

WILLIAM J. O'NEAL

Professor of Classics, University of Toledo, Ohio

MATTER OUT OF CHAOS

The unfolding proliferation of increasingly more sophisticated bodies throughout a cosmic system in the course of Creation was to Plato the increasingly deeper entrenchment of order or rationale in all Being. In only a fraction of the total pages in the *Timaeus* an account of this growth in complexity of astronomical entities is expounded by Timaeus of Locri, who legendarily was a Pythagorean-spined philosopher and learned in the physical sciences. The generative roll of events involved in the molding of matter out of Chaos might be accorded treatment in brief, as follows in the next sections.

Although there is a Real world with eternity inherent, the Creator could not incorporate this everlastingness into the replica of the Earth's and its halo of companions' models. All bodies to be awarded shape could at best be only extremely close copies of their Real counterparts. The first measure toward the institution of direction was the employment of matter as the mother of what was to be. Since matter, as a natural thing, is susceptible to being seen and held, it must by its perceptibility be made of fire and earth. Yet these two, although the vital bulk of Creation, are incompatible, necessitating a dual binder to temper their mutual hatred for one another. Analogous to the mean proportions between the two extremes, air and water perform the agglutinative function for fire and earth. The initial quantity of construction material at hand at the onset of cosmic Creation is thoroughly depleted by the close of Creation, thereby precluding vulnerability to the wearing and dooming incessant assault of age and plague. The world once formed moves inviolate because it neither draws anything external into itself nor spits out anything absorbed.

The inanimate heavenly collection of newly molded material was bodily implanted within the Soul or Mind of the universe, and it became organismal, a visible cosmos motivated by an invisible sheath of Soul. Once set at the time of Creation, the pace of life was for intelligent and everlasting presence. The Soul stretched from the heart of the world with its centrally suspended Earth to the boundaries of the universe; a radiating conglomeration of trifold blend --of Being or Essence which is the middle range between the eternal absolute and the ephemeral; of Samness; of Otherness.

In keeping with the attempted effectation of a perfectness of imitation of the real world, the Artificer assigned a perfect shape to it --the sphere, this being the form of the geometric solid with a capacity for containing the All, surpassing that of any other geometric solid.

Patterning the merged three components of the vital mass along the lines of a music scale with four octaves and a major sixth, the Creator worked as follows:

he took one part from the Whole;

he doubled the first part for the second part;

he took one and a half times of the second part for the third part;

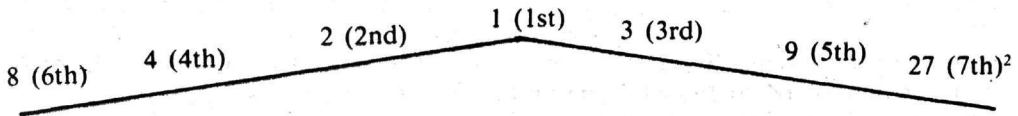
he took twice the second part for the fourth part;

he took thrice the third part for the fifth part;

he took eight times the first part for the sixth part;

he took twenty-seven times the first part for the seventh part¹.

Thus are the intervals of the wings of this, with the left slope of powers of two and the right slope of powers of three---



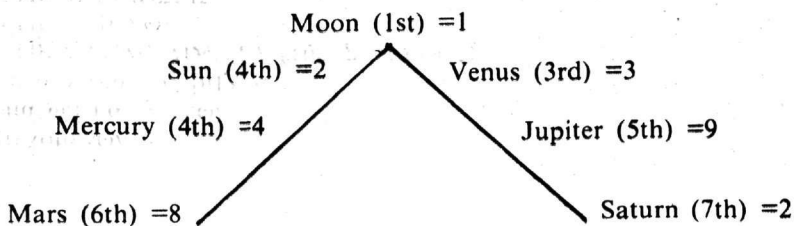
These seven root numbers, after studded between with integral, portions, expand to thirty-four terms covering one to twenty-seven as below:

1 9/8 81/64 4/3 3/2 27/16 243/128 2 9/4 81/32 8/3 3 27/8 243/64
 4 9/2 81/16 16/3 6 27/4 243/32 8 9 81/32 12 27/2 243/16 16 18
 81/64 64/3 24 27³

As what may be done to a thin and long strip of paper, the Creation matured with first the tearing lengthwise of the band; then the crossing of the two equal pieces at their midpoints perpendicularly, next the bending of each crossbar into a circle so that the formed circles lie in planes perpendicular, one circle nestled inside the border of the other circle. This is diagrammatically laid out in Figure A.

The outer loop was of the Same, the inner loop was of the Other. The ring of the Same was started spinning to the right, sparked by the knowing Soul within its confines; the Other circle was pushed into a tract oriented to the opposite direction. Originally, the angle between the two planar bands was a right one; later the circle of the Other tilted back, forming an oblique angle with the circle of the Same which assumed the relation of a sidereal equator to an ecliptic. There is yet more sophistication beyond the shift in angle degrees.

The Other underwent sectioning into seven concentric curves for the revolutions of the seven planets geocentrically trained. Three planets roll around with equal velocity or with the same «period», and the remaining four swirl about the courses at speeds unequal among themselves but with integral ratio relation to their partners' rates. Sun, Mercury, Venus are the Three; Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn are the Four. Assigned the progressional values of the previously diagrammatically constructed pyramid scale, the planetary hierarchy may be thus plotted:



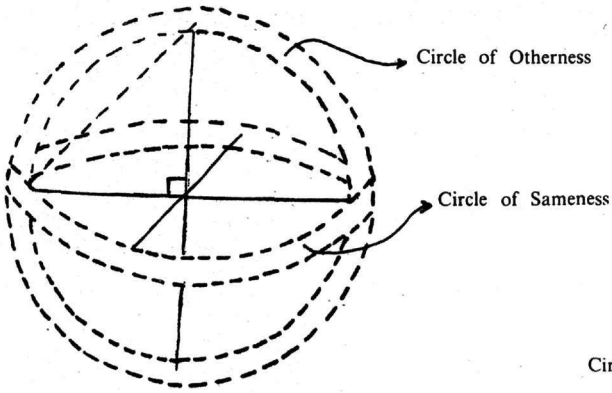
1. Plato, *Timaeus*, 35B.

2. Bury, R. G., *Plato with an English Translation* (Loeb Classical Library): Volume VII, p. 66.

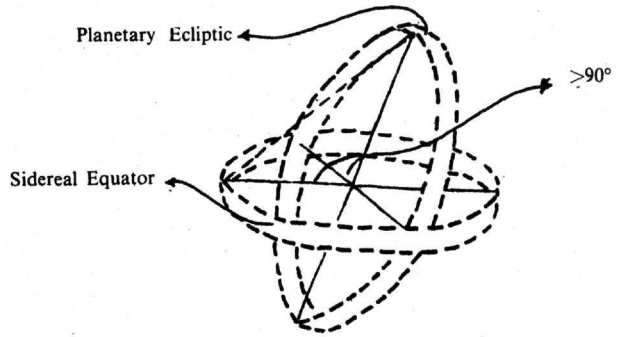
3. *Ibid.* pp. 68-70.

Figure A

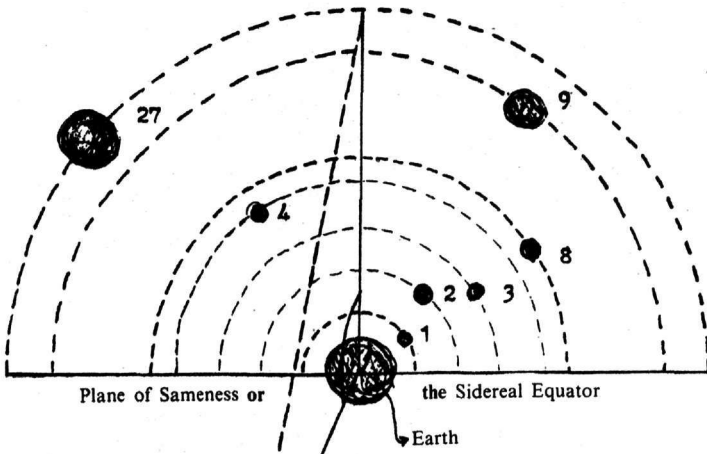
Circle of Otherness and Sameness Linked at Creation:



Circle of Otherness Tilted Oblique to Circle of Sameness:



Planetary Divisions of Circle of Otherness:



The Three Planets:

- 2 Sun
- 3 Venus (Hesperus)
- 4 Mercury

The Four Planets:

- 4 Moon
- 8 Mars
- 9 Jupiter
- 27 Saturn

Populating the celestial equator, the fixed stars have been by Plato acknowledged as gods and the abodes of men's souls – thither the souls sail to impregnate newly born human shells, whither the souls fly to abandon dead flesh. With perfection already in their spherical shapes, Plato granted them in Timaeus explanation a flawless genus of motion also; namely, he described their movement as occurring in one Same locus, and on a circular run throughout the Same. Though the stars may be seen as still in the sky from the viewpoint of an Earth-fettered observer, in actuality the realm (anima mundi) of their confines rotates round the core of the universe, the Earth. The stellar elements pursue paths different from those on the planets. The planets on the Circle of Otherness advance in their multiple tracts from West to East while the heavens turn contrarily from East to West. This sidereal equatorial movement permits the apparent birth of the constellations in the East and their disappearance into the deep of the West. Another structural divergence between these two revolving loops is that whereas the planetary diagonal plane is comprised of seven distinctively defined orbits, the starry horizontal stretch is spotted scatteredly with an unspecified number of stars which at equal velocities turn as a unit within a single orbit.

A controversial aspect of the Timaeus system lodges in the Immobility of the Earth dilemma. The Platonic view seems to be that the Earth is spitted on a polar axis and perpetrates the flux of Day and Night in passive causation. The Earth seems to have been allotted static pose in the universe, since the movement of the Earth around its axis would cancel or neutralize the heavenly and planetary revolutions round it outside. The resulting apparent immobilization of world revolution would have logically evoked further elaboration in the text. Yet there is none beyond the statement by Timaeus that the Earth is massed round a central rod and that she is destined by the Creator to be the artificer of Day and Night. If Plato had intended to impress on his audience a rotational nature of the Earth, it is strange that this was not clearly expounded with account taken of its impact relative to the visible movements of the other bodies of the Creation.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΙΣ

Ἐνταῦθα ἐκτίθενται αἱ ἀντιλήψεις τοῦ Πλάτωνος διὰ στόματος τοῦ Τιμαίου περὶ τοῦ τρόπου τῆς δημιουργίας τοῦ σύμπαντος καὶ τῆς διακυβερνήσεως αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ κόσμου. Εἰδικώτερον πῶς ἔχουν διαταχθῆ τὰ οὐράνια σώματα κατὰ ταυτότητα καὶ ἑτερότητα, ἔχουν ῥυθμισθῆ κατὰ τὴν ἀρμονικὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς μουσικῆς κλίμακος καὶ πῶς κινοῦνται διατεταγμένα εἰς κοσμικὰς ζώνας ἀλληλοδιασταυρουμένας καὶ περιφερομένας κατὰ θέσιν ἰσημερινοῦ καὶ μεσημβρινοῦ κυκλικῶς. Πῶς ἡ μία ζώνη περιέχει τοὺς πλανήτας, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα τοὺς ἀπλανεῖς, εἰς τοὺς ὁποίους κεῖται καὶ ἡ ἔδρα τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν, ἐνῶ εἰς τὸ κέντρον τοῦ κόσμου κεῖται ἡ γῆ περὶ πολικὸν ἄξονα ἀκίνητος.