

The Romanticized Plato

Peter Cheyne

Abstract

This paper argues for a reading of Coleridge that not only claims a philosophical lineage going back to Plato, but also that one which recognizes that Coleridge modified the Platonic epistemology and ontology to yield a philosophical frame for Romanticism. An analysis of Plato's Divided Line passage in Book VII of the *Republic* provides a scheme for Plato's scheme of knowledge and being, and this is shown to lie behind, with modifications, Coleridge's polar scheme of the mental faculties (1). It is argued that Romanticism is not only a movement with a Platonic heritage, but also that it is a modification of Platonism, the major difference being a new understanding of the imagination more consonant with Plato's actual use of poetic description, symbol, and myth, followed by the elevation of this imagination to a position above the understanding, Plato's *dianoia*. By recasting the Divided Line that harmonizes the faculties into a polar scheme, Coleridge returned a dignity to *aisthesis*, sensory intuition, such that it could be recognized as the unselfconscious counterpart of reason, able to recognize beauty in the sensible, and to have a sense—although largely without comprehension, first principles, or even logical consistency—of meaning and value.

Reading a Romantic Plato is possible in two different but complementary ways. There is the Plato of the Romantics, that is, Plato as read through and interpreted by the Romantic philosophers and poets. There is also the proto-Romantic Plato, anticipating the nineteenth century Romantics by over two thousand years and influencing them directly, as well as through the neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus (204 – 270); the Italian Renaissance humanists such as Marsilio Ficino (1433 – 1499) and his Florentine Academy, recreating of the Academy of Plato, and Pico della Mirandola (1463 -1494); the German mystic, Jakob Böhme (1575 -1624); and the Cambridge Platonists, most notably Henry More (1614 -1687) and Ralph Cudworth (1617-1689). There are elements throughout Plato, and specific passages in his works, that can be read as proto-Romantic. There is also a proto-Romantic strain throughout Plato in the dynamic and creative tension between rational, intellectual philosophy and its expressions in impassioned and imagistic poetic form.

Here I examine how Platonism was transformed in the hands of the

Romantics. The most important of these changes was in the role of imagination. Through imagination as Coleridge recast it, Ideas can affect the understanding. Without this imaginative act, the understanding is the lower understanding only, remaining at the level of concepts and abstractions as though this were the end and apex of thinking, which is, of course, Coleridge's criticism of empiricism. I examine a central schema of Plato's epistemology and ontology, the Divided Line analogy, and argue that Coleridge creatively recast this schema, mainly by finding a higher role for a radically re-thought imagination. The result of this recasting can be described as a Romantic Platonism.

Authors such as Mary Ann Perkins (2), and R. M. Hare (3) have argued for a reading of "two Platos". I basically sympathize with such readings, as I find both a creative tension in Plato between the sometimes quite dry search for definitional clarity, and metaphysical precision, and the poetic turns taken when Plato wishes to gesture towards ineffables such as the state of contemplating the Forms, the confrontation with Beauty, or the encounter with a daimonic conscience. However, I prefer not to talk of "two Platos", because that binary phrase is not subtle enough express the notion of the creative tension as being always present in Plato. In my opinion the creative tension is not so much a creative tension in one man, Plato, but a dynamic seen to be necessarily present, if pursued in good faith, in the nature of the problems he pursued.

James Vigus has recently published a book about the influence of Plato on Coleridge, and he does a very good job of tracing Plato's influence within the Coleridgean corpus (4). I agree with Vigus that Coleridge's Platonism was genuine, and I add that Coleridge then modified Platonism, sometimes in the light of Plotinus,

sometimes in the lights of Kant and Schelling, towards the direction of German and, from his and Wordsworth's own creative endeavours, British Romanticism.

Raymond Geuss has fairly recently continued what I believe to be the mistaken, Nietzschean (and what Geuss calls post-Romantic (5)), interpretation of Plato that holds that Plato championed propositional knowledge as the ideal and apex of all ethical and practical life. This I believe to be mistaken because for Plato the highest form of knowledge, *noesis* and its eventual contemplation of the Forms, is ultimately non-propositional, despite the epistemological ascent to this position through conceptual *dianoia* and logical dialectic. I partially agree with Geuss's position that Plato considered poetry to be 'not a reliable vehicle for correct knowledge' and that the 'Romantics tried to reverse Plato's specific account of poetry and its valuation, claiming that it was an important kind of knowledge' (6). However, the reality is not so simple, especially when considering Plato's use of elevated, poetic language to symbolically convey the perhaps otherwise ineffable views from the summits, as it were, in his dialogues.

The poetry of Diotima's instruction, to Socrates, on the ladder of love, in the *Symposium*; the winged charioteer of the *Phaedrus* symbolizing the soul's spirited ascent to contemplation of the Forms as an ascent occasioned by the encounter with Love and Beauty; the allegory of the prisoners in the cave in the *Republic* to show the political task of the philosopher as having to descend back into the cave and point out the illusory, shadowy nature of what is being taken for reality; the myth of the demiurge in the *Timaeus* to convey the theoretical role of the Forms as not creating the world, but as being needed for the order experienced in it: these are passages of the greatest poetical genius. While Plato knew he ought to use the clearest

propositional language as far as it could take him, he was equally certain that propositional explication could not take us all the way, as far as the dialectic goes.

My argument is basically that Romanticism can be understood as a modification of Platonism. I propose that Coleridge made some of those important modifications to Platonism to fashion a Romantic mood and system out of the Platonic system. Ernst Cassirer insightfully commented that ‘To poeticize philosophy and to philosophize poetry — such was the highest aim of all romantic thinkers’ (7). This is an accurate description that can be verified by tracing the development of philosophical concerns throughout Romantic poetry, as well as explicitly in Schelling’s assertion of Art as the highest expression of a culture’s philosophy, and in Coleridge’s self-declared mission, in *Biographia Literaria*, requiring the difficult pursuit after the rigorous logic of poetry.

One of Coleridge’s key modifications to Platonism was to place his Romantically reconceived category of Imagination between Plato’s levels of *noesis* (reason) and *dianoia* (mathematical and scientific understanding), perhaps even straddling both. The dividing lines are not to be conceived strictly. Indeed it is well to recall Coleridge’s maxim that, ‘It is a dull and obtuse mind, that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse, that distinguishes in order to divide’ (8).

The point is not to stress an insistence on a fragmented mind, but to show first a Platonic and then a Romantic (Coleridgean) model of mind, to see how the latter is a modification of the former, how both show different models for the unified, harmonic nature of that mind, and how the Coleridgean remodeling provided a system resulting in a Romanticized Platonism. To explore this modification is to follow the direction of the changes made, and to consider the meaning of these changes

concerning the dynamics of the whole system.

A creative tension is evident in Plato's writings that can be felt in his epistemology, and throughout his works. It is the tension between the mystical and the logical. This tension is doubtless partly related to Plato's attraction to Pythagoreanism, with its tendency to number mysticism, the belief that number is the fundamental constituent of the universe, and that the harmony of the spheres is the result of the mathematico-musical order held to be found in the cosmos. The Pythagorean School held that number is mystical. On the mystical side of Platonism is the example of Socrates' *daimon*, like a call of conscience, which brought him to a trance when he said or was about to say something "offensive to the gods". The original meaning of '*mystikos*' was 'closed lips/eyes' and later meant an initiate, and describes in literal terms a response to the acknowledgement of the ineffable. The inspiration described in the *Ion*, a dialogue exploring how the rhapsodist can persuade the audience, is an example of pre-philosophical, rhapsodic persuasion that works, so the analogy went, like a kind of magnetism, transmitting the inspiration of the poet to the audience. The Socratic trance of the *daimon* experience is of a higher level, and is taken by Plato to be something more mysterious. Rhapsodic persuasion can be understood as a kind of human magnetism or hypnotism, lulling reason to sleep, but the moral intuition that Socrates was described to have experienced is one that awakens reason to the Good. An example of this is outlined in the *Phaedrus*.

R.M. Hare saw this tension as leading to two ways of interpreting Plato, which then leads to a view of two Platons, Pato and Lato. The one interpretation of Plato is of an eternity inspired mystic advocating an ascetic life of mystical contemplation, eschewing worldly opinion and ambition. This interpretation is one

perhaps originally exaggerated to by the religious Gnostics, which view (the also mystical) Plotinus attacked as simplistic and reductive, with the Gnostics interpreting Plato as proposing that the phenomenal world is a dreary prison for the divine spark of soul (9). Hare suggests that this mystical Plato “would have been at home in a Zen Buddhist monastery” (10). The “other” Plato pursues analytic philosophy, is concerned with definitions and problems of linguistic meaning, and skillfully employs dialectic method to unravel ethical, ontological, and epistemological problems, revealing their *aporia*, and is more often than not more content to leave a problem unsolved, but now more clearly comprehended, than to propose theories or to be otherwise dogmatic.

Hare presents a breezy, cheerful account of two Platos, but this account risks missing the point of the one Plato working within a creative tension of currents. By proposing that the pursuit of definition and the exploration of positions through dialectic is that of a rational, analytic Plato, one could easily miss the point that the purpose of dialectic is to ‘follow the argument wherever, like a wind, it may lead us’ (11). The logic of dialectic leads the participants in directions, with its turns and returns, that are not always comfortable. It is not a dry, professionally academic process that necessarily excludes the possibility of ‘spiritual journey’. Hadot has described the Socratic dialectic of Plato’s dialogues as ‘spiritual exercise’, indeed as a ‘Way of Life’ (12). The pursuit of dialectic sometimes benumbs the participant, with the exposing of *aporia* in their arguments and definitions leading to a feeling of being stung by a stingray. This process of *elenchus*, or cross-examination, in dialectic is used to show up *aporia* or ignorance and from this, newly recognized, startling position, to foster a desire for genuine examination, both self-examination of virtues,

beliefs and opinions, as well as examination of external states of affairs. The elenchus and continuation of dialectic is a spiritual exercise in the sense of being a philosophical pilgrim's progress.

Mary Ann Perkins challenges, following Bernstein (13), a modern-postmodern view of Plato as the villain of philosophy who elevated reason to an absolute power and who inflicted an ideal of universals, grand schemes, and absolutes onto subsequent thinking. Perkins identifies this anti-Platonic view with a twentieth century move, particularly in Continental Philosophy, against logocentrism, best exemplified in Derrida, deconstructing Platonism, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism. Over 150 years earlier, Coleridge was defending Plato against charges of 'estranging the mind from sober experiences' and that Plato was indeed 'inductive throughout' (14).

Perkins argues that Coleridge's "other Plato" warns against the atomizing experience into only phenomena from the senses, and with "unmitigated hostility [...] pursues the assumptions, abstractions, generalities, and verbal legerdemain of the sophists!"(15). This was the Plato who, in recognizing the unity of the True and the Good, paved the way for Kant's deontological ethics, showing how a non-empirical ethical system can be reached by pure practical reason. For Perkins, Coleridge's preferred "other Plato" is opposed to that reading of Plato which represents him as representing the absolute, the universal, and the eternal. The "other Plato" is taken as understanding that the objects of *noesis* cannot be represented, for any representation would be in concepts and images, abstractions, and thus fall short of the measure of the *noemata*. Hence, the "other Plato" often discusses the movement towards the *noemata*, the Ideas, with self-consciously poetic symbolism, allegories and similes.

The misrepresentation of Plato in Coleridge's day perhaps was partly derived from the empirical tendency to understand symbolism as abstraction from phenomenal experience. In this case, as abstraction, Plato's symbolic passages would necessarily be merely fanciful and fallacious, however, Coleridge's point is that Plato's symbolism was not pushed from behind, from sense experience and abstractions therefrom, but was pulling upwards to indicate Ideas, the final ascent to which could not be present in any concept or symbol.

Perkins attributes the skewed, negative opinions of Plato and Coleridge to a 'philosophical collective unconscious' which, since the seventeenth century, has separated reality 'into a "really real" which is phenomenal, and directly experienced [...], on the one hand, and a parallel but entirely subjective reality, on the other. The latter may be emotionally, aesthetically and morally significant but has no claims to universality' (16). Platonism is hence prone to be dubbed "other-worldly", and Coleridge thought to have been better off 'confining his metaphysical meanderings to poetry' (17). Contrary to this opinion, Coleridge held that he was pursuing an ideal Realism, certainly insofar as he, with Plato, held principles to be logically antecedent to phenomena.

Coleridge faced a seemingly insurmountable difficulty in the dogmatic empiricism of his day, a day in which Kantianism was not yet widespread in England, which presumed that principles can only be abstractions from phenomena, rather than being their causes, constitutors and constant regulators. The challenge Coleridge faced against this metaphysical prejudice of empiricism was recounted in an entry of his Table Talk, recalling a conversation with an acquaintance:

He told me that facts gave birth to, and were the absolute ground of, principles; to which I said, that unless he had a principle of selection, he would not have taken notice of those facts upon which he grounded his principle. You must have a lantern in your hand to give light, otherwise all the materials in the world are useless, for you cannot find them; and if you could, you could not arrange them. "But then," said Mr. —, "that principle of selection came from facts!" — "To be sure!" I replied; "but there must have been again an antecedent light to see those antecedent facts. The relapse may be carried in imagination backwards forever, but go back as you may you cannot come to a man without a previous aim or principle." (18)

Coleridge's "other Plato" was not only set against the empiricists of the day, but also against some of Coleridge's recent contemporary Enlightenment and Romantic philosophers. Coleridge showed Plato symbolically expressing, in his dynamic philosophy, the unity of reality as a unity with distinction, as opposed to Schelling's apparently Parmenidean Absolute as a unity of utter sameness, which unity Hegel criticized as 'the night in which all cows are black' (19).

The notion of two Platos in Hare seems to be useful at first, in identifying different currents at work in Plato, but ultimately must be seen as superficial. Perkins' "two Platos" notion seems to bring us closer to the reality by contrasting not two Platos, but two interpretations of Plato. Within the so-called analytic Plato operates the current aiming towards ultimate knowledge, via a process that requires *aporia* to be contemplated, ignorance to be recognized, and stubborn, cherished opinions to be abandoned as the participants negotiate the rational and spiritual obstacle course of dialectic.

Within the so-called mystical Plato, exhorting the audience to seek knowledge in invisible Forms, are quite logical arguments that assert, for example, that any, indeed all, sensible examples put forward as examples of Justice are flawed, and in some way or other can also be shown to be unjust. Any particular police officer,

any particular lawyer, and particular law in any particular nation can be shown to suggest Justice, especially when all the particular examples are considered together, but will always also be able to be shown as capable of leading to injustice in some case or other. That is, the particulars taken to exemplify Justice can always be shown to be not universally Just, that is to say, Just in every possible and imaginable circumstance. This is not to make the trivial observation that particulars are not universals. Plato does not argue the trivial point that particulars are not universals, but rather that if we wish to know what, say “intelligence” is, observing examples of intelligent men and women will provide an initial guide, but will also lead us astray until we then progress from the stage of observing sensibles and move into a more general approach dealing with abstracts. And again, from the abstracts, which are dealt with according to theories and their schemata with axioms taken for granted in subjects such as Geometry, one can progress to another stage, that of dialectic leading to *noesis*, which is taken to be an intuition of Ideas without either a perception of sensibles or an imaging of mathematical or conceptual schemata.

The Phaedrus contains an excellent example of the poetic Plato. Jowett summarizes this very well, in his introductory essay to the Laws, ‘the higher art of the Phaedrus, in which the summer’s day, and the cool stream, and the chirping of grasshoppers, and the fragrance of the *agnus castus* [chaste tree], and the legends of the place are present to the imagination throughout the discourse’ (20). In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates attempts to better Lysias’ speech on love, wherein Lysias argued that the beloved should choose a “lover” who is calm, rational, and not really in love. In competitive response, Socrates grows eloquent in his speech against eros and in support of the non-lover. However, the *daimon*, Socrates’ inner voice or inner god,

stills Socrates' speech, calling him to silence and reflection before an improved argument can be formed. The previous arguments, Socrates realizes, were 'clever, but not wise'. Then Socrates gives the celebrated account of love as an irrational, but extraordinary, madness, a divine madness. Plato relates this inspiration of wisdom above cleverness to his theory of the Forms. The genuine lover, described as a charioteer driving a pair of winged horses, controls the sensual, unruly, Earth-bound horse to be kept in harness with the noble, pure, heaven-bound horse. Beyond heaven, all is without shape, and can only be "seen" with the intelligent mind. In this state, such Forms as Justice, *Sophrosune* or Self-possession, and Beauty can be contemplated. In the analogy, experiencing beauty in another person is a spur to contemplation of the Form of Beauty, hence it is argued to be unwise to either eschew beauty or to give way to it only sensually.

This is a progression whose movement is born of poetic imagination and is given expressively. What Plato actually meant by dialectic is a topic of perennial debate. Popper considered Plato's dialectic to be based on a doctrine of mystical intuition and wrote off Plato as a mystic with totalitarian tendencies (21). By dialectic, did Plato mean only an apparently irrational connection to knowledge itself, through intuition of the Forms? Or is the movement of dialectic wholly logical, advancing by refutations and modifications, as in the very method Popper held as enabling progression in science? Evidence for both of these interpretations can be found in Plato's writings, and the creative tension described above works between these meanings. The mystical *noesis* inspired by the *daimon* in the dramatic dialogues shows a proto-Romantic side to Plato, who then expressed this inspiration with poetic analogies.

With Coleridge developed a rise in the status and function of imagination, both in general culture and within the Platonic tradition. From Plato, through Plotinus, to the Romantics, the role of imagination grew in importance, finding its high point in Coleridge's system.

This resulted in a Platonism more receptive to exploring and communicating ideas in and through the arts than Plato himself advocated. This Romantic, art-friendly 'Plato' (cf. Mary Ann Perkins' "other Plato") became an idealized figure for Romantics from Schelling to Shelley. Plato explored questions of the highest philosophical and intellectual order by using the form of the dramatic dialogue, rather than first-person, scholarly exposition. This method remains true to the Socratic intuition that education, as *educare*, or drawing out, and especially within philosophy, is more akin to midwifery, the profession of Socrates mother, than to the attempt to fill their charges with knowledge as jugs to empty vessels as the sophists professed they were doing.

Plato recognizes the need in philosophy for the moods of wonder, of amazement, of being shocked and dumbfounded, and even of that philosophic frenzy exemplified by Diotima, the mantic priestess. Far from Plato representing the denigration of human emotion in favour of a pure, mathematical reason replacing all organic lines with right angles and integers, Plato presents a higher synthesis of a material, sensible, chaotic world given intelligibility insofar as it has a formality through the Ideas, the laws of phenomena that are not themselves phenomena. For Plato, spiritedness, receptiveness to sensual love and beauty, and the mood of wonder are important motors for the highest *noesis* of the philosophical attitude. Hence the appeal of Plato to the Romantics who sought to unite deep feeling with profound

thought.

In discussing what he recognized as the particular genius of Wordsworth's poetry, Coleridge wrote that, 'it was the union of deep feeling with profound thought, the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed' (22). Wordsworth saw reason in passion in much the same way as Plato, in dialogues such as *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, saw that cleverness is not the same thing as wisdom, and that wisdom is present in such "divine madness" as love and philosophical frenzy. Wordsworth spoke of 'passion, which itself / Is highest reason in a soul sublime' (23). 'O for some Sun', called Coleridge, seeking for wisdom with love, the intelligible with the sensual, 'that shall unite Light and Warmth' (24). From here we can see the natural connections and affinities which led to the Romantic embracing of Platonic themes such as the unity of Truth and Beauty, explicit in Keat's 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'; and which explain Shelley's devoted translations of Plato's *Ion* and *Symposium*. Shelley called Plato, 'essentially a poet' in a tract that I would like to quote from at length as it exemplifies so well the connections between the Platonizing Romantics and the proto-Romantic Plato:

The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated. Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive. He rejected the measure of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms, because he sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action, and he forebore to invent any regular plan of rhythm which would include, under determinate forms, the varied pauses of his style. Cicero sought to imitate the cadence of his periods, but with little success. Lord Bacon was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm, which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect; it is a strain which distends, and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy. All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal

music. Nor are those supreme poets, who have employed traditional forms of rhythm on account of the form and action of their subjects, less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things, than those who have omitted that form. Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power. A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth (25).

The Romantics were drawn to the unity of opposites they read in Plato: the epistemology written in dramatic form; the synthesis of reason and passion; the poetic passages to continue where rational argument with literal concepts must give way to the symbolic. Coleridge's scheme, his counterpart to Plato's Divided Line, is a polarity with harmonies between the extremes, and the two middle sections on either side, and on the two parts that meet in the centre. Thus in Coleridge's writings, it is made explicit that reason is present in sense, and in that way, sense is closer to its opposite in the scale (reason) than to its neighbour (fancy). While such harmonies might be imagined in Plato's system, they are never explicit in Plato's writings.

Hence we can see Coleridge's scheme as a modification of Plato's that (a) allows artistic activity to co-operate in the highest intellectual activity, as argued by Schelling: because 'aesthetic intuition is merely intellectual intuition become objective, it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form [...]. Art is paramount to the philosopher [...] it is art alone which can succeed in objectifying with universal validity what the philosopher is able to present in a merely subjective fashion' (26); and (b) allows phenomena to appear from out of natural laws as ideal reality in an organic fashion in a way that does not conceive phenomena as comprising a "second world".

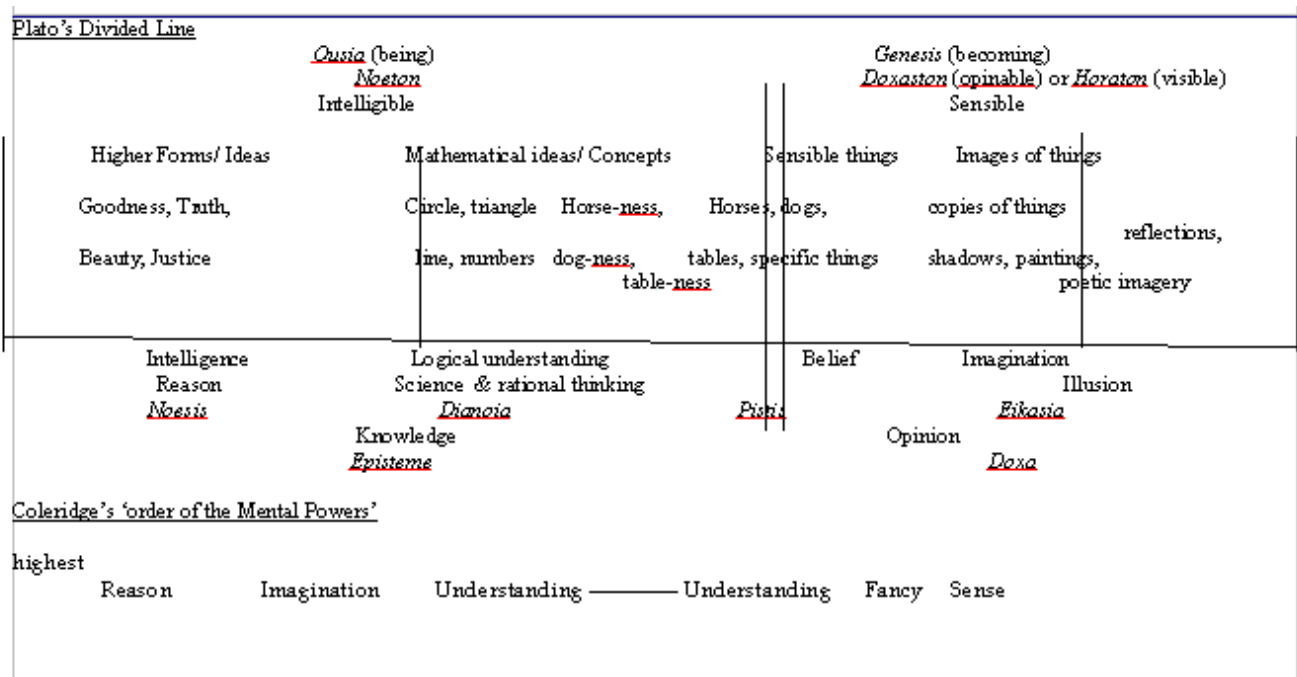
This point allows for a discussion of the Plato of the Romantics and whether

Romanticized Plato might be a modification of Plato, or an exploration of one aspect of Plato, the proto-Romantic Plato. The Romantic return to Platonism was seen as both a correction to empiricism and a progression from Kant.

Coleridge's polar diagram elegantly communicates the Romantic return to Platonism and the major difference between this Romantic Platonism and Plato's scheme in the Divided Line is obvious, namely, the elevated place of imagination. The preceding page shows Plato's Divided Line above Coleridge's harmonic polarity of the mental powers that he sketched out while reading Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*. I propose that Coleridge's scheme is a modification of Plato's Divided Line that both Romanticizes Plato and develops a Romantic scheme from Platonism. In the tables above, Coleridge wrote out the order of mental powers twice, in opposite orders, in order to emphasize the harmonies between the poles. Note also that both tables are best written out vertically, rather than horizontally, but for sake of clarity regarding reading the words I wrote this out horizontally. This relation of Coleridge's scheme to Plato's Divided Line has not previously been made in the secondary literature, nor was it mentioned by Coleridge, but I believe it is an important tool in both showing and exploring how Coleridge fashioned his Romanticism out of a proto-Romantic Platonism that needed a few tweaks, such as the elevation of the imaginative faculty, to become appropriate for the anti-mechanistic, post-Kantian Romantic movement of the nineteenth century.

The influence of Plotinus on Coleridge is apparent. Plotinus quietly passed over Plato's imitative theory of poetic-artistic representation, his own theory proposing that poetic-artistic creation springs from the same reason-principles, or laws, as nature itself. This would be no mere reproduction, but aesthetic production forming

its material. Thus for Plotinus, beauty in poetic-artistic representation and beauty in nature develop from the same principles. Plotinus argued in the *Enneads* that the aesthetic contemplation of art and nature leads beyond merely discursive reason and on towards the Ideas, or reason-principles, which neo-Platonic argument also appears in Schelling, as mentioned above.



direction. Plotinus did not reject outright Plato's position of imagistic representation as mimetic, as we can see in *Ennead*, IV. 3.10, where Plotinus describes the imitations of art as dim and feeble copies, mere eidola (idols) as so many "toys". Again, this time in *Ennead*, V. 9.11, Plotinus joins painting and sculpture to dancing and mime as art forms that take their models from the outward appearances of the world of sense in contrast to the higher art form of music, which takes the intelligibility of the essences, the Reason-Principles of things, as its models. Here also, Plotinus raises architecture and carpentry above painting, sculpture, dance, and mime, because the productive arts are founded on the Ideal principles of proportion, and moreover, their aim is actuality,

not appearance, and they take their model from the Idea, the purpose, function, and necessary properties, of a building, of a bed, and so on, rather than imitating any appearance, which position is basically the same as that expounded by Plato in *Republic*, Book X, namely, that of the carpenter's bed as being less far removed from reality than the doubly mimetic bed of the painter. So far Plotinus does not diverge from Plato's explicitly stated views regarding imagistic representation.

However, Plotinus' explicit statements on the subject go beyond what Plato explicitly stated. Whether or not what Plotinus says about artistic production goes against Plato is a matter of debate, and there is no doubt that Plotinus would have been sure that his position was certainly in the spirit of Plato and exemplified Plato's own practices as witnessed in the dialogues. Audrey Rich brings together the materials in Plotinus to describe his distinctively neo-Platonic contribution to aesthetics (27). Plotinus, there is no doubt, considered himself a Platonist, and would not have considered himself to have contributed anything un-Platonic to that school of philosophy. Nevertheless, the Plotinian theory of artistic creation is to be considered a novel contribution, one which came from out of Platonism, but was not in the original Platonic corpus itself. For Plotinus, the artist bases the work not on the material model, but on the contemplation of the Ideal and the principles of the thing portrayed. Rich points to Plotinus' example of the sculptor Phidias (28). His celebrated statue of Zeus was based on no human model, but was an attempt to convey how Zeus would appear, were he to manifest himself to us. Art remains a kind of mimesis, but it is a first-hand mimesis, contemplating the Ideas themselves and giving them sensible expression. However, Plotinus' view goes deeper than that, as in *Ennead*, V, 8.1, he states that artists do not merely reproduce the model, but indeed 'run back to the principles from

which the natural objects derive.’ Here we have a model of artistic creation that is not so much copying as running in parallel with its depicted subject. The artist calls upon the principles of creation which created the model, draws them together in her imagination, and uses these principles to recreate the object in a different material setting. Rather than being a copy of a copy, genuine art is a copy of the essence itself, or even a parallel of the essence itself. I do not wish to push this idea of artistic creation as a kind of parallel creation in Plotinus too far, because, for Plotinus, ‘something ugly that is alive is actually preferable to a beautiful statue’ (29). Still, we can see that in a modified Platonic view, artistic production is more imaginative than imitative. Indeed, it could be considered erroneous to judge Plato’s statements regarding imagistic reproduction and stylization as referring to what we, and Plotinus, called art, because Plato did not have the concept of “Art” that we are now using. However that point may be taken, certainly we can detect a lineage from Plato to Plotinus to Coleridge’s theory of the imagination, involving an imaginative contemplation of the principles within the subject of the artistic work, and not merely a skillful depiction of its outward forms.

This division in Platonism is not, I think, one quietly introduced by a Plotinus wishing to both remain faithful to Plato and keep his devotion to aesthetic contemplation. It can be argued that it comes from a tension enjoyed by Plato himself in some of the more dramatic and poetic scenes in his dialogues. The most relevant to consider here is when Socrates is seduced from his wonted urban environment to follow Phaedrus beyond the city walls and discourse along the river bank between a cypress and a plane tree. Socrates is seduced by the chance of a good discussion as Phaedrus holds in his hand the script of a speech on love recently made by Lysias, yet

of the proposal to hold this discussion in the countryside, where he fears his reason might fall under the sway of river nymphs, he objects: ‘the landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me, only people do’, (*Phaedrus*, 230d). In the spirit of this scene of natural riverside beauty, in a spot between the chaste tree and the plane tree, with the general topic of the lover and the beloved, we see Socrates move from merely rational, self-interested logic to an impassioned, elevated logic inspired by Socrates’ feeling the warning sign from his *daimon*. Had he continued the speech in favour of the rational detachment of the non-lover, he would have offended something sacred. Socrates begins again, this time wholly in favour of a spirited love that might sometimes appear to have a touch of madness, but this is a divine madness, like poetry or prophecy. Without doubt, Plato relished inscribing this dramatic irony, having Socrates’s *daimon* chide his first, too coldly logical speech, and inspire Socrates to sing his paean to the divine madness in love and poetry. Here we have the proto-Romantic Plato, beloved of Schelling, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley.

Plato’s model of thought and thinking is implicit throughout his writings and is most explicit when he directly discusses epistemology. In such passages as the Analogy of the Divided Line in the *Republic*, Book VI; the *Phaedrus* Analogy of the Charioteer struggling to steer the white, noble winged horse and the dark, dappled, earthy one; and the Ladder of Love in the *Symposium*, Platonic epistemology and ontology are seen to be inextricably related. The *Theaetetus* is a dialogue discussing the nature of knowledge. It is almost entirely epistemological, considering theories of knowledge as merely perception; knowledge as true judgement; and knowledge as true judgement with an account. Here Socrates argues against Theaetetus’ theory (and a related Protagorean, relativistic argument) that knowledge is nothing but perception.

The *Theaetetus* is Plato's purest exploration of epistemology, elsewhere in Plato the epistemology is always intermixed with ontology.

Knowledge is then considered as true judgment, but this is also dismissed, as one might by pure luck be possessed of true judgement, with no way to distinguish it from false beliefs. Eventually, the definition of knowledge as 'true judgment with an account' is also seen to be unsatisfactory, because defining 'an account' as 'knowledge of the distinctions of the thing to be known' would make a circular argument. The Platonic ontology of the Forms does not have a strong presence in this dialogue. In the *Theaetetus* we can read a presentation of epistemology carefully isolated from ontology. This epistemological argument follows an explicit progress through a dialectic advanced by Socrates playing midwife to the young Theaetetus' search to clarify what is and what is not knowledge.

In the Divided Line passage of the Republic, we see a simple rendering of Plato's epistemology as it relates to his ontology, the theory of Forms. This passage may be read both epistemologically and ontologically. The Divided Line, with its four main divisions, represents stages along the way towards knowledge: from shadows and reflections; to the visible three-dimensional things that cause these images; through concepts derived from these and mathematical notions as refinements of these; to the knowledge of the Forms themselves. To read the Divided Line as progressing through stages of human awareness is to read it epistemologically. This direction moves from murky, distorted apprehensions of reality to an increasingly general, abstract, clear knowledge of reality, culminating in the contemplation of the Forms and the Form of the Good. Obviously epistemology and ontology are intertwined in the analogy of the Divided Line. The ontological reading would be in

reverse order, beginning with the most real in Plato's system, the Form of the Good, and the other Forms; then descending through mathematical notions and general classes of things; to the individual, sensible things; which in turn create the shadows, reflections and basic images from which we humans begin our individual epistemological adventures.

Plato's Divided Line, read epistemologically, moves from *aesthesis* and *doxa* (sense perception and belief) about *eikasia* and *pistis* (images and opinions relating to perceived objects), through *dianoia* (logical reasoning and scientific, abstracting, empirical approaches) involving *mathematika* (concepts to be found in mathematics and in the empirical generalizations of science), and finally to reason's dialectical attainment to noetic knowledge of the Forms. In this direction, following the epistemological current that builds towards true knowledge, we read the line starting from shadowy acquaintance with sense data, images and reflections, which basic forms of acquaintance yield imagining and perception. Plato's model then moves through the common sense 'animal faith' of belief and opinion regarding perceptions. Beyond this stage, conceptualization leads to thinking, after empirical generalizations produce the schemata required by science and the technical arts. Then *dianoia*, rational thinking, produces the elements and formulae of mathematics. Finally, through dialectic and through sustained contemplation, there is the stage of episteme, which allows for a *noesis*, or rational intuition, of the Forms, and, ultimately, the Good or the Form of Forms.

When read ontologically, the movement through the divided line is to be understood in the reverse order. Reading the divided line ontologically is to see it as a model of reality with its reflections and shadows cast into faculties of mind

corresponding to levels of reality. In the order of thinking, proposes Plato's model, we tend to move from images, through opinion, to concepts, to pure science, to that imageless contemplation or *noesis* that is, he asserted, to be won through dialectic. This is a movement from shadows, reflections, images, and opinions, through conceptual and dianoetic refinements, to noetic contemplation.

However, the order of our usual thinking is an order that traces backwards, from what is most obvious and apparent (phenomena) to what is not phenomenal at all, and is the dialectical opposite of appearance. Usually our thinking moves inductively from appearances to concepts and plans, or rules. In the order of being, rather than of thinking, Plato's dynamic moves the other way, from the higher forms, through mathematical and then empirical concepts, to physical objects and then their images, shadows and reflections. That is, from sun, as it were, to shadow. It should also be kept in mind that while the epistemological movement can properly be described as having the movement outlined above, the ontological movement in Plato should be understood only metaphorically as movement and transition. The epistemological movement really is a transition from basic intuitions to more cognitive and developed levels of acquaintance with and knowledge of images, objects, concepts, and Ideas. We can see this movement in studies of child development, such as in Jean Piaget's psychological work in what he called genetic epistemology. The movement along the epistemological direction really is a movement because it requires and takes time; it moves along stages. But following the other direction, the ontological direction, the movement can only be metaphorical. For Plato, the ultimate reality is, and all of its epiphenomena, its concepts, reflections, shadows, and images exist simultaneously, rather than being progressing through stages that must take time to develop.

Forms do not become concepts, objects, and then images, in Plato's system, although concepts and phenomena (veridical or confused) are existentially dependent upon the Forms. Thinking about thinking about being (epistemology), in Plato, involves studying transitions of ever-closer approximations to truth from shadowy acquaintance, through doxic and conceptual comprehensions, to *noesis*. Thinking about being (the exercise of ontology) as such is in a sense always going to be off balance, external to where it intends to be, because it is thinking about being instead of being the being, until, that is, the ideal attainment of *noesis*, when the Idea in the mind is, ideally, identical to the object of contemplation. Whereas a concept is a concept of a thing, or rather of a class of thing, and is separate from the thing, or class, itself, providing philosophers with the epistemological gap, such a gap does not exist with the Platonic Idea and its apprehension or contemplation.

Of course, "Idea" is a sometimes troublesome translation of "*eidos*", and "Form" provides difficulties too, both words being all too familiar, hence easily misunderstood. "*Idea*" is not to be understood as a purely mental occurrence, as when someone "has an idea." There would be Ideas, whether or not there were philosophers to think them. *Noesis* of a Form or Idea is not a thinking that is separate from its object, unlike someone now thinking in an office of the actual Eiffel Tower in Paris, as opposed to just thinking its image. Coleridge described this important Platonic nuance when he argued that it is the "Queen Bee in the hive of error" to think that the same Idea in two minds would be two different Ideas. Another way of putting this is to stress that while the attainment and development of knowledge, studied in epistemology, is a process that requires time, this is not something that can be said of ultimate reality, modeled in ontology, according to Plato's model.

As in Plato, Coleridge's writings are united by the motif of thinking about thinking, with Platonic and neo-Platonic strains being the dominant tendencies. Coleridge's scheme of types, or faculties, of thought from fancy, through the understanding in its lower and higher forms, then imagination and finally reason provides a model that I read as being a Romantic recasting of the Platonic scheme of thinking from Sense to Reason, remodeling Plato's scheme from *eikasia* to *noesis*.

Plato's model is a deliberate polarity wherein the distinctions between the perception of changeable sensible objects and the thinking of stable intelligibles (concepts and Forms) are offered a setting and a solution. It is a deliberate polarity because he carefully inscribed in the Divided Line his solution to what he saw as a central problem in the possibility of knowledge. Plato saw a disparity between the flux of sensible objects versus their stable universal concepts, and sought to solve this disparity with a polarity. Coleridge's scheme is also a deliberate polarity between the intelligible Forms and the objects of sense. In Coleridge's system the intelligible Forms include, as well as Plato's *eide* (Ideas), natural laws as things which are real but not strictly phenomenal, and which give rise to phenomena. For example, in gravitation, gravity itself is never seen, it a law, not a phenomenon, and it gives rise to phenomena such that understanding the law helps to understand the phenomena. 'Plato treats principally of the truths, as it is manifested at the ideal pole, as the science of intellect', Coleridge noted, whereas Bacon applied himself, 'to the same truth, as it is manifested at the other, or material pole, as the science of nature.' Coleridge was impressed that Plato wrote of 'Living Laws', and that Bacon termed, 'the laws of nature, Ideas' (30). Coleridge here provided a refreshing view on Plato's Theory of Ideas, appealing to many engaged in a mathematical study of the laws

behind phenomena that could not themselves be phenomena.

While in Plato the affinities between *eikasia* and *noesis* are neither obvious nor elucidated, in Coleridge the affinities between sense and reason are never forgotten. These relations are described as harmonious, with the higher being detectable, though not self-conscious, in the lower. This is to say that Coleridge argues for harmonies of Form and reason between the phenomena of sense and the movement of reason. In Coleridge, there can be more easily appreciated an impression of reason—of logos, law, ratio and idea—in the phenomena of *aisthesis* that is implicit in Plato but is not drawn out into an explicit topic of discussion until the neo-Platonists. An impression of reason in aesthesis would come from hints of rhyme and reason in our qualitative and subjective experience. It is not surprising that a Romantic poet, engaged in poetizing sense experience, and uniting this poetry with philosophical interests, expressed the idea of such a harmony.

This idea is not explicit in Plato's writings, and the case for an interpretation finding it implicitly there would not be persuasive to many. There are hints, most notably from Aristotle, that Plato's lectures and discussions in the Academy treated of the relation between the Good or the One, the Ideas, and phenomena more fully, less metaphorically, and as his own developed theory rather than through the devices of the dramatic Socrates, Timaeus, or the Stranger. Indeed, in the *Timaeus* myth, Plato argues for an ultimate failure of harmony between the Forms and chaotic matter. Plato describes primal chaos being ordered with the Forms by a demiurge. Although this order resulted in a world of order that can more or less be understood, an element of intractable chaos remains in sensible objects and our feelings related to them. Coleridge's Romantic harmony, on the other hand, has no place for an intractable

element of chaos that cannot be harmonized with reason. In Plato's writings, the strongest hints we detect of any harmony between *eikasia* and *noesis* are in the Symposium, when Socrates relates Diotima's allegory of the Ladder of Love. In this story, beauty is judged to be both perceivable and intelligible: a chink through which the Forms can illuminate the sensible, thus providing the first rung on the Ladder of Love from sensible and material concerns, up the rungs of intelligible Forms to the Sea of Beauty and direct contemplation of the Forms in their pure aspect.

Eikasia

The object of *eikasia*, acquaintance with the world through images, is the phenomenal as images, *eikones*, icons. It is the realm, as it were, of colours, shapes, sounds, and other sensations taken at face value without critical reflection with respect to what they are images of. As such, it is naïve; Plato calls it a state of ignorance. *Eikasia* is neither true nor false, being derived from aesthesis, our raw aesthetic experience. The sophist in *Theaetetus* claimed this *aisthesis* to be all that there is to knowledge. In some ways a classical counterpart of Hume, Theaetetus (the dramatic character in the eponymous dialogue), influenced by the theories of Heraclitus and especially Protagoras, argued that all we can know is what can be apprehended by the senses. We can think of *aisthesis* as imagistic cognition; an intuition prior to existential judgments. In *eikasia*, a parade of icons, there is no claim to truth. *Eikasia* is the beholding of images, being a fixation on the image in the dream, memory, reverie, or on the reflection, the shadow, or the painted, poetic, or other likeness. *Eikasia* is a fixation in so far as it does not contemplate the image as merely an image of something else.

There is discussion in the secondary literature regarding whether *eikasia* is an illusory misapprehension of the images of things for the objects that they are merely likenesses of, or whether something somewhat different is supposed to be going on. Hardie suggests that *eikasia* means ‘conjecture’ in general, so that people in *eikasia*, like the prisoners in the cave, make conjectures, theories, and likely stories about what is going on, without necessarily making conjectures regarding any supposed originals the existence of which accounts for the appearances of the likenesses (31).

I take *eikasia* to be similar to what Heidegger’s described as the state of fascination, which state is taken to describe being immersed and absorbed in the (usually inherited and unquestioned) concerns of everyday life in its average everydayness. In *eikasia*, we are held, almost held captive, by the appearances and by the images. I read *eikasia* as thus being fascinated by the appearances. The pleasures of the sparkles of surface beauty, the pains of everyday frustrations can pull the mind into this level where one becomes caught up in concerns at this level without looking at the possibilities of reality beyond these appearances. The charms of *eikasia* involve *phantasia*, the accepting of images and appearances woven into stories. Here is a level that can be illuminated with a famous word from Coleridge, speaking of ‘that willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith’ (32). Polarizing the Divided Line gives back a dignity to *eikasia*’s objects – *eikasia*, become the Romantic imagination, is now also intuition, it also has deep truths, but the epistemological *pathema* that goes with it is the lowest, the least capable of knowing truth, the most ignorant. Two points though, Plato in 532c does talk about moving from seeing divine reflections as a way to move up to genuine knowledge. At the second point, *eikasia*’s focus is such that the objects in its perspective should be taken not as following along the path of

knowledge to truth (and thence goodness) but rather along the path of appreciation, of aesthetics, to beauty (and thence goodness).

There is neither truth nor falsity in *eikasia*, but rather a kind of reverie. In this dream-like state, what appears are *gignomena*, which Plato describes as the things which tumble about between being and not being. The *eikasia* of the Republic, Book VI has a broader reference than the *aisthesis* discussed in relation to the *doxa* in the *Theaetetus*. *Aisthesis*, as defined in the *Theaetetus*, is a ‘passive affection of the mind’ (33), and refers to sense impressions, whereas *eikasia* refers to sense impressions of images, but also to mental images, such as those experienced in dreams, delirium, and madness.

The objects of *eikasia* are described as shadows, reflections, dreams, and human productions of likenesses: a painting of a house “is a sort of dream created by man for those that are awake” (34). Plato suggests, in his Divided Line, that as *eikasia* dreams of actual objects, the *mathematika* of *dianoia* dream of being (35).

In the *Theaetetus*, the objects of *aisthesis* are colours, sounds, and other phenomenal basics. The objects of *doxa* are contrasted as *ta onta*, those things which have being, because they are held to be more real than the phenomenal basics by which we infer their existence. The *aisthesis* and *doxa* in the *Theaetetus* can thus be mapped onto the *eikasia* and *pistis* of the Divided Line in the Republic. In the Republic, *eikasia* and *pistis* together represent *doxa*. *Eikasia* takes the images at face value, whereas *pistis* takes the everyday objects and opinions about them at face value. Within these two modes of *doxa* in the Republic, *ta onta* is now referred to as the true object of episteme, beyond both *eikasia* and *pistis*. Plato's theory did not change, but the context of the discussion changes. In the Republic, *doxa* is considered within the

fuller scheme as a prior stage to episteme, so it becomes, by this fuller relation, less appropriate to describe *doxa* as relating to *ta onta*. In *Theaetetus*, *doxa* is considered in relation to *aisthesis*, with *doxa* better approximating reality. In the *Theaetetus*, the Forms as the proper objects of genuine knowledge are not mentioned, so it is fitting in that narrower context to call the objects of *doxa ta onta*, in contextual contradistinction from the sense-perceptions of *aisthesis*. In the *Republic*, we have an enlarged context juxtaposing *doxa* and *episteme*, with *doxa* further subdivided into *pistis* and *eikasia*, neither of which can be seen as knowledge within the larger context.

Eikasia is a primitive, pre-conceptual experience. *Noesis* is an advanced, praeter-conceptual experience. Everyday understanding, as well as the understanding of science and mathematics, lies in between. Within the polar scheme of Coleridge there is a harmony between the poles of sense and reason such that reason can be said to be sleeping or dreaming—that is to say unconscious—within our experience of *eikasia*, which for Coleridge becomes Sense and Fancy, only becoming enlightened and awake in self-conscious reason. For Coleridge, there is reason in sense, although this reason is ‘sleeping’ or ‘dreaming’. It is difficult to express this meaning clearly, and that obscurity is at least part of the Romantic point. Parting company with, or perhaps preferring to say modifying, Plato, Coleridge’s Romantic scheme does not see Reason as the absolute opposite to Sense, but rather its harmonic opposite.

Describing the harmony from the other perspective, now looking for Sense in Reason, is easier, because the Platonic understanding of Reason at the end of dialectic is of a direct intuition without the intermediaries of schemata. Sense intuits phenomena; Reason intuits Forms (and in Plato *noesis* intuits Forms while *dianoia* imagines Forms,

employing, for example, geometrical diagrams, and so on).

Coleridge's sense of the harmony between *aisthesis* and Idea allows for a Romantic impression of the artist as working through and with Ideas while simultaneously remaining within the aesthetic, sensory pole of *eikasia*. This Romantic Platonism is familiar by now, and a modern example can be seen in Thomas Mann's *Tod in Venedig* (1912). The example I refer to is particularly appealing in this context because it involves explicit allusions to Plato's *Phaedrus* which show that Plato at least sometimes, and especially during his poetic descriptions, believed the *eidos* of beauty to be accessible to the senses as well as to the intellect. In this scene, the intellectual composer and professor of music, von Aschenbach, hopes to recuperate his staid passions and tired mind with a vacation to Venice. A beautiful youth, Tadzio, captures his fascinated imagination and while on the beach, fully dressed in his suit and hat, the professor, at a table incongruously placed on the sand, attempts to create a musical composition while apparently the forms of beauty, life, joy, and goodness in the classically beautiful youth before him inspire a reverie of Platonic Ideas.

In Plato, the artist makes no existential claims—universals may be explored, but the art is sustained in *eikasia*. At the level of *pistis*, on the other hand, exists the work, the material object side, of the artwork, rather than the art as such. As with Sartre, for the artist in Plato's *eikasia* the object intended in art exists only in imagination. From the level of *pistis*, the painting, for example, is oil on canvas, an historical artifact.

Coleridge, however, stresses the harmony between sense and reason—*gignomena* (that which passes between being and non-being) and *eidos* (Form). Coleridge can therefore have an account of how the Idea can bring pleasure

through artistic expression, and how the artwork as artefact can inspire intellectual enjoyment. This account can support the argument in the *Symposium* that beauty is an *eidos*, yet one that can be seen by the eye as well as by the intellect.

In *eikasia* we have a kind of reverie: an ingenuous consciousness. Ingenuous because this consciousness makes no interpretative alterations and accepts appearances on face value. In *Theaetetus*, *aisthesis* is also ascribed to madness and the fevered delirium of sickness. Its object is whatever appears, whether in dream, delirium, or to the senses. Its object is the 'idea' in the empirical terminology of Locke and Hume. A sense of aesthesis and *eikasia* can be detected in Heidegger's 'fascination', which is a state of being held captive by the comings and goings of average everydayness and being held in the sway of the common interpretations of history, reality and morality found around us and taken as given. Plato's *eikasia* is a state of 'the unexamined life', unquestioningly accepting moral codes as given, and this stage is therefore pre-ethical. The condition of the prisoners in the cave, described in the Republic just before the Divide Line passage, outlines this aspect of *eikasia*. The prisoners are fascinated with the shadows on the wall and have no intellectual tools to criticize their own perspectives and theories of reality from the outside. Hegel's project of Phenomenology of Geist is obviously a descendent of the Platonic theory of evolution of consciousness according to its objects, and *aisthesis/eikasia* would naturally feel at home in Hegel's stage of 'sense certainty'.

In *eikasia* the Heraclitean flux is uncritically reflected in the mind. For Coleridge, this sensory flux is then further dispersed by the fancy, as it generates streams of association from this flux. Plato and Coleridge alike stress the impermanent character of the objects of consciousness considered at what might be

called the naïve pole of experience. In Plato, the argument presented through Socrates was directed against the position that knowledge can only come from and be of the objects of the senses, and hence of the necessarily subjective and relativistic nature of any possible knowledge. In Coleridge, the argument was against a similar empirical position, this time the modern position coming from Locke, Hume, and Hartley. The sophist in *Theaetetus*, as well as the empiricists in and preceding Coleridge's day, often argued that the only kind of knowledge possible was that of *aisthesis* or *eikasia*, and the only possible object was the phenomenal object that Plato here describes.

While both Plato and Coleridge were arguing against similar empirical positions, Plato can be seen to have chosen the tactic of diminishing the importance of the sensory along the pole of knowledge, his Divided Line, whereas Coleridge Romanticizes this scheme to show that a harmony can be detected between the ends of the pole. Coleridge finds intimations of reason in non-reflective aesthetic experience and the immediacy of the sensible (without the sensible itself) in the intuitions of reason.

Pistis

The objects of *pistis* are described in the divided line passage as those things made by God, animals, plants, etc., and man-made articles. These are distinguished from divine and man-made images, e.g., shadows, reflections, dreams, and painting. The objects of Plato's *pistis* are the actual objects of the ordinary world considered apart from their reflections and other images of them.

While *eikasia* is fascinated, accepting with neither prejudice nor concern for contradiction the phenomena composing its consciousness, *pistis* is characterised by

judgement. The judgements of *pistis* arrive at *doxa*, or opinions, by the process of “the soul debating with herself,” affirming and denying (36). This process is akin to the presence of (unenlightened) negative reason in the lower understanding of Coleridge's scheme. Although *pistis* arrives at judgements by comparing and relating perceptions, it does not subject these to any critical analysis.

Indeed, in the *Theaetetus*, this mode of *doxa* is said to contain both an element of *aisthesis/eikasia* and an element of pure thinking (37). The counterpart of the element of *aisthesis/eikasia* in Coleridge's lower understanding would be the fixed and definite thoughts fashioned by the fancy associated from the stream of sense. For Coleridge, these fixed and definite thoughts work like pre-concepts, or counters, pebbles still wet from the stream of sense experience from where they were lifted.

Within Plato's scheme, the inclusion in *pistis* of the principles of affirmation and denial, corresponding to the presence of negative reason as the principle of contradiction in Coleridge's lower understanding, the categories of reality and unreality arise in distinction to the level equality of unprejudiced experience in *eikasia*. The prejudice and existential affirmation necessary for judgement arises in *pistis*, thus completing the dynamic of *doxa*, or opinion. In *eikasia* a distinction between reality and unreality would be meaningless since every appearance is what it is as such, appearing or disappearing, not referred in judgement to anything else, yet often referred by association or delirium to other phenomena, none of which are distinguished in themselves as being either objective or subjective. Objectivity requires judgment, which distinguishes subject from object, perception from perceived, quality from qualified.

The judgments of *pistis* include much of empirical knowledge. It judges a

posteriori, asserting that this follows that without necessarily involving any theoretical framework or thinking as to why something is the way it is or follows the process it does. *Pistis* is pragmatic, as in the farmer who has true opinions regarding when to sow and when to harvest coming from a posteriori judgments. Such opinion may well be true, by accident or experiment, but is not concerned with a theoretical account, so for Plato it is not knowledge proper.

Aisthesis/eikasia presents what the empiricists would later call secondary qualities, the qualia, about which there can be no question of error. The secondary quality is neither more nor less than exactly as it appears, being pure appearance. On the other hand, to achieve a judged opinion of something is the style of *pistis*, requiring experience in dealing with the objects. Hence *pistis*, being object-directed, obtains a level of objectivity not present in *eikasia*. This objectivity, however, still deals with objects relative to purposes and points of view.

When the objectivity of the object becomes the focus of thought, then measurement and arithmetic set the object apart—to *metrein kai arithmein kai istanai*—in order to more fully reach objective qualities (38). At this point, we leave the level of *pistis* and progress to *dianoia*. Thus the object becomes amenable to *mathesis*, that is, it can be taught and learned according to its *mathemata* rather than only experienced according to its *pathemata*. By postulating an object set apart from the subjective experience of it, these measurable and calculable qualities allow for the possibility of affirmation and denial; for the judgements of truth and falsity; and for those of reality and unreality.

Pistis segues into *dianoia*, with the experiential counters of actual entities in our ordinary world of sense-perception being exchanged for intellectual, empirically

abstracted concepts derived from pistis experience to enable the level of thought specific to *dianoia*. To experience the entities of *pistis* as actual objective entities as such, in distinction from the presentations in *eikasias*, wherein the objective actuality or not of something corresponding to the presentation is not considered, requires a degree of thought which is then refined in *dianoia*.

Dianoia

The genealogy of *dianoia* is apparent not only from *pistis* but also from *aisthesis/eikasias*. *Dianoia* is a way of thinking and knowing that has been built up from earlier stages. Following the Divided Line thus far from ingenuous, imagistic consciousness of shadows, reflections, and other, e.g. painted, images towards higher mathematical reasoning and *ergon logistikou*, (39) or rational power, then towards the dialectical approach to Ideas, we see an epistemological theory of consciousness that is built up developmentally from the ground of sensation. The stages in Plato's epistemological model progress along a similar path to that taken in Jean Piaget's constructivist model of genetic epistemology, which shows children developing from mastery of sensorimotor operations and concrete intelligence to representational and conceptual thought. However, Plato's epistemology, while the main focus in Socrates' telling of the Divided Line to Glaucon¹, is secondary to Plato's ontology, which moves in the other direction: beginning with the Ideas and the Form of the Good and ending in reflections, shadows and other images.

This is because Socrates and Glaucon are discussing the best methods of education, so the attainment of knowledge is here the foremost topic.

Following the divided line epistemologically, moving from naïve consciousness to

empirico-scientific and mathematical thinking, everything seems to be built up from the empirical ground of sense-perception and its appearances, which are omnipresent and dominant in *eikasia*. Thus far, it appears that Plato has no skyhooks descend. Thus far, that is to say, this epistemological model is being built from the ground up, from sense-perception, though the kind of ‘common-sense’, conventional, ‘animal faith’ use of beliefs and opinions, to conceptual and mathematical thinking in *dianoia*, before the movement toward the Forms and the Form of the Good in *noesis*. There is no chance of a mystical access to Ideas with a capital ‘I’ from some secret world behind the scenes.

As in the analogy of the prisoners in the cave, which immediately follows the Divided Line passage, the way to the Ideas is difficult ascent after being released from the chains which compelled the prisoners to watch only shadows on the cave wall and hear only distorted echoes. After the release from the chains, the freed prisoner makes slow epistemological progress, first able only to observe shadows and dark colours, then brighter colours on the objects themselves, until the fire itself in the cave can be observed, showing the way of the path up to the cave’s exit. Here again, the freed man moves from shadows, to dark colours, to bright objects, to the source of all light, the sun. For Plato, the philosopher may contemplate the Forms and the Form of the Good only after a long process ascending through necessary stages. The chained prisoners cannot reach the Forms by some lucky guess extrapolating from the shadows and echoes that constitute their world. As was argued in the *Theaetetus*, any lucky conjecture would be no more than that, rather than knowledge, for it could not be known as such by being differentiated from any other conjecture. True belief, and even true belief backed up with a likely story, is not knowledge.

Plato showed that before knowledge is reached, we must first work our way from the *phantasia* of imagery in *eikasia* to the confidence of everyday dealings in *pistis*. From here, the first step to knowledge can be made, when we can think through problems with concepts and mathematical forms in *dianoia*. *Dianoia* is literally thinking through, but instead of thinking directly with the Forms, it has uses the images and diagrams given by representational concepts and geometry. Hence, *dianoia* is a form of episteme, but remains a shadow of *noesis*. Coleridge retains this slow build-up towards knowledge in his model, working up out thinking from Sense and Fancy, through the Higher and Lower Understandings, until Reason, the counterpart of *noesis*, is reached.

When it comes to achieving self-conscious Reason, Coleridge was as cautious as Plato, saying that the progress is one of slow ascent with necessary processes along the way. However, Coleridge added a Romantic twist. Coleridge often mentioned his distaste for overly clear distinctions that seem to have been made merely in order to divide what is not essentially in division. A clear-cut series of divisions creating a faculty psychology was not to Coleridge's taste. Coleridge presented a dynamic model emphasizing the "each-in-all" aspect of the "faculties" such that there is Sense in Reason and Reason in Sense, with traces of Fancy, Understanding, and Imagination running through. Whether a particular instance of thought is to be considered Understanding or Imagination depends on what aspects are conscious and what remain unselfconscious. In this way, Coleridge made room for the Romantic notion of a Romantic presentiment of mystery and Beauty, of Truth and the Forms, that was accessible, but not as self-conscious knowledge, at the lowest

levels of sensory and aesthetic experience.

Plato is often thought of as being an idealist. He is often misrepresented as arguing that matter is an illusion, and that the everyday concrete objects we deal with are merely shadows cast by the Forms. This misinterpretation comes from a shallow reading of the Allegory of the Prisoners in the Cave, and other passages in the dialogues. The understanding of things in the states of *doxa* (*eikasia* and *pistis*) is indeed 'shadowy', which is to say lightweight and insufficient, but the objects of the opinions and beliefs are not always mere shadows (although they are sometimes, literally shadows), they are indeed material objects (or their images, which include shadows).

In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the demiurge as using the Forms as models to create an ordered world out of the chaos of matter that preceded the cosmos, the ordered world. Although in this creation myth, a creation of order, not a creation ex nihilo, the demiurge employs the Forms of the Platonic solids, built up from triangles, to order the world, the matter thus ordered was already in existence. The same matter exists before and after the ordering. The Platonic point that is often confused is that the objects of sense-experience are material, but because they are transient, ever-transforming, and always coming-to-be and passing-away, they can be understood to be less real than the laws and Ideas responsible for their essential patterns and appearances.

Think of a small eddy in a river. It is fascinating to observe, perhaps calming even. Imagine a naïve someone who finds it so alluring, so beautiful, that they want to take it home. They try to catch the eddy in a bucket and are disappointed when in the bucket all they seem to have caught is still water, while the eddy remains swirling just

downstream of the rock in the river. Of course the eddy is a material phenomenon, manifested only in material fluids. But the actual matter that happens to be doing the manifesting is something quite interchangeable and inessential. To really know the eddy, the observer needs to appreciate, first by induction, through observation, the commonalities in all such patterns in liquids and gasses. From this the essential features can be separated from the interchangeable. Observations, conjectures, experiment, concept-building all work together until what one is really thinking of are no longer particular instances. What one begins to think about in essentially knowing the eddy are not less-vivacious sense-impressions called memories, nor “hieroglyphic” images working as conceptual counters.

Knowing the eddy eventually amounts to knowing the bodiless, invisible, laws or principles, what Plato called the Forms, which obtain even when the material is not there to instantiate the laws. This amounts to, as Coleridge argued, understanding that the laws responsible for phenomena are not themselves phenomena. Plato just argued that these laws, or Forms, are to be thought of as more real than the phenomena. To understand this way of talking is to focus on the thought that the eddy’s being has more to do with the laws governing how fluids behave when a solid partially interrupts the flow, than with the particular matter that instantiates the eddy phenomenon at any one time. The eddy is a possibility the laws of which always exist, or perhaps better, obtain, even if the phenomenon is, at any time, not being instantiated at a particular place. What accounts for this eternal factor, the ‘always’ in the possibility of the appearance’s coming-to-be, is the set of laws or principles that account for (epistemologically) and are logically and chronologically prior to and responsible for (ontologically) the phenomenon.

A ground-up reading of Plato's Divided Line, as epistemological progression, understands 'ground' as the starting position of the experiencing subject commencing the journey to knowledge (episteme) from interconnected imagery (*eikasia*).

'Ground' in this context cannot mean something foundational, that is to say logically originary, in Plato's theory, because the originaries, or *archai*, are the Ideas or Forms themselves, which are the starting point when the Divided Line is read in the other direction, ontologically.

The epistemological reading, which is the way Plato primarily intended the Line to be read, given the context in the discussion on education, describes the path to knowledge by perceiving subjects who have the ability to reason. The epistemological ground-up reading retains sense-perception, belief, an opinion as early stages, but proceeds from them and beyond them. This is what Coleridge also does when he retains the theory, but not the conclusions, of the mechanists and associationists (such as Hartley and Locke) within his broader scheme. As Plato saw sense-perception and opinion as gathering a store of images and recognizable objects and patterns which are then able to be operated on, by deduction and abstraction, into mathematizable concepts that can be processed in the absence of their phenomenal manifestations, so Coleridge acknowledged the place of the empirico-associationist account of sense experience being built up from the ground of experience through sense awareness.

The mechanisms of sense-perception and association were not disputed by Coleridge, but were retained as the mechanisms of Sense and Fancy, the pre-rational process of re-arranging impressions which can be then worked into concepts, allowing for thought processes about general events and object-kinds in the absence of both the phenomena and the memories of the phenomena. Up to this point in the essentially

parallel schemes of Plato and Coleridge, there is nothing major that Protagoras and Theaetetus (representing the relativism of Plato's day, along with the (empiricist) thesis that knowledge is nothing more than sense-perception, the main thesis shown to collapse into *aporia* in the Theaetetus) or Locke and Hartley would contest.

Coleridge's system was synoptic. In a sense he was a traditionalist and a hoarder, loathing to abandon what has been and still can be seen to be useful. In his twinned essays on Bentham and Coleridge, Mill asserted that these were the "two great seminal minds of England in their age" (40). Mill continued, 'Bentham was a Progressive philosopher, Coleridge a Conservative one. . . . To Bentham it was given to discern more particularly those truths with which existing doctrines and institutions were at variance; to Coleridge, the neglected truths which lay in them' (41). Mill saw that Bentham, regarding ancient or received opinion, would always ask, Is it true? but Coleridge, What is the meaning of it? Where the one would call for the extinction of the old institutions, the other would aim for their realization, 'reasserting the best meaning and purposes of the old.' This appraisal by his later contemporary would have appealed to Coleridge. 'I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist', he wrote in *Biographia Literaria*, 'I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible' (42).

With his synoptic system, Coleridge could retain the empirico-associationist mechanisms as explanations of how memories come to be; how concepts can be initially shaped as abstractions; and how fancy in poetic and other works, and in fevered brains, can come about. This level of explanation could be retained from the level of Sense to the concepts in the Understanding without needing to retain such conclusions as Hume's that aesthetic and moral values are nothing more than

projections of pleasurable and painful sensations; that knowledge is nothing more than sense-perception or generalizations therefrom; or, stretching back to Aristotle, that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses, which dictum Coleridge could only accept with Leibniz's addition, '...save for the mind itself.'

Coleridge argued that the presence to the lower understanding, which occupies a similar position and has a similar functional role to Plato's *pistis*, of reason in its negative aspect is the first stage in the awakening of reason in the self-conscious human mind. Prior to this, reason is present, but we are not present to it insofar as we are not aware of it as such. The universal applicability of reason in its negative aspect as the law of contradiction impresses the mind with the force of reason, both formal and applied. The point is that the law of contradiction is understood as being neither inductively derived from experience, nor formulated from concepts abstracted from sense-perception, and yet it is universally applicable. Coleridge argues that a mind's being impressed with this logical, universal applicability that is not derived from experience constitutes a dawning moment when the lights come on. This is the moment the understanding ceases to be mere understanding. Coleridge argued that reason slowly awakens in us, negatively at first, an appreciation of reason's scope and force; on the other side the empiricists argued that not only a conceptual armoury but also the logical techniques of wielding it are fashioned and evolved out of sense-perception and its traces.

With a neo-Platonically inspired poetic description, Coleridge described the presence of awakening reason as "the downshine of reason", suggesting the neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation from the One towards the appearances of matter. Although Coleridge appreciated Plotinus' doctrine as poetry, he saw it as a noble

failure philosophically, which is how he described it in *Aids to Reflection*, so I do not think that Coleridge intended this 'downshine' to be taken in a literal, neo-Platonic sense of *Nous* emanating from the One to irradiate with order chaotic matter. It seems likely that by it he intended to describe something akin to Schelling's principle that "Mind is invisible nature; nature visible mind" (*Natürphilosophie*). In this sense, "the downshine of reason" would suggest the view that reason is not just something that conscious subjects have access to through thought, but that it is the rational order of the universe and the ground of all laws and truths.

A recurrent theme in Coleridge is that natural laws have an ideal (Platonic, not subjective) nature. Laws of nature account for phenomena, without themselves being phenomena. As such, they lie behind, as it were, phenomena, being prior to them in the order of thought rather than appearances. Laws as things real, like gravitation, yet obviously not phenomenal, like actual apples, can help argue to the mind of empirical, scientific bent the reality of a fundamental order of being that is not phenomenal, thus not graspable within the empiricist's net. For Coleridge, this opened the door on the natural, physical side for natural laws to be understood Platonically, intellectually, as real and effective ideals. Indeed, Coleridge pointed out that Plato sometimes referred to Ideas as 'living laws' and that Francis Bacon, in *The New Organon*, sometimes described his notion of natural laws as 'living Ideas' and as 'Forms'.

Returning to my example of the eddy, when the observer notices general effects, such as warm and cold water eddies swirling in opposite directions depending on the location in the North or South hemispheres, the classification of evidence, the application of concepts, and the generation of theories remains within the sphere of

dianoia, or for Coleridge, the higher Understanding. When the thinker stops taking the axioms and concepts for granted, and inquires into their logical foundations, then the dialectical movement to episteme begins.

Plato's first example of a science exemplifying *dianoia* is geometry (43). Geometers employ hypotheses, which are then assumed, rather than being investigated themselves, after all, the hypotheses of geometry cannot be used to investigate the hypotheses of geometry. Plato's other examples of the sciences in *dianoia* are arithmetic, and harmonic theory (music, necessary for developing reason, grace and discernment (44)), and astronomy. These are not exhaustive, and Plotinus added, by way of example, architecture and carpentry. *Dianoia* creates technical subjects, treating of its various subject matters with abstracted concepts and visual aids, taken from the objects in *pistis*, that are to be understood in terms of number, space, and time. Arithmetic, geometry, and music are therefore taken to be the highest sciences in *dianoia*, alongside astronomy, which studies number in space and time. Dialectic takes the study a stage further, working not from hypotheses, but a priori, towards the Forms themselves and their first principle, the Form of the Good.

Dianoia works downwards, from hypotheses and unexplored assumptions, which are taken for granted, towards conclusions. *Dianoia*'s strength is that it is deductive, but its weakness is that most of its premises are unexamined assumptions, such as 'the odd and the even, the various figures, the three kinds of angles' (45). Moreover, although *dianoia* aims at the Forms, it is constrained to use visible diagrams. 'These figures that they make and draw, of which shadows and reflections in water are images, they now in turn use as images, in seeking to see those others themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought' (46).

Dianoia is, then, akin to *eikasia*, but at a higher level, in its reliance on images. *Dianoia* does not travel upwards from its hypotheses to examine, and thus really know, its first principles. It is thus incapable of reaching beyond its hypotheses. Hence, those thinking while they are in *dianoia*, ‘have some apprehension of true being—geometry and the like—they only dream about being, but never can they behold the waking reality so long as they leave the hypotheses which they use unexamined, and are unable to give an account of them’ (47). A difficulty in this presentation, of which Plato was fully aware, is that the Simile of the Divided Line is but a conceptual model and as such, it is an example of *dianoia*, with its respective insufficiencies. At the beginning of the Divided Line passage, Socrates says that he is aware that in the following, ‘I am omitting a great deal’ (48). In practice, the Divided Line is a pedagogical model that uses the image-making and manipulating capacities of *dianoia* to begin to explain the four major epistemological faculties.

Kenneth Dorter presented a good case that for Plato, the Divided Line was a ‘disappearing ladder’ that “vanishes as soon as we try to grasp hold of it’ (49). Dorter’s argument is that Plato was well aware of the shortcomings of trying to present a conceptual image of an idea that aims to point out the limitations of models, abstracted concepts and images. Indeed, just before the Divided Line model is described, Socrates asserts that what follows is more like his best opinion, rather than a conveyance of knowledge. The method of using poetic description (as in the chariot myth of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, or the ladder of love in the *Symposium*) or of conceptual models (as in the Divided Line) to point towards, rather than fully explicate, positions that are held to be *praeter-conceptual* is a method that led authors such as R.M. Hare and Mary Ann Perkins to write about two Platons, or ‘The Other

Plato.”

However, we do not need to attribute a split personality to Plato if we recognize Plato’s models and poetic descriptions as following the arguments to where the concepts of *dianoia* alone cannot progress. The opening words of *The Republic*, ‘I went down to Piraeus’, has been traditionally interpreted as focusing our attention on the phrase ‘I went down’, alluding to Socrates returning descent from *noesis*, through *dianoia*, *pistis* and *eikasia*, back to the prisoners in the cave, to try to teach from his perspective in a way that can be understood in the lower epistemic and imaginative levels, all the while educating a desire in the audience to make the ascent for themselves. As much the Sun cannot be properly described to lifelong prisoners chained to stare at shadows and hear echoes, true knowledge, and its perspective, cannot be described to the student in its own terms; Socrates, in this role, has to use the tools of *eikasia*, *pistis* and *dianoia* to indicate a truth and perspective beyond those levels. It is fitting that this descent back into the cave is made in *The Republic*, a political work primarily on Justice, one of the main theses of which is that the philosopher, even though inclined to remain in an ivory tower, detached from the political main in order to contemplate the Forms, has a duty to “go down” and teach, that is to say to educate—draw out—the inhabitants of the cave of puppets and shadows.

Noesis

As *dianoia* was described as moving down from its hypotheses and assumptions towards conclusions, *noesis* begins from the same hypotheses but moves upwards, towards the first principles, through the Forms and ultimately to the principle of the unity of the Forms, the Form of the Good. The important point here,

concerning knowledge, is that *noesis* is not satisfied with taking any concept, diagram or hypothesis for granted just because it is practically useful. *Noesis* is a search towards the first principles. From this point, *noesis* is in a position to do two things.

Firstly, and Plato argues this is the most attractive option to the philosopher, at the point of *noesis* the thinker is in a position to contemplate the Forms and to contemplate their unity as a kind of architectonic of Reason finding their necessary principle of unity in the Form of the Good. Because of the attractiveness of this apparently disinterested position, the philosopher must be compelled to descend from the beatific vision to the preceding levels in order to educate and to share insights with others. As Plato has Socrates say, ‘Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted’ (50). Although the philosopher described in the Republic needs to be compelled to descend from contemplation of the Forms and the Good, this should not be a difficult task, seeing as the desire of the philosopher in *noesis* is concentrated on virtue as application of the principles of Good, and therefore the general good is intended as a goal, and not merely the self-interested aesthetic enjoyment of contemplation.

Secondly, the thinker at the stage of *noesis* is in a position to return from and via the first principles to interpret and educate those in the stages of *dianoia*, *pistis*, and *eikasia*. Much of this work must be allegorical in nature, because *dianoia*, *pistis*, or *eikasia*, in their own terms alone, and take strictly literally, cannot advance beyond their own spheres. The limits of their languages are indeed the limits of their worlds. If concepts go in, concepts come out; and the same goes for beliefs, conjectures, and

images. The Socratic method of dialectic must therefore proceed by showing the seeds of contradiction already lying within each of the epistemic and doxastic levels preceding *noesis*, which levels depend upon sensory images, empirical evidence, experience of everyday dealings, but not on what Plato takes to be the eternal truths. While *dianoia* has access to the Forms, taken, perhaps indirectly, as mathematical, these are not understood with reference to first principles, but are hypotheses and assumptions demonstrated to have powerful practical application.

The most usual demonstration of *noesis* in Plato comes indeed in the form of Socrates' dialectical method. The participants typically begin by trying to pin down the meaning of a single term, usually a value or a virtue, such as courage, piety, beauty, friendship, knowledge, and proceed by illustrations, questions, answers and cross-examination until the original definitions and assumptions are found to be self-contradictory. Socrates then, as in the earlier dialogues, leaves the audience aware of their ignorance, with the *aporia* now glaringly and dumbfoundingly apparent, but perhaps now with an enlivened desire to know. In the middle and later dialogues, this model continues to advance by a series of tacks, pushing against contradictions and drawing towards necessities. On this path, the movement is to follow the argument wherever it will lead.

So Plato describes two modes *noesis*: one of contemplation of the Forms, the other as the procedure of dialectic intended to reveal *aporia*, foster genuine intellectual curiosity, and to move by theses and antitheses toward ever finer definitions until first principles may be reached. The second, dialectical mode is primarily governed by the law of contradiction as way of showing the *aporia* in assumptions and arguments as being self-evident. Invariably, Socrates' procedure

appears as ironic, as if he is speaking in one realm, say that of *pistis*, while thinking in another, *noesis*. He often needs recourse to parables, similes, analogy and symbol in order to convey the noetic insight that cannot be described in the terms and counters of *eikasia*, *pistis*, or *dianoia*. Socrates must keep one eye, as it were, on the object of *noesis*, and another on the development of thought among those in the discussion. Naturally enough, Plato describes *noesis* as the “eye of the soul” with its own objects, the Forms, appropriate to its own methods of apprehension (51). The Form of the Good is held to “enlighten” the soul, and this “eye of the mind” is held to be “sun-like”, and those who have reached the goal ‘fix their gaze on that which sheds light on all’ (52). In his 1810 introduction to his Theory of Colours, Goethe wrote, following Plato: ‘If the eye were not sun-like, it could not see the sun; if we did not carry within us the very power of God, how could anything God-like delight us?’ This notion of a part, or function, of the soul itself resembling the fundamental principles, or Forms, held an appeal to the Romantics, for whom the Kantian critiques held a hope for belief in a noumenal reality, but also disappointed in barring all access to this reality for any creature whose knowledge can only be of phenomena and the projected categories necessary for intuition. Just as the ocular eye must be somehow sun-like if it is to see, Reason must be Form-like, and resemble the Good, the argument goes, if it is to contemplate in *noesis*.²

So Plato described at least two modes of *noesis*, corresponding to what Coleridge would call Reason. There is the mode of dialectic, moving through examining theses in dialogue, upwards from hypotheses and aiming toward the first principles, or the *arche*. The second, exalted, mode of *noesis* is the contemplation of the Forms. This mode does not lend itself well to verbal description, and has indeed

been described by Plato and the neo-Platonists as ultimately ineffable. Perhaps for this reason more than any other, Plato had recourse to simile, metaphor, analogy, and most of the poetical devices and flourishes to be found in the Platonic dialogues. There are two places in Plato where I think he expressed most clearly the ineffability of this contemplative mode of *noesis*, and both are in the Republic.

At 533a, at the very end of the discussion of the Divided Line, Socrates tells Plato's brother Glaucon,

“You will not be able, dear Glaucon, to follow me further, though on my part there will be no lack of goodwill. And, if I could, I would show you, no longer an image and symbol of my meaning, but the very truth, as it appears to me—though whether rightly or not I may not properly affirm. But that something like this is what we have to see, I must affirm. Is not that so?” “Surely.” “And may we not also declare that nothing less than the power of dialectics could reveal this, and that only to one experienced in the studies we have described, and that the thing is in no other wise possible?” “That, too,” he said, “we may properly affirm.” “This, at any rate,” said I, “no one will maintain in dispute against us.”

Basically, Socrates is given to say that the highest level of *noesis*, the end-point of dialectic, is beyond what can be put into words, and can only be demonstrated by being induced through dialectic.

The second place where Plato affirms the ultimate ineffability of the contemplation of forms, indeed of the very principle of the Forms, is when he makes perhaps the deepest single statement in the Platonic corpus, in his description of the Form of the Good. At 509d10, Socrates asserts that, ‘...the Good is not being but superior to and beyond being in dignity and power.’ The Good, for Plato the Form of

Forms, is ideal in nature. It is not an existent being, but its reality is known through its power. What is this power? There is a clue in a later dialogue, the Sophist, wherein the visiting Stranger (Xenon, Greek for ‘stranger’) is debating with the materialist Theaetetus, a bright young student of Mathematics and other higher studies, about materialism and anti-materialism. Xenon, championing an anti-materialist cause, proposes that he must only get his opponents to admit the reality of any ‘entity’, no matter how trivial, that is bodiless, in order to defeat the hard materialist position that the only things which exist are bodies (*somata*). ‘If they can concede that there is something or other, even a trifle, which we can characterize as *asomata*, then that is already enough’ (53). Here Xenon invites discussion about what it is to be, and the notion that whatever is must have a power to effect, that is to say, a causal influence, is accepted. He argues that bodiless forms such as Justice, and their contraries, such as injustice, turn out to be powers, real movers, even though ideal, whether adjectival or substantial. Justice, wisdom, ‘and the soul in which they come into being’ are real things which are themselves neither visible nor touchable. This clue from the Sophist shows Plato arguing that power is to be understood as a causal influence, and so we can argue that for Plato, the power of the Good which surpasses being can be seen as an ideal, the contemplation of which has a pre-eminent power to influence Reason, and hence choice, behaviour and ethical consideration. Of course, for Plato, the power surpassing being held by the Form of the Good is even greater than this, which depends on rational contemplation to stimulate ontological and ethical consideration; beyond this, Plato argued that the Forms themselves, and hence the law-like behaviour of the universe, are ultimately derived from the Form of the Good. The actual matter of the universe is not derived from this Form of Forms, as Plato

proposed in the *Timaeus*, but the intelligible order of the structures, functions and laws by which this matter is anything knowable at all, rather than just chaos, is owed to the Form of the Good.

Aristotle mentions Plato's method of the 2-stage argument, firstly towards first principles (*arche*), away, as it were, from the natural (actual) order (the epistemological direction of the Divided Line), which is analysis, a term used metaphorically and taken from geometry, and then from theses to first principles, to reconstitute the "natural" order, a process of synthesis. The neo-Platonists took this movement of synthesis as describing the emanation from the One, to the three hypostases of Being. Coleridge's admired this very literal notion of emanation, although he saw it ultimately as a grand failure, in which no others have fallen from so high, so ambitiously.

Exploring the differing models of Plato's Divided Line and Coleridge's harmonic polarity provides a schema for appreciating how Coleridge Romanticized Platonism. The assimilation of Platonism to Romanticism required certain changes to allow a modified Platonism to fit well with the Romantic program. In Coleridge's scheme, the place of *eikasia* is given to Sense and then Fancy. Plato's *eikasia* has often been translated as 'imagination' (54), and Plato accorded it the lowest position, representing an insubstantial, illusory 'shadow-world' that was a state of virtual ignorance. While Coleridge placed Fancy at this level, he placed Imagination proper on the other side of the polarity, which in Plato would be the side of episteme. Coleridge placed Imagination above the higher Understanding and below Reason. Thus Imagination, for Coleridge, becomes that art necessary for episteme, that is for drawing down, or drawing to, Reason and its Ideas. Imagination's symbols and

schemata allow access, in Coleridge's Romantic modification to the Platonic scheme, to Ideas that remain inaccessible to the Understanding alone.

Fancy, in the lower pole, is mimetic, aping shape and other properties accessible to Sense. It alters by association, addition, subtraction, contiguity, similarity, inversion, and other basic operations that can be supported by the mechanical model. On the other hand, the Coleridgean Imagination is never simply productive of external shaping processes. That is to say, it does not merely copy and process. The products of Imagination aim towards an internal resemblance of their objects. In fact, Coleridge expresses this in stronger terms, saying, "the living educts of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and con-substantial with the truths, of which they are the conductors" (55).

'Consubstantial' is the stronger term Coleridge used here. By being consubstantial, Coleridge means that Imagination, 'always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in the Unity, of which it is the representative' (56).

This higher role of Imagination beyond the capacity to have representations (as perceptions, memories, mental images) based on what are taken to be external resemblances, and beyond the facility to create representations (such painted likeness, or written prosaic -or fanciful- descriptions -or recombined descriptions) is a departure from the Platonic scheme. I propose that this departure was a major

contribution to the formulation of a Romantic philosophy. In this sense, Romanticism is a modified Platonism. One might wish to call it a neo-Platonism, were that term not already taken to describe the philosophers in late Antiquity from Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus and Porphyry through to Damascius (the last scolarch of the School of Athens when the emperor Justinian I destroyed the school in his persecution of the neo-Platonists) and his student Simplicius.

The neo-Platonists were, however, an actual influence on the creation of Romanticism as a modification of Platonism. In ‘On Intelligible Beauty’, Plotinus makes some remarks that could be interpreted as gentle criticisms of Plato’s position on art as mimesis, which criticisms constitute a departure from Plato (57). Elsewhere in the *Enneads* Plotinus raises no objections to the doctrine of representation as mimesis, and even endorses the view. In *Ennead*, V 9.1, Plotinus classifies the arts and here asserts that painting, sculpture, dancing, and mime are all, and not only the latter, *mimetikai*, or mimetic, because they are based on models from sense experience. Music is contrasted against these arts as higher in origin because its model is not a sensible but rather the symmetry and order of the intelligibles. With music, perhaps surprisingly, Plotinus ranks also architecture and carpentry, because their use of necessary proportions connects them, without the intermediary of a sensible model, with Ideal principles, especially those of Geometry. The deductively provable axioms of Geometry are, of course, almost emblematically typical examples of what Plato considered as knowledge, *episteme* rather than *doxa*.

Plotinus’ ranking music, architecture and carpentry as higher arts that model at least the *mathematika* (for example the axioms of Geometry) and hence rank as genuine knowledge, as opposed to painting, sculpture, dance, and mime does not

contradict anything in Plato. Although in the Divided Line Plato places painting in the category of *eikasia*, along with natural images such as shadows and reflections, he does not mention anything of music, architecture or carpentry in this passage. Nevertheless, on the argument that these arts derive from use of the mathematical, we can see how they can be placed along the Divided Line as an application of *dianoia*. On the same theme, but now much later in The Republic, in Book X, Plato compares the bed of the carpenter with that of the painter, and it is almost certainly this that Plotinus has in mind when he ranks carpentry as a higher art, next to music. Famously, Plato argued that while painter is two removes from the *arche*, or original, of the bed, the carpenter's bed, which is the model for the painter is only one remove from the Idea of the bed. Although Plato talks of the bed made by God, which is a Form (the Bed), and the bed of the carpenter (a bed), it seems to me unlikely that Plato really means that there is a Form of the bed, or of other artefacts. I think this for reasons that I will explain elsewhere, sufficing to say for now that I take the passage on The Bed to be a didactic analogy to explain the difference between originals and imitations, so that Socrates can explain his argument for the exclusion of poetry.³ This is an argument that the Romantics, especially Coleridge, would obviously wish to modify, and Plotinus' modification would allow poetry, as itself using music, to have the status of *dianoia*, and not merely *eikasia* (which it would still also have, insofar as it was sensibly representational).

In Coleridge's system, Sense (*aisthesis* in Plato) harmonizes with Reason (*noesis*). Although Plato's Divided Line is dynamic, and may be read in both directions (starting from images to read epistemologically, and starting from Ideas to read ontologically), Coleridge's model adds the further dynamic tension of polarity.

This is what brings out harmonies along the pole. Hence Coleridge shows how Sense rhymes, as it were, with Reason. Sense itself cannot be mistaken, although opinions (*doxa*) about it can be. Sense and Reason have an intuitive immediacy that is absent from the levels in between.

Configuring the line as a polarity, Coleridge dignified Sense by bringing out its affinities with Reason. This move is a significant move in Romanticizing Plato. With this polar harmony, Reason can be seen as more like its polar counterpart, Sense, and less similar to Understanding, despite Understanding being a nearer neighbour.

Coleridge's tweaking of Plato's Divided Line into a harmonic polarity also brings out some lines of speculative inquiry that appeal to the Romantic imagination. If Reason is more present, although somnambulant, in Sense than in Understanding, we might ask if some Ideas can be intuitively felt in aesthetic experience, in *aisthesis*. Could this provide a way of framing how, for example, moral qualities can be felt almost palpably?

When Socrates turned philosophy's questioning to Ethics, was he creating Ethics? As the initiation of well-formed questions regarding the Good, yes, he was. Although dialectic is the best way to proceed to the Forms, there are other ways: prophecy; divine madness; love; contemplation of Beauty. Dialectic is the best, because its method is transparent, demanding rational assent along every step of the way. Aesthetic ascent demands assent too, but the 'yes' of pleasure is not the 'yes' of reason. But what is the difference?

One will only grant assent to pleasure if that pleasure is felt. Equally, however, one will also only honestly give assent to reason if that reason is understood. Don't they both demand their own kinds of *pathemata*, of subjective experience?

A Platonic response to that question could be that reason does not provide *pathemata*, only *noemata*. Here we have a spanner in the works that prevents a smooth transition for Coleridge to polarize Plato's Divided Line. Ideas are not sensations, and this really is an obstruction that accounts for a main and necessary difference between Romanticism and Platonism. For the Romantics, deep feelings could be united with profound thoughts. Of course, there is even a clue in the choice of the word "profound", because the word "transcendent" could equally well have been used here, also connoting extremity, but in the opposite direction. For Plato, poetry, and heightened states of feeling can also ascend to the heights, as it were, as thought can, but they are of a lower value they are a kind of lucky trick, a gift from the gods, and not constituted by the effort of ones own reason.

We can imagine what Plato was doing and exemplifying by his use of poetic descriptions. But was the poetry Plato's way of gesturing to, with symbols that use the sensible, what he had already encountered in more pure form, with *noesis* alone? Or were the poetic flights as useful for Plato's ascent as he intended them to be useful for his students and readership? Poetry, love, madness, and prophesy can also ascend to the Forms, as Plato had Socrates argue in the Phaedrus. But they retain a sensuality, a lower soul, as he put it, (spirit and appetite, but not nous, reason) attachment to sensation. Their ascent is not the purest, non-imagistic dialectic.

Can people be good without being rationally so? To help illustrate the question with a setting, Kant would have answered it in the negative. For Kant, only a rational being can be ethical, because only a rational being can be free from the sway of sensuality and choose its own law, the moral law that is demonstrably non-contradictory if universalized. Hence only a rational being can have autonomy.

Could there be a dialectic of the heart? Or, of the lower soul, the spirit and the appetite? If so, could its dynamic be anything other than the heteronymous use of sensation by reason? The heart does not announce its reasoning step by step with logically connected propositions. But then why should it? It is not the mind. Inasmuch as the mind may look down on the heart's apparent naivety, it cannot look down on its contradictions, because only propositions can contradict one another. And besides, the heart could just as well feel the mind's impotence and irrelevance to the experienced situation as the mind deduces the heart's seemingly incommensurable methods of finding the truth.

The Romanticization of Plato, remembering that Romanticism is itself a descendent of Platonism, is therefore a call to try to listen to both sides at once. The Ideal is not being renounced as illusory, merely metaphysical, creations to be committed to the flames in favour of the purely phenomenal, as the empiricists championed. The Romantic position of the Ideal remains unmoved, but it becomes relatively changed as Coleridge claims powerful polar status for the aesthetic extremes Plato knew as *aisthesis* and *eikasia*. Coleridge even moved Plato's *phantasia*, imagination, a great part of *eikasia*, way beyond the median point and up beyond *dianoia*, or the higher understanding, to become Reason's nearest neighbour and handmaiden.

Disgust, aversion, revulsion, as well as admiration, are impressions that have an intuitively moral feel to them. However defeasible these experiences are, moral qualities in people's characters tend to be experienced as things felt. A person can be experienced as creepy, slimy (as Sartre analyzed), shifty, chilling, as well as firm, dependable, and warm. Indeed, in the experience of feeling, correctly or not, these

qualities are taken as directly as perceiving someone as tall, blond, and loud.

Coleridge's Romanticizing the Divided Line into a harmonic polarity provides a schema that expands Plato's model to accommodate some of Plato's own views on beauty. The divine madness that Plato describes in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* is a state in which one "intuits Beauty itself" (58), inspired to this vision by the attraction felt towards the appearance of a beautiful person.

The harmony between Reason and Sense can also be recognized when we reflect that the intuitions of *aisthesis* are direct, because the objects are immediate. The red patch I intuit in Sense is precisely as it appears, no more and no less. Whether it is a representation or an effect of something inaccessible to Sense is irrelevant to saying that the red patch as such is exactly as it appears. This directness and immediacy of the state of mind to its object is a harmony between Sense and Reason in Coleridge's schema.

Whereas belief, opinion, understanding through the concepts, using empirical generalizations, and dianoic thinking involve an inevitable distance between the thing thought and the thinking, this epistemological gap is not held to exist in Plato's account of *noesis*, called Reason in Coleridge's system. In *noesis*, the mind is in a state of direct contemplation of the Idea. Indeed, even that formulation implies a distance or difference that is not intended in the account of the Middle Platonists and of, later, the neo-Platonists. For them, a more accurate account is to say that in the act of contemplating an Idea, the contemplation is identical with the Idea. There is no Idea on one side with the thought of it on the other side. This does not mean, however, that a Platonic Idea is an "idea" in the ordinary sense of the word, denoting something mental, or that can only exist in a mind. The translation of "*eidos*" and "*idea*" into

“Idea” can lead to such mistakes, and of course the alternative translation, “Form”, is not less prone to being misunderstood.

Draw a triangle and it is obvious in what respects this concrete image is only indirectly related to the Idea or Form of the triangle. No matter how sharp the pencil, there will always be inaccuracies. Also, the drawn triangle will have lines of a specific length, which would be a serious limitation on its usefulness if the same were true of the Form of the triangle. Perhaps more importantly, the Idea of the triangle has perfect mathematical lines. That is to say, its lines have length, but no width. When this point is grasped, it becomes obvious that the Form of the triangle can never be drawn. Now close your eyes and imagine three points, then imagine three lines so that two lines intersect each point. Here the imagination can bring us closer, although even here, the imagined triangle has specific angles, if we must imagine three points with specific relations to each other, even though it has shaken off the inessential details of line width and specific length. The angles in the Form of the triangle have a sum of 180 degrees, but the specific number of degrees in any of those angles is, in this context, an inessential particularity.

I have proposed a proto-Romantic Plato who sometimes has been interpreted as being at odds with his own more linear, logical expositions. This proto-Romantic, poetic Plato was not merely an interpretation of Plato by the Romantics, but can be justified by inconsistencies in Plato (within single dialogues, and not only from book to book) between his poetic word-paintings and his more ‘straight’ expositions and discussions, that is, in dialectic.

The place of imagination in Coleridge’s system is a revision of the place of its counterparts in Plato, *aisthesis*, *eikasia*, and *phantasia*. None of Plato’s terms here

really stood for what Coleridge meant by imagination, the secondary imagination at work in poetry and philosophy. There is a sense of what Coleridge meant by imagination in Plato, and that is in the implicit Plato, where Plato takes recourse to poetic description to gesture towards the noetic Forms that cannot be described with the concepts and *mathematika* of *dianoia*, or the understanding. For Plato imagination, described as *aisthesis*, *eikasia*, and *phantasia*, occupies the lowest level of thought, whereas for Coleridge it represents the only form through which the mind can access Ideas, considered as intellectual objects beyond concepts.

Proto-Romantic, poetic Plato saw the need for a poetic vision necessary for *aisthesis/eikasia* to experience beauty as ideal and astonishing. This Plato, most prominent in *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus*, and Book VII of *Republic*, was undoubtedly at self-questioning rather than dogmatic, most lucidly and explicitly in the *Parmenides*. Without doubt there was another side to Plato, the esoteric side, being the Plato who gave his most thorough explanations in the lectures and discussions in his Academy, the most thorough record of which, tiny though it is, being Aristotle's bemused account of Plato's lecture on The Good.

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