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THE METAPHYSICS OF POLITICS
IN THE
POLITEIA, POLITICOS AND NOMOI DIALOGUE GROUPS

SYMPOSIUM PLATONICUM

DIE BEDEUTUNG DER DIALOGE
POLITEIA UND NOMOI IN PLATON’S DENKEN
UND
IN DER GEGENWAERTIGEN POLITISCHEN DISKUSSION

PRAG, 4-5 APRIL 1997

In the dialogues where Plato ex professo develops his Political Philosophy (Πολιτεία, Πολιτικός, Νόμοi) there is apparent difference of analysis for State-“fundamentals”. Following the pattern of the Socratic – Platonic method of inquiry, questions relating to such “fundamentals” of social structure and political order can (indeed must) be grouped around the focal issues:

a) which is the ideal state;

and

b) what is the relationship of actual states to the ideal one.

Similarly, there is recurrent scholarly notice (with varying degrees of emphasis) of distinguishable forms in the Platonic “Theory of Reality” (under which rubric I subsume the convenient traditional terms Physics and Metaphysics neutrally employed). A later theory of ideas is set against a former one, a final phase of Platonic thinking separated from the middle period, questionable unwritten doctrines contrasted to the written expositions; on top of all this, a seemingly unstable Aristotelian testimony notoriously complicates matters. Problems again are made to revolve around two pivotal points:

A) What are the ideas;

and

B) what is the relationship of particulars in this world to them.

Not only is the first set of questions (a, b) in itself a special case of the second (A, B); more than that, Plato explicitly associated his political analyses to accounts of reality through a system of identical themes and unmistakably intentional exogenous pointers interspersed in the relevant dialogues. The way is thus opened to try, observing these interconnections, to gain an improved understanding of variational forms in Platonic Politics by a correct appreciation of the corresponding apparent differentiations in Platonic Physics and Metaphysics.
Thus this task must be tripartile, but will be executed very unevenly, in this paper: following Platonic precept, I shall chiefly treat of the first section with the eyes set on the second while in the end I shall quickly draw conclusions regarding the third. Following Platonic practice I shall handle questions of political philosophy by operating in the field of ontology.

- I -

The Republic contains (E, 471c-Z) its own theory of Reality and Knowledge (the latter being founded on the former as is the ancient order of things): I have argued elsewhere for the specific reason behind this inclusion. Reversely, the Timaeus is embedded in a political context (27a-b): it points backward and forward to discussions of political philosophy. The dialogue starts with a recapitulation of the first part of the Republic [1] where the basic structure of the best polity is described (B, 369a-e, 471b). What follows in the Republic (The Theory of Reality and Knowledge) in Books E to Z is explicitly cut off (Timaeus 19a-b), evidently substituted at least partly by the main body of Physics which follows in the latter dialogue. The forward reference is to promised, future narrations which will show Socrates’ best Polity living and in real action, even in the intenest action of war (19c). Critias undertakes to relate the predeluvian saving war of Athens against the invading dark Power Atlantis: the Athenians of yonder time provide the exact realization (τὰληθές) of the best polity and its citizens, which were circumscribed (ἐν κεφαλαίοις) in thought (ἐν μυθώ, οὕς διεννοοῦ) by Socrates (26c-d) [2]. Hermocrates’ role is not specified, but we may reasonably surmise that his task would concern experiences from novel foundations or re-foundations of cities in Great Hellas and Sicily or wars between them exhibiting markedly the true colours of their respective constitutional and legislative characters [3]: more flesh
would be added to the bones of the Socratic best Polity, and thus its realizability further supported. I postpone examination of the question whether any actual situation could possibly “fill” the structure of the Republic best state according to Plato.

A living, full-bodied animal is clearly meant to be the State-organism of the Laws, even if this, too, is constituted by reason (ἐν λόγῳ) and is not claimed to have existed as such (the animal is seen in picture or so to speak frozen, as it is put in Timaeus, 19b). The “legal” system articulated is a full blueprint, but blueprint nonetheless (ὡς δὲ σχήματος ἐνεκα καὶ ὑπογραφής, ἵνα περαινήται, πρὸς τὴν νομοθεσίαν ὁ λόγος ἰτω, 737d), for an actual νομοθεσία, detailed yet not exhaustive. There is no pressing need to lay out immediately the complete system, as it is not a case of present legislation (857e10-858b; 859c: νομοθέται γὰρ γινόμεθα ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐσμέν ποι, τάχα δὲ ἰσως ἀν γενοίμεθα). What is left out concerns in principle the many trifling details (πολλὰ καὶ σμικρὰ, 843e; 772a-b; μικρὰ καὶ σμικρὰ νόμιμα 846b; σμικρὰ καὶ ράδια νόμιμα εὑρίσκειν 957a), whose determination one way or the other does not confer a great benefit or harm to the city (οὐδ’ αὑ μετατιθέμενα ἐνθα ἢ ἐνθα μέγα τῇ πόλει κέρδος ἢ ζημίαν ἀν φέροι, 835b), and which are best suited to be arranged by subordinate functionaries (τοὺς δευτέρους 835b; τοῦ ἐπιτυχόντος νομοθέτου 843e, , οἱ νέοι sc. νομοθέται 845c; τοῖς νεωτέροις νομοθέταις 855d; τὸν νέον νομοθέτην 957a) rather than the primary political moderator (τῶ πρῶτω νομοθέτης 835b; τὸν μείζων πόλεως κοσμητήν 844a; γέροντος νομοθέτου 846c; πρεσβύτου νομοθέτου 957a).

In fact the supreme legislator knows very well that a lot of things should be left untertermined in the initial and constitutive νομοθεσία, things which must be checked in actual fact (ἀπὸ τῆς χρείας μανθάνοντας τάττεσθαι καὶ ἐπανορθουμένους κινεῖν) during a certain length of time (10 years) in the real working of the sociopolitical order instituted, before being settled definitively
(ἀκίνητα θεμένους) by subsequent legislation (769d; 770b; 779c-d; 920b-c; esp. 772b-d) [4].

The Laws, just as the Republic, partly contains its own Theory of Reality, but also points expressly and elaborately in its conclusion to an external supplement on wisdom and supreme reality. In Z, 817e-822c mathematical studies (in their triple aspect, Arithmetic as Theory of Numbers, Geometry as Theory of Magnitude and spatial measurement, and Astronomy as Theory of heavenly entities and movements) constitute essential knowledge indispensable in the formation and functioning of the optimal state-constitutive legislation. Mathematical necessity is indeed divine necessity, θεία ἀνάγκη, to which Gods themselves succumb (818a-b: τὸ δὲ ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῶν οὐχ οἰόν τε ἀποβάλλειν, ἀλλ’ ἐοικεν ὁ τὸν θεὸν πρῶτον παροιμισάμενος εἰς ταύτα ἀποβλέψας εἰπεῖν ὡς οὐδὲ θεὸς ἀνάγκη μὴ ποτε φανῇ μαχόμενος, ὅσα θείαι γε, οἶμαι, τῶν γε ἀναγκῶν εἰσίν. 818d: οὕτω γὰρ ἀνάγκη φύσει κατειληφην, ἡ φαμεν οὐδένα θεῶν οὕτε μάχεσθαι τὰ νῦν οὕτε μαχεῖσθαι ποτε). Mathematical knowledge is the prerequisite of all knowledge (818b: ...ἐπὶ τάλλα ἱόντα τούτων ἡγουμένων τῶν μαθημάτων μανθάνειν); it is this which enables man to exercise tenderness of the human flock like a god, a deamon or a hero (818b: which divine necessities if someone will not learn and apply οὐκ ἂν ποτε γένοιτο ἀνθρώπως θεὸς οὐδὲ δαίμων οὐδὲ ἢρως οἶος δυνατὸς ἀνθρώπων ἐπιμέλειαν σὺν σπουδῇ ποιεῖσθαι), a question answering to the optimal political leadership according to Politicus. Crucially moreover, true Astronomy is conceived as the real natural (astral) Theology (820e-822c). This theological Physics and natural Theology is further developed in Book I. The Work is concluded (XII, 960b sqq.) by a general analysis of the Saving Virtue (ἀρετῇ σωτηρίας, 969c) required for the preservation of the optimally constituted state. This Saving Virtue, the Virtue in itself and common factor of all virtues (963c-964c), consists in a certain single-mindedness, a permanent focusing in all thinking and action of a unitary object; 962d: πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἔχειν ἢς ἀρχεῖ τὸ
μὴ πλανᾶσθαι πρὸς πολλὰ στοχαζόμενον, ἀλλ’ εἰς ἐν βλέποντα πρὸς τούτο ἀεὶ τὰ πάντα οἷον βέλη ἀφιέναι. 963a: πρὸς γὰρ ἐν ἐφαμεν δεὶν ἀεὶ πάνθ᾽ ἦμῖν τὰ τῶν νόμων βλέποντ᾽ εἰναι, τοῦτο δ᾽ ἀρετήν που συνεχωρούμεν πάνω ὀρθῶς λέγεσθαι. Such constant aim and object of reference is an idea (965c: ἄρ’ οὖν ἀκριβεστέρα σκέψις θέα τε ἄν περὶ ὅτου οὖν ὅτως ἔγνωτο ἢ τὸ πρὸς μίαν ἴδεαν ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν καὶ ἀνομοίων δυνατῶν εἶναι βλέπειν;), which may be complex (965d: εἴπωμεν τί ποτ᾽ ἐστιν εἰς ὁ βλεπτέον, εἴτε ὡς ἐν εἴτε ὅλον εἴτε ἀμφότερα εἴτε ὅπως ποτὲ πέφυκεν). One such cardinal focal idea (ἐν ἐκ τῶν καλλίστων, 966c1) is the idea of divinity (966c). Supreme, saving Virtue is unswerving concentration on supreme knowledge, knowledge of the divine, and thus true piety (θεοσέβεια 967d) deposited, as it were, in the Nocturnal Council of the Law-Guardians. The idea of divinity involves two parameters: first, nature and preminence of the soul in cosmic existence; and second astral order (966e). Thus divine knowledge comprises two parts, the second being subdivided into three sections (967d-e) [5]: (a) analysis of the nature, immortality, precedence among things generated and dominance over bodily existence of the soul; (b1) account of the intelligent order in astral being (τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις νοῦν τῶν ὄντων); (b2) mathematical science as being necessarily presupposed by Astral Theology (τά τε πρὸ τούτων ἀναγκαία μαθήματα); (b3) theory of the interconnection among mathematical realities (τά τε κατὰ τήν μούσαν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας; Cf. 969b7). This complex knowledge is the exacter learning (ἀκριβεστέρα παιδεία τῆς ἐμπροσθεν, 965b1), which has been already alluded to before in the previous treatment of Mathematics (in Z, cf. 818a1; e7). Obviously, such knowledge has not been expounded in the Laws. In 818a what is promised is that at the end of the work it will be explained who must be the bearers of the exact knowledge (οἵς δὲ, προϊόντες ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει φράσομεν) – just as it happens in the final section on the νυκτερινὸς σύλλογος. The forward reference in 818e is indefinite, εἰς ἄλλον, εἰ δοκεῖ, χρόνον ἀκριβέστερον ἄν νομοθετησαίμεθα [6]. At any rate there is in
969a a definite pointer to a treatment outside the corpus of the \textit{Laws}: ἕγω δὲ ύμίν συγκινδυνεύσω τῷ φράζειν τε καὶ ἑξηγείσθαι τά γε δεδογμένα ἐμοί περὶ τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφής τῆς νῦν αὐ κεκινημένης τοῖς λόγοις.

What we need in answer to a, b₁ and b₂ is a combination of, correspondingly, a theory of Cosmos, Astronomy (not merely the empirical account of celestial movements (cf. \textit{Republic} 529d and 531a-c)) and, finally, Theory of Mathematics as prerequisite of rational Astronomy.

To complete the picture we need to determine the real meaning of (b₃) “what pertains to the communion among them”: τούτοις in e2 is better taken to refer to the immediately preceding two first parts – b₁ and b₂ – of the second gnostic requirement of piety, but can be easily also construed as covering both a and b₁, b₂ since mathematicals pertain to everything (πῶν ἐπὶ πάντα τεινόντων, \textit{Republic}, 522b9; τὸ κοινόν, 522c1). Now b₃ finds its exact analogue in \textit{Republic} Z, where, moreover, looking for the communion and affiliation among mathematicals is the right way to search for the Idea of Goodness; 531c9: ἡ τούτων πάντων ὄν διεληλύθαμεν (various branches of Mathematics) μέθοδος ἐὰν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλλήλων κοινωνίαν ἀφίκηται καὶ συγγένειαν, καὶ συλλογισθῇ ταῦτα ἢ ἐστὶν ἀλλήλους οἰκεία, φέρειν τι αὐτών εἰς ἅ βουλόμεθα τὴν πραγματείαν καὶ οὐκ ἀνόνητα πονεῖσθαι, εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀνόνητα. \[7\] That the mathematicals are common and extended over the entire scope of natural existence (or in other words that they essentially represent its structure and constitution) ensures that their nexus provides also the integrating factor for all physical being. Thus, 537c: τὰ τε χύδην μαθήματα παιδίν ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ γενόμενα τούτοις (the select ones above the twentieth year of age) συνακτέον εἰς σύνοψιν οἰκειοτήτος τὲ ἀλλήλων τῶν μαθημάτων καὶ τῆς τῶν ὅντως φύσεως. \textit{This bringing together under one view is precisely the dialectic function, and the continual application of this principle till the highest possible view is reached (the ἀνυπόθετον) constitutes the dialectical progression (διαλεκτικὴ πορεία, \textit{Republic} 532b4).} In fact mathematical expertise in
itself will not suffice (οὐ γὰρ τοῦ δοκοῦσι γέ σοι οἱ ταῦτα δεινοὶ διαλεκτικοὶ εἶναι); what is needed for that ascent is to combine mathematics with dialectics (531d-532a) [8]. The call is, in effect, for a blending of (mathematical) Pythagoreanism [9] with (logical) Eleatism (both of the developed 5th century types). Herein lies the key to a correct understanding of the Platonic Problem [10].

For the Republic, therefore, the affiliative, communal nexus of mathematical points to the supreme Idea, which is also their origin. Such dialectical treatment of mathematical sciences aims thus by its very nature to reach beyond hypotheses to the ἀνυπόθετον. To search for communion and unity in mathematics is attuned to an inquiry concerning first principles. The same must hold for the Laws, since the dialectical principle holds good in this dialogue, too (965c) [11].

The Epinomis (abstracting from the question of its authenticity) purports to, and does convincingly enough, answer to the call of the final section of Laws IB for some indication of the nature and content of supreme wisdom characterizing the members of the Nocturnal Council. In responding to this demand, the Epinomis presents an analogue to the discourse on higher education in Republic Z, 518b6 sqq. The parallelism extends far and in detail. The various special sciences and arts are excluded from true wisdom (Epinomis 974d3-976c6; Republic 521d4-522b7 referring back to the basic education described in Book B, 376e sqq., and to ΣΤ, 495D); arithmetic is the primary prima facie candidate for real knowledge (Epinomis 976c7-979e6; Republic 522b8 sqq.); mathematical studies are prerequisites and propaedeutic for such knowledge (Epinomis 990c5; 991b6-c1; Republic 536d). The need of combining mathematics with dialectics is also expressly stated in the Epinomis (991c2): πρὸς τούτοις δὲ τὸ καθ’ ἐν τῷ κατ’ εἰδὴ προσακτέον ἐν ἑκάσταις ταῖς συνουσίαις, ἐρωτῶντα τε καὶ ἐλέγχοντα τὰ μὴ καλῶς ρηθέντα. V. also 991e5. Most important, common to both works is the emphasis on the fact that there is a particular way of pursuing mathematical inquiries which elevates the student to
wisdom; and this way is to search for the unity of, and communion among, the diverse kinds of mathematical; Epinomis 991d8-992a3: ὁ δὲ τρόπος ὅδε - ἀνάγκη γάρ τὸ γε τοσοῦτον φράζειν [12] – πάν διάγραμμα ἀριθμοῦ τε σύστημα καὶ ἀρμονίας σύστασιν ἀπασάν τῆς τε τῶν ἄστρων περιφοράς τῆν ὁμολογίαν ὑσάν μίαν ἀπάντων ἀναφανεῖαι δεί τῷ κατὰ τρόπον μανθάνοντι, φανήσεται δὲ, ἂν, δὲ λέγομεν, ὡς τόις eis ἐν βλέπων μανθάνῃ - δεσμός γὰρ πεφυκὼς πάντων τούτων εἰς ἀναφανήσεσθαι διανοούμενος – εἰ δ` ἄλλως πως ταύτα μεταχειρισμένες τις, τύχην δεὶ καλεῖν, ὡσπερ καὶ λέγομεν. (τούτων in 992a1 is apparently not in mss AO. It is not needed. In fact, without it the style is more terse and the thought of universal application). This is exactly what is taught in the Republic: mathematics pursued with the dialectical method shows the communion and unity intramathematical and extramathematical which exists among its various parts and the whole of being. It is, of course, completely alien to the passage to interpret δεσμός as proportion [13]: it is a unifying bond; it cannot but be, or proceed from, a common principle.

That a theory of Principles is presupposed by the Epinomis is, further I think, indicated in 977d5 sqq. It is necessary, the Athenian Stranger concludes there, that number must be hypothesized; but the reason for this necessity is, we are told, the subject of a lengthy discourse. The fact that, should arithmetic be cancelled, no knowledge and no art would remain, cannot be that reason, for this fact is explicitly considered as a correct, but not the ultimate explanation. Evidently the real reason is an ontological datum; without number no being is possible; or rather it is an ontological derivation: being is constituted by, or from, number.

In conclusion, supreme knowledge postulated in Laws IB, 969d-e is articulated as follows, adding the late dialogues where its corresponding written, divided, version is meant to be supplied in its fundamentals. In the fourth column notice is given of those parts of the Laws where such branches of knowledge are
approached or handled. The same indication is provided in the last column with regard to *Republic*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>Theory of Cosmos</th>
<th>Timaeus</th>
<th>Laws I</th>
<th>Republic Z (Myth of the Cave); Republic ΣΤ (the Line)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b₁</td>
<td>Rational Astronomy = natural, Astral Theology</td>
<td>Epinomis</td>
<td>Laws I; Z, 817e-822c</td>
<td>Republic I (Myth of Er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b₂</td>
<td>Theory of Mathematics</td>
<td>Epinomis</td>
<td>Laws Z, 817e-822c</td>
<td>Republic Z, 518b6-531c8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b₃</td>
<td>Theory of First Principles</td>
<td>Philebus [14]</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Republic ΣΤ, 506d8-509c4; Republic ΣΤ (the Line) Republic Z, 531c9-535a1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The more complete account is provided for (a). The rest are markedly indicative, “introductory”, protreptic, anagogic more or less.

*It emerges that the Theory of Mathematics pursued with a view to first Principles (the desideratum of both the Republic and the Laws) was precisely the subject matter of Περὶ τὰ γαθόν and the fundamental content of the unwritten doctrines.*

Regarding the written and published accounts, a cluster of dialogues around the Laws expounds the later Theory of Reality. Much more flesh has been added to the bones of the Republic, not merely regarding political analyses alone.

The *Politicus* falls in between the Republic and the Laws. It also both involves internally, and points to an external treatment, of the Theory of Reality. Included are: the Myth (268d-274d), the nature of Example (277a-279a) and the true Art of Measurement (283b-287b). There is a backward reference to the Sophist (and, indirectly, to the Theatetus and Parmenides) and a forward to the unwritten Philosopher. The Statesman handles (relative) non-being by looking on the being.

The significance of the Sophist lies in the resolution (prepared by Parmenides) of the tangled web of questions regarding one-ness and non-being. Not only is each idea *not* any other, but it also *is* somehow many others. The former view would consolidate a sort of Ideal Atomism, a Monadology of Ideas:
many ideal units or “ones”, each one like the absolute Parmenidean being but for the fact that it is not the only one (as Melissus suggested the many would be like if they existed). However this is not the case: ideas are not atoms; they are interrelated with one another, they exist in *intercommunion* among themselves. This κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων establishes the possibility of eidetic division into many, and collection into one (of ascent to genera and descent to species). The κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων renders possible the definition of being, and definition in general. The interweaving of Forms makes articulate expression of reality possible 259e4-6: τελεωτάτη πάντων λόγων ἐστιν ἀφάνισις τὸ διαλύειν ἐκαστὸν ἀπὸ πάντων. διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἴδων συμπλοκήν ὁ λόγος γέγονεν ἡμῖν. In the *Politics* it further provides the foundation for the dialectical use of examples.

Now any given system which is no mere set of unsociable entities but a field exhibiting a nexus of interrelationships (and this is what “communion” among the members means), does not simply stand by itself: it can be “reduced” (ἀνάγεσθαι) to principle(s). In the *Republic* and the *Laws* we observed this implication (indeed dialectical necessity) of communion to be called for in the study of mathematics. In the *Sophist* there is an application of this operation in the establishment of the five μέγιστα γένη. The *Politics* provides another example of it, by defining example in terms of it. To give an example is to discover a common element in two different things [15], as the example employed and illustrated of the same letters occurring in different syllables and words makes clear. (And elements are principles). Thus statesmanship is successfully defined as a sort of weaving.

Furthermore. Not only is the dialectical necessity expounded in the two major political dialogues also confirmed and concretely employed in (the *Sophist* and) the *Politics*; the ultimate theory of principles finds its first statement in the seeming digression on Excess and Deficiency and the true Art of Measurement in the latter dialogue. This genuine Art of Measurement is concerned not with the
relativity of the more and less, but with the μέτριον (283c10) and the absolute distance, so to speak, from it. (To the μέτριον belongs also τὸ πρότον, ὁ καυρός, τὸ δέον καὶ πάνθ’ ὁπόσα εἰς τὸ μέσον ἀπωρίκισθη τῶν ἐσχάτων, 284e). The μέτριον in each domain is defined by a certain, privileged determination of a given infinite determinability (of the underlying infinity or indeterminacy of a particular kind). Such determination being stable represents the focal point of absolute measurement. Its stability constitutes the “necessary substance of becoming” (283d8: κατὰ τὴν τῆς γενέσεως Ἀναγκαίαν οὐσίαν); an expression exactly answering to the definition of the third Philebean nature, the μεικτή καὶ γεγενημένη οὐσία (27b), the ἐκγονον of the two former ones (πέρας and ἀπειρον) there being called γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν (26d). The two kinds of measure, the relative and the normative, go together, and the one is not possible without the other (Politicus, 284d). The Pythagorean view that all physical things are subject to measurement is endorsed: ὁ γὰρ ἐνιστε, ὁ Σώκρατες, οἰόμενοι δὴ τὶ σοφὸν φράζειν πολλοὶ τῶν κομψῶν λέγουσιν, ὡς ἄρα μετρητικὴ περὶ πάντ᾽ ἐστὶ τὰ γεγονόμενα, τούτ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ νῦν λεχθὲν ὃν τυγχάνει (284e-285a). The Eleatic philosopher is speaking somewhat condensingly of the Pythagoreans, and he supplies their art with the anchor of fixedness and stability, to the extent possible in the world of becoming. But the mathematization of the Cosmos (and in particular of all arts and sciences) is maintained and enriched. The new dimension added (absolute measurement) is proclaimed to be indispensable in the future demonstration of true accuracy in dialectics: ὃς ποτὲ δεήσει τοῦ νῦν λεχθέντος πρὸς τὴν περὶ αὐτὸ τὰκριβές ἀπόδειξιν (284d). A forward reference no doubt to the projected Philosopher. Once again we meet with the necessity of blending Eleatism and Pythagoreanism.

The prefiguration of the Philebus doctrine is ostensibly introduced as a sort of apology for the preceding lengthy Myth and the extended account of the detailed definition of weaving. As it is insisted that, in the cases concerned, the
right length of time has been observed with regard to the purposes at hand, both
the Myth and the example of weaving, being lengthy, are thus declared vitally
important for the argument of the Dialogue. The former supplies a Theory of
Cosmos in mythical vehicle, similarly to the Myth of Er in the Republic. As to the
latter, the royal function of statesmanship consists in balancing within the state
vigour and prudence, in weaving warp-like strength and welf-like caution
together according to the right mixture, the μέτριον (310e).

To the table above then, one more column may be added, reflecting the
intermediate position between Republic and Laws:

| a  | Myth of Cosmic periodization (Politicus) |
| b1 | –                                      |
| b2 | Measurement (Politicus)                |
| b3 | Definition of Example; Normative Measurement (Politicus) |

κοινωνία εἴδων and μέγιστα γένη (Sophist); [Philosopher]

A closely knit system of interconnections among Platonic dialogues
emerges upon inquiry, based on doctrinal constants and definite pointers in
various relationships. It figures out as a highly intentional and thorough overall
design. Theory of Politics and Theory of Reality always appear in emphatically
deliberate conjugation. Summarizing the main divisions of the integrated whole
we have:

I. Purified, strengthened and expanded Socratism finds its expression in the
   Republic: Σωκράτους ἐστι καλοῖ καὶ νέου γεγονότος (Second Epistle, 314c)
   [16].

II. Transformed Eleatism of the Eleatic Stranger.
   (Parmenides), (Theatetus) [17], Sophist, Politicus, [Philosopher]
III. Transformed Pythagoreanism of Timaeus.

(Republic B-E, 471b), Timaeus, [Critias] [18], [Hermocrates (?)]

IV. Approximate Plato – the Athenian Stranger [19], (Timaeus, Socrates).

Laws, (Timaeus), [Epinomis], (Philebus) [20]

III and IV really coalesce. Plato abandoned the project announced in the Timaeus of carrying on the concretization of Republic B-E, 471b by Critias and Hermocrates, and substituted in its place the Laws. In effect, therefore, we have:

III’ Timaeus, Laws, [Epinomis], Philebus.

- II -

The Theory of Reality involved in each one of the three dialogue-groups identified, involves both Mathematics and Dialectics, both mathematical and Ideas.

The mathematical structure of the World (affirmed analytically in the Laws-group and indirectly in the Politicus-group) is already presupposed in the Republic. The continuity of the Line, and mathematical as intermediates, make that clear. The entire development in Book Z confirms the assumption. True philosophy consists in the process of περιαγωγή, a turning round away from the darkness of becoming toward the light of real being (cf. 518d sqq.; 521c: τούτο δή, ως ἐοικεν, οὐκ ὀστράκου ἀν εἰ ἐπιστροφή, ἀλλὰ ψυχῆς περιαγωγή ἐκ νυκτερινῆς τινος ἡμέρας εἰς ἀληθινήν τοῦ ὄντος οὕσαν ἐπάνωδον, ἢν δὴ φιλοσοφίαν ἀληθῆ φήσομεν εἶναι). The search is for an inquiry drawing the soul from becoming to being; 521b: τί ἀν οὖν εἰς ... μάθημα ψυχῆς ὁλκὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ γιγνομένου ἐπὶ τὸ
The answer is given in the sequel. As has been analysed above, one starts with the distinct mathematical sciences, deepens then his insight by concentrating into their intercommunion, and, applying dialectical procedure to such thorough apprehension of their underlying mutual cognition, he finally reaches the principle(s) of being, the Idea of Goodness in particular. In this sense dialectics is the supreme lesson, lying as coping-stone on top of mathematics; 534e: ὁσπερ θριγκός τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἡ διαλεκτικὴ ήμῖν ἐπάνω κεῖσθαι, καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἂλλο τούτου μάθημα ἀνωτέρω ὀρθῶς ἀν ἐπιτίθεσθαι, ἄλλ’ ἔχειν ἣδη τέλος τὰ τῶν μαθημάτων. The ἀνυπόθεστον has been envisioned.

It has to do with a dialectical treatment of mathematics, especially of the inner communion among its branches. Dialectics is foremost a process (532a-b: οὐ διαλεκτικὴν ταύτην τὴν πορείαν καλείς); it is a method, as most clearly disclosed in the Laws [21].

But a dialectical treatment of mathematics with a firm view of ascending to first principles was precisely the content of the renowned Platonic discourse(s) on Goodness [22].

Republic Z, therefore, outlines the general pattern of reasoning in the Περὶ τὰγαθῶν [23]. As this lecture constitutes then the philosophical activity in actu (and not merely foreshadowed and methodologically circumscribed), it would answer to the projected dialogue Philosopher, should this have been meant as an execution of the Republic blueprint [24]. But as leader in the projected inquiry would be the Eleatic Stranger, we should rather expect an emphasis on the dialectical, and thus on the methodological aspect of the undertaking. At any rate the nonexistence of the Philosopher was felt in antiquity as a hiatus within the Platonic system of dialogues. One view, understandably yet impossibly, identified it with the Epinomis [25]: this work purportedly answers the call at the end of the Laws for a treatment of supreme wisdom.
Dialectics may be appropriately construed as a revised and methodological interpretation of Eleatism. In any case, it bears, however, (in common with that current of thought) heavy ontological committments. It has often been questioned whether the Theory of Ideas (as such metaphysical commitment) has survived under, and despite, the Pythagorean emphasis in late Plato. But as the mathematical interpretation of reality exists already in the *Republic*, so conversely Ideas are part of the final edifice.

The Aristotelian testimony is decisive. Aristotle, in his ex professo account of the Platonic Philosophy (*Metaphysics A6*), combines as a matter of course the Theory of Ideas with the revised Pythagoreanism of late Plato into one coherent, organic whole. There is no sign of fracture in this wholeness. Scattered also throughout his work are references and criticisms of the Theory of Ideas and of that severe and complete mathematization of philosophy which he ascribes to the Old Academy and strongly denounces. His published treatise *Περὶ Ἰδεῶν* is complemented by his account of the Platonic lecture(s) *Περὶ τὰγαθῶν*. It is inconceivable that Aristotle did not report and criticize the latest form of the Platonic Philosophy [26], with which he was immediately familiar for a very long time. (Without *A6* and *Περὶ τὰγαθῶν*, Spensippus, Xenocrates and the Old Academy would further remain an incomprehensible development).

Moreover Aristotle’s statement in *A6* that the Forms are the (ideal) Numbers fits exactly with what should be anticipated given the methodological description of the genuine philosophical endeavour from the *Republic* onwards. The “communion” among the (intermediate) mathematicals consists precisely in their presupposing eidetic or ideal numbers, incomparable (ἀνώμβλητοι) to each other: twoness, threeness, etc. rather than two, three, etc. In this respect ordinary Arithmetic, with numbers consisting of comparable units or monads, is on a par with Geometry, Stereometry etc. There are many units, and twos and threes etc. [27]. Besides, e.g. a triangle stands to the Threeness in a relation similar to that
which the (many) threes bear to it [28]. Thus the existence of the ideal, eidetic, “first”
numbers is the ontological presupposition involved in the dialectical treatment of the
mathematicals: in the Republic-programme.

Theory of (hypostatical) Ideas on the one hand, and mathematical Theory of
the World and First Principles on the other, go together, constituting the twin
aspects of a single vision of reality.

The general form of reality is represented by the (middle) Theory of Ideas: by the
side of a Cosmos in a continuous flux of becoming, there exist separately Ideas of
the various “communions” embedded in that flux, Forms of what appears in
common among different spatiotemporal segments of the flux identifying them as
the same or similar. Such Ideas are ontological and cognitive reference points, in
relationship to which the everchanging fabric of the World is woven and
comprehended.

The form of reality is filled with mathematical objects and structures as with its
true content. Timaeus explains how this is done in connection with the sensible
World, while Περί τὰ μεγαλότοιο would detail the constitution of mathematical
(ordinary and ideal) especially as disclosing the principles of being. Thus middle
and later phases of Plato’s philosophy, written and unwritten doctrines, are in perfect
harmony. There is no need of artificial interpretations like assuming dramatic
changes in Plato’s mind, or wholesale atheletization of late dialogues, or radical
invalidation of the Aristotelian testimony. The true account is elicited by a close
observation of what is going on in the written works of Plato and, primarily, by an
accurate appreciation of what is the purpose (avowed or hinted) of that which is
going on. Presumably, Plato obeyed his own sound dialectical maxim: in
everything that you think or do set unswervingly your eye and intention on a
fixed single object as end, and mould your every thought and action in terms of it.

Ideas are (ideal, incomparable, unitary) Numbers [29]. Their principles are the
One and the Great-and-Small, μέγα καὶ μικρόν (also called the Indefinite Dyad).
The second principle is the participatory one (μεταληπτικόν) and, hence, matter (οὐλη) [30]; its very name (μέγα καὶ μικρόν) confirms its dimensionality. Eidetic Numbers therefore, involve the abstract determination of extendedness, without themselves being extended in the normal way which entails repeatability [31]. When eidetic Numbers are (on a second level) conjugated to the Second Principle, there is generated a multiplicity (= ordinary number) of shapes and movements which constitutes the sensible world existing in, or rather with, space and (consequently) time. This is the mechanism of instantiation of the Ideas in this World [32].

Now every twos in the sensible and mathematical world participate in, or imitate, Twoness in itself, the (ideal) Number. But there exists one specific kind of twos which exemplifies (manifests) the ideal Twoness in such a way that the latter exhausts the formal component of the former in its specific character. Such a specific kind of two(ness) is length. Apart from abstract Twoness and indeterminate extentionality, there exists nothing else in length. Any other kind of two(ness), say a couple of colours or seing and intellection (critically bifurcated between a subjective and an objective pole and thus fundamentally dual), has not its total formal aspect exhausted by the (eidetic) Twoness, since this leaves out other factors in colour-dimension, sensing and conceiving correspondingly. Thus (ideal) Twoness is the idea of Length, but not of colour-couples, sensation or intellection. In the latter cases we need additional (ideal) Numbers to exhaust their formal content. We have here the Platonic equivalent of the Theory of essence. When X is the idea of x in the stricter sense defined, then x is an image of X. The shift from μέθεξις – talk to ὁμοίωσις – talk in Plato has, I suggest, to do with an emphasis on this stronger sense of instantiation which coheres with the recognition of the existence of relatively stable centers in the flux of becoming.

One can further pursue this line of thought to sharper precision. The kind of x imitating X is susceptible of more or less focusing. There is a point of highest
resonance (which the true Art of Measurement discerns), and also, on the other hand, various approximations to it [33]. E.g. the straight line of unit length may be held to constitute the optimal manifestation of the (Ideal) Twoness in space [34]. This is the best imitation of (eidetic) Twoness; we may speak of an ἀρίστη δύνας.

To answer then briefly the initial pivotal questions:

A) Ideas are the (eidetic) Numbers produced from the conjugation of the One with the Great-and-Small.

B) Particulars are produced from the conjugation of the (eidetic) Numbers with the Great-and-Small. Particulars imitate their (ideal) Numbers by copying the structure which these Numbers generate. There is an optimal likeness in each case; this is achieved when the structure realized best resembles that implicated in the (ideal) Number. In particular, with a given field of variation, optimal resonance has to be discovered experientially if the Number of the field is not known. Should it were known, the stable determination (the ἀναγκαία οὐσία, or the γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν) could be established rationally [35].

The “infinite” multitude of x’s under an idea X is organized in a Continuum of variability, an underlying field of indeterminacy. There exists an optimal determination for every such field: this gives the best-x, most adequate instantiation of X consistent with the structure of the actual World of Becoming. X is projected on the entire field of variation, indeterminacy reverberates to the tune of the projecting tonality, but focal resonance is achieved at the privileged poin, at best-x.
The polity of the Republic is emphatically held to be realizable in actual life. The anxiety not to be taken as a case of make-belief and wishful thinking (ἐυχὴ) is uppermost in Plato’s mind, esp. throughout E (and the end of Z). What is designed is possible (δυνατὰ), it can be actualized [36]. In fact, if the design is laid in accordance with the nature of things, there can be no question of an utopia; 456b-c: οὐκ ἄρα ἀδύνατα γε οὐδὲ εὐχαίς ὓμων ἐνομισθεῖμεν, ἐπείπερ κατὰ φύσιν ἔτιθεμεν τὸν νόμον ἀλλὰ τὰ νῦν παρὰ ταύτα γιγνόμενα παρὰ φύσιν μᾶλλον, ώς ἐοικέ, γίγνεται. If what is a deviation from nature can obtain, a fortiori this is possible for the thoroughly natural. It may be difficult, but it is not impossible [37]. Similarly in the conclusive conclusion of the middle body of books, at the end of Z (540d).

The call is to show the feasibility of the polity and even the manner of its realisability (ὡς δυνατὸν καὶ ἡ δυνατόν, 471e). The way is to have power and wisdom coincide in the same person(s) [38]. The main point in the developments in the middle books of the Republic is exactly to provide an intimation of the nature of philosophical wisdom required to effect (if coupled with power) the actual institution of the right polity. The necessary wisdom is philosophical (ultimately dialectical mathematics). The paradeigms of the World of Ideas will direct the legislator possessing power and wisdom in the proper design for the polity (500d-e). Following what he sees there (ἀ ἐκεῖ ὀρᾷ 500d4), he will undertake to picture the polity [39], by first purifying the existing state of affairs in society (501a) and then delineate the new design (501a9: μετὰ ταύτα ύπογραψαθαι ἀν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς πολιτείας). The paradeigms he would be looking at during this vital process will be τὸ φύσει δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν καὶ σώφρον καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα, while his task would be to harmoniously blend the characters around the dominant tone of
true piety (501b-c). There is a clear distinction between the polity-design and the ideal exemplars. In fact we seem to have an explicit acknowledgement of the multiplicity of such designs: ὡς τοιούτος ἐστι πολιτείων ζωγράφος ὁν τότε ἔπηνοιμεν (501c5-6) [40].

The necessary condition for the realization of a best polity is the same in the Laws as in Republic: greatest power and supreme wisdom must coincide. In fact, then the task is easy and quick moving [41].

The Laws (739a-e) recognize a first best polity (ἀριστή πολιτεία) and then approximations to it (δευτέρα καὶ τρίτη). The Laws provide the substance for the second. It is an open option which one is to be followed, depending on the obtaining state of society [42].

The best polity is not the polity of the Republic. It is one in which the unity of the society is so overwhelming as to extend even to the thoughts and sentiments of each individual: they all share the same attitudes, patterns of behavior, norms of appreciation, ways of thinking. We have to do with an explicit intensification of what is laid down in the Republic: the ἴδιον is completely eradicated from the Polis, not only regarding women, children or external possessions, but even (so far as it is possible) from the natural ἴδια, the senses and hands of a man, from what naturally belongs to him, parts and faculties of his body and soul. For τὸ μὲν γὰρ κοινὸν συνδεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον διασπά τὰς πόλεις (875a6-7). Goodness is Oneness [43].

This is a city of gods or children of gods (739d6). It corresponds to the Saturnian life (713b-e) [44], which has been described in the Politicus myth (268d-274d) in association with a Theory of Cosmic Periodization. This best polity is characterized by the sovereignty of the wise leader over laws (874e-875d): for ἐπιστήμης γὰρ οὕτω νόμος οὕτε τἄξις οὐδεμία κρείττων, οὐδὲ θέμις ἐστιν νοῦν οὐδενός ὑπήκουν οὐδὲ δούλοιν ἀλλὰ πάντων ἀρχοντα εἶναι, ἐάνπερ ἀληθινὸς ἐλευθερὸς τε ὄντως ἢ κατὰ φύσιν (875c6-d2) [45]. But this precondition is at best only partly attainable by human nature, and therefore, in general, τὸ δεύτερον
αἰσθέον, τάξιν τε καὶ νόμον, ἀ δὴ τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ὅρᾳ καὶ βλέπει, τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀδυνατεῖ (875d3-4). Such second best design is offered in the Laws [46]. The polity of the Republic approaches more to the Saturnian type and the best polity.

Any such type of polity, even the best one, is not the Idea of πόλις. Two senses of exemplariness (paradigm) should be distinguished: one is ideal; the other consists in the optimal determination of the variational field into which the Idea is manifested. The Idea of Polis must be an (ideal) Number encompassing the harmony of society, just as the soul in Timaeus was so integrated into its structured system proceeding from an appropriate Number. If we do not know the social Number (and the system of relationships that it generates and encompasses), then we may identify the basic dimension(s) of variation in the social nexus and discover its (their) essential, i.e. optimal, determination. And this is exactly what Plato does (applying the Philebean processes) in the final section of the Politicus: the Statesman’s function is to find the harmonious balance between security and dynamism, weaving the social fabric from serenity and vigour, from the welft of contentment and the warp of daring, from reasoned definiteness and impetuous openness – in fact, generalizing, the statesman will endeavour to grasp that combination of limiting Oneness and infinite Indeterminacy which constitutes the Number of Society [47]. Other aspects or dimensions beside the one noticed in Politicus may come into more or less prominent play as the history of human kind unfolds itself. The weaving has to be done anew in each case. The design may, and will, differ: but supreme wisdom and philosophical knowledge would for ever be required, irreplaceable by any subordinate art and science of the various necessary participants in the πόλις–life (287b-290e), even by any superior expertise of higher state-functionaries, politicians, military leaders, judicature (303d-305e). Statemanship is impossible without mathematics; not even divine stewardship of the human flock is possible without it; Laws Z, 818b9-c2: δοκῶ μὲν, ἀς (sc. divine
necessities i.e. mathematical order) μή τις πράξας μηδὲ αὐτοῦ τὸ παράπαν
οὐκ ἂν ποτὲ γένοιτο ἀνθρώπος θεὸς οὐδὲ δαίμων οὐδὲ ἥρως οίος δυνατὸς
ἀνθρώπων ἐπιμέλειαν σὺν σπουδῇ ποιεῖσθαι πολλοῦ δ’ ἂν δεησειν
ἀνθρωπὸς γε θείος γενέσθαι etc. Evidently dialectical mathematics is needed
to elevate a necessary condition to the sufficient one. Just as the Demiurge cannot order
the Κόσμος without mathematical structure emanating from Oneness-Goodness.

To sum up:

a) The Idea of State is the Social (ideal) Number, i.e. the Number which
involves the structure of the Harmony in Society or, in other words, the system of
determinate proportions which define all social parts and functions in their
interrelationship.

b) Depending on the state of the material principle (as reflected in a given
historic human condition) that Number is expressed as various forms of social
order, all converging and approximating to the optimal resonance of the Saturnian
life. In effect these forms can be represented as a certain weaving of the social
fabric from the two basic threads of many names underlying the variational field
of human excellence: valorous spirit and ponderous weighting, fieriness and
energy-accumulating reserve, strength and prudence, decisiveness and
calculation, force and repose, drive and contentedness. One can easily discern the
same fundamental elements into their manifold contemporary shapes. Carried
through the entire complex mixture of actual dimensions of variation, that
weaving always aims to create, by an appropriate system of checks and balances, a
simultaneously stable and dynamic social order which maximizes man’s potential
and optimizes his activity.
NOTES

[1] Socrates was the leader in the exposition to which Timaeus refers back, and that discourse is mentioned as τὰ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας (20b). Aristotle’s standing term of reference to the Republic is Πλάτων ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ or ἡ πολιτεία ἢ Πλάτωνος.

[2] Νῦν οὖν... Λέγει εἰμὶ ἔτοιμος, ὡς Σωκράτης, μὴ μόνον ἐν κεφαλαίοις ἀλλὰ ἄστερ ήμοιος καθ’ ἐκατὸν τοὺς δὲ πολίτας καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἢ χθές ἢ μεν ἢ τινῇ διόμεθα σύ, νῦν μετενεγκεφαλῶς ἐπὶ τ’ ἄλληθες δειώρθομεν ἢ εἰκόνιν τι ἄνθησαν ὡς, καὶ τοὺς πολίτας οὐς διένοιν φόρομεν ἔκεινοι τοὺς ἀληθινοὺς εἶναι προγόνους ἡμῶν... πάντως ἀρμόσουσι καὶ οὐκ ἀπασῶμεθα λέγοντες αὐτοὺς εἶναι τοὺς ἐν τῷ τότε ὄντας χρόνῳ.


[4] The later passage runs thus: ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ..., περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα ὅσα σημικαὶ καὶ πολλά νομοθέτην μὲν εκλείπειν, τοὺς δὲ ἐμπείρους αἰεὶ καὶ ἐνίατον γιγνομένους αὐτῶν, ἀπὸ τῆς χρείας μαθάνοντας, τάττεσθαι καὶ ἐπανορθούμενοι κινεῖν κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν, ἐώς ἅ ὁ ἐκατον δόξη τῶν τοιοῦτων νομίμων καὶ εἰπτυμεμάτων γεγονεῖν. χρόνους μὲν οὖν μέτριος ἀμα καὶ ἰκανός γίγνομαι ἂν τῆς ἐμπείριας δεκαετίης θυσίων τε καὶ χροιῶν, ἐπὶ πάντα καὶ ἐκκαίας ταχείς, ἦντος μὲν τοῦ τάξαντος νομοθέτου κοινῆς, τέλος δὲ σχόντος, αὐτὰς ἐκάςτας τὰς ἀρχὰς εἰς τοὺς νομοφύλακας εἰσφέρονσα τὸ παραλειπόμενον τῆς αὐτῶν ἀρχῆς ἐπανορθοθοῦντο, μέχριτες ἂν τέλος ἔχειν ἐκατόν δόξη τοῦ καλῶς ἐξειργασθαι, τότε δὲ ἀκίνητα θεμένους, ήδη χρῆσθαι μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων νόμων οὐς ἔταξε κατ’ ἀρχὰς ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶς νομοθέτης· ὅπερ κινεῖν μὲν ἐκάςτας μηδέποτε μηδεν, εἰ δὲ τὰς ἀνάγκης δοξεῖτο ποτὲ καταλαβεῖν, πάσας μὲν τὰς ἀρχὰς χρῆ συμβουλεῖτο, πάντα δὲ τὸν ἰδίων καὶ πάσας τοῖς μαντείας ἐπελθόντας, ἐκν αἰσφοροῦνται παντες, οὕτω κινεῖν, ἀλλὰς δὲ μηδέποτε μηδαμίας, ἀλλὰ τὸν κυλοῦντας αἰεὶ κατὰ νόμον κρατεῖν. (Absolute jus probendibidi belonging to any dissenting voice against a proposed change).

[5] This fundamental passage reads thus: οὐκ ἔστιν ποτὲ γενέσθαι βεβαίως θεοσεβὴ θυτην οὖν ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα ὡς ἀν μὴ τὰ λεγόμενα ταύτα νῦν διὸ λάβῃ, (a) ψυχή τε ὡς ἔστιν προεβαθμὸν ἄπαντον ὀσα γονίως μετεληθέν, ἄπανταν τε, ἄρχει τε δὴ σωμάτων πάντων, ἐπὶ τούτους δὴ, (b) τὸ νῦν εἰρήμενον πολλάκις, (b1) τὸν το εἰρημένον ἐν τοῖς ἀστροις νοεν τῶν ὄντων, (b2) τὸ πρὸ τοῦτον ἀναγκαία μαθήματα [λάβῃ], (b3) τὰ τε κατὰ τῇ μοίραν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας συνεθεσάμενοι etc. – The Μουσία in br is the supreme Muse of true Philosophy; v. ΣΤ, 499D: όταν αὐτή ἡ Μούσα πόλεως ἐγκρατης γένηται.

[6] The science in question is furthermore peculiar, difficult to be discovered and difficult to be taught (968b: ᾧ δει μανθάνειν οὕτω εὑρεῖν ἄριστον οὕτω ἡρμηστός ἄλλῳ μαθηματικός γενέσθαι), unexpectedly grasped (968c: οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτῶς τοὺς μανθάνουσι δῆλα γίγνεται ἂν οὗ πρὸς καὶρον μανθάνεται, πρὸς ἄντος τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐκάστω πο πο μαθηματικός ἐπιστήμης γεγονέναι), not really ineffable, yet unforetold (968c: ἀπόρρητα μὲν λεχθέντα οὐκ ἀν οὕτως λέγοντο, ἀπροφθητα δὲ), a result of teaching accompanied by frequent intercourse (968c: διδαχὴ μετὰ συνουσίας πολλῆς). The correspondence with Epistle Z, 341c is striking: ἢττον γὰρ οὐδαμῶς ἔστιν ὡς ἄλλα μαθήματα, ἀλλ’ ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γεγομένης περὶ τὸ πράγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τον συζήν ἐξαίφνης οἷον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδήγαντος
εξαφθὲν φῶς, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γενόμενον αὐτῷ ἐαυτὸ ἠδή τρέψει. The education in question is not really a proper object of legislation, but, once achieved, its starting condition (968c). Plato is in possession of it: (968b) διὰ τὴν περὶ τὰ τοιαύτα ἐμπειρίαν τε καὶ σκέψιν γεγονότα μοι καὶ μάλα συχνὴν.

[7] “Where we want to lead the inquiry to” is the search for the good and beautiful (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ζήσοσιν, 531c6). Thorough and in depth treatment of mathematics must tend to the spiritual vision of the Idea of Goodness: τὸ δὲ πολὺ αὐτῆς καὶ ποροφότερο προῦν σκοπεύεσθαι δει εἰ τι πρὸς ἐκείνον τείνει, πρὸς τὸ ποιεῖν κατιδεῖν φαν τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἱδέαν.

[8] As Julius Tomin correctly pointed out in the discussion, the intimate connection of Mathematics with Dialectics (of such a nature that the latter draws the significant conclusions from the facts established by the former science in thus ascending to their principles) is already affirmed, in a rather matter of course way, in Euthydemus 290c: οἱ δ’ αὐν γεωμετραί καὶ οἱ ἀστρονόμοι καὶ οἱ λογιστικοί - θηρευτικοί γὰρ εἰσι καὶ οὕτων οὐ γὰρ ποιοῦσι τὰ διαγράμματα ἔκαστοι τούτων, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα ἀνευρίσκουσιν - ἄτε οὖν χρησθαί αὐτοῦ αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐπιστάμενοι, ἀλλὰ θηρεύουσα μόνον, παραδίδοσι δήποτε τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς καταχρησθῇ αὐτῶν τοὺς εὑρήμασιν, ὅσι γε αὐτῶν μὴ παντάπασιν ἀνόητοι εἰσιν. In fact we seem to have here the postulate of the intermediate mathematicals: these are τὰ ὄντα which the mathematicians do not invent, but discover. Yet the Mathematicians, do not know what to do with the truths they reveal; it is to the Dialectician that they turn over their discoveries in order to trace their presuppositions and consequences – if they are not completely out of mind. For their expertise does not make them dialecticians; v. Republic Z, 531d9 sqq.: οὐ γὰρ που δοκοῦσι γε οἱ ταύτα δείνοι (i.e. accomplished mathematicians) διαλεκτικοὶ εἰσίν. – Οὐ μᾶ τὸν Δ’, ἐφι, εἰ μὴ μάλα γέ τινες ὁλίγοι ἄν ἔγω ἐντεύξατα.
world as the principle of infinity, that the principle of indeterminacy and infinity is the Great and Small) in his Commentary on Philoebus. The reason for this procedure is, as Simplicius suggests, the consonance between the two works; In Phys. 453.25 – 454.19 = Aristotelis, Fragmenta Selecta, Ross, pp. 117-8; n.b. the conclusion: ταῦτα ὁ Πορφύριος εἶπεν αὐτῇ σχεδὸν τῇ λέξει (after a long quotation from Porphyry’s Commentary), διαφθοράν ἐπαγγελμένον τὰ ἐν τῇ περὶ τάγαθῳ συννοσίᾳ αἰνιγματαδῶς οὕτεντα, καὶ ἵσως ὅτι σύμφωνα ἔκειν τὴν τὸς Ἐν Φύλλῳ γεγραμένος.

[15] 278c: παραδείγματος γ’ ἐστὶ τότε γένεσις, ὡσπῶς ὁ ταύτων ἐν ἐτέρω διεσπασμένῳ δοξαζόμενον ὀρθῶς καὶ συναχθὲν περὶ ἐκάτερον καὶ (better than ὡς) συνάμφω μιὰν ἀληθῆ δόξαν ἀποτελῆ.

[16] The leader in each dialogue is, no doubt, meant as a hint and clue.

[17] Parentheses indicate indirect or looser connection. Square brackets an unfulfilled promise. The inclusion sign for Epinomis draws attention to its (perhaps) doubtful authenticity.

[18] Critias is next to nonexistent for all meaningful purposes.

[19] Already in antiquity some held the Athenian stranger to be specifically Plato’s literary persona; Diogenes Laertius II, 52: εἰοὺ δ’ οἱ έένοι (sc. the Athenian and the Eleatic strangers) οὐχ, ὡς τινες ὑπελάβον, Πλάτων καὶ Πλατωνίδης etc.

[20] Philoebus’ inclusion in this final group need not be construed chronologically. It simply represents the most complete written account of the Platonic Theory of Principles. This dialogue’s true timing is, famously, a real puzzle. Its most natural position seems to be after Politics. It provides an illustration, drawn out in extenso, of how the Theory of Principles presupposed by the “true art of Measurement” can be applied in solving a characteristically Socratic problem: is phronesis or pleasure the ultimate human God? It corresponds to the Politics handling of the question concerning the true nature of regal statesmanship: we have to do in this world with harmonies in mixtures as stabilizing factors in the universal flux.


[22] The anecdote related by Aristoxenus highlights the contrast between the common notion of goodness and Plato’s analysis of it. Aristoxenus further testifies (according to the Aristotelian exposition of that lecture) that Plato started from a treatment of mathematics and ended up with a definition of Goodness as Oneness; Elementa Harmonica B, 31-2, pp. 39.4-40.4 da Rios, esp. p. 39.13 sqq.: φανείταιν οἱ λόγοι περί μαθημάτων καὶ ἀριθμῶν καὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ ἀστρολογίας (= astronomy) καὶ τό πέρας ὃ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἐν. This is then the structure of the discourse: it answers exactly to the general formulations for such procedure in the Republic and the Laws.

[23] To the careful student of Plato this must come as no great surprise. The theory that goodness and oneness or binding together (and so, correspondingly, badness and breaking up or segregation) are essentially connected pervades his work. For instance, notice, in the former part of Republic (E, 462a-b): ἔχομεν οὖν τι μεῖζον κακὸν πόλει ἢ ἡκείνον ὡ ἄν αὐτὴν διασκαὶ καὶ ποτὶ πολλὰς αὐτή μιὰς; ἢ μείζον ἀγαθόν του ὡ ἄν συνήθει te καὶ ποιὴ μιὰς;

[24] It would be significant if, as it is perhaps possible, Aristotle’s account of Περὶ τάγαθῳ formed the second book of his Περὶ Φιλόσοφίας (Cf. the passage from Syrianus in Arist. Fragn. Selecta p. 78 Ross). This would explain the Aristotelian reference in de anima 404b16-24, and the vacillating ancient tradition regarding the relationship between the two former works.

[26] In *Metaphysics*, M, 4, Aristotle treats of an initial form of the Theory of (separate) Ideas *unconnected* to the nature of number; 1078b9-12: περὶ δὲ τῶν ἰδεῶν πρῶτων αὐτὴν τὴν κατὰ τὴν ἴδεαν δόξαν ἐπισκέπτεσθαι, μηθεν συναντότως πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀριθμῶν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ ὡς ὑπελαβὼν ἐξ ἀρχής οἱ πρῶτοι τὰς ἰδέας φύσαντες εἶναι. From the sequel (in comparison with A6) it follows that those first exponents of the initial Theory of Ideas must be Plato (and maybe others in the Socratic circle like Euclides). *Phaedo* is probably considered to belong to this initial stage (1080a2 sqq.). The adherents are in all likelihood the εἰδών φύλοι of the *Sophist*. We have to do, it seems, with the logical (Eleatic) Atomism which I noticed above. We have then incontrovertible Aristotelian testimony for two phases of Platonic Philosophy. The specific differential between them is the non-existence or existence of (developed) Pythagoreanism as the foundation of the entire system.

[27] M, 1083a31 sqq.: εἰ δὲ εστὶ τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ, ἀνάγκη μᾶλλον ὥσπερ Πλάτων ἔλεγεν ἔχειν τά περὶ τοὺς ἀριθμοὺς, καὶ εἰναι διάδα πρῶτῃ καὶ τριάδα, καὶ αὐτῷ συμβλητοῖς εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμοὺς πρὸς ἀλλήλους. So, M, 1018a4-5: καὶ οὕτως δὴ συμβλητοί εἶναι τάς ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῶν πρῶτων ἀριθμῶν (sc. μονάδας) πρὸς ἀλλήλας. The First Dyad and First Triad are the ideal numbers, Dyad-in-itself and Triad-in-itself; M, 1080a25-30: εἰσὶ δὲ συμβληταί αἰ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἀριθμῷ μονάδες (one possibility), οἷον αἰ ἐν τῇ διάδα τῇ πρώτῃ αὐταίς, καὶ αἰ ἐν τῇ τριάδι τῇ πρώτῃ αὐταίς, καὶ οὕτω δὴ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀλλῶν ἀριθμῶν αἰ δὲ αἰ ἐν τῇ διάδα αὐτῆς πρὸς τὰς ἐν τῇ τριάδι αὐτῆς συμβλητοῖς, οὕτως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀλλῶν τῶν ἐφεξῆ ἀριθμῶν. Cf. M, 1081b30-1; 1083a24-30 (here the Speusippean position is criticized in favour of the Platonic). The Platonic theory is evidently referred to in K, 1060b6-9: ἓτε δὲ τοῖς τῆς πρώτης ἀρχής τὸ ἐν λέγουσα καὶ τοῦτ’ οὕτως, έκ δὲ τοῦ ἔνου καὶ τῆς ύλῆς τῶν ἀριθμῶν γεννώσα πρῶτον (perhaps we should read: «τὸν» πρῶτον) καὶ τούτων οὕτως φαίνουσιν εἶναι etc. This use of πρῶτος to refer to the ideal numbers (cf. 1080b22: τὸν πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν τῶν εἰδῶν ένα εἶναι etc.) settles the meaning of ἐξω τῶν πρῶτων (sc. ἀριθμῶν) in A6, 987b34. - Aristotle employs «πρῶτος» in general to signify a Platonic ideal entity; *Metaphysics*, Z, 1032a4-6: ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν πρῶτων καὶ καθ’ αὐτὰ λεγομένου τὸ ἐκάστῳ εἶναι καὶ ἐκαστὸν τὸ αὐτο καὶ ἐν ἐστὶ, δήλον. Cf. *De lineis insecabilibus* 968a9: ἡ δ’ ἱδέα πρώτη τῶν συννομών. Naturally, he also uses the term to refer to the (mathematical) number, as first in order among beings according to Speusippus (Cf. N, 1092a22; M, 1080b14-16; M 1083a21-24; Λ, 1075b37 sqq.); this cretes no blurring or confusion. On the other hand one must systematically distinguish between first x as the Idea (or ideal Number) X and best x as the optimal instantiation of X. V. *infra*.

[28] And here we have the answer why Plato was not troubled by any alleged necessity to hypostatize ideas of magnitudes as something different from both ideal numbers and mathematical. (Aristotle worries about this; *Metaphysics* 992b13-18 and 1080b23-25. In the second passage the reference to Plato is certain given the following mention of the Speusippean and Xenocrateian views. Aristotle holds that Plato is forced by the logic of his position to accept quasi-ideal magnitudes, τὰ μετὰ τὰς ἰδέας, 1080b25, distinct from the mathematical. The bias may have been operative under the earlier form of the Theory of Ideas, (v. n. 26 *supra*), where for any x an auto-x (αὐτόκεκαστον) was mechanically posited and hypostasized. But with the mathematical Dialectics of the later Theory of Ideas the pressure disappears. Thus Plato is hesitant in N, 1900b24: ἀλλὰ ταύτα γε (sc. τὰ μεγεθῆ as derived from their principles) ποτέρον ἰδέα ἐσονται (since the formal principle of e.g. lines is ideal 2) ἢ τις ο τρόπος αὐτῶν etc.). The idea of, e.g., surface (two-dimensional figures and their relationships) is for Plato the Ideal Number 3 and not an ideal surface. The first actual, concrete (i.e. repeatable) trinity is surface - not a purely numerical triad of comparable units. The progeny of the One is (ideal) Number. The offspring of (ideal) numbers is extension and extended being. In common with the Pythagorean tradition units
and (non-ideal) numbers have extension. Thus it is further understood why Plato was against a geometry of points (V. Metaphysics A, 992a20-22).

[29] The Idea of Living Organism (αὐτὸ τὸ ζώον) consists of the One and the Ideas of Length, of Breadth and of Depth; Aristotle De anima 404b18-21: αὐτὸ μὲν τὸ ζώον ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ ἔνος ἰδέας καὶ τοῦ πρώτου μήκους καὶ πλάτους καὶ βάθους, τὰ δ’ ἄλλα ὀμοιοτρόπως. The first length is the Idea of Length, i.e. the Number of Length, namely 2. Cf. Metaphysics, 1090b20-24: τοὺς δὲ τὰς ἰδέας τιθέμενος (sc. Plato who posited ideas as well as mathematical) τούτο μὲν ἐκφέυγει (sc. an aforementioned difficulty affecting Speusippus’ theory of first principles) – ποιοῦσα γὰρ τὰ μεγέθη ἐκ τῆς ὀλίγης (which is the metaleptikōn as space according to Timaeus, v. Aristotle’s definitive statement in Physics 209b11-16) καὶ ἀριθμὸς, εἰ μὲν τῆς διάδος τὰ μήκη, ἐκ τριάδος δ’ ἴσως τὰ ἐπίπεδα, ἐκ δὲ τῆς τετράδος τὰ στερεά ἢ καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων ἀριθμῶν διαφέρει γὰρ συμβέλει - etc. The relative nondefiniteness (ἴσως, ἢ καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων ἀριθμῶν) is a generalization referring to any holder of the basic view in question and not only to Plato.

But Plato is the main target here, and this confirms the Platonic ascription of the view in the De Anima passage. Immediately preceding there, Plato’s constitution of the soul from elements (στοιχεῖα) in the Timaeus is referred to; while the view in question is introduced by the sentence: ὅμως δὲ καὶ εἰν τοῖς περὶ φιλοσοφίας λεγομένοις διωσήθη. The ancient interpretative tradition takes this mostly as a reference to Περί τάγαθον. Probably, indeed, Aristotle means the Platonic concept of true Philosophy, i.e. dialectical mathematics with a view to eliciting first principles – exactly what was done in Περί τάγαθον. (Once again the promised Philosopher seems in effect realized in the unwritten lecture(s)).

Cherniss (Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy, Appendix IX, esp. pp. 567-70) argued against a Platonic reference in the De Anima passage (and in favour of a Xenocrateian one). His main reasons are: 1) Metaphysics N, 1090b20-32 (where the same view with that of De Anima 404b18-21 occurs) does not refer to Plato but to Xenocrates; and 2) In Metaphysics Z, 1036b13-15 Aristotle makes a distinction among those who assert the Theory of Ideas: some of them make the dyad αὐτογραμμή while others make the form of line (ἐίδος τῆς γραμμῆς) αὐτογραμμή; since the latter position represents the “orthodox” theory of Ideas, the former one could not be Plato’s.

Cherniss’ foundations are untenable.

As to the second: Aristotle’s point in Z, 1036a26-b20 is an apophrase treatment of the issue how much from the being-determination in any given entity is due to its form, and what the remainder is, which has to be accounted by its matter. Should flesh, bones and such “material” parts of a man be included in his definition as parts of his form and λόγος? Should extentionality and the continuum be considered as belonging to the form of lines and figures? (Cf. 1043a34: καὶ γραμμὴ πότερον δύνα ἐν μήκει ἢ [ὑπὶ] δύνας). Aristotle distinguishes the two logical alternative answers to this question about geometricals and draws unlikely (from a commonsensical outlook) consequences from the negative answer. The affirmative one belongs evidently to that original and simple form of the Theory of Ideas (v. supra n. 26), which roughly consisted in hypostatizing over and above any and every X the X as the αὐτό-x or the idea of x (Cf. Metaphysics Z, 1040b30-4: προσθήκεται τοῖς αἰσθήτοις τὸ ονά καὶ τὸ «αὐτό». Cf. also B, 997b5-12 and the αὐτοεκάστον in Nic. Eth. 1096a35-b5). Cherniss’ “orthodox theory of Ideas” is this initial, rude form of it.

As to the first: Cherniss holds that Metaphysics N, 1090b20-32 refers to Xenocrates, since in the sequel 1090b32-1091a12 Plato is certainly meant (1090b32: οἱ δὲ προὶς δύο τοὺς ἀριθμοὺς ποιήσαντες, τὸν τε τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν ετο.). But in fact Aristotle (a) starts with Speusippus (1090b13-20), proceeds (b) to Platonic doctrine (1090b20-27), criticizes (c) the Xenocrateian position identifying ideal and mathematical number (1090b27-32); there is no theorem about the ideal number, unless, by confounding ideal and mathematical
number, one gets the theory he needs but at the price of altering the proper mathematical foundations of Mathematics and assuming some peculiar positions: ἀλλά μήν οὐδ’ ὑπάρχει γε κατ’ αὐτὸν οὐθέν θεωρήμα, ἕαν μὴ τὰ βουλήθηται κινεῖν τὰ μαθηματικά καὶ ποικὶν ἴδιας τινὰς δόξας etc. – a characteristic Xenocratean feat according to Aristotle (cf. 1086a5-11; and for two characteristic unmathematical principles of Xenocratean mathematically-ideal realities v. 1080b28-30); finally Aristotle (d) returns to Plato (1090b32 sqq.).

(In De Anima 404b21-4 the quadruple division of apprehension in νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, δόξα, αἰσθήσεις can be easily reconciled to Platonic doctrine; still, the application here is more likely Xenocratean. In any case it does not affect the ascription of the view in b18-21 one way or another).

For Plato then the first Breadth = the Idea of surface = 3, and the first Depth = the Idea of volume = 4. So clearly Themistius, Paraphrases Aristotelis, vol. II pp. 20.22-21.9 Spengel: τοῦ μὲν οὖν αὐτοῦ, τούτου τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ νοητοῦ, στοιχεία τὰ πρῶτα ἐποίησιν τῶν εἰδητικῶν ἀρίθμων, τὴν τοῦ ἐνός ἰδεαν καὶ τὴν τῆς πρώτης δύνας καὶ τὴν τῆς πρώτης τράδος καὶ τὴν τῆς πρώτης τετράδος ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νοητῷ κόσμῳ δεῖ πάντως τὰς ἀρίχες παρεμφαίωσεν τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ, ὁ δὲ αἰσθητός ἐκ μέχρις ἦν καὶ πλατύντος καὶ βάθους, τοῦ μὲν μέχρις ἰδεαν εἶναι τὴν πρώτην ἀπεφήναντο δύνας etc. (This was Xenocrate’s explanation, as well, ibid.: ταύτα δὲ ἀπαντα λαβεῖν ἔστω ἐκ τῶν περὶ φύσεως ξενοκράτους). Probably, therefore, the (ideal) number of the Animal-in-itself is 10 (= 1+2+3+4). The (eidetic) Decade is the Intelligible Paradigm in creation, the idea of the World, of the cosmic animal. Ideas of particular animals must be construed in a similar manner (οἰκοιθότως): probably as number of decades. Thus Philoponus commenting on the passage from de anima maintains (v. V. Rose, Aristotelles Pseudopigraphus p. 28): φάσκει γάρ αὐτοὺς ὅτι τὰ εἴδη ἀρίθμητοι εἰσίν, ἀρίθμητοι δὲ δεκαδικοὶ ἐκαστὸν γὰρ τῶν εἰδῶν δεκάδα ἔλεγον.

Other examples of ideal numbers would be the Harmonic scale in the Timaean constitution of the soul; and the Number in the Republic. The former amounted (according to a tradition, going back probably at least to Crantor or Theodorus of Soloi, and explained in Timaeus Locros §§208-212 (pp. 124-130 M. Baltes), and when all terms of the scale have been normalized in the form of integers), to 114.695. For Proclus (Comm. In Tim. II p. 236 Diehl) the sum is 105.947 (he omits the ἀποστομαί – halftones from the series).

[30] Aristotle’s locus classicus in Physics 209b11-16: διό καὶ Πλάτων τὴν ὑλήν καὶ τὴν χώραν ταύτο ἄφιεν εἶναι ἐν τῷ Τιμαιῷ τὸ γὰρ μεταλητικὸν καὶ τὴν χώραν ἐν καὶ ταὐτόν (hence μεταλητικὸν = ὑλή), ἀλλ’ ἂν ἐφ’ ὑπάρχῃ ταῦτα λέγω τὸ μεταλητικὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀγράφοις δύσμασιν, ὅμως τὸν τόπον καὶ τὴν χώραν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεφήναντο. In the unwritten doctrines the μεταλητικὸν is defined of course as to μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸ (cf. ibid. b33-210a2).

[31] This answers the Aristotelian objection in Physics 209b33-210a2, why are not the Ideas themselves in space. Ideas are unrepeatable, being unique, and thus exempt from space (and time). Beings in the sensible world are repeatable, hence properly in space (and time). The deeper reason for this difference is that while the participative (receptive) principle is the same in the two cases, the formal cause in the former case is the One itself with its absolute unifying potency, whereas it is (eidetic) Number in the other, with inferior power of holding and bonding together, with less intense cohesive faculty.

The uniqueness of Ideas is emphasized by middle Plato; e.g. Republic 1, 597b-d, esp. 597c: ὁ μὲν δὲ θεός, εἰτε οὐκ εὔβολητε, εἰτε τις ἄναγκη ἐπὶ τήν μὴ πλέον ἢ μίαν ἐν τῇ φύσει ἀπεφάσατο αὐτὸν κλίνην, οὕτως ἐποίησεν μίαν μόνον αὐτὴν ἐκλίνην ὁ ἐστὶν κλίνης δόγμα δὲ τοιαύτῃ ἢ πλείους οὔτε ἐφευρέσθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ οὔτε μὴ φωσίον.

[32] The reality of this mechanism of instantiation, and the underlying structure of ideal, ordinary and material mathematics, constitutes mathematical truth as divine necessity, θεῖα ἄναγκη.
which gods themselves cannot deflect (Laws Z, 818b sqq.). This (mathematical) divine necessity binds by nature, 818d8: οὕτω γὰρ ἄναγκη φύσει κατειλήφθη, ἢ φαμέν οὐδένα θεοῦ οὕτω μαχεῖσθαι τὰ τῶν οὕτω μαχεῖσθαι ποτε. Just as mathematical is the way through which the Demiurge orders the world in Timaeus, so similarly mathematical must be the way the social human world is ordered, and proper care taken of man, by god, other divine being or divine man (818b9 sqq.). The reason being that reality is throughout mathematical, including divine reality (as C. Ritter correctly discerned the later point, Platos Gesetze-Kommentar pp. 213-4; although he inconsistently hesitated to affirm the universal validity of the principle, ibid. note to p. 213).

[33] Here we meet the analysis in Philebus and the applications in Politicus.

[34] Can the Xenocratean invisible lines find here their forceful motivation?

[35] Cf. the difference between empirical and rational Harmonics or Astronomy.


[37] 502c: συμβαίνει ἡμῖν περὶ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἀρίστα μὲν εἶναι ἀ λέγομεν, εἰ γένοιτο, χαλέπα δὲ γενέσθαι, οὐ μέντοι ἀδύνατα γε.

[38] 473c sqq. Cf. 502b: εἰς ικανὸς γενομένος, πόλιν ἐχων πειθόμενην, πάντ’ ἐπιτελέσα τὰ τῶν ἀπιστοῦμενα. The definite statement occurs in ST, 499. Plato renews the taunt of the unscientific “realists”, in reality mere opportunists (cf. 500b), against his best polity: to represent it as exemplary wishful thinking and utopian phantasizing (εὐχία) one has to deny the possibility of either the powerful becoming philosophic, or the genuine philosophers assuming sovereign power in human society; but there is no reason in support of such dogmatic position. 499c: τούτων (sc. the two alternatives) δὲ πότερα γενέσθαι ἢ ἀμφότερα ὡς άκον ἔστιν ἀδύνατον, ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν δὲ ἐχειν λόγον. Οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἡμεῖς δικαίως καταγελομέθα, ὡς ἄλλος εὐχίας ὀμιλεῖ λέγοντες. On the contrary it is certain that when Philosophy reigns and the philosophers rule the best polity is realized whether in the past, in the present at some unknown place, or in the future. (Notice the exquisite sophistication of the formulations in 499c-d. Moreover, at the conclusion of the long sentence «εἰ τοιῶν ἄκρως εἰς φιλοσοφίαν... ἐγκρατῆς γένηται», Plato uses a temporal clause in place of some normally expected combined form of conditional; the apodosis is also emphatic: οὗτοι αὐτή ἡ Μοῦσα πόλεως ἐγκρατῆς γένηται, γέγονεν ἡ εἰρημένη πολιτεία καὶ ἔσται καὶ γενησται γε. Whenever Philosophy gets the power, the best polity obtained and obtains and will obtain). We do not know such instantiation, but reason shows that it is possible, although difficult to obtain: οὐ γὰρ ἀδύνατος γενέσθαι, οὐδ’ ἡμεῖς ἀδύνατα λέγομεν χαλέπα δὲ καὶ παρ’ ἡμῶν ὀμιλεύεται (499d).

Disbelief in this salutary and true view is caused not by the inability of the many to accept the superiority of philosophy, but by the worthlessness of the actual pretenders at philosophy (499e-500b). Incapable leadership is the real trouble; it discredits genuine philosophical guidance to the eyes of the many.


[40] At the end of Book Θ, the polity of the Republic is denied by Glaucos to exist anywhere upon earth; it lies as a design of the philosopher’s own (591E: τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ πολιτείᾳ; 592A: ἐν γε τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πόλει) in thought (τῇ ἐν λόγοις κειμένῃ, 592B) ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ οṼμια αὐτὴν εἶναι. Socrates seizes the opportunity for a nice jocular turn: ἀλλ’, ἣν δ’ ἐγὼ, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἱδώ παραδείγμα αὖδαι τῷ θεῷ φαντάσων ὡς κατοικίσῃ, ἐν γε τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πόλει. Socrates has been tired arguing again and again for the realizability of his best polity, which he does not deny here. He strikes a jocular tone with his «ἐν οὐρανῷ» in replying, and then adds: διαφέρει δὲ οὐδέν, εἰτε που ἔστιν εἰτε ἐστιαν τὰ γὰρ ταύτης μόνης ἀν πράξειν, ἄλλης δὲ οὐδέμαζ. For the philosopher it is irrelevant whether his best design exists or will exist in sensible actuality: his actions will be guided by the best paradigm (= example) of a
state anyway. One inherits it by behaving according to its tone and pattern, thereby realizing it so far as depends on him. Παράδειγμα here is exemplary design. “In heaven, as it does not exist on earth. Besides, it is a heavenly design. The use of παράδειγμα in 472c-d is also non-technical. Strictly speaking it refers to the optimal realization of an idea rather than to the Idea itself. The variation of the actual approximations to such privileged optima has been explained above: it is the Philebean doctrine of variational distancing from the μέτρον. The reservation voiced provisionally and preemptively in 472b-473a regarding the realizability of the best polity (which is going to be proven in the sequel) concerns the necessary enhanced precision and truthfulness of λόγος as against deed and worked effect; 473a: ἐὰν οὖν τὲ τὰ παραχθῆναι ὡς λέγεται, ἢ φύσιν ἔχει πραξεῖν λέει ἢ τῶν ἀληθείας ἐφάπτεσθαι, κἂν εἰ μὴ τῶν δοκεῖ... Τούτο μὲν δὴ μὴ ἀνάγκαξέ με, οίᾳ τῷ λόγῳ δυσλόγου, τοιαῦτα παντάπασι καὶ τὰ ἔργα δεῖν γιγνόμενα ἀποφαίνειν ἀλλ’, ἦν οἷον τὸ γεγονός εὐφρέν ὡς ἄν ἐγγυτάτα τῶν εἰρημένων πόλεως οἰκήσεων, φάναι ἡμᾶς ἐξερηγήσεις ὡς δυνατὰ ταῦτα γίγνεσθαι, δὲν ἐπιτάπτεσι. (Cf. the principle enunciated in Phaedo 99d-100a; 99e: ἐδοξάσθη δὴ μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἑκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὀντῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ...οὐ γὰρ πάνω συχνώτερον τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὠντα ἐν εἰκοσὶ μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις. Thus Dialectics starts. Rational Harmonics and Astronomy are contrasted in the Republic, Z to the inferior empirical corresponding studies. And so the intelligible astral order (τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις νοῦν τῶν ὀντῶν) is emphasized in the Laws, 969e1). The qualification therefore expressed in 472b-473a has nothing to do specifically with the best polity of the Republic; it equally affects any design ἐν λόγῳ of some appropriate constitution, say that of the second best in the Laws, or any other. Every sensible reality suffers from such unstable approximability to the norm, even the paradigmatically divine celestial movements (Republic Z, 530a-b) or the relationships of audible harmony (ibid., 531a-c). (Notice 530b1-4, with reference to astronomical entities, measures and relationships: οὐκ ἀπότομον, οἷον, ἦγερεται τὸν νουμίζοντα γιγνόσθαι ταῦτα ἄει ὑστερεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν οὐδὲν παραλλάττειν σῶμα τε ἔχοντα καὶ ὀρόμενα, καὶ ζητεῖ παντὶ τρὸπῳ τὴν ἀλήθειαν αὐτῶν λαβεῖν). Realisability has nothing to do with the degree of detailedness in the design in question, or to its grade of approximation to the best paradigm-example (instantiation) of the Idea of State.

[41] 712a: ως ὅταν εἰς ταύτων τῶν φροσνείν τα καὶ σωφρονείν ἡ μεγίστα δύναμις ἐν ἀνθρώπων συμπέσῃ, τότε πολιτείας τῆς ἀρίστης καὶ νόμων τῶν τυχόντων φύσεις γένεσις, ἄλλως δὲ οὐ μὴ ποτὲ γένηται. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν καθήκει εἰς τις ταξιδεύων σχέσεις καὶ ἐπιδεικνύω τῇ μὲν χαλέπων ὅν τὸ πόλιν εὔνομον γίνεσθαι, τῇ δ’ εἴπερ γένος ὁ λέγομεν, πάντων τάχιστον τε καὶ ῥατότων μακρών.

[42] The choice must depend on the human "matter" available. Thus the Laws enjoin private ownership of house and land, instead of communal agriculture, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τοιοῦτον μεῖζον ἦ κατὰ τὴν τὴν γένεσιν καὶ τροφὴν καὶ παιδευέσθαι εἴηται (739e8-740a2).

[43] The identical understanding of what is "one’s own" (namely, their own) among the guardians in the Republic extends over all of them a common (so far as this is possible) response in terms of each one’s feelings of pleasure and pain; 464d: ἀλλ’ ἐνιὸ δόγματι τοῦ οἰκείου πέρα ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τείνοντας πάντας εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ὁμοσπαθεῖς λύσῃ τε καὶ ἢμοιούς εἶναι. Still this (and the other attitudes and behavior) is conditioned by the residuum of privacy, one’s own body (διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἱδίον ἐκτίσσει πλὴν τὸ σῶμα, 464d), as well as by the existence of other classes in society where the communal organization of the guardians does not hold. In the best (first) polity of the Laws, such conditions are cancelled to the uttermost extent possible: one compares with the Saturnian life.
[44] In fact it may be differentiated from it, in that the members of this society are men under the immediate tutelage of divine beings (713d). In that case even the Saturnian society would be a second best.

[45] The same in Politicus 292a-300e.


[47] What strikes as excessive in Plato’s sense of social harmony is the apparent overdose of bounding determinacy in his concrete weaving of the State-fabric. He seems to think in terms of a world-era close enough to the initial stages of the World’s self-government according to the Politicus myth. In fact he shares what I have called the “hybris of order” which was committed in the classical age of antiquity. (Cf. A.L. Pierris, Hellenistic Philosophy: Continuity and Reaction in an Oecumenical Age, in K. Boudouris (ed.), Hellenistic Philosophy pp. 133-135, esp. Excursus I: On the Hybris of Limitation and Order, ibid. pp. 144-152). The second principle of the supreme bipolarity is conceived as evil.