

Pythagoreanism in Platonism

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Abstract

Platonism is acknowledged to be one of the essential factors in the tradition of Western philosophy. At the same time, we often speak of the Pythagorean influence on Platonism. It means that Plato accepted not a few elements from Pythagoras and the Pythagorean School in constructing his philosophical theory of *idea*. Then we must suppose that Western philosophy, of which the structure is determined by Plato's idealism, originally owes very much to Pythagoras. In this regard, Bertrand Russell's radical remark: "What appears as Platonism is, when analysed, found to be in essence, Pythagoreanism." is impressive. However, this statement of Russell is not so easy for us to confirm as it seems to be. In fact, we must first concede that we are very poorly informed of Pythagoras as well as of Pythagoreanism. Secondly, we must suspect that Pythagoras' life was biased by the main biographers, Porphyry and Iamblichus, toward their Neo-Platonism. Thirdly, it is not excluded that even the sources, which these biographers used in their description of Pythagoras' life, might originate in Plato and his Academy. Thus in philological respect we would rather have to speak of the Platonic influence upon Pythagoreanism.

Therefore the circumstances are more complicated than they appear. In order to clarify the exact meaning of Russell's above-mentioned statement, we must explore accurately the situation in which Pythagoreanism was put in Plato's time and specify the influence that the Pythagoreans could exert upon Plato. Then we must find out what Plato accepted from them in various passages from his dialogues.

In the first chapter I mention Archytas of Tarentum, a contemporary of Plato, as an eminent, influential statesman and leader of the Pythagorean School. I explicate Archytas' teachings and his life-long friendship with Plato, although I cannot but in part depend upon historical conjectures. Thus I try to find out which factors Plato could receive from Pythagoreanism through Archytas.

In the second chapter I interpret "*Phaedo*", Plato's important dialogue composed soon after his return from his travel through South Italy and Sicily, in the light of his acquired Pythagoreanism. It is true that the Pythagorean effect is conspicuous in the way in which Socrates as *dramatis personae* states the immortality of the soul, especially in his statements about the transmigration of souls. So far, I admit that Plato portrayed in "*Phaedo*" the Pythagoreanized Socrates. Yet I point out that the Pythagoreanization concerns only appearance. Socrates' narration in this work signifies with the help of the Pythagorean concepts in reality what Plato found out as the truth of Socrates' philosophizing life and death. Plato tried to portray the philosopher Socrates as he must have been beyond the historical Socrates.

Keywords: Plato, Platonism, Pythagoras, Pythagoreanism, Archytas, *Phaedo*

Preface

Platonism is acknowledged to be one of the essential factors in the tradition of Western philosophy. Plato's idealism, with its dualistic, yet intellect valuing tendency, has dominated the patterns of Western philosophical thought. Even the materialistic thoughts, which we can regard as the opposition to the control of Platonism, have been themselves essentially determined by the Platonic framework of dualism. As is well known, the British philosopher A. N. Whitehead went so far as to remark that 'all philosophy is but a series of footnotes to Plato.' We might comment that he made an extreme argument. Yet we must admit the legitimacy with which he pointed out the crucial influence that Platonism has used in the tradition of Western philosophy.

At the same time, we often speak of the Pythagorean influence on Platonism. It means that Plato accepted not a few elements from Pythagoras and the Pythagorean School in constructing his philosophical theory of *idea*. Then we must suppose that Western philosophy, of which the structure is determined by Plato's idealism, originally owes very much to Pythagoras. In this regard, Bertrand Russell's radical remark: "What appears as Platonism is, when analysed, found to be in essence, Pythagoreanism." is impressive.¹⁾

Russell mentions as sources of Plato's opinions Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus and Socrates, among whom he puts the most emphasis upon the first. According to him, Plato derived from Pythagoras "the Orphic elements in his philosophy: the religious trend, the belief in immortality, the other-worldliness, the priestly tone, and all that is involved in the simile of the cave; also his respect for mathematics, and his intimate intermingling of intellect and mysticism".²⁾

In order to explore the point of his argument, I try to explicate the main features of Plato's philosophy which afterwards determined the structure of Western philosophical thoughts. I can mention several pairs of concepts: spirit-matter, soul-body, intellect-sensibility, *episteme-doxa*, eternity-mortality, and so on. It is obvious that Plato's philosophy is the type of dualism that intends a one-sided settlement. In each pair it is the former that should finally conquer the latter. We could characterize Plato's philosophy as the idealism that combats the bonds which tie down the human being. If one were completely purified from the wants of sensations, one would attain the moral perfection. If one were completely purified from the confusion of sensibility, one would attain the full recognition of *ideai* that is to say, true realities. And, what is most important here, Plato considers mathematics as the model of pure intellectual knowledge. Mathematical sciences—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy as well as musicology—effectively prepare students for philosophical exploration. So they are requisite to philosophy, although the latter as full recognition of *ideai* (*episteme*) is beyond them.

Pythagoreanism is also credited with almost all these features. Legends say that Pythagoras was convinced of the ultimate numerical harmony and order of the universe (*kosmos!*). He exhorted his disciples to mathematical studies including astronomy and music. According to him, devoting oneself to mathematical studies, one can be freed from the sensuous confusion and the bodily restriction, purified intellectually as well as morally, so that one can contemplate the ultimate harmony and order of the universe. Legends say also that Pythagoras' disciples adhered to his teachings, practiced the intellectual and moral purification in an esoteric way, and were called Pythagoreans, forming a school after the teacher's name.

So we are to all appearances justified in supposing that Plato took over most of the main features of Pythagoreanism and constructed his own idealistic philosophy. Even his use of the word “*idea*” seems to become comprehensive only under the presupposition of Pythagoreans’ use of it. Namely the word “*idea*”, as well as “*eidos*”, derives from the aorist of the verb “*horao*” which means “see”. So “*idea*” meant originally “something seen”, “the visible”. But Plato used the word for “the invisible”. In Plato’s terminology, for example, the beauty itself, the archetype of beauty, is called “the *idea* of beauty”, because it is seen with the philosopher’s spiritual eye, although it is invisible to the bodily eye. It is supposed that this daring use is intermediated through Pythagoreans’ use of this word, who probably called in their geometrical studies, for example, the triangle itself, the triangle completely accordant to its definition, “the *idea* of triangle” in distinction from incompletely constructed triangles, because it is seen with the geometer’s spiritual eye.

It seems to be natural for us to conclude from here that Plato’s idealism originates in Pythagoreanism and thus to assert Russell’s statement to be true. Yet we had better refrain from hastily drawing a conclusion. In fact, we must first concede that we are very poorly informed of Pythagoras as well as of Pythagoreanism. Although Diogenes Laertius insisted that Pythagoras had written three volumes: *On Education*, *On Politics* and *On Nature*, none of these works was extant any more in his times.³⁾ Therefore we cannot distinguish among the *Pythagorean* statements, which have been fragmentarily handed down, those of Pythagoras’ own from those of his disciples in various times. Both main biographers of Pythagoras, Porphyry and Iamblichus, were Neo-Platonists. We have good reason to suspect that they biased Pythagoras’ life toward their Neo-Platonism. Moreover, it is not excluded that the sources, which they used in their description of Pythagoras’ life, might originate in Plato and his Academy. If Plato and the scholars in his Academy were the originator of the traditions about Pythagoreanism, then we would have to concede that what appears as Pythagoreanism is, when analysed, found to be in essence Platonism. We would be thus able to speak of “Platonic influence upon Pythagoreanism” rather than that of the latter upon the former.

Therefore the circumstances are more complicated than they appear. In order to confirm Russell’s above-mentioned statement, we must explore the situation in which Pythagoreanism was put in Plato’s time and specify the influence that the Pythagoreans could exert upon Plato. Then we must find out what Plato accepted from them in various passages from his dialogues.

1. Archytas and Plato

It is said that Pythagoras was borne in Samos about 580 BC. Hating Polycrates’ tyranny (ca. 535–515BC), he left his native island. After having stayed in Egypt and perhaps also in Persia, he established himself in Croton, southern Italy or Magna Graecia. He founded there a society of disciples. It had great influence and governed the city aristocratically. Under this governance Croton could defeat its rival city, Sybaris, which was utterly destroyed in 510 BC. But soon after that Pythagoras moved to Metapontum, about 180 km north of Croton, where he ended his existence. Supposedly, some influential people rebelled against Pythagoras and his society. Moreover, it seems that the rebellion continued in Croton even after Pythagoras’ removal. At last the enemies attacked the assembly of the Pythagoreans and managed to inflict a shattering damage to them.

Iamblichus describes the matter on the basis of Aristoxenus' report. He mentions the rejection of Cylon's application as the cause of Pythagoras' removal:

Cylon of Croton was one of the most prominent citizens, in birth, renown and wealth; but in manners he was severe, turbulent, violent, tyrannical. His greatest desire was to become a partaker of the Pythagoric life, and he made application to Pythagoras who was now advanced in age, but was rejected for the above reasons. Consequently he and his friends became violent enemies of the brotherhood (=Pythagorean society). Cylon's ambition was so vehement and immoderate that, with his associates, he persecuted the very last of the Pythagoreans. That is why Pythagoras moved to Metapontum, where he ended his existence.⁴⁾

The 'Cylonians' continued to plot against the Pythagoreans. Although the latter kept the confidence of the citizens because of their probity, the former succeeded at last in eradicating them. It occurred, according to Iamblichus, as follows:

At length, however, the Cylonians became so hostile to "the men", as they were called, that they set fire to Milo's residence, where were assembled all the Pythagoreans, holding a council of war. All were burnt, except two, Archippus and Lysis, who escaped through their bodily vigor. As no public notice was taken of this calamity, the Pythagoreans ceased to pay any further attention to public affairs, which was due to two causes: the cities' negligence, and through the loss of those men most qualified to govern. Both of the saved Pythagoreans were Tarentines, and Archippus returned home. Lysis, resenting the public neglect, went into Greece, residing in the Achaian Peloponnesus. Stimulated by an ardent desire, he migrated to Thebes, where he had as disciple Epaminondas, who spoke of his teacher as his father. There Lysis died.⁵⁾

Thus Aristoxenus=Iamblichus reports two crucial events concerning the persecution of the Pythagoreans in Croton: expulsion of old Pythagoras and the incendiary massacre of the Pythagorean group. Both events are ascribed to the hostility of the 'Cylonians' toward Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. We cannot confirm the credibility of this explanation. Nor is the interval between both events clearly stated. But the distinction between the two stages of the persecution in Croton is anyway acknowledged to be plausible. So it is generally supposed that Pythagoras moved to Metapontum in one of his last years and died there about 500 BC, and that the assault on the Pythagorean assembly occurred in the middle of the 5th century BC.

Aristoxenus=Iamblichus proceeds with his story: "Except Archytas of Tarentum, the rest of the Pythagoreans departed from Italy, and dwelt together in Rhegium", and so forth.⁶⁾ Since Rhegium is situated in South Italy, this statement seems to be somewhat inexact. However it is credible, insofar as it is regarded as reporting a large-scale persecution of the Pythagoreans that occurred in all Magna Graecia. So, according to Aristoxenus=Iamblichus, by Plato's time Tarentum became the only stronghold of Pythagoreans, where Archytas, Plato's contemporary, succeeded Archippus as the leader of the school.

But some other traditions speak about Philolaus of Croton (!), apparently Plato's elder contemporary,

who played an important role in the succession of the Pythagorean teachings. Plato himself put a following interesting scene into his dialogue "*Phaedo*":

Then Cebes asked him: "What do you mean by this, Socrates, that it is not permitted to take one's life, but that the philosopher would desire to follow after the dying?"

"How is this, Cebes? Have *you and Simmias, who are pupils of Philolaus*, not heard about such things?"

"Nothing definite, Socrates."

"I myself speak of them only from hearsay; but I have no objection to telling what I have heard. And indeed it is perhaps especially fitting, as I am going to the other world, to tell stories about the life there and consider what we think about it; for what else could one do in the time between now and sunset?"

"Why in the world do they say that it is not permitted to kill oneself, Socrates? *I heard Philolaus, when he was living in our city*, say the same thing you just said, and I have heard it from others, too, that one must not do this; but I never heard anyone say anything definite about it."⁷⁾

Thus Socrates as *dramatis personae* confirms that Philolaus once lived in Thebes and introduced Simmias and Cebes to the profound Pythagorean teachings on life and death. Diogenes Laertius writes: "Philolaus of Croton, a Pythagorean, was he from whom Plato, in some of his letters, begged Dion to purchase Pythagorean books." He writes further: "He (=Philolaus) had written a single book which the philosopher Plato, visiting Dionysius in Sicily, bought, according to Hermippus, from Philolaus' parents, for the sum of 40 Alexandrian (sic!) minae, whence he drew his *Timaeus*. Others state that he received them as a present for having obtained the liberty of one of Philolaus' disciples, whom Dionysius had imprisoned."⁸⁾ So, according to Diogenes Laertius, we would even have to suspect Plato of a plagiarism in his chief work on cosmology. But his statement is somewhat confused, because he seems to confound two cities, Croton and Syracuse. It is also difficult to harmonize it with what Aristoxenus=Iamblichus reports. Therefore we must admit that we have only inadequate information about Philolaus, although it is by no means excluded that he might be the main intermediary between Pythagoras and Plato.

We are much better informed about Archytas of Tarentum. Plato mentions Archytas four times by name in his *seventh letter*, which is the most probable to be genuine his own among the thirteen letters attributed to him, although the *ninth* and the *twelfth*, which are both addressed to Archytas, are generally regarded as forged ones.⁹⁾ From what Plato says in his *seventh letter* we can suppose that he got acquainted with Archytas when he first visited Tarentum (probably 388 BC). Then he went to Syracuse to meet the tyrant Dionysius I. Having returned from Syracuse to Athens, he founded his Academy in the suburbs. It seems that Archytas was also on friendly terms with Dionysius I and his son, Dionysius II. So he was also concerned in Plato's second and third travel to Syracuse to educate Dionysius II (367–6 and 361–60 BC). Especially he interceded for Dionysius II with the reluctant Plato so that he might make his third voyage to Syracuse. Moreover, when Plato was at last in peril of even his life because of the distrustful, malicious young tyrant, he managed to persuade the tyrant to let Plato leave. Concerning these circumstances Diogenes Laertius says concisely: "It was he who, by a letter, saved Plato from the death threatened by Dionysius."¹⁰⁾

Thus there seems to be no doubt that Archytas was quite an influential man to whom even the tyrant of Syracuse had to make a concession. Diogenes Laertius says: “He possessed all the virtues, so that, being the admiration of the crowd, he was seven times named general, in spite of the law which prohibited reelection after one year.”¹¹⁾ He further says: “Aristoxenus claims that the philosopher Archytas was never defeated during his command. Once, overcome by envy, he had been obliged to resign his command, and his fellow-citizens were immediately conquered.”¹²⁾ So he must have been able to use his influence as a prominent statesman for the rescue of Plato, even if Diogenes Laertius might somewhat exaggerate Archytas’ achievements. Moreover, he seems to have been the leader of a group of scholars, that is, the Pythagorean School, in Tarentum. Plato’s way of mentioning Archytas in his *seventh letter*: “Archytas and his school at Tarentum” as well as “Archytas and the group at Tarentum”, convinces us of his leadership.¹³⁾ We are justified in supposing that such a man of social, political and scholarly eminence motivated Plato to build his theory of *idea*.

How did he (Archytas) then affect Plato? Again we consult Diogenes Laertius. He says: “He was the first who methodically applied the principles of mathematics to mechanics; who imparted an organic motion to a geometric figure, by the section of the semi-cylinder seeking two means that would be proportional, in order to double the cube. He also first, by geometry, discovered the properties of the cube, as Plato records in the *Republic*.”¹⁴⁾ Thus he affirms that Archytas excelled as a geometer, especially in solid geometry, and suggests that Plato owed much in this field to Archytas. Admittedly, his account is somewhat inaccurate. Plato does not mention Archytas in his *Republic*, in the seventh book of which he sketches out the curriculum of the philosophers’ school. Moreover, he introduces there solid geometry as the third field of mathematical science, which has yet to be developed next to already established disciplines, that is, arithmetic and plane geometry.¹⁵⁾ Also in the handed down fragments of Archytas, which are for the most part regarded as spurious, we certainly find some interesting arithmetical arguments, but hardly any geometric theories. Yet other traditions praise Archytas, in accordance with Diogenes Laertius’ report, for his achievements in the fields of arithmetic and geometry: 1. He made a major contribution to harmonic theory. 2. He was the first to solve the problem of doubling the volume of the cube. 3. He taught mathematics to Eudoxus of Knidos, who was one of the important co-operators with Plato in building the curriculum in his Academy. Therefore we probably do not need to deny that Plato owes his appreciation of mathematical studies as preparation for philosophy largely to Archytas. Moreover, we can consider here the eminent organizing ability of the statesman Archytas and the fact that Plato founded his Academy soon after his return from Syracuse. Then we have good reason to suppose that he learned the know-how of the management of a school largely from Archytas.

2. Pythagoreanism in *Phaedo*

It is generally presumed that Plato composed his dialogue “*Phaedo*” shortly after his return to Athens. This directs now our attention to this work, because we have then good reason to assume that this dialogue is the first to represent the ideas which Plato received from Archytas.

The subject of this work is Socrates in jail getting through his last day with his friends. *Phaedo*, one of those present there, narrates long after Socrates’ death this wisest man’s last day’s dialogue for his

friends in Philius. However Phaedo himself is not the main partner of Socrates in the reconstructed colloquy. According to his narration, it was Simmias and Cebes that mainly talked with Socrates about the immortality of the soul and the afterlife to which Socrates was about to transfer. As we saw above, Simmias and Cebes came both from Thebes. And Plato suggests through Socrates as *dramatis personae* that they were already instructed by Philolaus in the Pythagorean ideas of life and death. So it seems that Plato acknowledges through the casting of the dialogue the great influence of the Pythagoreanism on him.¹⁶⁾

It was quite natural that the colloquy of that day was concentrated on the theme of life and death as well as of the afterlife. And Simmias and Cebes, two youths previously instructed in Pythagorean ideas, were the adequate partners of Socrates. At the beginning he propounds a definition of death and asks the agreement of Simmias:

“We believe, do we not, that death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that the state of being dead is the state in which the body is separated from the soul and exists alone by itself and the soul is separated from the body and exists alone by itself? Is death anything other than this?”

“No, it is this,” said he.¹⁷⁾

Because death is the separation of the soul from the body, the soul is expected to *survive death*, although the body perishes soon. Then the afterlife will mean nothing else than the purified state of the soul liberated from the bondage to the body. In this state the soul will enjoy the pure contemplation on its own. Therefore Socrates insists that death is nothing to fear or to hate, that a true philosopher, lover of wisdom, on the contrary accepts it delightedly.

Following this, Socrates sets about confirming his expectation by the demonstration of the immortality of the soul. He propounds the major premises:

“It is inevitable that everything which has an opposite be generated from its opposite and from it only.”¹⁸⁾

and

“There is between all these pairs of opposites what may be called two kinds of generation, from one to the other and back again from the other to the first.”¹⁹⁾

Now “living” and “being dead” are opposites to each other. As between “awake” and “sleeping” there are the two kinds of generation: “falling asleep” and “waking up”, so there are between “living” and “being dead” the two kinds of generation: “dying” and “coming to life”. We fall asleep at night and wake up in the next morning. Repeating this cycle, we lead our life. Just like this, this world of living things subsists repeating the dying of one and the coming to life of another. According to Socrates as *dramatis personae*, this is only possible when the soul *survives death*. The soul of man, separated from the body, continues existing, probably in the *hades* or the nether world. This soul can then take at a certain time a new body and come into this world again. The endless repetition of the “dying and rising again” of the souls constitutes this world. Thus the immortality of the soul is proved in Socrates’ opinion.

We can call this argument the demonstration of the immortality through the transmigration of the soul.

The idea of the transmigration belonged to the Pythagorean teachings. It is said that Pythagoras believed in the transmigration of souls and that he received that idea from the Orphism. Although Pythagoras' connection with the Orphism is not clearly recognized, his group was no doubt much similar to the Orphic society in its features of a cult. Probably we are justified in regarding him as a reformer of the Orphic tradition. So the Pythagoreans inherited the Orphic idea of the transmigration of souls. It seems that Archytas instructed Plato also in this idea, with the result that Plato embodied it into his philosophical thought. Thus in "*Phaedo*" Plato's Socrates can ground his opinion of the otherworldly existence of the soul upon the dogmatic theory of the transmigration. Needless to say, his two partners, Simmias and Cebes, already introduced to the Pythagorean ideas, can sympathetically follow him.

Yet we must not miss here the main point of the story of "*Phaedo*". In fact, it cannot be regarded as Plato's purpose in this work to tell a dogma of the transmigration of souls. He pursues consistently the possibility of the pure intellectual knowledge (*episteme*). We might well go so far as to say that the teaching of the transmigration as well as Socrates' narrative about it is for Plato merely an instrument for that purpose.

If the life in this world is nothing but a combination of the soul and the body, meaning bondage for the former, death is just the separation of the two and the soul will in death, that is to say, in the afterlife, recognize in its pure isolated state the true eternal realities of the things (*ideai*), no more disturbed by the confusion of the sensibility. Then the death means the same perfection of the knowledge as a philosopher always pursues in this world:

“...as our agreement shows, when we are dead we are likely to possess the wisdom which we desire and claim to be enamoured of, but not while we live. For, if pure knowledge is impossible while the body is with us, one of two things must follow, either it cannot be acquired at all or only when we are dead; for then the soul will be by itself apart from the body, but not before. ...”²⁰⁾

Socrates' soul is about to move to the other-world where it is “freed from the body as from fetters” and where it can see with its pure eye the truths of the things (*ideai*).

“Well, then, this is what we call death, is it not, a release and separation from the body?”

“Exactly so,” said he (=Simmias).

“But, as we hold, the true philosophers and they alone are always most eager to release the soul, and just this —the release and separation of the soul from the body— is their study, is it not?”

“Obviously.”

“Then, as I said in the beginning, it would be absurd if a man who had been all his life fitting himself to live as nearly in a state of death as he could, should then be disturbed when death came to him. Would it not be absurd?”

“Of course.”²¹⁾

A true philosopher practices dying. Therefore death is nothing terrible for him. On the contrary, he is glad and delighted to meet with death, because he can now travel to the place where he can hope to attain “what he has longed for all through life”.

Plato speaks also about the pure state of the soul in the former life. It is not only after death that the soul, separated from the body, can enjoy the pure intellectual knowledge. Also before birth the soul must have enjoyed the same kind of knowledge, because it did not yet fall into the combination with the body. Plato exemplifies this with our knowledge of the “equality itself”. In this world we attribute equality to various things in their relation to each other, such as: “A is equal to B”, “C is equal to D” and so on. But none of these things are absolutely equal to each other. They are only incompletely equal, insofar as they are all objects of sensibility, perceived with our bodily eyes and ears. Nevertheless, we state that they are equal with each other. This is only possible because we already saw the absolute equality itself and are reminded of it at every time when we see quasi-equal objects in this sensuous world. When did we see then the equality itself? Obviously before our soul was bound to our body, that is to say, before we were borne.²²⁾

Thus Plato’s Socrates propounds two significant theorems concerning the pure state of our soul or intellect.

1. Our soul saw the eternal truth of the things before we were borne.
2. Our soul will see the eternal truth of the things after it separates from our body.

It is important for us not to adhere to the mythical expression Plato uses. It is not the succession of time that counts. Both theorems mean to communicate to us the just timeless essence of our intellect. The first theorem tells us about the origin of our intellect. In our present life our intellect cannot wholly recognize the truth of things as such because it must depend upon the sensory perception in the state of combination of the soul and the body. Yet it originally saw the truth of things in the pure state of the soul. Therefore when we learn something in this world, that is to say, acquire genuine knowledge of things, our intellect really just recollects what it once learned (*anamnesis*). And the second theorem shows us the ultimate ends of our intellect. In our present life our intellect can only inexactly know things because it is restricted to vague data of sensibility. Yet it always intends to liberate itself from such bondage so that it might finally attain the knowledge of the truth of things in the pure state of the soul separated from the body. Therefore when we learn something in this world, that is to say, acquire genuine knowledge of things, we prepare our intellect for its perfection of knowing the truth.

Now we can recognize that Plato explains through his Socrates’ mythical narration in reality the transcendence of our intellect which in its pure state can see the truths of things (*ideai*). Insofar as we live in this present life, our intellect is restricted to sensibility. Yet it originates in the perfect cognizance of the truths. A philosopher, lover of the wisdom, ceaselessly endeavors to recall the origin of his intellect. At the same time, to our intellect is described its ultimate ends, where it will possess the perfect knowledge of the truths of things. A philosopher ceaselessly prepares his intellect for its prescribed perfection.

Supposedly Plato inherited this view about the transcendence of our intellect in essence from Socrates rather than from the Pythagoreans. Socrates used to ask questions of his fellow Athenians: “What is Good?”, “What is Beauty?”, “What is Justice?” etc. Thus he sought the truths of things, severely criticizing fellow citizens for not knowing even their ignorance of the truth. This philosophizing life of Socrates impressed Plato deeply. On the other hand, he was filled with wonder when he witnessed the

event of Socrates' death. How could this wise man incur humiliating death upon himself and composedly take poison? So his chief consideration after 399 BC was how to explain Socrates' death consistently with what he practiced all his life through. The Pythagoreanism, to which Plato was introduced by Archytas in Tarentum, offered him effective measures to solve the problem. The mythical concept of the transmigration of souls as well as the geometric term of "idea" for the truth of the figure proved useful as metaphor, because the Pythagoreans suggest with these concepts the transcendence of our intellect beyond the material world. This transcendence was found by Plato to be the clue to the solution of the riddle of Socrates' life and death. Therefore Plato portrayed in "Phaedo" the Pythagoreanized Socrates. Yet the Pythagoreanization concerns only appearance. Socrates' narration in this work signifies with the help of the Pythagorean concepts in reality what Plato found out as the truth of Socrates' philosophizing life and death. Plato tried to portray the philosopher Socrates as he must have been beyond the historical Socrates.

Notes

- 1) Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 56.
- 2) *ibid.*, p. 123.
- 3) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 8, trans. by R. D. Hicks, in: *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, pp. 142-3.
- 4) Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*, trans. by Thomas Taylor, in: *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, p. 116.
- 5) *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 6) *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 7) Plato, *Phaedo*, 61 D, trans. by H. N. Fowler, in: *Loeb Classical Library 36*, Harvard University Press, pp. 213-5, italicized by the extractor.
- 8) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 8, trans. by R. D. Hicks, in: *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, p. 167.
- 9) Plato, *The Seventh Letter*, 338 C, 339 A, D, 350A.
- 10) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 8, trans. by R. D. Hicks, in: *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, p. 177.
- 11) *ibid.*, p. 177.
- 12) *ibid.*, p. 178.
- 13) Plato, *The Seventh Letter*, trans. by Walter Hamilton, in: *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII*, Penguin Books, p. 132 (338 C), p. 147 (350 A).
- 14) Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 8, trans. by R. D. Hicks, in: *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, p. 178.
- 15) Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7, 528 B-E, trans. by Tom Griffith, Cambridge University Press, pp. 236-7.
- 16) We are reminded that remarkable utterance of Phaedo: "But Plato, I think, was ill." (*Phaedo*, 59 B, trans. by H. N. Fowler, in: *Loeb Classical Library 36*, Harvard University Press, p. 207) It seems that we are fully justified in supposing that Plato set up in this way an alibi in order to get a free hand to make a fictitious narrative about the somewhat Pythagoreanized Socrates in his last day.
- 17) Plato, *Phaedo*, 64 C, trans. by H. N. Fowler, in: *Loeb Classical Library 36*, Harvard University Press, pp. 223-5.
- 18) *ibid.*, 70 E, p. 245.

- 19) *ibid.*, 71 A, pp. 245–6.
- 20) *ibid.*, 66 E, p. 231.
- 21) *ibid.*, 67 D-E, p. 235.
- 22) Cf. *ibid.*, 72 E-76 D, pp. 253–67.

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I am much obliged to Mr. Jean Pierre Antonio, my respected colleague, for his kindness to correct my manuscripts.

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