

Yx26 – Clerical Quackery 6 – Physics vs. Metaphysics in Ancient Greece – 2 – Plato

This is the 26th in a series of posts dealing with what I call “the God Lie”, the 6th in a subseries dealing with “Clerical Quackery”, and the 2nd in the sub-subseries (!) dealing with “Physics vs. Metaphysics in ancient Greece”, i.e., dealing with skirmishes and battles that occurred in ancient Greece in the war between science and religion (or between realism and mysticism), a war that has been waged for at least 2500 years and continues today (e.g., in the war between the “modern world” and “Muslim supremacists”).

Early in ancient Greece (as I outlined in the previous post) one side of this war was taken by the superstitious Greek “rabble”, their clerics, and other “metaphysicists” (or more accurately, ‘mystics’), including Homer, Hesiod, Heraclitus (partially), and Pythagoras (completely). On the other side were the first few physicists (i.e., those who tried to understand ‘nature’; Greek, *phusis*), including Thales (“[water is the cause of all things](#)”), partially Xenophanes (“[...all is but a woven web of guesses](#)”), Anaxagoras (who suggested the Sun is a “[red-hot stone](#)”, rather than a god), Protagoras (“[concerning the gods, I have no means of knowing whether they exist or not...](#) ”), and Democritus (“[by convention there is color, by convention sweetness, by convention bitterness, but in reality there are atoms and space](#)”).

Approximately 400 years after Homer and Hesiod, Socrates (469–399 BCE) seems to have tried to stay neutral in the war between science and religion, but he managed to offend the religious rabble and their clerics – who have always been eager to kill for their cause (perhaps because, beneath all their bluster, they know they’ve bought into a bill of goods, i.e., the God Lie). Yet, whatever the cause, after a trial that mocked justice, Socrates was found guilty and executed. The official verdict was:

Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods in which the state believes, but brings in other new divinities; he also wrongs by corrupting the youth.

After Socrates’ execution, of course the battle between science and religion continued, with the next two primary combatants being the two most famous Greek philosophers, namely, Socrates’ student Plato (c.428–c.348 BCE) and Plato’s student Aristotle (384–322 BCE).

As I plan to outline in the next post, Aristotle unfortunately engaged in some (useless) metaphysical speculations, but he also contributed a little to physics (including meteorology), quite a bit to biology (a branch of *phusis*), and a lot to logic. For this post, my goal is to at least outline some of the subterfuge promoted by Plato, who was a mystic – arguably, the most evil mystic the world has even known (using ‘evil’ in the sense of harm done to humanity). That is, it was Plato’s “Forms” into which later tyrants (including “Saint” Constantine, Muhammad, al-Wahhab, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Khomeini) poured their concrete for the foundations of their abominations, including various versions of Christianity, Islam, Fascism, and Communism.

Confusion About the Concept of ‘Existence’

Before trying to explain what I mean, however, I should point out a complication about the word ‘existence’ that Plato apparently never appreciated (leading him to his ridiculous “Theory of Forms”) and that has subsequently caused considerable confusion throughout the world, especially among the mystics of the world. The confusion¹ has arisen because the word ‘existence’ has multiple meanings. In what follows (except for cases in which I trust that my meaning will be obvious), I’ll distinguish two meanings for ‘existence’ by using the expanded phrases “exists in reality” *versus* “exists only as an idea”.

By “exists in reality” I’ll mean that some type of measurement can be made on the subject and that independent observers generally agree on the results. For example, I expect that most observers would agree that, e.g., the Empire State Building “exists in reality”. On the other hand, by “exists only as an idea” I’ll mean that such measurements aren’t possible – although, in such cases, it might be possible to measure associated brain waves, but I’ll then describe the brain waves as “existing in reality” (as electro-chemical signals within someone’s brain), without meaning to confirm that what is being thought about also exists in reality. As illustrations, there’s no evidence to support the assumption that God (or any god) exists (or has ever existed) in reality, but meanwhile, there’s no doubt that various gods exist (and have existed) as ideas – otherwise, I wouldn’t be wasting so much time writing about the God Lie (which, fundamentally, is the lie that any god has ever existed in reality).

¹ See, e.g., <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nonexistent-objects/>.

In ancient Greece, enormous confusion arose (and persists in religious people to this day) because so many otherwise-brilliant people didn't (and foolish and/or uneducated religious people still don't) distinguish between what exists in reality and what exists only as ideas. Unfortunately for the world, the distinction between the two meanings for 'existence' never penetrated Plato's thick skull. [By the way, but maybe not entirely incidentally, the name 'Plato' was actually his nickname, meaning 'broad' or 'thick', suggested to refer to the size of his forehead!]

Plato as an Aspiring Mathematician

To try to uncover possible reasons why Plato managed to cause the world so much trouble, it might be useful to explore Plato's background. In that regard, Aristotle mentions that Plato (born of a wealthy Athenian family with genetic lineage to the famous Athenian legislator, Solon, c.630–c.560 BCE) was first a student of Cratylus, a disciple of Heraclitus.

As I mentioned in the previous post, Heraclitus was the Ionian who studied under Thales and who is famous for a number of ideas that have been influential for thousands of years, including:

- His ideas of the *Logos* [which is used in the New Testament and which probably was an idea that he or Thales adapted from the Egyptian idea of *Ma'at* or Zarathustra's idea of *Asha*],
- His idea of “the attunement of opposite tensions” [which became known as “the dialectic”, which Hegel (1770–1831) promoted to try to find a synthesis of a thesis and its antithesis and which Marx (1818–83) used to formulate his dialectic materialism], and
- His perceptive statements, “all is flux; nothing stays still... nothing endures but change.”

The above, last-listed idea of Heraclitus apparently caused Plato a great deal of anxiety, resulting in his imagining ideal things (called “Forms”) that never change, which in turn led to Plato's evil already mentioned.

After serving in the military from 409–404 BCE (during the war between Athens and Sparta) Plato apparently decided to become a playwright (which presumably explains why Plato expounded his philosophy *via* dialogues). Thus, in *Hermes and Plato* (partially available at Google books) Edouard Shure (1841–1929) states:

At the age of twenty-seven he [Plato] had written several tragedies and was about to offer one for competition. It was about this time that Plato met Socrates, who was discussing with some youths in the gardens of the Academy. He was speaking about the Just and the Unjust, the Beautiful, the Good, and the True. The poet drew near to the philosopher, listened to him, and returned on the morrow and for several days afterwards. At the end of a few weeks, his mind had undergone a complete revolution...

Another Plato had been born in him, as he listened to the words of the one who called himself “the one who brings souls to birth.” The important thing, he (Socrates) said, was to believe in the Just and the True, and to apply them to life. Plato had received from Socrates the great impulse, the active male principle of his life, his faith in justice and truth. He was indebted for the science and substance of his ideas to his initiation into the Mysteries, and his genius consists in the new form, at once poetic and dialectic, he was enabled to give to them.

How Plato became “initiated” into the above-mentioned “Mysteries” seems unclear. After what was essentially the murder of Socrates, Plato probably distrusted the Greek rabble and their clerics, and left Athens. Thus, as given in *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition – An Encyclopedia*:²

Soon after Socrates’ death in 399 BCE, Plato apparently left Athens for Megara [a city in Attica, Greece], where he visited Euclides (450–380 BCE), founder of the Megarian school [and another of Socrates’ students, who was present at his death and who famously and importantly rejected arguments by analogy]; Cyrene [a Greek colony in what is now Libya], where he visited the mathematician Theodorus (c.460–390 BCE) [famous for what’s now called “the Spiral of Theodorus”]; and Italy, where he visited the Pythagorean Philolaus (c.470–390 BCE)...

It therefore appears that, soon after Socrates’ death, the erstwhile playwright Plato immersed himself in the field of (pure) mathematics.

Relative to Plato’s “**Theory of Forms**”, it’s relevant to point out an important distinction between “pure” vs. “applied” mathematics. Applied math has been “**the queen of science**” ever since the first cave-woman divided the available meat into an appropriate number of portions and told her man to go out and get a half dozen more logs for the fire! Subsequently, applied math was used by architects, bureaucrats, engineers, etc. to build irrigation systems and dwellings, divide property, and collect taxes.

² At <http://www.plosin.com/work/PlatoPlatonism.html>.

Pure math, on the other hand, caught the attention of the first metaphysicist who noticed that $1 + 1 = 2$, no matter the things being counted (pieces of meat, logs, taxes, stars, whatever); that is, pure math is an abstraction from reality. To this day, applied math continues to be the fundamental tool used in all branches of science, and pure math (which isn't a branch of science) continues to be “merely” an abstraction – albeit sometimes extremely useful (e.g., in the formulation of general relativity, quantum mechanics, particle physics, and string theory).

Not incidentally, a hint of differences in mental attitudes of people who pursue pure math vs. science is available from relatively recent data³ about members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Thus, although I consider it disgraceful that 7% of NAS members “believe in a personal god” (because members of the Academy are charged with conveying their collective opinion to the U.S. Congress based on evidence, and yet, 7% believe in the existence in reality of “a personal god”, even though, in reality, there's zero evidence to support such an opinion!), yet for present purposes, it's more interesting to note that “the highest rate of belief in god was found among mathematicians (14.3%)” – and if some of them are pure mathematicians (as they probably are) they shouldn't even be members of the National Academy of *Sciences*! The result suggests that, to this day, pure math continues to be a fertile field for mystics, i.e., those who have yet to develop the critically important habit of basing their ideas, opinions, and beliefs on evidence – which was Plato's fatal error.

Plato apparently concluded that (pure) math (which includes the study of the geometry of perfect, idealized forms) leads to knowledge of “the truth”, not just in mathematics. Thus, in his most famous book, *The Republic*,⁴ Plato wrote (bk. VII):

... the knowledge at which geometry aims is knowledge of the eternal, and not of aught perishing and transient... Geometry will draw the soul towards truth, and create the spirit of philosophy, and raise up that which is now unhappily allowed to fall down.

Approximately two decades after Socrates' execution and after visiting and (no doubt) learning from the leading (pure) mathematicians around the Mediterranean Basin, Plato returned to Athens and established his own

³ See, e.g., <http://www.atheists.org/flash.line/atheism1.htm>.

⁴ Available, e.g., at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>.

school (the original “Academy”, derived from the name of the man, Academos, who had formerly owned the land on which Plato’s school was established). The motto of Plato’s Academy was reportedly: “Let no one unversed in geometry enter here.”

Plato the Mystic

Just what “truth” Plato claimed he discovered *via* math, he purposefully shrouded in mystery: apparently he was “an initiate” in the Pythagorean (or other) “Mysteries”, details of which he apparently swore not to reveal. Thus, in the Seventh Letter of his *Epistles* (i.e., “letters”) Plato wrote:⁵

There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith [of the Mysteries], for it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden [in an “epiphany”, from Greek *epiphaninein*, meaning ‘reveal’] as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.

Plato adds that such secrecy is necessary in order not “to expose [the Mysteries] to unseemly and degrading treatment”, and in his book *Phaedo*, he claims:⁶

Whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods.

As for just what these Mysteries were (permitting one to “dwell with the gods”), it’s a long story – one that I plan to describe in at least a little detail in a later post dealing with one aspect of the creation of Christianity. Here I’ll give just a very brief introduction.

In general, the Mysteries about how to enter “the spirit world” are as old as stone-age use by shamans of hallucinogenic plants (or “psychotropic substances” or “entheogens”, a Greek word meaning “becoming divine within”) and as old as the first instance of any of a variety of brain disorders, including epilepsy and schizophrenia (originally called “sacred diseases”), which in turn can be caused by, e.g., genetic anomalies, physical trauma, or chemical imbalances in the brain.

⁵ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh_Letter_%28Plato%29.

⁶ Available, e.g., at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedo.htm>.

From the time that writing first became available (in about 3000 BCE, with one of the first records being a recipe for making beer!), reports are available about the use of “mind-warping drugs”, including the Hindu’s *soma*, the Zoroastrian’s *homa*, and as readers can find from the internet, Wasson and colleagues have proposed that “a psychoactive brew from mushrooms” was probably used for induction into the “Eleusinian Mysteries” (at Eleusis, a city near Athens) by the ancient Greeks, possibly including Plato.

But whatever the cause might have been (drugs or trauma or...), the result was that Plato “went mystic”, causing humanity an enormous amount of harm, comparable to the harm caused by (the epileptic?) “Saint” Paul (the real founder of Christianity) and by (the brain-damaged?) Muhammad. In his famous cave analogy,⁷ Plato leaves no doubt that he (egotistically and even maniacally) considered himself to be the one who climbed out of the cave and saw “the true nature of reality” in the full light of day, while the rest of us mere mortals were left behind in the fire-lit cave, trying to make sense of shadows on the walls.

Plato’s Forms

As already illustrated, Plato said he wouldn’t write about the Mysteries, but apparently he did give lectures about them, and from the “lecture notes” of Plato’s most famous student, Aristotle, it appears that Plato pursued the craziness promoted by Pythagoras. An example is the following, copied from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (bk. 1, pt. 6):⁸

After the systems we have named [developed by Pythagoras and others] came the philosophy of Plato, which in most respects followed these thinkers, but had peculiarities that distinguished it from the philosophy of the Italians [i.e., the Pythagoreans and the Eleatics]. For, having in his youth first become familiar with Cratylus and with the Heraclitean doctrines (that all sensible things are ever in a state of flux and there is no knowledge about them), these views he [Plato] held even in later years. Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal [in] these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions; Plato accepted his teaching, but held that the problem applied not to sensible things but to entities of another kind – for this reason, that the common definition could not be a definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing [consistent with what Plato had learned of the thoughts of Heraclitus].

⁷ See, e.g., <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix11ChangingIdeas.pdf>.

⁸ Available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.html>.

Things of this other sort [fixed things], then, he called *Ideas* [or *Forms*], and sensible things, he said, were all named after these, and in virtue of a relation to these; for the many existed by participation in the *Ideas* [or *Forms*] that have the same name as they. Only the name ‘participation’ was new; for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by ‘imitation’ of numbers, and Plato says they exist by ‘participation’, changing the name. But what the ‘participation’ or the ‘imitation’ of the *Forms* could be, they left an open question.

Further, besides sensible things and *Forms*, he [Plato] says there are the objects of mathematics, which occupy an intermediate position, differing from sensible things in being eternal and unchangeable, [differing] from *Forms* in that there are many alike, while the *Form* itself is in each case unique. Since the *Forms* were the causes of all other things, he thought their elements were the elements of all things. As matter, the great and the small were principles; as essential reality, the One; for from the great and the small, by participation in the One, come the Numbers. But he agreed with the Pythagoreans in saying that the One is substance and not a predicate [or description] of something else; and in saying that the Numbers are the causes of the reality of other things, he agreed with them...

In his book *On the Soul* (bk. I, pt. 2), Aristotle described Plato’s views more succinctly:⁹

Again he [Plato] puts his view in yet other terms: Mind is the monad [unity, i.e., 1], science or knowledge the dyad [i.e., 2] (because it goes undeviatingly from one point to another), opinion the number of the plane [3], sensation the number of the solid [4]; the numbers are by him expressly identified with the *Forms* themselves or principles, and are formed out of the elements...

It seems appropriate to add a few comments about what poor-old Plato was apparently trying to do, namely, trying to identify “the fundamental stuff behind reality”.

As I mentioned in the prior post, for approximately 200 years prior to Plato people speculated about such “fundamental stuff”. Thus,

- Thales (c.624–c.545 BCE) claimed it was water,
- Anaximander (c.610–c.546 BCE) claimed it was something indefinite, which he claimed contains opposites and which he called *apeiron*,
- Anaximenes of Miletus (c.585–c.528 BCE) claimed it was air,

⁹ Available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html>.

- Heraclitus (c.535–c.475 BCE) claimed it was fire (which may have been symbolic for “change”),
- Anaxagoras (c.500–c.428 BCE) claimed it was *nous* (God’s thoughts),
- Others claimed it was various combinations (e.g., earth, air, water, and fire) and processes, and
- Democritus (c.460–c.370 BCE) claimed it was atoms and space.

Plato apparently adopted Pythagoras’ claim that the “fundamental stuff behind reality” was *Ideas* or *Forms*, which could be represented by numbers. Incidentally, today, most physicists would probably say that “the fundamental reality” (at least in our universe) is that “energy exists and exchanges”, whatever energy might be!

As for more details about Plato’s Theory of Forms, it’s unfortunately difficult to find a concise summary in Plato’s works – because Plato apparently never wrote anything concisely! In particular (as I partially reviewed in an Chapter **Q2**), Plato pretends in *The Republic* that Socrates is discussing various ideas with a variety of other people, and from the resulting “dialogues”, some idea of Plato’s Forms is available. The following pieces are illustrative.

First... let me remind you of the distinction... between [on the one hand] the multiplicity of things that we call good or beautiful or whatever it may be and, on the other hand, Goodness itself or Beauty itself and so on. Corresponding to each of these sets of many things, we postulate a single Form or Real Essence, as we call it.

With this, Plato is apparently proposing that, because there are a number of cases of, e.g., “good”, therefore (according to Plato), there is such a “thing” as Good (with a capital ‘G’, no less!), which has the property (unsurprisingly!) of “Goodness”. Thereby, he apparently didn’t appreciate that ‘goodness’ is subjective and depends on the subject’s objectives. Even more strangely, Plato proposed that this ideal “Good” actually exists (not just as ideas but in reality!) – and even worse, that “the Good” is what “believers” call ‘God’ – and still worse, that if people didn’t believe him, then they should be executed!

Now if readers think that Plato couldn’t have been so dumb and so horrible as I’ve suggested, then I invite them to read the junk that Plato wrote. Below, I’ll comment on a tiny percentage of his writings, mostly from his

most notorious book, *The Republic*. To start, what follows is a sample of Plato's illogical, despicable, despotic writings, to which I've added some notes in brackets.

It [Goodness] is the cause of knowledge and truth. [What nonsense! “It {Goodness}” isn't “the cause of knowledge” or “truth”. Knowledge is gained by people trying to understand. Closed-system truth is defined by whoever concocts the game (e.g., games of poker, baseball, pure math, or various religion). Open-system truth is what people try to determine – and it's apparently done best by applying the scientific method.] And so, while you may think of it [Goodness] as an object of knowledge [What stupidity! Who considers “Goodness {or goodness} as an object of knowledge”? “Goodness” is used to describe some object or process, e.g., Plato's thinking is the opposite from “goodness”!], you will do well to regard it as something beyond truth and knowledge and, precious as these both are, of still higher worth... [Objects of knowledge] derive from the Good not only their power of being known, but their very being and reality; and Goodness is not the same thing as being, but even beyond being, surpassing it in dignity and power.

There's so much drivel in Plato's final sentence, above, that it's difficult to know where to start criticizing it! But starting with the first claim, consider: “{Objects of knowledge} derive from the Good... their power of being known.” Hello? Suppose my “object of knowledge” is how to correct Plato's dumb statements. I suppose that they do have some “power of being known”, but this power isn't “derive {d} from the Good.” Their “power of being known” is derived from so many people, over so many centuries, failing to see that what Plato is peddling is pure bunk; therefore, the “power” is derived not from anything good but from ignorance, gullibility, acquiescence to authority, etc., none of which is beneficial to the continuation of humans, i.e., it's derived from what most humans consider to be evil, not good. Then there's “Goodness is not the same thing as being.” Duh. Who said it was? And then the finale: “[Goodness is] even beyond being, surpassing it in dignity and power.” Hello? Pray tell what “beyond being” means? Does Plato mean it's just an idea? If so, then how does an idea surpass “being... in dignity and power”? I know a lot of ideas that aren't dignified at all (funny how easily so many examples come to mind when reading Plato!), and as for the “power” of such ideas, apparently Plato never thought about how wimpy such ideas would be if the Sun's power switched off! As I wrote in Chapter Q1, it's easy to imagine how one person's mind can “go around the bend” as badly as Plato's did (especially if he used mind-warping drugs), but what's so amazing is that so many people (over so many centuries!) followed him around the same bend.

The source of Plato's leaps over logic seems to be simply his use of a capital letter. Thus, what he does, first, is play some grammatical games, starting with a perfectly good adjective (as an example, 'red', as in "the red barn"). Next, he turns the adjective into a noun (as in "the barn's redness is fading"). Then, he uses it as a subject – complete with a capital letter ("Yet, the Redness persists!"). Once he has the capital letter, he then gives this "noun" any attribute he desires: "For this Redness is the best of colors: the color of the most beautiful roses and sunsets, the color that transmits heat throughout the universe, the color that gives power to blood, and therefore – as must be obvious to all – Redness is the supreme color, chosen by the gods themselves"! Then, still worse, in *The Republic* Plato takes the next horrible step in his idiocy, which in this case would be: "People who refuse to recognize Red to be the supreme color should be executed."

Now, I'm certainly not the first person to criticize Plato's nonsense. One of the most penetrating criticisms is contained in a story about the Greek philosopher Diogenes (c.400–c.325 BCE), the most famous of the Cynics (the one who, readers might remember, was famous for wandering around Athens, "searching for an honest man"). The following is quoted from David Quinn's webpage:¹⁰

Plato was discoursing on his *Theory of Ideas* [or *Forms*] and, pointing to the cups on the table before him, said while there are many cups in the world, there is only one 'idea' of a cup, and this 'cupness' precedes the existence of all particular cups.

"I can see the cup on the table," interrupted Diogenes, "but I can't see the 'cupness'."

"That's because you have the eyes to see the cup," said Plato, "but", tapping his head with his forefinger, "you don't have the intellect with which to comprehend 'cupness'."

Diogenes walked up to the table, examined a cup and, looking inside, asked, "Is it empty?"

Plato nodded.

"Where is the 'emptiness' that precedes this empty cup?" asked Diogenes.

Plato allowed himself a few moments to collect his thoughts, but Diogenes reached over and, tapping Plato's head with his finger, said, "I think you will find: here is the 'emptiness'."

¹⁰ At <http://members.optushome.com.au/davidquinn000/Diogenes Folder/Diogenes.html>.

I don't know if, in the subsequent ~2400 years, anyone clobbered Plato's *Theory of Forms* so well as did Diogenes!

Plato's Ideas About Souls, Gods, and Creation

Now, although it's essentially impossible to show details about any of Plato's ideas without quoting pages and pages of rambling "dialogue", I'll try to get by with just sketching his ideas about souls and gods, etc. In Chapter **Q2** (starting on p.16), I already went through the idiocy of Plato's hypothesis about souls – as well as some of the horrible consequences, because so many Christians, Muslims, etc. adopted the same nonsense. In summary, Plato took huge leaps past logic to "demonstrate" (or more likely, to copy from Pythagoras – who in turn seems to have copied the idea from Zoroastrian priests, who in turn may have copied the idea from Egyptian or Indian priests!) that humans have "souls" that "existed before we were born" (because we know the "ideal Forms" without ever experiencing them while we're alive). He concludes his idiocy with the asinine statement:

So now there is no longer any difficulty in stating expressly that... concerning all the stars and the moon, and concerning the years and months and all seasons, [no] other account [can] be given than this... namely, that, inasmuch as it has been shown they are all caused by one or more souls, which are good also with all goodness, we shall declare these souls to be the gods...

As for Plato's proposal of how his principal god allegedly created everything, I expect that, without reading Plato's junk for themselves, readers would have difficulty believing that anyone could propose such nonsense. Therefore, as a sample, consider Plato's following "explanation" (as given in his book *Timaeus*)¹¹ for how his God created everything (and why!), to which I've again added notes in brackets and some paragraph breaks.

Let me tell you then why the creator made this world of generation. He was good [Define 'good'! 'Good' is a value, and values can be measured only with respect to some objective. What was your god's objective? Was he bored and wanted to watch how ant-like people struggle to survive? Does he get his kicks from watching people suffer? Was he into voyeurism and just wanted to watch? And if so, how can you describe your wimpy, sadistic, voyeuristic god as 'good'?], and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. [Oh, come off it! Someone (such as you) can be jealous of a person who can think clearly – and that would be good!]

¹¹ Available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>.

And being free from jealousy [Really? Or is your god jealous of people who have the fortitude to struggle to survive in the face of their inevitable death?], he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. [You mean that your egotistical god (desiring that “all things should be as like himself as they could be”) is such a wimp that he couldn’t make it easier for people to survive? Is that “good”?]

This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world [according to the egomaniac Plato], as we shall do well in believing the testimony of wise men: God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable. [Do you mean that there are some things that your god is powerless to do? Don’t you worry that your god will reprimand you for describing him as a wimp?] Wherefore also finding the whole visible sphere not at rest [What “visible sphere”? Do you mean that there was something here before god? Who or what created it? And for that matter, who created your wimpy god?], but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other. [So, your god only cleans up messes – sort of like your mother? Yah, I can believe that: your mother is your god. But the question is: who will clean up the mess you’re now making?]

Now the deeds of the best could never be or have been other than the fairest [Define ‘fairest’! It’s another value judgment – with meaning only relative to some goal. Was your god’s goal that all the gods would have the same (voyeuristic) view of the people? That would be “fair”! Why should it be only your god who gets to watch people have sex?!]; and the creator, reflecting on the things which are by nature visible [Do you mean that your wimpy god can’t see things in the infrared or ultraviolet?!], found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole [What a crazy use of the word ‘fairer’! Do you mean ‘better’? And if you mean ‘better’, then again I’d ask: measured against what objective? For example, for those creatures living in the oceans, then much better than to have the “intelligence” you claim to possess is to have gills!]; and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. [Oh, do tell! And what data, pray tell, support your speculation that living things have ‘souls’? Oh, sorry, I forgot: you don’t have a clue what the word ‘data’ means, do you? Okay, then, let’s see where your wild speculation about the existence of ‘souls’ leads you.]

For which reason, when he was framing the universe [So, now, you have your god just ‘framing’ the universe! Someone or something else created it (I presume), and your god just puts a frame around it!], he put intelligence in soul [Oh neat! In an unknown, unspecified, thing called ‘soul’ (whose existence in reality isn’t supported by a shred of data), your god manages to stuff ‘intelligence’ into it. If he (and you) wouldn’t mind some advice, I’d suggest that such a move wasn’t a very intelligent thing to do!], and soul in body [Oh great: inside bodies, your god stuffs an undefined, unmeasured, hypothetical thing called ‘soul’ that contains some unspecified type of ‘intelligence’ – to do what, breathe underwater? And I wonder if your god has the

intelligence to see that you're just bandying about meaningless words, conveying no information, and demonstrating zero intelligence?], **that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best.** ['Fairest' for what? 'Best' for what? (Besides possibly lulling people into 'thinking' that you know what the devil you're talking about.)]

Wherefore, using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God. [The "language of probability"? Somebody's gotta be kidding! And all of this total nonsense resulted in your proposing that the world "became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence"? The world is living? In what sense do you use the word 'living'? In what sense do you use the word 'intelligence'? Other living things reproduce. Does the world? Other living things try to continue to live. Does the world? 'Intelligence' means "the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills." Does the world do that? Do you feel no constraint, whatsoever, in your choice of words?!]

This being supposed [Ah! So, all the above was just a supposition, as in, "Let's pretend." And yet, later, you'll propose that people who don't believe in your god should be executed! But if it's all just pretend, then who but an idiot – or better, an egotistical maniac – would propose to kill people who refuse to play your game of make believe!], **let us proceed to the next stage: In the likeness of what animal did the Creator make the world?** [Hello? If your god is just now creating the world, what's with the animals? Where did they come from? Where do they live? I mean, it's one thing to put the cart in front of the horse, but this is ridiculous: as yet, there are no horses!] **It would be an unworthy thing to liken it [the world] to any nature which exists as a part only; for nothing can be beautiful which is like any imperfect thing** [What astounding nonsense! The nutcake Plato is claiming that something "which exists as a part only" is imperfect. Duh. How about an atom of someone's body. Is the atom "imperfect"?! In addition, he's saying that something that exists only as a part can't be "beautiful". Who in hell is he to say what's "beautiful"? I say that the part of my daughter's hair glistening in the Sun is beautiful – and to be blunt, I don't give a damn if anyone disagrees with me.]; **but let us suppose the world to be the very image of that whole of which all other animals both individually and in their tribes are portions.** [You're imagining that the world is the image of all animals? Boy, you have one powerfully weird imagination!]

For the original of the universe contains in itself all intelligible beings [Oh? Do tell! But first, pray tell, what the devil do you mean by "the original of the universe"?! Is this one just a replication of "the original"? Where did "the original" come from? And this "original" contains all intelligible beings? Are you and I and everyone else in "the original of the universe"? And, just out of idle curiosity: where did you say the data are that support your crazy ideas?!], **just as this world comprehends us and all other visible creatures.** [Hello? This world "comprehends us"? 'Comprehends' in the dictionary sense of "to grasp mentally; understand"? Have you considered seeing a psychiatrist?]

For the Deity, intending to make this world like the fairest and most perfect of intelligible beings, framed one visible animal comprehending within itself all other animals of a kindred nature. [Plato: if you're not just clowning around, you really gotta have your head examined; you're claiming that the world is an "animal"?!]

Are we right in saying that there is one world, or that they are many and infinite? [I have a suggestion: why don't you seek some data, rather than just continue with your wild speculations.] There must be one only, if the created copy is to accord with the original. [It's astounding that a single sentence can contain so much stupidity! It means, obviously, that it's possible to make only one photocopy of any document. Thanks a lot, Plato: you just decimated my Xerox and Toshiba stocks!] For that which includes all other intelligible creatures cannot have a second or companion; in that case there would be need of another living being which would include both, and of which they would be parts, and the likeness would be more truly said to resemble not them, but that other which included them. In order, then, that the world might be solitary, like the perfect animal, the creator made not two worlds or an infinite number of them; but there is and ever will be one only-begotten and created heaven. [Although, come to think of it, what's really astounding is why any sane person would ever have paid any attention to the idiocies Plato produced. And so, given that this crap is the basis of Christianity and Islam, it seems reasonable to question the sanity of Christians and Muslims!]

Now that which is created is of necessity corporeal, and also visible and tangible. [Really? I can create ideas (just as you obviously can) none of which need be "corporeal" or "visible and tangible". And in your case, the ideas are definitely not sensible!] And nothing is visible where there is no fire [Hello? Have you ever seen a snowflake?!], or tangible which has no solidity [Hello? Have you ever felt the wind and rain on your face?], and nothing is solid without earth [Hello? Have you ever gone skating on ice, i.e., frozen water?]. Wherefore also God in the beginning of creation made the body of the universe to consist of fire and earth. [Hello? What was burning – besides your other brain in "the original universe"?] But two things cannot be rightly put together without a third [I guess Plato was into group sex!]; there must be some bond of union between them. And the fairest bond [I wonder if he meant to write "the fairest blonde"!] is that which makes the most complete fusion of itself and the things which it combines; and proportion is best adapted to effect such a union. [Maybe that means he likes women of particular sizes and proportions!] For whenever in any three numbers, whether cube or square, there is a mean, which is to the last term what the first term is to it; and again, when the mean is to the first term as the last term is to the mean – then the mean becoming first and last, and the first and last both becoming means, they will all of them of necessity come to be the same, and having become the same with one another will be all one. [Wow! Talk about kinky sex! And wouldn't you know that he'd try to squeeze some math into his machinations?!]

If the universal frame had been created a surface only and having no depth, a single mean would have sufficed to bind together itself and the other terms; but now, as the world must be solid [imagine how it would have shaken up poor Plato if he had learned that most of the Earth (including the oceans and the Earth's interior) is liquid!], and solid bodies are always compacted not by one mean but by two [now, there's a bizarre theory that fortunately no longer pollutes the world!], God placed water and air in the mean between fire and earth, and made them to have the same proportion so far as was possible (as fire is to air so is air to water, and as air is to water so is water to earth); and thus he bound and put together a visible and tangible heaven. [Damn, but that's gotta be close to the craziest gibberish ever concocted!] And for these reasons, and out of such elements which are in number four, the body of the world was created, and it was harmonized by proportion, and therefore has the spirit of friendship; and having been reconciled to itself, it was indissoluble by the hand of any other than the framer.

Sorry, but that's all of Plato's crap on the creation of the world that I can take. Yet, I should give credit where credit is due. Thus, Plato accomplished what many would consider to be impossible: he managed to make the Bible's creation myths look good!

And then there's Plato's crazy "proof" of the existence of each person's "immortal soul", given in *The Republic* (bk. X), in an alleged discussion between Socrates & Glaucon:

Are you not aware, I [allegedly Socrates, at least according to Plato] said, that the soul of man is immortal and imperishable?

He [Glaucon] looked at me in astonishment, and said: No, by heaven: And are you really prepared to maintain this?

Yes, I said, I ought to be, and you too – there is no difficulty in proving it.

I see a great difficulty; but I should like to hear you state this argument of which you make so light.

Listen then.

I am attending.

There is a thing which you call good and another which you call evil?

Yes, he replied.

Would you agree with me in thinking that the corrupting and destroying element is the evil, and the saving and improving element the good?

Yes. [Really? What about that which corrupts and destroys viruses? Care to define ‘evil’ and ‘good’?]

And you admit that every thing has a good and also an evil; as ophthalmia is the evil of the eyes and disease of the whole body; as mildew is of corn, and rot of timber, or rust of copper and iron: in everything, or in almost everything, there is an inherent evil and disease?

Yes, he said. [Come off it! It depends on the definitions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’.]

And anything which is infected by any of these evils is made evil, and at last wholly dissolves and dies?

True. [No it’s not! For example, we who want to live describe that which threatens our lives to be evil, but such a description is subjective. A virus, in and of itself, isn’t evil; it, too, just “wants” to survive. To the virus, that which threatens it (e.g., modern medicine) is evil!]

The vice and evil which is inherent in each is the destruction of each; and if this does not destroy them there is nothing else that will; for good certainly will not destroy them, nor again, that which is neither good nor evil.

Certainly not. [What garbage! First, it isn’t necessarily correct that “the vice and evil which is inherent in each is the destruction of each”; for example, there are a huge number of causes of the destruction of humans (from floods to earthquakes), none of which reflect inherent vices and evils of humans. Second, we humans might describe as “good”, for example, that which kills some dangerous virus, but for the virus, our “good” is its “evil”!]

If, then, we find any nature which having this inherent corruption cannot be dissolved or destroyed, we may be certain that of such a nature there is no destruction?

That may be assumed. [Well, it may be, but it would certainly be dumb to do so! For example, as far as is known, an iron atom has a number of “inherent corruptions” (in that its electrons would merge with the protons in its nucleus, except for the need to preserve the electrons’ angular momenta, and its protons would repel one another, destroying the nucleus, except for the strong, attractive, nuclear force. Yet, although we find that the iron atom “having this inherent corruption” does not dissolve or self-destruct, the iron nucleus can be destroyed, e.g., by bombarding it with neutrons. Consequently, since at least one such case exists (although no doubt there are thousands more!), it’s incorrect to say “we may be certain that of such a nature there is no destruction.”]

Well, I said, and is there no evil which corrupts the soul?

Yes, he said, there are all the evils which we were just now passing in review: unrighteousness, intemperance, cowardice, ignorance. [Depending on what might be meant by the undefined word ‘soul’!]

But does any of these dissolve or destroy her? – and here do not let us fall into the error of supposing that the unjust and foolish man, when he is detected, perishes through his own injustice, which is an evil of the soul. Take the analogy of the body: The evil of the body is a disease which wastes and reduces and annihilates the body; and all the things of which we were just now speaking come to annihilation through their own corruption attaching to them and inhering in them and so destroying them. Is not this true?

Yes. [No: not only is it untrue, it’s meaningless!]

Consider the soul in like manner. Does the injustice or other evil which exists in the soul waste and consume her? Do they by attaching to the soul and inhering in her at last bring her to death, and so separate her from the body?

Certainly not. [What nonsense! Suppose (in contrast to these word games) one considers only those concepts corresponding to things and processes whose existence (in reality) can be measured, e.g., rather than ‘soul’, consider ‘character’, and as an instance of ‘character’, consider “the ability to get along with others”, measures of which can be defined and made. Then, obviously this measure of a person’s “soul” (i.e., “the ability to get along with others”) can, in fact, be “corrupted” (or diminished or impaired), e.g., if the person is a murderer, thief, philanderer, etc.]

And yet, I said, it is unreasonable to suppose that anything can perish from without through affection of external evil which could not be destroyed from within by a corruption of its own?

[And so on this rambling nonsense continues, not worth that paper it’s written on and certainly not worth reading in more detail, leading to Plato’s:]

...But the soul which cannot be destroyed by an evil, whether inherent or external, must exist forever, and if existing forever, must be immortal?

Certainly.

That is the conclusion, I said; and, if a true conclusion, then the souls must always be the same, for if none be destroyed they will not diminish in number. Neither will they increase, for the increase of the immortal natures must come from something mortal, and all things would thus end in immortality.

Plato’s idiocy about “immortal souls” (quoted above) is obviously just word games. In reality, the “souls” that Plato postulates exist not in reality but only as ideas – and illogical, nonsensical ideas at that!

As Thomas Jefferson wrote (when he was 71 years old) in his 5 July 1814 letter to John Adams (his friend and also a former president):

Having more leisure... for reading, I amused myself with reading seriously Plato's *Republic*. I am wrong, however, in calling it amusement, for it was the heaviest task-work I ever went through. I had occasionally before taken up some of his other works, but scarcely ever had patience to go through a whole dialogue. While wading through the whimsies, the puerilities, and unintelligible jargon of this work, I laid it down often to ask myself how it could have been that the world should have so long consented to give reputation to such nonsense as this?

Plato's Utopia

Actually, though, Plato's "whimsies, puerilities, and unintelligible jargon" leads him to much worse than his speculations about souls and gods: ideologue that he was, it led him to promote a horrible dictatorship, as I'll outline below. In what follows, though, I won't add detailed, sarcastic comments. Instead, in the main, I'll let Plato's evil (his idiocy), which follows by deduction from his bizarre, unverified and unverifiable assumptions, speak for itself. In the main, I'll just group his ideas under the listed headings.

1. Plato's proposal to censor ideas

In attempting to address the problem of evil, Plato proposed that God would be depicted only as good. The following is from *The Republic*, bk. II, with the dialogue allegedly between Socrates and Adeimantus:

Then the first thing [allegedly said by Socrates] will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorized ones only. Let them fashion the mind with such tales, even more fondly than they mould the body with their hands; but most of those which are now in use must be discarded...

But which stories do you mean, he said; and what fault do you find with them?
[Adeimantus allegedly asks.]

A fault which is most serious, I [allegedly Socrates] said; the fault of telling a lie, and, what is more, a bad lie.

But when is this fault committed?

Whenever an erroneous representation is made of the nature of gods and heroes – as when a painter paints a portrait not having the shadow of a likeness to the original.

Yes, he said, that sort of thing is certainly very blamable; but what are the stories which you mean?

First of all, I said, there was that greatest of all lies, in high places, which the poet told about Uranus, and which was a bad lie too – I mean what Hesiod says that Uranus did, and how Cronus retaliated on him. The doings of Cronus, and the sufferings which in turn his son inflicted upon him, even if they were true, ought certainly not to be lightly told to young and thoughtless persons; if possible, they had better be buried in silence. But if there is an absolute necessity for their mention, a chosen few might hear them in a mystery, and they should sacrifice not a common pig, but some huge and unprocurable victim; and then the number of the hearers will be very few indeed.

Why, yes, said he, those stories are extremely objectionable.

Yes, Adeimantus, they are stories not to be repeated in our State; the young man should not be told that in committing the worst of crimes he is far from doing anything outrageous; and that even if he chastises his father when does wrong, in whatever manner, he will only be following the example of the first and greatest among the gods.

I entirely agree with you, he said; in my opinion those stories are quite unfit to be repeated...

... all the battles of the gods in Homer – these tales must not be admitted into our State, whether they are supposed to have an allegorical meaning or not. For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts.

There you are right, he replied; but if any one asks where are such models to be found and of what tales are you speaking – how shall we answer him?

I said to him, You and I, Adeimantus, at this moment are not poets, but founders of a State: now the founders of a State ought to know the general forms in which poets should cast their tales, and the limits which must be observed by them, but to make the tales is not their business.

Very true, he said; but what are these forms of theology which you mean?

Something of this kind, I replied: God is always to be represented as he truly is, whatever be the sort of poetry, epic, lyric or tragic, in which the representation is given.

Right.

And is he not truly good? and must he not be represented as such?

Certainly.

And no good thing is hurtful?

No, indeed.

And that which is not hurtful hurts not?

Certainly not.

And that which hurts not does no evil?

No.

And can that which does no evil be a cause of evil?

Impossible.

And the good is advantageous?

Yes.

And therefore the cause of well-being?

Yes.

It follows therefore that the good is not the cause of all things, but of the good only?

Assuredly.

Then God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men. For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him.

That appears to me to be most true, he said.

Then we must not listen to Homer or to any other poet who is guilty of the folly of saying that two casks Lie at the threshold of Zeus, full of lots, one of good, the other of evil lots, and that he to whom Zeus gives a mixture of the two Sometimes meets with evil fortune, at other times with good; but that he to whom is given the cup of unmingled ill, Him wild hunger drives o'er the beauteous earth... he must say that God did what was just and right, and they were the better for being punished; but that

those who are punished are miserable, and that God is the author of their misery – the poet is not to be permitted to say; though he may say that the wicked are miserable because they require to be punished, and are benefited by receiving punishment from God; but that God being good is the author of evil to any one is to be strenuously denied, and not to be said or sung or heard in verse or prose by any one whether old or young in any well-ordered commonwealth. Such a fiction is suicidal, ruinous, impious.

I agree with you, he replied, and am ready to give my assent to the law.

Let this then be one of our rules and principles concerning the gods, to which our poets and reciters will be expected to conform – that God is not the author of all things, but of good only.

That will do, he said.

And what do you think of a second principle? Shall I ask you whether God is a magician, and of a nature to appear insidiously now in one shape, and now in another – sometimes himself changing and passing into many forms, sometimes deceiving us with the semblance of such transformations; or is he one and the same immutably fixed in his own proper image?

Then it is impossible that God should ever be willing to change; being, as is supposed, the fairest and best that is conceivable, every god remains absolutely and for ever in his own form...

Then, although we are admirers of Homer, we do not admire the lying dream which Zeus sends to Agamemnon... These are the kind of sentiments about the gods which will arouse our anger; and he who utters them shall be refused a chorus; neither shall we allow teachers to make use of them in the instruction of the young, meaning, as we do, that our guardians, as far as men can be, should be true worshippers of the gods and like them.

I entirely agree, he said, in these principles, and promise to make them my laws.

2. *Plato's mistaken ideas about heroism and his advocacy of lying*

The following is from *The Republic*, bk. III, allegedly a dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus:

Such then, I said, are our principles of theology – some tales are to be told, and others are not to be told to our disciples from their youth upwards, if we mean them to honor the gods and their parents, and to value friendship with one another.

Yes; and I think that our principles are right, he said.

But if they are to be courageous, must they not learn other lessons besides these, and lessons of such a kind as will take away the fear of death? Can any man be courageous who has the fear of death in him?

Certainly not, he said. [What a horrible, moronic conclusion! The exact opposite is closer to the truth. Courage is not the absence of fear but the ability to face one's fears. If one is unafraid of death (e.g., deluded into imagining "life-after-death"), then it takes no courage to face death. The result is the crazy Islamist's cry: "We love death!" What's courageous is to do what one decides is necessary with full recognition that the result might be the end of one's existence. As I wrote in the previous post: *If you've been brainwashed into believing in a beneficent afterlife, then following clerical orders, it's logically impossible to risk your life and be a hero.* What Plato is promoting is not "courage" but a way to dupe followers to blindly risk their lives to protect the rulers.]

And can he be fearless of death, or will he choose death in battle rather than defeat and slavery, who believes the world below to be real and terrible?

Impossible.

Then we must assume a control over the narrators of this class of tales as well as over the others, and beg them not simply to but rather to commend the world below, intimating to them that their descriptions are untrue, and will do harm to our future warriors.

That will be our duty, he said.

Then, I said, we shall have to obliterate many obnoxious passages, beginning with the verses [from Homer, said by Achilles]

I would rather be a serf on the land of a poor and portionless man than rule over all the dead who have come to naught...

Neither ought our guardians to be given to laughter. For a fit of laughter which has been indulged to excess almost always produces a violent reaction.

So I believe.

Then persons of worth, even if only mortal men, must not be represented as overcome by laughter, and still less must such a representation of the gods be allowed.

Still less of the gods, as you say, he replied.

Then we shall not suffer such an expression to be used about the gods as that of Homer when he describes how

Inextinguishable laughter arose among the blessed gods, when they saw Hephaestus bustling about the mansion.

On your views, we must not admit them...

Again, truth should be highly valued; if, as we were saying, a lie is useless to the gods, and useful only as a medicine to men, then the use of such medicines should be restricted to physicians; private individuals have no business with them.

Clearly not, he said.

Then if any one at all is to have the privilege of lying, the rulers of the State should be the persons; and they, in their dealings either with enemies or with their own citizens, may be allowed to lie for the public good. But nobody else should meddle with anything of the kind; and although the rulers have this privilege, for a private man to lie to them in return is to be deemed a more heinous fault than for the patient or the pupil of a gymnasium not to speak the truth about his own bodily illnesses to the physician or to the trainer, or for a sailor not to tell the captain what is happening about the ship and the rest of the crew, and how things are going with himself or his fellow sailors.

Most true, he said.

If, then, the ruler catches anybody beside himself lying in the State, any of the craftsmen, whether he priest or physician or carpenter, he will punish him for introducing a practice which is equally subversive and destructive of ship or State.

Most certainly, he said, if our idea of the State is ever carried out...

3. Plato's advocacy of communism

From The Republic, bk. III:

Then let us consider what will be their way of life, if they are to realize our idea of them. In the first place, none of them should have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary; neither should they have a private house or store closed against any one who has a mind to enter; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; they should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more; and they will go and live together like soldiers in a camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of the dross which is current among men, and ought not to pollute the divine by any such earthly admixture; for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds, but their own is undefiled. And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them. And this will be their salvation, and they will be the saviors of the State.

But should they ever acquire homes or lands or moneys of their own, they will become housekeepers and husbandmen instead of guardians, enemies and tyrants instead of allies of the other citizens; hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will pass their whole life in much greater terror of internal than of external enemies, and the hour of ruin, both to themselves and to the rest of the State, will be at hand. For all which reasons may we not say that thus shall our State be ordered, and that these shall be the regulations appointed by us for guardians concerning their houses and all other matters?

... The regulations which we are prescribing, my good Adeimantus, are not, as might be supposed, a number of great principles, but trifles all, if care be taken, as the saying is, of the one great thing – a thing, however, which I would rather call, not great, but sufficient for our purpose.

What may that be? he asked.

Education, I said, and nurture: If our citizens are well educated, and grow into sensible men, they will easily see their way through all these, as well as other matters which I omit; such, for example, as marriage, the possession of women and the procreation of children, which will all follow the general principle that friends have all things in common, as the proverb says...

4. Plato's "ideal" dictatorship

From *The Republic*, bk. V & VI, allegedly a dialogue among Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus:

I mean, I replied, that our rulers will find a considerable dose of falsehood and deceit necessary for the good of their subjects: we were saying that the use of all these things regarded as medicines might be of advantage.

And we were very right.

And this lawful use of them seems likely to be often needed in the regulations of marriages and births...

I said: Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils – nor the human race, as I believe – and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon, which I would fain have uttered if it had not seemed too extravagant; for to be convinced that in no other State can there be happiness private or public is indeed a hard thing...

Inasmuch as philosophers only are able to grasp the eternal and unchangeable, and those who wander in the region of the many and variable are not philosophers [And therefore his philosophers grasp nothing, since nothing is eternal and unchangeable!]. . . . And are not those who are verily and indeed wanting in the knowledge of the true being of each thing, and who have in their souls no clear pattern, and are unable as with a painter's eye to look at the absolute truth and to that original to repair, and having perfect vision of the other world to order the laws about beauty, goodness, justice in this, if not already ordered, and to guard and preserve the order of them – are not such persons, I ask, simply blind?

. . . Then, I said, the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all – they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.

What do you mean?

I mean that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labors and honors, whether they are worth having or not.

But is not this unjust? he said; ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better?

You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

True, he said, I had forgotten.

Observe, Glaucon, that there will be no injustice in compelling our philosophers to have a care and providence of others [Oh, the poor philosophers!]; we shall explain to them that in other States, men of their class are not obliged to share in the toils of politics: and this is reasonable, for they grow up at their own sweet will, and the government would rather not have them. Being self-taught, they cannot be expected to show any gratitude for a culture which they have never received. But we have brought you into the world to be rulers of the hive, kings of yourselves and of the other citizens, and have educated you far better and more perfectly than they have been educated, and you are better able to share in the double duty. Wherefore each of you, when his turn comes, must go down to the general underground abode, and get the habit of seeing in the dark. When you have acquired the habit, you will see ten thousand times better than the inhabitants of the den, and you will know what the several images are, and what they represent, because you have seen the beautiful and

just and good in their truth. And thus our State which is also yours will be a reality, and not a dream only, and will be administered in a spirit unlike that of other States, in which men fight with one another about shadows only and are distracted in the struggle for power, which in their eyes is a great good. Whereas the truth is that the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed, and the State in which they are most eager, the worst.

5. *Plato's proposed punishments for people who dare to think for themselves*

From his last book, the *Laws*,¹² bk. X, allegedly spoken by “The Athenian Stranger”:

After the prelude shall follow a discourse, which will be the interpreter of the law; this shall proclaim to all impious persons: that they must depart from their ways and go over to the pious. And to those who disobey, let the law about impiety be as follows: If a man is guilty of any impiety in word or deed, any one who happens to present shall give information to the magistrates, in aid of the law; and let the magistrates who first receive the information bring him before the appointed court according to the law; and if a magistrate, after receiving information, refuses to act, he shall be tried for impiety at the instance of any one who is willing to vindicate the laws; and if any one be cast, the court shall estimate the punishment of each act of impiety; and let all such criminals be imprisoned. There shall be three prisons in the state: the first of them is to be the common prison in the neighborhood of the agora for the safe-keeping of the generality of offenders; another is to be in the neighborhood of the nocturnal council, and is to be called the “House of Reformation”; another, to be situated in some wild and desolate region in the centre of the country, shall be called by some name expressive of retribution.

Now, men fall into impiety from three causes, which have been already mentioned, and from each of these causes arise two sorts of impiety, in all six, which are worth distinguishing, and should not all have the same punishment. For he who does not believe in Gods, and yet has a righteous nature, hates the wicked and dislikes and refuses to do injustice, and avoids unrighteous men, and loves the righteous. But they who besides believing that the world is devoid of Gods are intemperate, and have at the same time good memories and quick wits, are worse; although both of them are unbelievers, much less injury is done by the one than by the other. The one may talk loosely about the Gods and about sacrifices and oaths, and perhaps by laughing at other men he may make them like himself, if he be not punished. But the other who holds the same opinions and is called a clever man, is full of stratagem and deceit – men of this class deal in prophecy and jugglery of all kinds, and out of their ranks sometimes come tyrants and demagogues and generals and hierophants of private mysteries and the Sophists, as they are termed, with their ingenious devices. There are many kinds of unbelievers, but two only for whom legislation is required; one the hypocritical sort, whose crime is deserving of death many times over, while the other needs only bonds and admonition.

¹² Available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.mb.txt>.

In like manner also the notion that the Gods take no thought of men produces two other sorts of crimes, and the notion that they may be propitiated produces two more. Assuming these divisions, let those who have been made what they are only from want of understanding, and not from malice or an evil nature, be placed by the judge in the House of Reformation, and ordered to suffer imprisonment during a period of not less than five years. And in the meantime let them have no intercourse with the other citizens, except with members of the nocturnal council, and with them let them converse with a view to the improvement of their soul's health. And when the time of their imprisonment has expired, if any of them be of sound mind let him be restored to sane company, but if not, and if he be condemned a second time, let him be punished with death.

Which, then, is surely the lowest to which any student has ever sunk: in the above, Plato in essence argues that his teacher, Socrates, deserved to die! And perhaps recognizing what he had done, he decided (for the first time?) to put his words not in the mouth of Socrates but in the mouth of “the Athenian Stranger”.

In overview, in *The Republic* the ideologue Plato describes his utopia, i.e., what he considers to be an “ideal” government, complete with philosophers (such as him, of course) as rulers and with censorship, indoctrination, breeding humans for assigned roles, infiltrators and informants, and prosecution (including execution) of “deviants” – just as in Orwell's *1984*. Similar to all ideologues, Plato was certain that he knew best how others should live their lives. During the subsequent 2400 years, tyrants have instigated concepts similar to those in Plato's *Republic* to create their own utopias (for themselves!), including all Christian and Muslim theocrats and communist and fascist dictators. Indeed, *The Republic* is still the blueprint used by the collusions of clerics and dictators in many Muslim countries, the worst examples being in Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Which brings to mind another important paragraph in the letter from Jefferson to Adams (quoted above), since it demonstrates that Jefferson saw some of the horrors that were caused by the adoption of Plato's ideas by the Abrahamic religions. To this Jefferson quotation, I've added a few notes in brackets and the italics.

In truth, he [Plato] is one of the race of genuine sophists, who has escaped the oblivion of his brethren, first by the elegance of his diction, but chiefly by the adoption and incorporation of his whimsies into the body of... Christianity [and all the Abrahamic religions]. His foggy mind is forever presenting the semblances of

objects which, half seen through a mist, can be defined neither in form nor dimensions. Yet this, which should have consigned him to early oblivion, really procured him immortality of fame and reverence. *The Christian priesthood... [and earlier, Jewish clerics, and later, Muslim clerics] saw in the mysticism of Plato materials with which they might build up an artificial system which might, from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power, and pre-eminence...*

But Jefferson apparently couldn't foresee how much worse Plato's plague would harm humanity. As Jefferson wrote (essentially on his deathbed, declining an invitation to attend the 4th of July celebration in 1826):

May it be to the world, what I believe it will be (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form, which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion.

All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.

Yet, as we now know, subsequent ideologues [such as Marx, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and various ayatollahs (such as Khomeini), would-be caliphs (such as bin Laden) and other demagogues] arose, “booted and spurred, ready to ride [the mass of mankind] legitimately, by the grace of God [or some other phantom of Plato's fictitious Forms]”, trampling human rights, fanatically trying to create their own utopias, similar to the one described in Plato's horrible book, *The Republic*. In fact, if it weren't for the existence of the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and other, similar, damnable “holy books”, I would classify *The Republic* as the most horrible book ever written – or, as a minimum, down there with other trash, such as Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Khomeini's *Islamic Government*, and the Muslim Brotherhood's *Milestones*. All such books are similar, because all are written by ideologues with thoughts imprisoned by their own versions of Plato's Forms, committed more to the closed-system “Truth” of their ideas than to the idea of open-system “truth”.¹³

¹³ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/T1_Truth_&_Knowledge.pdf.

For example, the (Shiite) leader of the Iranian revolution and subsequent dictator Khomeini wrote regarding Plato:¹⁴

In the field of divinity, he [Plato] has grave and solid views...

Sure he did: as solid as his fictitious Forms! In addition, similar to Platonic megalomaniacs before and since (such as Lenin and bin Laden), Khomeini proposed:

Establishing the Islamic state worldwide belongs to the great goals of the revolution.

Currently, members of the (Sunni) Muslim Brotherhood¹⁵ vigorously (but surreptitiously) apply their own version of Plato's Forms, with one of their goals being (as I'll detail in a later post in this series):

The process of settlement [in Western nations]... a kind of grand *Jihad* in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and "sabotaging" its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious...

I expect that Plato would have enthusiastically supported members of the Muslim Brotherhood – and Jefferson would have forcefully deported them!

[To be continued...]

¹⁴ From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khomeini>.

¹⁵ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood.