

**Plato's Non-Being: An Annotated Abridgment of Leonard J. Eslick's
"The Material Substrate in Plato"
by Anthony J. Damiani
Paper V09N**

3-LETTER CODE: PLA

TOPIC: Plato

SUBJECT: Non-Being

SUBSUBJECTS: Matter, Space, Principle of Difference, Emptiness, Saturn in Aries, Aristotle, Participation

ORIGINAL LOCATION & FILE NAME (of PDF used for typing): PLA 3 papers_8Hyp_Non-Being_2foldB.PDF (pp. 41-64)

CONTENTS:

Fundamental difference between Plato and Aristotle on indeterminate substratum

Starting point: world of image and unreality given to sense; characterized by instability and non-permanence

No potential intelligibility in what always becomes

Causes of image-reality cannot themselves be image, must be attained aprioristically; experience of image-reality leads to principles that explain their existence

There must exist an archetypal reality of which image-beings are images; need for explaining ontological degradation of copy vs. model

Separation between that which participates and essence participated; both denial and affirmation of image-beings' explicability through essence

Matter as principle based on same premises as transcendent essence

Real Difference/Otherness constitutes beings separated from essence

Lack of aseity and indivisible sameness in sensibles leads Plato to posit matter (space) as container of image

Matter produces differentiated multiplicity through negation and extrinsic limitation; guarantees inter-participation of Beings while restricting universal relativity

Ontological basis of Platonic matter a separation between Unity and Being

Pluralism of Being leads to matter as ultimate substrate principle of Being's dyadic constitution

Contrast with Aristotelian matter: not potential Being/substance; not potential ousia; radically non-being and privation

Image-beings exist in matter, so matter cannot be image; participation renders impossible likeness between images and material substrate

Matter contributes to image-mode of existence by providing receptacle in which participation in essence may be realized
Matter a principle in order of image-existence, not nature or essence; neither sensible nor intelligible, but irrational; only grasped by spurious reason
Matter's deceptiveness; philosopher's reminiscence is of Being imaged, not substrate of images
Being as composite not controvertible with Unity; Being's differentia based on matter
Infinity effected by matter within each form; makes relational knowledge of forms possible; enables perinoetic discourse around Being
Both One and matter described as eternal, indestructible, changeless
Ceaseless becoming of images makes them unamenable to fixed terms and definition; calling images "such" refers to the forms they imitate
Dynamism intrinsic to generated being; restlessness of participating beings' separation from essence; where essence is intrinsic, there is permanence but no becoming
Essence as transcendent principle of act and perfection; existence of forms and becoming a function of matter (space) and negative limitation
Matter unrelated to essence; generation for sake of essence but essence not final cause of matter
Two underived levels of existence: true existence the sphere of essence, spurious existence the sphere of the formless
Images not causally related to Unity
Unity cannot generate multiplicity; matter safeguards absolute unicity of the One; matter's power greater than Unity's
Matter combines roles of existential actuation and differentiation; negates essential reality
Developed metaphysical systems making determination negation end in mystery of self-causation
Matter determines essence in line of natureless existence; imaging never explicable in terms of essence imaged
Matter's powerfulness in producing effect by negating essence bears witness to impotence of Platonic One

BOOKS QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Ernan McMullin (ed.), Leonard J. Eslick, *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Medieval Philosophy*, "The Material Substrate in Plato"
- Plato, *Parmenides*, *Sophista*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Seventh Epistle*
- Aristotle, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*

AD HANDWRITING: Typewriter typed, some AD and AS edits

COMPLETENESS: Full Paper, abridgment of an essay from a book with some original additions

and corrections by AD

PUBLISHABILITY: No, already published

RETYPE, REFORMAT, AND PROOFREAD by IT, HP 2023

NOTES:

- **RETYPE AD PAPER (V09N).**
- This document is from the 1970s, and was revised, retyped, and copyedited at various times. It is heavily based on, and quotes without attribution, “The Material Substrate in Plato,” by Leonard J. Eslick. Although it is primarily an abridgment of an essay from a book, the AD handwritten additions/revisions are often correcting or questioning the article and introducing new material, and thus this is categorized as a V09N Paper and not Book Notes.
- All AD handwritten revisions/additions are in curly {} brackets. Some revisions are made above the word without crossing out the word underneath and in some cases it is not clear whether it is meant to add to or replace the word(s) underneath.
- All spelling corrected, punctuation and capitalization left as is. A few words have been corrected to conform to the article as published.

PLATO'S NON-BEING: AN ANNOTATED ABRIDGMENT OF LEONARD J. ESLICK'S "THE MATERIAL SUBSTRATE IN PLATO"

[File PLA 3 papers_8Hyp_Non-Being_2foldB.PDF (pp. 41-64) Begins]

PLATO'S NON-BEING

Plato and Aristotle differ as to the nature of the "indeterminate substratum", the "principle of limitation" which underlies Forms or Essence. The mode of reality and the functioning of this principle is profoundly different for each of them.

The fundamental datum for Plato is the concrete world, the world of experience. It is a world of image and unreality, a world given not to reason, but to sense. It is characterized by an intrinsic instability and non-permanence.

Now, there is no potential intelligibility to be actualized from that which always becomes and never is. There is nothing within "image-being" {sensible} which the mind can draw out, no possible content in terms of which human reason can be related to things of experience so as to organize them into a unity of science. {Now}:

(1) Whatever the causes for image-reality, these causes cannot themselves be image. Consequently, they must be attained "aprioristically". The experience of image-reality -- the experience of the primordial image, in other words -- will be helpful only in a conditional and negative sense, i.e., if it leads beyond the beings which exist by imaging to the principles which explain both their hold on nature and their image-mode of existence.

How is the "not-really-real", that which "is and yet is not" to be brought into the unity requisite for knowledge?

If the world of becoming is unsubstantial image, knowledge of it properly concerns not *it*, but that of which it *is* the image. To know this world, then, is, really, not to know it at all, in a sense.

There must exist the archetypal {intelligible} reality of which the image-beings are images. These images point to the existence of the imaged {archetypes}. So, while we must transcend the order of sense-experience to attain the existence of the paradigm reality, this existence is (in some way) already established in the existence of the images themselves. There must exist over and above the reality which the image-beings reflect something other which explains this deficiency, this imitative way of being. For, if the reality which is imaged accounts for the "being-imaged", it does not by this line of reasoning explain the image-beings. It does not explain the ontological degradation of the copy as compared to the model.

If that which is imaged -- that is, ultimately, unity in the case of the forms . . . and the forms in the case of the sensibles -- represents the essence of that which is imaged, and exists nonetheless in a state of ontological separation from them, then the {forms} imaged cannot formally explain the imagings (i.e., the defective or privative character of the images). (And here a question might be added parenthetically: Can the sense-image be subsumed?) [AD handwrites 'example' twice in the left margin of the beginning of

this paragraph, and once in the right margin of the middle of this paragraph.]

Yet, to imitate is to imitate something. This thing imitated is, for Plato, Essence itself. So, imaging must in some real sense be explicable by the essence imaged.

If image-beings are natureless in themselves and have natures in a purely relational and imitative way, then their imitating must somehow be causally related to the nature imitated. Thus by the real Separation on the one hand, and the “Image-likeness” on the other, Plato denies and affirms that image-beings -- qua images -- are explicable in terms of Essence or true Form.

The difficulty becomes more acute once we find Plato demonstrating the existence of Matter as Principle from precisely the identical premises upon which he bases the necessity of positing a principle of transcendent Essence, or true Being: namely, the imaging of that which is Image. It is necessary to consider this imaging as the basis for Matter’s existence *before* we can come to any adequate determination of the causality exercised by Essence.

On the levels both of Being and Becoming, the separation of that which participates from the Essence participated immediately provides the basis for concluding that all beings separated from their Essence are constituted by real Difference or Otherness. If the Separation is ontological, the Difference is ontological. There cannot exist real separation unless there is real difference. Now, inasmuch as true Being can render fully intelligible only that which is the same as it (and does not suffice to explain what is different), we must look elsewhere for the difference which separates it from the world of images . . . the things which are its copies.

The Difference and Otherness which accounts for the lack of intrinsic Essence and for the image-character of all that which imitates is Matter. Matter must then exist for the general reason that images exist.

Since true Reality does not belong to the image-beings generated -- which exist ever as the fleeting shadow of some other -- it must be inferred to be “in another”. If not for this existing-in-another of true Reality, the image-beings could not be at all. It is the lack of substantiality, (the lack of) aseity and indivisible sameness in sensible things which leads Plato to posit Matter {‘Space’} as the container of Image in the sensible order.

Here then, it is {space which} the being-contained and the being received which differentiates the image mode of existing. In view of this differentia, a container and receiver is required in which this mode of existing may be realized.

In the second hypothesis, the effort to mingle Unity with Being leads to the traumatizing infinite plurality in which everything participates everything. A principle that alone can produce the truly differentiated multiplicity which is requisite for a universe of Being and Discourse must be established. Such a principle, in producing many really different beings by *extrinsic* limitation of absolute unities can only (and must necessarily) differentiate only through negation. {Saturn in Aries in intelligible ‘space’?}

Only a ‘material’ principle of this kind -- which is distinct from the absolute Unity {is it?} which is the Essence of all Beings -- can guarantee both the inter-participation of Beings in one another and a restriction of universal relativity. (The restriction of infinite internal relatedness ensures that everything

does not participate in everything.) These are the conditions, as the *Sophista* makes clear, for the possibility of both true and false discourse.

In the *Philebus*, the plurality which intrinsically constitutes Being is said to be consequent upon the composition in Being of finite and infinite. Being is finite in respect to having a certain ratio of number and measure; it is infinite in regard to non-being and multiplicity.

The ontological basis for the existence of the Platonic Matter is evidently the Separation which Plato set up between Unity and Being. This Separation is not an opposition of contrariety, since contrariety excludes participation . . . and Being could not *be* unless it somehow participated in Unity and its own essence. But there is, nevertheless, in Being's dyadic structure an intrinsic principle of internal relatedness to others which cannot be identified with Being's essential unity without a collapse into a universal relativism which destroys the foundation of all real differentiation in Being.

To be in Being is not to be One, but to be an Image-One: to exist as a whole of unlimited parts, to be in as many ways as Being can be. For any being, this means that intrinsic to its very being, but distinct from its essential unity, there is an infinite context or web of internal relatedness -- both positive and negative -- to all other entities. It is this peculiar web of internal relatedness which alone defines it as differentiated from those others.

Thus, if Being cannot be an absolute One, neither can it be a completely and exhaustively determinate Many. It cannot possess, as an intrinsic and proper perfection, an actual limit or a completion or a realization of itself.

It is Unity which is the perfection and realization of Being, and this is why Being as such can never fully be. It is Unity which is the source from which all that is secondary participates Essence and true Reality. But this Unity which is the source is not unity as intrinsically possessed by any being. The Unity which is the source is proportionately (but really) realized in the beings which are Image-Ones.

The natural posteriority of Being in relation to Unity thus means for Plato that Being is inescapably determined to multiplicity. Its essential actuality is determined by derivation, not from what *is*, but from Unity. As other than its Cause, Being must ever be a semblance of itself (of its true essential self) and hence an Image-One and a Plurality. In this way, it is the pluralism of Being which leads Plato to assume the existence of Matter as the ultimate substrate Principle of Being's dyadic constitution. Since Being cannot be and be a true One, there must exist outside the generic unity a source from whence originates Being's Difference, its mode of being an Image-One. This source in its function is Cause of Being's ontological Otherness in relation to Unity.

This source (Matter) {space} in its function as cause to Being's ontological otherness in relation to Unity can only be a natureless multiplicity, an indeterminate matrix of relatedness. As such, it is an existing negation of Primal Reality, a real absence or privation of true Being: {emptiness}.

Matter in Plato is not and cannot be potential Being {substance --}. Aristotle's primary matter, in contrast, is the indeterminate potentiality for substantial existence. Plato's Matter is not potential "ousia". It is precisely that which cannot become substance, because it is in itself radically non-being and privation.

In the Thomistic formula, potency limits act. But, though the act or perfection so received is limited, it is not thereby ontologically degraded to the status of unreal image. Such a limitation of potency does not accord with the famous Spinozistic maxim that all determination is negation. The perfection limited by potency is still properly perfection or act.

This is not the case in Platonism. For Plato, the limitation of act is not by potency, but by relative non-being or privation. Such a limitation is fatal to the integrity of the act or perfection as limited and received: only images of {the} act {of the World-Mind} can be generated in this way.

The existence of non-being {Saturn in Aries} is thus intimately contingent on the existence of (Being.) {the One?} The certitude with which non-being is known to be is inseparable from that with which is known the being of Being. In short, non-being must exist because Being is and is an Image-One. [Handwritten addition by AS (student): If no being - non-be[ing] cannot be known -- *lapses* -- never have just *locus* or *Dyad*.]

The reality and function of non-being as material principle is entirely relative to the lack of unity and essential deficiency which intrinsically constitutes {the sensible}.

* * * * *

What meaning or character, consequently, does Matter have in Platonic philosophy? How are we to understand Matter in comparison with that which is Image? How are we to understand it in comparison with the Essence imaged?

We must infer that Matter itself is not and cannot be Image. Plato's own insistence is that since Image-beings (i.e. sensibles) lack the proper aseity to exist in themselves, then -- if they are to exist in the way possible to them -- they must exist in another. Consequently this other in which they exist cannot be image: otherwise we would be involved in infinite regress.

It is the meaning Plato attaches to images which prohibits any identification (or even similarity) of the container of images with the images contained. To be a sensible thing (or an image/one) signifies participation in Essence. It is the fact of this participation -- mysterious as it is -- which renders impossible any relation of likeness between images and the material substrate. Participation signifies a sharing of Essence in such a way that that which is participated always remains separate from that which participates. Participation involves the participated -- which is related to that which participates as its essence or nature -- and that which participates -- which is related to the participated as its image or copy. The separation can be understood as follows: on the one hand, the participated is at once the Essence of that which participates and different from it; on the other hand, that which participates is simply the image of what is held to be its proper nature {forms}.

In view of this relation of participation set up between images and Essence -- and because sensible beings are, to speak metaphorically, the mirrorings and reflections of true Essence -- the Matter which receives them cannot be Image. Aside from the fact that the material substrate is ultimate and ungenerated, to what kind of nature could the natureless be so related? To what sort of true Being could existing non-being respond?

Plato tells us that the substrate of all becoming is to be called a "this" or a "that", while the

images themselves are designated “such”. If the images are essentially (but not intrinsically) Nature -- if their mode of existing is a mode of participating -- it is superfluous to posit a new nature in which they are contained. Indeed, it is contradictory (not only to the function of Matter but also to the dominant theme of the Separation) that Matter be conceived in any sense a Nature. For then it would follow that by which image-beings (or sensible beings) differ from Nature is nothing but Nature.

True, it is {in} being contained by Nature -- and being contained necessarily -- which serves to explain how that which is separate from its own Essence can even exist at all. But if Matter rescues sensible beings from sheer nothingness, it is neither to supply them with natures in which to inhere nor to function as a condition for Essence (i.e., as a principle in the order of Essence). Matter contributes to their (sensible beings’) image-mode of existence solely by providing the receptacle in which their participation in Essence or true Form may be realized.

Matter is a principle, therefore, not in the order of Nature or Essence, but in the order of Image-Existence. This status of Matter -- although it is neither Nature nor Essence -- establishes it as a “non-being which exists”. For Plato, Matter cannot -- as it does for Aristotle -- enter into the order of Existence.

This non-image and natureless character of Matter is implicitly recognized in the *Timaeus*. Plato asserts that, while the images themselves are apprehended by opinion and sense, the substrate is grasped only by spurious reason. Accordingly, Matter is neither sensible nor intelligible. It is, in the strictest sense, irrational. Its real irrationality exerts a traumatizing effect even on the higher plane of the objects of science.

Where Unity is the principle and source of intelligibility, the existence of real irrationality is necessitated. [AD handwrites a question mark in the right margin here.] Existence not being the principle and source of intelligibility, there is something which can exist and yet be irrational. This irrationality connotes Matter’s essential negativity and indefiniteness, its lack of limit and Nature.

As Aristotle points out, the ratio of Platonic Matter is Privation rather than Potency. As such, it is the contrary of Form, and hence totally incapable of any assimilation into the order of Formal or Essential intelligibility.

Insofar as Matter is intelligible only in a purely spurious and counterfeit sort of way, Plato implies not only the “naturalness” [AD handwrites a question mark above “naturalness”] of the existing subject of image-beings, but also the deceptiveness of Matter and the subterfuge it is capable of obtruding on the human mind. Because it has been necessary to assume a substrate for all things deficient in intrinsic substantiality, must we then infer what appears to be the logical inference: that that in which the image-beings appear is itself substance? For after all, one might reason that it is through the fault of lacking aseity that these images are determined to existence in Matter.

Matter’s mode of existing must necessarily be a substantial mode, if we follow this line of reasoning. But it is precisely this line of reasoning that Plato characterizes as “spurious.” Because the images are coming-and-going and are never-the-same, non-philosophic reason falls victim to the belief that the changeless substrate is the permanent reality, the substance of which these images are merely the fleeting outward appearance. [AD handwrites a question mark in the left margin here.] {If Saturn in Aries = Turiya Vaishvanara}

The philosopher who has -- with effort -- transcended the world of sense experience has done so because the imagery therein has directed his disciplined reason in reminiscence not to the substrate of images, but to the Being imaged. He is faced with a system of intelligibilities permeated by materiality and irrationality {emptiness and suchness}. He is confronted with an order of forms which -- to an extent that they resist unity and are subject to non-being -- resist [AD crosses out 'intelligibility'] {or are not real} and are [AD crosses out 'irrational'] {just so and so}.

We have seen that Being is not controvertible with Unity, its own Essence. As concerns our present consideration, this means that Being for Plato -- as composite and as being [AD handwrites question mark above 'being'] -- is not the intelligibility of its own Essence. Since Matter -- as the "Other," the "Indeterminate Dyad" -- is Being's Difference in relation to its Essence, it "is."

Being's differentia {Saturn in Aries}, which founds the per se 'irrationality' {maya} of the world of intelligibilities, is {looks like: based on?} Matter. There exists an infinite in being -- proper to Being as Being -- which is not intelligible.

The Seventh Epistle makes explicitly clear that the effort of reason to define a Form in its Essence is always and necessarily doomed to frustration. This means that since there is no question of individuation in this order -- there being only many species (each of them unique) and not many individuals within a species -- the infinity effected by matter is within each Form. To posit multiplicity in this order is simultaneously to posit within the intelligible itself -- within each species-being -- an inexhaustible series of relations. This is, for the philosopher, the traumatizing meaning of Being's composition with non-being.

While we place the burden of responsibility upon Matter for the irrationality which pervades the world of being, we must not neglect the fact that, were it not for Matter, even such relational knowledge would be an impossible dream. Just as Matter rescues images from their sheer nothingness, so also does it preserve them from utter unknowability.

If we can imagine, for the sake of clarification, a pure image subtracted from its receptacle -- and detached from all that which renders it infinitely relational -- we can grasp Plato's meaning. *What* is left is neither in itself nor in relation. Separated from Essence by the fact of participation, it is now separated from its relative identity. Hence we cannot even say of this isolated image that it is the same with itself: for it is same (or relatively one) only in a relational matrix. In respect to all the others, it is not. And so, to know its sameness, one must know its difference.

The Platonic Separation necessitates a confusion of the logical principle of Identity with the real principle of Difference. As separated from their own Essence, the only identity possible to images and capable of exhibition in rational discourse is that of their difference from one another. It is in not being the others that the image is relatively one.

It is not because of its Essence that a being differs from and is related to others. But it must be remembered that it is separated from its own Essence: even its sameness with itself is relational and participated. The ratio of sameness which a being has in relation to itself is not identical with its essential and incommunicable Unity. This sameness is founded only in its membership in a community of entities which exemplify the same common reason (which participates in the form Same).

The Other is always the only subject which is being talked about. Even when the Same is used as a predicate, the meaning is relational. The Platonic Separation between the thing and its Essence is maintained. Hence, the powerfulness of Matter as a principle of knowledge is that it makes possible perinoetic discourse around Being and gives meaning to the only question left for metaphysical discussion in Plato: the question of the relations of beings to one another.

Plato describes Matter as an eternal, indestructible and changeless Space which never adopts in any way or at any time the Forms received from without. But these notes of eternity, indestructibility and permanence are equally applicable to true Essence, to the One. And reason, in all assertions (its searchings), is directed to and finalized by the permanent and indestructible. It would then seem that it is the changelessness and immutability of Matter which -- beneath the surface of the sensible flux -- simulates Essence and deceives the human mind.

In anticipation, the general difference consists in this: while Matter is permanently natureless and is always a “that-able-to-receive” but never a “that-actually-informed”, the One is permanently Essence and never able to receive or to be informed from without. The One can never, therefore, be a subject of predication; nor can Matter itself, strictly speaking, be a predicate. Matter and Essence thus represent the opposite orders which exhaust the area of immutability.

Plato says that the images are too volatile to be detained in any expression as “this” or “that” -- or any other mode of speaking which represents them as permanent. It is the ceaseless change -- the becomings [Note: Eslick has ‘becomingness’] of the image-beings -- which then resists conceptualization. It is this ceaseless becoming of the images that makes them unamenable to expression in fixed, static terms. For this reason, the images cannot be the real objects of definition and science. When we call them “such”, we do not refer to any stability in them -- not to any inner nature -- but to a common extrinsic principle {the forms} of which they are flowing imitations and moving approximations. This, says Plato, is true of all things generated.

The very idea of participation or imitation connotes the dynamism intrinsic to the structure of being as generated. It explains this dynamism as the necessary orientation not merely of the imitating to the imitated, but of the inherently “natureless” to its formal perfection and identity.

All becoming thus denotes the restlessness of participating beings’ separation from their proper Essence. It is made intelligible not in terms of inner forms seeking to energize and expand, but by the radical extrinsicism of Essence to Being itself. From this it appears evident that where Essence is intrinsic -- where there is aseity and identity -- there is permanence but no becoming.

With Essence possessed and with Nature present by an inwardness, there is nothing to look out to. There is no need to go beyond what one has to be that which one is.

In Plato there is a kind of inverted real distinction of Essence and existence in which Essence -- ultimately, the One -- is a transcendent principle of act and supreme ontological perfection. The existence {becoming} of the Forms and the domain of becoming, however, is the function not of Essence -- but of {space} and negative limitation. Existence in the multiform realm of Being and in the flux of becoming precisely and necessarily connotes a failure of expression of the inexpressible Essential principle. It connotes an imperfect image of a Reality which -- as existing in these modes -- can only appear in

otherness and dispersed multiplicity.

In such a system, it is not an Essence or a Unity which is created or emanated of the multiple entities. Rather, Matter -- as the principle of existential actuation in the image world -- negates Essence. The function of existential actuation is identified with that of existential differentiation, performed by the material substrate as the maker of the manifold images of the single, Essential principles.

The absolute and independent status accorded to Matter as an existing {limitation} of Essence (in contrast to Aristotle's potential ousia) must signify a total lack of relation between the material substrate and Essence. How can such a disjoined and unrelated principle function as Cause in the production of being and becoming?

Generation, says Plato, is for the sake of Essence. But Essence can hardly be the final cause of Matter itself. Aristotle speaks of some kind of Eros which the Platonic "Indeterminate Dyad" is supposed to have for the One, identified with the Good. But he points out that, since these principles are contrary, this contrariety implies the "that" itself -- the Dyad -- must desire its own opposite, and hence, its own {completion}.

But, in fact, the formula "Matter exists for the sake of Form" could have no real meaning in Platonic metaphysics. Form cannot be the final cause of Matter for the simple reason that it is not through Form that Matter exists. Form cannot as Form be causally related to Matter: Matter is not potentially "such", but actually "this". Matter's actuality, to be sure, is neither that of image nor of Essence, but rather, that of existing non-being {indeterminacy}. Permanently existing in its own right, and permanently formless in its actuality, the Platonic Matter has no final cause.

This absolute dissociation of Matter and Form -- or of substrate and nature -- has disastrous implications, some think. It means that the Platonic metaphysics does not recognize that -- even though existence is not a Form or a nature -- nothing that is natureless exists. On the contrary, the Platonic position is that Essence -- the One -- is true Existence, the original and privileged Reality of which even the being of the Forms is mere appearance; and yet, the natureless necessarily exists.

This position, in turn, demands that there are two underived levels of existence -- irreducible in principle -- operative in Plato's thought. The level of true existence is the proper sphere of nature or Essence. The level of spurious existence is the proper sphere of the actually formless, of Matter and of the "non-being-which-is". It is this dualism which explains at bottom why Plato's metaphysics -- many claim -- is incapable of achieving the unity of science.

If the image-beings engaged in becoming are separated from true Being by Difference -- which of itself is absolutely unrelated to Essence -- how is it possible that images as such be explicable by the Essence imaged? How is a true causal relationship possible between them, when the differentia of the effect from the cause is permanently closed off from the very thing assumed to be the cause?

While an existing formless receptacle is the principle of Difference, the images received are not so received as to form a unity with their container. The images remain somehow different from the principle by which they differ from Unity. Being thus different from their receptacle, they are "like" unity. It is this likeness which provides the basis for a true causal relationship.

But this argument proves, rather, that images as such cannot be causally related to Unity. Images as such cannot be causally related to Unity, for if they are only related to Essence by that by which they differ from their principle of Difference, then they are related to Essence not as image, [Handwritten note by AS (student): i.e., are (one word illegible) to Essence.] but as non-image. If that by which they are like Essence is other than the differentia, then the likeness and the causation which explains it are not to be found in the order of image. Thus, the only mode of causation left open concerns the causality of the One: its final causality in terms of Essence or true Form. [Handwritten note by AS (student) in right margin at top of paragraph: shows that essence or the One *cannot* be the *cause* of images]

According to this possibility, the intrinsic possession of the One -- as unitary Essence and true Form -- could be conceived as being at once the formal completion and the Good of all that participates Essence, but does not have it.

The impossibility of this interpretation is that it demands identity of nature between the beings finalized and the end attained. For Plato, identity of nature is identity of true existence. Thus there would be no distinction of cause and effect, and consequently, no conceivable foundation for a causal relationship.

The existence of Platonic Matter immutably opposes the supposition that beings engaged in becoming attain to what they are -- not as images, but as one with their unitary essence. As long as Matter exists -- as long as there is multiplicity -- Unity cannot be cause according to its mode of being cause.

We must, as a final consideration, briefly estimate Matter's status as a co-principle with Unity. The assumption of Matter as the principle of Difference in relation to Unity evidently implies that multiplicity cannot originate from Unity. This implication, in turn, is logically dependent upon a univocal conception of the One. Unity as primal essence can only generate unity; as univocally conceived, its causation must necessarily be univocal -- which means that it cannot generate. The failure of the Neo-Platonists to understand this is their greatest departure from Plato.

To attribute to Unity the causation of Being is thus equivalent to denying Unity, to inserting duality in that which transcends all composition. Existing Matter functions as a sort of metaphysical nature, an expedient adopted to safeguard the absolute unicity of the One. The "powerfulness" of Matter as principle is greater than that of Unity. This greater power is made evident by the effectiveness of Matter in the composite being.

The One can in no way exercise its proper causality in conjunction with Matter. It is this total absence of mutual relationship between the intrinsic co-principles -- and this failure to recognize the reciprocity of causes -- which must obtain if composite being is to be intrinsically determined to a composite nature. This absence of relationship also necessitates in the Platonic theory of generation the absolute causal sufficiency of Matter itself.

Plato's Matter thus combines both the roles of existential actuation and differentiation; it achieves the former by means of the latter. The creative function of Matter is its negation of Essential Reality.

With the real relationship of principles abandoned, the efficacy of both causes is logically nullified. With Plato, however, we have the following situation: while no true relationship of causes

obtains, there is nonetheless effected Being. But if Being is generated and produced by causes so unrelated, it must be that the efficacy of the One as cause is totally destroyed.

Ultimately, all developed metaphysical systems which make all determination Negation must come to rest in the mystery (or contradiction) of radical self-causation. For, unless Matter limits and does not inform, unless it receives and is not determined, then the separation of the participated and that which participates is wholly inexplicable. It is because Matter exists as the actually formless -- and according to mode of spurious existence -- that it is able to limit and to not be informed, able to receive and not be determined.

Matter's mode of existing being a privative one -- and since privation as such has no potentiality for existence as substance -- Matter cannot exist as nature. And nature is powerless to inform it. Being thus powerless to determine Matter to existence as nature, Unity as received is determined by Matter. This determination is not, of course, in the order of Essence. Rather, Unity is determined by being limited to a mode of spurious existence.

Since there are here operative two irreducible levels of existence, Matter then explains why that whose true existence is a nature-mode can nonetheless exist according to a natureless mode, in a state of separation from true Being.

Thus, while Matter cannot determine Essence in the *line* of Essence, Matter can determine Essence in the line of *natureless* existence, in the line of relation -- of relative non-being. This is why the image-beings -- although they ever will be essentially nature -- will never be identical with the nature which they are. The imaging -- although ever an imaging of Essence -- will never be explicable in terms of the Essence imaged.

Hence, the powerfulness of Matter exists in this: while Essence cannot produce its own effect in Matter, Matter can produce *its* own effect by negating Essence. The existence of the Platonic material substrate thus bears permanent witness to the impotence of the Platonic One.

[Note: The following handwritten by AS (student).]

Matter is both extrinsic and intrinsic to Being.

Extrinsic to its essence, or Unity,

but it is intrinsic to Being as composite (as is unity!)

Intelligibility resides ultimately with the *One*.

ONE ONE + Being [circle around ONE + Being]

[File PLA 3 papers_8Hyp_Non-Being_2foldB.PDF (pp. 41-64) Ends]