

PLATO IN THE ACADEMY: SOME CAUTIOUS REFLECTIONS

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I shall deal here with a question of method: how to be fair to scanty evidence. Plato lived in his house near the Academy for over forty years, and one assumes that this is where he wrote most, or all, of his dialogues. Yet we have extremely meagre indications of his other activities in this hub of scholarship and thought. I shall not deal here with his activity as a philosophical thinker except in a few contexts where some of it may have some bearing on our main theme. As we all know, Plato has been depicted over the generations as a Socratic Pythagorean with Heraclitean influences; a sceptic; a para-Stoic; a Neo-Platonist; a precursor of Christianity; a prefiguration of Hegelian ontology; a destroyer – together with Euripides and Socrates – of the true Tragic Spirit of the Greeks; a neo-Kantian; an existentialist; an analytic philosopher manqué, and a post-modern pharmacist. All this where we have volumes of ancient evidence – but there we are faced, of course, with the lubricous issue of philosophical exegesis. Our problem in the present study is of a different nature. It is chiefly historical, and we have more lacunae than solid facts in our meagre evidence.

Indeed, the issue of Plato's teaching activities is like a jigsaw puzzle where most of the parts are missing. Philosophical scholars tend, by and large, to imitate nature in not liking a vacuum. They have, therefore, the tendency to bridge over the gaps and make assumptions¹ where evidence is lacking. By and large, one detects

1 I have not compiled a long list of places where we are told that 'one must assume...', and the like: it would have occupied a whole booklet. Here are some examples. Konrad Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre*², Stuttgart 1968, p. 2: "... und im übrigen ist anzunehmen"; p. 28: "Freilich gibt es so gut wie keine direkte Zeugnisse dafür, daß sich Platon in der Schule ausführlich über geschichtsphilosophische Fragen geäußert hat. Es ist jedoch anzunehmen...". Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said*, Chicago 1933 and reprints, pp. 29-31, "We may suppose"; "We may fancy if we please"; "We may see in the *Parmenides*"; "We may presume" – and more of the same. The whole section begins with the words "Somewhat less fanciful {and therefore "we may fancy if we please"? JG} are the better-founded

three types of answer to the question of what Plato taught in the Academy – assuming, that is, that he did teach in the Academy at all.

The first, and rather widespread, suggestion is that the “programme of studies” in the Academy followed the plan for the education of the Guardians in Plato’s *Republic*. This was expounded in some detail by John Burnet:² the teaching included arithmetic, plain and solid geometry, astronomy, harmonics – and, of course, dialectic. Paul Shorey³ adds to the programme of studies in *Republic* also *Parmenides* as “a lesson in logic devised by Plato to exercise the wit of his students”; and sees in *Philebus* “a report of a discussion guided by Plato”. The methods of classification in *Sophist* and *Politicus* may also have “found its reflection in the exercises of the school”.⁴ Shorey devotes some space also to “occasional lectures by Plato himself”, of which Περὶ τ’ἀγαθοῦ is a specimen, and also to research in mathematics and astronomy; but the main ‘teaching programme’ is derived from the dialogues.

Doubts have been expressed on this point, and rightly so. The best objection known to me has been formulated by Henri-Irénée Marrou.⁵ None of our sources, says Marrou, tells us anything about such a ‘programme of studies’. It is unlikely that programmes of education like those in *Republic* or *Laws* were ever intended for the

conjectures of modern scholarship with regard to the nature of Plato's teaching in the Academy”.

2 John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Thales to Plato*, London 1914 and reprints, “THE PROGRAMME OF STUDIES”, pp. 182-187. Burnet has already – pp. 180-181 – also accepted the reports on Περὶ τ’ἀγαθοῦ in a ‘maximalist’ interpretation of ‘regular lectures’.

3 See note 1 above.

4 Theodor Gomperz, *Griechische Denker, Eine Geschichte der antiken Philosophie*, 2e Auflage, Iler band, Leipzig 1903, p. 222, also suggests that some of the late dialogues reflect Plato's teaching in smaller “Schülerkreise”, which were not unlike our own “seminaristische Übungen”. See, for a similar view, Émile Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie* 1, Paris 1951, p. 97: “En quoi consistait l'enseignement de Platon? C'est ce qu'il est difficile de savoir, parce que la plupart de ses oeuvres, destinées à un large public, n'en doivent pas être le reflet; il faut en excepter pourtant ces sortes d'exercices logiques que sont la seconde partie du *Parménide*, et les débuts du *Théétète* et du *Sophiste*; si l'on fait attention que ces exercices sont destinés à éprouver la vigueur logique de l'étudiant...”

5 Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 2nd edition, Paris 1965, pp. 114-115.

Academy. Both dialogues are "utopian", blueprints for ideal states, and their programmes are organized by age-groups and abilities. One may also add that the dialogues were written for publication and addressed to a readership which included people outside the Academy.

Another suggestion, a little less widely held, was that Plato used his own dialogues as textbooks in teaching his pupils in the Academy. We have seen that Shorey takes *Parmenides*, *Sophist* and *Politicus* as reflecting such exercises. A representative of this view, within limits, is Gilbert Ryle.⁶ Ryle does point out that "Plato composed his elenctic dialogues before his Academy was founded", but continues: "We have indeed good reasons to think that the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* were designed for academic listeners only."⁷ "The *Timaeus*...", he says elsewhere,⁸ "was reserved for the instruction of students in the Academy". This involves him in speculating about the various 'performances' of some of the other dialogues in various festivals and games. This is only one of the eccentricities of this fascinating book. But it does take it for granted that some dialogues were used in teaching in the Academy. If we take the more pedestrian, and more widely accepted, view that *all* the dialogues were written for publication – or even if we accept Ryle's thesis that *some* dialogues were first used only for teaching in the Academy – we may ask how one imagines that the dialogues were used in courses in the Academy. Were they just 'performed', as Ryle sometimes suggests? But even he assumes that they were also used "for the instruction of students". Would Plato explain to his students what is wrong with the sophisms used by Socrates in *Republic I*,⁹ or with the argument at *Meno* 81c7, ...οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτι οὐ μεμάθηκεν as a refutation of Meno's

6 Gilbert Ryle, *Plato's Progress*, Cambridge 1966. Ιωάννης Θεοδωρακόπουλος, *Εἰσαγωγή στὸν Πλάτωνα*, 5τη ἔκδοση, Ἀθῆναι 1970, pp. 74-76, seems – as far as one is entitled to draw such pedestrian conclusions from his sublime formulations – to take it for granted that the Platonic dialogues, especially those where Socrates is the 'hero', were studied and taught in the Academy.

7 Ryle, pp. 42-3.

8 Ryle, p. 83.

9 See Ivor Ludlam, 'Thrasymachus in Plato's *Politeia* I' in Amos Edelheit (ed.), *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 6, 2011, Maynooth 2012, pp. 18-44.

argument that one cannot learn what one does not know?¹⁰ Or with the 'telegraphic' proof of the immortality of the soul at *Phaedrus* 245c5-246a2?¹¹

Another way of taking the dialogues to be at least part of the materials used for Plato's teaching in the Academy has been proposed by our colleague Professor Szlezak.¹² (**A 1-2 on handout**). But Szlezak's suggestion is that the dialogues, or some of them, were read in the Academy *in conjunction with the students' "training in Platonic philosophy"*. In the context of the school Szlezak adheres to, the Tübingen School, this training would mean regular courses of lectures on the One, the Indivisible Dyad, and the whole complex system of philosophy reconstructed by the Tübingen Platonists from these ἀρχαί. The evidence for this system is what we are told about Plato's /lecture?/course of lectures?//regular courses of lectures?/ "On the Good". Dealing with this issue is almost like *rem actam agere*. Let us, however, look again at what the sources tell us about this/ese lecture/s. I shall not enter into the contents, or the possible implications of these contents – or else we shall be sitting here μέχρι δευτέρας παρουσίας. I shall only refer to the passages which explicitly mention Plato's Περί τ'ἀγαθοῦ.¹³ (**C 1-11 on handout**). Before we do that, however, we should take heed of Giovanni Reale's sombre warning against those who may dare disagree with the Tübingen reconstruction of the philosophical system of Περί

10 A number of adherents of the "Theory of Reminiscence" have suggested that the perfect tense does not mean here that the soul *has actually learned*, but only that she is "in a state of having learned" (μεμαθηκυῖα, 81d1). This would imply that at c5 πολλάκις γεγονυῖα would only mean that "she is the state of having been born many times", and at c6 ἑώρακυῖα would mean that "she is in the state of having seen". And when Phidippides came to Athens from Marathon and said, with his last breath, νενικήκαμεν, he did not mean "we have won", but merely that "we are in the state of people who won". In any case, even if the soul has lived many times here and in Hades, why should this necessarily prove that she has seen πάντα χρήματα and that οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτι οὐ μεμάθηκεν"? I have lived many times in London for long periods, and yet there are many parts of it which I have never seen. See, for some of the problems involved, the detailed discussion in R. W. Sharples (ed., transl., comm.), *Plato: Meno*, Warminster 1984, pp. 147-149.

11 See Ιωάννης Στεφάνου, 'Ἡ ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς στό *Φαῖδρο*', in Κωνσταντῖνος Βουδούρης (ed.), *Ἐρωτας, Παιδεία καὶ Φιλοσοφία*, Athens 1989, pp. 105-114.

12 See A 1-2. in the handout.

13 See C 1-11 in the handout.

τ'ἀγαθοῦ.¹⁴ (**B 1-2 on handout**).

In my Section C, I have arranged the pieces of evidence on Plato's *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ* in three sub-sections, according to the main emphasis in the story told in each of them. 1-3 describe what seems to be a public lecture by Plato, which most of the audience found incomprehensible and went away, leaving only Plato's *συνήθεις*, *ὀμιλητές* or *ἑταῖροι*.¹⁵ 4-9 report in various details the contents of *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ*, mainly the One, the Indivisible Dyad, and the various applications of this Dyad. Of these, 4-5 mention the names of some, at least, of those *συνήθεις*, *ὀμιλητές* or *ἑταῖροι* – Speusippus, Xenocrates, Aristotle, Heraclides, Hestiaeus – and tell us that they wrote down what Plato said. 6-9 concentrate on the difference between these 'unwritten words' of Plato and his *Timaeus*, as indicated in Aristotle's *Physics* 209b11-16. 10-11 deal with what they call Aristotle's *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας*, but are taken by most scholars to refer to the two *ἀρχαί* of *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ*.

At the price of repeating old arguments, it would be hard to read 1-3 carefully and yet assume that the delivery of *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ* was more than one single event. As pointed out long ago by G. J. De Vries,¹⁶ Aristoxenus, our source for 1, was no friend of Plato, and would have been only too happy to point out that Plato drove away large crowds of listeners again and again – if that were what happened. Also, would Plato himself care to risk repeating such a humiliating performance more than once? Similar arguments are offered in Philip Merlan's posthumous article in the same periodical.¹⁷ Add to their arguments that, if these were recurring lectures – not to mention regular *Lehrvorträge* delivered by Plato year in, year out – there would be no reason for his *ἑταῖροι* to write them down, nor would Porphyry (5) describe these words as *τὰ ῥηθέντα αἰνιγματωδῶς* if

14 See handout B 1-2.

15 As can be seen from the headings of the passages in Section C, Gigon includes all of them among the fragments of Aristotle's *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ*. But our 1 is clearly by Aristoxenus, and claims to record what Aristotle used to say to his pupils. 2-3 *may* also depend on the same Aristoxenus story, adding some details. See our note 18. The rest of these passages seem to derive indirectly from Aristotle's *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ*.

16 G. J. De Vries, 'Aristoxenos über *Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ*', *Hermes* 96, 1968, pp. 124-126.

17 Philip Merlan, 'War Platons Vorlesung "Das Gute" Einmalig?', *ibid.* pp. 705-709.

they represented common themes of Plato's regular lectures. Add to it – as Merlan does – that Themistius (2) tells us that Plato delivered Περὶ τ' ἀγαθοῦ in Piraeus. Whether Themistius and Proclus (2-3) were entirely dependent on Aristoxenus (as Gaiser takes for granted) or not, I see no reason to assume that Themistius would go out of his way to *invent* such an 'unnatural' venue.¹⁸

This should dispose of the other suggestion, that Περὶ τ' ἀγαθοῦ is described in our sources as ἀκρόασις, λόγοι, συνουσία, or συνουσίαι since all these words refer to regular instruction. In fact, none of these is, at the time of Plato and Aristotle, a strictly technical term, and only the plural συνουσίαι, which appears in 7, 9, 10 and 11, must refer to more than one occasion. Three of our sources – Aristoxenus (1), Proclus (3), and Alexander, quoted by Simplicius (4) use ἀκρόασις. Gaiser¹⁹ explains this ἀκρόασις as "Lehrvorträge" which "allgemein zugänglich waren". My objections in the last paragraph need not be repeated. But let us look at these words. Despite the common name in the MS tradition of φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις, applying to a

18 Gaiser (note 1 above), at the end of his note to his testimonium 1 (=our 1), pp. 452-3, writes: "Von Aristoxenos abhängig und also ohne selbstständigen Quellenwert sind die Darstellungen des Themistios [our 2] und Proklos [our 3], die in der Übertreibung des mißerfolges noch weiter gehen". Neither of these two passages is included in any edition of Aristoxenus. Bruno Colpi, *Die παιδεία des Themistius, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Bildung im vierten Jahrhundert nach Christus*, Bern 1987, p. 121, note 99, cites these words of Gaiser and remarks: "Vielleicht läßt sich doch die Frage stellen, ob der Aristoteliker Themistius nicht aus Aristoteles (de bono p. 111 Ross) selbst, auf dem sich Aristoxenus beruft, geschöpft hatte". Gigon takes this account of Themistius as derived from Aristotle's Περὶ τ' ἀγαθοῦ. Themistius knew one or two things about Plato and Aristotle. He may have added, for rhetorical effect, the description of the various places, including the silver mines at Laurium, from which people flocked to hear Plato; but he is unlikely to have invented Piraeus as the place where these λόγοι were delivered. Why should he? The Academy would be the natural place, and if imagination had a say in this, people would rather be made to flock there even from the Piraeus. Indeed, W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy IV*, p. 21, takes it for granted (having probably forgotten Themistius' evidence) that "The lecture must have been given in the gymnasium, a public part of the Academy precinct, where Sophists and others were wont to hold forth." I shall not attempt to examine the rest of Guthrie's discussion of Plato's 'instruction' (pp. 21-22).

19 L. c. note 1 above, p. 452 note. It would follow from his remark that the phenomenon of most listeners leaving half-way through the lecture was also a regular feature of these 'Lehrvorträge'.

series of lectures (and this title is post-Aristotelian),²⁰ this is not the usual sense of ἀκρόασις : it usually refers to any spoken performance,²¹ and often clearly to a one-time performance.²² The singular form is attested by Porphyry (5). I would rather take his evidence than that of Asclepius (7); Philoponus (9;10) and Simplicius (11, literally the same as 10). Συνουσία means simply being together with others.²³ Agathon's symposium is described as a συνουσία.²⁴ So is the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras.²⁵ It is sometimes used in Sophistic contexts, as in that *locus classicus*, *Apology* 19e4-20a2. This sentence is evidence enough for the non-technical sense of the word: young people who can τῶν ἑαυτῶν πολιτῶν προῖκα συνεῖναι ᾧ ἂν βούλωνται are persuaded by some famous Sophists τὰς ἐκείνων συνουσίας ἀπολιπόντας σφίσιν συνεῖναι χρήματα διδόντας. The 'being together' itself applies here to anyone, Sophists or any ordinary citizens. Any ordinary citizens, at least, are nowhere attested as delivering 'Lehrvorträge'. And, if the Seventh Epistle is genuine, it is again Plato himself who uses συνουσία a few times in the non-technical sense of 'being together'. Moreover, in what may be the most famous passage in that letter, συνουσία is expressly distinguished from σύγγραμμα and μάθημα.²⁶ **(D on handout)**. As to λόγοι, they need not mean anything more than 'things said': in a casual talk, in a lecture, in a series of lectures, in a conversation of any sort. To conclude from such words that Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ was a regular series of lectures or seminars is to read far too much into our

20 Aristotle himself refers to what we call his *Physics* as τὰ φυσικά, or ἡ μέθοδος ἢ τῶν φυσικῶν. See references in Bonitz p. 835b.

21 E. g. Thucydides I. 22.4. Cicero, *Att.* XV. 17.2

22 Hippocrates, *Praecepta* XII. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459b22. Suetonius, *Gramm.* 2: ... plurimas acroasis subinde fecit assidueque disseruit. Vitruvius X. 22. 3.

23 E. g. Plato, *Laws* I, 624b1; 639d3.

24 Plato, *Symposium* 172a7. b7. c1 et al.

25 Plato, *Protagoras* 337b3.

26 See handout, section D. If the Seventh Epistle is not genuine, then we have here an extra-Platonic piece of evidence for the informal nature of συνουσία in a Platonic context. For Socratic συνουσία see also John Patrick Lynch, *Aristotle's School, A Study of a Greek Educational Institution*, Berkeley. Los Angeles. London 1972, pp. 42-44. Lynch, however, limits his discussion to passages where συνουσία is explicitly connected with Socrates' 'teaching activities'.

scanty evidence, disregarding the contemporary usage of these words.

What, then, did Plato do with his 'students', other than what seems almost certainly to be the one lecture Περὶ τ'ἀγαθοῦ, open to the public, and quite probably delivered in the Piraeus? We have two ancient pieces of evidence, one contemporary and one from an Epicurean source, written about three centuries later, but most probably relying on near-contemporary sources.

The first passage comes from an unknown comedy by Plato's contemporary Epicrates. **(E on handout)**. This passage is well-known, and yet it is absent from Riginos' *Platonica*.²⁷ A number of German scholars regarded it as – what else? – seminars in botany and zoology.²⁸ Gaiser,²⁹ more cautiously, calls it merely "biologische Klassifizierung in der Akademie". Cherniss³⁰ dismisses the whole story as pure invention, based partly on a scene of Aristophanes, partly on the method of division exemplified in *Sophist* and *Politicus*, and of no greater historical value than the Aristophanic φροντιστήριον. But the Aristophanic 'school', just like Socrates' ascent to the clouds, were indeed pure inventions. Middle comedy is somewhat less imaginative and more down to earth. Assume that Epicrates is describing some practice of Plato and his friends. It occurs quite clearly not in Plato's house or garden, but in the public gymnasium. The activity is described by the verb διατρίβουσιν, and in our context it does not even have the later sense of 'course, seminar'.³¹ It is more reminiscent of Socrates' activity described at the beginning of Plato's *Euthyphro* (2a1-3): ...ὅτι σὺ τὰς ἐν Λυκείῳ καταλιπὼν διατριβὰς ἐνθάδε νῦν διατρίβεις περὶ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως στοάν... And to anticipate any suggestion by future scholars that Socrates is 'holding forth' at that stoa, Euthyphro – who, we remember, had the gift of prophecy – adds immediately: οὐ γάρ που καὶ σοί γε δίκη τις

27 Alice Swift Riginos, *Platonica, The Anecdotes Concerning the Life and Writings of Plato*, Leiden 1976.

28 See references in Harold Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1945, p. 99, note 4.

29 (See note 1 above), fragment 6, pp. 450-451.

30 (Note 28 above), pp. 62-63.

31 John Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen 1978, pp.162-166.

οὔσα τυγχάνει... Even Socrates' διατριβαὶ καὶ λόγοι at *Apology* 37b8-c1 and *Gorgias* 484e2-3 are not exactly academic (or Academic) seminars or lectures: they are things said in public and addressed to a general public. It is no accident that the Cynic sermons, addressed to a wide public, were called διατριβαί. Moreover, the practice of philosophers coming to a gymnasium and posing questions to young people should be known to us from the first few pages of *Euthydemus* (also taking place in the Lyceum), and the emphasis on defining the κολοκύντη by its γένος is, of course, reminiscent of the Eleatic's demand to define by division into proper γένη. Even assuming that this scene is no pure invention by the comic poet, it does not seem to provide us with any evidence of teaching activities directed at some proper students of Plato.³²

Our other source is Philodemus' History of the Academy, as a combination of Pap. Hercul. 1021 and 164 is now called.³³ As Dorandi points out in his Introduction,³⁴ and throughout his

32 One has no evidence either way for the historicity or otherwise of the story about the quarrel between Aristotle and Plato in Plato's last year, told by Aelian, *VH* 3, 19 (ed. Mervin B. Dilts, Stuttgart 1974, pp. 50-52), but some of the expressions used there seem to be genuine. Aristotle had a χορός τις τῶν ὁμιλητῶν τῶν ἑαυτοῦ (51, 6-7: at 20 they are his γνώριμοι), and makes Plato retreat τοῦ ἔξω περιπάτου (most probably outside Plato's property and in the gymnasium), so that ἔνδον ἐβάδιζε σὺν τοῖς ἐταίροις (51, 15-16: at 26, we have ἐν τῷ κήπῳ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ φιλοσοφεῖ). Xenocrates finds Plato there διαλεγόμενον τοῖς σὺν ἑαυτῷ ἦσαν δὲ μάλα συχνοὶ καὶ ἄξιοι λόγου καὶ οἱ μάλιστα δοκοῦντες τῶν νέων ἐπιφανεῖς (27-29). There can be little doubt about διαλεγόμενος. This activity is then described as ὁμιλία (30), which can be used for any social intercourse or familiarity (we remember Aristotle's ὁμιληταί) and by συνουσία (32), which we have discussed earlier. As we have noted, neither has, in such contexts, any formal or institutional connotation. The young 'students' are ἐταῖροι, and Plato used to converse with them walking in the peripatos of the gymnasium. Another interesting point: in Aelian's story (51, 13-14), Aristotle caused Plato to retreat φιλοτίμως πάνυ τὰς ἐρωτήσεις ποιούμενος καὶ τρόπον τινὰ καὶ ἐλεγκτικῶς. Diogenes Laertius III, 24 tells us about Plato: οὗτος πρῶτος ἐν ἐρωτήσει λόγον παρήνεγκεν, and refers to Favorinus as his source. On ἐρώτησις as a manner of doing philosophy, and its connections with ἔλεγχος, see my article 'Πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα – Sources and Credibility of *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 8', *Illinois Classical Studies XIII*, 1989, pp. 473-489.

33 Latest and by far best edition: Filodemo, *Storia dei Filosofi [.] Platone e l'Academia*, (*P.Herc.* 1021 e 164)... a cura di Tiziano Dorandi, Napoli 1991. (Henceforth "Dorandi").

34 Section ii, LE FONTI, pp. 83-99.

commentary on the Plato sections,³⁵ Philodemus used contemporary and near-contemporary sources like Philip of Opus, Hermodorus, Dicaearchus and Antigonus of Carystus. Plato is praised (I, 9ff.) as the one who "increased philosophy... and attracted innumerable people to it ". Here one would expect a mention of his extensive lectures and seminars, but no: ... διὰ τῆς ἀναγραφῆς τῶν λόγων (14-15: some editors suggest διαλόγων). At I, 16-41, we have some indication – the text is rather lacunose here – of Plato making people turn to philosophy by showing them their ignorance; but the only indication that this involved teaching is Gaiser's reading διδασκάλου (adopted by Dorandi) at 41, where previous editors read διαδόχου. Since later, at V, 35 ff., we have a list of Πλάτωνος μαθηταί, even the reading διδασκάλου, if correct, should not surprise us. After all, Plato himself is described at X, 6 as Σωκράτους γεγωνῶς μαθητής, and Socrates gave no formal lectures or seminars. Plato's main praise appears at Y 1 ff.: κατενενόητο δὲ, φησί,³⁶ καὶ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπίδοσις πολλὴ κατ'ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον, ἀρχιτεκτοῦντος μὲν καὶ προβλήματα διδόντος τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ζητούντων δὲ μετὰ σπουδῆς αὐτὰ τῶν μαθηματικῶν. Philodemus proceeds to mention 'metrologia', geometry, mechanics and optics. The text becomes lacunose again here, but at 2 we have φοιτητῶν, a word which already in Plato (e.g. *Euthyd.* 295d5-7) means 'a pupil' (and today means 'a student'). Here, at last, are our students, taking proper formal courses... But hold! Did Euthydemus and Dionysodorus give regular formal lectures? And a few lines below, at 29, we encounter yet again our friend συνουσία. Neither here nor in the sections which follow do we have any evidence for any formal teaching activities, if there were any. I see no reason to fill the gap, if a gap it be.³⁷

35 Pp. 203-224.

36 That is, Philodemus' source, probably here Dicaearchus: see II, 5.

37 This may be the place to cite a somewhat neglected piece of evidence (?). Riginos (note 27 above), p. 128, cites what she calls "a humorous fabrication given by a fifth century Neoplatonist and based on a specific passage in the *Phaedrus*" (275c-276d). Here is her rendering of Hermias, *In Phaedrum* 275c (p. 258 Couvriér): "A student wrote down all of Plato's lectures. Later, when he was travelling by boat, his notes were lost. He then returned to Plato and said he knew from experience the truth of Plato's maxim that one should write not in books but in men's souls." Here, then – at last! – we have evidence, from a pupil of

One thing which emerges from all the passages referring back to *Περὶ τ' ἀγαθοῦ* is that in that lecture Plato referred, at least, to the One and the Indivisible Dyad as ἀρχαί, and expanded on some of the applications of the Dyad. Considering that both Alexander of Aphrodisias and Porphyry (**C 4-5 on handout**) tell us that it was not only Aristotle who took down what Plato said on that occasion, but also other ἑταῖροι such as Speusippus, Xenocrates, Hestiaeus and Heraclides, it would be hazardous to dismiss all this – which seems to agree with much of what Aristotle says in chapter 6 of the first book of *Metaphysics* (esp. 987b19ff.) – as the sheer invention of Aristotle, who did not understand his Platonic dialogues, as Cherniss *has* done. But in the same chapter of *Metaphysics* (esp. 987b7-9) we are also told that Plato was the 'onlie begetter' of the 'theory of Ideas'. Yet in a sufficient number of places in *Metaphysics*, *Physics* and *Topics*, Aristotle speaks of "those who have postulated (or similar expressions) the Ideas". (**See Section F on handout**). This has often been dismissed out of hand, since – as we all know – Plato and the Theory of Ideas are inseparable.³⁸ "The use of the plural..." we are

Syrianus and a friend of Proclus, that Plato gave *regular lectures*. But hold! Here is the Greek: φέρεται δὲ τοιοῦτόν τι διήγημα πρὸς τὸ μὴ δεῖν συγγράμμασιν ἀποτίθεσθαι τὰ νοήματα, ὅτι μαθητῆς τις τοῦ Πλάτωνος πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀπογραψάμενος ἀπέπλευσε, καὶ ναυαγία περιπεσὼν ἅπαντα ἀπώλεσε καὶ ὑπέστρεψε πρὸς τὸν διδάσκαλον, ἔργῳ πειραθεὶς ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐν βιβλίοις ἀποτίθεσθαι τὰ νοήματα ἀλλὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ. The expression πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα παρ' αὐτοῦ is preposterous: as if Plato had a limited amount of philosophy to teach, repeated it regularly, and if you lost it you could come back for the same. One is reminded of the wise words of Glaucon in *Rep.* V, 450b6-7, μέτρον... τοιοῦτων λόγων ἀκούειν ὅλος ὁ βίος νοῦν ἔχουσιν.

38 See, e.g., Harold Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore 1944 and reprints, p.186, note 108, referring to recent (then) publications; and especially G. C. Field, *Plato and his Contemporaries*, London 1930 and reprints, p. 208. W. D. Ross (ed., comm.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics...* Volume II, Oxford 1924 and reprints, pp. 420-421 (on 1078b11), is somewhat indecisive. On p. 420 he states plainly that the comparison between A, 987 and M, 1028 "shows clearly that Aristotle means Plato." On the next page, however, he suggests that "The main difference between A and M here is that M, in using the phrase οἱ πρῶτοι τὰς ιδέας φήσαντες εἶναι, and in referring only to the influence of Heracliteanism in general and not to Cratylus in particular, perhaps suggests that Plato was one of a band of thinkers who by their united efforts arrived at the ideal theory". This, however, does not account for the large number of other anonymous references in the plural (handout, section

told by Field, "proves nothing in Aristotle". No evidence is given: *sic volo, sic iubeo*. But is Aristotle incapable of uttering the name Plato when he is referring to Plato? I have collected a number of passages in all three works where Aristotle does not hesitate to mention Plato by name (**See handout, Section G**). In most of these places, Plato is mentioned in relation to themes with which we are familiar from dialogues like *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*. Only in two of these passages does Aristotle connect Plato with *ιδέαι* or *εἶδη* (*Met. Z*, 2, 1028b19-22; *Top.* 148a14-22.) In neither of these places is Plato explicitly credited with inventing the Ideas. In the first passage we have his view on the relation between the *εἶδη* and the mathematical entities as contrasted with that of Speusippus. In the second, we have his definition of the Ideas as immortal and imperishable. This would still enable us, if we wished to make assumptions, to speculate on the nature of οἱ τὰς ιδέας τιθέμενοι and similar expressions as other pupils of Socrates, other members of the Academy - perhaps "the Friends of the Ideas" of *Sophist* - and the like. Plato, we could maintain, did not invent the Ideas, but only 'shared' them, and discussed them, with other members of the Academy. But such assumptions fail in the face of the close verbal similarities between *Met. A*, 6 and *M*, 4, where similar actions related to the Ideas are ascribed, virtually in the same words, to Plato in *A*, 6 and to οἱ πρῶτοι τὰς ιδέας φήσαντες εἶναι in *M*, 4 (esp. 1078b11-12).³⁹ These similarities have, of course, not escaped the notice of scholars; but as we have seen, the tendency has been to

F), as against the numerous references to Plato, only two of which connect him at all with the Theory of Forms (handout, section G).

39 Just a few examples: 987a32-34, ... καὶ ταῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις δόξαις, ὡς ἀπάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀεὶ ῥεόντων καὶ ἐπιστήμης περὶ αὐτῶν οὐκ οὔσης.../ 1078b13-16, ... περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις λόγοις ὡς πάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀεὶ ῥεόντων, ὥστ' εἶπερ ἐπιστήμη τινὸς ἔσται... 987b1-3, Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ τὰ ἠθικὰ πραγματευομένου περὶ δὲ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως οὐθέν, ἐν μέντοι τούτοις τὸ καθόλου ζητοῦντος καὶ περὶ ὀρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρώτου τὴν διάνοιαν.../ 1078b17-19, Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ τὰς ἠθικὰς ἀρετὰς πραγματευομένου καὶ περὶ τούτων ὀρίζεσθαι καθόλου ζητοῦντος πρώτου... 987b5-6, ...ὑπέλαβεν ὡς περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γιγνόμενον καὶ οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν.../1078b15-16, ...ἐτέρας δεῖν τινὰς φύσεις εἶναι παρὰ τὰς αἰσθητὰς μενούσας. 987b7-8, οὗτος [Πλάτων] οὖν τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ιδέας προσηγόρευσε.../1078b31-32, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ιδέας προσηγόρευσαν...

regard the plural as singular, and οἱ τὰς ιδέας τιθέμενοι as some sort of euphemism for Plato. Aristotle, needless to say, had a fairly decent Classical education, knew the distinction between singular and plural, and could recognize a Plato when he saw one. What, then, are we to do with this problem?

I do not have an answer. I can only point to some possibilities. One suggestion was made long ago by Richard Shute:⁴⁰ The *Metaphysics* as we have them are not part of the collection of works which made their way to Skepsis and were then discovered by Tyrannio. They consist of a collection of treatises written by Aristotle at various times – hence the similarities, differences and confusions. A more extreme approach is that of Felix Grayeff,⁴¹ according to which the whole Aristotelian corpus as we have it is not 'pure' Aristotle, but rather a collection of works based on lecture notes of two or three generations of Peripatetics. Most scholars, however, tend to accept most parts of the corpus as basically Aristotle's, with some possible interpolations and additions. One way of dealing with double versions like the one we have between A and M is to accept the approach of Werner Jaeger and ascribe each of these books to a different period in Aristotle's life.⁴² Jaeger (pp. 192-193) takes Aristotle's expression at A, 9, 990b17-19, ὅλως τε ἀναιροῦσιν οἱ περὶ τῶν εἰδῶν λόγοι ἃ μᾶλλον εἶναι βουλόμεθα [οἱ λέγοντες εἶδη]⁴³ τοῦ τὰς ιδέας εἶναι as evidence that in A Aristotle still identifies himself with other members of the Academy, and he therefore maintains that A was written during Aristotle's sojourn in Assos. But assume that we accept this interpretation, what reason had Aristotle, when he was in

40 Richard Shute, *On the History of the Process by which the Aristotelian Writings arrived at their Present Form*, Oxford 1888, pp.136-138.

41 Felix Grayeff, *Aristotle and his School*, London 1974.

42 Werner Jaeger, *Aristoteles, Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Berlin 1923, Ch. 3, 'Das Urmetaphysik', pp. 170-199 and Ch. 4, 'Die Entwicklung der Metaphysik', pp. 200-236.

43 These words are secluded by Blass as 'an intrusion' from M4, 1079a14-15. Jaeger also reads βουλόμεθα with the 'oldest and best' MS E. So does Ross, and most editors since Bekker. However, the Laurentian MS A^b and Alexander's commentary read βούλονται, as in the parallel sentence in M – and all MSS have the words secluded by Blass. Why assume that the scribe of the archetype, at A, would look to a similar sentence in M to correct the version he had in front of him – or indeed even remember that there was such a similar sentence?

the company of other Academics in Assos, to ascribe to Plato what he later ascribes to an anonymous plurality? What would be the facts behind such a change? Jaeger does not refer to this issue of "Plato" as against the many "introducers of the Ideas", and his proposed dating leaves this problem exactly where it was. I have no solution to offer.