

Animal and Paradigm in Plato*
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ABSTRACT: The paradigm according to which the cosmos is ordered by the demiurge is characterized in the *Timaeus* as ‘Animal Itself’, while παράδειγμα in the vision of Er from the *Republic* denotes the patterns of lives chosen by individual humans and other animals. The essay seeks to grasp the animality of the paradigm, as well as the paradigmatic nature of animality, by means of the homology discernible between these usages. This inquiry affirms the value within a Platonic doctrine of principles of persons over reified forms, of modes of unity over substantial natures, and of agency over structure.

This essay concerns animals, including humans *qua* animals, insofar as they may be considered the *fundamental units* of the Platonic cosmos. The animal as considered in this fashion, however, is prior to taxonomy, and as such expresses a metaphysical ‘humanity’ prior to the taxonomically human; so this essay also concerns the animal *qua* human. The critical concept Plato provides us for grasping his thought in this way is that of the παράδειγμα, ‘paradigm’ or ‘pattern’, as it is used on the one hand in the vision of Er that concludes the *Republic*, and on the other, in the account of the demiurgic organization of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*. We shall see that the term παράδειγμα is to be distinguished in important respects from other terms Plato uses for principles of formation, chiefly εἶδος, ‘idea’ or ‘form’, although the present essay can only begin to adumbrate the relationship between these terms.

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In the vision of Er (*Rep.* 614b-621d), souls preparing for rebirth are presented with an array of possible paradigms for lives they might live. The possible lives include those of all kinds of animals as well as all sorts of human lives, and the choosers include those who have just completed human lives as well as those who have been animals. Humans may choose lives as humans again or as other sorts of animals, animals may choose lives as other sorts of animals, and animals may even choose human lives as well. We need not assume that Plato intends us to [312] take this account literally in every respect, but certain things follow if we take it seriously at all—and it is clear enough from the references to metempsychosis in other dialogues,¹ differing in some particulars but not very much, that Plato means us to make *something* of it, and something more than what would answer solely to the thematic needs of the *Republic*.

One must acknowledge, first, that Plato wishes us, for whatever purposes, to at least imagine an extraordinary kind of existential choice laid upon the individual, a choice, moreover, that he wishes us to think of as free—“the cause [or ‘blame’, αἰτία] is his who chooses” (617e)—despite the virtually complete determination of the choice by the circumstances of the previous life, and the prior state of the cosmos in general. Second, one must acknowledge that he wishes us to imagine the individual who would make such a choice as somehow numerically the same across every conceivable qualitative variation,

¹ E.g., *Phaedo* 70c-72a, 81d-82b, 107d-108c, 113a; *Meno* 81b-c; *Phaedrus* 245c-257a; *Timaeus* 42b-d, 90e-91c; *Laws* 903d. I do not address in the present essay divergent aspects of these accounts, such as the judgment, not present in Er’s vision, but prominent in the *Phaedo*, and mentioned elsewhere, e.g. in the *Apology* (41a) and *Gorgias* (523a-527a), where metempsychosis is not, or the possibility of release from metempsychosis in the *Phaedo*. There is, as well, Diotima’s characterization of immortality as consisting for the individual either in procreation or the propagation of virtue (*Symp.* 207d-208e). Diotima’s speech addresses a different problem, as I have discussed in “Plato’s Gods and the Way of Ideas,” *Diotima*, 39, 2011, pp. 73-87. The *Timaeus* account features below; I address briefly below a possible understanding of the release from transmigration. In general, I think the vision of Er may be regarded as normative in certain respects and with an eye toward certain problems, while other of these accounts might be regarded as normative in their own right and within the scope of the problems addressed in their particular dialogues.

and thus to imagine a source of identity that goes to the very limits of what is conceivable as determinate identity, and perhaps beyond, since no quality exists by which we might identify an individual as the same over such a transformation, except for one alone. Only the agency exhibited in the existential choice itself can be regarded as the ultimate individuator of ensouled entities. If ‘this soul’ can be now a human, now a swan, now something else altogether, its identity can only be fixed, either by the series of forms itself in its utter contingency, or by the ideal unity of the one choosing each successive form. The ‘freedom’ of this choice, therefore, *purely with respect to its individuating character*, is presupposed by Plato, a presupposition perhaps rendered innocent just by virtue of the uncertainty of the individual’s successful *appropriation* of the choice to him/herself. This imperfect identification with the agent of the choice corresponds to the sense of individuation in Plato as an “achievement”, as it has been presented recently, e.g., by Mary Margaret McCabe and by Lloyd Gerson. For just as “being a unified person is not something I can take for granted ... but rather something to which I aspire,”² being *the one who chose* in any sense beyond the emptily formal is not simply given to me.

Far from discouraging us from drawing ontological inferences from the account of the choice of paradigms in the *Republic*, the posteriority of the soul’s order or structure (τάξις) to the choice itself—“But the τάξις of the soul was not there [among the paradigms], because from the choice of a different life inevitably a different <τάξις> comes to be” (618b)—positively invites it, especially in light of Plato’s assertion at *Philebus* 30b that both mind and soul come from the “family of cause [τὸ τῆς αἰτίας γένος] in all things.” This cause or agency may “most justly be called wisdom and intelligence,” but Plato does not quite assert their identity; as for soul, it is clearly treated as posterior to the family of cause, which “gives” (παρέχον) it to us. The temptation to read this as a

² M. M. McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 264. Cf. Lloyd P. Gerson, *Knowing Persons: A Study in Plato*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

reference to a single cosmic cause granting souls ought to be resisted. The purpose in this passage is to outline a *class* of entities to complement the classes of limit (limiting, measuring [313] and informing entities), unlimited (entities receptive of limiting, especially continua of whatever kind), and the mixed (entities conceived as a state of limit imposed upon some unlimited by a cause) in a classificatory system. A reference to a numerically singular cause of everything is, at least, not *required* in a discussion ostensibly concerning the *class* of causes, and hence the status of *causality* as such.

Fortunately, the individual agency displayed in the constitution of the soul provides an attractive alternative. Nor should it concern us if the single genus of ‘cause’ encompasses both personal agency and natural causality. While Plato divides causes into two classes in the *Timaeus* (46de), namely, the causes belonging to the intelligent (ἐμφορων) nature and those which “are of the class of things which are moved by others, and themselves, in turn, move others because they cannot help it,” he is prepared elsewhere, in another light, to see this difference as one of degree, rather than of kind, as in the *Phaedo* (105ce), where soul is considered as a form-bringer of Life just as fire is a form-bringer of the Hot. The class of ‘cause’ in the *Philebus* in this way is free to exhibit as much diversity as the classes of limit, unlimited, and the mixed, and we can assume that in many cases a single entity would be, from different perspectives, cause, limit, unlimited, and mixture.

Indeed, the method of classification into causes, limits, unlimiteds, and mixtures would seem to be useful in the way the *Philebus* intends only insofar as the same entity can be regarded from different perspectives as belonging to different classes; for example, something that is in some respect a cause is in another respect a mixture, and so forth. This seems to be the case with the soul, considered now as a pure agency, now as the structure resulting from the operation of such agency. We are reminded of the formulations from the vision of Er when the *Philebus* states that “in the nature [φύσις] of Zeus ... a kingly

soul and a kingly mind appeared through the power of the cause, and in other deities other noble qualities from which they derive their favourite epithets” (30d, trans. Fowler, slightly modified). Φύσις is used, e.g., at *Rep.* 620c, as a synonym for that which elsewhere in Er’s account is more often termed βίος, a life or way of life, namely that structure which, through the choice of a paradigm, the individual brings forth. This structure expresses the different result that follows from one individual choosing a particular paradigm rather than another individual choosing the same one: same paradigm, different life. There could be little purpose, however, to individuating the paradigm in this fashion except as an ideal immanent to an already constituted βίος, or, better, a βίος in process of constituting itself. The paradigm appears in this light as a dependent and inseparable moment of the life, a moment problematic in its very nature. The ‘idea’ of the soul referred to at *Phaedrus* 246a is another way of referring to the structure resulting from the agency of the choice, which helps to clarify the young Socrates’ ambivalence at *Parm.* 130c about whether there is an idea/form (εἶδος) of the human, or of fire, fire sharing the soul’s status as a typical form-*bringer* in the final argument of the *Phaedo*. The ambivalence arises with [314] respect to attributing *form* to the causality of the form-bringer, and identifying the structuring agency with the resulting structure. Even if the form-bringer has a formal structure, is it structured *qua* cause, or *qua* effect of some other causality, and hence as a mixture in the *Philebus* classification?

The structuring cause in question then is not some single architectonic cause of the whole cosmos. Rather, each existing individual’s agency is an orientation of desire which causes the individual to come-to-be in the form answering to it, a form proleptically, if also problematically, contained in the pattern or paradigm that is the actual object of the mortal soul’s choice. A cause bringing about a life is distinguished from other causes in operating according to a paradigm, for here this agency can be most clearly distinguished from the structure or form, as is the case in animals, humans and Gods particularly, as

opposed to form-bringers such as fire.³ In such cases it is appropriate to speak of a paradigm. This is essential to Platonic ‘animality’, as we shall see from considering the paradigmatic function of the ‘Living Thing Itself’ or ‘Animal Itself’, ἀντοζῶον, in the *Timaeus* in the direct relationship I believe it to bear to the paradigms implicated in the life cycle of each individual animal, whether human or other. ‘Animal Itself’, explicitly and repeatedly designated a παράδειγμα, and according to which the demiurgic God organizes the cosmic φύσις or nature, is itself paradigmatic of the paradigms chosen by mortal souls; it is the Animal as such, which means nothing more, and nothing less, than that each paradigm of a life, a βίος, is really *some animal*.

We ought to think of the relationship between the cosmic paradigm and the paradigms that embody the life-choices of individual animals as such that the cosmos acquires its organization not from a top-down determination, but from the bottom up through the very choices of souls, and its form is that of just such living, desiring intentions: an animal composed of animals. The very nature of a paradigm, I would argue, calls for this sort of conception. The cosmic paradigm, in this sense, *is* the paradigms of lives, and it is a transposition of registers to make it *another one* (cf. *Parm.* 132d-133a). Plato in this way grants epistemic authority to the animal’s perspective on the world, according to the principle that “like knows like” (*De An.* 404b16). Moreover, it is the autonomy of these individual minds that enables the Gods to achieve the “easy supervision of all things” that the Athenian stranger describes in the *Laws* (903d-905c), in which the trend of our desires and the resulting state of our soul causes us to assume a position in the cosmos that secures the victory of goodness in the All by congregating like souls together so that the effectiveness of the better-intentioned souls is maximized, that of the worse-intentioned

³ We may understand the notion of a final release from metempsychosis (see above, n. 1) in light of this theoretical opposition between structure and structuring agency, namely, as securing the possibility *in thought* of a clean separation between these aspects of the individual. This possibility having been secured, it is no longer material whether such a separation really occurs.

minimized. Similarly, at *Theaet.* 176e-177a Socrates speaks of παραδείγματα of “divine happiness” and “godless misery” in the nature of things; in doing injustice, one grows more like the latter and less like the former, the penalty for evildoers being simply living the life answering to the pattern they resemble, “in the society of things as evil as themselves.” Accordingly, in the [315] *Timaeus* the forms, εἶδη, within the cosmic paradigm are not, e.g., discrete species, but instead *habitats*—astral, aerial, aquatic, and terrestrial (*Tim.* 39e-40a).

To come to be according to a paradigm seems to signify primarily that something is a *structured totality*. The aspect of totality is emphasized by Plato when he explains that the relationship of likeness (ὁμοιότης) between the cosmos and the paradigm does not consist in the privilege accorded some partial form (ἐν μέρους εἶδει, *Tim.* 30c). And so, in the first place, there is not some *particular* animal paradigmatic for the cosmos—for instance, the human. The universal ‘humanity’ which lies prior to the differentiation, first into genders, and then into other species of animal (*Tim.* 90e-92c) cannot be identified with the *particularistic* humanity which lies at the end of this process of speciation. I have spoken of this distinction between a wider and a narrower ‘humanity’ in another context.⁴ As a result, the souls of humans and other animals do not differ in kind, for which Aristotle indeed seems to criticize Platonists (*De An.* 402b3-5). Carpenter has argued correctly, I believe, against the interpretation that would first generate ‘prototype’ animals from the primordially ‘human’ paradigm, with animals subsequently generating their own kind from these prototypes without reference to their original ‘humanity’.⁵ Rejecting such prototypes means that the injunction from *Phaedrus* 249b, that only a soul that has beheld

⁴ “Hercules of the Surface: Deleuzian Humanism and Deep Ecology,” in B. Herzogenrath (ed.), *An (Un)Likely Alliance: Thinking Environment(s) with Deleuze/Guattari*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, pp. 139-158.

⁵ A. D. Carpenter, “Embodying Intelligence: Animals and Us in Plato’s *Timaeus*,” in J. Dillon and M. Zovko (eds.), *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence*, Berlin, Verlag, 2008, pp. 39-57; p. 48 & n. 24.

truth may enter human form, lays no categorical restriction upon the passage from the animal to the human form, for every soul is primordially 'human' in the special, paradigmatic sense.

Viveiros de Castro has found a very similar structure in Amerindian, especially Amazonian, mythical ontologies, for which "the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but, rather, humanity," such that the task of the myths is to tell "how animals lost the qualities inherited or retained by humans [...] Animals are ex-humans (rather than humans, ex-animals)." These ontologies exhibit a concept of humanity with a broad and deep metaphysical significance transcending taxonomic determination; 'humankind' in this sense is "the substance of the primordial plenum or the original form of virtually everything, not just animals."⁶ This notion of humanity finds a direct expression in language, in a phenomenon which has been mistaken, Viveiros de Castro argues, for mere 'ethnocentrism':

[T]he Amerindian words which are usually translated as 'human being' and which figure in those supposedly ethnocentric self-designations do not denote humanity as a natural species. They refer rather to the social condition of personhood, and they function (pragmatically when not syntactically) less as nouns than as pronouns. They indicate the position of the subject; they are enunciative markers, not names [...] Thus self-references such as 'people' mean 'person', not 'member of the human species', and they are personal pronouns registering the point of view of the subject talking, not proper names. To say, then, that animals and spirits are people is to say that they are persons, and to [316] attribute to non-humans the capacities of conscious intentionality and agency which define the position of the subject.⁷

To be 'human' is, in effect, to occupy the first-person position of cause and of agency, rather than the third-person taxonomical position of the mixture, to return to the

⁶ E. Viveiros de Castro, "Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies," *Common Knowledge*, 10.3, 2004, pp. 463-484; p. 464-5.

⁷ Idem, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4.3, 1998, pp. 469-488; p. 476.

categories from the *Philebus*. In the same way, Viveiros de Castro finds complementary and opposed to the category of the ‘human’ in this first-person, subjective sense the objectivizing ethnonym applied to the other: “Ethnonyms are names of third parties; they belong to the category of ‘they’ not to the category of ‘we’.”⁸ The ethnonym therefore stands in the place of the taxonomic distinction as such, whether applied to the other *or* when applied by the subject to him/herself *qua* object.

Thus there is a far-reaching metaphysical significance to the generation of humans and other animals *individually* rather than according to types. For the universal ‘humanity’ that is the starting-point for the emergence of every kind of animal, as well as the differences of gender and of every conceivable way of life as well, does not merely stand outside of, but *resists* speciation and sortal individuation. It is from the paradigm’s *totality* that Plato infers the *uniqueness* of the cosmos (*Tim.* 31a). Rather than reducing individual animals to their part-status, the relationship to the paradigm, that is, the relationship of each animal to *its own* paradigm, gives form, not to a species, but to an *individual life*, and in this way affirms the uniqueness that is constitutive of a living thing as such. ‘Humanity’ thus is the intelligible expression of the metaphysically fundamental mode of unity, the mode of the *autos*, the ‘self’ as such, that is, as *each* self, not some single over-self. As Viveiros de Castro puts it with respect to the Amerindian ontologies, “the subjective aspect of being”—i.e., ‘humanity’ as the transhuman ‘I’—is “the universal, unconditioned given [...] Reflexive selfhood [...] is the potential common ground of being.”⁹ Humanity in this special sense is thus *metaphysical individuality*.

This uniqueness of the animal inheres in its pure unitary agency, not in the animal as this or that *type* of mind or soul—or, *a fortiori*, this or that type of body (cf. Viveiros de Castro’s remarks on the ‘performative’ nature of embodiment in the Amerindian

⁸ Idem, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” *loc. cit.*, p. 476.

⁹ Idem, “Exchanging Perspectives,” *loc. cit.*, p. 466-7.

ontologies).¹⁰ Mind and soul as *products* can be regarded as homoiomerous substances on the analogy of elements like fire (*Phil.* 29b-30b), just as the latter can be regarded as an agent ‘form-bringer’ producing warmth. These two possible perspectives upon the living being are expressed in the paradigm itself. ‘Animal Itself’ is the animal of which all other animals are parts (μόρια), both individually (καθ’ἑν) and according to kind (κατὰ γέννη) (*Tim.* 30c). Yet, it is not *as parts* that animals are ‘paradigmatic’, but as each a *whole* (ὅλος), i.e., an organism, and even, in a certain respect, each as the *totality*, as the All (πᾶν). From a henological perspective, that is, with respect to the inquiry into *modes of unity and of individuation*, what is important about the cosmic individual is the [317] convergence in it of internal or absolute individuation—that is, individuation by virtue of internal unity and coherence—and external or contextual individuation—individuation by virtue of exhaustion of some continuum specific to a given unit.¹¹

In contrast to the paradigm, what we might term the partial form, that is, the species form, on the other hand, is treated by Plato as the repository of restrictive habits that inherently distort the possibilities of the cosmic individual. This is obvious in the shocking account in the *Timaeus* (90e-92c) of the generation of females and diverse types of animals from character flaws occurring through the declension, so to speak, of the universal ‘human’, an account, however, which resembles in broad terms the Amerindian mythic ontologies of how animals ‘lost’ their humanity—or how ‘humans’ lost their ability to participate in the wider, trans-species humanity. Proclus points out in his commentary on the *Republic* that the vision of Er shows that, in the absence of philosophy, all human perfections (such as the ways of life ranked at *Phaedrus* 248d2-e4) can be regarded as, in effect, so many modes of animality (*In Remp.* II 319.12-320.4 Kroll), that is, taxonomic animality. In Proclus’ reading, virtues, even traits apparently divine (δοκοῦντα

¹⁰ Idem, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 478-82.

¹¹ M. M. McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 163-170.

δαμόνια), and not merely flaws, generate animal bodies in the presence of passion and without philosophy (316.6-25). Agamemnon, an embodiment of kingly virtue, admirable for his patience and perseverance (*Crat.* 395a), and whom Socrates looks forward to meeting in the afterlife (*Apol.* 41b), chooses a life as an eagle (*Rep.* 620b); Orpheus, a transmitter of divine inspiration (*Ion* 536b), chooses a life as a swan, even as a swan chooses the life of a human (*Rep.* 620a). What is distinctive about such ‘animalities’ is the manner in which they position the individual as part of a mediated whole (an ecosystem, a society) by emphasizing some part of the self (a particular talent, a peculiar antipathy) at the expense of its own totality, which reflects *immediately* the totality of the cosmic individual.

Only philosophy, which orients itself *away* from the human in the particularistic taxonomic sense—the objectively human, as it were—preserves the cosmogonic value of the individual. This value accrues, not to the animal as part of a species, even the human species, albeit that species has clear advantages in its ability to understand and appropriate for itself the paradigm. Cosmogonic value applies, instead, to the animal as a unique, and hence *totalizing*, individual. The individual is totalizing in its uniqueness inasmuch as this very uniqueness identifies it immediately with the totality of the cosmos, whereas a species, partial role, or specializing function of any kind represent mediations of this identification, these latter all being relationships of *whole and part*. To be some species of animal is no different than to have any of the other sorts of life experiences that predispose the souls in Er’s vision to choose one sort of paradigm or another. These utterly unique life-experiences, and the unique trajectories they impose [318] upon souls, play a structuring role in the cosmos metaphysically *prior* to elemental forces operating with uniform regularity.

Appropriating a paradigm represents accepting a place, a part, in the cosmic whole constituted by the totality of the paradigms available to souls to select at any given

moment. How such idiosyncratic paradigms—a paradigm, for example, of “a female artisan” or of “a private man who minds his own business” (*Rep.* 620c)—could possibly be conceived separately from the individuals who live them out, as well as the manner of whole formed by such parts, is obscure. The mechanism of the numbers drawn by the souls to determine the order in which they shall make their selection (617e) evokes the element of non-identity in this most individuating choice. Balancing the alienating aspect of the numerical lot is the assurance that “even for him who comes forward last, if he make his choice wisely and live intensely [σύντονῶς], there is reserved an acceptable life,”—ἀγαπητός, which can be read as ‘cherished’, or more often with the sense ‘good enough’; for typical Platonic usages compare *Phil.* 61e, *Laws* 918e—“no evil one” (619b; trans. mod.). But since the field of patterns among which souls may choose is common for all, every creature depends, in some respect, for the kind of soul it shall come to be, upon the choices made by every other with whom its life shall overlap on the earth. The totality generative of souls is thus not a transcendent model generating copies, but an *immanent* totality, a virtual cosmopolis, participation in which forms the ultimate citizenship. Thus Socrates anticipates the unique paradigm of the individual when he speaks of a παράδειγμα of the city “of one’s own” that may well not be “the city of one’s birth”, but which is “laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen. But it makes no difference whether it exists now or ever will come into being. The politics of this city only will be his and of none other” (*Rep.* 592ab, trans. Shorey).

The ultimate role accorded to philosophy in the *Republic*, as supplied by the vision of Er, is to aid the individual in the utterly private and idiosyncratic act of personal demiurgy. In this respect, the account emphasizes the failure of souls to examine sufficiently the patterns they choose. Thus the soul drawing the first lot in Er’s vision “at once sprang to seize the greatest tyranny [...] in his folly and greed [...] and failed to

observe that it involved the fate of eating his own children, and other horrors” (619c, trans. Shorey). This Thyestes had lived in a well-ordered polity in his previous life, but having participated in virtue merely by habit—i.e., as a part, an organ, so to speak, of the state—and not through philosophical insight, he had no resources with which to choose wisely, or at any rate, none with which to choose *autonomously*. “One may perhaps say that a majority of those who were thus caught were of the company that had come from heaven, inasmuch as they were unexercised in suffering” (619d)—in a dialogue which has dwelt at such length on the forms of polity, here is a reminder that the purpose of that discussion [319] was to facilitate the soul’s self-understanding. But beyond this, let us note that Plato offers here a means of dramatically leveling the playing-field between humans and other animals, for *suffering*, which would have helped such a soul to choose well even without philosophical insight, knows no species. Setting aside for the moment the admittedly very small numbers of souls to be reckoned as philosophers, there is a broad common way for souls that embodies the justice of the whole cosmic order, and a common way of individuation as well.

Similarly, when Plato recounts that “... of the other beasts some entered into men and into one another, the unjust [ἄδικοι] into fierce creatures, the just [δίκαιοι] transformed into gentle, and there was every kind of mixture and combination” (620d; trans. mod.), we may well be surprised to see ‘justice’ and ‘injustice’ unhesitatingly applied to nonhumans. This must be a justice that arises, not from rational insight, but from a well-ordered soul, in a manner that presents a continuum between the animal and the human state. A well-ordered animal soul will tend to seek, according to this account, more peaceful forms. But every form is useful to the “easy supervision” of the universe evoked in the passage cited above from the *Laws*. Specifically, animal forms in Er’s vision serve to transmute passions into virtues. Ajax, nursing his grievance over the arms of Achilles, chooses the life of a lion, spurning the human form (620b). Plato obviously comments here

upon the fit of insane rage in which, in Sophocles' tragedy, Ajax slaughters sheep and cattle, thinking them the Greek leaders who have disgraced him. A hero become ignoble in the throes of passion becomes here a creature who kills dispassionately to survive. Ajax can more easily manifest virtue as a lion than as a human who would begin from the place where the son of Telamon ended; he can be a just lion who could no longer be a just human.

In choosing paradigms for their lives, animals, including humans, choose a direction or orientation to which the cosmos adjusts, so to speak. In this process, the role of philosophy is to advocate for a greater degree of insight into, and hence control over, the processes that will shape the new person. This process is 'humanization' in the true sense, the sense which is not bound to the human species for any reason beyond the possibilities this form offers for the individual to grasp this process and therefore to manifest autonomy. Indeed, in accord with the aims and methods of Platonic henology, it ought to be possible ultimately to render the differences between one type of soul organization (τάξις) and another purely as a question of modes of unity, i.e., of σύνταξις (*Rep.* 462c), and the 'human' defined in this fashion rather than according to purely contingent attributes (e.g., 'featherless biped') or even essential ones (e.g., 'rational animal'). The paradigm serves a cosmogonic function broader than the aims of philosophy; broader, as well, than the concept of a pattern or plan in the conventional sense, which points to a broader sense of *formation* in Plato than the stereotype of transcendent forms.¹² [320]

If we look to the ways in which Plato uses the term παράδειγμα, we find that it rarely has the straightforward sense of an intelligible formative principle. Rather, it usually means an *example*, and this often in an ambiguous way. First, there are, of course, both good and bad examples, not just in social life (many of the uses of παράδειγμα as

¹² For further considerations regarding 'forms' as such in Plato, with special reference to the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, see my "Plato's Gods and the Way of Ideas."

‘example’ come from the sphere of crime and punishment), but also in epistemic inquiry. At *Theaet.* 202e, Socrates explains that we may hold as ‘hostages’ for a theory the examples (παραδείγματα) in terms of which it has been stated, for a theory may be undermined by the examples used to articulate it. This is in accord with the method for the use of examples explained in the *Statesman*, in which “an example is formed when that which is the same in some second, unconnected thing is rightly conceived and compared with the first, so that the two together form one true opinion” (278c, trans. Fowler, slightly mod.). A paradigm comes about from comparison, but the ‘rightness’ of this comparison can always be questioned; and, as the *Theaetetus* passage affirms, paradigms are not just used to articulate a theory, they are also crucially involved in theory formation. The ambiguity of paradigms lies in their dual nature as both coming prior to, and coming after, a process of formation. This underscores something else important about the term: more than any other term Plato uses for formative principles, ‘paradigms’ are themselves clearly and unmistakably particulars, as we can see from the discussion of forms as παραδείγματα in the *Parmenides* (132d), which occasions the famous ‘third man’ problem. Another important aspect of the paradigm can be seen from *Rep.* 472bc, where the purpose of a παράδειγμα is to permit approximation, as opposed to the realization of an ideal. Just as in the *Parmenides*, the relationship constitutive of the paradigm is *likeness* (ὁμοιότης), not *sameness* (ταυτότης), the relationship of likeness being analyzed, in effect, in the *Statesman* passage as that which is “the same in the different” (ταυτόν ἐν ἑτέρῳ). A paradigm has in this respect a certain priority to being itself, for “Do you think [...] that he would be any the less a good painter, who, after portraying a pattern [παράδειγμα] of the ideally beautiful man [...] should not be able to prove that it is actually possible for such a man to exist?” (472d, trans. Shorey).¹³

¹³ Compare Proclus, for whom *likeness* is at once posterior to formal identity, as approximation-to-form, but also *prior* to form, inasmuch as likeness is the basis of all ontic

The paradigm in Plato and elsewhere has recently been the subject of a wide-ranging but incisive essay by Giorgio Agamben. Agamben does not discuss the use of *παράδειγματα* in Er's account or in the *Timaeus*, but his conclusions about the epistemological function of the paradigm as such are in harmony with those of the present essay. Agamben emphasizes the singularity and immanence of the paradigm, which “neutraliz[es] the dichotomy between the general and the particular [...] In the paradigm, there is no origin or *archē*; every phenomenon is the origin, every image archaic.”¹⁴ Agamben argues that there is a paradigmatic procedure in dialectics which embodies the latter's transcendence of the procedures of the special sciences, as treated in *Rep.* 509d-511e. In the special sciences, certain hypotheses are treated as principles, *ἀρχαί*, while in dialectics, hypotheses [321] are treated purely as hypotheses, in order to arrive at a non-hypothetical principle; for Agamben, inasmuch as “the knowability of the paradigm is never presupposed [...] treating hypotheses as hypotheses means treating them as paradigms” for this is to consider the *ἀρχή* “in the medium of its intelligibility.”¹⁵ The *idea* as such arises from and is dependent upon this procedure, “not another being that is presupposed by the sensible or coincides with it,” but “the sensible considered as a paradigm.”¹⁶ The present essay argues to the same end by asserting the primacy of structuring causes to reified structure in Platonic ontology.

How, then, is the paradigm in the epistemological sense related to the paradigm of a life and the cosmic paradigm? What is the common structure, the paradigm of paradigms? The Eleatic Stranger speaks of the need for an example of how examples work at *Statesman* 277d, but is there a paradigm encompassing the epistemological as well as the zoogonic senses of *παράδειγμα*? If there is, it seems as though it would lie in the

procession (e.g., *Elements of Theology* prop. 29).

¹⁴ G. Agamben, “What is a Paradigm?”, in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. L. D’Isanto with K. Attell, New York, Zone Books, 2009, pp. 9-32; p. 31.

¹⁵ Idem, “What is a Paradigm?”, *loc. cit.*, p. 25 sq.

¹⁶ Idem, “What is a Paradigm?”, *loc. cit.*, p. 26.

essentially *problematic* nature of both. That is, a paradigm, whether existential or epistemic, has the character of a problem, in the sense in which Proclus speaks of ‘problems’ as the analogues of production in theoretical sciences (*In Eucl.* 77 Friedlein/63 Morrow), “propositions whose aim is to produce, bring into view, or construct what in a sense does not exist” (201/157). The theorem is privileged over the problem within a discipline such as geometry, but geometry is a certain “dream about being” (*Rep.* 533c). The privilege of the theorematic over the problematic within such a special science cannot thus be regarded as a general ontological proposition once the broad scope of paradigmatic production in the *Timaeus* is taken into account, because the *Timaeus* takes up the question of the construction of the cosmos itself and everything in it. So too, the “city in speech” of the *Republic* is not an idea or form (εἶδος), but a παράδειγμα (*Rep.* 472e). It will not suffice to convert the ultimate paradigm into another dogmatic ‘dream’.

What is paradigmatic about the paradigm is nothing other than its *animality*. What is essential to animality, as the vision of Er affirms, is desire, and the cosmic paradigm is the ultimate *object* of desire. But if it is the *ultimate* object, then it cannot be an object in this sense, but must rather be that which makes the desired object in its objectivity desirable (epistemologically speaking, “the medium of its intelligibility”); and this is simply the desiring itself as the primary mode of causality, cause of the organism.¹⁷ In this way, we are thrown back again and again upon the individual desiring animal(s) as the sole intelligible content of the cosmos. For in what lies the “self-identical” nature of the paradigm, which ensures the beauty of the work executed in orientation toward it (*Tim.* 28a)? What paradigm could possibly be *unique* (31a)? The answer to these questions ought not lie in a violent transcendence. The animal is self-identical because it is, by

¹⁷ Compare Theophrastus’ critique of Aristotle’s prime unmoved mover at *Metaphysics* 5b7-10, to the effect that circular motion is not the best motion if it is done for the sake of some external object of desire, because *any* such motion will therefore be inferior to the motion providing the faculty of desire itself.

definition, that which strives to persist in self-identity, and this striving is the beauty of every work the living performs. The paradigm is unique inasmuch as it [322] is each unique being *qua* unique, and uniqueness is nothing other than absolute individuation, dependent upon no sortal unit; and this is the animal as such, as structuring rather than structure. The demiurgic production of the cosmic totality is thus integrated into a broader framework of *action* and of ethical rather than technical formation (cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1140b6-7).