

PARMENIDEAN PEDAGOGY IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

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Resumo: No livro *Plato's Philosophers*, Catherine Zuckert olha para o *Timeu* de Platão de maneira renovada e revive implicitamente a tese de A. E. Taylor, segundo a qual *Timeu* não fala por Platão. Taylor devotou seu escrupuloso comentário de 1927 para construir esse argumento, o qual, porém, encalhou diante da questão colocada dez anos depois por F. M. Cornford, no livro *Plato's Cosmology* (viii): “Qual poderia ter sido o seu motivo?” O motivo de Platão era tanto pedagógico quanto parmenídico: assim como a deusa expõe o peregrino à “Via da Opinião” depois da revelação da “Verdade”, assim também o *Timeu* de Platão expõe o leitor a um relato poético de uma cosmologia baseada na visão – outro κοσμός ἐπέων ἀπατηλός (*Parménides*, B8.52) – depois da revelação, feita na *República* V-VII, da ontologia platônica puramente inteligível.

Palavras-chave: Platão, *Timeu*, pedagogia parmenídica.

Abstract: In *Plato's Philosophers*, Catherine Zuckert looks at Plato's *Timaeus* with fresh eyes, implicitly reviving the thesis of A. E. Taylor that *Timaeus* does not speak for Plato. Taylor devoted his scrupulous 1927 commentary to making this case but it ran aground on the question about Plato posed ten years later by F. M. Cornford in *Plato's Cosmology* (viii): “What could have been his motive?” Plato's motive was both pedagogical and Parmenidean: just as the Goddess exposes the seeker to “the Way of Opinion” after the revelation of “Truth,” so also does Plato's *Timaeus* expose the reader to a poetic account of a sight-based cosmology—another κοσμός ἐπέων ἀπατηλός (*Parmenides* B8.52)—after the revelation of exclusively intelligible Platonic ontology in *Republic* V-VII.

Keywords: Plato, *Timaeus*, Parmenidean pedagogy.

In his influential 2005 article “Εἰκὼς Μῦθος,” Myles Burnyeat draws an important distinction between internal and external coherence in the case

of Plato's *Timaeus*.¹ While internal coherence is required from Timaeus—and this claim is crucial for Burnyeat's argument about the meaning of εἰκῶς μῦθος—external coherence is not; in other words, while an account cannot be εἰκῶς if it contradicts itself,² a series of accounts can be inconsistent *with each other* without losing the more positive sense for the word εἰκῶς that Burnyeat's article is intended to secure for it.³ The question of external incoherence arises because immediately prior to Timaeus' introduction of the term εἰκῶς μῦθος at 29d2, he makes the remarkable admission that discourses like his—discourses about copies as opposed to exemplars—may well be inconsistent *with themselves* (ἑαυτοῖς at 29c6); this admission momentarily complicates Burnyeat's case. Despite the facts of elementary Greek,⁴ and relying on the authority of John Burnet's editorial decisions,⁵ that case turns on the question of whether Timaeus' discourse is best understood as a single μῦθος or λόγος (on the one hand) or—and this is Burnyeat's claim—it is best understood as a series of λόγοι that are each *internally* coherent but are not collectively so.⁶ Burnyeat obscures the fact that there is incontrovertibly a Timaeian λόγος of λόγοι, wherein these λόγοι, each in itself “a complex of statements standing to each other in some logical relation,”⁷ is in turn merely one of those “statements” that collectively constitute some larger λόγος, in this case, that singular εἰκῶς μῦθος, i.e., the words with which he famously describes his discourse.

Not surprisingly, Burnyeat begins the relevant passage by emphasizing instances of the plural λόγοι: “My second comment is on the plural λόγοι at 29c6 (which I would set beside the plural εἰκότων μύθων at 59c6).”⁸ The

¹ Myles Burnyeat, ‘Εἰκῶς Μῦθος’. *Rhizai* 2, 2005, p. 143-165, reprinted in the revised version of PARTENIE, C. (ed.). *Plato's Myths*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 167-186.

² Idem, p. 155: “I trust that everyone will agree that this interpretation is preferable to one that understands Timaeus to mean that a given account may be internally inconsistent, at variance with it itself. That would give it zero probability, at once.”

³ Idem, p. 158: “the standard aimed at is to be εἰκῶς in the sense of reasonable or appropriate: as like what reason says *ought* to be as the materials allow.”

⁴ Idem, p. 155: “One such account is at variance with another (ἑαυτοῖς here = ἀλλήλοις).”

⁵ Idem, p. 155: “The λόγοι we meet in the sequel are a series of well-marked units as displayed by the paragraphing in Burnet's Oxford Classical Text.”

⁶ Idem, p. 155: “If these units are the type (ii) accounts which aim to be εἰκότες, they are the λόγοι about which we are warned not to expect them to agree with each other in absolutely every respect.”

⁷ Idem, p. 155: “Each unit is a λόγος in the sense of a complex of statements standing to each other in some logical relation and dealing with a particular explanandum.”

⁸ Idem, p. 155.

problems here are three. First of all, the later passage from *Timaeus* 59c6 refers to “pursuing *the idea* of εἰκότων μύθων” (translation and emphasis mine);⁹ it is therefore the idea that there is a *form* or genre of εἰκότες μῦθοι that leads Timaeus to employ the plural beginning at 29b4 because he is distinguishing between two types of *discourses*, some of which can be characterized in one way, and *others* in another. The second problem is that Burnyeat chooses not to cite a parallel instance of the plural—here the reference is to τὴν τῶν εἰκότων λόγων δύναμιν at 48d2—immediately before referring to his own discourse in the singular, indeed as εἰκότα at 48d3. And of course the greatest weakness in Burnyeat’s case is the remarkable equation: “ἐαυτοῖς here = ἀλλήλοις” (29c6); by no manner of means does “with themselves” mean the same thing as “with one another.” As if acknowledging the problematic nature of an interpretation that involves this egregious lexicographical audacity, Burnyeat concludes the passage on a more modest note: “I trust that everyone will agree that this interpretation is preferable to one that understands Timaeus to mean that a given account may be internally inconsistent, at variance with it itself.”¹⁰

Despite the fact that she refers to “Burnyeat’s seminal paper”¹¹ in her recent book *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s Timaeus* (2012),¹² Sarah Broadie has discovered an internal incoherence in Timaeus’ discourse of that undermines Burnyeat’s analysis. Her discovery originates in the following hymn to sight at 47a1-b2:

“As my account has it [κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον], our sight has indeed proved to be a source of supreme benefit to us, in that none [οὐδεῖς] of our present statements [τῶν νῦν λόγων]

⁹ Donald J. Zehl translates the relevant passage: “As for going further and giving an account of other stuffs of this sort along the lines of the likely stories we have been following, that is no complicated matter.” For the train of thought developed here, I have benefitted from Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, “The Epistemological Section (29b-d) of the Proem in Timaeus’ Speech: M. F. Burnyeat on *eikós mythos*, and Comparison with Xenophanes B34 and B35”. In: MOHR, R. D.; Sattler, B. M. (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato’s Timaeus Today*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2010, p. 225-247, especially at 241-43.

¹⁰ Idem, p. 155.

¹¹ BROADIE, S. *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s Timaeus*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 33 n. 14.

¹² Idem, p. 180-81. For the explicit connection to Burnyeat, see 180 n. 22.

about the universe could ever have been made if we had never seen any stars, sun, or heaven. As it is, however, our ability to see the periods of day-and-night, of month and of years, of equinoxes and solstices, has led to the invention of number, and given us the idea of time and opened the path to enquiry into the nature of the universe. These pursuits have given us philosophy, a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed.”¹³

Broadie comments as follows:

“Whatever the intention of the passage, Plato must have regarded his point here as well worth making: for it comes with a cost of which he can hardly have been unaware. If the chief benefit of vision depends on contemplating *all* the visible regularities of the heavens, Timaeus’ physics of vision cannot be adequate. The theory that postulates an optic fire that coalesces with daylight can explain only daytime vision (45b4-d7). By itself it cannot explain how we see the moon and stars by night.”¹⁴

¹³ Cicero’s translation of *Timaeus* breaks off here. Although Carlos Lévy, “Cicero and the *Timaeus*”, in J. REYDAMS-SCHILS, J. G. (ed.), *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, p. 95-110, does not distinguish between Cicero and the character Nigidius—in whose mouth Cicero places the excerpt from Timaeus’ discourse—it is a valuable introduction to the problems involved. For Cicero’s own position of the limited role of vision for apprehending realities, see *Orator* 8 (*neque oculis*) and 10 (*sub oculo ipsa non cadunt*).

¹⁴ Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 180. One of the remarkable aspects of this argument is its Parmenidean echoes: the two principles that inform “the Way of Opinion” are fire and night (Parmenides at Diels-Kranz, B8.56-59). And the interplay of night and light is crucial to the claim advanced by Alexander Mourelatos that it is not only light but also darkness that allowed Parmenides to deduce that the moon derived its light from the sun and that the morning and evening stars were one and the same; see Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, “Parmenides, Early Greek Astronomy, and Modern Scientific Realism”, in CORDERO, N-L. (ed.), *Parmenides, Venerable and Awesome: Proceedings of the International Symposium*, Buenos Aires, October 29-November 2, 2007, Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2011, p. 167-190. Of course this does not touch Broadie’s point about the stars and also, perhaps, the planets; cf. JOHANSEN, T. J. *Plato’s Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 152 n. 26. But it does establish a link between the λόγος of Timaeus and another cosmology intended by its ultimate creator to be both deceptive and incoherent; the best way to make “Timaeus’ physics of vision” coherent with his claims about the knowledge that only nighttime vision bestows is found in the “Way of Opinion” in Parmenides.

Here then is Broadie's internal incoherence claim, a claim that rests on the fact that *some* of "the visible regularities of the heavens" are only visible *at night* and therefore that Timaeus' sun-based account of vision is inconsistent with a hymn to it that depends primarily on astronomy. There can be no question here of external incoherence, Broadie points out, due to the close proximity of the two inconsistent claims: "Almost as soon as Timaeus has uttered his account of how vision works, it turns out to sit badly with the ultimate purpose of the faculty [n. 22]."¹⁵ And it is in n. 22 that Broadie mentions Burnyeat:

"Burnyeat, 2005, suggests that internal but not external coherence is a necessary condition for a Timean *logos* (i.e. section of the cosmology on a specific subject-matter) to be *eikós*. The vision example casts doubt on this if (as I am supposing) it is internally incoherent—unless Plato missed the difficulty."¹⁶

The careful reader will observe that the possibility that Plato "missed the difficulty" contradicts the first sentence of Broadie's incoherence claim,¹⁷ quoted above. Because this sentence opens the door to the central theme of this paper, I will quote it again, this time for purposes of analysis:

"Whatever the [1] intention of the passage, [2] Plato must have regarded his point here as [3] well worth making: for it [4] comes with a cost of which [5] he can hardly have been unaware."

The sentence's first part, [1], calls attention, in an admirably open-minded manner, to the possibly elusive *proper* interpretation of Plato's text; far more important than the internal inconsistency that Broadie discovers

¹⁵ Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 180.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 180 n. 22.

¹⁷ I should remark here that I believe she is correct: there is an incoherence.

here is the remarkable hymn to vision and the visible, a hymn that could only strike the student of *Republic*—and in particular, the careful student of its central images, the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave—as peculiar. I want to suggest, then, that Broadie’s open-minded manner of expression in [1] opens the door to the possibility that the proper interpretation of “Timaeus’ remarks about the chief benefit of vision” in Plato’s text is that they are precisely the remarks of the *character* “Timaeus” and not necessarily those of Plato. It is for this reason that I draw attention to Broadie’s reference to *Plato* at [2]; despite any latitude that [1] may offer for separating Timaeus from Plato, her own approach is to assume that Timaeus’ remarks are actually Plato’s as well and, indeed, that these are remarks that Plato in particular believed were [3] “well worth making.” Broadie’s proof for this statement is not simply based on the implicit assumption that since Plato made these remarks—albeit through Timaeus—he *ipso facto* considered them “well worth making”; instead, her proof of [3] is that making these remarks [4] “comes with a cost.”¹⁸ What Broadie means, of course, is that Timaeus’ remarks about vision are internally incoherent and thus that the proof that Plato regarded them as worth making is that they are made at the cost of internal incoherence. Indeed it is to explain this incoherence that Broadie is writing the paragraph: she elucidates it in the remainder of it. But in the context of n. 22, her claim at [5] that Plato was aware of the incoherence is made at the cost of *her own coherence* because Broadie raises the possibility that “Plato missed the difficulty” (n. 22) whereas she claims at [5] that “he can hardly have been unaware” of the same fact, i.e., that Plato’s position “is internally incoherent.” The important point, however, is not Broadie’s own incoherence except insofar as it disappears by discriminating the discourse of Timaeus—which *is* “internally incoherent”—from its author Plato, who, as Broadie rightly senses, “can hardly have been unaware” of the fact. On this reading, it is Timaeus who is unaware of the difficulty, not Plato.¹⁹ To put it another way: (1) if Broadie is correct in her initial sense that it is not the case that “Plato missed the difficulty” (as I believe she is), and (2) if Timaeus’ account of vision is “internally incoherent” (as I believe it is), then (3)

¹⁸ Cf. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, 222 and 226.

¹⁹ Thereby rendering the following sentence more accurate (Broadie modified): “Whatever the intention of the passage, Timaeus must have regarded his point here as well worth making: for it comes with a cost of which Plato can hardly have been unaware.”

Burnyeat's argument becomes doubtful.²⁰ By distinguishing Plato from Timaeus and attributing the incoherence to the latter but not the former, Broadie is not contradicting herself precisely because Burnyeat is wrong. Unfortunately, proving Burnyeat wrong is only a small first step; there is a more important kind of incoherence to be considered where Plato's *Timaeus* is concerned: the discourse of Timaeus is not entirely consistent with what we find in other Platonic λόγοι.²¹

In a chapter entitled "Body, soul, and tripartition" in *Plato's Natural Philosophy*,²² Thomas Johansen devotes considerable attention to the consistency of Timaeus' discourse with other Platonic dialogues.²³ Given his title,²⁴ there is never any doubt that by explicating the discourse of Timaeus, Johansen believes that he is also explicating the views of Plato,²⁵ he never raises the possibility that the proper investigation of the soul requires emancipation from "natural philosophy."²⁶ While Johansen readily admit that we might get the idea from *Phaedo* that Plato was an enemy of the body,²⁷ that idea needs rethinking; his chapter's purpose is to accomplish

²⁰ Although I will postpone an explanation of this argument until it arises later in Broadie's paragraph, it is important to grasp that: (¬3) if Burnyeat's argument is sound, and (2) Broadie is correct that Timaeus' "vision example" is "internally incoherent," then (¬1) "Plato missed the difficulty," thereby contradicting what Broadie said at [5] that Plato "could hardly have been aware" of just this "difficulty."

²¹ Developmentalism note.

²² JOHANSEN, *op. cit.*, p. 137-159.

²³ Johansen has already devoted attention to the discourse's internal consistency, especially with respect to the receptacle in chapter 6 ("Space and Motion", 117-36); see especially *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 124: "Has Timaeus slipped from one notion of coming into being to another without warning or is there a way in which these points can be combined within a single story?" Not surprisingly, the most effective defenders of "Platonic" consistency in *Timaeus* make good use of Aristotle; see p. 134: "Aristotle's approach to the *chôra* is essentially the one I have been advocating in this chapter."

²⁴ Cf. F. M. Cornford's classic *Plato's Cosmology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937.

²⁵ This is typical; see MOHR, R. D. "Plato's Cosmic Manual: Introduction, Reader's Guide, and Acknowledgements". In: MOHR, R. D.; Sattler, B. M. (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2010, p. 1-26 , esp. p.3: "For the sake of full disclosure, though, let it be known that all the contributors here who write on the content of Timaeus' speech work on the unstated presumption that the speech represents Plato's views."

²⁶ Cf. *Phaedo* 114e2-5 and *Phaedrus* 247c3.

²⁷ Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 137: From the *Phaedo* we are familiar with the view of the body as a sort of prison for the soul. . . . If this is our only impression of Plato's view of the relationship between the body and the soul, then reading the *Timaeus* may come as a surprise." This is the chapter's opening.

this process.²⁸ Indeed his chapter's most arresting image measures the distance from *Phaedo* to *Timaeus*: "the human body appears less like a prison for the rational soul and more, as one might put it, like a rather comfortable hotel with quite a few research facilities built in."²⁹ On the specific question of the three parts of the soul—he acknowledges, of course, that this doctrine is missing from *Phaedo*³⁰—he carefully sidesteps the question of whether *Timaeus* is consistent with *Republic*,³¹ admitting only that it is "different in emphasis."³² More importantly, he deftly avoids commitment on the implications of the image of Glaucus in Book X,³³ the passage that indicates Socrates is not consistently upholding the view that the soul actually has three parts in *Republic*—despite the fact that this view allows him to locate justice in its internal harmony in Book IV³⁴—because tripartition merely captures the *appearance* of the soul in its embodied state.³⁵ Johansen is at his best in explaining, by contrast, how embodiment

²⁸ Idem, p. 159: "The dialogue forces us to rethink the image of Plato as enemy of the body." This is the chapter's last sentence.

²⁹ Idem, p. 157.

³⁰ Johansen usefully describes three different dialogues with respect to tripartition at *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 158: "In the *Phaedo* the soul seems to be essentially unitary and rational as we see in the argument from the kinship with the forms (78b-80c). In contrast, the image of the chariot in the *Phaedrus* presents the soul as having three parts already prior to embodiment (246a-b). In comparison to these claims, the *Timaeus* occupies a more developed half-way house."

³¹ Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 153 n. 27: "I deliberately refer to differences in emphasis between the two dialogues. I do not claim to have identified any disagreements or inconsistencies in doctrine between them."

³² Idem, p. 153: "I would suggest that *Timaeus*' account of the tripartite soul is, generally speaking, different in emphasis from that of the *Republic* [n. 27]." See previous note.

³³ Idem, p. 157: "There is a debate (which I shall not enter here) about whether the image [sc. of Glaucus] implies that the immortal soul is unitary or in some sense tripartite. However this may be, we can see how the passage could be read from the point of view of the *Timaeus*."

³⁴ Idem, p. 154: "The case [sc. in the *Republic*] in which the parts of the soul are in conflict with each other is a useful way of introducing the distinction between the three parts, but that does not mean that we should take this case to be representative of the general, let alone natural, state of the soul." This sentence opens the way for one of Johansen's most ingenious arguments; as defined in Book IV, justice "presupposes that the lower parts of the soul are fundamentally able to co-operate with ends that have been determined by reason" (154).

³⁵ "But though we have stated the truth of its present appearance [sc. as consisting of many parts], its condition as we have now contemplated it resembles that of the sea-god Glaucus whose first nature can hardly be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because the original members of his body are broken off and mutilated and crushed and in every way marred by the waves, and other parts have attached themselves to him, accretions of shells and sea-weed and rocks, so that he is more like any wild creature than what he was by nature—even such, I say, is our vision of the soul marred by countless evils. But we must look elsewhere, Glaucon." "Where?" said he. "To its love of wisdom" (611c6-e1).

actualizes “a potential for irrationality”³⁶ already inherent in the pre-embodied soul.³⁷ But he is also deft—and this might be said to be the purpose of his book—in defending Timaeus’ teleological approach to nature in a manner that does not so much ignore “the lesser gods” (who fashion the human body) but makes them a more or less detachable figure of (Timaeus) speech.³⁸ In short, Timaeus’ physicalization of tripartition must be comforting to those who are eager to exchange Socrates’ prison for a comfortable hotel.

“Consequently our rationality is not exhibited simply in rational contemplation in disregard of the influence of the body, but in pursuit of a composite life of soul and body. Caring for the self, as we saw, extends to caring for the entire tripartite soul, not just the intellect. Caring for the self also involves caring for the body.”³⁹

It is not difficult to see why modern readers in particular would find this kind of Plato congenial. Since “the body has been designed with a view

³⁶ Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 159: “Embodiment in this sense [sc. given that there was “already a certain structural and functional differentiation within the soul” at 158] brought out a potential for irrationality already inherent in the soul's original composition.”

³⁷ On the Aristotelian echo, cf. p. 157-58: “We are thus closer to an Aristotelian teleological relationship between the psychic parts and their proper organs than we are to anything that is explicitly offered in Plato's other dialogues.” See also Johansen's “Should Aristotle Have Recognized Final Causes in Plato's *Timaeus*?”. In: MOHR, R. D. and SATTLER, B. M. (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*. Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2010, p. 179-199; no one should be surprised that his answer is “no.”

³⁸ Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 158 (brackets mine): “The soul is not tripartite because it is embodied. Tripartition only arises when the irrational and irrational motions of the soul are organized [by the lesser gods] within the human body. However the soul is not strictly speaking a unity either in its pre-embodied state.” Similar is p. 154 (brackets mine): “While the *Timaeus* emphasizes that the lower parts of the soul and their bodily organs are organized [by the lesser gods] so as to aid the aims of reason, the emphasis in the *Republic* is more often on showing how the non-rational parts have desires which may oppose what reason tells us to be good.”

³⁹ Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, p. 155.

to increasing our rationality,”⁴⁰ Timaeus’ human being is what Johansen calls “a psychosomatic whole.”⁴¹

Rather than show why this notion of “a psychosomatic whole”—given the traditional conception of Platonism, one is tempted to call it a “post-Platonic” notion—resonates with modern readers, I want to point instead to a pre-Platonic parallel: fragment B16 of Parmenides:

For according to the mixture of much-wandering limbs which each man has, so is the mind which is associated with mankind: for it is the same thing which thinks, namely the constitution of the limbs in men, all and individually; for it is excess which makes Thought.⁴²

In the words of Patricia Curd, B16 “clearly wants to say something about human thought and to connect it in some way with states of the body.”⁴³ And according to Curd, what it wants to say is antithetical to what the Goddess has already expressed in “Truth”: whereas “genuine thought (and its object) are not to be identified with states of the body,”⁴⁴ B16 promotes the opposite view. It therefore belongs in “the Way of Opinion”:⁴⁵ although it may be like the truth, it is merely εἰκῶς.⁴⁶ And thanks to B16, Timaeus’ physicalization of tripartition is as good a place as any—despite the fact that the most important battleground when comparing *Republic* and *Timaeus* has

⁴⁰ Idem, p. 157.

⁴¹ Idem, p. 155; cf. p. 159, where Johansen refers to Timaeus’ “detailed picture of living beings as psychosomatic wholes.”

⁴² Translation in FREEMAN, K. *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 46.

⁴³ CURD, P. “Thought and Body in Parmenides”. In: Cordero, N.-L. (ed.). *Parmenides, venerable and awesome (Plato, Theaetetus 183e)*. *Proceedings of the international symposium*, Buenos Aires, October 29-November 2, 2007, Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2011, p. 115-134, 116.

⁴⁴ Idem, p. 117.

⁴⁵ This has been denied; see HERSHBELL J. P. “Parmenides’ Way of Truth and B16.” *Apeiron* 4 no. 2, 1970, p. 1-23 and LOENEN, J. H. M. *Parmenides, Melissus, Gorgias*. Assen: 1959, p. 58.

⁴⁶ As indicated by the previous note, the same dynamics visible in Johansen apply as well in the case of the “Doxa” of Parmenides; for a more recent example, see Giovanni Casertano, “Parmenides—Scholar of Nature”. In: Cordero, *Parmenides, venerable and awesome*, p. 21-58 at p. 44: “According to this fragment [sc. B16], man is an unsplitable oneness of body and thought, and this is one more piece of evidence of how impossible it is in Parmenides to separate and oppose sensibility and reason.”

been and will always remain ontology⁴⁷—to begin showing how his vision-based discourse undermines the purely intelligible foundation for “Truth” that Plato discovered in Parmenides.⁴⁸ Following Parmenides, Plato placed the physicalization of the tripartite soul in the mouth of his character Timaeus because this allowed him to present a λόγος that may well be εἰκώς but is in fact several removes from the truth.⁴⁹ In short: Timaeus should not be regarded as a spokesman for Plato but rather for what Parmenides called “Doxa” and this explains the fact that Plato’s *Timaeus* contains yet another “deceptive cosmos of words.”⁵⁰

In an important new book,⁵¹ Jenny Bryan examines the use of εἰοικώς and εἰκώς in Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Plato, weaving together, in the process, a narrative based on allusion and dialogue between the three. Bryan’s second chapter (“Parmenides’ Allusive Ambiguity”) vindicates a doxographical tradition going back to Plato that connects Parmenides to Xenophanes.⁵² Although her emphasis throughout is on B8.50-61—the crucial word εἰοικότα appears at line 60—her aporetic presentation of four possible meanings of the crucial word,⁵³ combined with a section entitled “Forensic Vocabulary in the Fragments,”⁵⁴ gradually and delicately leads the reader to a

⁴⁷ As indicated by Plutarch, the World Soul was the primary subject of controversy in antiquity although SORABJI, R. “The Mind-Body Relation in the Wake of Plato’s *Timaeus*”, in REYDAMS-SCHILS, *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, is illuminating on the difficulties that Timaeus’ physicalized account of the soul caused Platonists. Modern debate has shifted to “the receptacle” and SAYRE, K., “The Multilayered Incoherence of Timaeus’ Receptacle”, in REYDAMS-SCHILS, *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, p. 60-79, is a useful introduction. Johansen, Plato’s *Natural Philosophy*, chapter 6 ((interesting on Plutarch; note the reference to Grube at 138 n. 1)), and Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, chapter 6, are more representative of Anglophone discussion.

⁴⁸ See Crystal, I. “Parmenidean Allusions in *Republic V*”. *Ancient Philosophy* 16, 1996, p. 351-363.

⁴⁹ The reference is to *Republic* 515c1-2; cf. the comparison of the χῶρα to a movie projector interacting with an aquarium at Zeyl. D., “Visualizing Platonic Space”, in Mohr and Sattler (eds.), *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato’s Timaeus Today*, p. 117-130, at p. 123-24.

⁵⁰ Parmenides B8.52.

⁵¹ BRYAN, J. *Likeness and Likelihood in the Presocratics and Plato*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

⁵² *Sophist* 242d. The way Bryan handles the relationship between Parmenides and Xenophanes (*Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 93-100) is another example of her light touch: fully aware of modern attempts to dissolve the bond between the two, she indirectly affirms the spirit of that tradition (99-100) by considering textual parallels and basing her case on those rather than on contested doxographical evidence.

⁵³ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 66-74.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, p. 80-93.

compelling account of the relationship between the *Aletheia* and the *Doxa*,⁵⁵ the central problem in Parmenides. Because the net result of Bryan's carefully consideration of the possibility that εἰκώτα could mean (1) "similar," (2) "fitting" or "appropriate," (3) "specious," or (4) "plausible," is that it really means all four (hence the allusive *ambiguity* of Parmenides), one might well imagine that she could arrive at no definitive conclusion about this central problem. But thanks to a judicious use of Alexander Mourelatos,⁵⁶ that is exactly what she accomplishes.

"With the *Doxa*, then, the goddess is giving a plausible account of typical mortal beliefs which stands in opposition to the properly convincing and cogent argument of the *Aletheia*. On this reading, εἰκώτως is not a word of recommendation. The *Doxa* may be a subjectively plausible cosmology. It may even be the most subjectively plausible of such cosmologies. It would not, however, be found convincing by anyone who understands the truth set out by the goddess. We, if we have such knowledge, should not be persuaded by the *Doxa* or by any such cosmologies because they do not possess such genuine cogency. Such accounts do not justify the faith that mortals place in them. They are merely subjectively plausible and thus, for all that they may possess the power to persuade, i.e. to deceive, those who are ignorant, they should not persuade those who recognize them as no more than specious fabrications."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The key to her approach is what might be called Bryan's "second sailing" announced at *Likeness and Likelihood*, 67: "Rather than interpreting εἰκώτως in the light of the *Doxa*, I want to consider what we can learn about the *Doxa* from the fact that the goddess claims it to be εἰκώτως."

⁵⁶ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 75 n. 66, p. 82 n. 89, and 110. Mourelatos note. Mourelatos, A. P. D. "The Epistemological Section (29b-d) of the Proem in Timaeus' Speech; M. F. Burnyeat on *eikōs mythos*, and Comparison with Xenophanes B34 and B35, in MOHR and SATTLER (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*, p. 225-247, at 241-43.

⁵⁷ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, 107-8.

I have quoted this passage at length not only because it corroborates my own understanding of Parmenides' poem but also because I take Bryan's phrase "any such cosmologies" to include Plato's *Timaeus*.

Unfortunately, Bryan does not understand Plato's *Timaeus* in these terms; under the influence of Burnyeat, she argues that εἰκῶς in Plato has a positive sense; indeed, because Timaeus presents the cosmos as a "likeness" of "the Forms," it is *ipso facto* εἰκῶς.⁵⁸ The result is that Bryan's Parmenides is more of a Platonist than her Plato is allowed to be:

"My suggestion is that Timaeus is deliberately engaging with and seeking to correct Parmenides' absolute dismissal of the value of thinking about the perceptible world. Whilst Parmenides recognizes no more than a specious connection between the realm of Coming-to-be and Being, the cosmos that Timaeus describes is connected to the realm of Being insofar as it is created as an image of Being."⁵⁹

This is a uniquely important passage because—when taken out of context, as here—it might suggest that Bryan appropriately distinguishes between Timaeus and Plato,⁶⁰ alas such is not the case.⁶¹ But in the context of her reading of Parmenides—a reading that boldly challenges an emerging orthodoxy aiming to rehabilitate the *Doxa*⁶²—Bryan is getting very close to a more Parmenidean Plato. It is primarily because of Bryan's dependence on Burnyeat's article that she misunderstands Plato's intentions and it was because of this dependence that I began this paper with a consideration of his attempt to salvage a positive sense of εἰκῶς by introducing the

⁵⁸ Idem, p. 147, p. 151, p. 152, p. 158-59, p. 176 and p. 180.

⁵⁹ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, 190.

⁶⁰ Idem, p. 158 and p. 158-59 n. 125.

⁶¹ Idem, p. 119 is representative: "Finally, I will suggest that this interpretation of Timaeus' εἰκῶς—claim ["following Burnyeat" at p. 118 n. 15] reflects a Platonic desire to emphasize the positive relation that holds between the perceptible world and the intelligible world. Rather than diving a wedge between the two worlds, Plato is seeking to emphasize the value of the cosmos as modeled on the Forms."

⁶² See *Bryn Mawr Classical Reviews*, 2012.09.44; my approach revives the approach to *Doxa* found in Owen, G. E. L. "Eleatic Questions." *Classical Quarterly* (n.s.) 10, 1960, p. 84-102 at p. 89; LONG, A. A. "The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmology." *Phronesis* 8, 1963, p. 90-107 at p. 106; and MOURELATOS, A. P. D. *The Route of Parmenides*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970, at p. 260.

distinction between internal and external incoherence, a distinction that Bryan likewise accepts.⁶³

It is worth recalling a remark Burnyeat makes in a defense of his external incoherence theory that Timaeus only admits the possibility that his various λόγοι may be inconsistent *with each other*:

“I trust that everyone will agree that this interpretation is preferable to one that understands Timaeus to mean that a given account may be internally inconsistent, at variance with it itself. That would give it zero probability, at once.”⁶⁴

At the very least, Burnyeat’s “everyone” is belied by A. E. Taylor: the central purpose of his classic commentary was to distinguish Plato’s views from those of his character Timaeus, i.e., the claim that I am reviving here. This is what Taylor wrote:

When we find T. [sc. Timaeus] falling into inconsistency we may suspect that his creator is intentionally making him ‘give himself away.’⁶⁵

In addition to finding an explanation for inconsistencies in Timaeus’ discourse, Taylor also discovered (but did not develop) an amazing link between Parmenides—and in particular, his “Way of Opinion”—and Plato’s *Timaeus*. Commenting on the fact that Timaeus identifies Fire and Earth as the first two elements at 31b6-8, he asks: “Is it possible that it may have been a reminiscence of this very passage led Aristotle into the loose statement that the two [“forms”] in Parmenides are [“fire”] and [“earth”]?”⁶⁶

Although Aristotle betrays no awareness that the two parts of Parmenides’ poem need to be kept distinct,⁶⁷ Taylor’s discovery that Aristotle erroneously conflates the two “forms” (with which the Goddess begins her

⁶³ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, 176 n. 39.

⁶⁴ Idem, p. 155.

⁶⁵ Taylor, A. E. *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, p. 614.

⁶⁶ Idem, p. 94 n. 2 (Greek needed). Palmer and the Sphere. See also RUNIA, D. “The Literary and Philosophical Status of Timaeus’ *Prooemium*”. In: Calvo, T.; Brisson, L. (eds.). *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*. Sankt Augustin: Akademie Verlag, 1997, p. 101-118, at 111.

⁶⁷ *Physics* A.5 (188a21).

account of “the deceptive cosmos of my words”) with the two elements with which Timaeus begins his account of the world’s body, points to an important truth: Plato’s *Timaeus* is equivalent by analogy to Parmenides’ “Way of Opinion.” Most importantly, both accounts are explicitly εἰκός and, as Bryan has forcefully argued, Plato is deliberately alluding to Parmenides.⁶⁸ But Plato—as distinct from his character Timaeus (the very distinction Taylor undertook to prove)—intends the reader to recognize that both accounts are also equally ἀπατηλός (“deceptive”) and it is this last step that Taylor did not take: he argues throughout that Plato was seeking a kind historical verisimilitude not easy to explain.⁶⁹ As a result, despite his philological acumen and encyclopedic knowledge, Taylor’s theory that Plato had written *Timaeus* in order to give a historically accurate synthesis of Pythagoras and Empedocles persuaded next to nobody; less than ten years after publishing his magisterial commentary, F. M. Cornford posed his fatal question: “Why?”⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, this same question has likewise often been posed in opposition to those who take Parmenides’ “Way of Opinion” to be deliberately deceptive.⁷¹

In support of Taylor’s distinction between Plato and Timaeus—recently revived (albeit without reference to Taylor) by Catherine Zuckert⁷²—this paper will provide the same kind of answer to both questions: Plato followed his master in the use of what I am calling “Parmenidean pedagogy.” After having offered the student the authentic revelation, the Goddess then exposed her audience to a deliberately false account—both “deceptive” and

⁶⁸ Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 117-19, p. 162, p. 170-74, and p. 190-95. The difference between us—ultimately grounded in her conflation of Plato and Timaeus—is that she sees Parmenides as Plato’s “allusive target” at p. 162: “By alluding to Parmenides, Plato is, I suggest, seeking to counter his predecessor’s denigration of mortal cosmologies.” On my reading, this is the purpose of Plato’s *character* while Plato himself upholds Parmenides.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. viii-ix, p. 11-12, and p. 18: “In fact, we might say that the formula for the physics and physiology of the dialogue is that it is an attempt to graft Empedoclean biology on the stock of Pythagorean mathematics.”

⁷⁰ Cornford, *op. cit.*, p. viii: “What could have been his [sc. Plato’s] motive? Nowhere, in all his seven hundred pages, has Professor Taylor really faced this question.”

⁷¹ Cf. Hershbell, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3: “How a theory of knowledge can be seriously proposed which is considered false by its author, is not explained by Tarán.” Cf. FINKELBERG, A. “Parmenides’ Foundation of the Way of Truth.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6, 1988, p. 39-67 at p. 67 and p. 67 n. 74.

⁷² See Zuckert, C. H. *Plato’s Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 423-81.

“plausible”⁷³—in order to ensure that they have acquired an *unassailable* grasp of “Truth.”⁷⁴ It is this Parmenidean project that guided Plato in creating a dramatic connection between *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Having been confronted by the criticism offered him in *Clitophon*, Socrates responds with the *Politeia*, a response that grounds an answer to Clitophon’s question in the ontology revealed in Books V through VII.⁷⁵ In another place, I have argued that Plato’s *Republic* does not answer the question “What is justice?” in Book IV but rather in Book VII, by means of the Allegory of the Cave. The importance of the Cave is already indicated in the great dialogue’s opening word but the reason that “I went down” is of crucial importance only becomes obvious when Socrates offers Glaucon the speech that the City’s founders will address to the temporarily rebellious Guardians who presumably concur with Glaucon’s protest that it would be unjust to compel those Guardians to return to the Cave.⁷⁶ The most important passage in this speech is where Socrates compares the Guardians to citizens of other cities, who are justified in not returning to the Cave because their exit from it has been their own private affair.

“But you [ὑμᾶς] we [ἡμεῖς] have engendered for yourselves [ὑμῖν τε αὐτοῖς] and the rest of the city [τῆ τε ἄλλῃ πόλει] to be, as it were, king-bees and leaders in the hive. You have received a better and more complete education than the others, and you are more capable of sharing both ways of life. Down you must go [καταβατέον] then, each in his turn, to

⁷³ Cf. Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 129: “Successful lies need to be plausible.”

⁷⁴ I have italicized “unassailable” because I take this to be the purport of B8.61 (Freeman): “in order that no intellect of mortal men may outstrip you.” Thinking rooted in the intelligible will always confront objections (and ridicule) from men of science determined to uphold truth-claims derived from empirical observation of the sensible world. Neither Plato nor Parmenides wanted their students to be shaken from a commitment to unchanging Being by the latest discoveries about Becoming. Bryan, *Likeness and Likelihood*, comes closest with the words “educative” (p. 111) and “instructive” (p. 113).

⁷⁵ See ALTMAN, W. H. F. *Plato the Teacher: The Crisis of the Republic*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012, p. 29-36.

⁷⁶ *Idem*, p. 171-8.

the habitation of the others and accustom yourselves to the observation of the obscure things there.”⁷⁷

The key to my reading of the *Republic* is that just as the “you” to whom “we” are speaking here is not really or at least not solely the hypothetical Guardians of a strictly imaginary City but rather, to put it baldly, *you*—citizens of what Socrates calls “the other city”⁷⁸—so also it is *Plato* who stands behind this “we”; it is he who has given you (for free) the best education that (no) money could buy and now he asks you as a philosopher to return to the Cave of political life in return.⁷⁹ It is this reading that determines my solution to the first problem that confronts the reader who turns—as Plato intended them to turn—from *Republic* to *Timaeus*: the problem of the missing fourth with which Plato’s cosmological dialogue begins: “One, two, three ... Where’s number four, *Timaeus*?”⁸⁰

There is, of course, another case of something missing that arises shortly thereafter: while the summary of the previous day’s conversation in *Timaeus* makes it obvious that this conversation resembled the conversation Socrates describes in *Republic*, it is equally obvious that plenty is missing.⁸¹ In some sense, there are two similar problems at the beginning of *Timaeus*: we are asked to consider what is missing in two different but conceivably related mysteries.⁸² Certainly the *Timaeus* summary is missing the Allegory

⁷⁷ *Republic* 520b5-c3; Shorey translation modified.

⁷⁸ *Republic* 520b5.

⁷⁹ Altman, *op. cit.*, p. 178-81. Given his emphasis on leaving the Cave without any discussion of returning to it (336 and 338), Sedley, D. “‘Becoming Like God’ in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle”, in Calvo and Brisson (eds.), *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*, p. 327-339, might be said to support my interpretation of the relationship between *Republic* and *Timaeus*. At *Likeness and Likelihood*, p. 186-194, Bryan assumes that it is Plato who embraces self-deification despite the evident wisdom of Xenophanes.

⁸⁰ *Timaeus* 17a1-2 (Zeyl). Beginning with the first *scholium* to the *Timaeus*, the identity of this “missing fourth” has excited comment; see William GREENE, W. G. (ed.), *Scholium Platonica*. Haverford, PA: American Philological Society, 1938, p. 277. For the most detailed attempt to identify a particular person, see LAMPERT, L.; Planeaux, C. “Who’s Who in Plato’s *Timaeus-Critias* and Why.” *Review of Metaphysics* 52 no. 1, 1998, p. 87-125.

⁸¹ For a good account, see MILLER, M. “The *Timaeus* and the ‘Longer Way’: ‘God-Given’ Method and the Constitution of Elements and Animals”, in Reydams-Schils, p. 17-59, at p. 20-21.

⁸² Of course avoiding the mystery is fashionable as well; see, for example, Johansen, *Plato’s Natural Philosophy*, p. 7; he lets others consider the problem in notes 1 and 2. Johansen postpones discussion of “the missing fourth” until 197, in the last paragraph of his last chapter.

of the Cave; it is also missing the Divided Line and the Sun as well.⁸³ But given the accumulation of detail that surrounds the summary of what in *Republic V* is called “the Second Wave of Paradox”⁸⁴—especially since the equal training the female Guardians for war (“the first Wave of Paradox”) is present but treated more briefly⁸⁵—it is pretty obvious that the first and most obvious thing the previous day’s conversation is missing is “the third Wave of Paradox,”⁸⁶ i.e., the assertion that philosophy and political power need to be combined in one person.⁸⁷ This combination is quickly made conspicuous in a second way by attributing precisely this combination to Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates who—it should be made explicit—are, as a triad, the “one, two, three” who precede the mention of the missing fourth.⁸⁸ The crucial passage is found toward the end of Socrates’ longest speech in *Timaeus*, where he expresses an interest in seeing the City he constructed yesterday at war;⁸⁹ he wants to see its Guardians in action,⁹⁰ fighting both in words and deeds.⁹¹ After having stated that he cannot accomplish this result himself, he then explains why neither poets nor sophists are capable of doing so.⁹² The inadequacy of *this* triad leaves only his audience,⁹³ who combine

⁸³ As indicated by Miller’s title: “*Timaeus* and the ‘Longer Way.’”

⁸⁴ *Timaeus* 18c6-19a5.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Republic* 451d4-457b5 with *Timaeus* 18c1-4.

⁸⁶ Introduced at *Republic* 473c6-e2, the “third wave” follows from Glaucon’s interruption beginning at 471c4. Cf. Benardete, S. “On Plato’s *Timaeus* and Timaeus’ Science Fiction.” *Interpretation* 2 no. 1, 1971, p. 21-63 at p. 22: “His [sc. Socrates’] summary, at any rate, omits the rule of the philosopher-kings and the still-undiscovered sciences needed to educate them.”

⁸⁷ *Republic* 473d2-3; for the implications for the “one man/one job” definition of justice, see Altman, *Plato the Teacher*, p. 250-59.

⁸⁸ See *Timaeus* 20a1-b1; the crucial sentence that follows (20b1-7) will be discussed below.

⁸⁹ *Timaeus* 19b3-20c3; the fullest treatment of Socrates’ speech is REYDAMS-SCHILS, G. “Socrates’ Request: *Timaeus* 19B-20C in the Platonist Tradition.” *Ancient World* 32 no. 1, 2001, p. 39-51; particularly valuable is her suggestion at p. 41 that Socrates’ request is connected with his critique of writing in *Phaedrus*.

⁹⁰ After speaking only of a city (*Timaeus* 19c1-8), Socrates adds its men at 19d2; the role of women in the City’s wars is mentioned at 18c3.

⁹¹ *Timaeus* 19c6-7.

⁹² *Timaeus* 19d3-e8.

⁹³ For the careful articulation of this triad and identification of the fourth as οἱ ἀκροαταί (“the audience”), see Greene, op. cit., p. 278-79.

philosophy and political experience.⁹⁴ He then enumerates—and it is the first time he has explicitly done so—a second triad and he discusses, in turn, the political and philosophical accomplishments of Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates. It is immediately after reviewing the credentials of his three interlocutors with respect to this combination that Socrates offers the reader a sentence⁹⁵ that contains Plato’s carefully hidden solution to “the problem of the missing fourth.”

“Already yesterday I was aware of this [διὸ καὶ χθὲς ἐγὼ διανοούμενος] when you asked me to discuss matters of government [ὑμῶν δεομένων τὰ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας διελεῖν], and that’s why I was eager to do your bidding. I knew that if you’d agree to make the follow-up speech [τὸν ἐχῆς λόγον], no one could do a better job than you [προθύμως ἐχαριζόμεν, εἰδὼς ὅτι τὸν ἐχῆς λόγον οὐδένες ἂν ὑμῶν ἐθελόντων ἰκανώτερον ἀποδοῖεν]. No one today besides you could present our city pursuing a war that reflects her true character. Only you could give her all she requires. So now I’m done speaking on my assigned subject; I’ve turned the tables and assigned you to speak [— εἰς γὰρ πόλεμον πρέποντα καταστήσαντες τὴν πόλιν ἅπαντ’ αὐτὴ τὰ προσήκοντα ἀποδοῖτ’ ἂν μόνοι τῶν νῦν εἰπῶν δὴ τὰπιταχτέντα, ἀντεπέταξα ὑμῖν] on the subject I’ve just described [ἄ καὶ νῦν λέγω].”⁹⁶

Although I have provided an English translation, I am going to discuss this critical sentence in Greek. It begins with the words διὸ καὶ χθὲς ἐγὼ διανοούμενος and they raise from the start the ambiguity of this “I”:⁹⁷ is this ἐγὼ Socrates or Plato? As was the case in *Republic* VII, Plato and the reader will emerge simultaneously; he (as author) recovers from the “most majestic silence” of *Phaedrus* 275d6 at the same moment *we* overcome the

⁹⁴ For the claim that Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates are not really instances of this combination, see ROWE, C. “The Case of the Missing Philosophers in Plato’s *Timaeus-Critias*.” *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* (neue folge) 28b, 2004, p. 57-70.

⁹⁵ In the translation that follows, Zeyl (improperly) divides it into five.

⁹⁶ *Timaeus* 20b1-7 (Zeyl).

⁹⁷ Cf. “a crucial ambiguity” (Altman, *Plato the Teacher*, p. 176).

characteristic passivity of the reader, the ἀσθενεία τις (“a certain indisposition”) of *Timaeus* 17a4.⁹⁸ “You”—the “Missing Fourth”—are introduced in the next set of words: ὑμῶν δεομένων τὰ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας διελεθῆν. This “you” is the insistent audience of *Republic*, and the same ambiguity arises that first emerged in the context of ἐγώ: is it Socrates who is now addressing the triad of Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates—the literal sense—or is Plato addressing the reader?⁹⁹ Whoever this “I” is, he was eager to gratify his insistent audience because he *knew*—and for some, this will suggest Plato as opposed to Socrates¹⁰⁰—that nobody could give him a more suitable return than “you,” assuming, of course that “you” are “willing” to give him “the discourse that comes next.”¹⁰¹ Here’s what Plato writes: προθύμως ἐχαρίζομην, εἰδὼς ὅτι τὸν ἐχῆς λόγον οὐδένες ἂν ὑμῶν ἐθελόντων ἱκανώτερον ἀποδοῖεν.¹⁰² Given the fact that *Critias* breaks off his narrative before the war between Atlantis and the City of Socrates—allegedly preborn as ancient Athens—can even begin, it is clearly not Socrates’ three auditors who supply ὁ ἐχῆς λόγος if Socrates is “I” and the Three are “you,” then Socrates is disappointed in *Timaeus-Critias*.¹⁰³ But if I am right, and this “I” is Plato

⁹⁸ At *Phaedrus* 275d, after making the comparison to painting also found at *Timaeus* 19b4-c2, Socrates famously claims that written texts “remain most solemnly silent” (translation Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff) and even “when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father’s support; alone it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support.” But when deliberately fashioned by its father to attack itself—as, for example, in this very text—a text comes alive by provoking *its readers* to come to the aid of the truth it suppresses; the passivity of the reader is the weakness that prevents Plato’s texts from coming to life. And even if only a few readers will overcome this passivity, they will prove that Socrates’ claim that the text “doesn’t know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not” is false; a deliberately provocative *text ipso facto* distinguishes between active and passive readers. Incidentally, anyone who has read any Platonic dialogue twice knows that no Platonic text says the exact same thing again and again (citation); Plato’s writings have proved an enduring delight because we learn something new from them every time we read them and this is even more true when we teach them.

⁹⁹ Hereafter, “the Three” will refer to Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates.

¹⁰⁰ See Altman, *Plato the Teacher*, 10 n. 31 on Leo Strauss.

¹⁰¹ The phrase τὸν ἐχῆς λόγον reappears at *Critias* 106b7. Note that the first instance of “you” in the sentence is found in a genitive absolute (ὑμῶν δεομένων) the second instance (ὑμῶν ἐθελόντων), also in the genitive, appears to be another genitive absolute but is really the genitive of comparison following ἱκανώτερον.

¹⁰² Note the echo of Cephalus’ definition of justice; for its incorporation into Socrates’ conception, see IRWIN, T. *Plato’s Ethics*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 314.

¹⁰³ See Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 124-28, culminating with “Socrates will never be accorded the spectacle he longs for and which is beyond his competence to produce for himself.” Cf. MORGAN, K. A. “Narrative Orders in *Timaeus* and *Critias*.” In: MOHR and SATTLER (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato’s Timaeus Today*, p. 267-285.

himself, then it is entirely up to “you” to gratify him by offering “the discourse that comes next in order,” described in three lines of verse:¹⁰⁴

“—εἰς γὰρ πόλεμον πρέποντα καταστήσαντες τὴν
πόλιν ἅπαντ’ αὐτὴ τὰ προσήκοντα ἀποδοῖτ’ ἂν μόνοι
τῶν νῦν εἰπῶν δὴ τὰπιταχθέντα, ἀντεπέταξα ὑμῖν.”

Only if “you” are willing to supply the missing λόγος and lead the Socratic City, internalized in your own soul,¹⁰⁵ by fighting an interpretive¹⁰⁶ war against “the plausible myth” of Timaeus, does Plato’s “now” become *now*, only when *you* yourself become “the missing fourth” will you realize that it is the elusive Plato who is saying: ἄ καὶ νῦν λέγω, “the things which even now I am saying.”

The notion that the City’s Guardians will be required to fight the kind of interpretive battles I am suggesting here is introduced in *Republic* VII. Having already described the five mathematical sciences so prominent in *Timaeus*,¹⁰⁷ and now turning toward the training in dialectic¹⁰⁸—the give and take of discussion conspicuous by its absence in the astronomer’s discourse¹⁰⁹—Socrates says:

“And is not this true of the good likewise—that the man who is unable to define in his discourse and distinguish and abstract from all other things the idea of the good [τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν] and who cannot, as if in battle [καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ], through all refutations emerging, not eager to

¹⁰⁴ For galliambics, see the commentary on Catullus 63 in QUINN, K. (ed.). *Catullus, The Poems*. London: Macmillan, 1970, p. 282-297, especially p. 288 on line 12 for an example in Greek.

¹⁰⁵ *Republic* 590e1-4.

¹⁰⁶ Note the emphasis on speeches and interpreting them (διερμηνεύσεις) at *Timaeus* 19c7.

¹⁰⁷ Note the conspicuous absence of the elementary “one” in Timaeus’ account (cf. *Republic* 524d9-526b4; the elements of his cosmology are triangles and he further never mentions either lines or points. Of course the greatest inconsistency arises with respect to astronomy; see *Republic* 529a9-c3.

¹⁰⁸ Given the proclivity of the young to employ dialectic in a destructive manner (*Republic* 539b1-7) and given also the superiority of voluntary falsehood to the involuntary kind (535e1-5), Plato’s pedagogical strategy is—having exposed the student to, e.g., the truth about astronomy (see previous note)—to offer the budding dialecticians deliberately contrived falsehoods that will turn the aforementioned youthful proclivity to a good end. Not that the pedagogy in question is in fact the basis for the “true-false” type of question used everywhere today.

¹⁰⁹ See Johansen, *Plato’s Natural Philosophy*, p. 177-78, particularly p. 178: “Surely Plato wants us to keep the *Republic* in mind and think about its relationship to the ideas contained in the *Timaeus*.” Johansen’s use of “ideas” here is revealing.

refute by recourse to opinion but to essence [μὴ κατὰ δόξαν ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν προθυμούμενος ἐλέγχειν], proceeding throughout in all of these with the discourse untoppled—the man who lacks this power, you will say, does not really know the good itself or any particular good but if he joins himself in any way to some image [εἰδώλου] he does so by reputation [δόξῃ] but not knowledge [ἐπιστήμῃ].”¹¹⁰

I have called this passage “the Battle Hymn of the *Republic*” and have argued that Plato uses it to point the way forward to the “difficult studies”¹¹¹ that lie ahead, beginning with *Timaeus*. If we really embraced the absolute disjunction between Being and Becoming that emerges from Socrates’ justification of the Third Wave of Paradox and reaches its highest development in the Cave, we would discover in the astronomer Timaeus the first of three “images” Plato will create in order to determine whether “you” will refute those images μὴ κατὰ δόξαν ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν.¹¹² Were you to do so, you would find his discourse objectionable from beginning to end, from the absence of the Idea of the Good, the reduction of otherworldly Being to the status of exemplars for worldly things to copy,¹¹³ the mixture of Becoming and Being in the World Soul,¹¹⁴ the deeply problematic χώρα,¹¹⁵ the physicalization of the tripartite soul, through to the patently ridiculous origin of the first woman. Daryl Tress has astutely pointed out that the most problematic passages in *Timaeus* all involve the “intermediates” he inserts between Being and Becoming, each one of them deeply fissured as a result of the

¹¹⁰ *Republic* 534b8-d1 (Shorey translation modified). On this passage, see KRÄMER, H. J. “Über den Zusammenhang von Prinzipienlehre und Dialektik bei Platon; Zur Definition des Dialektikers *Politeia* 534 B-C.” *Philologus* 10, 1966, p. 35-70.

¹¹¹ *Republic* 535b7.

¹¹² Note that Socrates qualifies his praise for the philosophical attainments of Timaeus with the words κατ' ἐμὴν δόξαν (“according to my opinion”) and uses the word οὐσία to refer to his *wealth* at *Timaeus* 20a1.

¹¹³ See Miller, “*Timaeus* and the ‘Longer Way,’” 18-22.

¹¹⁴ As indicated by Plutarch, the World Soul was the primary subject of controversy.

¹¹⁵ The most compelling attempt at restoring coherence to this deliberately incoherent construction is ZEYL, “Visualizing Platonic Space”, MOHR and SATTTLER (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*, p. 117-130. But the real challenge comes from the continent; with anti-Platonic intent, Jacques Derrida has argued that the χώρα undermines Plato's distinction between Being and Becoming, as indeed it does; see GIANNOPOULOU, J. D. Z. “Derrida's *Khōra*, or Unnaming the Timaeon Receptacle”, in MOHR and SATTTLER (eds.). *One Book, the Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*, p.165-178, is an attempt to refute Derrida and thereby restore coherence where it does not belong.

impossible task they are assigned.¹¹⁶ And it is in his account of the close connection between soul and body that Timaeus inveighs against precisely the kind of verbal battles that the reader would need in order to break the spell of his discourse by showing that “the plausible” is actually merely “deceptive.”

“When within it [sc. the body] there is a soul more powerful than the body [when is this not the case where philosophers are concerned?] and this soul gets excited, it churns the whole being and fills it from inside with diseases, and when it concentrates on one or another course of study or enquiry [e.g., philosophy], it wears the body out. And again, when the soul engages in public or private teaching sessions [i.e., as politician or teacher] or verbal battles [μάχας ἐν λόγοις], the disputes and contentions that then occur cause the soul to fire the body up and rock it back and forth, so inducing discharges [ρέύματα] which trick most doctors into making misguided diagnoses [πάναιτία αἰτιάσθαι ποιεῖ].”¹¹⁷

Presumably the ρεύματα in question include sweat and tears. In short: the reason Plato placed *Timaeus* directly after *Republic* is because the relationship between the two dialogues replicates the division in Parmenides’ poem between “Truth” and “the Way of Opinion.”¹¹⁸

It is naturally beyond the scope of this article to subject the whole of Plato’s *Timaeus* to a section-by-section analysis; my purpose here is rather to indicate how it should be read and in what manner the true Platonist—i.e., “the missing fourth”—should respond to it. Plato has indicated the nature of that response not only in *Timaeus* but also in *Critias*, the dialogue that naturally and indeed immediately follows *Timaeus*. It is a noteworthy difference between these dialogues that only one of them is complete; *Critias*

¹¹⁶ TRESS, D. M. “Relations and Intermediates in Plato’s *Timaeus*”. In: OPHUIJSEN, J. M. Van (ed.). *Plato and Platonism, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 33. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999, p. 135-162, at p. 144-57.

¹¹⁷ *Timaeus* 87e6-88a7 (Zeyl)

¹¹⁸ Arbeit ultimately in defense of a Heidegger-inspired deconstruction of modern science (p. 42-44), Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich, “Eikos Logos: Platons Theorie der Naturwissenschaften”, In: *Einheit und Vielheit; Festschrift für Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker zum 60. Geburtstag*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973, p. 20-44, suggests the following analogy at p. 20-21 and p. 31-32: “Truth”: Plato’s *Parmenides*: “the Way of opinion”: Plato’s *Timaeus*.

ends just as Critias is about to insert a speech to the imaginary Atlantids¹¹⁹ into the mouth of Zeus:

“But as Zeus, god of the gods, reigning as king according to law, could clearly see this state of affairs, he observed this noble race lying in this abject state and resolved to punish them [δίκην αὐτοῖς ἐπιθεῖναι] and to make them more careful and harmonious [ἔμμελέστεροι] as a result of their chastisement.”¹²⁰

The hypothesis that the reader is the missing fourth at the start of *Timaeus* explains why Plato deliberately concluded *Critias* with a missing speech of precisely this kind. My basis for making this claim is found in the opening speech of Timaeus with which *Critias* begins:

“My prayer is that he [sc. “that god who had existed long before in reality, but who has now been created in my words”] grant the preservation of all that has been spoken properly; but that he will impose the proper penalty [δίκην τὴν πρέπουσαν ἐπιτιθέναι] if we have, despite our best intentions, spoken any discordant note. For the musician who strikes the wrong note the proper penalty is to bring him back into harmony [ἔμμελῆ].”¹²¹

The verbal echoes are precise, revealing, and deliberate: by leaving room for a missing speech at the end of *Timaeus-Critias*, Plato invites the

¹¹⁹ Thanks to P. Vidal-Naquet, “Athènes et l’Atlantide: structure et signification d’un mythe platonicien.” *Revue des études grec* 77, 1964, p. 420-44, the view that Critias’ myth of the ancient war between Athens and Atlantis “re-enacts the Sicilian expedition and it also re-enacts the Persian invasion putting Athens on the wrong side” is finally being accepted by Anglophone scholars; see Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 140, especially p. 140 n. 45. Note that while Hermocrates is competent to describe the modern re-enactment of the Atlantis myth—his role in defeating the disastrous Sicilian Expedition is well known from Thucydides—such a description is by no means germane to Socrates’ request: Syracuse was by no manner of means similar to the City described in *Republic*. Given the context of missing speech of Critias, and the fact that it is intended to chastise “Atlantis” and render its citizens “more melodious,” it is the kind of speech that would have prevented Athens from attempting to conquer Sicily. See Clay, D. “The Plan of Plato’s *Critias*”, in CALVO and BRISSON (eds.), *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*, p. 49-54, for a sensible account.

¹²⁰ *Critias* 121b7-c2 (Diskin Clay translation).

¹²¹ *Critias* 106a4-b3 (Clay).

reader to bring the discourse of Timaeus back into tune by distinguishing “all that has been spoken properly” from that which has not. Only the student who can do so has passed the test arising from Plato’s appropriation of Parmenidean pedagogy.

Ironically, Plato places the best textual evidence for his Parmenidean pedagogy in the mouth of the slippery Critias,¹²² he who is the first to speak once Timaeus has finished his λόγος. In the course of his rude and self-serving explanation of why his task is more difficult than that of Timaeus,¹²³ Critias uses the analogy of a painting: a critic will naturally be more critical of the portrait of a person than the accurate depiction of the background, a background that Critias likens to the cosmology of Timaeus. In this analogy, Critias uses the same word (ἀπατηλῶ at 107d1) to describe the technique used by those who paint “all of heaven and the bodies that exist and move within it”¹²⁴ that the Goddess in Parmenides uses to describe “Doxa” at B8.51: “the cosmos of my words” is ἀπατηλός. Critias further complains that “we do not examine these paintings too closely or find fault with [ἐλέγχομεν] them” at 107c7-d1; this word recalls the need for a Guardian who is προθυμούμενος ἐλέγχειν (“eager to refute”) in “the Battle Hymn of the Republic” (534c1). And most importantly, having dropped the painting analogy, Critias likewise uses the same crucial word to attack directly discourses like those of Timaeus—“about the heavens and things divine” (107d6-7)—that Timaeus famously used to defend his coming “myth” (εἰκότα at *Timaeus* 29d2) and, likewise, that the Goddess in Parmenides had first used to describe the coming “Doxa” (ἔοικότα at B8.60):

¹²² The view that the Critias of *Timaeus-Critias* is the Critias of *Charmides* and the Thirty Tyrants seems to be gaining ground; see Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 133-36. The argument against this identification on the basis of anachronism (see, for example, Lampert and Planeux, “Who’s Who”) can be short-circuited by an editorial decision: place the first set of quotation marks at 21b1 (instead of 21c4), marking the beginning of the narrative spoken to the modern Critias (he of the Thirty and of the *Timaeus*) by his grandfather Critias. Of course the quotation marks of 21c4 would be retained; they would mark the speech of a yet more ancient Critias (Greek has no word to distinguish grand-father from either great- or great-great-grandfather; hence pappo[ς] at 20e3 does not settle the matter) heard in his youth by the tyrant’s grandfather and then relayed, within the speech that begins at 21b1, to the present speaker. Such narrative layering—a speech within a speech within a speech—is hardly without parallel in Plato; cf. *Symposium* where the speech of Diotima, as reported by Socrates, is being narrated by Apollodorus, who heard it from Aristodemus.

¹²³ Critias 107a3.

¹²⁴ Critias 107c3-4.

“We embrace what is said about the heavens and things divine with enthusiasm, even when what is said is quite implausible [σμικρῶς εἰκότα]; but we are nice critics of what is said of mortals and human beings.”¹²⁵

Even Broadie and Johansen, who take it for granted that Timaeus speaks for Plato, readily admit that Critias does not do so;¹²⁶ ironically, the playful Plato¹²⁷ allows Critias to speak for him here. Despite Timaeus’ claim that his discourse is εἰκῶς in Burnyeat’s sense—and I readily admit that Burnyeat is correct about the *character* Timaeus’ sense of that word—Plato here offers the reader an alternative: that discourse is plausible only to a tiny degree (σμικρῶς εἰκῶς). And it is likewise through Critias that Plato poses his Parmenidean challenge to the “missing fourth” in the form of an apparently rhetorical question at *Critias* 107a4-6 (translation Diskin Clay): “Now, who in his senses would undertake to maintain that your [sc. Timaeus’] speech was not an excellent speech?” It is only Plato’s chosen reader who will do so.

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¹²⁵ *Critias* 107d6-8 (Clay).

¹²⁶ In addition to “the Critias framed in this way is truly an anti-Socrates” at 169, a clearer critical distinction between author and character is found at Broadie, *Nature and Divinity*, p. 166: “This Critias of Plato’s imagination is the personified paradigm of one sort of unreason.” Cf. Johansen, *Plato’s Natural Philosophy*, p. 42-47. Perhaps most revealing is Mohr, “Plato’s Cosmic Manual: Introduction, Reader’s Guide, and Acknowledgements” at p. 3: “Even the metaphysics of the *Timaeus* is spun out in the manner of a story. But virtually all critics now think that Timaeus’ story about the universe, unlike Critias’ about Atlantis, is one in which Plato advances his own views—to the extent, that is, that Plato’s own views can be found in the dialogues.”

¹²⁷ Altman, *Plato the Teacher*, p.458.