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**THE INFLUENCE OF IDEAS ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE PHYSICAL
WORLD BASED ON PLATO'S THEORY OF FORM**

**A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Award of the Baccalaureate Degree in Philosophy**

NAIROBI, 2022

DECLARATION

I assert that the extensive study behind this dissertation involved critical thinking techniques as well as the evaluation of data and information pertinent to the topic. Its submission is intended to satisfy the requirements for the philosophy bachelor's degree. It has never been offered for scholarly consideration to another university. Every reference has been properly referenced with the source name.

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DEDICATION

This effort is committed to anyone curious about the role of Ideas in the existence of physical phenomena.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I appreciate God for giving me the ability to finish this task because He is the source of both life and health. A special thanks to Rev. Dr. Kenneth Makokha, who has been journeying with me to guarantee that I successfully finish this work, as well as to my friends, family, and anybody else who has assisted me in any manner.

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, we argue that the problem of “the existence of the physical world is a”¹ a genuine epistemological drawback that seems to be a result of the hypothesis of Ideas, which Plato calls the theory of Forms. The physical world and the spiritual world are considered the two realities in Plato's philosophy. The things we come into contact with daily, such as animals, plants, natural features, and man-made features, are referred to as belonging to the physical domain. We all know that the physical world is unstable and imperfect because motion permeates every physical space. It can go from one stage to another or from one position to another. The spiritual sphere, however, exists outside of the physical universe. The realm of Forms, also known as the sphere of Ideas or the realm of Ideas, is what Plato refers to as this spiritual realm. According to Plato's notion of Forms, the material world is merely a representation of the world of Forms' actual existence. Thus, the Forms are unalterable, flawless, abstract notions or ideals that dwell in the realm of Forms and transcend time and space, according to Plato. Or, to put it another way, the domain of Form exists apart from the physical cosmos. In this dissertation, we will examine Plato's views on the significance of Forms and their relationship to Ideas. The philosophical perspectives on how concepts (or Forms, to use Plato's terminology) affect the existence of the physical world will then be discussed. As a key concept, we consider Plato's theory of Forms; and we will also select some notions from other thinkers to make this work meaningful.

¹ Stephen Gaukroger. *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, (University of Sydney, 2006), 5.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Do we ever ponder the question of what is real and what is merely an illusion? Is this stone, a physical object, real? Is the physical world, where cows silently graze in a green meadow beneath a clear summer sky, a real place? Are the city streets, the stores and office buildings, the traffic jams, the pedestrians swarming the sidewalks, and the enormous metal planes soaring through the gray clouds above real? Is there anything only physically, materially, and tangibly real? Is reality just a collection of particles moving mindlessly toward death—the death of the individual as well as the catastrophic death of the solar system? Or is everything we perceive to be a physical reality just a surface illusion created by our senses? Does reality exist somewhere else—in the realm of reason, in timeless truths like the Golden Rule, or in the knowledge and plan of God?²

What about our reality, you ask? Are we only a body, a physical being that seeks pleasure and avoids pain, a group of atoms with an innate capacity for development and self-destruction, a creation of the environment and the genetic material we have inherited from the past? Where did we reside? What kind of reality do we have, though, if we reject the idea that we are a physical body? Is it true that we are spirits or souls in reality? But what sort of reality is this, and how is it possible for a spirit or soul to live in a physical body? as a specter?

² T. Z. Lavine. *The Philosophic Quaest*, (Bantam, George Washington University, 1984), 1.

What is real and what is appearance are the two problems that the philosophical discipline of metaphysics poses regarding reality. Do the cosmos have a spiritual reality, a material reality, or some other form of reality? What exactly is human reality? These are the inquiries posed by metaphysics.³

We occasionally ponder the question, what can we know? Exists a type of truth we can rely on? Could the truth of a statement solely depend on what our senses tell us; on what we can see or touch? Is it certain that what we see with our senses will reveal the reality of the world? Is reality, as some philosophies and all major faiths claim, eternal and unchanging, or is it open to change? These are the concerns of the philosophical subfield known as epistemology. Is reality, as some philosophies and all major faiths claim, eternal and unchanging, or is it open to change? These are the concerns of the philosophical subfield known as epistemology.⁴

From this point of view, we now see that everything that exists must have its origin. When we look at material things like tables, chairs, cars, buildings, and so on; are is nothing if there is no one to bring them into existence. But if we ask ourselves this, did the person who started these things come out of nowhere and start making them? I think the answer here is no because before he decided to do it, he first asked himself: What does he want to do? How to do it? What's that thing supposed to look like? How long should it take? What should the uses be? And finally, he decided to do a certain thing.

So when he was wondering what to do, how to do it, and so on; is when he got Ideas about something he wanted to do. Then he should use those Ideas to do a certain thing. And according

³ Lavine. *The philosophic Quaest*, 1.

⁴ Lavine. *The philosophic Quaest*, 1.

to philosophers like St. Augustine, it also applies to the creation of human beings; whereby God uses his Ideas (types) to create everything in this world.

We shall discuss Plato's ideas on the role of Ideas in the existence of the physical world based on his theory of Form in this lengthy essay. We will also examine various philosophers' perspectives on the matter, including those of the seven classical thinkers: Thales, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Zeno of Elea.

All of these thinkers spent their entire lives devoting themselves to contemplating the eternal problems of philosophy and formulating their solutions.

1.1 Background of Study

The Idea is an active principle that governs something. The word, which is a translation of the Greek word Eidos, was originally most commonly used in a technical definition similar to the one Plato gave it in his Theory of Forms. Around the 17th century, it was largely employed to signify Idea, Concept, Belief, Intention, or Just Thought.⁵

The word Idea was frequently employed as a technical term in philosophy, though not in its philosophical sense. Instead, it was used in a variety of senses, many of which are attributed to John Locke and some of which he derived from Rene Descartes.⁶ The phrase was first used by Rene Descartes to describe what he thought was the most accurate way to characterize a person's subject of comprehension when they were thinking, and it later came to signify the immediate object of perception, thought, or thought to understand.⁷

⁵ Erik Gregersen. "Theory of Ideas." Accessed 26 Nov. 2022, www.britannica.com.

⁶ Gregersen. "Theory of Ideas."

⁷ Gregersen. "Theory of Ideas."

He gets into a lot of difficulties because of this ambiguous wording. First of all, since he believes that Ideas are a mental construct, he must explain how knowledge of the outer world might result from perception if concepts are to be considered objects of perception. Second, he is made to miss the key distinctions between thinking and understanding, and perception because he talks about them as if they were fundamental components of perception or as if all three were equally necessary Ideas to have.⁸

George Berkeley continued to refer to objects that are perceived with the term Idea, which he occasionally used as a synonym for feeling. To avoid the problem Locke had not addressed—the problem of basing knowledge of the material world on the experience of mind-dependent concepts—he stuck to the notion that Ideas reside in the mind and made no boundary between Ideas and physical objects. Since physical objects are collections of Ideas, they are also limited to the mind.⁹

The distinction between Ideas and impressions was made by David Hume. The latter phrase was meant to encompass all of our senses, passions, and emotions, whereas the former referred to the hazy representations of them in thought and thought. While doing so, he did not significantly advance Locke's position; he continued to hold that perception's objects are in the mind and, for the most part, continued to relate thought to perception in a fatally misleading way.

The majority of the uncertainty surrounding Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, according to pioneering critic Thomas Reid, stems from the word's original ambiguous meaning. Finally, Reid accused Descartes of using the word "Idea" ambiguously at first. While it is unlikely that all problems can

⁸ Gregersen. "Theory of Ideas."

⁹ Gregersen. "Theory of Ideas."

be attributed to this one cause, it can be claimed that their use of the term idea needs to be closely examined and critically analyzed if their issues are to be solved or even properly comprehended.¹⁰

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is a philosophical argument that Ideas lead to the existence of the physical world. For example, when we talk about artificial features like; cars, houses, computers, and so on; They once existed as Ideas in the human mind and then man used those Ideas to create all the physical attributes. According to St. Augustine, “God created things out of nothing. And that all things at once existed in God’s mind as Ideas (types) and then God used these types to create things.”¹¹

Now we see that Ideas are very essential to the existence of the physical world and without which nothing could exist. This study, therefore, begins with Plato’s inquiry into the theory of Ideas that comes from the light of reason and sentiment or sensation and shows how it contributes to the properties of objectivity and subjectivity to the existence of the physical world.

1.3 Objectives of Study

This dissertation's major goal is to determine how our Ideas contribute to the existence of physical objects. It's just a matter of finding out whether there is a relationship between Ideas and existence. We are steered in this direction by the ensuing particular goals:

- I. To outline Plato's theory of Form.
- II. To explain the influence of Ideas on the existence of the physical world
- III. To outline Plato's theory of Forms' critics.

¹⁰ Gregersen. “Theory of Ideas.”

¹¹ Fr Moses Wanjala. “Foretaste of the Heavenly Liturgy. Commemorating, Celebrating and Living.” 24 Feb. 2022, *jerusalem.unisal.it*.

- IV. To outline the various philosophical stances on how Forms or Ideas relate to the reality of the physical world.

1.4 Justification of Study

Science and technology have been the big thing in today's world, which has led to the existence of new things that are important in our lives as human beings. It is believed that most things in the current world are the result of Ideas that have emerged from the human mind.¹²

Therefore, although science and technology can lead to the existence of new objects, they are also the result of Ideas that have emerged from the human mind.

This essay will therefore attempt to explain the importance of Ideas for the existence of physical phenomena, and it consists of presenting Plato's metaphysical system at its most detailed level and of expanding his philosophical thought, which is also found in the Principles of philosophy.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of Study

The main topic of this dissertation is how Plato's theory of Forms relates to the reality of physical events. But it also includes different philosophical views from other philosophers on the same subject of study. As in the Meditations, Descartes himself seems aware of the problem as he points out that we do not have a clear separate perception of the existence of physical objects.

This essay is linguistically restricted because it uses straightforward language that anybody can understand. It is also limited in terms of its purely analytical method of inquiry, considering that it

¹² Robson Barcelos. "Descartes' Theory of Ideas", (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*), plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-ideas.

draws attention to what Plato and other philosophers said about the theory of Ideas as a result of the existence of the physical world.

1.6 Methodology

The study will include analytical and explanatory methods of philosophy by presenting the concept of enlightenment, which can be a guide to better knowing how important Ideas can be in the creation of various phenomena. The relevant Ideas from books, publications, and online resources will be analyzed in the exposition. This approach is also used to define research terminology and analyze data gathered from a variety of sources before concluding.

1.7 Significance of Study

This dissertation is important since we all make decisions based on Ideas in our daily lives. Now when we consider the uniqueness of our Ideas at different times, it is better to know how these Ideas can lead to different positive and negative impacts so that we can plan how to use our Ideas to bring about positive changes. Otherwise, ignorance of the impact of Ideas in our lives can lead to major problems for people and the environment in which we live.

1.8 Literature Review

A group of words that are primarily concerned with sight—the sight or appearance of a thing—express the Greek concept of Form, which predates the invention of written language. Eidos and Idea are nouns with Indo-European ancestry. The earliest Greek literature works by Homer, contain both of these nouns.

These meanings persisted throughout the ages until the advent of philosophy, at which point they turned ambiguous and took on new, specific philosophical meanings. Some pre-Socratic philosophers concluded that things are made up of the constituent parts that make up the existing

item that is seen become after realizing that appearances are constantly changing, starting with Thales. They started to wonder how substance and Form, or appearance and essence, related to one another. As a result, the Matter-Form Theory, or Hylomorphism, was developed. The Forms were viewed in something else that Plato called nature,¹³ starting at least with Plato, and perhaps as early as some pre-Socratics. The latter appeared to be the substance's mother (matter of matter).¹⁴

Plato claimed that phenomena are essentially instantaneous representations of the Form or its shadows in varied circumstances. Plato also believed that the Form is the object in its fundamental Form. The problem of universals—how a thing, in general, may be many things in particular—was solved on the presumption that the Form was a distinct, solitary entity that gave rise to numerous representations of itself in specific objects. The situation was regarded as unique in and of itself.¹⁵

A Form exists beyond time and outside of space. Because they lack spatial dimensions, orientation in space, and even a location (unlike a point), shapes are outside of the world. Although they are extra-mental and non-mind, they are not corporeal.

Due to their immutability, the Forms are perfect in and of themselves. Imagine that a triangle has been drawn on a chalkboard. A polygon with three sides is a triangle. A triangle is far from perfect when it is written on the board. However, the only way we can identify that the drawing on the blackboard is a triangle is because the shape triangle is comprehensible, and the shape triangle is

¹³ Sun Myung Moon. "Theory of Forms by Plato." *Accessed 26 Nov. 2022, New World Encyclopedia*, www.newworldencyclopedia.org.

¹⁴ Moon. "Theory of Forms by Plato."

¹⁵ Sasha Blakeley, Erica Cummings, Ginna Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm." *Accessed 26 Nov. 2022, study.com/learn/lesson/plato-theory-forms-realm-physical.html*

flawless and constant.¹⁶ The time is that of the observer and not the triangle, but it is the same whenever someone thinks about it.

Plato has a special name for such concepts: Forms or Ideas. But how do such concepts convey true knowledge to us? How are they related to concrete objects of perception? How many such concepts are there? How can we know them? How can we prove that they are eternally true? Having crossed over into the intelligible world of which Forms are objects, let us now pause before ascending to the highest level of the divided line and examining the Platonic theory of Forms.

First, how do abstract notions help us understand every item, including those in the visible and understandable worlds? To conceive or communicate at all, Plato argues, concepts must be used. It is via concepts that the cosmos is made understandable. The most basic claim, there is a man, utilizes the word man, while there is an apple, uses the Idea of an apple. Each Idea, such as man or apple, refers to the characteristics that a collection of specific items, such as Tom, Dick, John, McIntosh, and Baldwin, all share. And since we all understand what the word man means, we may specifically refer to John Jones as a man. However, communication would be impossible if there were no objective, universal, and unchangeable set of characteristics that the name human denotes and each person's judgment of these characteristics was only their own. We would never know what someone else meant when they used the word human, as it could signify something very different to them.¹⁷

For Plato, an Idea or Form can now be defined as: Forms are the only accurate, unchangeable definitions of concepts. The collection of all the characteristics that characterize the Idea of a triangle is the shape triangle. Additionally, these are the characteristics that all individual triangles

¹⁶ Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm."

¹⁷ Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm."

that have been created in the past or will be created in the future possess (for example, the characteristic that a triangle's internal angles add up to 180 degrees). Plato defines Form as the objective, universal, and unchangeable characteristics that characterize our notions, such as justice or man. When he refers to the Forms as essences, he means that they stand in for the essence or fundamental characteristics of a given entity.

By Idea, we usually mean any particular thing we think of, something within consciousness or something private to my mind. The person's prejudice at the level of belief, however, that only what is visible and tactile is real, runs counter to Plato's views on Forms or Ideas. Plato's view is exactly the opposite of this.

As we've seen, shadow and substance serve as frequent metaphors in Plato's philosophy. The Forms are the substance, whereas Concrete, Particular, and Changing Objects are the shadow. Furthermore, Plato clarifies the hazy relationship between things in the visible world and the Forms of the intelligible world by describing the concrete objects of the visible world as imperfect copies of the Forms in which they participate.

Now it is clear how the Forms facilitate true knowing. We discovered that belief-level knowledge based on sense perception was neither information about the real since it was knowledge about the flow, nor was it knowledge about the actual because of its uncertainty. Knowledge based on the Forms, however, is unchangeable. And because the Forms stand in for the real reality, it will be the fulfillment of the real.

Here, Plato explains the type of understanding that distinguishes mathematics and science. Shapes, including those of triangles, circles, and other mathematical objects, are the subjects of a mathematician's expertise. Mathematicians have access to these Forms, which are immutable,

universal, and of a logical and rational nature. These Forms are eternal and unchangeable.¹⁸ These Forms are unaffected by changes in the external world. They are not correlated with either the type of personality or the city that thinks about triangles or circles.

Even within their brains, humans are unable to produce Forms in the physical world, according to Plato. Despite this, humans are capable of understanding the concept of shapes. This is critical to comprehend the cosmos. Plato claims that there are several ways in which Forms are different from their actual manifestations of them. These characteristics include the following words:¹⁹

First, Forms' lack of spatiality is one of their key characteristics. They, therefore, don't occupy physical space and may not have predetermined dimensions. Consider a triangle as an example; a triangle is composed of three lines and has three angles totaling 180 degrees. It has neither a spatial nor a size dimension.

Second, not only are Forms timeless, but they are also aspatial. They did not emerge at a specific period, and the universe of Forms does not have a specific relationship to time. For instance, the Form of a chair is only an abstract representation of actual chairs—it is neither new nor old. Because there is no temporality, Forms are consequently unchangeable and immutable.

Third, according to Plato, Forms are divine. Because of their connection to divinity, Forms are flawless and free from all human or physical flaws. Compared to their physical representations, they are of a higher degree of existence.

¹⁸ Lavine. *The philosophic Quaest*, 3

¹⁹ Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm."

Fourth, shapes must be understandable, that is, people can imagine them, but they are imperceptible. This suggests that while a human can understand the domain of Forms, they cannot perceive the Forms. The triangle shape is essentially distinct from any physical representation of a triangle, not even the most accurate one.

Here is Plato's primary defense of the existence of Forms, which is solely based on intuition:

First, using the example of the color blue can help you comprehend Plato's contention from a human viewpoint. The color blue is what we use to describe both the sky and blue denim. The wavelengths of light reflected from the sky in all locations and from the millions of blue jeans in various states of fading are continually changing, but despite this, we still have a general understanding of the fundamental Form of blueness as it pertains to them.²⁰ According to this view, there won't be anyone to know and nothing to know at the time that knowledge's nature changes, but if knowledge and the known ever exist along with the beautiful, good, and everything else, then I don't think they can resemble the process of flux that we just assumed, says Plato.²¹

Second, neither a perfectly circular nor straight line has ever been observed., but everyone is familiar with their definitions. Plato cites the toolmaker's blueprint as evidence for the reality of Forms. It follows that there must be some Idea or shape of a perfect circle or line since seen circles and lines are not perfectly round or straight but serve as a maker's guide.

²⁰ Moon. "Theory of Forms by Plato."

²¹ Moon. "Theory of Forms by Plato."

1.9 Conclusion

Many of the specifics of the theory are up to interpretation because of how differently Plato understands Forms from dialogue to discourse and how occasionally he doesn't give a clear description. Shapes are first stated in *The Phaedo*, albeit in this discussion, only the concept that the participants are already familiar with is mentioned and the theory is not further developed.²²

Similarly to this, throughout the *Republic*, Plato builds various arguments on the concept of Forms, but he does not feel the need to defend the theory's accuracy or define what Forms specifically are.

The burden of defining Forms and describing how visible objects participate in them was left to the commentators, and there was no shortage of debate. For some academics, Forms act as paradigms—perfect models that serve as the foundation for the flawed world. Others see Forms as being universal; the Form of beauty, for example, is the quality that all things that are lovely share.²³

Others still view Forms as matter, the accumulation of all manifestations of a character in the external world. This viewpoint allows us to assert that, when joined with the beauty within each human, the Form of beauty is composed of all the beauty in the world. Plato was aware of the ambiguities and inconsistencies in his theory of Forms, as seen by the harsh criticism he leveled at it in *Parmenides*.

²² Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm."

²³ Wilkerson. "Plato's Theory of Forms | The Realm of Forms vs. The Physical Realm."

CHAPTER TWO

THE INFLUENCE OF IDEAS ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

2.0 Introduction

The Forms (Ideas) are defined as meaning that everything in reality, including dogs, people, love, mountains, courage, colors, and kindness, has a Form in Plato's dialogue and everyday speech. The Form responds with "What is that?" Plato took it a step further and questioned the nature of Form itself. He assumed that the phenomena were merely shadows of the Form or momentary representations of the Form in various contexts and that the object was fundamentally the Form.

Descartes will use the phrase "it has a Formal reality" when referring to an existent mode, in this case, a happening Idea. The type of reality that an object has because it is actual or existing is called the Formal reality of the object. For instance, the Sun has a Formal actuality because it is a real or existent thing. The Pegasus, on the other hand, has no Formal actuality because it is not real. While an Idea would hold any Formal actuality when it is actively considered by a mind, as is the case with the Idea of the Sun or the Idea of Pegasus.²⁴

2.1 The Ideas and the Ideal Numbers

We are now in a better place than before to consider the relationship between the Ideal numbers and Ideas in general in Plato's system. Aristotle claims—or at least suggests—that for Plato, all Ideas were numbers in a daunting number of passages. On the other hand, there is an

²⁴ Adams, Robert. *where do our Ideas come from?* (Stich, 1975), 71.

important passage where Theophrastus says that the numbers (i.e. the Ideal numbers) were more fundamental than the Ideas (i.e. the other Ideas).²⁵ Plato, reducing things to the governing principles, seems to treat other things (i.e. sensible things) by associating them with Ideas and these with numbers, passing from numbers to the governing principles. There is an apparent contradiction here. Aristotle identifies the Ideal numbers with Ideas in general; Theophrastus places the Ideal numbers above the other Ideas, between them and the first principles, i.e., the One and the great and small.

The incorporeal Ideas, according to Plato, are before the bodies, and each of the things that arise is modeled after them; but they are not the first principles of existing things, for while each Idea by itself is termed a unity, under its incorporation of another or other Ideas it is termed two or three or four, so that there is something higher than its nature, namely number, by participation, in which one or two or three or even higher numbers are predicted of them.²⁶

Plato recognized an element of arithmetic like the line, the plane, and the body. But he did not identify these with numbers 2, 3, and 4; he treated these numbers as the Formal element in the essence of line, plane, and solid, and space or extension as the material element; the line was two in length (in one dimension, as he put it), the solid four in depth (i.e., in three dimensions). Is it not then likely that he treated Ideas other than line, surface, and body as having a formal element that was a number and a material element in which that number was embodied? Here, too, the Pythagoreans had shown the way. They had said that justice was a square number, and that meant

²⁵ William David Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 216.

²⁶ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 216.

that justice was fourfold, embodied or exemplified in two persons and two possessions to be distributed or exchanged between them.²⁷

It is therefore probable that Plato did not identify the Ideas with numbers, but only assigned numbers to the Ideas; i.e. he considered some Ideas monadic, others dyadic, and so on. About the general principles, Plato associated a certain Idea with a certain number, we have no precise information. But it is safe to say that he assigned a specific number to a given Idea if and only if he thought the Idea involved in some way that number of elements, and we can maybe be a little more specific. Stenzel and the interpretation school that followed him interpret the Ideal number theory in the light of the division preached and practiced by the Sophists and the Politicus.²⁸

If Plato did not identify the Ideas with numbers, but only provided Ideas, i.e. classified Ideas with numbers, i.e. classified Ideas as monadic and dyadic, the theory is by no means the wild fantasy it seems at first sight to be; in it, Plato pushes the effort of abstraction of Ideas from sensory particularities.

2.2 The Ideas and the Sensible Things

In his summary of the last phase of Platonic metaphysics, Aristotle not only says that Plato treated the One and the great and small as the Formal and the material principle involved in the essence of Ideas, but that he also treated the Ideas and the great and small ones as the principles involved in the being of sensible things; and we must now consider the interpretation of this statement. Aristotle's language suggests the material element in the Ideas, but it is hard to believe that in constructing sensible things Plato simply added a second dose of the same principle that he had already used once in the construction of the Ideas. The most obvious thing about bodies is

²⁷ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 216.

²⁸ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 220.

their spatial extent, and this they could derive neither from the numbers of Ideas nor from the large and small that Plato used to construct the numbers of Ideas, which was simply an indefinite multiplicity. In the *Timaeus*, he had seen space clearly as something as necessary to the existence of sensible things as the Ideas of which they were copies, and we can hardly believe that he ever went back from that teaching.²⁹

In his study of space in physics, Aristotle refers to this issue. Plato, in his *Timaeus* remarks, claims that matter and space are the same because person and space are the same. It is true, nevertheless, that he gives a different account of the participant than he did in his allegedly handwritten teaching. But he was able to place and locate space. Later, he claims that Plato should explain why the Forms and numbers aren't there, questioning whether the participant is a location, the vast and the little, or matter, as he referred to it in the *Timaeus*. These allusions clearly show that Aristotle had not read his *Timaeus* very carefully; they contain two obvious errors. The participant is a beautiful paraphrase of Plato's vessel or seat of becoming.³⁰ But, first, Aristotle errs in equating this with the matter that looms so large in his philosophy.

It is safe to presume that Aristotle made another error since he undoubtedly made these. Plato may have used the term participants, or something equivalent, in his account of the origin of the Idea-numbers, but Aristotle must be wrong in assuming that Plato meant the same participant he uses in the *Timaeus*; for what he needed in the derivation of the numbers of Ideas infinite multiplicity.

If this train of thought is correct, due in part to a hurried interpretation of the *Timaeus*, Aristotle claims that the underlying stuff the great and small, and partly to a hasty confusion of what Plato had written in the *Timaeus* about the generation of sensible things with what he had said in his

²⁹ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 221.

³⁰ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 223.

unwritten teachings about the generation of the Ideas. Plato did not, as Aristotle says, use the same participants in his construction of Ideal numbers and his construction of sensible things, but instead indefinite multiplicity and indefinite extension. There could be no number if there were no oneness and multiplicity since each number was both a single Form and a species of the genus multiplicity. Reasonable things could not exist unless there were Ideas of which they must consist, under penalty of not existing at all.³¹

At this point, of course, a question arises. Plato, it seems, already used infinite extension in creating the Ideal line, plane, and solid. Does he use the same indefinite extension in creating sensible things? I don't think the answer is far to look. The Ideal solid is not solid; it is solidity, and the space that pertains to its being is not space but spatiality; the Ideal body is the fourness shown in space. Thus space itself, that which has spatiality, is still there to be used in the production of sensible things which are examples of the quaternity exhibited in spatiality.³²

None of our evidence indicates that the mathematical units, which Plato saw as a middle ground between Ideal numbers and magnitudes on the one hand and meaningful numbered groups and meaningful shapes on the other, had a part in the latter's creation. The One and the indefinite multiplicity were the necessary premises of sensible things; the mathematical entities disappear from view. What did Plato think of them in his last period? We do not know, but we can surmise that he took them for mathematical fiction. He certainly thought so at that point, and it was a great mystery why he did it. It becomes more understandable if we assume that he considered impossible not only a point having a position but no magnitude, but also a line having length but no breadth or depth, and a plane having length and breadth but no depth, thought impossible. The Ideas of

³¹ Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 223.

³² Ross. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 223.

position, length, breadth, and depth remained real and distinct to him; but one might surmise that he had come to believe that assuming the existence of points, lines, and planes, as defined by mathematicians, was simply a necessary means of enabling the study of solids.

It must be remembered that in *Timaeus*, to explain why the perceptible world exists, Plato postulates only three things, apart from the Demiourgos- the Ideas, the things entering and leaving space, and space itself. Also, the things that enter and leave space are not the intermediate products that are the objects of mathematics; for they are tangible and are produced, while the intermediate products are intangible and external. Again, the things that enter and leave space are not perfect examples of Ideas, but only close approximations of such; as to their number, their movements, and their powers in general, we must suppose that God adjusted them in due proportion, bringing them in every detail to the most exacting perfection which necessity permitted willingly bowing to conviction.

2.3 The Consequences of Ideas

Ideas have effects, and by fully comprehending them, we can direct and mold those effects. The effects of Ideas not only make us stronger but also enable us to educate others and establish intellectual connections with other schools of thought. Just as wrong acts follow wrong thoughts, so do right actions. R.C. Sproul in his book entitled *The Consequences of Ideas* is further proof of this axiom. It is an overview of some of the most important trends and figures in Western philosophy.³³ Writing for the educated lay reader, Sproul often combines complex epistemologies with historical and personal anecdotes, abundant illustrations, and simple language. His book helps

³³ R. C. Sproul. *The consequences of Ideas*, (U.S.A, 2000), 2.

us understand some of the most important thinkers in Western philosophy and some of the conclusions derived from their thoughts. Some of them are as follows:

2.3.1 Thales of Miletus

According to Thales, water permeates everything. Water is the basis of all that is, acting as the unifier and structural support of the universe. Because he rejected conventional mythology and poetry, Thales is regarded as the founder of Western philosophy. Instead, he considered a scientific explanation for how things work. By changing the direction of a river, he found solutions to engineering issues. Based on the motion of their shadows, he created a method for calculating the height of Egyptian pyramids. He established methods for using the stars as a navigational aid and a tool for determining distances at sea.³⁴

2.3.2 Pythagoras

The Pythagoreans, a group that influenced Plato, were among the most fascinating individuals before Socrates and Plato. The Pythagorean theorem is known to every high school student who has taken geometry. In southern Italy, where he established his theory of numbers, Pythagoras immigrated from Samos. His interest in mathematics was both spiritual and religious, and he gave numbers a mystical significance. He considered 10 to be the Ideal number. The Formal (or essence) takes precedence over the material in the study of mathematics, and the intellectual or spiritual takes precedence over the material. For Pythagoras and his adherents, mathematics is a spiritual subject.

The Pythagoreans believed that mathematics also applied to medicine. They anticipated the present biological worries about hormone balance by viewing physical health as the balance or harmony

³⁴ Noble, Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy," www.barnesandnoble.com.

between such opposites as warmth and cold as well as between the chemical processes of the body.³⁵

To plan and forecast the motion of the celestial bodies, the Pythagoreans used mathematics to study astronomy and sought the harmony of the spheres. The ancients relied on the stars for navigation as well as for timekeeping, which allowed them to produce and harvest their crops at the best times. This wasn't just idle supposition.

It has been proven throughout history that mathematics has been a critical handmaiden for advancements in science. Numerous revolutions, like the Copernican revolution, the revolution brought on by Isaac Newton's physics, and the revolution in nuclear research, have been ushered in by advances in mathematical theory.

2.3.3 Heraclitus

Because he attacks the essence, Heraclitus is frequently referred to as the originator of modern existentialism. His philosophy can be summed up by the Greek phrase *Panta rhei*, which means everything flows. Heraclitus asserted that everything is constantly changing. It suggests that everything is in a state of becoming different from being, which is an important philosophical Idea to introduce here.

He provided an example by stating that it is impossible to enter the same river twice. When you dip one foot into a river, the river has already started to flow by the time you dip the other foot in, it's altered. You have changed, if only by becoming a few seconds older, and its beaches have been affected by imperceptible erosion.

³⁵ Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy."

Heraclitus made an effort to shed light on the reality of conflict by looking at the existence of motion in everything, which he identified as the clash of opposites. All conflict is finally resolved in the ultimate fire or logos of things, which ignites as fireworks via the conflict of opposites and in which nothing is ever lost but just changes Form.³⁶

2.3.4 Parmenides

Heraclitus' more recent contemporary Parmenides established the Eleatic school of thought. What is, is, is perhaps Parmenides' most well-known claim. For Parmenides, anything cannot change if it already exists. At the same moment and in the same manner, something cannot be both and. It cannot be if it is. It's nothing and it's not. Either it is absolute or it isn't. Parmenides was well aware of the ex nihilo, nihil fit, or nothing arises from nothing, premise. Parmenides had a point when he said that it was irrational to think that something could originate from nothing. It seems to reason that if there was ever a moment when there was nothing, it is now.

Change, in Parmenides' view, is a mirage. Change is an idea that we are incapable of thinking about. There is nothing to think about, therefore we are unable to consider the change. It isn't it when anything changes. To think about change, one must first consider what it is not and what is not conceivable.

2.3.5 Zeno of Elea

Zeno of Elea, a student of Parmenides, spent most of his time reacting to his teacher's observations. It was argued by opponents of common sense that the five senses establish the exterior reality of several physically changing objects. The use of the senses serves to demonstrate the reality of physical objects. Zeno aimed to show that the senses only take in appearances and

³⁶ Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy."

not actuality. Four objections or paradoxes were put forth by Zeno to show how easily our senses could be tricked. Zeno used the analogy of a racetrack to respond in discrete units to the pluralists who claimed that the world is divided: to complete the circuit, the runner must travel through an infinite number of spots in a finite number of minutes. Without reaching the finish line, the runner would have to sprint from their starting point to the end, then another halfway point, and so on indefinitely.³⁷

The second paradox involves a race between Achilles and a tortoise, in which Achilles gives the slower turtle a head start to give it a chance. Achilles must first catch up to the tortoise to defeat it. The turtle has gone on by the time Achilles arrives at the starting point where it took the lead in the race. Achilles follows the tortoise over and over again but never manages to catch it since this process never ends. In the third paradox, an archer and an arrow are involved. An arrow in flight must always occupy a space that is the same length as it. However, a resting arrow is necessary for that position for it to occupy a space of the same length. Since the arrow constantly occupies a place equal to its length, it must always be at rest. Consequently, the appearance that the arrow is moving is an illusion.

The fourth paradox, like the others, shows the relativity of motion in terms that are still relevant today, indicating that there is no precise definition of motion.

2.3.6 Empedocles

Empedocles, a Sicilian philosopher, disputed Zeno's doubts about matter and motion. He claimed that it is impossible to ignore the truth of movement—change is a type of movement. He pinpoints Parmenides' monism as the source of the issue and offers a philosophy of pluralism to

³⁷ Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy."

address it. The universe was made up of eternal and unchanging particles, and its pluralism was bodily. These sub-atomic particles are conscious and unchanging. However, as their composition changes, the objects made of these particles also change.³⁸

2.3.7 Anaxagoras

With just one alteration to corporeal pluralism, Anaxagoras made a significant contribution to the pre-Socratic period. He believed that the universe is made up of immortal particles known as seeds or sperm. The idea that reality comprises both matter and spirit was unique to Anaxagoras. He created his notion of nous to find a reasoned basis that may bring harmony and order to the beginnings of a material universe. However, Anaxagoras did not include the Idea of a human creator or ruler of the universe in his conception of nous. His Idea was more ethereal, a teleological (purposeful) principle of existence that is an impersonal power or force.³⁹

2.4 Conclusion

The Ideas of Western philosophers led to great changes in the world; introducing new concepts of science, art, religion, politics, and culture; applicable and helpful to the people of today's world. Other Ideas contradict the purpose of human life. They are there to ensure that they act against the Ideas that aim to bring development to the people. Such Ideas are produced by people with bad intentions. For example, people who kill their fellow human beings, people who produce viruses and other serious diseases for their interests, and also people who use their power to subvert others; it is not that such people cannot do good, but it is their wrong thoughts that cause them to do wrong. Therefore, it is possible for us to do good, especially if we can think rightly to have the right thoughts.

³⁸ Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy."

³⁹ Barnes. "History of Ancient Philosophy."

CHAPTER THREE

THE CRITICISMS OF THE THEORY OF FORMS

3.0 Introduction

According to Vasilis Politis, Plato's Forms are essences rather than merely entities with an essence. Politis demonstrates that for modern philosophers, who view essentialism as little more than an option on the philosophical menu, comprehending a major barrier is posed by Plato's Idea of Forms as a theory of essence. He suggests that this strategy also offers a scathing refutation of those who think that Aristotelian essentialism is the sole viable viewpoint.⁴⁰

3.1 Self-criticism

Since he critiqued the Idea in his dialogue, *Parmenides*, Plato was aware of its flaws. Socrates is depicted as a young philosopher there, who functions as the younger version of *Parmenides*. The discussion brings to light a significant flaw in the Idea of Forms; Aristotle later highlighted this criticism by rejecting the Idea of an autonomous world of Forms.

Conceptualizing an object's involvement in a shape is one challenge. But the Idea may be like the day, which is simultaneously the same in various locations and yet in itself enduring. In this

⁴⁰ Matía Cubillo, Gerardo Óscar. *Suggestions on How to Combine the Platonic Forms to Overcome the Interpretative Difficulties of the Parmenides Dialogue*, (Revista de Filosofía de la Universidad de Costa Rica, vol. 60, 2021), 13.

manner, each Idea can be the same at the same time. This is how the young Socrates conceptualizes his answer to the problem of universals.⁴¹

But how exactly is a shape if it appears everywhere at once? The solution calls for a separate Form that has instances that are different from the Form; in other words, the Form must be dispersed to numerous locations, much like the tag. The Idea of participation, which is conveyed by multiple words in Greek, is equally enigmatic in both languages. Plato made the famous third-man argument of Parmenides, which demonstrates that Forms cannot exist and participate independently, by speculating that distinctness implies existence as independent entities.

If everything that exists, whether it be general or particular—say, let's man or greatness—is the same, then the Form is not one but rather multiple. If they are simply similar to one another, they will both have the same Form and different Forms. Accordingly, if we assume that a particular and a Form are similar, then there must be a second or third kind of grandeur or man that they both possess. The eventual consequence would be an infinite regression or an endless string of third men. The final participant, greatness, which makes the entire series great, is absent. In addition, every Form is not unitary but rather consists of an endless number of pieces, none of which is the right Form.

The youthful Socrates chose a different path, believing that the details as such do not exist, yet he did not reject Forms' thesis regarding the third man. Whatever they are, they appear to detail and mimic the Forms. This is a significant departure from representationalism because it implies that we can only consider objects in the context of their representations. The flaw in this theory is that, if just the pantomimes can be seen, the true Forms cannot be understood at all, moreover, neither

⁴¹ Cubillo, Óscar. *Suggestions on How to Combine the Platonic Forms to Overcome the Interpretative Difficulties of the Parmenides Dialogue*, 14.

the observer nor the representations' intended meaning is revealed to the observer. Socrates replied that men already knew the Forms since they had been in the world of Forms before birth. These are the only Forms the mages can recall.

3.2 Aristotelian criticism

Aristotle has a vast and developing theme in his critique of Plato's notion of Forms. Rather than directly quoting Plato, Aristotle frequently summarizes him. Syrianus, a Platonist, employed Aristotelian critiques to further the Platonic interpretation of the Forms that was taught in his school; Proclus, a disciple of Syrianus, continued this tradition.⁴² As a result, Aristotle was recommended by classical commentators as an introduction to Plato, even if they disagreed. Aristotle was an invaluable historian of ancient philosophy, but this was subservient to his dialectic, and in certain instances, he handled implied meanings as though Plato had stated them clearly or even defended them. Analyzing Aristotle's critique of the Forms requires knowledge of his hylomorphic Forms, which he uses to attempt to preserve much of Plato's philosophy.

The unreal, which Plato distinguished from the real and used to denote substance, was the Former. The images the artisan engraves on gold are not material; they are merely an artifact. Aristotle maintained that Plato only regarded matter as Form and that all objects explored by the sciences have a Form. He comes at a kind of contradiction as a result of this unlovingly: Forms exist as scientific objects but do not exist as substances. Plato asserted that he was unsure of how to distinguish between Form and non-Form. This, according to Scottish philosopher W.D. Ross, is a misrepresentation of Plato.

⁴² Gail Fine. "Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms." (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993*).

Plato did not assert that he understood where to establish the boundary between Form and non-Form. Comford notes that those things—Man, Fire, and Water—about which young Socrates (and Plato) said, "I have often been puzzled about these things," appear as Forms in later works. Others, like dirt, mud, and hair, don't. Socrates is supposed to say that it "would be too ludicrous to think that they have a Form" concerning these.

Additionally, Ross refutes Aristotle's criticism that the uniqueness of Form explains the variations among Forms and results in contradictory Forms, such as the non-great and the no-beauty. Aristotle believes that a Form's inclusion of information is far too vague to allow for analysis. He sorts of unravels the Idea that the Forms will lose their essence as a result of various participants. As Ross points out, Plato leaped from A is not B to A is not B. Only its specifics—not those of other Forms—would be considered different, according to the word.⁴³ There are only specifics of Form-Otherness that in some way suppress the Form-Greek, for instance; there is no Form-non-Greek.⁴⁴

No matter if Socrates intended the specifics of Otherness to be non-Greek, not great, not lovely, etc., the specifics would seem more precise than broad, each somehow making simply an exclusion. Aristotle's arguments against Plato's theory of epistemology, which held that we only know Forms through the memory of previous mental existence, are convincing. Plato believes that certain specifics are inexplicably absent and that what is absent cannot be seen at first glance.

3.3 Scholastic criticism

According to nominalism, Ideal universals are nothing more than labels made up of humans. For example, the word blueness refers to a shared quality that blue jeans and the sky

⁴³ Fine. "Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms."

⁴⁴ Fine. "Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms."

share. Beyond its use in blue things, blue is said to have no other existence. Scholasticism, a movement from the Middle Ages, is where this Idea first appeared. The nominalist argument might be more clear when an example is offered in more than one language because Scholasticism was a widely international, polyglot school of philosophy.

Languages differ greatly in terms of color, for instance; whereas some languages regard blue and green to be the same color, others have monolexic names for various shades of blue that are thought to be distinct. The Mandarin Qing, among others, designates both blue and black. Pencil or pencil are both translated as Stift in German, all in the same Form. A small brush was the original meaning of the English word "pencil," which eventually came to refer to the silver stick used for the silver point. A pen can refer to both the German pencil and the silver pen, nevertheless, it also contains felt-tip pens, which are not pencils. It is simple to think of these concepts as mere names with ambiguous meanings that can nonetheless be valuable in communication due to how they shift and cross. How can you tell whether an object collection contains several mutually exclusive Forms or only instances of one Form?⁴⁵

3.4 Conclusion

Although challenged by his pupil Aristotle, Plato both endeavored to show the problem of universals, albeit through different approaches. Plato, as a rationalist, focused on a priori and deductive arguments, meaning that knowledge of Forms or essences is only tangible as opposed to sensible. On the other hand, as an empiricist, Aristotle focused on posterior and inductive arguments, meaning that the Forms are accessible and accessible to anyone through the use of sense experiences, while for Plato these conceptual Ideas are accessible only to a few philosophers.

⁴⁵ Cubillo, Óscar. *Suggestions on How to Combine the Platonic Forms to Overcome the Interpretative Difficulties of the Parmenides Dialogue*, 20.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SUPPORTS OF THE THEORY OF FORMS

4.0 Introduction

Plato's theory of Forms was supported by St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas Aquinas through the epistemological or ontological doctrine, namely exemplars. A role model is typically anything that is emulated by an actor who chooses his objectives for his activity, or an intelligent actor. This definition states that the term example includes both a model for human behavior, such as when Christ is mentioned as the divine example and a pattern or Idea from which a work is formed, as is typical in philosophy. The phrase has historical significance since it has been central to Ideas of ultimate reality put forth by eminent thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, and Plato, to name a few. Because of its link to the Doctrine of the Word, according to which all created things have an existence, it has a unique relevance for Christian theologians. Plato deserves credit for being the first philosopher to realize that the universe displays an intelligent design, indicating the knowledge and benevolence of its creator.⁴⁶

4.1 Saint Augustine's Divine Models

A concept of creation and a doctrine of the divine type joined the mainstream of Western European philosophy with the arrival of Christianity. Despite having too much sympathy for Plato, St. Augustine had to reject the latter notion of Ideas as a Christian, at least in its original Form.

⁴⁶ Dancy, Russell. *Plato's Introduction of Forms*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

Augustine was unable to embrace Plotinus' emanation theory, which held that the universe had to have unavoidably evolved from the One through the nous and World-Soul while admiring the nous concept for its similarity to Christian word doctrine.⁴⁷

According to the Christian view of creation, God directly created the universe following a freely chosen design. Furthermore, according to Augustine, the Word, which is the second member of the Trinity and is nearly similar to the Father, contains the Ideas that gave rise to all things created. How one can acknowledge a variety of Ideas in the divine intellect without jeopardizing the divine simplicity is a topic that Augustine did not address. He was unable to enshrine the divine Ideas as imitable in the divine nature since there wasn't an existential notion of participation.⁴⁸ Finally, since He created everything, there is no room for anything fundamentally bad. This is important to note because Augustine, a Manichaeon, held the opposite view.

4.2 Superiority in Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas reached many of the same conclusions logically, in contrast to Augustine, who primarily relied on his Christian faith to influence his conceptions of creation and types. Revelation surely also had an impact on Aquinas, though. He was able to show that an Absolute Being exists and that it is also the ultimate efficient, exemplary, and ultimate cause of all finite reality because of his unique existential perspective on reality. This supported his Judeo-Christian faith that God is the Self-Existing Being (I am who I am), the Creator, and the Ruler of the cosmos.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Charles Boyer, SJ. *L Idea de Verite dans la philosophie de saint Augustin*, (Paris, 1920), 119, 123.

⁴⁸ Boyer. *L Idea de Verite dans la philosophie de saint Augustin*, 123.

⁴⁹ Michael Legat. "Conceptions of Creation and types," *Free Online Encyclopedia*, www.encyclopedia.com.

Aquinas' conception of creation was in stark contrast to that of both his Greek and Arabian forebears, who had all held the universe to be inescapably everlasting. Although he believed that the universe's creation through time was a fact that cannot be disputed, he claimed that it will always need to be created, and that creation must be free. On this latter point, St. Thomas took special issue with the Arabian philosopher Avicenna, who held that the universe originated from God, the supremely simple Being, through a necessary emanation that began from a multitude of causes. Such a hypothesis of the universe's beginning was rejected by Aquinas for many reasons, including finally, of concern here, it denied the role of divine wisdom in creation because, according to this account, the distinction and order found in things proceed not from the intention of a first agent but from the accidental convergence of many causes, which is to say from chance.⁵⁰ This account reduced God to the finite level by having a creature proceed from Him by natural necessity.

Aquinas believed that God's intelligence was the first agent responsible for the diversity and uniqueness of the things that make up the order of the universe. All things were created by God alone, and He had a very specific purpose in mind when He did so. Only God's goodness could help accomplish that. Because multiple entities can more accurately represent goodness than a single one, divine wisdom itself is responsible for the diversity and multiplicity of all things created.

St. Thomas responded that God does not engage in creation via a natural necessity, but rather through his thought and decision, in response to the Neo-Platonists' question of how variety and distinction could emerge from a perfectly simple Being. God now fully understands the multiple

⁵⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947), I, 16-17.

degrees to which different beings can share his nature depending on how like they are to him. Because God is mindful of himself, he is also aware of the proper kind of everything he would and could make. This leads to the conclusion that the divine mind is flooded with a variety of Ideas while never losing sight of divine simplicity.⁵¹

St. Bonaventure appears to be stating much the same thing as Thomas Aquinas when he claims that since the divine essence is outside of any genus, it can be the likeness of every creation, even if he does not use the concept of participation in his answer to this issue. According to Aquinas, the divine essence, insofar as it is comprehended by God, is itself the example cause of all finite reality, with the proportion that each creature to be produced has to it.

By making the divine essence the greatest template in the light of which every finite being is produced and can be said to participate to some extent, St. Thomas, like Augustine before him, corrects Plato's notion of Ideas. Simply put, the one Being who alone possesses existence is preferred over the Platonic Ideas. All other entities partake in His unlimited existence by obtaining their being from such a Being because He is the whole of existence. As a result, although Aquinas appropriated Plato's Idea of participation, he modified it to fit the needs of his existential philosophy, in which it comes to mean participation in the perfection of existence rather than in some absolute class Idea that is the only thing that is considered to be fully real. Since the divine essence is a possible imitation of the finite essence in God's intellect, the essence of the finite being is a definite potentiality for being that obtains its real existence from God.

To explain the determinateness that underlies every finite being's being and from which the gradation of being resulted, St. Thomas turns to a concept of divine type. Such a belief also

⁵¹ Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 2.

indicates God's providence and eternal law since existence is given to the creature in such a way that it can recognize the extent of divine kindness for which it was created after it has reached its full perfection. Furthermore, Aquinas believed that even matter, despite not having a real existence of its own, participated in existence in some way and that God was the prototype of the composite.⁵² Therefore, God's archetypal knowledge encompasses knowledge of things according to their very individuation, which is subsequent upon the matter, as well as according to their specialized or class nature, which is consequent upon Form.

Understanding the truth of being is also made easier by St. Thomas' notion of exemplars. Since the finite being will derive its being from God, its necessity for communication with the divine intellect will reveal its truth. Because all things must necessarily accord with their mental types, regardless of whether they agree with human cognition, they are all true in the divine mind. God is inescapably the ultimate source of the truth or intelligibility of any finite being because God is the truth itself.

Since all things are formed under a view of God as imitable and in Him all creatures find their truth and ultimate meaning, God is thus referred to as the Light of the world. Since everything was created through and for the God-man, theologically speaking, the glorification of the God-man is the culmination of creation. Relativism, which is so prevalent in modern thought, has no place in St. Thomas' teaching of the fact of existence.

The notion of exemplars virtually vanishes with the advent of the modern era in Western European philosophy. René Descartes and G. W. Leibniz are two modern thinkers who accepted the Christian teaching of creation, but their distinct theories of reality made few allowances for it.

⁵² Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 7.

They often begin their arguments for God's existence from the Idea of the perfect being rather than the actuality of contingent existence, as follows:

4.3 Rene Descartes

In the voluntarist tradition, Descartes argued that exemplars hold that the essences of objects and their inherent possibilities are dependent on the divine will. Man's nature, for instance, is the result of divine decree rather than existing from all eternity as a potential imitation of the divine essence in the divine intellect. If God had so desired, a man may not have been an intelligent animal. Such a theory eliminates the possibility of knowing God analogically by putting the divine will beyond the law of contradiction. Descartes eliminated the requirement for divine agreement and providence in his mechanistic explanation of physical reality.⁵³

4.4 Leibniz

Leibniz, on the other hand, took Descartes' viewpoint to its logical extreme by subordinating the divine will in some way to the order of possible, which he believed to be everlasting in and of itself. In other words, he also missed the fact that everything has an inherent possibility because everything stems from the divine nature, which is imitable. In addition, his intellectual determinism, which holds that one must always select what is best for all, caused him to reject God's freedom to specify His results.⁵⁴

God must therefore create the best world possible since He can do so. It seems clear that Leibniz made a mistake by failing to acknowledge that divine goodness is not at all tied to any particular

⁵³ Laurie J. Edwards. "Exemplarism," *encyclopedia.com*

⁵⁴ Edwards. "Exemplarism."

created order of things and that it can appear to some extent in any cosmos God voluntarily chooses to create.

4.5 Spinoza

All finite entities, in Spinoza's view, are Forms of God's infinite nature, and he utterly rejected the notion of free creation. The British empirical school, whose most renowned exponents are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume, produced a current of thinking that was quite distinct from the rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. This school gave rise to positivism by denying the intellect any real objects that were distinct from those of the senses. None of the empiricists can be found endorsing a theory of Ideas because their theories of knowledge constrained the human mind to the order of sense appearances, undermining the basic viability of metaphysics.⁵⁵

Furthermore, Immanuel Kant's modern Idealism, which is based on this notion, did not fare any better. The world and absolute mind are not clearly distinguished in the Idealistic line of thought, typically leading to some sort of pantheism as a result.

4.6 Contemporary Schools of Philosophy

A doctrine that maintains that the world is a reflection of God's infinite goodness and beauty can hardly find fertile ground in the current schools of philosophy, all of which question the very possibility of proving God's existence and generally equating reality with the world of change. This is the last point regarding the status of exemplars in contemporary philosophy.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Edwards. "Exemplarism."

⁵⁶ Edwards. "Exemplarism."

4.7 Conclusion

The Forms of the rationalist Plato are immortal, unchanging, and eternal. They are the true essences of all that exists in our physical reality. But the only problem with Plato's theory of Forms is that he looks for concepts that do not exist independently of human language.

People are thus made to be deceived by their senses in how they view the world around them thanks to Plato's notion of Forms. It's important to note that the things people think they see with their senses are merely mental representations or even experiences. Therefore, the object becomes more real the more objective it is. And because it affirms the notion that God is omniscient and knew us before we were born, this theory has a particularly strong connection to Christian philosophy.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The concept of Ideas is very relevant in our everyday lives as thinking beings. Our actions are useless unless we use our Ideas to control them. Because nothing good comes from nothing, but good comes from good with good Ideas. For example, the appearance of a particular house determines the goodness or badness of the Ideas of architecture. If the house looks good, it means that its designer's Ideas are good too, and vice versa. From this perspective, Ideas can have both positive and negative effects. Hence, we appreciate the contribution of philosophers who have brought positive changes in all aspects of life through their philosophical concepts.

The development of science and technology that we see today is due to the work of some philosophers. And whatever we see as the development of science and technology started as a concept (Ideas) and then turned into reality.

We know that we exist in the sensible world because we previously existed somewhere else, namely in the mind of the one who created us, which brings us to the philosophical concept of Ideas concerning topics of faith, notably the Christian faith. And this implies that God was aware of us before our creation. Additionally, the reason we exist is to work in harmony with God in all that He accomplishes, not to oppose it. And it is clear that when God created us, He endowed us with the capacity for reason, which will enable us to distinguish between right and wrong. But the majority of what is done in the modern world is not at all consistent with God's original creation design. Consequently, we are opposed to Him. As a result, we abuse our freedom by witnessing and hearing about individuals killing one another, torturing others, defying the laws of nature, and so forth. All of these are a result of the improper use of our freedom and the denial of good due to evil. These selfishness-related characteristics start in someone's head and then manifest in reality. So, unless there is a premeditated plan, a mental disorder, an urgent situation like a car accident, etc., a person cannot suddenly kill another person. However, the person on whom our attention is focused has planned to kill. This indicates that he has thought about the crime and how he will carry it out before acting on his plans.

In this situation, our Ideas might either turn us into evil or good individuals. And since we can exercise self-control, choosing between wickedness and virtue is a matter of personal decision. God also made us moral beings rather than immoral ones by taking into account the reason for our existence. And if we want to be moral beings, we must always seek the best for others and use our Ideas to bring about good; otherwise, our Ideas will die with the one who made us.

Therefore, as people who know the source and purpose of our being, this study should help us to know ourselves in terms of our strengths and weaknesses so that we may always act correctly and not emotionally; as a way to support life in every living being.

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