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NICHOLAS WHITE

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Nicholas White

Department of Philosophy
University of Utah

Abstract. Goodman is known as an opponent of what he calls 'platonism'. One might therefore think that the main thing to be said about the relation between Plato and Goodman is simply that the latter rejected one important idea espoused by the former. In fact, however, Plato's interests were different from what the modern use of the ontological label 'platonism' suggests. Plato was mainly concerned to defend a notion of objectivity, according to which there is a single reality for us to be right or wrong about. Here, too, one might suppose that Plato and Goodman are completely opposed to each other, since Goodman defends a view according to which there are many 'versions' and many 'worlds'. Nevertheless there is an important common element in the ideas of both philosophers, although they develop it in very different ways.

Résumé. On connaît Goodman pour son opposition à ce qu'il appelle "platonisme". C'est pourquoi on pourrait penser que la principale chose à dire à propos de la relation entre Platon et Goodman est simplement que le second rejette une position importante adoptée par le premier. En fait, les préoccupations de Platon étaient différentes de ce que suggère l'usage moderne du label d'ontologie "platoniste". Platon s'attachait principalement à défendre une certaine notion d'objectivité, selon laquelle il y a une réalité unique à propos de laquelle nous pouvons nous tromper ou avoir raison. Ici aussi, on supposera que Platon et Goodman sont complètement opposés l'un à l'autre, étant donné que Goodman défend une vision des choses selon laquelle il y a de beaucoup de "versions" et beaucoup de "mondes" possibles. Toutefois, il y a un élément commun important dans les idées des deux philosophes, bien qu'ils les développent dans des voies très différentes.

When I was asked to make a presentation that would link Plato to Nelson Goodman, the task seemed straightforward. Surely, it appeared, the most salient thing about them is their disagreement about ontology. Thus I could say simply that Goodman rejected the theory of what Plato calls Forms (*eidê*) or Ideas (*ideai*), and that would be that. It turns out, however, that that isn't that.

In the first place, although Plato and Goodman diverge on what we now call ontological issues, their divergence is not as direct as it might appear. The position that Goodman rejects under the name of 'platonism' is not identical with the doctrine, 'Platonism', that Plato espouses. Indeed, the issues motivating their respective thoughts about these matters are very different. Thus a precisification of what divides them seems to be in order. The first part of this essay will be devoted to this matter.

Further reflection, however, has convinced me that there is far more to the relation between them than their differences. In fact, they have something in common that is at least as important, I would argue, as what separates them. I shall devote the greater part of what follows to this issue, though limitations of space will prevent me from doing justice to its full philosophical significance.

1. Plato was a Platonist, but no platonist.

Plato was by my definition a 'Platonist', while Goodman opposes what he calls 'platonism'. My question here is whether what Goodman opposes is the view that Plato espoused.

When we compare Plato's and Goodman's ontological views, we have to consider the respective contexts within which they worked. Goodman's work on ontology is done against a background of general concern, exemplified by Carnap but dating back to Berkeley and beyond, about which entities can be 'constructed' out of which other entities. The motivations for this concern arise, it seems fair to say, from impulses generated by natural science. They include a suspicion of both abstract entities and of universals, and a related general propensity to prefer spare ontologies over luxurient ones.

Within such a context, philosophers often find it attractive to explain certain entities in terms of others, or — as some philosophers put it — to 'construct' the former out of the latter. The point of this procedure is as follows. Suppose that you wish to talk about certain kinds of things, but find that they are philosophically obscure or puzzling, whereas other entities seem straightforward and unproblematic. A natural response to this situation is to try to show that the former entities can be constructed in philosophically clear and acceptable ways out of the latter. The former entities are felt thus to inherit acceptability, via the acceptable methods of construction, from the already-accepted entities.

Goodman employs this kind of procedure repeatedly. When the construction succeeds, he regards the entities that had seemed problematic as acceptable after all; when, on the other hand, there appears to be no prospect of such a construction, he draws the conclusion that the problematic entities should not be deemed to exist.

The context of Plato's work was different. He was not much affected by this kind of concern, and has on the whole little interest in the procedure of construction (though perhaps the late works, the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*, exhibit exceptions to this claim). Plato's ontology includes entities that he calls 'Forms' (*eidê*) or 'Ideas' (*ideai*). Many philosophers since, reacting against him, have denied that such things exist. Plato was aware of this reaction — for example on the part of the so-called 'giants' who appear in the *Sophist* [245e-248a]. Moreover thinkers like Anaxagoras had earlier been exercized over another ontological issue, namely whether gods exist. Plato thus twice presents arguments to try to convince doubters that there are indeed Forms distinct from sensible objects.

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Nevertheless on the whole the thinkers with whom Plato was in contact did not exert much pressure on him to be concerned about ontological economy.

As a result, Plato never took disbelief in the existence of Forms seriously. Only twice in his large corpus of writings, as I just said, does he ever explicitly argue that there are such entities [*Phdo.* 72-75; *Rep.* 476-480]. Moreover he never shows any sign of generally favoring ontological parsimony over ontological extravagance. He never suggests that accepting fewer entities or types of entities is, *ceteris paribus*, preferable to accepting more. He is far less focused upon issues of ontological economy than Goodman is.

Let me here briefly digress to mention one subtlety of interest to those who are familiar with Goodman's thinking. Goodman's worry about platonism, I would argue, is fundamentally an ideological issue (in Quine's sense of an issue of what notions are to be employed in one's theory), and only secondarily an ontological one. Goodman is not concerned in the first instance with how many entities or kinds of entities he ends up with, but rather with whether the notions by which these entities are specified and described make sense. For Goodman, I would say, ontological questions are really a special case of ideological questions. Thus Goodman would fault the notions that Plato employs at least as vehemently as he would protest the ontological profusion that they generate. Nevertheless it is still fair to say that both Goodman and the philosophers in whose wake he works are far more attentive to the ontological consequences generated by ideological issues than Plato and the thinkers around him ever were.

When Plato does deal with ontological questions, his way of doing so is often interestingly different from what we nowadays might expect. For instance his two aforementioned arguments for — as we would put it — 'the existence of Forms' do not have the now-customary structure. For example Plato does not give an argument that yields a conclusion of the type: 'Therefore F-ness exists'. Rather his conclusion is of this type: 'Therefore F-ness is distinct from sensible things that are F'. That 'F-ness *exists* is taken for granted from the beginning! Plato's project in these arguments is to prove that F-ness is *distinct from sensible things*. To be sure, his ultimate conclusion is the same as the one that we expect, namely that there is such a thing as F-ness which is not a sensible object. However the logic and semantics of his argument are obviously different from that of most modern arguments for this type of conclusion.

In a general way the repertoire of ontological concepts available to Plato is far less rich than what we, for better or worse, possess now, and as a result his ontology often appears to us not to be very well defined. For example we cannot expect him to declare plainly that Forms are, say, abstract particulars, or instead that they are universals, whether abstract or concrete — to name only some of the possibilities. Moreover his ontological arguments do not all point to a single sort of entity, whose existence Plato then felt obliged to defend. Rather, they gesture at what we nowadays must take to be sundry kinds of entities, which he often does not distinguish from each other. He did draw some relevant distinctions — between, for example, Forms and 'mathematicals' — and his students, including Aristotle, elaborated on these distinctions. At the beginning, however, Plato was inventing, for the first time, ways of articulating the various options as he went along. He neither had decided, nor even was trying to decide, among options that lay ready made for him.

I have said that, notwithstanding differences between Plato's concerns and modern ones, his Platonism does include an assertion that there are such things as Forms and that they are distinct from sensibles. Is this a view that Goodman rejects? Perhaps, but the main thrust of Goodman's anti-platonist thinking is not directed primarily at Plato's position.

In rejecting 'platonism' and espousing what he calls 'nominalism', Goodman's stated purpose is to reject the existence of anything that is not an 'individual'. Now terms like 'platonism', 'nominalism' and 'individual' all have somewhat unusual meanings within Goodman's thinking. According to Goodman, individuals may be made up of other individuals. The view that Goodman accepts, *'nominalism'*, consists in denying that individuals may be put together to compose a further individual in more than one way. Goodman's nominalist slogan might be, 'Same constituents, same composite'. The denial of nominalism is what Goodman labels 'platonism'. Thus by Goodman's definition *platonism* turns out to be simply the label for views that admit "the composition of different entities out of the same elements" [1984, 52].

Notice that in Goodman's terms a nominalist may therefore accept the existence of both abstract entities and universals, so long as he can construe them as individuals, i.e., can avoid maintaining that two of them have exactly the same individuals as constituents. Thus there can in Goodman's terminology be universal individuals and abstract individuals [1951, 248-250].

Plato's Platonism is not the platonism that Goodman attacks, and Plato's Forms do not clearly fail to be individuals in Goodman's sense. When called upon to describe how sensible objects and Forms stand to each other, Plato often says that sensibles 'participate' or 'partake' in Forms. Nothing in this assertion violates Goodman's nominalist strictures. To say that sensibles participate in Forms is not to say that Forms are *composed of* sensibles. It is also not to say that the same sensibles might compose more than one Form or more than one anything else. It is true that some sensibles might compose a further sensible that is a physical aggregate of them — think, for instance, of a pile of stones that is composed of many stones. But if the Form of F is not composed of physical objects, then there is no reason to believe that Plato might think it possible for different Forms to be composed of the same sensible objects. Thus, it so far appears that a Form might after all be an individual in Goodman's sense.

In fact Plato simply does not maintain that Forms are composed of sensibles. He was perplexed about how sensible objects and Forms are related, i.e., about what the relation of 'partaking' really amounts to. Nevertheless he never even hints that the relation might be one of composition. In the *Parmenides*, for instance, he makes several prominent suggestions about how to explain 'partaking': (1) that a Form — either all or part of it — might be 'in' a sensible; (2) that a Form might stand to sensibles as a day stands to various places at which, as we say, it is the same day; (3) that a Form stands to various sensibles as a sail stands to things over which it is spread; (4) that a Forms 'resembles' various sensibles. None of these possibilities has to do with composition or anything analogous to it. Indeed, Plato sometimes talks as though Forms are indivisible or atomic, and thus are not composed of anything at all [*Phdo*. 78d, 80b]. But even when he talks otherwise, so as to allow that Forms are composite entities [*Soph*. 257c], he shows no sign of believing that their constituents are sensibles. Rather, he here takes some Forms to be composed of other Forms.

Might he then have believed that different Forms could have the same Forms as their constituents, and thus violate Goodman's nominalism in that way? I must admit that there is no explicit evidence on this question. I know of no text showing that Plato rejected this contention. Equally, however, there is no evidence that he accepted it. I think that the evidence of silence in this case weighs in favor of the hypothesis that he did not envisage violating Goodman's stricture in this way.

It therefore seems to me reasonable to conclude that Plato's theory does not conflict with nominalism in Goodman's sense, and that therefore the platonism that Goodman attacks is not the Platonism

that Plato defends. I am not saying that Goodman *accepts* Platonism. Indeed, I shall soon explain that he does not. What I am maintaining, however, is that his *rejection* of platonism is not *itself* a *rejection* of Platonism. Rather, as I have said, Goodman's thinking is mostly focused on issues different from the ones that preoccupy Plato.

2. The thoughts from which Plato starts are much the same as the ones that lead Goodman to his idea of multiple worldmaking.

Now let me focus on what I regard as a significant though subtle similarity between the lines of thought that Plato and Goodman follow.

Let me begin by stating dogmatically something that I believe is essential to an understanding of Plato's thinking (I have argued for this point elsewhere [1976]). In spite of the ontological connotations of the labels 'platonism' and even 'Platonism', the most important thrust of Plato's thinking, whether he was talking about Forms and sensibles or about other issues, has to do with the notion that we often gesture at by means of the word '*objectivity*'. In loose and naive terms, Plato wished to defend the idea that there is an 'objective' reality for our judgments to be right or wrong about, and that the best kinds of judgments, in the favored sense of the word 'best', are the ones that tell us how reality is.

Right away it might appear that here Plato and Goodman share no common ground. For Goodman speaks for views that seem to be diametrically opposed to the one that I have just ascribed to Plato. Nevertheless they turn out, as I have said, to share a quite important way of thinking, which is either absent from other philosophers or at least present in a far less clear and explicit way.

What they share is a common way of understanding what is said by the use of certain important predicates or general terms, or statements using them. These predicates are not relational in form, but are often held to be covertly relational in content. Plato and Goodman both insist in common, and contrary to some other philosophers including Aristotle and Russell, that what is conveyed by these terms is *not* relational. Plato and Goodman draw rather different conclusions from this common thesis. Nevertheless the very fact of sharing this thesis unites them in a signficant way.

Here is how Goodman introduces his ideas about multiple worldmaking [1984, 30]:

Some truths conflict. The earth stands still, revolves about the sun, and runs many another course all at the same time.

Plato makes use of a similar idea. He considers the claim that

> [children's toy] tops [...] stand still as a whole at the same time that they are in motion when with the peg fixed in one point they revolve, and that the same is true of any other case of circular motion about the same spot (*Rep.* 436d).

Moreover both Plato's and Goodman's first reactions to this idea are similar. Both of them maintain that we cannot tolerate these conflicts. Goodman says,

> Yet nothing moves while at rest. We flinch at recognition of conflicting truths; for since all statements follow from a contradiction, acceptance of a statement and its negate erases the difference between truth and falsity.

Plato for his part says the following [*Rep.* 436e]:

> No such remarks [...] will disconcert us or [...] make us believe that it is ever possible for the same thing at the same time in the same respect and the same relation to suffer, be, or do opposites.

Both of them, then are committed to trying to show us how the conflicts that they cite can be avoided.

Now comes a further, crucial similarity. Goodman and Plato both deny that these alleged contradictions can be avoided by simple relativizations, particularly of the relevant predicates.

In *Ways of Worldmaking* Goodman takes up the apparently true but conflicting sentences [1978, 113],

(9) The earth rotates, while the sun is motionless

(10) The earth is motionless, while the sun revolves around it.

He contends (what many would dispute) that we cannot remove the conflict by paraphrasing (9)-(10) by

(11) The earth rotates relative to the sun

(12) The sun revolves relative to the earth.

Nor, he says, can we convey the thought behind (9) and (10) by

(13) The spatial relationships between the earth and the sun vary with time according to the formula f,

because (13) ascribes neither motion nor rest to either earth or sun. Goodman's response to the problem posed by (9) and (10), as is well known, is to think of (9) and (10) as each part of a comprehensive 'version' that deals with a distinct actual 'world'.

Plato is every bit as determined as Goodman to deny that conflicts like the one between (9) and (10) can be resolved by some simple relativization of what we take them to say. For instance Plato quite evidently regards a statement like (this is my example, not his, but it is appropriate)

(1)   This piece of cheese is hard

and

(2)   This piece of cheese is soft

as 'opposing' each other when they are used to describe the same object. But nevertheless he never proposes to paraphrase these statements by, e.g., 'This piece of cheese is harder than the average piece of cheese' (whatever that might be) or '... than the piece of cheese that I just felt' or anything like that. Plato realizes, of course, that the circumstances that give rise to these respective statements may be different. He knows that a person who asserts (1) is likely enough to have touched the piece of cheese, let us say, shortly after he touched a softer piece of cheese, or a softer something-or-other, and is equally likely to assert (2) shortly after having touched something harder. Nevertheless Plato refuses to say that the word 'hard' should be *paraphrased by* 'hard compared with the cheese that I just felt' or 'hard compared with the average piece of cheese' or anything of that kind. Rather, he thinks, 'hard' *just means* 'hard', and his theory of Forms takes its start from that thought.

Many philosophers since Plato have thought that the reason why he does not take terms like 'hard' to be covertly relational is that he is simply confused about relations, and in particular about the difference between relational statements and monadic predications. However it is evident that that accusation is false. He recognizes relational terms explicitly. He does this, for example in the *Symposium*, where he gives the example of 'brother' and 'love' (199d-200c). There is therefore no reason to think that his treatment of terms like 'hard' and 'soft' — as well as many other cases such as 'high' and 'low', 'large' and 'small', 'heavy' and 'light', not to mention such evaluative terms as 'just' and 'unjust' and 'good' and 'bad' — is not at all the result of a simple-minded mistake.

Thus both Plato and Goodman clearsightedly insist that statements of the sort just discussed are nonrelational. No one would accuse Goodman of being unaware of the difference between relational and non-relational statements, and we have just seen that Plato is aware of this distinction too.

There is yet another similarity between Plato's views and Goodman's. Both respond to the threat of conflict between judgments by insisting the contradictions are unacceptable. This is an important common attitude, especially in light of Goodman's otherwise largely relativist views.

Goodman insists that we may not accept contradictions. Thus he says, "acceptance of a statement and its negate erases the difference between truth and falsity" [1984, 30]. He steadfastly rejects such a course. This attitude fits well with his characterization of his own position. In *Ways of Worldmaking* he labels his view "radical relativism with rigorous restraints and irrealism" [1978, 39]. One restraint is his refusal to accept contradictions — a refusal on which this argument, at least, for multiple worldmaking evidently depends. Likewise he expresses hostility to "the irresponsible relativism that takes all statements as equally true" [1984, 32].

Plato is also hostile to contradictions. Sometimes he appears to suggest that we engage in discourse entirely about things that do not admit of contradictions — i.e., about the Forms. At other times he seems to suggest that we need not accept contradictions about sensible things either. In this vein he rejects, even for sensible things, the already-cited idea that "it is ever possible for the same thing at the same time in the same respect and the same relation to suffer, be, or do opposites" [*Rep.* 436e].

Let me conclude my treatment of this topic by digressing for a moment to explain the issue that I am discussing by contrasting it with some related issues. You might think that the similarity that I have urged between Plato and Goodman is common to virtually all metaphysical thought since its beginnings in, say, Heraclitus and Parmenides. You might think, that is, that I am saying merely that Plato and Goodman wish to avoid conflicts that arise in our perceptions of, or judgments about, the world as we perceive it. Or alternatively you might think that my point is that they wish to avoid contradictions like the ones that Heraclitus and Parmenides feared. I do indeed wish to make both of these points. However what I am saying goes beyond them.

I would insist that the similarity between Plato and Goodman that I stress is not to be identified either with a general desire to avoid contradictions, nor again with relatively restricted metaphysical puzzles about change or river-like entities. What unites Plato and Goodman is that they both think, in a way that many other philosophers do not, that certain judgments and statements lead to contradictions. They think this because they believe that these

judgments may not be taken to be relational or paraphrasable by relational judgments, even though they may appear to be so. This — not any special concern with judgments about change, nor the more general desire merely to avoid contradictions — is what they have most signficantly in common.

3. Nevertheless Goodman is not a Platonist.

Although Plato and Goodman share a common interpretation of certain statements, and a hostility to contradictions, they proceed to very different conclusions.

Goodman's response to conflicts like the one manifested in (9) and (10) is to talk of a plurality of worlds. To put the point loosely, he blames such conflicts on our tendency to think that there is only one true or right version which describes a single reality or world. He then tries to obviate the conflicts by resisting that tendency. He says that each of (9) and (10) is associated with its own world or worlds.

This is emphatically *not*, in Goodman's view, to say that *what is said or conveyed* by (9), e.g., is that 'In world *W*, the earth rotates, while the sun is motionless', or any other such relational statement. Rather, (9) means just the non-relational thing that it says. However, Goodman thinks, we should abandon the idea that when one says something like (9), meaning the unrelativized thing that it does, one is attempting to describe *the* single world or reality that there is. Instead the act of asserting (9) is merely an attempt to present *a* world. (I am unsure that Goodman's thought here is consistent, but I leave that matter aside here.)

Plato's reaction to the conflicts is very different from Goodman's. Much of the time Plato seems to blame such conflicts on the world, or, more exactly, on the sensible world. According to this thought, the difficulty is that the sensible world is itself full of conflicts and contradictions: it is somehow an inconsistent *thing*, which contains many other inconsistent things, and simply has to be described with that fact in mind. That is why it 'both is and is not' and so is unintelligible, as dark as a cave.

But Plato does not leave matters there. He makes two further proposals. One is to suggest that rational discourse must be about entities that lie outside of this inconsistent world. Those entities are, of course, the Forms. Thus one finds him seeming to assert that we should confine our serious discourse to the Forms and, at least insofar as we aim to talk intelligibly, dispense with discourse about sensibles altogether.

However, Plato does not always adhere to the view that reasonably consistent discourse about the sensible world is impossible. His other proposal is to maintain that we can somehow say at least some non-contradictory things about sensible objects. The details of this proposal are desperately difficult to understand (the mystifying slogans often associated with it are no help). As I have already twice mentioned, he makes an argument concerning the sensible world that is based on the premise that opposed attributes may not be ascribed to the same thing in the same way [*Rep.* 436e]. Moreover he is very anxious to avoid contradictions that arise from our use of notions like 'being' and 'one' [*Parm.*, pt. II], and also strongly motivated by a desire to be able to conclude that discourse is possible [*Parm.* 134e-135c]. Therefore we cannot say that he simply took the sensible world to be a 'self-contradictory thing' which we should try to forget about.

In addition, Plato also shows awareness, at least in his later works like the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, that conflicts arise in discourse about the Forms as well. Forms, like sensibles, 'both are and are not', at least in some ways. According to this attitude, conflicts may not be avoided simply by giving up the practice of thinking about sensible objects. Nevertheless he continues, as far as we can tell, to believe in the existence of Forms [*Tim.* 51d-e].

It is worth remarking that something resembling Goodman's notion of the multiplicity of worlds might be claimed to be present in Plato, not as a position that he advocates, but as one that he ascribes, perhaps playfully, to Protagoras. In the *Theaetetus* Plato makes Protagoras contend that "... nothing is anything just by itself", but rather that things "are to each person as he perceives them" [152c-d]. At times, Plato so presents this idea as to hint at a view much like Goodman's. As one commentator has suggested, it is as if Plato ascribes to Protagoras the view that each person has 'his own world', in which the things that that person believes are true [Burnyeat 1976, 182-183, 191].

However this way of reading the *Theaetetus* is not the usual one. Most interpreters think that Protagoras is there portrayed as adopting a policy of always transforming nonrelational predicates into predicates that are relativized to an observer, or to someone who holds a belief. Under this scheme, 'The wind is cold' would be replaced by 'The wind is *cold to* Theodorus'. Protagoras would on this interpretation be like someone who, contrary to what Goodman recommends, transforms (9)-(10) into (11)-(12).

Nevertheless this interpretation has its drawbacks. Plato does not consistently relativize the judgments that he puts into Protagoras'

mouth. Sometimes his language seems to indicate that since Theodorus takes it that the wind is cold, we should suppose that it *is* cold! This would be like Goodman's refusal to paraphrase 9)-(10) into (11)-(12). Moreover there is another possible point of similarity between Goodman and the view that is ascribed to Protagoras. According to Goodman's view, we may not say that the various worlds can all be taken together as making up a *single totality* of worlds [1984, 31-32]. In the same way, there is no sign in the *Theaetetus* of such an idea of a total super-world that contains all of the worlds that are attached to individuals' sets of beliefs.

Therefore perhaps someone back in Plato's time did, however fleetingly, think in a way similar to Goodman's. But in spite of this suggestion, there remain deep differences between Plato's and Goodman's approaches to these issues.

In that vein let me turn to the crucial difference between Goodman's and Plato's respective ways of trying to deal with these threatened contradictions. Goodman constructs a view that will enable us to escape them. Plato does this too, but also insists on developing a theory, of a type that Goodman would be unwilling to accept, about our understanding of the terms and statements that led to the conflicts in the first place.

In a nutshell, Plato's thought runs as follows. In our non-philosophical moods we have a sense that we understand terms like 'hard', 'soft', 'light', 'heavy', etc., as non-relational. However, when in response to perception or even to certain kinds of thoughts, we try to apply these terms in the way that we naturally tend to do, we discover that we are always irresistably led to make conflicting statements. Whatever is F will also appear to us non-F, and vice versa, and likewise with all such pairs of terms [*Rep.* 479a-b]. So, Plato infers, we have to say that there is something wrong with this kind of very natural talk as it is applied to sensible things. Our experience drives us irresistably to calling sensible things 'hard' or 'light', *tout court*. But we find that, just as irresistably, it drives us to accept statements or judgments that seem respectively inconsistent with these.

But by that same token, to reiterate, Plato believes that we find ourselves with a sense that we do *understand* such terms, taken as *not* relative to perceiver or believer. We are as unwilling simply to give up the idea that it makes sense to call things hard or light, etc., as we are to give up the intelligibility of the idea, in Goodman's example, that some things move and that they also are at rest.

Plato tries to explain how we could understand such notions. His explanation is that the intelligibility of these notions is brought

about by our apprehension, through something other than sense perception, of the Forms. Seemingly he believes both that our initial acquisition of these notions is caused by an apprehension, either before birth or soon after it [*Phdo.* 75-78], of Forms corresponding to these notions, and also that our present understanding of the notions is sustained by a continuing capacity, which unfortunately is in many people very weak, to apprehend those same Forms.

Much of Plato's metaphysical doctrine finds a motivation within the context of this account of what led to it. Let me give just one example. Why does Plato hold that Forms are outside of space and time [*Tim.* 37e-38a]? Various ways of formulating and justifying this idea exist — one construal is given by Goodman [1951, Ch. 11, 357-59]. At bottom the reason is Plato's wish to deny that Forms are, so to speak, embedded within a context that would allow them to be apprehended from distinct spatial or temporal perspectives. For that would open up the possibility of their being the subject of conflicting judgments, just as sensibles are. As I have said, Plato seems ultimately to have given in to this possibility. In his earlier works, however, he apparently resisted it.

On various grounds, Plato believed that the existence of various standpoints within space and time, along with the effects of our bodies and physical surroundings on our perceptual and cognitive apparatus, are what generate conflicting judgments about sensibles. He therefore strove to think of our minds and Forms as standing to each other in such a way that variations of spatial and temporal perspective could not affect our apprehension of the Forms, except by *obscuring* them from us *without*, however, leading to *mistaken* judgments about them. This effort seemingly could not succeed, though Augustine attempted it centuries after Plato's death in Bk. 2 of *De Libero Arbitrio*, and Russell did likewise many centuries later [1912, Ch. 10].

My purpose in presenting this rapid survey of Plato's views is to stress something that is not sufficiently appreciated. Many of Plato's views about Forms are primarily an attempt to answer the following question: How can we account for the fact that we seem to understand these apparently nonrelational notions, given that perception offers us no cases in which the notions can be applied without conflict? Plato does not seem to think that there is any way to answer this question without appealing to Forms. I might emphasize that he also mentions the hypothesis — though he rejects it — that we simply do not understand our discourse at all [*Parm.* 135b-c].

Why did Plato think that the positing of Forms was the *only* hypothesis that would do? In part, I am afraid, it is because he supposed that if a person comprehends a certain notion (of this type,

at least), that can only be because there has been presented, to his perception or his mind, something that *actually exemplifies* that notion. I would like to find evidence that Plato did not rely on such a supposition, but I doubt that that can be done. It is mainly this way of thinking, though, that leads him to think of the Forms as 'paradigms' after which sensibles are somehow copied.

To my mind the salient difference in this area between Plato and Goodman is that Goodman does not attempt to provide any account of what makes possible our non-relational understanding of terms and statements like these. Of course, Plato's account would in many ways be unacceptable to Goodman. But it is really Plato's whole program of trying to supply such an account that seems most at odds with Goodman's way of thinking. It appears to me that the type of account that Plato was aiming for is regarded by Goodman either as impossible or else as more fruitfully sought by ordinary empirical psychology, not by the kind of philosophizing that he himself chiefly engages in.

4.But in another way Goodman is perhaps something of a Platonist.

The claim that such statements are covertly relational is the most straightforward way of defending the thesis that those statements describe a single objective reality. That is why so many philosophers incline to it. If we are tempted to say that X is large and that X is small, it is tempting to resolve the seeming conflict by relativizing both statements, so that we end up saying, e.g., that X is large *compared to Y* and that it is small *compared to Z*, since these two statements obviously do not conflict with each other. This relativization permits us to say that there is a single reality within which X is, in this relational way, both large and small.

Another sort of relativization involves observers. Thus, in an example of Plato's, the wind may initially seem to be both cold and warm [*Tht.* 152b-c]. To avoid the conflict, Protagoras may have suggested that we say that the wind is cold *to person A* but warm *to person B*. He would assume that there is no possibility of deciding that the wind is warm rather than cold or vice versa. In other words, it is assumed that there is no way of choosing A or B as the best judge of whether the wind is cold or not.

This relativization to observer leads to a peculiar result. In one way, it seems to permit us to preserve the idea that there is a single reality that we are talking about. For saying that the wind is cold to A but not to B does not, on the surface, have the appearance of a contradiction or conflict. However when we look more closely, we

may perhaps conclude that this freedom from conflict comes at a price. We are not forced to deny, so far, that there is a single reality that we are describing. However we are barred from saying anything about whether any wind is 'objectively' or 'really' cold or warm. And in fact that is how we do react in this case. There is 'no fact of the matter', we think, as to whether winds really are warm or cold. Rather, cold and warmth are 'subjective' matters. What is objective, we might add, is *temperatures*: whether the wind really is 60°F can be measured by a thermometer. If we confine this strategy to a relatively narrow set of notions, like 'cold' and 'warm' and 'soft' and 'hard' and the like, the cost of relativization is relatively low. We are left with a largely objective world, within which there are also matters of perspective or judgment or taste.

But a severe price is exacted if we say, as perhaps Protagoras did, that there is *never* a way of determining that a particular statement or belief or appearance is more acceptable or correct than some conflicting statement. Then if there are different thermometers with different readings, we cannot say that it is really 60°F, but only that it is 60° 'to' this thermometer but 59° to that one. We thus encounter no *conflict* that forces us to deny that there is a single objective world or reality. Nevertheless we are forever *prevented* from saying that reality is, objectively, *any* particular way at all. According to such a view, no statement or belief or appearance can be *constrained* by facts about how things really are, because no such facts are accessible.

You may have noticed already that if this argument is applied in full generality, the same problem affects not only descriptions of winds, but also descriptions of statements and beliefs and appearances themselves. We started by saying that the wind appears cold to one person and warm to another. But if we are barred from talking about how things really are, we are *ipso facto* barred from talking about how things really do appear to people, as opposed to how it appears that things appear to them. And, of course, so on.

For the same type of argument can be iterated, with various results all tending in the same direction. For instance what *A* believes can become a matter of what someone believes that *A* believes. And of course it can often be controversial what a given person believes, so that 'to' *C* it can be the case that *A* believes that *p* whereas to *D* it can be the case that *A* does not believe that *p*. Notice that a parallel argument can be used to deny that a given statement 'really' has a particular content, that a given sentence 'really' has a particular meaning, and so on. If *everything* is relativized to observer or believer, or the like, then *nothing* is left for us to say about what is what, even about beliefs and statements.

Plato used a similar line of argument to try to show that Protagoras' Relativism was self-refuting [*Tht.* 169-171]. In my version of the argument — which is different from Plato's version — the upshot seems to be that on Protagoras' own view, his assertion of Relativism can possess no definite content. In other words, it cannot on Protagoras' view be objectively the case that his statement of Relativism has a particular content, or that he himself believes it.

Ironically enough, therefore, the policy of relativization, which first appeared to be a way of saving an objective world that could be described without contradiction, ends up when fully generalized leaving us without the possibility of saying anything about anything.

What Plato and even Goodman both save, when they refuse to maintain that statements such as I have discussed must be relativized to the point of view from which they are accepted, is the possibility of thinking of such statements as being, in *some* sense, about an objective reality.

In Plato, non-relativized notions are associated with Forms, and Plato claims (again, at least in his earlier works) that we can describe these Forms without conflicts, or (perhaps in the later works as well) without conflicts that run out of control. Judgments involving such notions are thought of as purporting to express objective states of affairs, which concern Forms, and the judgments are entertained and evaluated on the assumption that they do so. (In the meantime the *Timaeus* perhaps embarks on a program of showing how objective judgments may be made about the physical world [White 1992].

In Goodman the content of these statements is likewise not relativized, but the statements are associated with different worlds. This in its way is something near to being a relativization: we are barred from saying that particular statement is flatly *true regardless of* which world is taken into consideration. Rather the statement may be part of some 'right' version, so that it somehow has a world associated with it. On the other hand Goodman denies that the *what the statement says* (as he puts it) is *that* it holds only for a world and perhaps not for others. As it is used, a statement like (9) or (10) is to be taken 'at face value', so to speak, but the advancing of it is not to be regarded as claiming uniqueness for the world with which it is associated.

Obviously some philosophers will maintain that here in Goodman's view there lurks a contradiction, and I think that that may well be so (though it is at the very least a subtle matter to formulate and demonstrate the contradiction convincingly). But it is

still clear that the effect, within his view, of refusing to say that all such statements say something relational is to preserve the possibility of expressing judgments that are, in some degree, treatable *as if* they were about something objective, even if that something is only one world among others. That seems to leave Goodman, like Plato, with a universe in which most things are not 'objective' matters, but still with a background of some things that are, at the least, taken as fixed.

Thus I conclude with two pairs of sentences:

(P1) Plato is a Platonist

(P2) Plato is not a platonist,

and

(G1) Goodman is in no degree a platonist

(G2) Goodman is in some degree a Platonist.

You might ask yourself whether there is any contradiction here.

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