

THE CONCEPT OF PLACE IN PLATONIC ONTOLOGY

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Abstract: In Platonic ontology, all beings, both the visible or physical and the invisible or metaphysical ones, are located *somewhere*. Why however does Plato attribute such importance to the concept of place and in what specific way should we exactly consider this need in general of Plato to locate all beings without exception in a certain place? This is the main question which is elaborated in this paper. Through the attempt to give an answer to it, that which is in essence being sought, is to make it evident that, for Plato, “Being” and “place” are concepts inseparable from each other, and that the general concept of place cannot be identified with physical, geometric space.

Keywords: Plato, visible, invisible, place, Being, Ideas, somewhere

ONTOLOGY AS TOPOLOGY

Platonic ontology in its entirety is -one could say- a topology. This characterization is based on the fact that, what Plato achieves in essence through his ontology, is a topographic division of Being into two levels: the visible or physical and the invisible or metaphysical. On these two levels, or in these two *places*, are clearly placed, each in its own place, the two kinds of beings which, according to Plato, exist. These are those two kinds of beings into which the totality of beings is divided, and to which Plato repeatedly refers in his various dialogues, up to and including the last ones. In other words, it seems that Being and place are, for Plato, inseparable concepts. All beings, the visible and corporeal beings, and the invisible and incorporeal ones, are, according to him, located *somewhere*.

Why however does Plato attribute such importance to the concept of place and in what specific way should we exactly consider this inseparable correlation between Being and place in Platonic ontology, and this need in general of Plato to locate all beings without exception in a certain *place*? In what way, moreover, should we precisely

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understand the particular place or location of each one of the two kinds of beings that exist? What is exactly the meaning of the concept itself of "place" in each one of these cases? Has the place of the Platonic Ideas the same characteristics and the same status as the place of visible beings? Is the place of the Ideas the same as the place of the souls? And why in the first place does Plato locate the Ideas somewhere, since they are incorporeal and do not occupy any kind of physical space? Why do the Ideas need to be located by him somewhere? And if this "somewhere" of the Ideas is elsewhere from the sensible things, how exactly should the relationship between the Ideas and the sensible things in Platonic ontology be interpreted? These are the main questions among other specific issues as well, that will be elaborated in this paper and to which this paper will try to respond.

But before proceeding to this attempt, it is essential, first of all, as regards this Platonic ontological division of Being into two kinds of beings -on which the topographic division of Being into two levels is based-, to point out, albeit indicatively, certain characteristic examples that can be encountered in the Platonic dialogues.

THE ONTOLOGICAL DIVISION OF BEINGS INTO TWO KINDS

In Plato's *Phaedo*, to begin with, it is indeed clearly stated that beings are of two kinds: "δύο εἶδη τῶν ὄντων, τό μὲν ὄρατόν, τό δέ ἀιδέζ" (*Phaedo*, 79). "Ταῦτα διττά εἶδη, ὄρατόν, νοητόν", is stressed also in Book VI of the *Republic* (509d), while in another extract from the same Book the same division is underlined: "τά μὲν δὴ ὄρασθαι [...], νοεῖσθαι δ' οὐ, τάς δ' αὖ ἰδέας νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὄρασθαι δ' οὐ" (Ibid. 507b). Plato's *Philebus* reformulates the classic Platonic division of beings into two kinds, as follows: "ἔστόν δὴ τινε δύο, τό μὲν αὐτό καθ' αὐτό, τό δ' αἰεὶ ἐφιέμενον ἄλλου" (two are the kinds of things which exist: one is that which exists by itself, as such; the other is that which always tends towards another thing, *Philebus*, 53d). That which tends towards another thing is anything that has birth, anything that comes into being and dies. It is the becoming itself which tends towards the Essence, which tends towards rendering itself identical to the unalterable Essence, without ever succeeding, remaining always only similar to it, but never identifying itself with it. That is also why in extract 54a, this same dialogue, *Philebus*, distinguishes once again clearly, in the totality of beings, as

two kinds different from each other, genesis from Essence: "ἐν μὲν τι γένεσιν πάντων, τὴν δὲ οὐσίαν ἕτερον ἔν". Plato's *Timaeus* points out the same distinction in the following way: "ἐν μὲν εἶναι τό κατὰ ταῦτά εἶδος ἔχον, [...] ἀόρατον δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναίσθητον, [...] τό δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὁμοίον τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον, αἰσθητόν" (that which is always the same as itself, invisible and not sensible, is one thing; that which is homonymous and similar to that one thing, is a second thing, and sensible, *Timaeus*, 52).

THE TOPOGRAPHIC DIVISION OF BEINGS INTO A *HERE* AND A *THERE*

This fact, according to which these two kinds of beings, as Plato perceives them -on the one hand, the invisible and intelligible Ideas or Essences, which, as such, are at the same time always identical to themselves and unchanging, unborn and imperishable, and, on the other hand, the visible or sensible kind of beings, or, in other words, the things which, as such, are at the same time always changing, subject to birth and to death-, due precisely to the different and essentially opposite ontological characteristics between them, cannot have and do not have the same place of origin, nor the same place of existence, we are able to deduce from extracts deriving mainly from *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and the *Republic*, to which reference will be made below.

Before moving on to these references however, it is necessary at this point to note that, as it is of course commonly understood, according to Plato, despite the ontological opposition between the invisible Ideas and the visible or sensible things, the invisible Ideas are simultaneously always present in the sensible things, which are similar to the Ideas and which carry, as an appellation, a name the same as theirs. This presence, however, of the Ideas in all the sensible things arises for no other reason than because of the relation of "μέθεξις" (participation) or "μίμησις" (imitation) which these things themselves have with the Ideas, and, therefore, with regard to their nature as such, with regard to their self, it is evident that the Ideas, both have and maintain always, their own ontological status: the invisible, that which is separate from that of the status of the sensible things which participate in them, or are "μιμήματα" (resemblances) of them. The Ideas as Ideas exist by themselves. They exist as beings in their own right. It is as such, that they cannot have the same place of existence as

that of sensible things. As such, they have their own place. They are located elsewhere.

The theme of this paper is, in the end, none other than precisely this continuous Platonic division of beings into a *here* and an *elsewhere*, into a *here* and a *there*. This *elsewhere* or *there* -that is to say, the particular place of the Ideas, the field in which they "reside"- is the "ἀληθείας [...] πεδίον", which is described in Plato's *Phaedrus* (248b), and which is *outside, beyond* ("ὑπερ [-]") the sky. It is the "ὑπερ [-] ουράνιος τόπος" (*Phaedrus*, 247c); the invisible place of the Ideas themselves, which, as it is also described in *Phaedrus* (247b-248c), pre-experientially -before, that is to say, its fall to earth, before its fall to the "visible place" ("ὄρατόν τόπον", *Phaedo*, 81c)-, each soul had the luck to contemplate (each one to a different degree, and thus, each one acquiring also a relevant knowledge of them).

THE PLACE OF THE IDEAS AND THE PLACE OF THE SOULS

The similarity between the place of the Ideas and the place of the souls
That which, moreover, should be mentioned at this point, regarding the pre-experiential life of the souls, is that, if, in fact, during this life which precedes birth, each soul had the luck to obtain a certain knowledge of the Ideas, in the way that these exist by themselves, independently of sensible things, in their own place, it is because each soul itself as well, during its pre-experiential life, had the ontological status of existing by itself. Indeed, before its experiential life, each soul too existed, according to Plato, by itself, separately from the body. As such, as self-existing, incorporeal and invisible, the soul belongs to the same kind of beings as the Idea and is a being akin to it ("ὡς συγγενής οὔσα αὐτοῦ", *Phaedo*, 79d).

With regard to their autonomous ontological status, both the souls and the Ideas have, therefore, a similar place of origin and a similar place of meeting or encounter, during the pre-experiential life of the soul, which is *other* than that of visible things. This, of course, does not mean that the Ideas and the souls have exactly the same place of origin and encounter. This place is for them precisely *similar*, but not identical, in the exact same way that -because of their status of self-existence, of non-corporeality, of eternal unchangeability and invisibility- the Ideas, as beings, and the souls, as beings, are *similar* to each other, or beings which resemble one another ("εἰς τό ὅμοιον αὐτῇ τό αἰδέξ ἀπέρχεται", "ὁμοιότερόν ἐστι ψυχῇ τῶ ἀεί

ώσαύτως ἔχοντι", "τῶ μὲν θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῶ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ καὶ ἀεί ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταῦτά ἔχοντι ἑαυτῶ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχῇ", Ibid. 81, 79e, 80-80b) and are akin to each other ("ἕυγγενέστερον", Ibid. 79e), but not in any case beings which are identical.

In other words, not only do the Ideas and the souls not share exactly the same place, but they do not even have such a possibility of being located in exactly the same place. If they were located in exactly the same place, and not only in a similar one, they should be considered as identical -not similar-, and they are not. They are certainly not identical, since, for Plato, the soul is the subject of knowledge and the Idea the object of it.

What is however the precise meaning of this *similarity* between the place of the Ideas and the place of the souls? In other words, in what specific way does indeed the place of the Ideas and the place of the souls resembles one another and in what specific way is this place, nevertheless, not exactly the same?

The resemblance of the Ideas and the souls, as far as this place is concerned, lies in the fact that, in both cases, this place is not the place of the visible things around us or the place of the embodied -and not self-existing- life of the soul itself. It is, in both cases, a place which is precisely "other" ("τόπον ἕτερον", *Phaedo*, 80d) than the place which is here where we are, and a place which is "pure" ("καθαρόν", Ibid.) and "invisible" ("ἀιδῆ", Ibid.). It is that place where the soul is found before birth ("πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι", Ibid. 75d) and its enclosure in a body, pure in itself ("αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν ἢ ψυχὴ [...] χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος", Ibid. 66e), and where the pure Ideas themselves ("πᾶν τό εἰλικρινές", "αὐτό καθ' αὐτό εἰλικρινές ἕκαστον [...] τῶν ὄντων", Ibid. 67b, 66) can be encountered, since it is precisely in that other invisible place there, where, pre-experientially, the soul had the possibility of "having sight" of the Ideas ("προειδόντα", "προειδένα", Ibid. 74e) and gaining knowledge of them (Ibid. 75b).

The difference of the Ideas and the souls, as far as this "other place", there, is concerned, -and therefore precisely the resemblance or similarity of this place, with regard to them, and not the sameness of it-, is mentioned in a very characteristic way in the *Phaedrus*, since in this dialogue it is precisely underlined that only then can each soul

gaze upon the Ideas or have sight of the Ideas, that are "outside the sky" ("ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ", *Phaedrus*, 247c), and contemplate them, if and when it succeeds in climbing up with its winged chariot from the innermost centre of the sky to the external edges of the celestial dome, and, while standing at these edges, being rotated by the celestial movement (Ibid. 247–247c). This description is not at all accidental. On the contrary, it is indeed revealing and significant, since it clearly indicates that, when the soul attains knowledge of the Ideas, it does not find itself "outside" the sky as well, in the exact same location as the Ideas themselves, but that, at the moment of contemplation, it is located only in what happens to be, not the same, but, nonetheless, the closest point to the Ideas, given that this point is precisely the completely remote, and *invisible* to the eye, local spot of the visible place (the sky being certainly still itself a part of the visible, cosmological place). At that moment, the soul is indeed not located itself "outside" the sky, but, in any case, it is certainly still located on an *invisible* side of the sky.

In consequence, between them, the Ideas and the souls have in fact the possibility of sharing a common point of contact, which takes place within the contemplation itself of the Ideas by the souls, without, however, these two -the Ideas and the souls-, having for this reason to situate themselves at the exact same local spot; on the contrary, they remain in different locations which, nevertheless, are very close one another and similar to each other. These locations are indeed very close to one another, since the one is found at the very edges of the sky, and the other, in what is located immediately after the sky or immediately outside it, and in any case at such a short distance from the edges of the sky, that it is always possible for the "eye" of the soul to see it; and also similar to each other, since, in both cases -both in the case of the Ideas and in the case of the souls-, these locations concern a place which in general can be called "invisible" and "other" than that which we can reach and perceive by the senses, and which, in relation in general to the whole of the place of corporeal or physical things around us or *here*, can be given one and the same appellation: the appellation "*there*".

The pre-experiential and the posthumous place of the souls

This place which is "there" is also that place where the soul, even after its fall and enclosure in the body, tends to return, tends to come back to again. The permanent desire of the soul, during its experiential life, as

Plato's *Phaedo* informs us, is to find once again its pre-experiential nature in its pre-experiential own place. Its permanent desire is to regain the direct contemplation of the Ideas as they are by themselves; something, of course, which cannot take place except after death: when -that is to say- it will disengage from the body and it itself also will find again its substance in itself. As long as the soul remains in union with the body, it is indeed impossible for it to ever really contemplate the truth ("μή δύνασθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καθορᾶν τὰληθές", *Phaedo*, 66d).

The meeting once again of the pure soul and the pure Ideas cannot in consequence take place except after the return of the soul to that same place, which is "there". This intended encounter cannot take place again, except after the return of the soul to that place, in which, as also extract 66b of Plato's *Phaedo* implies, is found that which is characterized as the "object of our desire". This is what this extract states:

For as long as we have our body, and our soul is mingled with this evil element, we will never attain to a satisfactory extent that which we desire (οὐ μή ποτε κτησώμεθα ἱκανῶς οὐ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν), and this object is -we proclaim it-: the truth (φαμέν δέ τοῦτο εἶναι τό ἀληθές).

This same conviction returns in extract 66d-66e of *Phaedo*, where it is stressed characteristically once again that:

If we are ever to obtain a pure knowledge of something, we will have to rid ourselves of it [of the body], and to have a view of things as they are by themselves with the soul as it is by itself. And only then, as it appears, will we obtain that which we desire and with which we say that we are in love: pure thought (φρονήσεως). This will occur when we die, as logic indicates, and not as long as we are alive. If indeed it is impossible to ever know something with purity in our union with the body, one of the two is true: either we will never attain knowledge or this can happen after death, for only then will the soul be in itself as such without the body, not before.

For only then -that is to say-, will it be possible for the soul to be again "alone", completely itself by itself ("μόνην καθ' αὐτήν", *Ibid.* 67d), in the exact same way as it had precisely been pre-experientially, when it had attained knowledge of the Ideas; and therefore, for only at that time will it be possible for it to see and meet again the Ideas, as these exist by themselves in their own supra-celestial place.

For Plato, there definitely is, in consequence, -and according, not only to the Platonic view of a pre-experiential life of the soul, but at the same time also according to the Platonic theory of the immortality of the soul-, apart from the visible place, another place: that place to which the soul goes ("ἀπέρχεται") also after death (*Phaedo*, 81); and from where it precisely derives, before enclosing itself again each time in a new body or being "reborn" (Ibid. 77d). This place is, as clearly appears, in both cases -both in the case of the pre-experiential and in the case of the posthumous life of the soul-, the same. It is the same for this precise reason that the soul, in its pre-experiential life, during which it had the possibility of contemplation and knowledge of the Ideas -knowledge of the pure being by itself as such ("αὐτό καθ' αὐτό εἰλικρινές ἕκαστον [...] τῶν ὄντων", Ibid. 66)-, was also itself pure, without the body. It was, in other words, in exactly the same condition in which it always finds itself also after death. That is indeed precisely and the reason why, after death, also the soul always travels to that particular same place there, where it had existed pre-experientially and where can once again be encountered that sort of being which resembles it: the invisible, the divine, the immortal and wise ("εἰς τό ὅμοιον αὐτῇ τό αἰδές ἀπέρχεται, τό θεῖόν τε καί ἀθάνατον καί φρόνιμον", Ibid. 81). After death, the soul travels there, where, when it arrives, it will encounter happiness ("οἱ ἀφικομένη ὑπάρχει αὐτῇ εὐδαίμονι εἶναι", Ibid.).

The place of the soul during its experiential life

On the level of experience, by contrast, where the soul is captive to the body and where the Ideas can be seen faintly only through the sensible things, the knowledge of the Ideas, as beings existing in themselves and by themselves, can never be absolutely achieved. It can, however, be achieved in part, if, as far as possible, the soul does not care about the body and avoids its contact and care of it; if, as far as possible, it manages to keep itself at a distance from the body (*Phaedo*, 65e-66, 67). Such a soul which does not care for the body and distances itself as far as possible from it, always has, as its object, that which is "ἐκεῖσε" ("there"), and always tends towards that which is "ἐκεῖσε" ("ἐκεῖσε οἴχεται", Ibid. 79d). What characterizes a soul of this kind is indeed the fact that it always tends towards "ἐκεῖσε", that it never really has its object in its possession, and that it always "desires" it

("ὀρέγεται τοῦ ὄντος", Ibid. 65c), precisely because that object is elsewhere. That is why knowledge, according also to the *Republic*, requires the "περιαγωγή" (conversion, *Republic*, 518d) of the soul. The soul must indeed turn its gaze from *here*, from the visible place, from the caring of the body and generally of all bodily things, towards *there*, the invisible place of the Ideas. It must turn its gaze towards that which constitutes its own object and that which is akin to it.

In other words, that object which is situated in the visible place is nothing other than only the object of the body or of that soul which is a "slave" of the body ("ὥσπερ δεσμῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος", *Phaedo*, 67d). The object of the pure soul is only the Pure in itself (Ibid. 67-67b): that is to say, only precisely that thing which exists by itself and is situated *there* -*there* where the soul also existed pre-experientially by itself, and where by itself it will also be after death.

The place and the intermediate character of the soul

This continuous desire and effort of the soul, during its experiential life inside the body, to direct itself, as much as possible, from the things which are *here* and perceived by the senses of the body, to those invisible that are *there* -*there* where is precisely found the specific object of its own desire-, is at the same time that which reveals and underlines the *intermediate* character of its essence.

The fact that the essence of the soul has an intermediate character does not of course mean that the soul itself is an intermediate being. The soul, as a being, belongs to the invisible kind of beings. This is stated with absolute clarity in extract 79b of the *Phaedo*: "Τί οὖν περὶ ψυχῆς λέγομεν; ὀρατόν ἢ ἀόρατον εἶναι; - Οὐχ ὀρατόν. - Αἰδέξ ἄρα. - Ναί.". Besides, since only two are the kinds of beings that exist: the visible and the invisible ("δύο εἶδη τῶν ὄντων, τό μὲν ὀρατόν, τό δέ ἀιδέξ", Ibid. 79), and since the particular own ontological characteristics of the soul -that is to say, the characteristics precisely of the self-existing being, the invisible, the unchanging, the immortal, etc.- resemble those which characterize the Ideas themselves, it is evident that the soul, even though it is not identical to the Idea, cannot belong to any third kind of beings or to any intermediate, between the visible and the invisible, kind of beings -or

between the sensible and the intelligible kind of beings¹-, but only to that one, which is precisely the kind of beings to which the Ideas themselves also belong.

In other words, to the invisible kind of beings belong both the invisible Ideas and the invisible souls, which are beings akin to each other, but not identical. Their basic difference lies precisely in the fact that, as the subject of knowledge, the soul tends or moves itself continuously towards its object, the Idea, trying to capture it, without ever succeeding entirely -given that it is enclosed inside the body and constantly prevented by it in its quest for truth²-, and has, therefore, an essence which, in this sense -of continuous movement between the non-possession of knowledge and the possession of knowledge-, can be characterized as "intermediate".

As such, this essence is, more precisely, the never-ending desire itself or the "love" itself for attaining knowledge of the Ideas, since moving between privation and possession of the object of desire is exactly what the nature itself of *love* implies ("Ἔρωτα [...] δι' ἔνδειαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν, ἐπιθυμεῖν αὐτῶν τούτων ὧν ἐνδεής ἐστίν", *Symposium*, 202d).

GNOSEOLOGY AS TOPOLOGY

Taking particularly into account the fact of the intermediate character of the soul, that which could, moreover, be added at this point, is that Platonic ontology in general, as topology, as a theory that divides

¹ Although the terms visible and sensible, on the one hand, and invisible and intelligible, on the other, are not, in each case, exactly identical, they indeed refer, nevertheless, for Plato, to exactly the same thing, or correspond, nevertheless, to exactly the same sort of reality, and therefore they are essentially equivalent to each other. This equivalence is specifically evident in phrases, such as, for example: "αἰσθητόν τε καὶ ὄρατόν, [...] νοητόν τε καὶ ἀιδές" (*Phaedo*, 83b), and in phrases which juxtapose the term "ὄρατόν" to "νοητόν", instead of to "ἀόρατον" or "ἀιδές", such as: "ταῦτα διττά εἶδη, ὄρατόν, νοητόν" (*Republic*, 509d). It is indeed evident that if the Ideas are intelligible beings, objects of the mind and not of the senses, it is because, first of all, they are invisible beings; and in the same way, it is evident that if the sensible beings are sensible, objects of senses, it is because, first of all, they are visible beings. That is why the distinction between the "visible" and the "invisible" is so fundamental in Plato's mind and why the distinction between the "sensible" and the "intelligible" is not in any way more important or essential than this one, or even in reality different from it.

² For how much the embodied soul is being prevented in its quest for truth by the body, see the very characteristic extract 66b-66e of Plato's *Phaedo*.

beings topographically into two levels, also determines, by extension, gnoseology itself as topology. For Plato, to attain knowledge, to know, means to do what precisely, with its intermediate character, the soul does: that is to say, *to tend towards there*. To attain knowledge, means *to tend towards there* and to capture that which is *there*, for the precise reason that *there* is where it is, that *there* is where is situated, the object of true knowledge.

In other words, just as there are two different kinds of beings, which are situated on two different levels, in the same way, these two different kinds of beings also correspond to two kinds of cognitive objects: on the one hand, there is the object which is not only existent, but at the same time also true -since it is always unchanging- and is situated *there*, and, on the other, there is the object which, although existent, is not at the same time true -since it is always changing- and is situated *here*. *The truth has its own place*. It is located elsewhere.

The truth, according to Plato, "τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τόπον" ("it has this place", *Phaedrus*, 247d): that is to say, the supra-celestial place of the Ideas, the "ἀληθείας [...] πεδίων" (Ibid. 248b) itself. When the soul is not directed towards this other place, when it does not turn its gaze there, when it holds it captive here, when it does not transcend the "here", then it does not know; it is deceived. It is deceived by the body, taking the body's object for the truth: "ὅταν μὲν [...] μετὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπιχειρῇ τι σκοπεῖν, δῆλον ὅτι τότε ἐξαπατᾶται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ" (*Phaedo*, 65b).

THE ABSOLUTE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE CONCEPT OF PLACE AND THE CONCEPT OF BEING

That which, in general, and in accordance to what has already been mentioned from the beginning of this analysis, is evident in all these extracts just mentioned above, and that which we can also in consequence conclude finally, is that Plato considers impossible any kind of disconnection of the concept of place from the concept of Being, as well as, in a secondary sense, any disconnection of the concept of place from the concept of knowing. This Platonic conviction of the absolute connection between the concept of place and the concept of Being is stated in a particularly strong way in extract 52b of Plato's *Timaeus*. In this extract, Plato states emphatically that it is necessary that everything that exists, every being, is somewhere, has some *place* and occupies some space, and that, that which is not

situated either on earth or somewhere in the sky, is nothing ("ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι που τό ὄν ἅπαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ καί κατέχον χώραν τινά, τό δέ μητ' ἔν γῆ μήτε που κατ' οὐρανόν οὐδέν εἶναι").

It is indeed difficult, actually impossible, for someone to be able to think of the existence of any kind of being, separately, independently of a place. We always think of beings, of things, as situated somewhere, as occupying a space. The beings and their places always go together. It is this that Plato wishes to stress through the characteristic extract of *Timaeus*, to which reference has just been made. And it is within the general framework of this conviction -within the general framework of this, I would say, commonly human perception-, that Plato is led inevitably to the need to place, *also*, the Ideas themselves in a certain place: in a place, for which, he speaks about like as if it was a physical one.

THE ONTOLOGICAL AND LOCAL SEPARATION OF THE IDEAS FROM THE SENSIBLE THINGS

Ideas are invisible; they belong in the invisible kind of beings, because they are incorporeal, because they are not bodies which come into existence, which become beings in a certain physical place and at a certain time. Ideas have certainly no birth and death. According to the text itself of *Timaeus*, the Idea is "τό ὄν ἀεί, γένεσιν δέ οὐκ ἔχον", the "ἀγέννητον καί ἀνώλεθρον" (*Timaeus*, 27d, 52). This kind of existing being should not, by extension, have any place of birth and death. Besides, according also to another clear statement, with regard, in this particular case, to the Idea of Beauty, in extract 211-211b of Plato's *Symposium*, the Idea is never situated "inside" any other thing which is outside of itself; *inside*, for example, a living being on earth or in the sky, or *inside* anything else which is distinct from it, but is always the same in itself and by itself, as such: "οὐδέ που ὄν ἔν ἐτέρῳ τινι, οἷον ἔν ζῳῳ ἢ ἔν γῆ ἢ ἔν οὐρανῳ, ἢ ἔν τῷ ἄλλῳ, ἀλλ' αὐτό καθ' αὐτό μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδές ἀεί ὄν". That is precisely what is also meant in extract 133c of Plato's *Parmenides*, where as it is clearly stated by Parmenides himself, for everything, there is a corresponding Essence which, in so far as it is itself by itself ("αὐτήν τινα καθ' αὐτήν αὐτοῦ ἐκάστου οὐσίαν"), cannot be "inside us" ("ἔν ἡμῖν") -that is to say, in general, *inside* all its

participants. Socrates shows his complete agreement with this statement, by wondering how could any Essence ever really be itself by itself, if it was *inside* us (Ibid.).

It is in fact evident that if something participates in an Essence or in an Idea, it must participate either in a part of the Idea or in the whole Idea. But neither the one nor the other is possible if the Idea itself has the status of being itself by itself. Indeed, if the Idea is itself by itself -that is to say, one and the same thing on its own ("ἔν [...] ὄν καὶ ταῦτόν", Ibid. 131b)-, then it is obvious that it cannot as a whole be in its participants ("ἔν [...] ὄν καὶ ταῦτόν ἐν πολλοῖς", Ibid.), since it would then be somehow outside of itself or "separate from itself" ("αὐτό αὐτοῦ χωρὶς ἄν εἴη", Ibid.) and *elsewhere* from itself, or "in a different place from itself"³. If, on the other hand, it is a part of the Idea that should be considered present in each participant, then this would mean that the Idea is divisible -and therefore, that it is *in many locations* at the same time-, which is again inconsistent with the fact that it is one and the same thing, existing on its own, itself by itself ("ἔν ταῦτόν [...] πολλαχοῦ", Ibid.).

In other words, it is evident that the attribution of the status of being "itself by itself" to the Ideas implies that Plato "must have thought that Forms do not depend for their existence on having participants"⁴ and, more precisely, that they are ontologically independent from them and separated from them. As Vlastos explains very clearly, the relationship of the Ideas with their participants "is strongly anti-symmetric: the copies 'imitate' the model, but not the model the copy; the object is a causal condition of the existence of its shadows, but the converse is not true"⁵ and, as he generally demonstrates, by pointing out and emphasizing the repeated assertion of the "itself by itself" existence of the Ideas in the Platonic dialogues, in Plato, "the same metaphysical claim may be expressed by either [P] or [Q]: [P] The Forms exist 'themselves by themselves' - [Q] The Forms exist 'separately'"⁶. As such, the notion of this "separation" (χωρισμός) seems to have been in a certain way well understood and defined by Aristotle, as it

³ G. Fine (1986). "Immanence", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 4: 80.

⁴ D. T. Devereux (1994). "Separation and Immanence in Plato's Theory of Forms", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 12: 77.

⁵ G. Vlastos (1998). "'Separation' in Plato", in *Plato: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, Smith N. D. (ed.), London-New York: Routledge, p.210.

⁶ Ibid. p.207.

concerns beings that are considered by him as existing simply by virtue of themselves and not by virtue of other things, and which, in this sense, correspond to what he himself calls "primary beings"⁷ or "substances" ("οὐσίαι")⁸.

What Aristotle argues against Plato's theory of Ideas is certainly not, therefore, this ontological independence of the Ideas; it is not the fact that the Ideas are considered by Plato as beings that do not depend for existence on other things. On the contrary, that is exactly how he himself understands "substance" and that is why he himself claims that "substance alone is separate"⁹. What he argues against Plato's conception is, in consequence, only this: that, since these beings, which do not depend for existence on other things and which Plato calls "Ideas", are also considered by him as essences (οὐσίαι) of these other things, on which they do not depend for existence, they should not thus, and for this precise reason, be distinct from them, but *in* them.¹⁰ In other words, what Aristotle does not seem to share together with Plato, as far as the concept of essence is concerned, is the strict meaning of separation: that kind of separation which involves local distinctness as well, and not only natural independence or priority.¹¹

For Plato himself, however, separation implies that the Essences or the Ideas are indeed distinct from the things that participate in them¹², and therefore, that these and their participants exist in different places. This evident consequence of local separation between the Ideas and the sensible things, on the basis of the difference of their ontological

⁷ "τό πρῶτως ὄν" (Aristotle, *Metaph.* Z 1, 1028a 30). For more on the notion of "primary being", see, e.g., M. J. Loux (1991). *Primary Ousia: An Essay on Aristotle's Metaphysics Z and H*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁸ "οἱ τὰ εἶδη λέγοντες εἶναι τῇ μὲν ὀρθῶς λέγουσι χωρίζοντες αὐτά, εἴπερ οὐσίαι εἰσὶ" (Aristotle, *Metaph.* Z 16, 1040b 28 - 30).

⁹ "τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἄλλων κατηγορημάτων οὐδέν χωριστόν, αὕτη δέ μόνη" (Aristotle, *Metaph.* Z 1, 1028a 34 - 35).

¹⁰ For more on Aristotle's own conviction that the essence of something cannot exist at a distance from the thing of which it is the essence, and that "separation" in Plato is, for Aristotle, more likely to mean "failure to be 'in'" sensible things, than just independence or natural priority, see D. Morrison (1985), "Separation in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 3: 134-138.

¹¹ On this issue, see also, for example, Vasilis Politis (2004), *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*, London and New York: Routledge, p.317.

¹² In relation to sensible things, the Ideas are: "παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα ἕτερόν τι", "ἕτερον ὄν τούτων", "ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων" (Plato, *Phaedo*, 74, 74b, 74d).

status, does not indeed, nevertheless, seem really evident to Aristotle himself, as Fine notices.¹³ Based on this, Fine even argues that "although Aristotle may take Forms to be locally and definitionally, no less than ontologically, separate, ontological separation (IE¹⁴) is the central sort of separation he associates with Forms"¹⁵, and that when Aristotle "says that Plato separated Forms [...], he typically has IE in mind"¹⁶.

Fine's above mentioned conclusion is of course consistent with Aristotle's own conception of substance, but is it consistent with Aristotle's criticism against Plato? If, in other words, Aristotle indeed interpreted the separation of Plato's Ideas, as ontological independence of the Ideas, as an attribution to the Ideas of that kind of existence which does not depend on other things, what would then be the reason for his criticism against Plato, since he himself, according to his own conception of substance, should agree with such an attribution of ontological independence to the Ideas?

But this is certainly not the most important thing to think of. What indeed in the final analysis seems most important to think of, is not whether the separation of Platonic Ideas from sensible things is only an ontological separation or a local one as well. The real question could be stated as follows: If the separation of Platonic Ideas from sensible things is an ontological separation, could this be indeed such a separation if it did not necessarily imply at the same time a local separation? As should be clear from what has already been elaborated above in this paper, and independently of Aristotle's own opinion on the matter, the answer given by Plato himself to this question is obviously negative; something which leads us of course to the same query: Since, as a particular kind of beings, different from the sensible things, the Ideas are, according to Plato, *necessarily located separately* from the sensible things, in what precise way should we then understand a *place*, a separate place from that of sensible things, in the case of the Ideas, given that these are beings which are incorporeal and invisible and do not in reality occupy any physical space of birth and death?

¹³ G. Fine (1984). "Separation", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 2: 31–87; and also, G. Fine (1998), in Smith N. D. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.161–206.

¹⁴ IE = Independent Existence, existence which does not depend on other things.

¹⁵ G. Fine (1998), *op. cit.*, p.168.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.164.

THE PARTICIPATION OF THE SENSIBLE THINGS IN THE "SEPARATED" IDEAS

Moreover, if the Ideas are separated from their participants, and in general from all sensible things, and if the immanence of the Ideas in the sensible things is in a strict sense incompatible with such a separation, then how exactly are we supposed to understand "participation"? Through this last question, the intention of this paper is not of course at all to suggest that, in *Parmenides* or in any other Platonic dialogue after *Parmenides*, Plato abandons the theory of participation, as it has at times been supported by different commentators¹⁷ of Plato.

On the contrary, and, as Plato himself felt the need to admit early in his work, and especially very clearly since *Phaedo*, even though in reality he has no scientific explanation of how the relationship of participation between the sensible things and the Ideas is taking place, this is, nevertheless, the only theory he can with absolute "safety" ("ἀσφαλέστατον εἶναι", "ἀσφαλές εἶναι", *Phaedo*, 100d, 100e) support, since this theory is -according to him- precisely the only one which can justify the existence of sensible things (Ibid. 101c). Indeed, Plato has no hesitation in admitting that, even though "without art", but "with simplicity" and maybe even "with naivety" ("ἄπλῶς καὶ ἀτέχνως καὶ ἴσως εὐήθως", Ibid. 100d) of how this relationship between the sensible things and the Ideas really occurs, he entirely supports the existence of such a relationship. As he continues to admit in the same extract from the *Phaedo* (100d), he really has so little

¹⁷ There are various commentators who, after *Parmenides*, and especially from the *Sophist* onwards, consider -each one for different reasons- that a rupture is taking place in the Platonic theory of Ideas. See, for instance: P. V. Kucharski (1949: *Les chemins du savoir dans les derniers dialogues de Platon*), who supported the idea that Platonic Ideas in the late dialogues cease to be considered by Plato as self-existing beings in which the sensible things participate, in order for them to be, and become only logical notions of the mind; L. Robin's point of view (1968: *Platon*) that Ideas become in the late dialogues beings that are now identical to souls; as well as the thought of E. Zeller (1922: *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*) and of K. M. Sayre (1983: *Plato's late ontology: a riddle resolved*), who supported that Ideas become in the late dialogues beings which now receive characteristics or properties of sensible things. See also G. E. L. Owen's own interpretation of the concept of Being in Plato's *Sophist*, as merely a source of predication or attribution and logic, and not, above all, as the ontological cause of existence for whatever else exists (1971: "Plato on Not-Being", in *Plato*, I, Vlastos G. (ed.)).

knowledge of how to explain this relationship of participation, that he does not even know what name would be the most appropriate to designate it: the name itself of "participation", or maybe the term "presence" (immanence) or "communion", or a term expressing "any other way" of realization of this relationship, would it probably be more appropriate in this case ("εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία, εἴτε ὄπη δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη")? All these terms indeed mean the same thing. They are all used in the context of Plato's same effort to render conceivable to the greatest possible extent this precise relationship between the Ideas and the sensible things, which is the only thing that gives a reason to the existence of the world and which Plato undoubtedly and with complete certainty supports, even though he does not even know how exactly to call it.

Considering that, for Plato, this relationship is in any case a fact -a fact of which he is entirely convinced, in spite of his inability to explain and prove it in "a wise way" ("οὐδέ δύναμαι τάς ἄλλας αἰτίας τάς σοφάς ταύτας γινώσκειν", Ibid. 100c), and thus, a fact that he could under no circumstances abandon-, the only thing that, in consequence, can be said regarding participation, is that the presence of the "separated" Ideas in the sensible things, or their immanence in them, -due precisely to this relationship of participation between the sensible things and the Ideas-, *is*, for Plato, *a reality*; but a reality, that should not in any way be interpreted as an actual or physical placing of the Ideas *inside* the sensible things.

THE "PLACE" OF THE IDEAS: NEITHER A CONTRADICTION NOR A METAPHOR

In a more general way, Plato should not normally locate the Ideas *in* a place. And yet, as we have repeatedly stressed, he does so locate them. On the one hand, he seems to locate them in the sensible things due to the theory of participation, and on the other, and indeed above all, he locates them *in their own place*. In that place to which reference is made repeatedly in the Platonic dialogues and which is sometimes called: a "different, [...] noble and pure and invisible place" ("τόπον ἕτερον [...] γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ ἀιδῆ", *Phaedo*, 80d), sometimes an "intelligible place" ("νοητόν τόπον", *Republic*, 517b), and sometimes a "supra-celestial place" ("ὑπερουράνιον τόπον", *Phaedrus*, 247c).

Is this a contradiction or could it be a metaphor? Of course, it is not a contradiction, in the sense that the Ideas, even if they have no place of birth and death -even, in other words, if they do not have the same place as that of other beings that are born and die, even if they do not occupy a physical and geometric space within the place of the visible things, as we understand it-, nonetheless, *they are somewhere*. That which is imperative, which in any case cannot disappear and is absolutely linked to the concept itself in general of Being, and which Plato wished to point out in a particularly strong way in extract 52b of *Timaeus* to which reference is made above, is the "somewhere". The "somewhere", however, is not necessarily a cosmological, visible space, such as the one to which Plato refers specifically in *Timaeus*. In this sense, the Ideas *also* are somewhere.

In other words, there is no contradiction, since the "somewhere" of the Ideas is not, in any way, a place of birth and death. Their "somewhere" is not a "somewhere", either on earth or in the sky: in these specific -that is to say- topographical points to which extract 52b of *Timaeus* refers. It is precisely, as *Phaedrus* calls it, a place "outside the sky" ("ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ", *Phaedrus*, 247c). It is the "ἔξω τόπος" (the "outer place", *Ibid.* 248), or a "supra-celestial place" ("ὑπερ [-] οὐράνιον τόπον"), as exactly once again *Phaedrus* calls it; a place, therefore, other than the sensible, other than that in which the beings that inhabit it are subject to birth and death. It is precisely a "different, [...] invisible place", as *Phaedo* calls it, and an "intelligible place", as the *Republic* on its part, calls it. It is the "intelligible place" of the Ideas.

On the other hand, could it be that all this reference to an "intelligible place" is not in reality anything more than a metaphorical, in the last analysis, manner of speaking? In order to answer this question, we must, first of all, make a fundamental distinction between the "manner of speaking" about the "intelligible place", on the one hand, and the "intelligible place" itself, on the other.

Indeed, since the Ideas, as incorporeal beings, as they are, cannot literally be *in* something external to them -like the corporeal beings, which possess matter, can-, stating, as precisely Plato himself does, that the Ideas are located *in* a certain place, *in* the place he calls "intelligible", is without any doubt a metaphorical "manner of speaking". And it is not just simply a metaphorical "manner of speaking", but also an obligatory metaphorical "manner of speaking".

How would indeed be possible for someone to think and talk about something which exists, and is, therefore, considered to be situated *in* a certain place, without using the word "in"? In other words, Plato speaks about the Ideas in a metaphorical way, because there is indeed no other way for him to think and speak about them. *Since these are not, for him, simply and only intelligible concepts of the mind, but beings which exist by themselves, they must be somewhere.* The concept of "somewhere", from which, with regard to beings -when we refer to beings-, it is not possible to free ourselves, as well as the use itself of language, oblige him to borrow terminology coming from the physical space. *This does not mean, however, that he indeed considers that the Ideas are located in any kind of physical and geometric place,* that the Ideas are located in a place similar to that of external nature, in the way that we perceive it with the senses, and where the word "in" has the precise physical and geometric meaning that we understand and that we attribute to the corporeal beings. Not at all. And it is precisely this that becomes understood in the *Symposium*, where, as has already been mentioned above, it is stated that the Ideas are never *inside* another thing external to them -in that way, that is to say, by which we precisely perceive "place" on the level of the visible, geometric field.

Consequently, despite the fact that very often, in a large number of Platonic dialogues, the Ideas always appear, are always thought of, as placed somewhere, that "somewhere" is not equated and should not be taken to be equated to the meaning of any form of physical place. The "somewhere", the general concept of place, is a much broader concept, which goes beyond the boundaries of the visible world, and it is in that way that Plato perceives it. That is precisely the reason why he attributes it to the Ideas as well. In other words, apart from his belief in the existence of the physical place, Plato also indeed believes in the existence of another kind of place, which is really, and *not metaphorically*, non-physical.

THE PLACE OF THE SENSIBLE THINGS

On the boundaries of the visible or physical world, only the bodies have a place or occupy space. Only bodies have a "receptacle" ("ὑποδοχήν"). The concept of the "receptacle", which is presented and defined in Plato's *Timaeus*, clearly concerns only the material, sensible beings, the bodies. The "receptacle" is that which "receives" in it all the bodies ("τά πάντα δεχομένης σώματα φύσεως",

Timaeus, 50b). It is that which can contain within it all the bodies or it is the seat for everything that comes into being, that has birth ("πάσης εἶναι γενέσεως ὑποδοχήν", "ἔδραν [...] παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν", Ibid. 49, 52b). It is that *within which* something is created, something is born ("τό [...] ἐν ᾧ γίγνεται", Ibid. 50d).

Consequently, it is not possible for the Ideas, as unborn and incorruptible, as incorporeal, as they are, to have a "receptacle", a place in the physical sense of the term -in the sense of a place of birth and death. These can never be inside another thing external to them, as it has precisely been stressed that the *Symposium* underlines, and as is exactly the way in which the bodies exist. The Ideas have only their own place, the intelligible place; that place -that is to say-, that we do not see and yet we conceive it as existing, because it is imposed or implied by the very concept in general of Being, by the very fact that the Ideas themselves are *also* beings that exist: that they are one of the two kinds of beings that -according to Plato- exist. Since they too exist, they too have a place of existence; which, however, in relation to that of the other beings, is a completely different kind of place of existence. In other words, since the Ideas are beings which exist, but differently from the other beings, *it is necessary* that they have a *different* kind of place of existence as well. And in this sense, this place which the Ideas have, the "intelligible" one, *is* indeed, as such, *a real one*, and not at all a metaphor.

On the other hand, that which must also be stressed, is that from the fact that the "receptacle" is only and exclusively that which "receives" in it all the bodies, it arises that the meaning itself in general of the "receptacle" could not be identified with the material extent or with the matter that extends, as, from their own point of view, certain commentators considered, on the contrary (for example, L. Robin¹⁸, or even Aristotle himself, who, in his *Physics*¹⁹, claims that in *Timaeus* Plato identifies "τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὴν χώραν"). In our view, there is no such identification, since precisely this concept of the "ὑποδοχή" or of the "χώρα" (*Timaeus*, 52b) -Plato uses both these terms in the

¹⁸ L. Robin (1918). « Études sur la signification et la place de la physique dans la philosophie de Platon », *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 86, pp.202, 213-214, 216.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Physics* IV (2), 209b 11-12: "ὁ Πλάτων τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὴν χώραν ταὐτό φησιν εἶναι ἐν τῷ Τιμαίῳ".

same way- does not mean matter, but that within which matter, any material body, is born. It is the "ἐν ᾧ": that, within which, any corporeal being "γίγνεται". It is the "ἐν ᾧ γίγνεται": that within which comes into being or is born whatever comes into being or is born. The "receptacle" is not a body. A body is only whatever is born inside it, revealing properties, such as that of fire, of earth, etc, in order to lose them within it once again. The "receptacle" is not identified with the bodies, which, according to the terminology of *Timaeus*, simply "enter" into it ("τά [...] εἰσιόντα", *Timaeus*, 50c), when they are born, and "exit" from it ("ἐξιόντα", *Ibid.*), when they die. It is not identified with those material elements which are created within it, constantly in a changing way, constantly entering/exiting. It is -Plato stresses- really essential that, that which receives within it all the bodies, should be outside any form of some specific body ("πάντων ἐκτός εἰδῶν", "ἄμορφον", *Ibid.* 50e, 51a). And thus, the Ideas, as incorporeal, do not have an "ὑποδοχή" -in the way that this precisely is defined in the *Timaeus*-, in spite of the fact that, just like them, the "ὑποδοχή" itself or the "χώρα" itself, as well, is incorporeal.

That which the Platonic "χώρα" is, therefore, it is only and generally the concept of space. It is that invisible, purely intelligible object ("μεταλαμβάνον [...] τοῦ νοητοῦ", *Ibid.* 51a-b), which is, however, -just like also any other Idea in Platonic ontology in fact-, at the same time always an existing being, a reality, and not simply and only a logical notion or a logical abstraction. The Platonic "χώρα" is indeed at the same time a genus that always exists: it is the "γένος ὄν τό τῆς χώρας αἰεί" (*Ibid.* 52-52b). It is precisely that existing genus which, on the level of the Sensible or of the Visible, without ever being identified with the material substance, concerns and includes in it all the locations and all the individual definitions of locality, where corporeal beings are born and die. Such definitions of locality are, for example, those of "ἄνω", "κάτω" (*Timaeus*, 58b), "ἐκεῖσε" (*Phaedo*, 79d), "ἐκεῖ", "ἐνταῦθα" (*Republic*, 509). There is indeed a plethora of different places and definitions of locality. Each thing has its own place. There exist the individual specific places of each thing ("τούς ἐαυτῶν τόπους", *Timaeus*, 58b).

DEFINITIONS OF LOCALITY WITHIN THE “INTELLIGIBLE PLACE”

References to definitions of locality, we encounter in Plato, within the intelligible level of things as well. That is to say, not simply and only are the Ideas, despite being incorporeal, referred to, in Plato, as having in general their own place -the intelligible place-, but within this place, within the Intelligible itself, each one of these intelligible beings also appears as having its own separate location. It is that separate location of each Idea inside the "ἀληθείας [...] πεδίων", inside the valley of truth, which each soul tries to look at with its winged chariot, when it indeed succeeds in climbing from the interior of the sky to the external edges of the celestial dome, and in being rotated by the celestial movement. During this rotation, the soul is able to gaze, outside the sky, upon one Idea after the other; to gaze upon Justice, Wisdom, Science, and all the other Ideas, as if these were actually set in specific locations outside the sky (*Phaedrus*, 247d-247e).

It is in this same framework of the setting of the Ideas in particular locations, that also the Idea itself of Good, for example, is found, according to the *Republic*, "ἐν τῷ νοητῷ τόπῳ" (*Republic*, 508c), but "beyond the essence" ("ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας", *Ibid.* 509b); beyond -that is to say- all the specific locations of the other Ideas or Essences, and precisely "at the end" of the Intelligible ("τῷ τοῦ νοητοῦ τέλει", *Ibid.* 532b). The Idea of Good, which, according to extract 511b of Book VI of the *Republic*, is the only Idea which is not an hypothesis ("ἄνυποθέτου"), is, indeed, for this precise reason and as an illustration of this particularity, also *located* by Plato -in relation to all the other Ideas-, "last" inside the Intelligible itself; and therefore, this Idea is at the same time the only one which is extremely difficult for a soul to "see" ("ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταία ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγις ὄρασθαι", *Ibid.* 517b-c).²⁰

In the same way, but at the same time in a more general way, in the *Republic*, according to the theory of the line (*Ibid.* 509d-511c), the two kinds of beings -the visible and the intelligible- are clearly stated as

²⁰ It is certain that one might not see any connection between the fact that the Idea of Good is, in the *Republic*, presented as "ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας", or found "at the end" of the Intelligible, or being "last" inside the Intelligible itself, and the concept itself of *place* in Platonic ontology; but, in our point of view, the Platonic thought of being presents such unity that it is indeed possible to make such kinds of connections.

corresponding simultaneously to two "places" ("δύο αὐτῶ εἶναι καὶ βασιλεύειν τό μὲν νοητοῦ γένους τε καὶ τόπου, τό δ' αὖ ὄρατοῦ", Ibid. 509d); to two "places", having by extension, each one of them, specific and separate definitions of locality, which, in this particular case, are presented as "parts". "Τό [...] ἔτερον [...] τμήμα τοῦ νοητοῦ" -to which, for example, reference is made once again in extract 511b of Book VI of the *Republic*- is nothing more than a specific place or location within the intelligible place in general. It is the "other part", the second piece of territory, within the Intelligible itself.

THE NECESSITY OF THE "INTELLIGIBLE PLACE"

In the final analysis, that which we conclude is, first, that Plato does not appear to be able to refer to anything, corporeal or incorporeal, without linking it, one way or another, with the concept of place, without placing it somewhere; that he cannot perceive of beings as beings, as realities that exist, if he does not consider that these are located in a certain place. In other words, for Plato, that which is, whatever it is, is, because it is somewhere. That which is nowhere, is not. It cannot be anything.²¹ The Ideas, because they are beings, because they are existing entities, and not only logical notions of the mind, *of necessity* they have to be somewhere. And because they are also existing entities with completely opposite ontological characteristics from those of sensible things, they are necessarily somewhere, not only outside the mind, but also outside the space of all sensible things.

²¹ Aristotle, on his part, claims of course that Platonic Ideas are "nowhere" (*Physics* III, 203a, 8-9). If this statement was to be understood in the strict sense of the impossibility of the Ideas occupying, incorporeal as they are, any kind of physical space, it would certainly be appropriate. Nevertheless, what Aristotle seems to suggest, is that Ideas are "nowhere", in the sense that they do not occupy any place *outside* the sensible things; and thus, that these are in no place only by themselves, as Plato believes. If this is the case, then the question of course which arises is the following: If the Ideas were only *inside* the sensible things, and not outside of them, would they not then still be somewhere, and not nowhere? Whether *there* or *here*, it is in any case evident that the Ideas should be somewhere. This is precisely what it seems that Plato must have realized. What he must have realized, is that anything that is an existing being -and the Ideas are for him existing beings- must in any case be *somewhere*, no matter *where* exactly (there or here or both there and here) and *how* exactly (as a physical, cosmological space, or not) we should understand this "somewhere" to be.

The Ideas, as things which are not corporeal and sensible, as things which cannot be perceived by the senses, cannot and do not have an "ὑποδοχή"; but, as things which, nevertheless, exist, as beings, *of necessity* they have to be in a certain place. As invisible beings, they do not have any "χώρα", but they necessarily have a "τόπος".²² The setting of the Ideas in a place, in their own supra-celestial place, proves and supports -in other words- precisely the ontological status, which Plato attributes to the Ideas, and specifically, the separate and entirely different, from that of other beings, ontological status, which he attributes to them. If he did not locate them in a certain place, he would not be able to prove that these are beings; that he considers them as beings: and indeed, in an exclusively particular way in relation to whatever else exists, as self-existing beings.

"I am", for Plato, means, or is tantamount to, "I am located", "I am located somewhere". The shift from *I am* to *I am located* may sound like a metaphor, but, in reality it is not, because in the same way that there are two kinds of beings, there are, for Plato, also two kinds of places. Whatever exists, it is somewhere. It is in its own place. So, the intelligible place, as the specific place of existence of the Ideas, is not a metaphor. It sounds like a metaphor, because, in order to speak about it, Plato uses, by necessity, terminology coming from the sensible, physical place; *because he speaks about it as if it was sensible*. But in itself, this place is real, for him. It is real, although not with the same ontological characteristics as those that belong to the place of the sensible beings. It is the *different*, from the sensible, proper place of

²² This is a fact which, on the other hand, demonstrates, of course, the truth that the concept of "τόπος" and the concept of "χώρα" cannot be identified with one another. Indeed, these two concepts cannot be identified between them; and that, not merely in the sense of the distinction between "place" and "abstract space", as that one, for example, to which Hans Rämö refers to in his article "An Aristotelian Human Time-Space Manifold: From Chronochora to Kairotopos" (1999: *Time & Society*, vol. 8, no.2: 309-328). Their real difference does not lie on the fact that "χώρα" is a larger, a broader concept than that of "τόπος". Their real difference, as far as the Platonic conception is concerned, lies on the fact that "χώρα" includes in its concept all the places in general of only the visible things which are born and die, while "τόπος" has the meaning of the specific locality, but not only of visible things. "Τόπος" is the specific locality for any kind of being which exist. Any kind of being which exist, visible and invisible, *of necessity* has to be in a certain "τόπος", in a specific place of its own. And in this particular sense, we could consider "τόπος" to be an even broader concept than that of "χώρα".

the Ideas; the proper place that these (the Ideas themselves) also need to have, in order for them to be able to exist as a precisely different, from the sensible, kind of beings. In other words, what is metaphorical is indeed -as already underlined-, not the place itself of the Ideas, but precisely the way Plato speaks about it. It is the discourse *about* the intelligible place which is metaphorical, not the intelligible place itself.

Of course, the aim of this paper is not at all to point out what is literal and figurative (metaphorical) in Platonic dialogues. As has indeed been already mentioned from the very beginning, what the real aim of this paper is, is to try to render evident how much, and in what specific way, essential and inseparable is, for Plato, the correlation between the concepts of Being and place. This correlation is really so fundamental and so decisive in Platonic ontology that precisely even the incorporeal Ideas -*since, and because, they are considered as beings*- have to be located somewhere. And, by doing so, by setting the Ideas *in* a particular place, Plato, in consequence, makes, simultaneously, the metaphorical speech itself become a necessity.

In other words, what is important is not at all that Plato uses metaphorical language, but that he is so strongly convinced of the real, and not metaphorical, correlation between the concepts of Being and place, that metaphors -since they are the only way to indicate and illustrate this correlation, as far as the Ideas are concerned- cannot, therefore, be avoided.

BEING: THE LARGE PLACE OF ALL BEINGS

Secondly, we also conclude that Plato must not in fact believe that there exist two separate spheres or "worlds", alienated from each other, but only two different *places* within one single whole: that is to say, two different places -the visible or cosmological and the invisible or non-cosmological-, as two basic sub-divisions of a greater, a broader place, which must be none other, in this particular case, than that of Being itself as Being. Being as Being is the large place, where are located, each in its own specific place, all the different beings that exist, both the visible and the invisible.

Being as Being is that particular broad genus, which is other and different from all the other genera ("ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων [...] γενῶν", *Sophist*, 259b); it is that genus, which is not any of the other genera separately, nor the totality of all the other genera together ("ἕτερον δ' ἐκείνων πάντων ὃν οὐκ ἔστιν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν

οὐδέ σύμπαντα τά ἄλλα πλήν αὐτό", Ibid.), but precisely that genus in which all the other genera participate in order to be able to be, to be able to exist ("ἔστι δέ γε διά τό μετέχειν τοῦ ὄντος", Ibid. 256a), without ever it itself identifying with them ("τό ὄν αὐτό τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον εἶναι", Ibid. 257a). It is that genus which Plato, in the important extract 248e-249a of the *Sophist*, calls "παντελῶς ὄν", and whose definition is given in 250b of this same dialogue: in other words, it is precisely that universal Being which concentrates and embraces somehow inside it, as species to genus, all the other beings that exist, both the visible and the invisible, while it itself remains always "third" and other than them ("τρίτον [...] τι παρὰ ταῦτα τό ὄν", Ibid. 250b).²³

In this embrace of the great genus of Being "reside" all the beings which exist, sensible and intelligible, each one having its own place. However, with regard especially to the particular intelligible place of the Ideas, this is not -it must finally and additionally be stressed- simply or only the place where the Ideas "reside", each one of them in a specific location. It is also the place where the Ideas are situated and found according to a specific order of mutual correlations. In other words, even if the Ideas have, each one of them, a specific location inside the Intelligible itself, that does not mean that they do not have at the same time, among them, any mutual relation. On the contrary, the "intelligible place" of residence of the Ideas is that place where the Ideas exist by themselves, *communicating* with each other ("δύναμιν ἔχειν ἐπικοινωνίας", *Sophist*, 252d). Their place is the "*community*" of the genera ("ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις ἢ τῶν γενῶν φύσις", Ibid. 257a); it is that specific community of relations which the mind, in order to attain knowledge, should grasp, and which discourse, in order to be correct, should imitate.

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²³ The connection between the broad concept of place, as Plato conceives it, and the precise, but also broad, concept of Being as Being in Plato's *Sophist*, is another one of those connections that can in general be made in the context of Platonic ontology, on the basis, once again, of the content of note 20.

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