

**Existence, Time, and Being in
Plato's *Timaeus***

**How Heidegger,
Levinas, and
Popper diverge from
Plato**

EMIL BAKALLI

Master of Philosophy Lecture: *The New School for Social Research*

Professor: Claudia Baracchi, New York 2007

EMIL BAKALLI

The condition of our being and existence in regards to time and the cosmos as we perceive it today, has dramatically catapulted and it has dogmatically altered from the perceptions of Plato. The question that comes up is this: is Plato's artistic-philosophical thinking in *Timaeus* still relevant today? Can it resist the changes of human progress and more than that, the existential, ontological, scientific, and political conditions or situations that we are experiencing since the early 20th century? Many still say yes, it can. There is a plethora of wisdoms that has resisted time and those ideas still could resonate in our life time. Is it right to say that, Plato's artistic-philosophical thoughts have absolutely compromised democratic institutions, then and now? Can we also say that, Plato's authoritarian elitist-eugenic and political-utopianism erodes and negates democratic values—it excludes the unpredictability of possible? Again, many might say yes, because in Plato's philosophy there are many compatible situations that we still experience even today, including the notion of sublime Idea, the authoritarian political system, et cetera. And yet, the main focus of my critical analyses against Plato's theatricality in *Timaeus* and the Platonic thought in general, it is going to be precisely this: 1) Plato's political system not only erodes and dismantles democratic values, but it is even worse, it literally prohibits them to grow and to just simply "be"; 2) "Time" is neither measured as a *cyclical* movement of the

celestial bodies being perceived as revolving in eternity, as Plato in *Timaeus* would suggest; nor in a linear mode as Christian theology would passionately argue about, and nor in a teleological fashion either. Time, I believe is “now”, fragmented, multiple, and discontinues where human beings and their praxis are the *epicenter* of time. Time, is not *self-same*. Time, is neutral and colorless—the praxis and the existence of human life makes it to be as such, to experience, to interconnect, to engage, to relate in the world of inter-subjectivity, and to be in the midst of the world—sort of, to be unconsciously objectified.

It seems to me that Plato is thinking about time, being, and existence in a cyclical dogma, despite of his ingenious, he was not able to comprehend the fact that; if that is so, than if time is cyclical there is no direction, no beginning, and it does not seem to have a center or an end. The Platonist’s answer might legitimately be this; but in Plato’s time the notion of Cartesian geometry was not identified—we today think in Cartesian terms; apply Newtonian mechanics and Einstein’s relativity theory, Maxwell’s electromagnetic wave theory, that of Quantum Physics-Mechanics in regards to cosmological structures, Quark Physics-Symmetries, not to mention Black Whole theory, S-Matrix and Bootstrap theories. However, the Platonic facts we have here, are what they seem to be, and we cannot take-out or eliminate these facts or take them slightly into account; because then, everyone might alter his/her own philosophy according to the progress of human existence. My main point is an “ontological” one: *time cannot exist-in-it-self as self-same, but it needs something else to exist and that is the subject of the other, the inter-subjective relatedness*. Also our being and existence does not reside in a hermetic bunker either, so to speak, but rather, we are a part of an ecstatic temporality and trans-phenomenology. That being said, I will add that existence and being are multiple, discontinues, and the past,

present, future as a triangle is defined by the “who”—not by “how” in regards to the “eternity of the cosmos” (*ouranos*), and that seems to be our presence and our ecstatic engagement in the world of interconnections. In this discourse I will operate ontologically and not in the realm of anthropology, sociology, psychoanalyses or semiotics. My argument against Plato in political terms will include Karl R. Popper, and on the ontological domain will include Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas.

Plato: Political Totalitarianism, Utopianism and the Theory of Forms and Ideas

Karl R. Popper diverging from, and repudiating Plato

For many people Plato has been a paradigm of the political system-formation until early 20th century (if even to some degree today). And yet, for many others Plato has been the spark for political and human upheavals leading to pain and destruction. Popper in his 1962 book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, takes a very critical position arguing against Plato’s philosophical and political elitist-structure. I do share the views of Popper as well. There are many examples that implicate Plato as Popper said, aiming at a “utopian social engineering”. However, for the time being, my primary locus will be the starting point of Plato and his theory of “forms and ideas”. The main structure of Platonic thinking is the pair or the couple of Forms and Ideas. According to Plato, the *authentic origin* regarding the primacy of the Idea seems to be the most stable phenomenon. It is this very concept of the Idea as the logical-rational of all thinks. There is no existence without the very essence of the thing—it is its Ideal Sublimation.

Before getting into the gate of Platonic allegoric-labyrinth, it is important to mention a bit about Heraclitus; because, Heraclitus was the first innovator regarding the idea of *flux* and *change*. His greatest statement is that ‘everything is in flux’ and that ‘you cannot step twice into the same river’. These two historical statements are embedded in our thinking since then. The influence of Heraclitus on Plato is indispensable and of mega significance, because Plato’s ideas do not really emanate from him or as if these concepts never existed before him. Also, what is imperative here is the influence of Parmenides’ doctrine of *unchangeable world* which exists behind our visible and tangible reality—it is static and not effected by violent change, decay and human degeneration. The synthesis of Plato emanated from the concepts of both Heraclitus and Parmenides. Plato leaved in times of great upheavals, of the Thirty Tyrants destroying the Athenian democracy. From this particular moment we see that, Plato tends to believe that the energies and *perplexities* of human history are somehow related to cosmic dynamics as well. So, our earthly conditions reflect the *cyclic* movements and tensions of the cosmos—although, only the human condition experiences the decay and destruction or corruption—the cosmic world is stable and sublime. Another way to put it is that, it seems obvious enough, and one might call it mythological or prophetic or utopian that, Plato believed that human conditions permeate to the cosmic laws only as their copy. Plato talks a great deal about the notion of *decay* and *degeneration* constantly appearing in human relations and in the socio-political domain, too. According to Popper: “Heraclitus had generalized his experience of social flux by extending it to the world of ‘all things’, and Plato...did the same. But Plato also extended his belief in a perfect state that does not change to the realm of ‘all things’. He believed that to every kind of ordinary or decaying thing there corresponds also a perfect thing that does not decay. This belief in perfect and unchanging things, usually called the *Theory of*

Forms or Ideas, became the central doctrine of his philosophy (21). What seems interesting from this great remark of Popper is the fact that Plato, created the *vertical-cyclical doctrine* of “higher” and “lower” forms or ideas, where the higher ones do not alter, do not perish, do not degenerate, and do not decay in chaos as in human societies. Thus the human condition is a copy of the initially sublime primogenitors. He wanted to create a utopian vision of a state where corruption and instability is dismantled, leading to the formation of a static morally and ethically superior state of being. And this sort of state that Plato wanted to invent, Popper calls it; “*arresting all political change...It is the arrested state*” (21). We can now see why Popper coined Platonism a day-dreaming concept: a “utopian social engineering” (22). Thus the instrumental play of Platonic phantasmagoric state was the inspirational pathway for many others to follow, and consequently ending up with all sorts of utopian states; communist, fascist, authoritarian, oligarchic, or the best-and-elite-lead-the-state.

Here we could see the contour of selection, where, the correct and fair participation of all as in the norm of the Athenian democracy is excluded. Plato does not allude to this element of elitist exclusive club, but rather, he literally implies and aims that, and more specifically in *Timaeus* claiming: “...how we said that the rulers, male and female, had to contrive some sort of lottery by secret ballots for marital coupling so that the separate classes of bad and good men will respectively be mated by lot with women who were like them; and that no hatred would arise among them on this score since they’d believe that the cause of the allotment was chance”? (49). What first comes to my mind is the notion of eugenic thinking, elitist exclusiveness—utopian social manipulation similar to the Stalinist communism and Nazi eradication and selective process. This is not a surprise that the book of Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle*

of the Universe, in 1901; as the greatest of all Eugenics had a great impact on Nazi propaganda and dogmatism, as the prevailing ideology of the best selected elite—it is an extension of Plato’s thought. And the same thing could be said for, *The city of the Sun*, of Tommaso Campanella, who was introduced to Lenin through Gorky. Plato’s guardians and the special selected has been the idealization for all mentioned above. There can be a variety of views regarding the passage I quoted from *Timaeus*. Also, there is absolutely nothing random or inadvertent in the Platonic dialogue—whatever occurs is needed to be there. And if anything seemed to be at odd in the middle of the dialogue, it would meld and be a part of that natural process and take up a meaning. In these calculated polyphonic dialogues pervades the element of fictitious flavor.

Thus Platonic dialogue is structured upon the notion of the sublime and the beautiful, of theatricality and staging-spectacle. It is a drama and melodrama. There is no room for chance to happen. Plato does not like the decadence, the decay and the degeneration of flux and the unpredictability of chance or the vortex of change. This thinking shows his authoritarian bend—everything ought to be controlled and planed. However, what is clear and solid here, it is the well-grounded view of Plato that, in order to build an ‘ivory tower’ of the fantastic state, where the guardians are the best selected is obvious enough. There might come up the common question: what is the impact of Plato’s philosophy in the western civilization and beyond it? Were there many others that reflected on Plato’s authoritarian political believes? Is there any commonality with the notion of utopian communal live or with the later on the idea of Marxist communism? Reading *Timaeus* and Plato as a whole, I would say yes. In the beginning of *Timaeus* we see: “...didn’t we first distinguish them as separate from the class of those who were to make war on the

city's behalf?...we said that those who had to make war on behalf of all, and they alone, had to be the guardians of the city..." (17c-d). It seems obvious enough to say, that the guardians or the warriors will be the ones in charge of the political affairs and control the city/state. They are entitled to this claim as aristocrats, oligarchs, and as in our modern world, totalitarians and communists would do. Thus the notion of what is "just" or not is left in the hands of the warriors only. This political stance of Plato is in conformity with the rule of the Thirty Tyrants that utterly obliterated the Athenian democracy—may be Plato was admiring the militaristic system of Sparta? It is not unfair to say, that all these ideas relate to communist regimes that came after Plato, regimes that put power to the hands of a few self-selected ones—where the lower strata had no significance over justice and righteousness. What we have here is the proto-communist dogma and ideology of antiquity given birth by Plato.

All the examples I mentioned above have one common theme with Plato's forms and ideas, and these are the *oneiric* (dream-like) and the pathological processes of creating an imaginary world—that which is, unfortunately our degenerated human history ending with dystopia. Popper renders his analyses insightfully, writing: "...But there is one element within Utopianism which is particularly characteristic of Plato's approach and which Marx does not oppose.... It is the sweep of Utopianism, its attempt to deal with society as a whole, leaving no stone unturned... It is the conviction that one has to go to the very root of the social evil that nothing short of a complete eradication of the offending social system will do if we wish to bring any decency into the world. It is, in short, its uncompromising radicalism (164). Furthermore, Popper would state: "Both Marx and Plato are dreaming of the apocalyptic revolution which will radically transfigure the whole social world. This

sweep, this extreme radicalism of the Platonic approach (and of the Marxian as well) is, I believe, connected with its aestheticism (165). What Popper introduces here is the aspect of artistic sublimation of the social realm in human political affairs. Plato is an artist-philosopher, a playwright, and dramaturge, creating illusions and spectacles based on his experience in the worldly environment. As an artist-philosopher, Plato was deeply concerned with the aestheticism of human condition—he claimed at creating another imaginary world that would be perfect and *rational* as well—not imperfect as ours with instability and perpetual destruction. However, what we are seeing here is a hybrid “synthesis” of reason and utopia, and this is aesthetically and artistically well realized, but practically as it is being applied and replicated in human affairs—it leads to dystopia. Plato greatly visualized a schema of the “sublime primordial”, which ought to be imitated meticulously in the city-live. He wanted to capture the notion of perfect sublimation and beatification of the cosmic eternity and to transfer it or pass it over to the worldly condition—to the city live. Here is initiated the Platonic drama of the human-political condition. This Platonic schema of utopia and artistic imagination could not find realization and application in the conditions of human reality, thus, eventually leading to the formation of political upheavals. It is not without cause that, Popper mentioned Marx as well in his rejection of Platonic thinking.

Personally speaking, I am not against the politics of aesthetics or the aesthetics of politics per say. What I mean is that, the artistic-philosophic thinking is intrinsically intertwined—art-philosophy has never been pure as for the sake of creating something; but rather, this philosophic-artistic synthesis has been a vital part of human affairs and of course, of the political sphere as well. Another truism is the concept of an artistic-philosophical utopia such as that of Plato, which is as equal as

that of political utopia because, both transmigrate and determine our state of mind and being. Thus the “artistic-philosophic” principles are intertwined with “political-aesthetics”—are intermingled in the same spiral-path of life and experience of human affairs, finding expression in political praxis, and in the process of execution of the laws and system-formation. The truth of our perception and existence is a thing that, the philosophic-artistic-politics of aestheticism, in its rhetorical and dramaturgical Platonic-polyphonic dialogues of perception and imagination, envisioned and created for us a utopian-pragmatism.

But in general, all this is in a sense—meaning, the reality and hyper-reality are intertwined and, consequently and eventually find a strong ground in human praxis. Here we see that Plato’s schema of horizontal-cyclic platform is radical because, it leaves absolutely no room for compromise and faire dialogue. He structures his “higher ideas and forms” to the point of hermetic forms of sublimation. In the same vein, Popper would add that: “Plato says in the *Statesman* of the royal rulers who rule in accordance with the Royal Science of Statesmanship: ‘Whether they happen to rule by law or without law, over willing or unwilling subject;... and whether they purge the state for its good, by killing or by deporting [or ‘banishing’] some of its citizens....—so long as they proceed according to science and justice, and preserve....the state and make it better that it was, this form of government must be declared the only one that is right” (166). I think that at this point, we have the clearest and the most transparent and the strongest Platonic fact and schema of regimented, eugenic, and uncompromising catastrophic political attitude—it is not far from fascism or Stalinism or from any other form of repressive state, be it; totalitarianism, authoritarianism, despotism, anarchism, kleptocratic-oligarchism, et cetera. According to Plato, this is the platform that the artist-philosopher and artist-politician

ought to think and act accordingly to the political arena, regardless of human destruction and the macabre it produces.

It is difficult not to be in accordance with, and/or accepting the fact that, Plato was a pure eugenic mind and totalitarian. Regarding Plato's violent and radical pathos or exclusive thinking, Popper would also state: "But all this radical and violence is both unrealistic and futile. (This has been shown in the example of Russia's development... Lenin introduced his 'New Economic Policy', in fact a kind of piecemeal engineering...) (167). Now just as I said a bit earlier, it is interesting how Popper introduces Marxism and Leninism at this point of analysis. Truly, the Russian Revolution or the German and Italian Fascism for that matter (here, I will refer more to the Russian development), are the climax of the Platonic-Machiavellian thought. These "royal rules" that we find in Plato's *Statesman* resemble the ones we really know so good, such as; Pope Urban II, with his band of crusades fighting for spiritual redemption and Christian justice in the name of God, Napoleon Bonaparte fought in the name of egalitarianism and brotherhood, Marx's and Lenin's communist-anarchy was based and justified in the name of proletariat, Stalin's apocalyptic-killing in the name of utopian vision, Hitler's gas-like annihilation of non-Germans was also justified in the name of eugenic racial justice, and Mussolini's in the name of bringing back the lost pride of Rome, et cetera. However, it is not random that Popper mentions the dramatic Russian Revolution. I think that the Soviet government, as early 1920s and as late as 1980s, led by the Marxists-Leninists and later on by Stalin and Stalinism, undertook the greatest task ever—making the Platonic-utopian dreaming a reality; although, eventually and as we now know it, from an exuberant utopian undertaking turned out to be dystopian disaster. The result is, as we now it by know; devastation and human pain, repression and catastrophe. We

have for the first time in human history, where the Platonic dreamers were tangibly imagining a glittering state of utopia—dreams suddenly transformed into concerted beliefs, and then to action. These Platonic “royal rulers” of Russian Bolshevik-utopia, so passionately believed in a perfect glittering, and radiant utopian society and exuberant and progressive future; where, eventually though, reality just caught-up with them and practically it became an avalanche of destruction and regression.

If we carefully look now at all these points, made above, in relation to the state of affairs even in the world of today, still the problem seems (same with Plato and the Russian Utopian Communist Revolution) that the elite did not apprehend the reality of the “present” as of “now”—I am emphasizing the “now” and “present”, in a more ontological aspect and in Heideggerian terms as well. Here I think, is the core of the Platonic problem: it thinks in a cyclical platform without taking into consideration the “reality-factor” on the ground, and dreaming of another hypothetical imaginary world or cosmos, leads to nowhere in any political system-formation and applicability. Platonic thinking obliterates or negates its own esoteric web of structure—it is self-destructive. In order for the “future” to be obtained we need to comprehend the “exteriority” of the “present” and “now” and that needs an understanding of human factor.

Then out of this background, we can say that, it is the essential component of human praxis, as that which determines the future of any utopic or political system to take shape and place, and this has nothing to do with the Heroic Age of power—this has to happen on the ground and not from some sort of Platonic ivory-tower. For, in the worldly reality, individuals have the absolute right to act in and for their own benefit, and for what is right for them and who should represent them. To sum up, then, in the realm of politics or in its system-formation, and even

more so, in today's world as we speak, it is the human presence and the individual (s) where the essential element lies—the one that Plato disregards and dismantles. It is in the act of humanity as a whole that which forms the system we function—everything that is created ought to be based on the human factor and not for the unchangeable, not degenerated, and not corrupted cosmic time and being. Any system be it Platonic or any other for that matter, is hollow and has no chance of survival, if it does not think that human praxis create the norm and the time or our existence as we historically know it. This is our earthy world where *time* and *being* is purely human. And it is precisely here, where Plato missed the main concept that: humanity creates and destroys its own political systems and that is for the sake of humanity's survivor—decay and degeneration are just a part of the whole; although, not desirable but vital for progress to be made—there is no utopian-system that could disengage humanity, and there is no platform that can bunkerize human mind-spirit for change and continuous alternations, including unpredictability.

At this point of our analyses, I will introduce a different approach, regarding the Platonic issues and taking into account Martin Heidegger's existential exteriority concept of “now” and “Dasein” as being-in-the-world; and also, Emmanuel Levinas' concept of “alterity”, and the “Other”. I will develop the existential and the ontic-ontological aspect of Heidegger and the ontological aspect of being, time, and existence of Levinas. They differ greatly from one another in their respective approaches; however, they are united and solid with one another in one main point, and that is: the repudiation of Plato and his utopian ideas.

Time — Being — Existence

Levinas: diverging from, and repudiating Plato

There is a major shift from how we have known the Platonic *cyclical* concept of time, being, and existence. Heidegger and Levinas effectively challenge the Platonic concepts of Idea and Form. Heidegger and Levinas disagree with the Platonic notion of time as *self-same*. Why is that so? Why this break with antiquity or the Greco-Roman concept of time and being? It seems to me that, there are legitimate and reasonable concerns—thoughts that determine their departure from Plato. Although, there are a few major differences between Heidegger and Levinas, but what they have in common is the break with Platonic thinking of *time*. So, for the sake of our argument, we could perceive both of them as unified against Plato, regardless of who is more effective against one another and/or against Plato.

On these general lines and having settled the issue in principle, we will engage with Levinas' Platonic demarcation. Starting with Levinas' 1947 book, *Le Temps et L'autre* (Time and the Other), we will see that his main divergence from Plato will alter our perception of time, being, and existence. What strikes most of my attention in terms of this divergence from Platonism, is the notion that according to Plato, the *future* and the *past* does not exist—Plato not only implies that *future* and *past* are not present as of “now”; but also, out of picture too. Plato sacrificed “time” as something that has no-being [to] “unity” or “oneness” and “eternity principle”—believing in the unity of being. What is consequential or of mega significance for Levinas though, is the fact that he operates in terms of “exteriority” or the “irreducible exterior”—

aspiring to discharge from the historicity of totality and unity—practically to reject the Platonic notion of “self-same”. There is one *noema* (schema) and it is apropos/pertinent to say that, regarding the notion of “time” in Plato’s *Timaeus*; we could pin point that, Plato emphasizes that “*ouranos*” or “sky-universe” is time; this is indispensable—creating something or a thing from chaos and disorder to order seems to be the main theme or aspect of *Timaeus*—the cosmic domain is the instrumental factor of time and celestial bodies. In *Timaeus*, we see that “time” is a cycle or circling around and it is regulated by numbers and coming back to the same—beginning—we perceive here a sort of *abiding principle* of time. This is a Time that repeats and eventually returns to the same point of departure—self-same. This “self-same’ condition is what we find in Plato’s *Timaeus*: “...one kind is the form, which is in a self-same condition—unbegotten and imperishable, neither receiving into itself anything else from anywhere else nor itself going anywhere into anything else, invisible and in all other ways unsensed...” (52-a). It is clear enough, to comprehend and to elucidate this not at all infinitesimal fact that: “selfsameness” for Plato is all that matters.

Now, as has been said already, this selfsameness is intelligible, invisible, intangible, and irreducible to nothing—it is benevolent and [impervious] to human degeneration and decay, et cetera. The eternity of this selfsameness is understood, as it is also understood the fact that, “... that which comes to be, that *in which* it comes to be, and that *from which* what comes to be sprouts as something copied” (50-d). There is no doubt at any point that Plato projects or visualizes a state of imaginary existence, a utopian way of mythological creation, the same as I mentioned along with Popper’s critical analyses regarding Platonism’s utopian –cacophony or its dystopia, so to speak. What I mean by this dystopia and utopian-cacophony, is the *copy principle*, that which is

replicated from the “higher-forms”, the ones that are invisible—these forms just exist on their own and are self-regulated, regardless of our human condition and its decay—these are Plato’s elite or royal higher-forms of being.

The main difference is that, if for Plato the common denominator is the cosmic idea of unity and selfsameness as unchangeable, for Levinas is the element of “human being” and that of “human presence as now”, of “alterity” and the “Other”. It is [us] as a temporal-existence that which really factors everything regarding the equation of existence and time. Thus encapsulating Levinas’ thinking we can say that for him, the unity of this Platonic selfsameness is not found *in-itself* as *self-sustained*, but rather, we find it through the notion of *alterity*, that which derives from the existential human condition and explicitly from the Other.

To sum up, we could say that Levinas mixes the idea of *time* with the concept of *alterity* and that of the other’s body in terms of temporality and reciprocally— intertwined, and that applies to Heidegger as well; although, it has to be said and clarified that, Heidegger takes a different path in regards to *time* and *finitude*. Therefore, regarding the notion “time” Levinas states: “Relationship with future, the presence of the future in the present, seems all the same accomplished in the face-to-face with the Other. The situation of the face-to-face would be the very accomplishment of time; the encroachment of the present on the future is not the feat of the subject alone; but the intersubjective relationship. The condition of time lies in the relationship between humans, or in history” (79). If, to consider the issue in more detail, it seems that at this point we have the greatest climax or the greatest point of divergence from Plato. Levinas humanizes time. Time for Levinas is intermingled in the web of human condition, and [not] in the speculative condition of cosmos and of *choric* dances of celestial bodies juxtaposed with one another in cyclic

motions, thus infinitely returning into the same point of departure—selfsameness. What we see in *Timaeus* is: “...the motion that is self-same and goes around in the same spot, since each in itself always thinks the same thoughts about the same things...” (40-a). I just paralleled both Levinas and Plato in a short spectrum of my proceeding because; we could clearly see the grand differentiation in between them. If, in Plato we perceive a surreptitious treatment or regimen, regarding the creating of being, time, and existence—being exposed to a certain degree of opacity or obscurity in terms of its inconsistency and perplexity (*aporia*), about these attunements of celestial bodies as cacophonic fluxes; then, this is very problematic and obscure. This leads us to say that this *chora* in *Timaeus* (48-a), or this self-sustained utopian-system place, in space, it is a utopian cosmic placeless—this is the Platonic utopian-nothingness. In Plato, we see a cacophony of musical perplexity trying endlessly new beginnings to locate and relocate the origin and the empty meaning of time, being, and the existence of life. This *aporia* or perplexity is troublesome because, it shows that Plato through his polyphonic dialogue, engages a plenitude of ideas and a plethora of characters for the sake of finding an imaginary location of how life, existence, time, and being begins—he aims at finding a dream-like place for humanity to exist, without look under his feet and see, that he himself is walking under the crust of earth—in the mud of human life where finitude is the end point of departure.

Proceeding with Levinas’ thoughts, diametrically opposing those of Plato, we see that for Levinas the most important event is the *face-to-face* situation of human condition. For him, it is this encounter of giving and concealing the Other in a perpetual flight, and yet the Other is time, the Other is my future, the Other is my existence because I come to be, I become, and precisely because; of this mutual bond with the Other-being,

is that which makes it a human time and a real existence—not a transcendental and eternal nothingness. Levinas congeals and vindicates his human relation of time with the greatest clarity, rendering it through the human factor, and the equation of mystery of time and existence is revealed only through this denominator, which are: human life and its eros and fecundity. Levinas elucidates his anti-Platonism in the most apodictic manner; simply put, not agreeing with Plato's *oneiric*-mythic dogmas of absolute impenetrability of immobility and endless cyclical continuity of time (*synecheia chronou*) as self-same. Levinas, in contrast to Plato emphasizes the notion of fecundity, eros, and the nourishment in regard to existence and time of being; for him these elements are of mega significance in our ecstatic condition of time and existence—are precisely these elements that enable us to be in our exteriority and yet, to be bound by these very objects. With Levinas we perceive the joy and exuberance of self as it is engaged in the human world. On the other hand, we have a discouragement of mixed joy in Platonism, because these pleasures tend to be vulgar, not calculated by numbers and simply unclean and immoral. These concepts of worldly exuberance and nourishments as well as eros are against the petrification of Platonic reckoning or cosmic computation.

More precisely Levinas states: "...the words "I am" here have significance different from an Eleatic or Platonic significance. There is a multiplicity and transcendence in this verb...Then again, the son is not any event whatsoever...The son is an ego, a person...thanks to the perspective of the future opened by eros" (91). Concluding this aspect a bit further, Levinas continues: "Sexuality, paternity, and death introduce a duality into existence...The Eleatic notion of being is overcome. Time constitutes not the fallen form of being, but its very event. The Eleatic notion of being dominates Plato's Philosophy, where multiplicity was subordinated to the one...Plato did not grasp the

feminine in its specifically erotic notion...he left to the feminine no other role than of furnishing an example of the Idea...The whole particularity of the relationship of one to another goes unnoticed...Plato constructs a Republic that must imitate the world of Ideas; ...a world without time...the subject tends to be identified with the other, by being swallowed up in a collective representation, a common ideal” (93).

It is now that we can really coagulate or petrify our position against Platonism: Levinas demolished the most rigorous path the idealization of superior being and the idea of the selfsame. And also, it is now that we have a better apodictic picture of Popper’s criticism of Platonic common and collective Ideas—those ideas that for Popper ended to a common-communistic-elitist-authoritarian brand in our present modern political world. However, Levinas elucidated that this “unity” of “one” and of the “selfsame”, is not applicable in the real and earthly human condition, because it excludes the human factor and. It is the *other* and the *feminine* which leads us to fecundity through eros and joyfulness, and all this on a face-to-face- with the other person (s). Plato created a philosophy that we might call it, an *escapist* philosophy from reality; not willing to face pragmatically the notion of how time and being relates to the very aspect of existence. His utopia or his artistic-philosophic ideas are ingeniously important, and yet, all the ideas of Plato are self-negated or self-obliterated if they do not apply to human reality and conditions. *Timaeus* and the very essence of Platonic structure might very well be seen in the same vein as that of Homer’s drama. It seems that, the siding of Plato with Parmenides was that which eroded Plato’s thinking. Nothing is static, be it in galaxies or earthly life. Flux is life and life is change and time is just action—it is an organic and natural necessity—these phenomena happen within the historicity and inter-subjectivity of the other (s), being-in-the-multiplicity-of-the-world.

Heidegger: diverging from, and repudiating Plato

Proceeding in the pathway of Heidegger's principle of [*Geworfenheit*], "being-thrown-in-the-world-of-existence", and [*Dasein*] "being-in-the-world" and that of [*Mitsein*] "being-with"; I will continue to reflect a bit more as of how Heidegger navigates, and why he is impervious to the notion of Platonic thinking—regarding the aspect of "eikon" (*image*), of the "eidetic" (*form*), and of "logos/mythos" (*the arche or beginning*). In his 1927 book, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), we see how Heidegger repudiates Plato and the Greek understanding of *time* and *being* precisely stating: "...the Greeks have managed to interpret Being in this way without any explicit knowledge of the clues which function here, without any acquaintance with fundamental ontological function of time or even any understanding of it,...they take time itself as one entity among other entities, and try to grasp it in the structure of this Being..." (48). What Heidegger implies here, is not only Plato but also, Aristotle, because for Heidegger Greek thought is formed mainly by both of them and his critique applies to both. Heidegger is claiming that Platonists and Aristotelians as well, ought to take a look at *Dasein* of what it means "to-be-in-the-world", *Mitsein* of "being-with", and that of *Geworfenheit*, "being-thrown-in-the-world-of-existence or "dereliction", because 'being' is attained precisely by inter-subjectivity, inter-connection, eros-inter-being and inter-relationships with the [Other (s)]. This is how ontological being is and ought to be perceived.

Only from this prism could we perceive what "being" is and what it means—being is about the [*who*] and not about the teleological [*how*] and the *cosmic* imagination and the oneiric perplexity of Greek thought.

Another interesting aspect of Heidegger's argument is that of *logos* understood as *reason*. He states: "In Plato and Aristotle the concept of logos has many competing significations, with no basic signification positively taking the lead" (55). What is happening at this cross-road of the essence and the real meaning of logos, Heidegger claims that logos is been misunderstood and very much so, misused by either philosophical realism or idealism. For him "logos" means to make something to be seen and manifest, that which is being articulated throughout the mind and mode of others' engagement. Because of this he points that: "...because the *logos* is a letting-something-be-seen, it can therefore be true or false" (56). Furthermore, he concludes that: "...because *logos* as *legomenon* can also signify that which, as something to which one addresses oneself, becomes visible in its relation to something in its 'relatedness', logos acquires the signification of *relation* and *relationship*" (58). Heidegger would call this aspect of logos '*apophantical discourse*' in terms of engagement and, in relation with the other one, so to speak, to reason the notion of *aletheia* (true); because there cannot be an engagement to/with any one, if we see it from the prism of Plato in *Timaeus* in particular, and Plato or Aristotle in general. Another aspect of this 'relation and relationship' we find it in Levinas' principle of *alterity* and *face-to-face* situation, which basically means, the inter-subjective relationship among others (humans) is the path of *here* and *now*— life's flux and phenomena.

The question that comes up is this: What is being? What defines being? What is the structure of being? Is there a fixed being or a flux being? My stance is been against Plato for the simple reason that; I flow in the same labyrinth and ontic-ontological and existential-ontological path of Heidegger's archaeological-mind investigation of being and time. Heidegger's attunement [*Befindlichkeit*] of capturing the sense of the perpetual flight of being in *Dasein*, (also, Levinas and Sartre), is the

reversal of Platonism, stating: “Being cannot indeed be conceived as an entity (my emphasis, as Plato would have it);... : nor can it acquire such a character as to have the term “entity” applied to it. “Being” cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones” (23). Here we have a clear repudiation of Platonic elitist mode, of royal rulers, aristocratic guardians and warriors—the state-of-the-best, and a rejection of philosophic-thinkers-as-the-divine protectors of the polis and humanity—of the higher forms. For Plato being is related to the divine and the unchangeable, the static, and the uncorrupted, or on the not-degenerated being; where, decay never occurs—it is a high and sublime form in the realm of imaginary idea and cosmic perplexity. For Heidegger, as well as for me, and again, in my humble opinion, being exists only in the reality of exchange and intersubjectivity with other beings and thus, this is the most valid and congeal fact—in the “here” and “now”, creating exuberance and to-be-in the womb of life-itself. Thus being cannot be a monotonous selfsame circle, without beginning, and end, a middle point and eternal to anything that comes up. According to Heidegger being cannot resemble a “higher”, solid unchangeable, impervious, benevolent, and sublime eternal entity—a unity that all that is in human life, resembles this kind of entity as eternity and as the offspring of human condition. What is most important, it is that this Platonic “oneness” or “entity” cannot be attained through the “lower” and “higher” forms; but rather, only through face-to-face as Levinas would have it and, *Mitsein* (being-with) and *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) as Heidegger would claim it. Thus we have dismantled, repudiated, and nullified Plato with his “eugenic-royal oneness” or higher entity being replicated in lower-level human forms once and for all!

Now I will proceed from few other concepts such as, the potentiality of being in the world and the possibility of finitude or death. The next question that comes up is this: Is death or finitude my freedom or my liberation regarding, my existence as being a free agent in the flux of the world? Or, is it that the factor of “anxiety” is that which renders ones actuality? Anxiety is linked to solitude, and solitude is the path that one can engage in the world and its materiality. “Death” or “finitude” speaking in Heideggerian terms, is the path to attain the condition of freedom and that of authentic existence—I: it is the most authentic and veritable stasis of being-in-the-midst-of-the-world. This condition of *Dasein* (being-in-the- world) and *Mitsein* (being-with) is the evanescence of this essential stasis or condition of being, it is starting and finishing its own actuality and existence. And, speaking in Levinas’ terminology, and that which comes closer to the authentic condition of being and existence; there is the factor of “suffering”, because it reveals the forces of potentiality, possibility, and virility—to face the conditions of the world through the notion of related and relationship in terms of worldly reality. Following the path that Heidegger opened for us, I will say that, it is the abstract and the real human feeling of “anxiety” that enables my being to be. To be is to exist in the midst of the world and to open up potentialities of existences through virility, eros, and fecundity, alongside-with others—it is an attunement of temporal-being. *Dasein* in essence and in its very noema (schema) has the spark of anxiety—there is no *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) without the ecstasies of anxiety.

All that has been said so far; it has had as a purpose to capture the notion of being and time, renouncing the Platonic understanding of it. Being-in-the-world and attributing the transcendence of this being-with and being-alongside, presupposes that we are exposed to the actualization of ecstatic-temporal mode of *Dasein*. I will stay close to

what we are aiming at/for in this existential and ontological analysis and that is, that the argument I have made is precisely the repudiation of Plato about being and time and also, about the rejection of the Platonic formation of utopian higher forms of existence. Heidegger is been a guide in this labyrinth and vortex (and so has been Popper and Levinas), giving us the radiating light and the projecting exuberance to the understanding of what time is, and what to be in the world means, and what existence is.

Furthermore, in a diametrical or opposing prism from Plato, regarding the ontological aspect of time and being as selfsameness, Heidegger congeals or petrifies and imperviously vindicates that time is not vertical-cyclical. Time is not hierarchical with higher and lower strata; but rather, time is that which is the: “Ecstatico-horizontal temporality temporalizes itself primarily in terms of the future..., the basic phenomenon of time is seen in the “now”.... Time is ‘abstract’ negativity....—but this means present-at-hand” (479, 485). What this means is that “time” is an irreversible succession or progression of events, instances, spontaneities, fluxes, conditions, and sequences—time is the “now” as temporality and as the presence of new sequences of happenings. Time is horizontal-temporal and not as Plato would have it; as a vertical-cyclical mode of existence. Thus time is horizontally spanning and stretching infinitely. Only the relationship between human praxis facing one another, and being in the world of another’s *finitude* and *alterity* in its midst of existence, can create the now-being-present-of-time.

It seems that what Plato did not take into account, is the notion of the other; where, the other is a phenomenon of being in relation to the mode of them-they, and facing the *presence* of others, of being *in* the world—and that of being in the world with the others and alongside the

others including the *feminine* aspect of *eros* and *fecundity*. All these factors are the interpretations of 'now', at hand, and there is a plurality or multiplicity of 'now', being in a perpetual and temporal flight towards *finitude*. The past-present-future occurs in the 'now' as that which is, the now that just past, the now-to-come, and the now as present. Without being *now* and without grasping the ontological and temporal-ecstatic notion of time as that which stretches along horizontally, there is not time, otherwise; there is an imaginary empty notion of time. Being in the world demands our humanly participation. Time is the materiality of our world created by human activity, interconnectedness and interchangeability as a flux and perpetual alternation of the worldly condition.

There is nothing that resembles the eros, fecundity, and materiality of human exchange in the realm of Platonic being. Plato's being in *Timaeus*, and Platonism as whole is a fable phenomenon and a reflection to *escape* from the real upheavals of human and worldly affairs. These conditions are broad up through eros, pain, suffering, anxiety, happiness, ambition, and destruction. There is no meaning of time and being, if there is no decay and degeneration in worldly existence. Plato wanted to eliminate precisely all of these conditions of human time and existence, inventing an imaginary static and unchangeable and ever-same or selfsame cosmic order—creating from disorder to order. However, life and the praxis of potentiality cannot, and ought to not be static and frozen in time and memory. And here is the main problem of Plato: he wanted to capture a perfection of the sublime Idea in its highest pedestal and making from it, a lapidary structure regarding the fact of being, that which as a primordial one has no-time, it is self-sustaining while revolving in-it-self, retuning-in-it-self as selfsame. Plato's philosophy is an escapist and elitist-authoritarian-eugenic philosophy. As I have

already said, an escapist in terms that Plato wanted to recreate human life in the realm of cosmic being, virtually eliminating the most important factor; the human praxis. It seems that Plato did not like the presence of the human condition because; it corrupts the sublimity of higher entity and its unity. For Plato human existence can only replicate this higher harmonious and not-degenerated being. We are the copy of what imaginarily could exist, that which really is, an *ex nihilo*—it does not exist.

Now it seems to me that, what exists, it is the fact of being in the world in full responsibility regarding individualized actions—it is this responsibility that we have towards one another, because I come to realize myself and be myself only through facing and having the presence of the other (s). Being is a fact that is, and this abstract non-being of Plato in the cosmic realm can only be artistically and theatrically recreated. Being is something to be in the earthly condition—it means responsibility to exist and to be alive among others, from whom time can exist. Thus this is a human Time. This is the way the political philosophy of Plato was, still is and it will always be—catastrophic in regards to our human condition; precisely because, it does not factor the human affairs and its relation to others. It is our human antagonism and the democratic platform that which Plato disregards—and consequently, that leads to recreate the royal-aristocratic philosopher-kings to rule the scatological lower strata and beings of life. Popper was right in his criticism, and so does my political worldly experience of now and present.

At the end, concluding this critique towards Plato, I would like to point out a few things. Plato was an ingenious thinker regarding the higher Idea principle as something abstract and invisible. However, his dogmatic perversity and intellectual vortex in relation to the reality of the human condition; began, precisely with the ideal-structure when, he

created a utopian or imaginary being-of-life. He neglected the most imperative and the most vital and basic human freedom; which is to say, to be for the sake of being—human rights, the spontaneity of life, the evolution of history, the aspect of human emotions and the unpredictability of desires and most essentially again, that of *human praxis*—those which in total, create life and existence—our human world and our reality as we earthly know it. Plato's *selfsameness* of *time* is static, self-destructive, and monotonous, single and frozen in imagination. I believe that time is plural or multiple and it cannot stand by it-self. Time needs the other relationship (s) of being engaged in the world, being with the other (s) as a responsibility of mutual co-existence with nature. Thus facing the facts of life through the mind and the body of the other, (s) is the only path to be or exist on a given temporality of time. The “other” as “me” and “I” as the “other” phenomenon is attained in the world human praxis, and in the midst of the world. Eros transcends being, where being is the *facticity* of “they” and “I”—into finitude. Time *is* me and I *am* the time of my being that exists through mine and others' praxis. Human Time is not cosmic. Time is the existence of human condition in its full responsibility.

Cite Notes

- Plato. *Plato's Timaeus*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing R. Pullins Co. 2001
- Heraclitus. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981
- Parmenides. *On the Order of Nature*. New York: Aurea Vidya, 2009
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1962
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other*. Penn: Duquesne University Press, 2005
- Popper, R. Karl. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. NJ: Princeton University, 1971
- Campanella, Tommaso. *The City of the Sun*. Merchant Books, 2010