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Editorial

The Return of Metaphysics

Following last month's editorial, I thought of reflecting on the question of metaphysics in the light of a new turn in the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas. The new phase could be characterized as a new version of post-Metaphysical, or may be termed post-Secular thinking, in which the significance of religion is considered. Why is this important for philosophy? I will suggest that it could be understood in terms of public beliefs and practices, commonly assumed to be the property of religion, and in terms of the nature and history of philosophy.

Religion could be understood in psychological terms, in the way Nietzsche explains it, as the attempt to give meaning to life, especially when things go bad, or when life involves suffering and death. It seems that a religious view that there is a wise God who made the world in such a way that permitted suffering is justifiable. It has been argued that in the interest of a larger good, the world will have suffering and death, much like the Leibnizian thesis 'the best possible world'. I know that many, from Voltaire to the present-day atheist, will argue that this is not right. But none of these objectors presents a workable thesis that contradicts the Leibnizian thesis. When it comes to the ultimate question of suffering and death, the religious story has much to offer in terms of comfort and consolation. Boethius turned this question into philosophical metaphysics in his *Consolation of Philosophy.* Nietzsche thought that suffering needs an explanation to mitigate it. The secular worldview could not give a satisfying answer to the individual, while religion could. The evil of suffering is at its most when it is not explainable.

But it is not only suffering that motivates a metaphysics of religion - philosophical knowledge also seems to need metaphysics. From Plato's Forms to Process Philosophy, philosophy relies on metaphysical entities, such as those implied by the theory of Forms or the concept of forces. These are not discovered in the world of particulars and appearances, but by abstracting from them and going beyond them to a world that either has eternal stable entities (Forms), or turbulent dynamic forces. In this way we can see why medieval philosophy was fascinated by Plato. Nietzsche called Christianity a Platonism for the masses. It worked as a philosophy and as a religion.

However, there is an internal need of metaphysics within philosophy. This need concerns its foundation or what used to be known as First Philosophy. Since Plato and Aristotle metaphysics was considered the pinnacle of philosophy. Descartes once wrote '…, all Philosophy is like a tree, of which Metaphysics is the root, Physics the trunk, and all the other sciences the branches that grow out of this trunk'. However, Descartes relied on human thinking, and used this to prove our knowledge of God and the external world. But this view ended in creating dualisms that were difficult to eradicate. Much more sophisticated solutions came to dominate the philosophical scene, such as a return to an older more mystical view, of the unity of being and the metaphysics of the Absolute. This was expressed in different ways by Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, the Romantics, and their followers.

The Absolute in these conceptions may have similarities with religious and mystical views, but they were argued for in purely rational, philosophical terms. In fact, some of these views can be read as talking about an immanent Absolute - rather than a transcendent Absolute - such as can often be found among interpreters of Spinoza. But this can only show how subtle these views are, and how important the metaphysical foundations of philosophy. Kant who put a limit on knowledge, has pointed out that there is a higher faculty in human beings that goes beyond the faculty of understanding. That is Reason for him which deals with ideas, or general rules beyond the realm of experience. He pointed out some of the conflicts between these two faculties (Reason and Understanding) that give rise to the antinomies. But subsequent philosophers, such as Hegel, showed that all contradictions will be resolved in the Absolute.

I will suggest that philosophy has become poorer by the decline of metaphysics rather than richer. My argument for this is that metaphysics is connected with a wider concern of human beings. This is what one philosopher called 'ontological need'. It seems human beings are always asking about beginnings and ends, where we came from and where we are going. Such concerns connect with art, poetry, religion, mysticism and the daily practices of ordinary people. No wonder then that questions of the highest value for human beings are dealt with by philosophies that take metaphysics seriously. I am attending a very interesting course on Thinking the End in/through Continental Philosophy, taught by two promising young, energetic philosophers, Terrence Thomson and Kyle Moore. They based the course mainly on the work of Kant, Kojève and Heidegger, as well as other philosophers, such as Derrida, Bataille and others. I may have the opportunity to discuss this course in a future editorial.

The Editor

IDENTITY: What am I?

According to Plotinus we are in reality and reality is in us. Unraveling this statement leads us into the terrain of identity and destiny.

WILLIAM BISHOP

An ancient philosopher said an unexamined life is not worth living, and 'know thyself' echoes down from the past, while in *'Presence and Immortality'*, Gabriel Marcel opined: 'There is a sense in which it is true to say that the only metaphysical problem is: What am I? To this problem all others are reduced'.

Identity is multifaceted and our conception of the self depends upon our assumptions and perspective; and some people even deny the existence of a self. We need to bear in mind differences, but additionally need to feel our way towards, as well as think and intuit, what for us is real. To have an in-depth sense of identity is important in the way it bears upon destiny: our direction in life. From a materialist perspective, a person can be seen as a body that operates like a machine, and attributing a number to a person rather than a name allows them to be seen as a thing, which can then be manipulated using utilitarian logic applicable to things. The reverse of this is an open mind to a spiritual viewpoint that confers genetic and spiritual identity.

We enter the world apparently ignorant and after taking the first breath learn to adapt to our environment. Education then conditions us. Differences become established through variety in education and culture and dispositions and human capacities. This appears to suggest relativism in knowledge and worldviews, yet each system regards its norm as the right way of being in the world. Enculturation is significant because our view of the world affects the way we act, and consequently how the world reacts upon us.

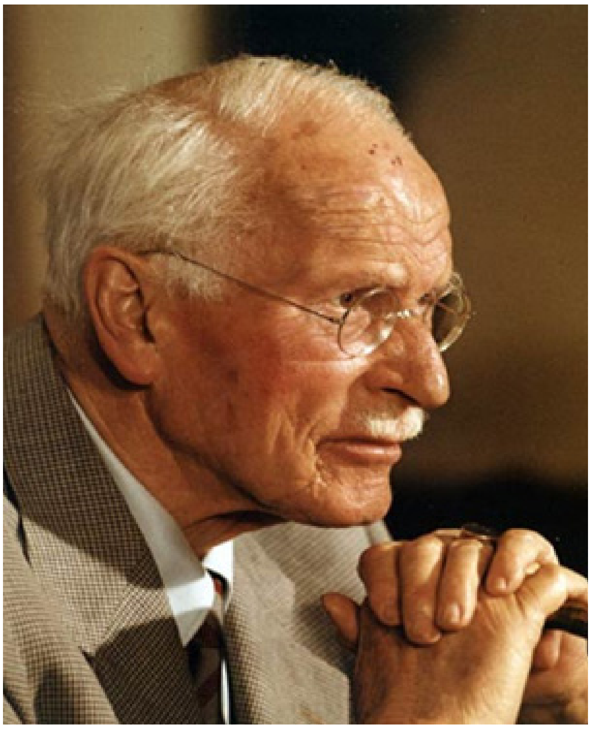
Human Being As A Unified Trinity

The traditional view of the human being is of a unified trinity of body, soul and spirit, where the soul (psyche), as mediator between body and spirit, is mainly responsible for identity as a personality, but identity revealed by spirit (as the 'I') has a universal aspect. Arguably it makes sense to accept that the soul has a body rather than that the body has a soul, because of their interaction and mutual influence. Thinking, feeling and volition are qualities of soul that characterize a person, and temperament can become a dominant characteristic, expressed in body type. Classical Greek philosophy identified the four temperaments as *melancholic*, *phlegmatic*, *sanguine*, and *choleric* and related these to the four states of matter: earth, water, air, and fire. Carl Jung added the types of *extrovert* and *introvert*. Each person is a mixture of all four temperaments but usually one predominates. It can be considered that initially a newly born child will inherit genetic characteristics from the stream of heredity that joins the spiritual core conditioned by a previous incarnation, so that the transitory joins the eternal.

We may think that we know our self but such ability to know is limited by our experience of life, and even if we could see our self as others see us, that may also be limited by the other person's perception and prejudices. In other words, there can be so much more to know than is immediately evident. In fact there is a view that to see fully at one level you need to view from a level above. This will mean opening to the possibility of a world of spirit, or developing higher organs of perception through spiritual discipline and in that way coming to know through experience (perception) instead of belief through faith in a tradition.

A Sense Of Internal Identity

Identity recognized by society includes nationality, ethnicity, parentage, and gender among other things. These are general identifications but a sense of internal identity is different, and then a sense of psychological identity differs from a sense of spiritual identity,



Carl Jung

Gabriel Marcel

if indeed such a sense is acknowledged. In as much as the 'I' (in its relation to spirit) inhabits the soul, the sense of psychological identity will reflect back upon the 'I', for it is in the soul that the human drama is staged and where human identity is vulnerable to compromise and capture. This internal sense of identity can include such things as class, special talents and interests, temperament, appearance, and confidence.

As we grow in life we witness the paradox of change happening while something remains and retains its identity. This is where the *essence* of identity combines with the time-process of *becoming*. As the human being on earth is a being that is becoming, the direction of travel arguably has significant consequences, so that retention of agency of the self is vital, yet forces of suppression and take-over of agency press hard upon the individual and society and humanity. The battle for an individual's attention is very much alive today. Identity is also subject to deception and even to theft. In this case this applies to the economic aspect of identity; but theft at the spiritual level will be disastrous. There is also use of pseudonyms or an avatar, even to the extent of deceiving oneself. Confidence tricksters can deceive and actors even make a profession of portraying identities other than their self. Literature's richness consists in relationships between fictional characters. Here it is possible to think of identity as a series of veils.

From the perspective of religious texts, the human being is a creation through divine instrumentation within a divinely created world, and in this respect there is intention and purpose; and on the part of humanity an implied relationship to the divine source. Conversely, if there is no awareness of this then life can be taken for granted and its purpose determined according to one's own desires and intelligence. But if what defines the human is 'embodiment' of the divine seed which is to be realized, then it follows that departure from this possibility is departure from what it is essentially to be human. In *Phenomenology and Humanism,* Luijpen expresses the view that if man is seen as isolated interiority separated from the world in which he lives, we can imagine someone could have a clear conscience in a decaying world, but the idea of an isolated interiority is an illusion. For Luijpen, Man is existence, he is involvement in the world.

In '*The Sacred in Life and Art'*, Philip Sherrard reminds us that both sacred cosmology and modern scientific epistemology require faith in their presuppositions and that the physical depends upon the metaphysical because the physical world is enclosed within the metaphysical. Sherrard speaks of *imagination* as the soul's organ of perception which cannot perceive or experience the sacred dimension unless it is divinized: '*It is the heart that is the seat, the organ, of the intellect . . . What then has to be actualized in the heart is the love that awakens in the intellect the 'intellect of love'.'*

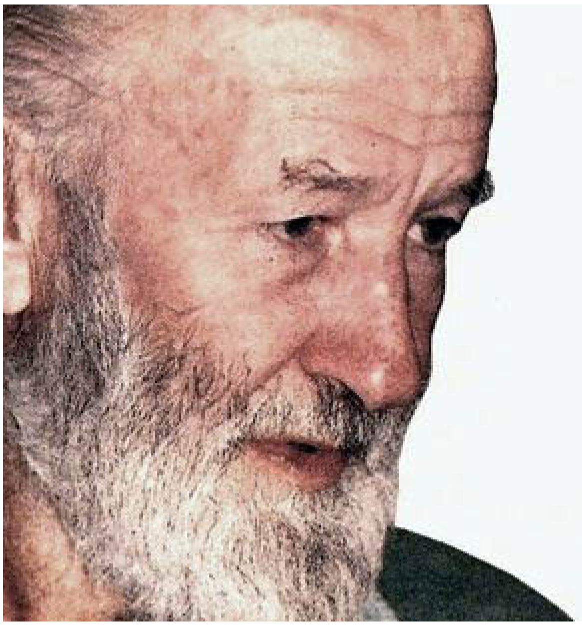
Conflicting Forces

Within the human soul there are conflicting forces like reason, emotion, instinct, the double or shadow, and spiritual forces of the intangible world that penetrate the soul to exert agency at an unconscious level. It is therefore vital that a balance is maintained by the *self*. Whether or not soul and spirit emerge from the build-up of material complexity or alternatively incarnate into the built structure, the fact is that meaningful control comes from the higher level of organization or intelligence of the whole entity. In this sense it is the 'I' as human self that coordinates the whole. If this Master is disabled this will result in loss of human agency. Interestingly in this respect, in the *Republic*, Plato divides the soul into three parts: *logos* (head or thinking part of the soul), *thymos* (chest), and *eros* (stomach). These relate to a person and to government: *Logistikon* is gentle rule through love of learning, *thymoeides* obeys instruction from Logistikon and defends the whole, while *epithemetikon* seeks pleasure. When Logistikon rules the whole there is harmony.

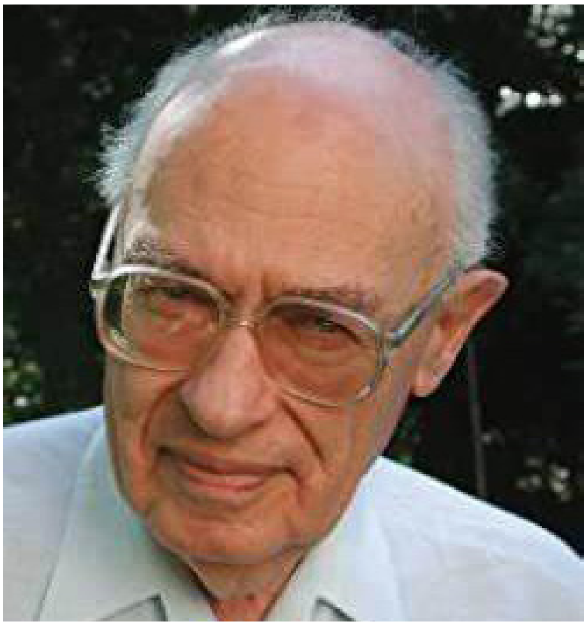
Being is considered the origin of manifestation as the essent - as that which appears - and language is part of the essent, offering identity to its speaker. If the speaker is the 'I', this could be identical to *Dasein*: the being who is there for Being. The 'I' (which is arguably the human essence or divine seed) seems to be unique in its internal relationship with Being or Spirit. As Georg Khühlewind says in *The Life of the Soul:* 'For if matter, and not the Word, is the fundamental reality, then man cannot know himself in reality as soul and as spirit. If he does not become aware of his spiritual being, his logos-essence, then he is not free'. And 'The revealer, the being who reveals itself in man through speaking, is the I-am-here. The I lives in whoever can say I am.' (Georg Khühlewind: *Becoming aware of the Logos*). In its 'historical, history-disclosing essence', writes Heidegger, 'human-being is logos, the gathering and apprehending of the being of entities'. (*The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*).

The traditional view is that it is the spirit that is the essential being, supported in life by the soul and body. In this conception the spirit is the human 'I', created in the image of the absolute or cosmic 'I'. In this way there is connection with divinity as microcosm to macrocosm. In *The Life of the Soul,* Khühlewind speaks of *'The thinking and speaking 'I' – not the ego which wakes to consciousness with the already thought or the already spoken – lives in presentness, or the sphere of life, of intuitions. In consciousness the human being shifts back and forth between 'I' and ego, between present and past. ... The "formed" part of the 'I' is called the ego, and is its non-cognitive part through which the I-being identifies itself with the bodily living-psychical organism, putting down its roots there. ... A part of the world process becomes conscious as it surges around us, a part of the interchange between the world of light and the human essence'.*

This is an extreme, and one might say, extraordinary view of identity but if we are in earnest we cannot avoid facing the mystery of the self. Ultimate knowledge may be beyond us at present but the searchlight of consciousness can enlighten some of our ignorance. There is empirical knowledge from inside and from techniques of meditation, yet this is knowledge by participation and experience instead of from a subject to an object, because the self is of the nature of living being. From a holistic point of view the human being is created from the forces of the cosmos and in that respect the human being is a cosmos in miniature, where the 'self' engages in the medium of attention and consciousness.



Philip Sherrard



Georg Khühlewind

Absolute Being

By means of thinking, Descartes deduced that it followed that he was in a state of being, or that being constituted him, enabling him to think. His statement proposed: 'I think therefore I am'. Whether he remained in this state of being, or this state of being still manifested him while he was asleep, is an open question, but it appears that Descartes identified an active state of consciousness with possession of being, or possession by the state of being as that which enabled him to think of himself as 'I'. We have information about Descartes that identifies him in the public sphere (as a person) but his sense of himself in his thinking corresponds to his more fundamental and existential identity. For a person in deep meditation it may be that this self that says 'I am', merges with *being* so that there is just the state of being. This non-separation is just being as a state, and it would appear to annul the 'I', which otherwise it empowers in the world of becoming. In this case the 'I' would appear to have the status of independent being yet be ultimately dependent on (and identical with) absolute being.

Many traditionalists warn against technology displacing nature and drawing the human being into a world inimical to it. Indeed there are people today intent on uniting humanity with technology. Here knowing what distinguishes the human self from what is alien becomes vital in knowing whether it is worth the effort to preserve the essence of human nature. Attention is vital to human agency and this is where an ongoing battle rages. Self-knowledge is a bid for human freedom and an awareness of dangers to its suppression and possible extinction of human purpose within Creation. In Greek tragedy destiny is closely allied to character, and particularly so in Shakespeare's plays where the individual is emphasized. Self-knowledge should add insight to the context in which *I am*, and bear not only upon the destiny of my *self*, but on society and the flourishing or otherwise of the 'anthroposcene', not to mention the cosmic order.

The motive of love (interested care) can extend one's felt identity out from oneself and family to society and the cosmos (echoing the role of the cosmos in creation, and universality of the 'I'). Conversely the self (as ego) can become isolated and in competition and conflict with others and nature. The vision of the self that embraces the cosmos is a stark contrast from a self that is subsumed by sub-natural forces (ostensibly of the atom, electron and gravity); the one journeys towards inner heavenly light, and the other to outer darkness. Self-knowledge is therefore vital in strengthening the self as a responsible agent, because it is upon freedom of choice that our future depends.

Parmenides' Puzzle

When asked to give an example of Ancient Greek philosophy, most beneficiaries of a liberal education are bound to mention Plato's concept of 'forms'. If pressed, they will likely recall the allegory of the cave from Plato's *Republic*, one of the more famous metaphors in Ancient Greek philosophy, if not all Western philosophy. In this paper, I will give a short overview of the Theory of Forms, and then take a more critical analysis that will surface a number of deep questions which after more than two millennia remain unanswered.

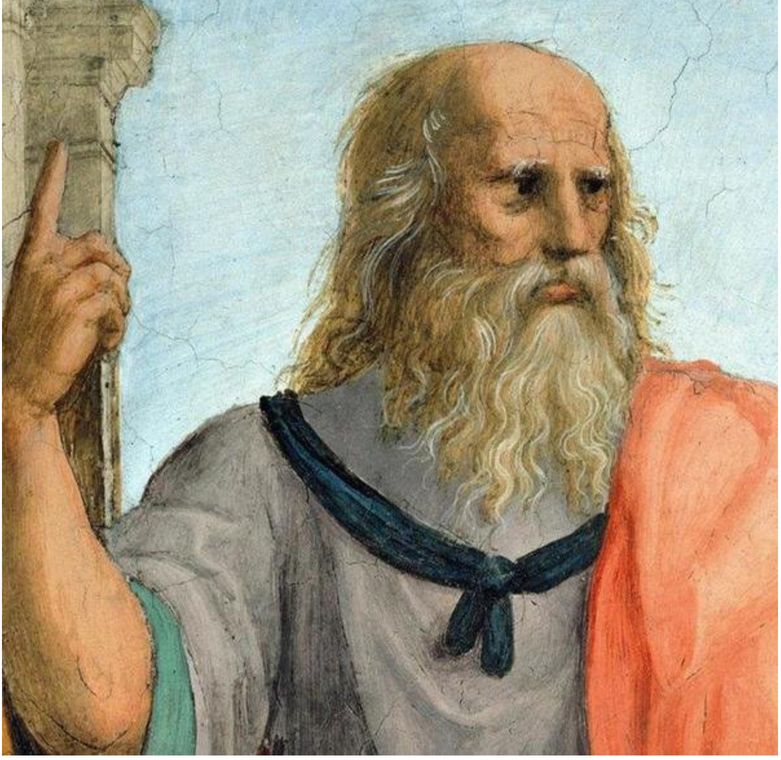
DAN MCARDLE

In Book VII of his *Republic*, Plato serves up his famous cave allegory. What we see as the world, Socrates argues, are simply shadows on the wall of a cave which we all sit facing. Were we to turn around and gaze up at the entrance of the cave, we would see the 'real' world, a purity of essence which the shadows of the cave wall at best emulate. To translate metaphor into example: an individual horse is a particular instance of the ideal form of 'horseness'. Likewise, a table is an instance of the ideal form of 'tableness' and so on with all other things we might encounter, such as chairs and windows. This short summary might suffice for an introductory classroom, but on examination it falls apart quickly.

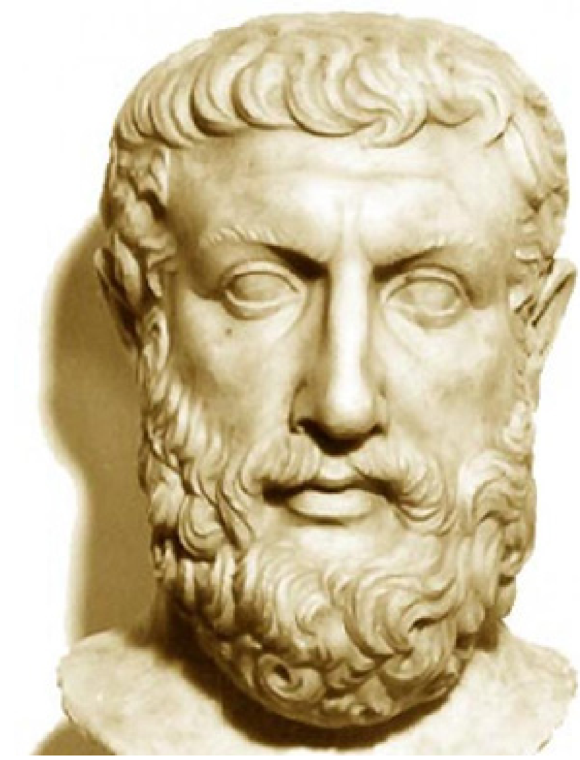
Let us begin with a few clarifying questions. First, how do we *know* that the horse we see embodies 'horseness?' Second, assuming this form of 'horseness' exists, where is it? One might say that we know this animal is called a 'horse', a name which signifies a definition of horseness. But if that is the case, how could an infant who does not yet have language distinguish between a horse and a cat or dog? Yet they can, so there is clearly something which precedes language. Are forms a means by which we can recognize something without words or language to describe it?

Next, if we can discern that this animal is a horse, what is it we are discerning? Does the horse itself have some sort of essential form of 'horseness', or do we in our minds have a filtering perception which performs a sort of matching? The form cannot be present in the horse itself, because otherwise we would not be able to look at a rough sketch from a child and recognize it to be a horse. So perhaps it is something inherent in our minds. But then we must ask, how is it that everyone is able to see the form of horseness? Do we observe the forms through our senses, or is there some kind of higher filtering layer?

To these latter questions, Plato provides something of an answer in his *Meno* and *Phaedo*, and hints at it in other dialogues like the *Phaedrus*. In the *Meno*, he uses a geometry lesson with a slave to argue that when we learn something, we are actually remembering it. But how can this be, if this concept is new to us? It is because of the nature of the soul. Socrates claims that when we die, our physical body separates from our soul, and, while the body dissolves to ash, the soul returns to some spiritual realm where it waits to be reborn into a new body. Therefore, the act of learning is simply our soul reaching into some higher logos to "retrieve" a memory from a past life. This would support his reasoning in the *Phaedo* where Socrates has no fear of bodily death,



Plato



Parmenides

and it resonates with a lengthy exposition in his second speech of the *Phaedrus*, where he recounts a bizarre palinode that includes the number of lives a soul must pass through before reaching some greater state. At points his ideas sound more Eastern than Western.

Taking in these details, we can arrive at a potential beginning to a more solid theory. Recalling from *Timeus* that Plato distinguishes between the static world of being and the changing world of becoming, we could argue that the soul itself serves as a kind of link between the two worlds, a sort of gateway which allows us to look at a horse, and have it 'remind' us of the perfect form of 'horseness' which exists in the static world. Further, it resolves the question of why everyone can comprehend these forms, without needing language or lessons: if everyone has a soul, which is a connection to the perfect world of spirit, then lessons and language are only used to fine-tune our perceptions of the forms within objects in the world, a bit like tuning an instrument or adjusting the lens of a camera or a telescope. It also answers the question of needing to learn itself. If the soul is a sort of gateway to this spirit world, it must go through the body, which is imperfect. Over time, the soul is able to 'remember' things, like an astronomer tracking the stars.

Parmenides' criticisms of the Forms

As far-fetched as this theory sounds, it does resolve some of the questions we initially posed. However, it does not satisfy them all, and in his later dialogues, especially the *Parmenides*, Plato takes a wrecking ball to the theory and leaves the reader wondering if the forms was an early idea which an older Plato came to reject. Rather than continue his practice of platforming Socrates as the new Achilles, in his *Parmenides* Plato presents an aged Parmenides scolding a very youthful 18 year old Socrates for the faults in his nascent theory. For example, he asks:

> 'So does each thing that gets a share get as its share the form as a whole or a part of it? Or could there be some other means of getting a share apart from these two?
> (Plato's Parmenides, 131a).

Let us step back, give some context, and break down the argument to show how powerful it is. Parmenides is grilling Socrates on how exactly the forms work. How is it that the horse we see which contains horseness, *has* horseness? Is this form of horseness something that can be quantified? The answer must be yes, because we'd say that a living horse has horseness, while a drawing of a horse at best resembles a horse. But if this is true, that means the drawing only has part of the form, not the full form. However, if we accept that, then a slew of contradictions follow.

For sake of argument, let us assume we have two drawings of horses, one by a child and one by a professional artist. The artist's rendering will probably more closely resemble the actual living horse and therefore contain more horseness than the child's. If we consider relations such as 'more' and 'less' to be forms themselves, then the child's drawing, having less horseness, would contain more 'lessness' than the professional's. But then we have a larger quantity of 'lessness' containing 'moreness', at which point the logic becomes self-contradictory.

We could then push back and say that concepts like 'more' and 'less' are not forms, which solves the first dilemma and leads to a second: What gets a form? Obviously things like chairs and tables have the forms of tableness and chairness, but someone who is brave would also have the non-material form of braveness. By setting the bounds of what gets a form and what does not, are we actually trying to understand how this works, or are we simply redefining forms in such a way to fit Plato's theory, rather than reality?

And Parmenides is just getting started. There is an additional question of what it means to *partake* in a form. Take a teacher, who would embody the form of 'teachingness'. It is clear that at some point in time we have an individual who is not a teacher, and then at another point in time, they have transformed into being a teacher. How did this happen? Is the simple act of teaching someone sufficient to partake in this form, or must they be employed as a teacher, or further, must they be in the actual act of teaching a class or seminar to partake in 'teachingness?' If the same person writes a book on a topic, when someone reads the book and learns, is the person who wrote it still partaking in teachingness? In other words, while we would agree that the concept of teaching (or teachingness) exists, it is much harder, if not impossible to pinpoint when an individual who does not originally partake in 'teachingness' *becomes* a teacher, and likewise, when their role as a teacher ceases to exist, when they stop partaking in the form.

And the challenges keep coming. Parmenides' lines of attack, ironically skewering Socrates in the way Socrates himself targets opponents in other dialogues, seem fatal, but they are not conclusive: if there are no such things as forms, then how is it that we see and recognise patterns? How do we know that a horse or a chair is in fact a horse or a chair, if not through forms? After more than two millennia, we still do not have a satisfying answer to this question.

Why Does Plato Attack His Own Theory?

But wait: if the theory of forms is the foundation of Plato's philosophy, then why does he attack it so profusely? In modern practice, we are used to one philosopher proposing an idea or set of ideas, and another opposing them. This is so common that all we need to do is utter someone's name– Wittgenstein, Hegel, Marx– and a whole series of ideas will follow, and most seeming contradictions between a philosopher's early and later work can be explained by experience or maturity. But Plato poses a problem for us, because it is unusual for a single individual to put so much effort into a theory and then ruthlessly attack it. We tend to regard the *Republic* as Plato's masterpiece, and the forms as a crown jewel. This is not a straw man argument he has constructed only to destroy it later with something better, but a deep and profound insight about how the world might work.

There are a few possible explanations for this. First, we know that Plato is the author of, but never the speaker in any of the dialogues. The earlier dialogues feature Socrates heavily, culminating in the *Republic*, and then he slowly fades away until the *Laws*, where he is not present at all. It could be that Plato is giving Socrates a platform early on, and then later, hands the stage to the Eleatic philosophers like Parmenides, and then at the end, to an Athenian 'stranger'. So perhaps Plato is acting like a news reporter and simply reporting the perspective from different sides of the arguments. But if that were the case, it seems odd that the early and middle dialogues would focus so much on Socrates to the exclusion of all others.

Another argument is that Plato began as a strict adherent to Socrates, chronicling his ideas as faithfully as possible, and as time passed, the philosophical bond between Plato and Socrates weakened. The once loyal student ceased to be a parrot for his teacher's ideas, matured into his own, and by the time he was writing the *Parmenides*, long estranged from his master's charismatic wings, turned against them. It was yet another case of a teacher/student rivalry: the balance of the earlier dialogues tilt to Socrates, the later to Plato, the *Republic* showing a harmonious compromise between. However, this does not explain other changes in the dialogues, such as their length and interaction of participants.

Form As Metaphor

Finally, a theory proposed by Gilbert Ryle in his 1966 *Plato's Progress* is more promising. Ryle argues in Chapter 2 that Plato wrote his dialogues to be performed at the Panathenaic. Games, with Plato himself acting as Socrates. This matches the early and some mid period dialogues, which have quite a lot of back and forth between characters, and are also of a suitable length to engage a crowd but not tire them out.

When things shift in the later dialogues, Ryle suggests that Plato suffered a health condition that prevented him from being on stage, and so swapped out Socrates with other philosophers. The timing also coincided with the founding of the Socratic School, where Plato taught and Aristotle eventually became student then teacher.

Gilbert Ryle

This could explain why the later 'dialogues' are really monologues: they were serving as lectures to students, rather than theatrical devices used to engage the public. After completion, Plato slightly modified them to be passed off as dialogues for the public.

In the end, this is all speculation. We can attempt to use historical context and external sources to explain away the inconsistencies, but despite thousands of years of efforts, the best philosophers have been unable to completely dismiss the theory of forms. Perhaps, like metaphor, it is a literary device

As He Saw Love (a Sonnet)

In youth, he thought that love was pure and bold,
A treasure shared by those whose hearts were kind.
Like sunlight caught in dreams, a joy to hold,
A secret path where fortune's light would find.

With age, his view grew cloudy, more restrained,
He laughed at love, a fake god made to please,
A dance to entertain, its grip a chain,
Yet deep in dreams remained that scent of peace.

Now, in his middle years, he starts to see,
Not grace nor mirage, love takes its true form,
A living art, grown slowly, wild and free,
A candle flickering through calm and storm.

It shifts and bends, it moulds, a shared intent,
In heart and mind, it bids us to repent.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Poetry

Unforgotten

One might, for example, speak of an unforgettable life or moment even if all men had forgotten it. If the nature of such a life or moment required that it be unforgotten, that predicate would imply not a falsehood but merely a claim unfulfilled by men, and probably also a reference to a realm in which it *is* fulfilled: God's remembrance.

Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator'

The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious.

Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History'

1

Should the Recording Angel not have wings?
The memorable may not come to mind.
Time-sensitive, the vital news she brings.

The past deed flashes up, the image springs;
Too long we lived forgetful, aspect-blind.
Should the Recording Angel not have wings?

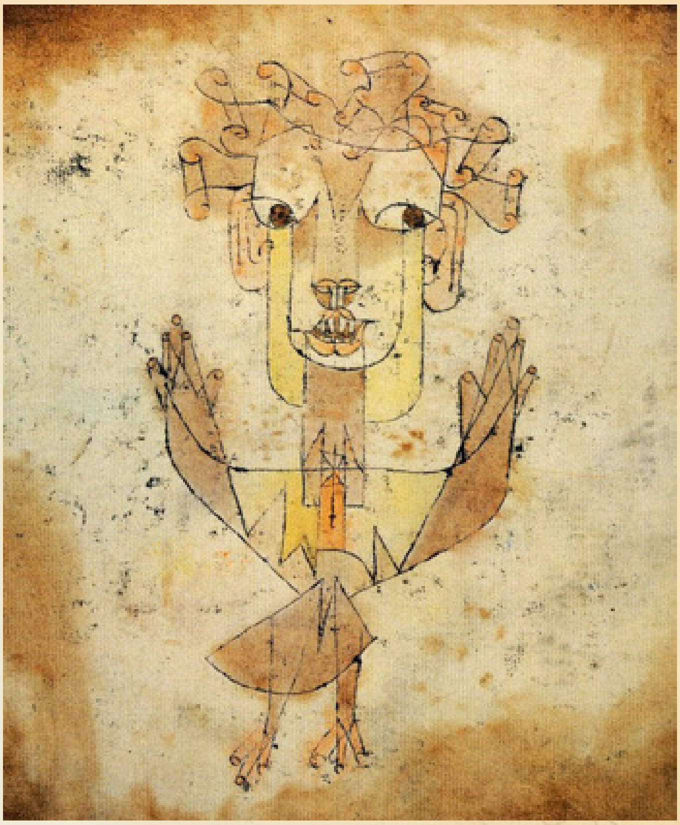
By her swift flights alone remembrance clings
To call-signs that hiatus left behind.
Time-sensitive, the vital news she brings.

Else they'll be lost, those *Jetztzeit* tokenings,
Or lost to us who've bearings yet to find.
Should the Recording Angel not have wings?

A broken music to our ears she sings,
Though future-charged when punctually divined.
Time-sensitive, the vital news she brings.

And yet, of this be sure: that everything's
Recorded, every past act truth-consigned.
Should the Recording Angel not have wings?
Time-sensitive, the vital news she brings.

CHRIS **NORRIS**



2
Who'll say alms for oblivion leaves no debt?
They err who think 'forgotten' means 'clean slate'.
What's unforgettable we may forget.

Those lives, deaths, moments, deeds we should regret
Or view with pride – they've no fixed recall-date.
Who'll say alms for oblivion leaves no debt?

We'd be truth's sole key-holders should we set
Its scope and limits by our memory-state:
What's unforgettable we may forget.

Think rather it's truth's standard must be met
If anything's to set our errors straight.
Who'll say alms for oblivion leaves no debt?

For mere forgetfulness may mask those yet-
Un-rediscovered truths that lie in wait.
What's unforgettable we may forget,

But should keep that in mind so never let
Hope's fragile witness fall to Pyrrho's fate.
Who'll say alms for oblivion leaves no debt?
What's unforgettable we may forget.

Quantum Teleportation and the Metaphysics of Identity

Beam me up, Scotty!"—a phrase emblematic of Star Trek's vision of instant travel—may soon move from science fiction to scientific reality. Recent advancements in quantum teleportation, particularly the potential transmission of electrons, bring us closer to the possibility of teleporting complex matter, even humans. However, such a breakthrough does not simply raise technical challenges but also profound metaphysical and ethical questions. If teleportation merely transmits quantum information while destroying the original, does the person at the destination remain the same individual, or are they merely an indistinguishable copy? Drawing on the insights of philosophers such as Derek Parfit, Thomas Reid, and Bernard Williams, this article briefly explores the paradoxes of personal identity, the implications for consciousness, and the existential dilemmas that teleportation presents. While quantum physics pushes the boundaries of what is possible, humanity must grapple with whether the risks of teleportation outweigh its potential. As we stand on the brink of a technological revolution, we must ask: is teleportation a gateway to the future or a philosophical trap leading to the ultimate loss of self?

DR. ALAN **XUEREB**

The Promise and Paradox of Teleportation

The recent breakthrough in quantum mechanics, suggesting that teleportation may soon be possible between electrons, marks a significant step toward what was once considered purely the domain of science fiction.

'This is incredibly exciting because nobody thought it was possible,' said Professor Prem Kumar of Northwestern University in the US, who led the study.'Our work shows a path towards next-generation quantum and classical networks sharing a unified fibre optic infrastructure. Basically, it opens the door to pushing quantum communications to the next level'.

While quantum teleportation has long been achieved with photons, extending this capability to matter is an entirely different challenge — one that raises not just technical questions but profound philosophical and ethical dilemmas.

Professor Jim Al-Khalili, who was not involved in the study, told BBC Science Focus: 'Quantum teleportation has been demonstrated before, but only under very careful laboratory conditions. The problem is that quantum-entangled particles used to teleport information quickly become entangled with everything else along their path'.

For now, the dream of human teleportation remains theoretical, but as quantum technology evolves, society may soon have to decide whether the benefits outweigh the existential risks. If human teleportation were to become possible, it would not involve the physical transport of matter. Instead, quantum teleportation would transfer the information that defines a person's atomic structure, allowing them to be reconstructed elsewhere while the original body is destroyed. This immediately confronts us with a metaphysical question: would the person at the destination be the same individual, or merely an exact replica with identical memories, thoughts, and personality?

Identity in the Age of Teleportation

This problem is not new to philosophy. The 18th-century philosopher Thomas Reid famously critiqued John Locke's theory of personal identity, arguing that memory alone is insufficient for continuity of self. If teleportation relies on replicating a person's information rather than preserving their material continuity, can we say the original person survives?

The thought experiment known as the 'Teletransportation Paradox', originally proposed by Derek Parfit, perfectly illustrates the dilemma. Suppose you step into a teleportation machine. Your body is scanned, your quantum information is transmitted, and you are reconstructed at a distant location while your original form is destroyed. The newly reconstructed person has all your memories, thoughts, and subjective experiences. But did you survive, or were you simply replaced by someone else who only believes they are you?

Parfit argued that identity might not be as important as psychological continuity. He suggested that if teleportation produced a perfect replica, the fear of death would be misplaced, as the replica would still carry our consciousness forward. However, this view is deeply unsettling to those who believe that true survival requires the persistence of a singular, numerically identical self.

The Death Machine Argument

Some physicists and philosophers, including Nobel laureate John Clauser, argue that teleportation is tantamount to death. By stepping into a teleportation machine, you are consenting to annihilation, with only a clone emerging on the other side. This is reminiscent of the infamous 'death machine' thought

**Teleportation of organic matter:
Transfer of information or destruction and recreation?
(AI generated picture.)**

experiment: imagine a teleporter that malfunctions and fails to destroy the original. Would we then say there are now two equally valid versions of you? If so, then teleportation cannot preserve personal identity—it can only create duplicates.

This raises troubling ethical concerns. If teleportation becomes a common method of travel, would societies encourage people to undergo what is effectively self-annihilation? Would religious or moral frameworks oppose it as a violation of the sanctity of life? And if a person commits a crime before teleporting, would their replica still be legally accountable?

Quantum Consciousness

A deeper philosophical issue concerns whether consciousness itself can be copied. If subjective experience—what philosophers call qualia—is more than just the sum of physical processes, then teleportation might be impossible in any meaningful sense. Could quantum mechanics eventually reveal that consciousness has an irreducible, non-material aspect, resistant to mere informational transfer?

Some interpretations of quantum theory, such as Roger Penrose's Orchestrated Objective Reduction (Orch-OR) hypothesis, suggest that consciousness might be tied to quantum processes that cannot simply be duplicated. If true, then teleportation might create an entity that is physically identical but lacking the original subjective self.

The Ethical and Existential Dilemma

Even if teleportation becomes technologically feasible, its adoption would force humanity to grapple with existential questions. Would society embrace teleportation, accepting a radical new understanding of identity? Or would the process be rejected as an unethical disruption of personal continuity? If teleportation is truly indistinguishable from death, should it be legally banned? Or would people gradually accept a new, Parfitian notion of selfhood, in which survival is no longer tied to the persistence of a singular body?

For now, these questions remain theoretical. Yet as quantum technology progresses, they may soon transition from the realm of philosophy into urgent ethical debates. When that moment arrives, the question will no longer be whether teleportation is possible — but whether humanity is prepared to face what it means.

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Is There In All Our Lives No Chance?

Is there in all our lives no chance
But does Fate govern all we do?
That was the youthful Nietzsche's view
That preordained is each life's dance.

And in that dance spectators see
Every step is preordained,
It is as though we are all chained,
Although we think that we are free.

Then have the famous earned their fame
If they were puppets in Fate's power?
And have the shameless earned their shame

And have the guilty earned their blame,
If every moment every hour
Could not have been different, but the same?

Edward Greenwood