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Sky & Psyche in Plato

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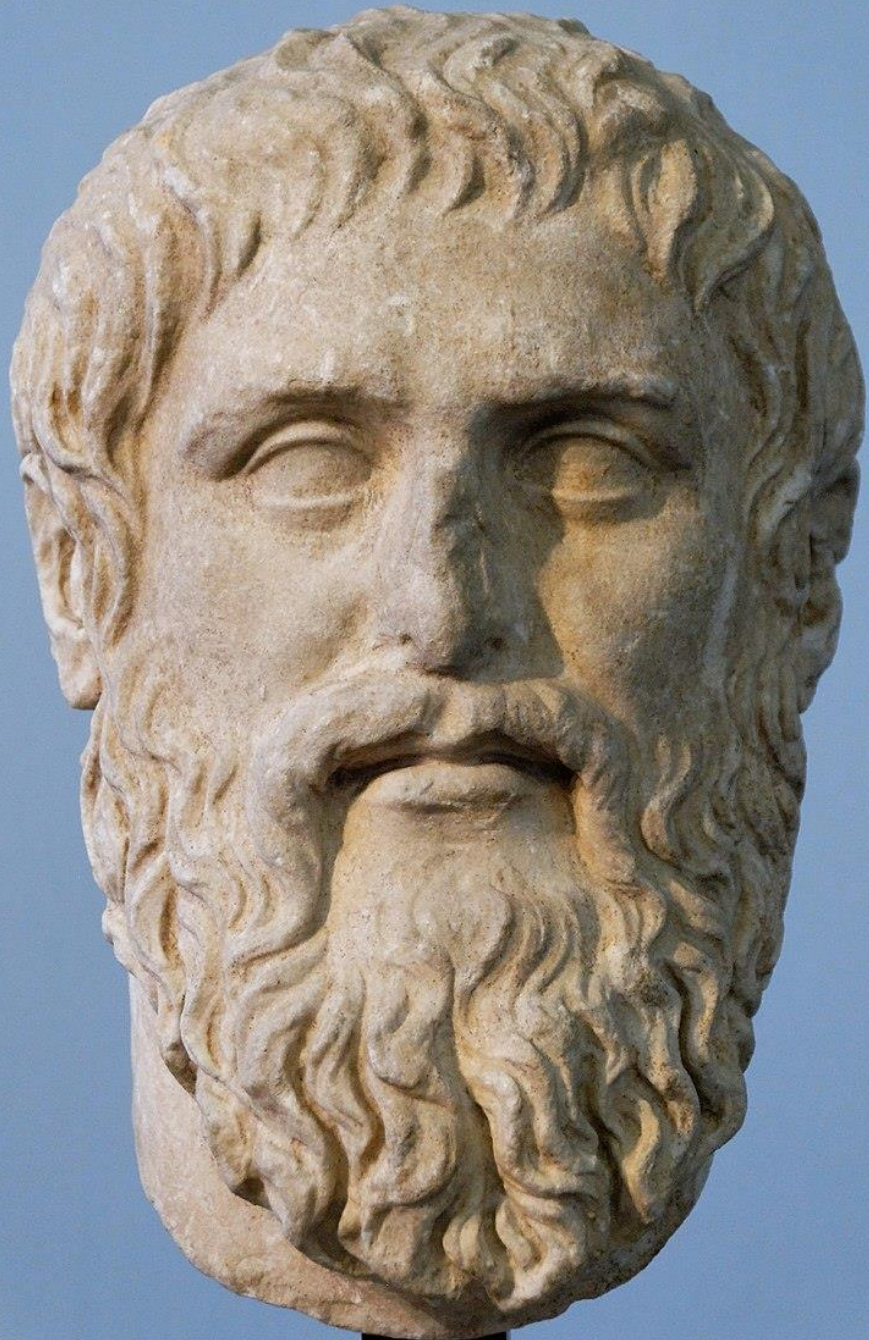
Agenda

Review of Plato's Cosmology

Plato's Changing View of the Soul

The Soul and the Sky

Knowledge of Astronomy



Plato (428–348 BCE)

From Athens

Aristocratic background

Difficult times

- Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE)
between Athens and Sparta

Founded the Academy in 387 BCE

- Aristotle
- 300 years

Thirty-five dialogues and thirteen letters

- Some disputed



Eagle Bringing cup to Psyche

The Soul (*psuchē*) in Plato

Concerned with the spiritual welfare of the soul

‘For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul’

Apology, 30a-b



Eagle Bringing cup to Psyche

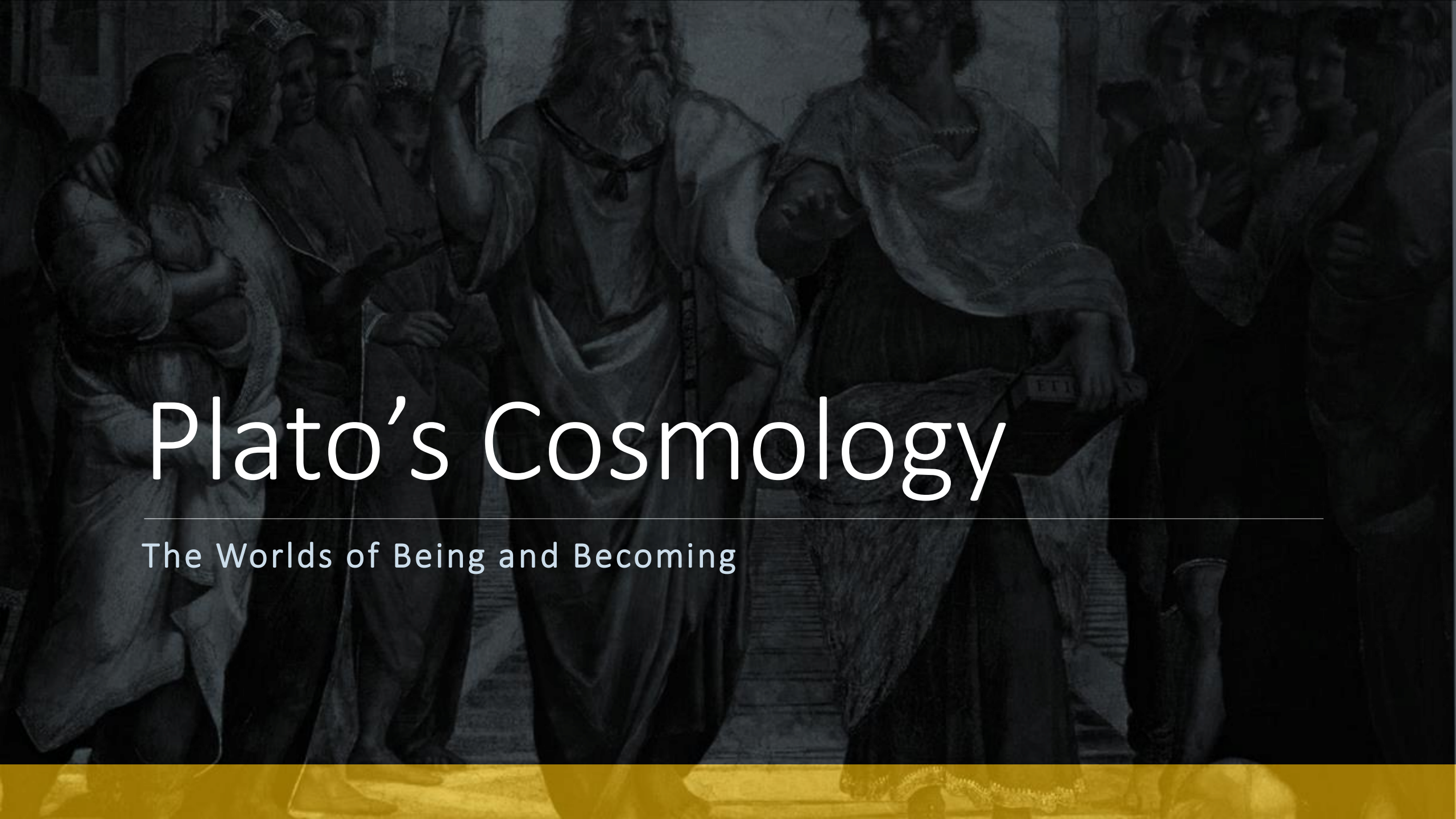
The Soul (*psuchē*) in Plato

‘Thus, that when I say that next after the Gods – our masters – and their attendant spirits, a man must honour his soul, my recommendation is correct.’

Laws, 727a

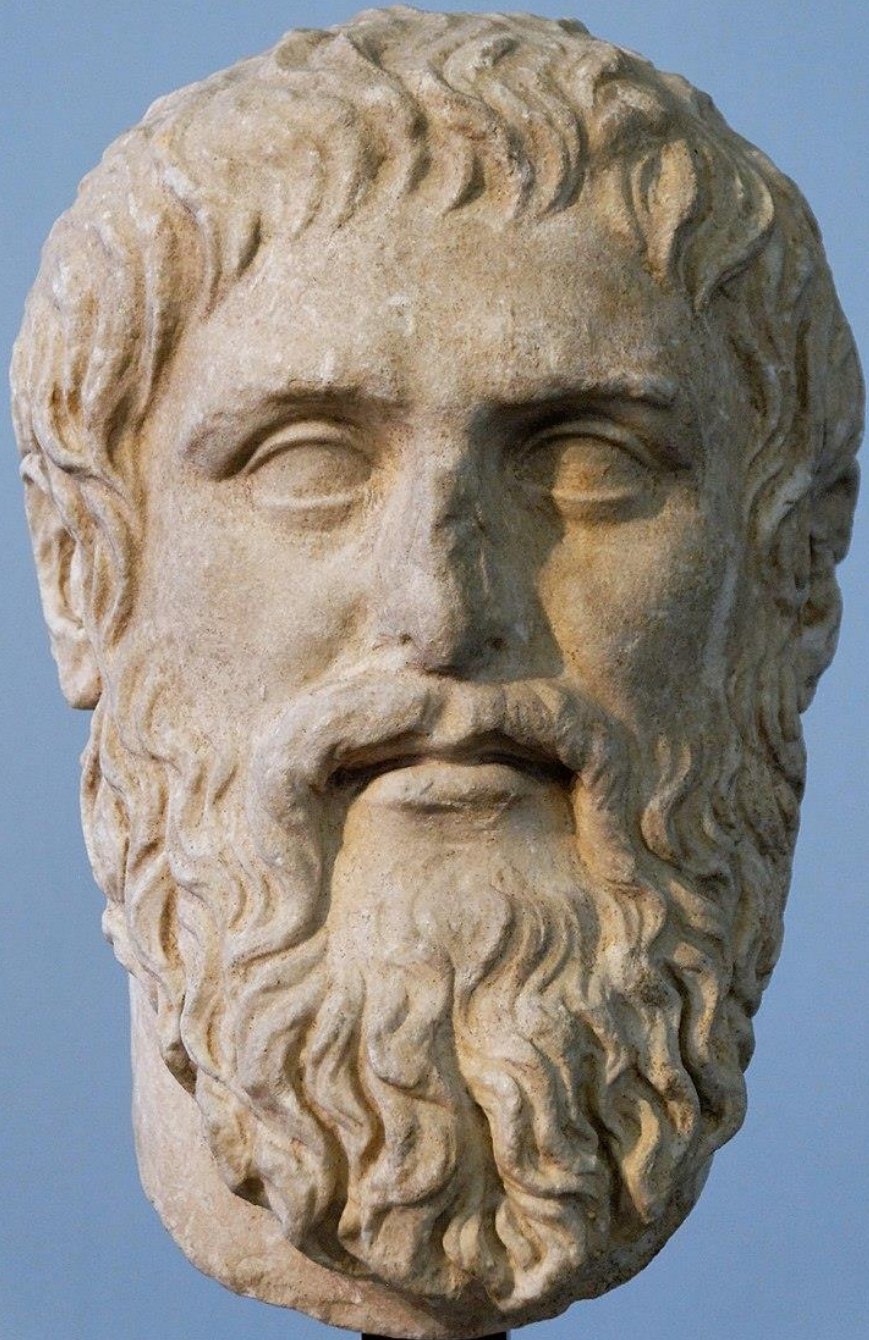
The ‘care for the soul’ motif is implicitly or explicitly present in every one of Plato’s dialogues

Solmsen, Friedrich, ‘Plato and the Concept of Soul (Psyche): Some Historical Perspectives’, p. 358



Plato's Cosmology

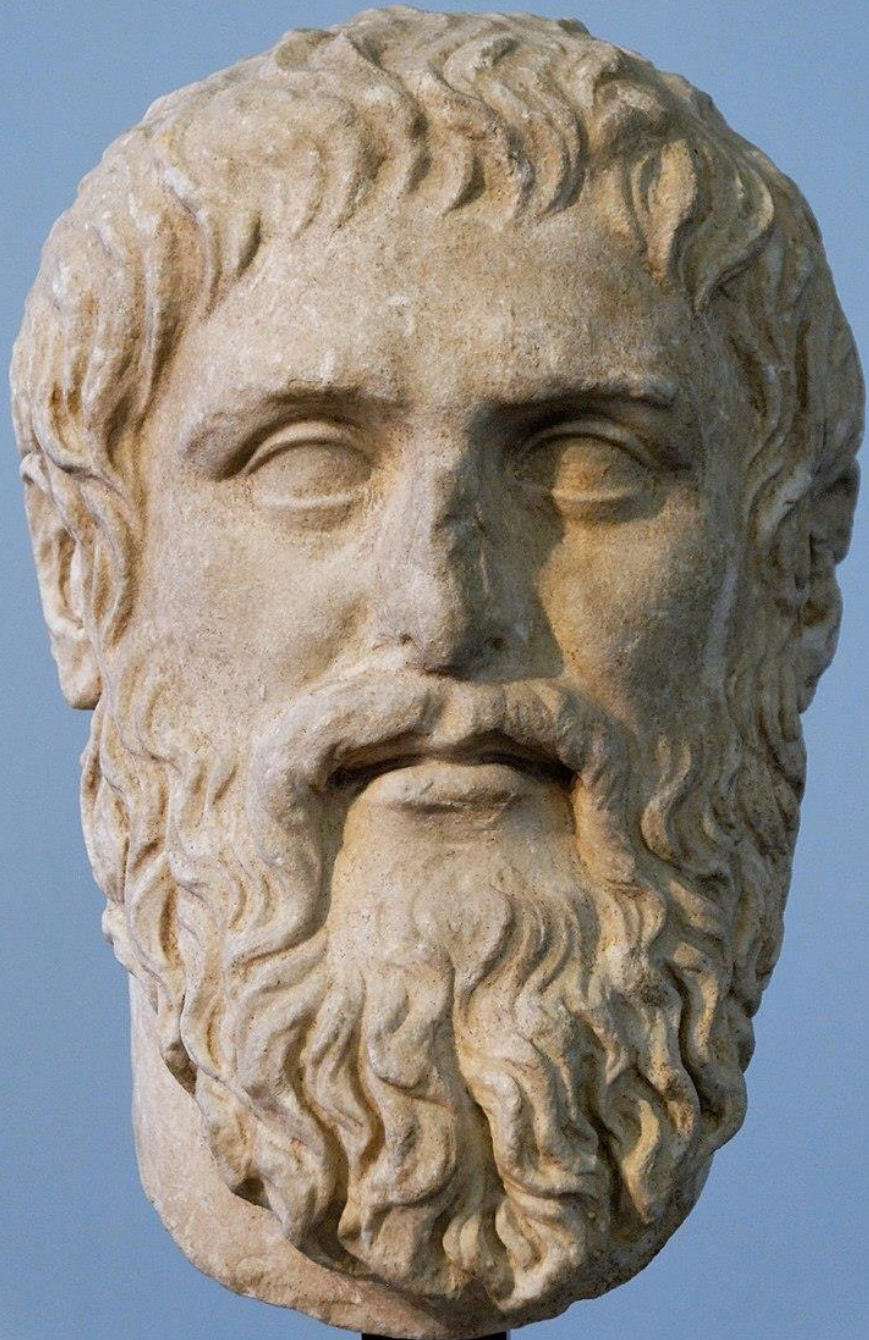
The Worlds of Being and Becoming



Plato's Cosmology

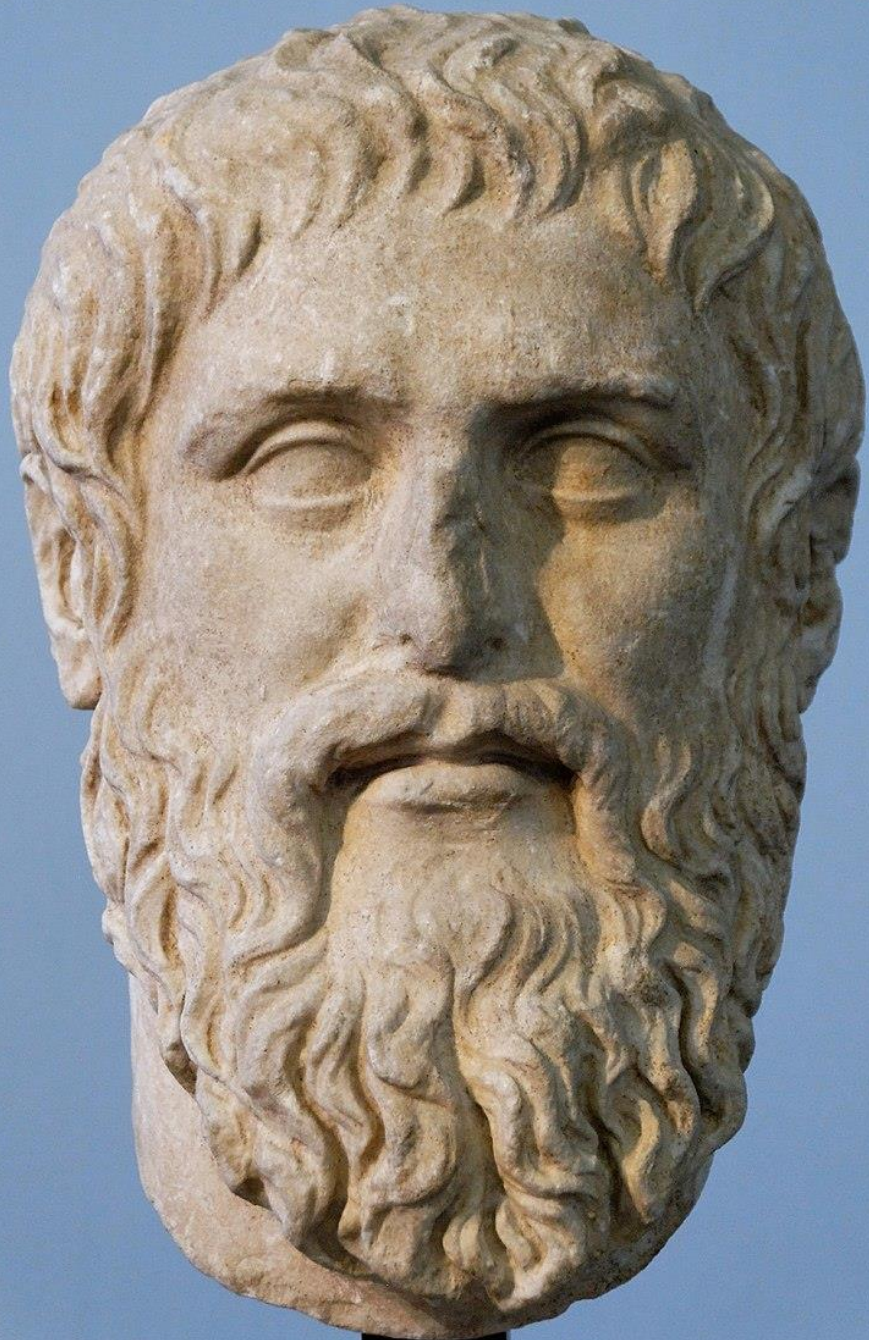
The World of Being

- Perfect and unchanging
- An intelligible, incorporeal world of Ideas - which was inhabited by a creator God
- Grasped by Reason
- Creates the physical universe
 - *Timaeus*, 28d
- Ineffable
 - 'The place beyond heaven – none of our earthly poets has ever sung or ever will sing its praises enough'
 - *Phaedrus*, 247c



Being and Becoming

- The World of Becoming
 - Imperfect and unstable
 - A visible, corporeal reality - that contained the visible universe, including the Earth.
 - Everything on Earth is in a constant state of decline but even the corrupt matter was beautiful because God created it and modelled it on the eternal
 - Grasped by opinion, which he associated with the body and the physical senses
 - *Timaeus* 28b-d



In Plato's Words

‘As I see it, then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is? ***The former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account.*** It is unchanging. ***The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception.*** It comes to be and passes away, but never really is.’

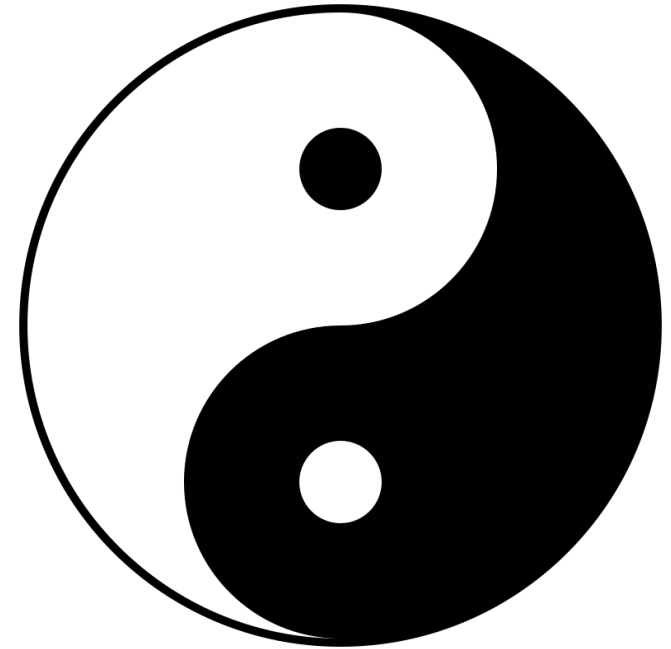
◦ *Timaeus* 28d

Criteria for a Dualism

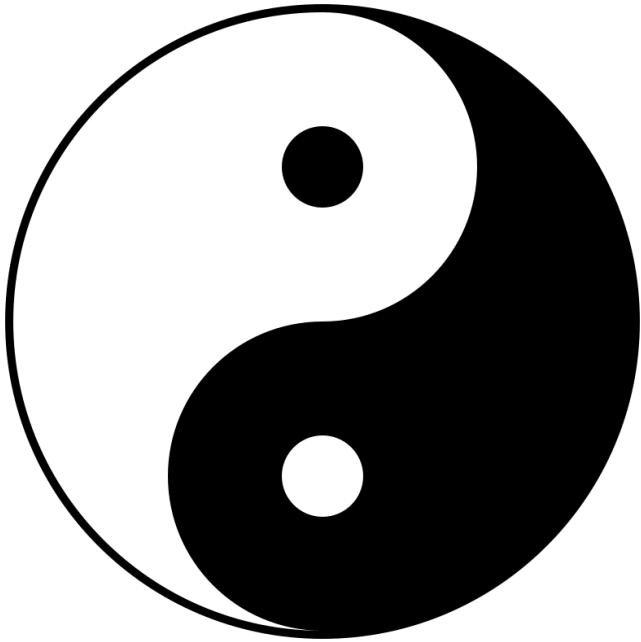
There are two members involved

Those members, even when joined to each other, remain opposed to each other

- Robert J. O'Connell, *Plato on the Human Paradox* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 114.



Classes of Dualism



Cosmological Dualism

- 'A contrast between two levels of existence, the earthly and the heavenly.'

Anthropological Dualism

- 'A contrast between two parts of the body, the body and soul.'

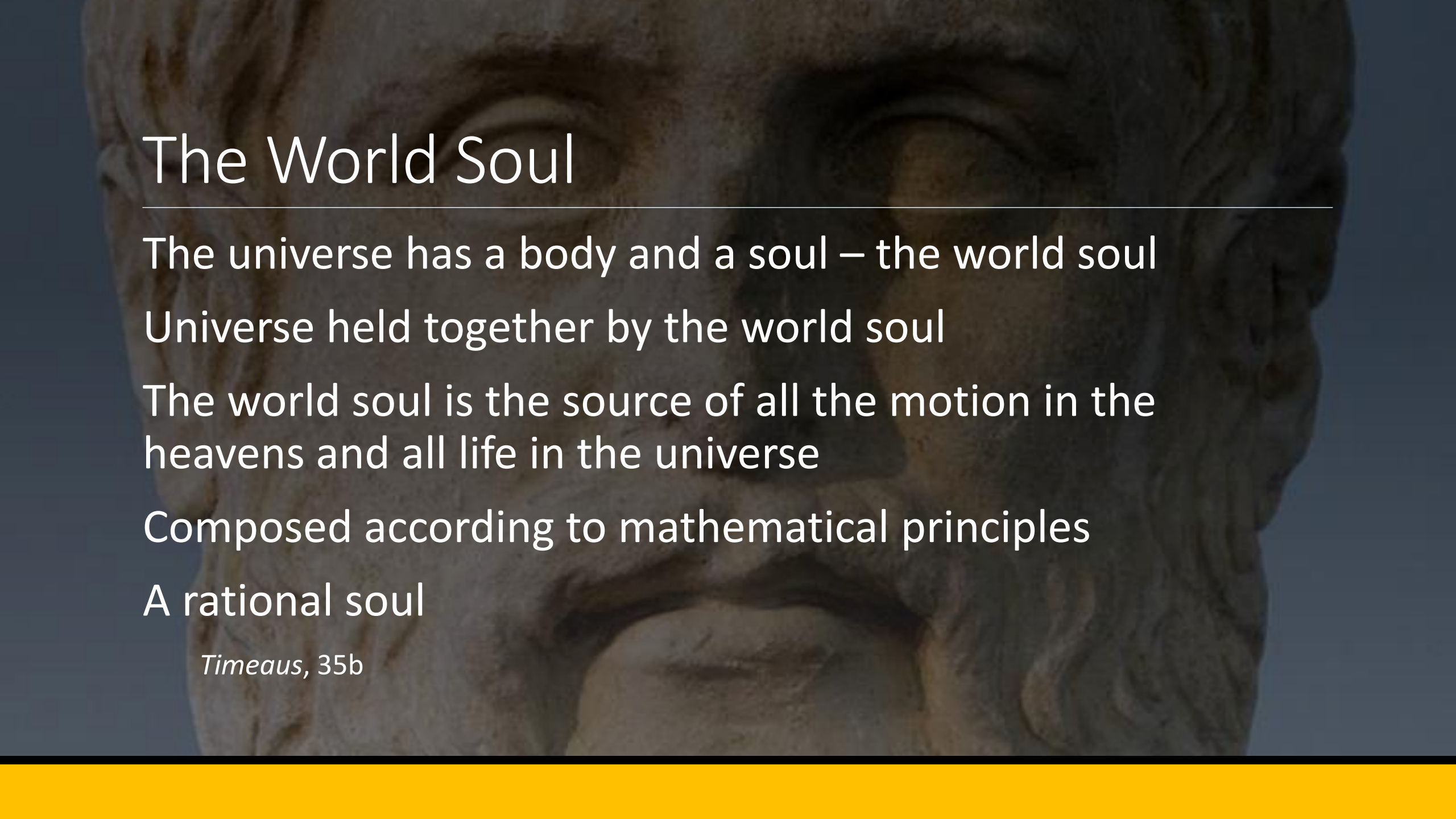
The two types of dualism are closely associated, with the body belonging to the earthly level and the soul belonging to the heavenly or spiritual level

- George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm E. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993 [1974]), pp. 435-36.

Cartesian Dualism

‘From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this ‘me’, that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is.’

- Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.



The World Soul

The universe has a body and a soul – the world soul

Universe held together by the world soul

The world soul is the source of all the motion in the heavens and all life in the universe

Composed according to mathematical principles

A rational soul

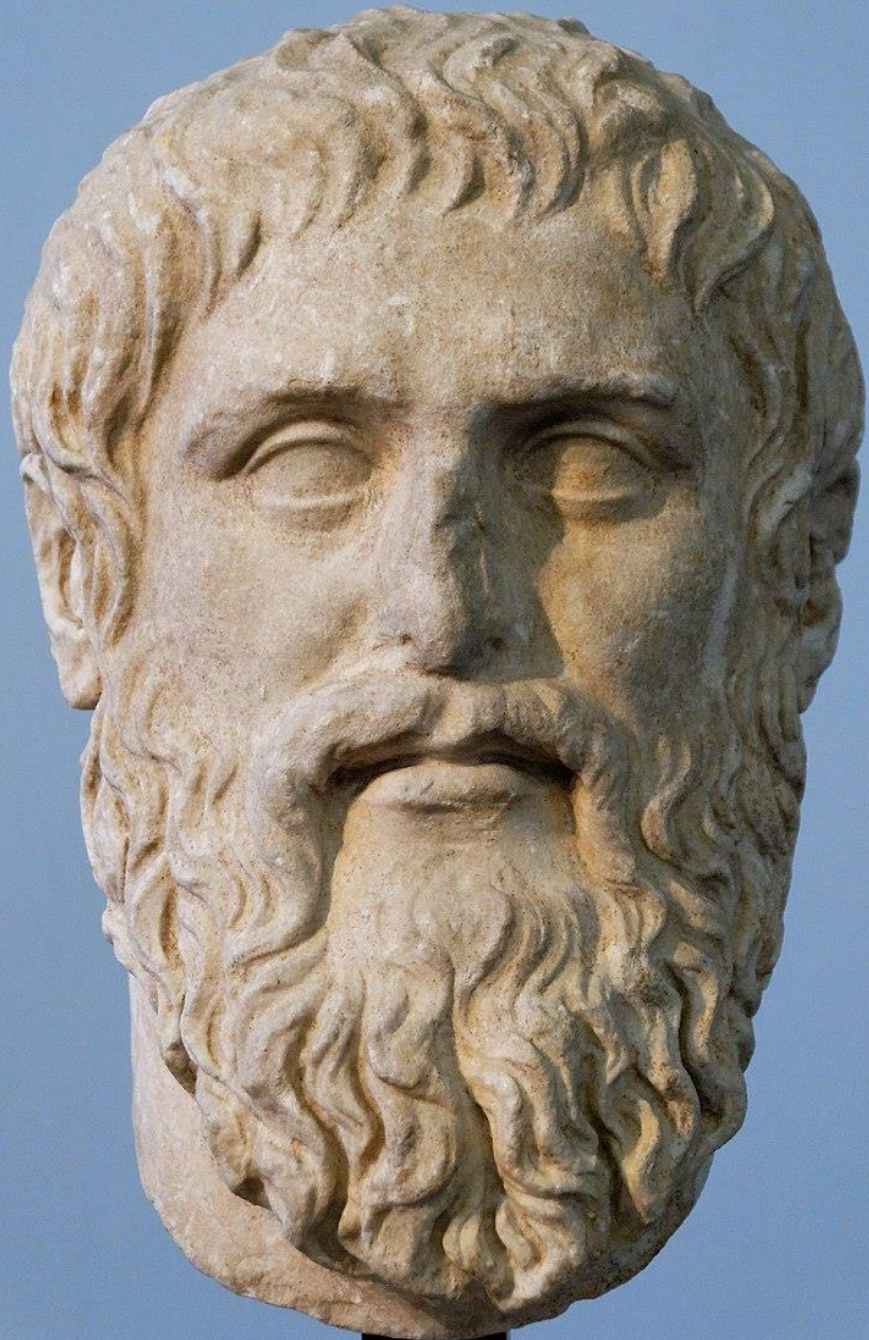
Timeaus, 35b

The World Soul – The Recipe

A mixture of Being and Becoming

‘In between the Being that is indivisible and always changeless, and the one that is divisible and comes to be in the corporeal realm, he mixed a third, intermediate form of being, derived from the other two. Similarly, he made a mixture of the Same, and then one of the Different, in between their indivisible and their corporeal, divisible counterparts. And he took the three mixtures and mixed them together to make a uniform mixture, forcing the Different, which was hard to mix, into conformity with the Same. Now when he had mixed these two together into Being, and from the three had made a single mixture, he redivided the whole mixture into as many parts as his task required, each part remaining a mixture of the Same, the Different, and of Being.’

Timeaus, 35b



The World Soul

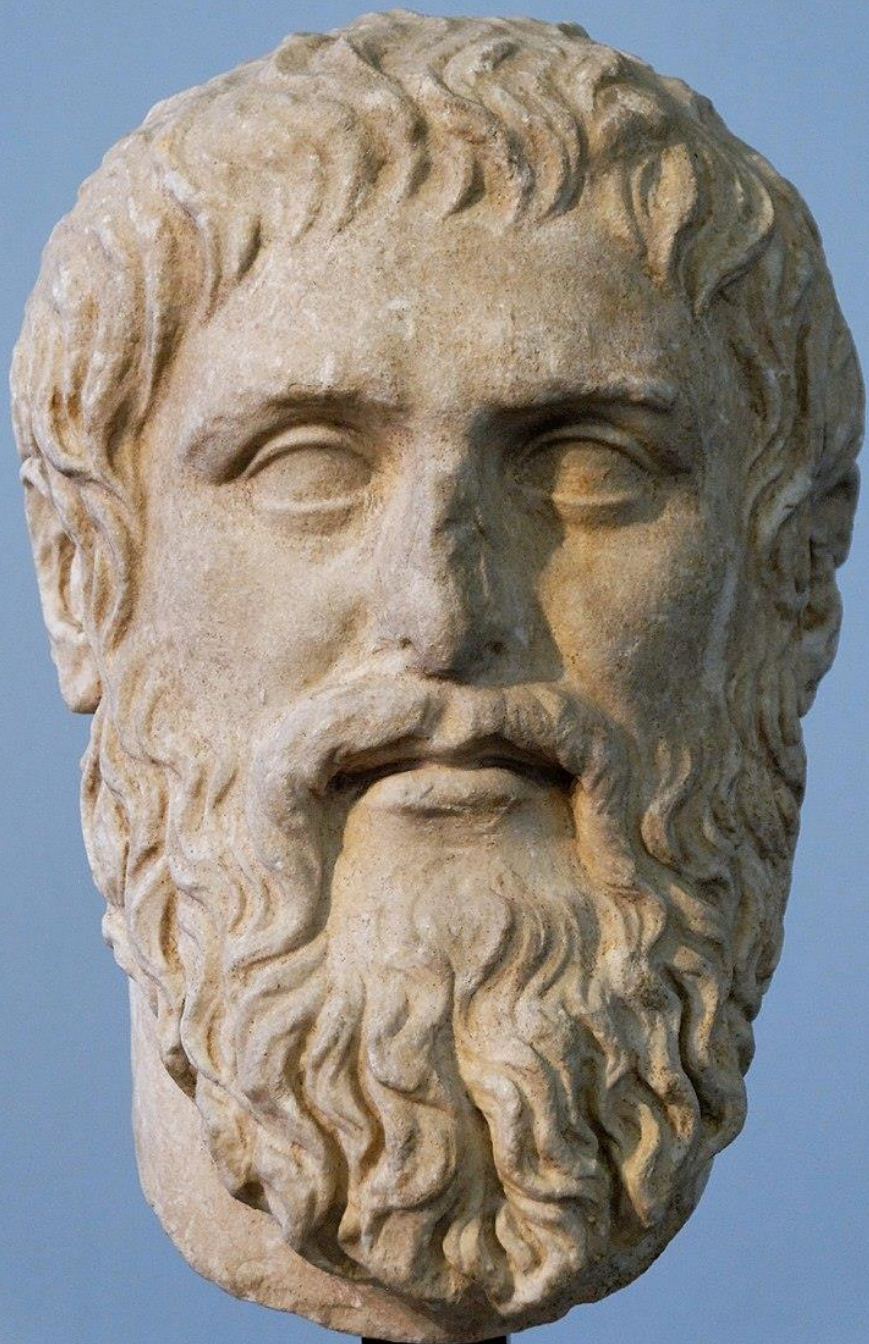
Blended with the souls of humans

‘When he had finished this speech, he turned again to the mixing bowl he had used before, the one in which he had blended and mixed the soul of the universe. He began to pour into it what remained of the previous ingredients and to mix them in somewhat the same way, though these were no longer invariably, and constantly pure, but of a second and third grade of purity. And when he had compounded it all, he divided the mixture into a number of souls equal to the number of stars and assigned each soul to a star.’

Timaeus, 41d



Changing View of the Soul



Plato and the Soul

- *Phaedo*
 - Important work on the soul
- *Phaedrus*
 - The soul as a chariot and charioteer
- *Republic*
 - The soul before birth and after death
- *Timaeus*
 - Outlines his cosmology
 - Tripartite soul
- *Epinomis* (Appendix to *Laws*)
 - Astronomy



Soul in *Phaedo*

An immortal soul

- Incorporeal and invisible
- Trapped in the mortal body
- Associated with all that is divine and unchanging
- Associated with the world of Being

‘The soul is altogether more like that which always exists in the same state rather like that which does not’

- *Phaedo* 79e



Soul in *Phaedo*

A mortal body

- Corporeal, visible and perishable
- Associated with all that is mortal and constantly changing
- Associated with the world of Becoming

‘The soul resembles the divine, and the body resembles the mortal’

- *Phaedo* 80a



Plato's Academy mosaic from Pompeii

Soul Distinct from Body

Only with the soul can people gain pure knowledge

- 'For whenever it (the soul) attempts to examine anything with the body, it is clearly deceived by it'.
 - *Phaedo* 65b
- 'And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality'.
 - *Phaedo* 65c



Soul Distinct from Body

‘The philosopher more than other men frees the soul from association with the body as much as possible’

◦ *Phaedo* 65a

‘When the soul and the body are together, nature orders the one to be subject and to be ruled and the other to rule and be master. Then again, which to you think is like the divine and which is like the mortal? Do you not think that the nature of the divine is to rule and to lead, whereas it is that of the mortal to be ruled and be subject?’

‘Obviously Socrates, the soul resembles the divine, and the body resembles the mortal’

◦ *Phaedo* 80a

Soul in *Phaedrus*

‘Every soul is immortal’

It has no beginning and no end

It is a self-mover and ‘the source and spring of motion in everything else that moves’

‘Every bodily object that moves from the outside has no soul, while a body whose motion comes from within, from itself, does have a soul, that being the nature of a soul’

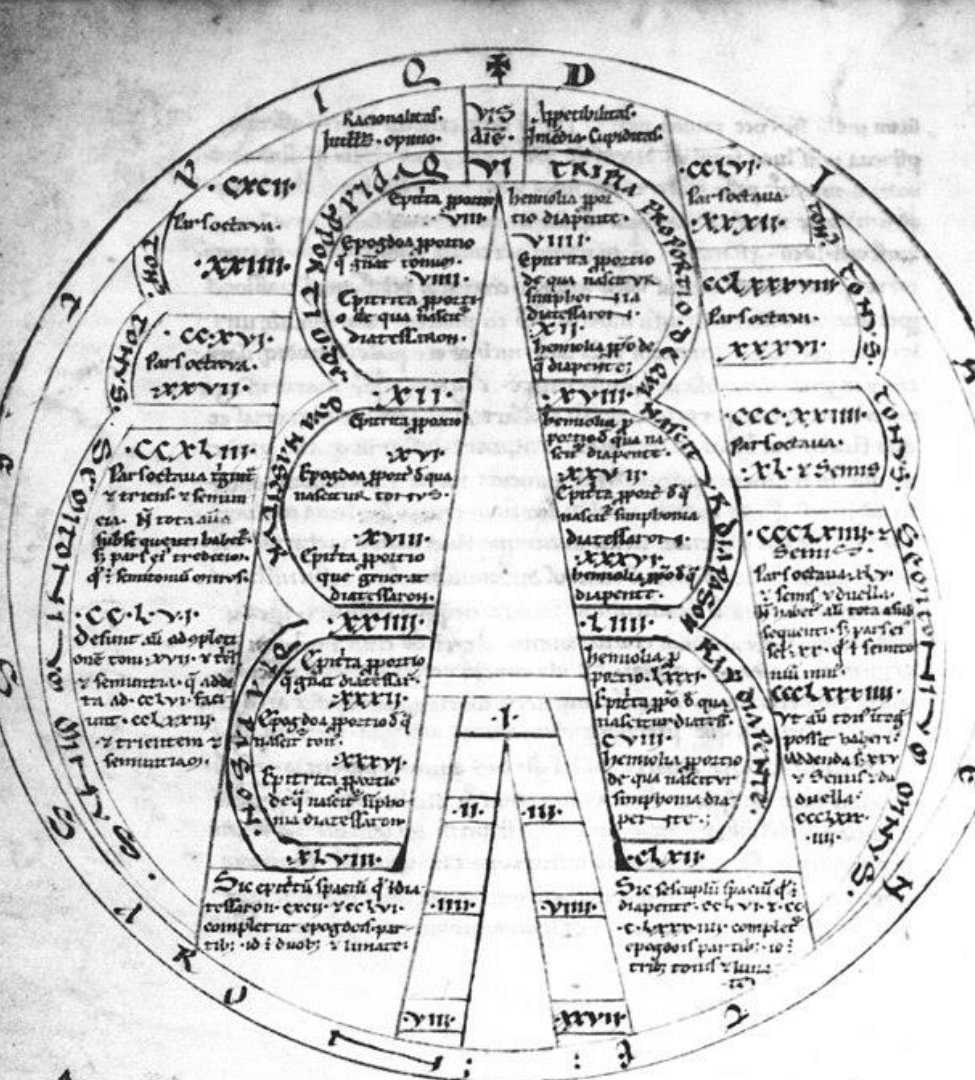
- *Phaedrus* 245c-e

Soul in *Phaedrus*

‘Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer’

‘To begin with our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business’

- *Phaedrus* 246a-b



Us constituit animam mundi ex eentia individua & diuidua & ex archetypo & yle. & ex natura
ad & diuisa. Nam u. eandem & diuisam uocat gra & spet. Na licet gra in spet diuisa sit
cu in sui natura eandem tunc naturam. Et si au qd ex ill eentia pposita die naturam uocantur
diuisa uresant. Na p individua eentia uocat intellectus p que diuisa pceptum p diuidua
u. yle. sensus designat p que corporea pceptum. Et uocantur au eandem & diuisam ro & pceptum
p q gra i spet; dicitur ne possunt & ;

Soul in *Timaeus*

Tripartite Soul

- Differs from soul in *Phaedo*
- Divine part of the soul in the head and the mortal part in the trunk of the body
- Mortal soul divided into two
 - One part below the midriff – concerned with appetites that he wrote 'was not going to understand the deliverance of reason'
 - Other part between midriff and head 'so that it might listen to reason and together with it restrain by force the part consisting of appetites'
 - Only the reasoning part of the soul is immortal
 - *Timeaus*, 69c – 70a



A Changing View of Soul

- *Apology*
 - Socrates considered the possibility of death as 'a dreamless sleep', where the dead 'have no perception of anything'
 - *Apology*, 40c-e.
- *Phaedo*
 - The soul is immortal
 - That which brings the body to life is the soul and this is always so
 - *Phaedo*, 70c-72a.
- *Phaedrus*
 - Soul is a self-mover and the source of motion in everything else that moves. It cannot have a beginning and cannot be destroyed
 - *Phaedrus* 245 a-e
- *Republic* and *Timaeus*
 - Tripartite Soul
 - *Republic* 611a-b; *Timaeus* 69c – 70a



Consciousness

Phaedo

- The soul is immortal. It is what brings the body to life
- All living things have immortal souls – not just humans
 - *Phaedo*, 70c-72a

Bostock

- If all living things have immortal souls then the soul is not necessarily related to consciousness, since only humans have consciousness
 - David Bostock, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 189.



The Soul and the Sky

The Home of the Immortal Soul in the Heavens

‘But when the souls we call immortals reach the top, they move outward and take their stand on the high ridge of the heaven, where its circular motion carries them around as they stand while they gaze upon what is outside heaven.’

- *Phaedrus* 247B-C

‘The shift of the immortal soul’s home from the underworld to heaven has survived in writing for the first time in Plato’s works and represents one of the most dramatic innovations of Greek philosophy.’

- Nicholas Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, p. 162



The Babylonian Pantheon

Imported the Babylonian pantheon and put them in the sky

Lists them in *Epinomis*, 987b-c

‘From there [Egypt and Syria], after being closely examined for thousands of years, in fact an infinite time, this knowledge spread everywhere including Greece.’

Epinomis, 987a



The Babylonian Pantheon

Believed Babylonian astrology lacked mathematical rigour

‘But let us take it for granted that whatever Greeks receive from foreigners they improve in the end – a point we must suppose holds for the present subject in particular.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 987d

‘Even though the tradition about all these gods and also their worship have come from abroad, the Greeks, on account of their forms of education, the oracles from Delphi, and their whole legally codified system of worship, will succeed in worshipping them better and in a real sense more justly.’

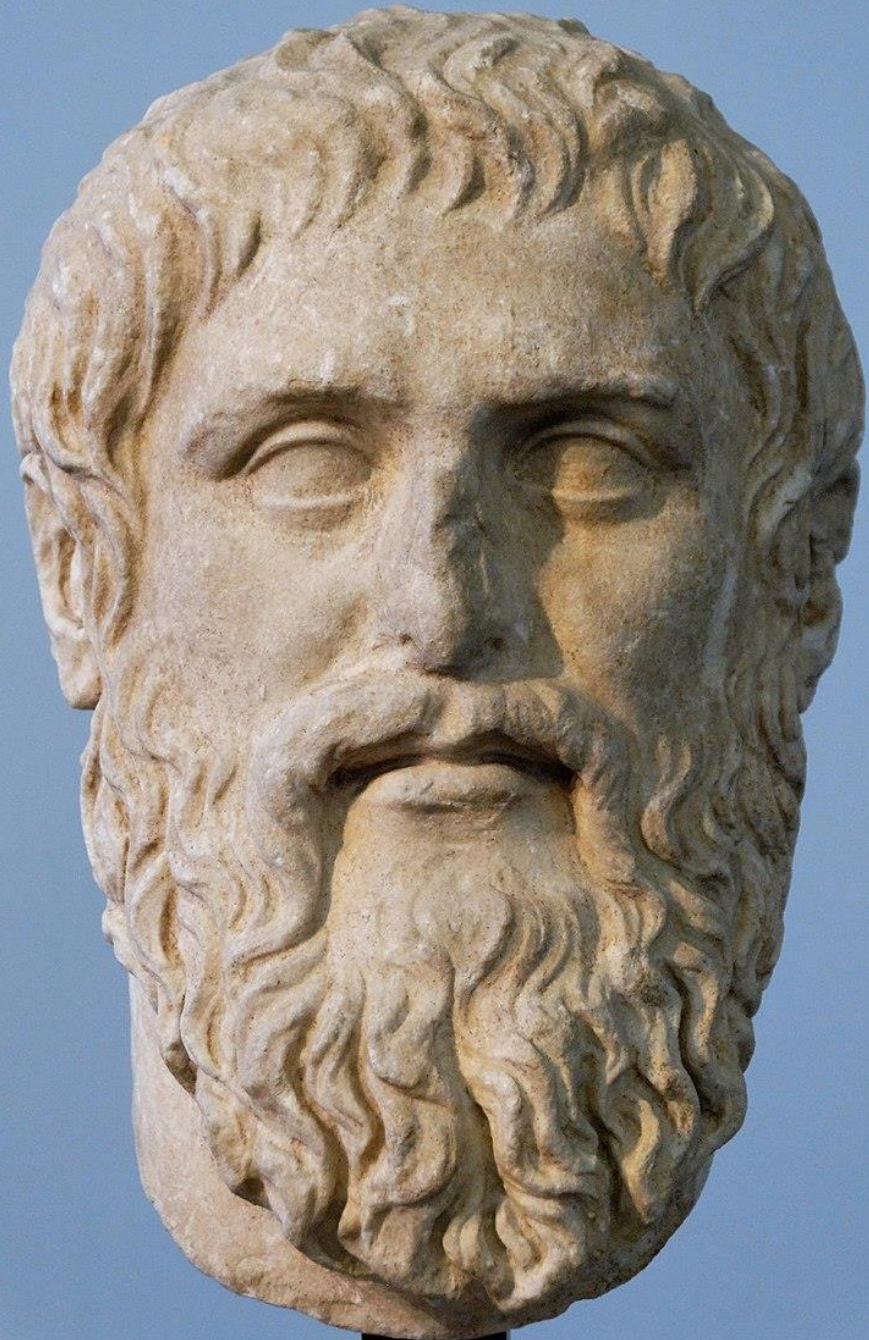
◦ *Epinomis*, 988a



The Babylonian Pantheon

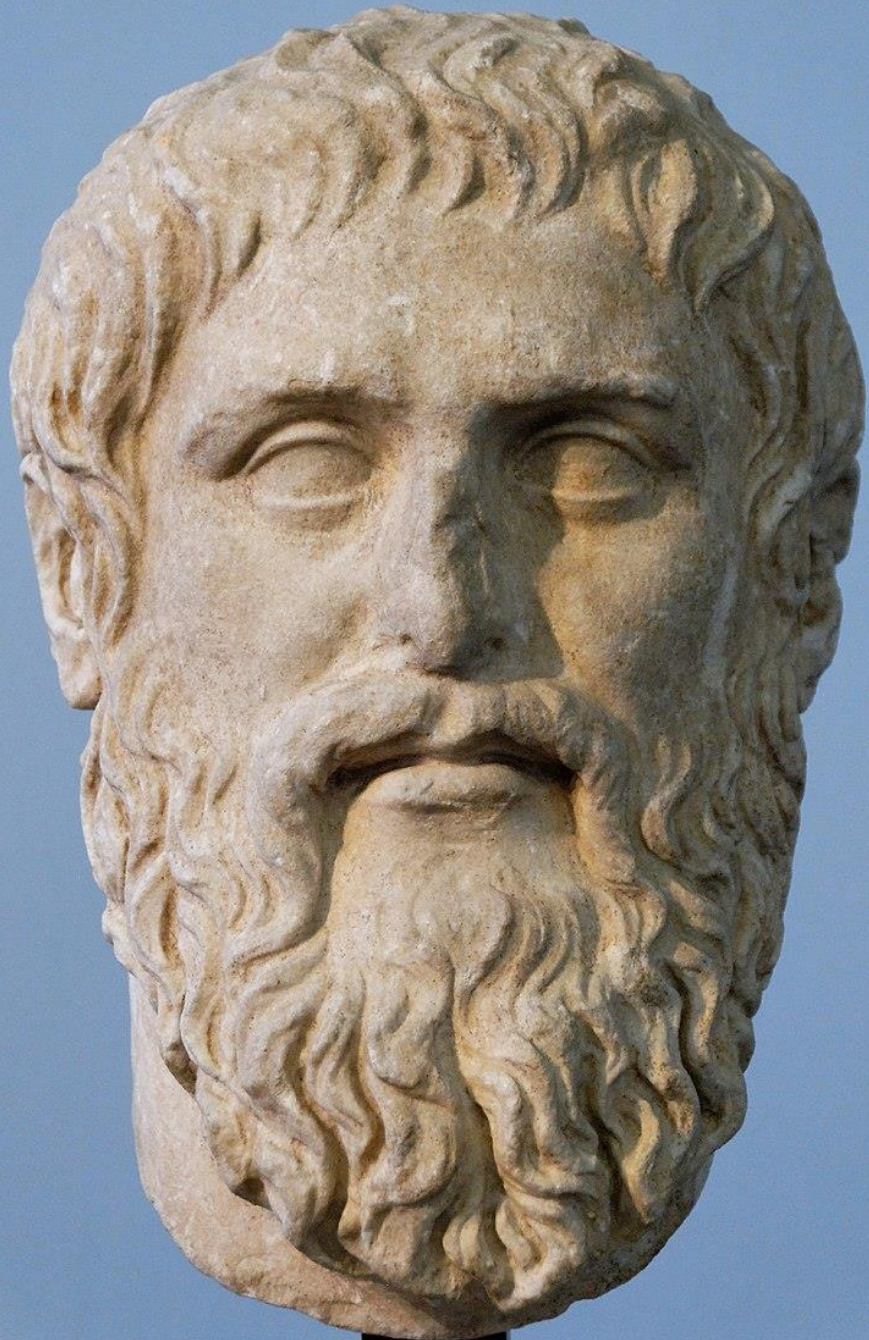
Sought to make the sky ordered and mathematically perfect

Sought to create an astrology based on accurate mathematical astronomy



The Divinity of the Celestial Realm

- The fixed stars being close to God are more divine than the planets
- The planets become steadily less divine the closer they are to Earth
 - Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, the Moon
- The Earth is round and is perfectly still at the centre of the universe
 - ‘This, then, was the reason why all those everlasting and unwandering stars – divine living things which stay fixed by revolving without variation in the same place – came to be’
 - *Timaeus*, 40b

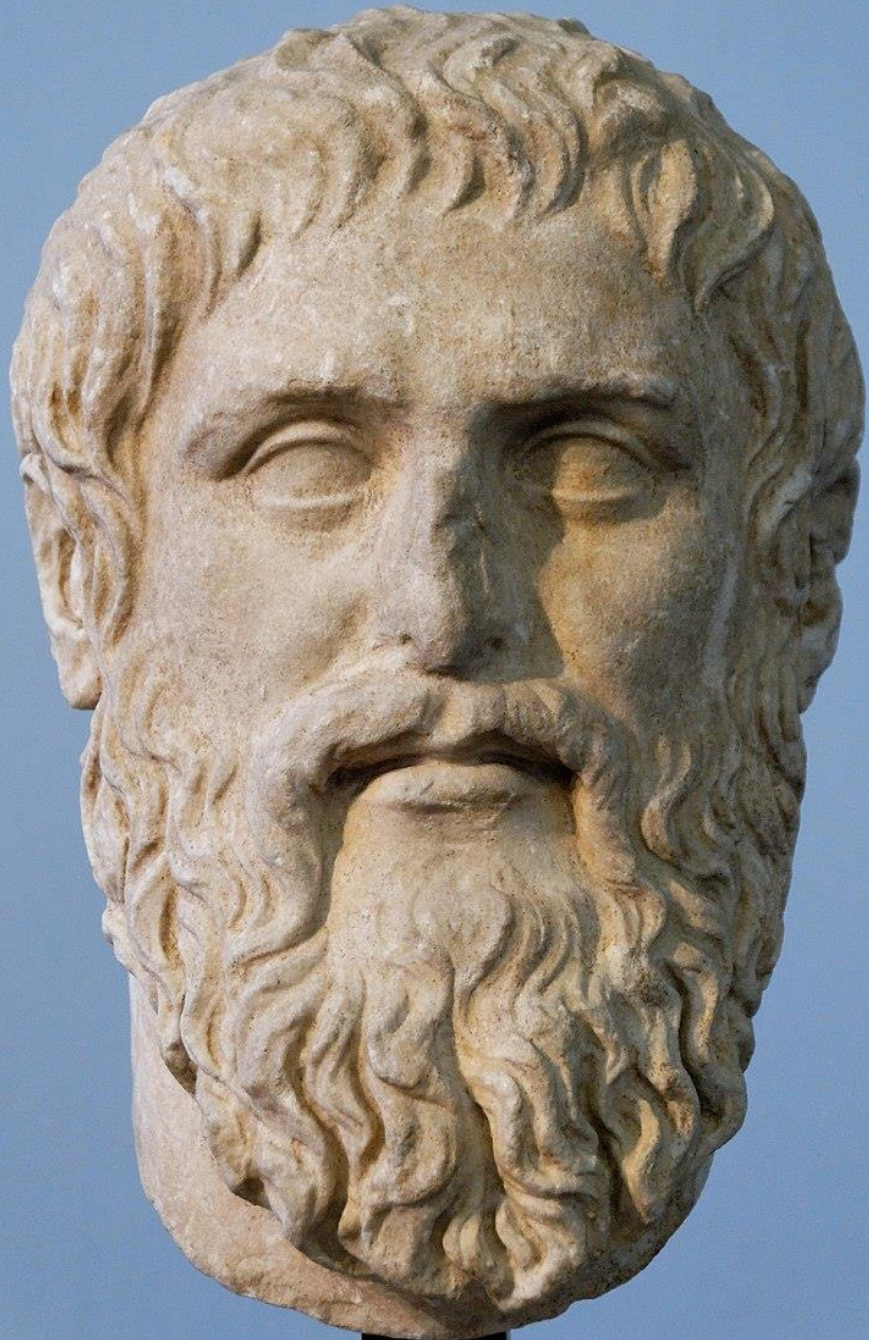


The Sky and the Soul

Created the planets to design time and ensouled them so they would have life and movement

‘These are called “wanderers”, and they came to be in order to set limits to and stand guard over the numbers of time’

Timaeus, 38c



The Sky and the Soul

Each human soul is associated with a star
Once implanted in a body the soul struggles with
Necessity

‘And if a person lived a good life throughout the due
course of his time, he would at the end return to his
dwelling place in his companion star, to live a life of
happiness that agreed with his character’

Timaeus, 42b



Plato – Myth of Er

- The soul descended to Earth through the planetary spheres
- The route back to the stars was also through the planetary spheres
- The planetary spheres revolved around the spindle of Necessity
- They are inside the whorl of the spindle
 - ‘The whole spindle turned at the same speed, but, as it turned, the inner circles gently revolved in a direction opposite to that of the whole.’
 - *Republic*, 617a
- Concept of Heaven and Hell
 - *Republic*, 614c-d



The Celestial Spheres

- 'The way to heaven was charted through the stars'
 - *The Dawn of Astrology*, pp. 153-156
- 'The descent of the soul from the stars leads naturally to an astrology that is deigned to analyse one's moral character and spiritual destiny.'
 - *The Dawn of Astrology*, p. 162



Knowledge of the Sky



The Laws

Astronomy an important subject in education in ideal city

- Philosopher-rulers and guardians of the law

Theoretical knowledge superior to practical knowledge

- *Laws XII, 967e*



The Laws

Theology includes the study of the motion of the heavenly bodies which are under the control of Reason – the source of order in the cosmos

- ‘No mortal can ever attain a truly religious outlook without risk of relapse unless he grasps the two doctrines we’re now discussing: first, that the soul is far older than any created thing, and that it is immortal and controls the entire world of matter; and second ... that reason is the supreme power among the heavenly bodies’

- *Laws XII, 967e*



Plato - *Epinomis*

An appendix to the *Laws*

May not have been written by Plato –
Philip of Opus

Discusses the nature of wisdom and the
studies by which it is to be obtained

Wisdom is gained solely by the
knowledge of astronomy

The study of the planets is the study of
the gods



Plato - *Epinomis*

Without numbers humans cannot have intelligence or virtue

They cannot have wisdom which is the greater part of virtue

A person lacking wisdom cannot become completely good or, in consequence, happy

Therefore numbers are more necessary than any other art or science



Plato - *Epinomis*

‘Of all the sciences that now exist, which one would render humans the most unintelligent and senseless of human beings if it completely disappeared from the human race or had not been developed? In point of fact, it is not at all hard to identify. If we compare, so to speak, one science with another, we will see that the one that has given the gift of number would have this effect on the entire mortal race.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 976d-e



Plato - *Epinomis*

God's reasons for creating the Sun, Moon and planets to teach humans mathematics

God gave us the ability to understand what we are shown

We are shown the heavenly bodies

The phases of the Moon teach us to count the days of an individual lunar cycle and the number of cycles in a year

- 'After creating the moon, waxing and waning...God established months in relation to the year, and so all the living beings who could began to comprehend number in relation to number, with the blessing of Good Fortune.'

- *Epinomis*, 979a



The Heavens

The heavens are the cause of all good things

Uranus, the sky god, gave us number and will continue to do so if we contemplate him in the right way

- ‘Uranus (i.e., the heaven), the god whom above all others it is most just to pray to and to honour’
- ‘Let us notice carefully how by decorating himself and making the stars revolve in himself through all their orbits, he brings about the seasons and provides nourishment for all. Together with the entirety of number, he also furnishes, we would insist, everything else that involves intelligence and everything that is good. But this is the greatest thing, for a person to receive from him the gift of numbers and go on to examine fully the entire revolution of the heavens.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 977a-b



The Heavens

If something has an orderly path in the heavens that is evidence of its intelligence. It proceeds uniformly and without variation

- 'Humans should admit as evidence of the intelligence of the stars and this entire movement of theirs, the fact that they always do the same things, because they are doing what was decided an astonishingly long time ago and do not change their decision back and forth, sometimes doing one thing and at others doing something else, wandering and changing their orbits.'

- *Epinomis*, 982c-d



The Heavens

‘[Operating uniformly] is the nature of the stars, the finest of all things to behold, and further that moving through their march and dance, the finest and most magnificent dance there is, they bring to pass what all living things need.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 982e



The Planets and Soul

God causes the planets to revolve

Their order is predictable and consistent

God can make them living beings and move as he thinks best

There are two things: body and soul and, soul is superior to body

‘In fact, we are right to say they possess soul.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 983a

‘Unless a soul is attached to each of them or even *in* each, earth, heaven and all the stars and all the masses made of these things cannot move with such precision in their annual, monthly and daily courses, making all that takes place turn out good for us all.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 983d



Divinity of the Celestial Realm

Either the stars are gods or they are the likenesses of gods, something like images of them, made by the gods themselves

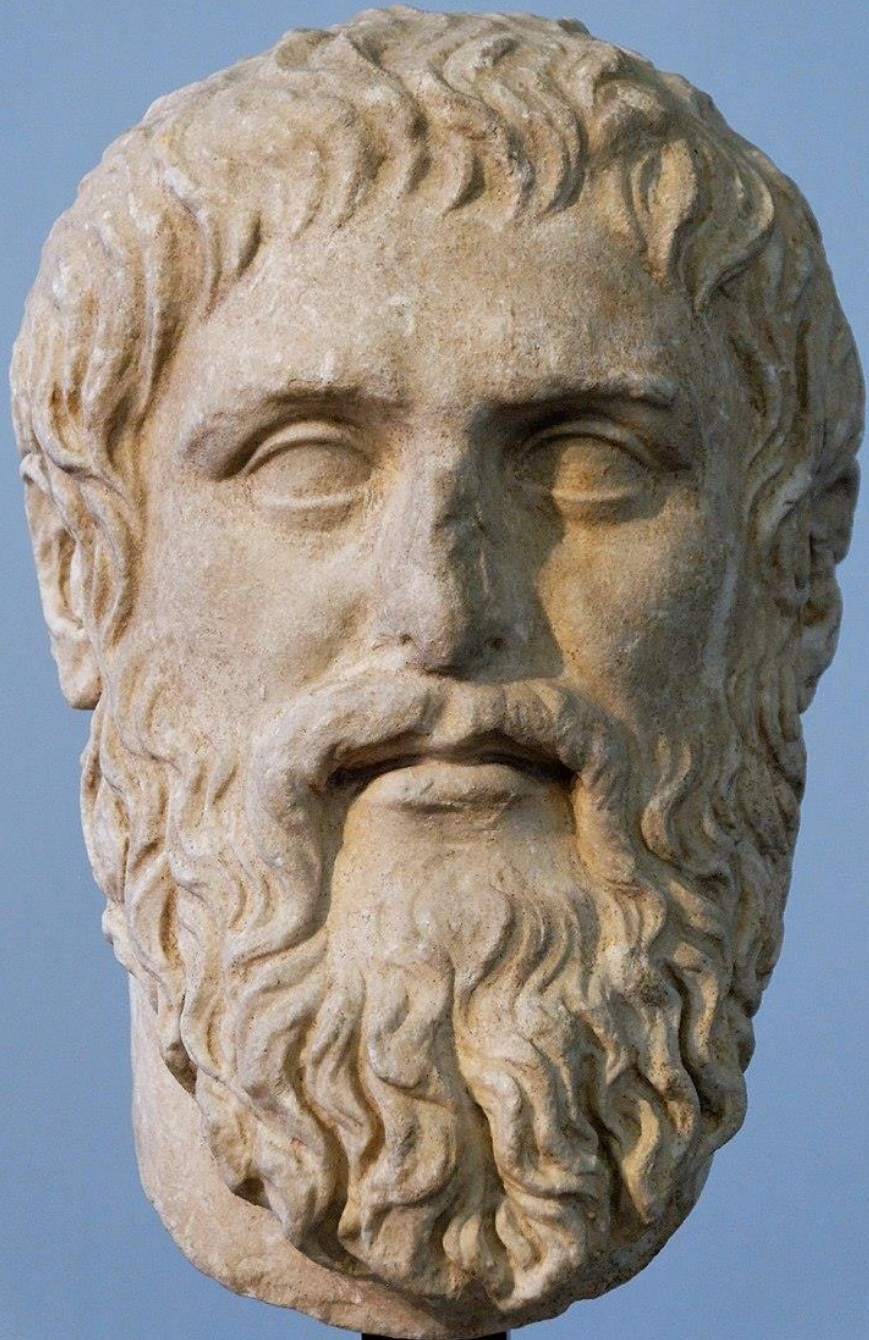
- 'We must suppose them to be one of these two things, and once we do this, we must honor them above all images'
 - *Epinomis*, 984a
- 'But as to the first gods, those that are visible, greatest, most honored, and most sharply seeing everywhere, we must declare that these are the stars together with all the celestial phenomena we perceive.'
 - *Epinomis*, 984d



Practical vs Theoretical

‘People do not know that the true astronomer must be the wisest person. I do not mean...by observing risings and settings of the stars, but the one who has observed seven of the eight circuits, each of them completing its own orbit in a way no one can easily contemplate who is not endowed with an extraordinary nature.’

◦ *Epinomis*, 990a



Timaeus

‘As it is, however, our ability to see the periods of day-and-night, of months and of years, of equinoxes and solstices, has let to the invention of number, and has given us the idea of time and opened the path to inquiry into the nature of the universe. These pursuits have given us philosophy, a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed.’

Timaeus, 47a-b



Summary

The soul is separate from the body and is superior to the body

Only knowledge from the soul can be trusted

The soul is immortal and is associated with god

The soul is associated with reason or understanding

The heavens are associated with reason and are divine

Knowledge of the heavens is knowledge of the divine

Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden

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