WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD: THE METAPHYSICAL MONISM OF PLATO UNDER THE TWO-LEVEL MODEL OF HOLGER THESLEFF

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a critical appraisal of the two-level model of Holger Thesleff as an interpretive paradigm for the philosophy of Plato. The primary emphasis is on the metaphysics of the model, which revolves around the idea of a single world composed of two levels. Conceived as an alternative to the dualism of worlds traditionally attributed to Plato, the levels in question complement each other in a symbiotic relationship between intelligible phenomena and sensible matter, which jointly account for the whole of reality without the complications associated with a multiplication of worlds. The principal complication in the latter scenario is the difficulty of meaningful interaction under circumstances of radical separation, especially with a strict segregation requiring two different worlds: one for transcendent Forms, one for instantiating particulars. That difficulty does not even come up in the two-level model, which confines everything to a single world, where the possibility of interaction is not undermined by the reality of separation or the severity of segregation. The two-level model avoids that issue altogether by keeping everything together. A purported problem with this monistic alternative, on the other hand, is the inherent impediment to transcendence within a single world, where there would seem to be no room for the requisite ascension. How indeed can anything transcend the only place that exists? Promoting a solitary world as the intended framework for Plato's metaphysics ostensibly requires retaining some semblance of transcendence, or else providing an acceptable alternative to it, while compressing everything into the same reality. The ultimate goal of the present paper is to show why, given a natural challenge to both approaches, that is, despite an apparent obstacle to either perspective, the two-level model is preferable to the two-world alternative. Progress toward that end unfolds as an effort to illustrate and vindicate the way Thesleff meets the methodological challenge to his brand of monism with a philosophical vision originating with Plato himself.

KEYWORDS: Plato; Plato's Ontology; Plato's Forms; Holger Thesleff; Two-Level Model

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The two-level model is an interpretive paradigm developed by Holger Thesleff for proper insight into the artistry and philosophy of Plato. Although it has various different uses, including overlapping applications in philosophical, philological, and literary matters, it is essentially a thought experiment grounded in Plato's perception of reality in terms of two complementary levels making up a single world. What the model represents, therefore, is not merely an analytical apparatus for interpreting the philosophical contributions of Plato but a hermeneutic platform for recapturing the philosophical predilections of Plato. The difference is between invention and discovery: The exploration of the world through integrated levels is not a methodological contraption invented by Thesleff for probing into Plato but a philosophical propensity by Plato recognized by Thesleff as an essential consideration for understanding Plato. While the former approach can at best inspire observations that happen to fit the textual evidence, the latter approach stands to uncover developments that actually determine such evidence.

The present paper goes back to the roots of the discovery in question, namely to the original vision of Plato, which holds the key to the heuristic program drawing on it for illuminating the correlative ideas. The overarching objective is a comprehensive appraisal of the viability of the emerging model both in reference to the circumstances in which it was developed and in connection with the benefits for which it was intended. The main focus is consequently on the metaphysics of the model, in other words, on the plausibility of a single world with two levels as an alternative to the generally accepted archetype of two separate worlds neatly dividing their presumably incompatible contents between them. Given that the incompatibility indicated, whether real or imagined, is between transcendent Forms and sensible phenomena, the principal purpose of the paper is to show how the two-level model can accommodate both kinds of things in a single reality without resorting to the extravagant metaphysics of a duplication of worlds.

The strategy adopted toward that end consists of a positive initiative demonstrating the possibility and desirability of handling everything in a single world, combined with a negative counterpart exposing the complications and drawbacks in reserving a separate world just for the Forms. The paper starts with historical and methodological considerations, taking into account both their

origins in Plato and their development by Thesleff, as well as prior work and parallel projects by other scholars. It then conducts a critical analysis of the philosophical merits of one world versus two, particularly in terms of their capacity to make sense of the influence of Forms in our existential experience, despite the separation of Forms from the corresponding reality. It thereby addresses the problem of transcendence versus immanence, or separation versus instantiation, in the context of the number of worlds required to resolve the implicit tension without undermining the supporting metaphysics, especially from the perspective of Plato but also from that of philosophical norms in common currency.

2. HISTORICAL ORIGINS

The notion of levels in Plato rests on natural distinctions in our phenomenal experience. It is therefore informed and inspired by historical interest in opposition relations (Thesleff 1993, 21; 1999, 7–25; Alican and Thesleff 2013, 17–19). Thesleff's levels are motivated especially by distinctions between complementary perspectives, as in the contrast between, say, upstairs and downstairs, where one thing makes no sense without the other, because it is essentially incomplete without the other. This is a distinction — or rather a relationship, perhaps a communion (*koinōnia*) of sorts — that can be observed throughout the Platonic corpus. Thesleff himself traces its roots to the ancient tendency, both before and after Plato, to explore and explain the world in terms of opposing forces at the foundation of reality. He warns, however, that it is important to distinguish between different types of opposites, and between different modes of opposition, in order to appreciate the kind of opposites and opposition prevalent in Greek philosophy in general and in Plato in particular.

Distinguishing between two different types of opposites, namely contrary (polar) opposites, as in white versus black, and contradictory (binary) opposites, as in human versus non-human, Thesleff describes the Greek context, in contrast to both, as a matter of complementary contrasts, such as divine versus human (1999, 7–10). Contrary (polar) opposites represent the extreme ends of a continuum, or spectrum, where the relevant alternatives are mutually exclusive but not jointly exhaustive: white/black; heaven/earth; hot/cold; friend/enemy; life/death; truth/lie; good/evil; etc. (Thesleff 1999, 7). Contradictory (binary) opposites represent alternatives that are not only mutually exclusive but also

jointly exhaustive, often being manifested as a matter of mutual negation: human/non-human; pleasant/unpleasant; true/untrue; etc. (Thesleff 1999, 7). The Greek perspective, in contrast, despite some similarities outside Plato, is not so much dualistic (as seen in regional religions, particularly in Persia, including Zoroastrianism, Zervanism, and Mithraism) as it is holistic, integrated, and synergistic, thus proceeding with complementary contrasts productive of balance and harmony instead of discord and division (Thesleff 1999, 7–8).

Here is how Thesleff sees the patterns prevailing in Greek thought: "It seems possible to trace, in the Greek view of the world since the earliest times, a tendency to see opposites as relational or complementary rather than pointedly polarized. For instance, Homer's characters are to a remarkable extent both 'good' and 'bad,' both divine and human (not to say multidimensional); and classical Greek sculptures are mostly meant to be looked at from all sides" (1999, 7). As for specific examples, he finds common precedents in both Greek and Chinese outlooks on life. He exemplifies the Greek perspective through the Pythagorean table of opposites constitutive of the world, as reported, among others, by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 986a22–b2, cf. 1004b27–1005a18, 1066a13–15, 1072a30–33): limit/unlimited; odd/even; unity/plurality; right/left; male/female; rest/motion; straight/crooked; light/darkness; good/evil; square/oblong (Thesleff 1999, 8).[1] And he illustrates parallels with Chinese philosophy through the Yin-Yang forces envisaged as the foundation of universal reality: light/darkness; male/female; activity/passivity; hot/cold; dry/wet; hard/soft; odd/even (Thesleff 1999, 8).

Noting that Pythagorean opposition emphasizes equilibrium, whereas Chinese opposition emphasizes continuity, Thesleff adds that Greek thought was replete with opposites of all kinds adopted toward various ends: "classical Greece

[1] The key passage in Aristotle is the following: "Other members of this same school say there are ten principles, which they arrange in two columns of cognates — limit and unlimited, odd and even, one and plurality, right and left, male and female, resting and moving, straight and curved, light and darkness, good and bad, square and oblong. In this way Alcmaeon of Croton seems also to have conceived the matter, and either he got this view from them or they got it from him; for he expressed himself similarly to them. For he says most human affairs go in pairs, meaning not definite contrarieties such as the Pythagoreans speak of, but any chance contrarieties, e.g. white and black, sweet and bitter, good and bad, great and small. He threw out indefinite suggestions about the other contrarieties, but the Pythagoreans declared both how many and which their contrarieties are" (*Metaphysics* 986a22–b2, cf. 1004b27–1005a18, 1066a13–15, 1072a30–33).

was a complex laboratory for harmonized and polarized contrasts" (1999, 9). It is specifically the strand of Greek thought favoring completion over contradiction, and thereby embracing complements rather than opposites, that Thesleff finds dominant in the works of Plato. He identifies ten pairs of contrasts that are representative of the two-level vision of Plato: divine/human; soul/body; leading/being-led; truth/appearance; knowledge/opinion; intellect/senses; defined/undefined; stability/change; one/many; same/different (Thesleff 1999, 13; explicated individually in 14–25; placed in a table in 27). While these are all harmonizing contrasts, as opposed to polar opposites, the relationship governing each pair is hierarchical, so that one element is primary and the other complementary, though both are indispensable, with the former "dominating" the latter, while the latter is "oriented" toward the former (Thesleff 1999, 13, 30–31).

Thus setting up complementary contrasts as the dialectical impetus behind Plato's philosophical outlook, Thesleff defines the two-level vision of Plato as "a graded, terraced (not to say hierarchic), asymmetric, i.e. non-reciprocal, non-polarized relationship between a 'lower' and a (somehow related) 'higher' level, comprising all philosophy" (1999, 13, 30–31). This is not, to be clear, a strictly binary model, where there is one thing and the other and absolutely nothing else, or in this case, one level and the other with nothing in between. What Thesleff conceives of as the upper and lower levels of Plato's world are the two main levels of reality framing endless possibilities in ontological stratification, where everything is oriented toward the top at various distances from the summit, which is reserved for the Form of the Good as a universal force of attraction and a principle of regulation.[2] The contrast between transcendent Forms and sensible phenomena is arguably the most familiar manifestation of the two-level vision of Plato, though Thesleff himself finds the importance of that relationship to be exaggerated beyond its actual function in the philosophy of Plato, where he considers the prior distinction between basic contrasts to be more decisive and

[2] The Form of the Good is not just another Form but the fountainhead of reality and knowledge. It is, to put it in less metaphorical terms, the necessary condition of all that exists and the grounding principle of all that can be known. And it is, therefore, what everything, including all other Forms, aims at in the two-level model. It sits at the top of the hierarchy, both in Plato (*Republic* 506d–520d) and in Thesleff (1999, 398, 412, 428, 432), where it illuminates the upper level of reality as the cause of the existence and essence of all other Forms (509b, 516c, 517b–c) as well as the source of their truth and knowability (508e–509b, 517b–c).

relevant (Thesleff 1999, 53, 119; cf. 2002; Alican and Thesleff 2013, 17).[3]

The most telling examples in that regard, possibly the most compelling as well, are the central thought experiments of the *Republic* (506d–520d), namely those of the sun, the line, and the cave, where the Form of the Good is articulated through metaphors intended to compensate for the difficulty of capturing its elusive nature in words. Recall how the simile of the sun (506d–509c) introduces a distinction between the intelligible realm and the visible realm as complementary contrasts of a foundational nature, which is subsequently fleshed out through the analogy of the line (509d–511e), where further divisions reveal a more detailed structure with sliding scales of reality and knowledge, again built on fundamental benchmarks complementing one another in apparent opposition, which is eventually elaborated through the allegory of the cave (514a–520d), where the previous gradation of reality and knowledge comes alive through existential as opposed to conceptual illustration, as the philosophical enlightenment of the prisoners of ignorance proceeds with their gradual apprehension of increasingly higher levels of truth, commensurate with their correlative exposure to increasingly higher levels of reality.

Just as noteworthy as an illustration of the two-level vision of Plato is the myth of the afterlife described in the *Phaedo* (107d–114e), the mystical journey of noetic ascension envisaged in the *Phaedrus* (246e–249d), the ladder of love erected in the *Symposium* (209e–212a), and the World Soul delineated in the *Timaeus* (34b–37c). The central myth of the *Phaedrus* is especially memorable as it follows the labors of the gods (246e–247e) as well as the disincarnate souls of mortals (248a–249d) in their quest for spiritual purification and philosophical enlightenment through an arduous journey culminating in the apprehension of Forms at the edge of heaven. Methodological parallels can be found in the structure of the ascent in Diotima's ladder of love in the *Symposium* (209e–212a), where the completion of the journey reveals a sea of beauty at the highest level, standing in stark contrast

[3] Thesleff's assessment of the place of Forms in the two-level vision of Plato comes out clearly in the following passage: "The central position of the 'theory of Forms' in Plato's thought is easily exaggerated; indeed, Aristotle's criticism has made it appear as Plato's main doctrine. However, it constitutes only one aspect of his philosophic moves. The two levels as such, and the problems of their internal relations, always remained as foundations and frames in his thinking. The various themes and methods of the dialogues show plainly that many other aspects of his two-level vision kept in the foreground, indeed more prominently than any theory of Forms" (1999, 53).

to the surface of the sea, never reached, in the *Phaedo* (109c–d).[4] Further intimations of a single reality with hierarchical levels in universal harmony (*koinōnia*) can be found, among other places, in the *Laws* (967d–e), *Phaedo* (100d), *Republic* (462a–464d, 477a–478e, 537c, 585b–c), *Sophist* (248a–e), and *Theaetetus* (147d–e).

3. MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

The skeletal sketch above traces dialectical developments that are open to observation, both in regard to the fundamental principles in the cultural background and with respect to their philosophical applications in the Platonic corpus. The seminal contribution of Thesleff is in having harnessed the interpretive power of their collective significance. His articulation of the two-level model is the result of decades of reflection in three monographs (Thesleff 1989a, 96–102; 1999; 2011) and several articles (1984; 1989b; 1993; 2002; 2017; 2023; Alican and Thesleff 2013).

The earliest prototype is a rudimentary sketch in a paper delivered at a colloquium in Helsinki (1982) and subsequently published among the proceedings (1984). A more developed version, still not fully reflective of Thesleff's mature thought, follows in *Platon*, first published in Finnish translation (1989a) and subsequently released in the Swedish original (1990). The principal presentation comes ten years later in *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999).[5] Later ruminations are shared in *Platonin Arvoitus* (2011), a larger study, in Finnish, of, literally, *Plato's Riddle*. The ideas in the three monographs are adumbrated earlier in three essays (1984; 1989b; 1993), revisited later in the form of an overview (2002) of the second

[4] Diotima invokes "the great sea of beauty" (*to poly pelagos tetrammenos tou kalou* at 210d), where the Beautiful (*to kalon*) prevails "itself by itself, with itself, always one in form" (*auto kath' hauto meth' hautou monoeides aei on* at 211b), at the top of the ladder of love in the *Symposium* (209e–212a). The corresponding passage in the *Phaedo*, where the surface of the sea is never reached, runs as follows: "Seeing the sun and the other heavenly bodies through the water, he would think the sea to be the sky; because he is slow and weak, he has never reached the surface of the sea or risen with his head above the water or come out of the sea to our region here, nor seen how much purer and more beautiful it is than his own region, nor has he ever heard of it from anyone who has seen it" (109c–d).

[5] Thesleff's *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999) is more widely accessible through his *Platonic Patterns* (2009), a compilation of his previously published works on various aspects of Plato scholarship, but references in the present paper give the pagination of the original publication, which is provided in the margins of the compilation.

monograph (1999), elaborated afterwards in a collaborative initiative to flesh out some of the details (Alican and Thesleff 2013), and ventilated again in two subsequent essays without further development (2017; 2023).

Although his mission to recapture the two-level vision of Plato occupies Thesleff for well over a third of a century, he is quick to acknowledge the work of those coming before him, or of those laboring alongside him, even in the absence of a direct influence on his ideas.[6] Thesleff (2009, xv) singles out Cornelia de Vogel (1986) as his main inspiration for the development of the two-level model, though he lists several other scholars as forerunners in the same area (1999, 11–12, n. 20). Even a cursory glance at the work of de Vogel, especially at her *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (1986, 50, 62, 145–148, 159–212, n.b. 159–171), reveals why Thesleff (1993; 1999, 11–52) felt a debt of inspiration in that regard. She is indeed concerned with many of the same problems, which she addresses with essentially the same solution: "a metaphysic of different levels of being," with "a dependence of the inferior on the higher level" (de Vogel 1986, 44).[7]

The other publications Thesleff cites as precedents, on the other hand, do not appear to be anywhere near as relevant as the contribution of de Vogel. The full list consists of a journal article by Gerald A. Press (1995) and scholarly monographs by Bernard Freydberg (1997), Charles H. Kahn (1996), J. M. E. Moravcsik (1992), and Tapio Nummenmaa (1998), complemented by a sweeping

[6] A literature survey on the subject can be a mixed bag, if only because scholarly interest corresponds more generally to any aspect of monism versus dualism in Plato, as opposed to pertaining specifically to Thesleff's predilection for the union of complementary levels in a single world over the clash of opposite forces in separate worlds.

[7] The inspiration for the two-level model of Thesleff (1999) is hard to miss in the following words of Cornelia de Vogel (1986): "Thus, a distinction has been introduced which implies a difference of value and, so to speak, a difference of level: that kind of being which is 'pure' is obviously 'better' than the other kind; that which 'always exists' is superior to that which passes away, the 'immortal' kind is superior to the perishable, the 'stable' kind as such more basic than the shifting. We are in full metaphysics here: physical being is a kind of reality, but a kind of reality which can neither exist by itself nor be known or explained from itself. It is found to be dependent on that other, superior kind of being. There proves to be a 'difference of level' in such a sense that, after all, there appear to be *not two realities*, the one next to or opposite the other, realities of basically the same order and thus independent the one of the other — which would be *dualism* —, but one kind of reality which symbolically should be indicated by a capital, a Reality which in the ontological order must be called 'basic', and in the qualitative order 'supreme', a Reality which does not surpass the other in degree, in the way we say of things surrounding us that one of them is 'superior' to another, but ἁπλῶς; and another kind of reality which does 'exist', but in its very existence is found to be dependent on the first" (1986, 162).

reference, without differentiation, to various essays contributed as chapters in two scholarly collections, one by Francisco J. Gonzalez (1995) and the other by James C. Klagge and Nicholas D. Smith (1992). None of these works represents anything like a forerunner or prototype of what Thesleff gives us as two integrated levels in rejection of two separate worlds as the proper interpretation of the metaphysics of Plato. Their relevance to what Thesleff does with levels seems to rest mainly in their incidental recognition of the role of complementary contrasts in Plato's philosophical outlook and not in their clear endorsement of metaphysical monism over metaphysical dualism as the resulting framework.

Works that come closer to the position of Thesleff as precedents in the rejection of two worlds in Plato, in favor of a single world that serves the same purpose, fall into two categories in accordance with whether they focus on the metaphysics of the matter or on the epistemology of it. The former is about the reality of the world (or worlds) in question, while the latter is about the knowability of the contents of that world (or of those worlds). From either perspective, dualism represents the standard approach to Plato, that is, the most widely favored interpretation of Plato, which makes its scholarly adoption the default position. Presenting or representing Plato as a dualist, therefore, hardly ever requires documentation, especially since it emerges as a passive assumption rather than proceeding with active argumentation.[8] Potential precedents to

[8] There is no shortage of primary sources that can be cited in support of a dualism of worlds in Plato, whether or not Plato himself ever actually held such a view. Clustered around the so-called middle dialogues, passages typically adduced in favor of a dualism of that sort indicate either a separation of Forms or a duplication of worlds (domains, realms, regions, and so on), preferably both at once since they go hand in hand. Selected examples include the following: (1) *Parmenides*: (A) "Have you yourself distinguished as separate, in the way you mention, certain forms themselves, and also as separate the things that partake of them?" (130b); (B) "forms do not have their power in relation to things in our world, and things in our world do not have theirs in relation to forms" (134d). (2) *Phaedrus*: (A) "But when the souls we call immortals reach the top, they move outward and take their stand on the high ridge of heaven, where its circular motion carries them around as they stand while they gaze upon what is outside heaven. The place beyond heaven — none of our earthly poets has ever sung or ever will sing its praises enough!" (247c–d); (B) the mortal soul most closely following the gods on their winged journey "raises the head of its charioteer up to the place outside" for a glimpse of the Forms (248a). (3) *Republic*: (A) "there are these two things, one sovereign of the intelligible kind and place, the other of the visible" (509d); (B) "The visible realm should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the power of the sun. And if you interpret the upward journey and the study of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm, you'll grasp what I hope to convey, since that is what you wanted to hear about" (517b). The apparent dualism in such passages seems to find further corroboration in the testimony of Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 990b34–991a3, 1079a32–34), though the original

Thesleff come from dissenting opinions, hence from the opponents of dualism. They tend to address either the metaphysics of the matter or the epistemology of the question, instead of tackling both at once or not distinguishing between them at all.

Relevant examples of reactions to a two-world ontology in Plato include, but are not limited to, John Brentlinger (1972), A. S. Ferguson (1921), Debra Nails (2013), Alexander Nehamas (1975), and David Robjant (2012). Just as relevant is a dialogue between Sarah Broadie and Anthony Kenny (2004), who both focus on the ontology of the matter, though they examine the question specifically in the context of the *Timaeus* instead of discussing it more broadly as a general concern. Exemplifying the other dimension of the general issue, prominent reactions to a two-world epistemology include, among others, Travis Butler (2007), Gail Fine (1978; 1990; 2016; 2022), Francisco J. Gonzalez (1996 in critical appraisal of Fine 1978 and 1990), Christopher J. Rowe (2005), and Nicholas D. Smith (2000; 2012; 2019). Representing something of a combined approach, or comprehensive coverage, reactions to both the metaphysics and the epistemology of two worlds include J. N. Findlay (1974, especially xi–xii, 32–36, 40–41, 57–59, 77–78, 324–325, 351, 365, 390–391, 408; 1978, 209; 1983), Dorothea Frede (1999) in articulation, elaboration, and defense of Findlay (1974), and Eric D. Perl (1997).

Although it is always reasonable and frequently useful to distinguish between ontological and epistemological considerations in the corresponding context, it is neither necessary nor relevant in the case of Thesleff. The nature of his project leaves no room for emphasizing the epistemology of the question, nor even for benefiting from a discussion of the possibilities. This is because rejecting a two-world ontology, as he does, makes it contradictory to support a two-world epistemology, and superfluous to attack it, which therefore renders it at least pointless, if not also distracting, to bring it up at all. One of the most authoritative sources for the epistemological perspective is Nicholas D. Smith (2000; 2012; 2019), who not only provides a thorough acquaintance with the scholarly

passages themselves, without any help from Aristotle, are troublesome enough, at least at face value, for a proponent of monism in Plato.

literature but also contributes sound ideas toward a sensible solution.[9] This is not to say that problems associated with the epistemology of two worlds have been laid to rest, but that the knowability of Forms versus particulars is no longer a definitive implication of their existence in two separate worlds.[10]

What sets Thesleff apart from other proponents of a monism of worlds in Plato is not just the nature of his particular brand of monism, to wit, the integrated levels constituting a single reality, but also the modesty of his claims, especially relative to the depth and breadth of his observations. His two-level model, to recount his own description, is more of a tentative proposal emerging from a thought experiment than a definitive position grounded in a conclusive observation. And this holds not just for Thesleff but also for Plato. There are, to be precise, two separate but reciprocal dimensions to this talk of experimentation, much like the metaphysical levels they both articulate: The first is the dimension of dialectic by Plato, the second, that of interpretation by Thesleff. The two-level model thus represents the insight of Thesleff into the vision of Plato. Hence, it is not just the interpretation of Thesleff, but also the approach of Plato, that is more speculative than demonstrative: "The model was a matter of intuition rather than doctrine" (1993, 22).

Building on this basic caveat in a later discussion of the same issue, Thesleff leaves no room for misunderstanding regarding the proper employment of the model: "The two-level model, as sketched here — I repeat this again — is certainly no simple doctrinal, methodological, or artistic principle or set of principles that could be used, as such, to explain Plato's thought and art. It is an intuitive 'vision' which offers only crude basic patterns and frames for the structures of Plato's thinking, feelings, intuitions, and intentions, from his youth

[9] Debra Nails (2013, 78, n. 3) considers Nicholas D. Smith (2000) to have settled the epistemological issue, having demonstrated, at least to her satisfaction, that the two-world model fails to account for Plato's epistemology.

[10] To be more specific, the monism versus dualism of worlds does not determine whether — and the separation of worlds does not establish that — knowledge is reserved for Forms while belief is reserved for particulars, so as to preclude the possibility of belief in Forms or knowledge of particulars. Here is how Nicholas D. Smith describes the corresponding problem: "Worries about this problem have come to be called Plato's 'Two Worlds' problem, according to which the distinct and separate worlds of Forms and sensibles were supposed to entail that there could be no beliefs about Forms and no knowledge of the sensible world — which would obviously defeat Plato's claim that the philosopher-rulers would be superior rulers (in the Cave/sensible world, obviously), on the basis of their knowledge" (2012, 57, n. 15; cf. 2000 and 2019).

to his old age, and for our understanding of them" (1999, 123). This is how he views every aspect, detail, and feature of the model, not just the basic monism framing it. It is not just the interpretive paradigm of two levels in one world, in other words, that is provisional at both ends, hence both in Plato and in Thesleff, but also, to cite just one example, the accompanying classification of Forms within the two-level model, which then leaves the entire structure open to discussion and subject to revision in various ways.[11]

Despite the modesty of his claims, however, Thesleff considers his two-level model well-grounded in textual evidence. It is indeed largely out of intellectual modesty that he presents it as a speculative exploration of the evidence rather than as a conclusive inference from the evidence. That modesty is forced upon him, no doubt, by the inadequacy of the combined evidence for a compelling conclusion, but it is not unusual to find stronger positions defended with weaker evidence, while still making a relevant contribution through solid scholarship.[12] Thesleff's work, on the other hand, is all about the evidence. Some of the most conspicuous manifestations of the two-level model in broad outline have already been identified in the previous section in reference to the *Phaedo* (107d–114e), *Phaedrus* (246e–249d), *Republic* (506d–520d), *Symposium* (209e–212a), and *Timaeus* (34b–37c). Further connections between the operating principles of the interpretive paradigm and corroborating passages in the canonical corpus are available just about anywhere Thesleff discusses the subject matter.[13]

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[11] Thesleff finds it useful to think of Plato's Forms in terms of three distinct categories consisting of Ideal Forms, Conceptual Forms, and Relational Forms (Alican and Thesleff 2013, 26–29, 29–34, 35–38). These originate in his earlier classification of them as Ideas, Forms (or Conceptual Forms), and Categories (Thesleff 1999, 57–61, 63–69, 74–90).

[12] Although the textual evidence in primary sources may not always be enough to draw a compelling conclusion, especially where the topic of discussion is a matter of contention, it is no secret that just about any interpretation of Plato can, rightly or wrongly, be traced back to a passage in one dialogue or other that appears to support it, often in mutual inconsistency with any number of others that may appear to contradict it. That is quite possibly the most frustrating hermeneutic consequence of Plato's chosen position behind the veil of drama. That does not mean, however, that any passage can support any reading. Nor does it preclude the possibility of an overarching interpretation that is broadly consistent with the main lines of philosophical development throughout the canonical corpus.

[13] Readers requiring documentation at a more detailed level, including the classification of Forms as well as other features of the two-level model, will most likely find what they are looking for in the textual references and correlative analyses in Thesleff (1999). Those favoring a quicker review of the evidence can find a distillation of the most compelling references in a more compact presentation in Alican and Thesleff (2013).

Supremely confident in his philological assessment of the relevant texts, and quite rightly so, Thesleff was at least amused and visibly intrigued by parallel perspectives concerning philosophical implications. Keep in mind, however, that although he is doing philosophy in, say, *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999), he is doing it as a philologist, as he announces in the preface, where he promises to "combine some new and slightly eccentric approaches to Plato with the determining of an elderly philologist's positions arrived at successively over the past fifty years or more" (Thesleff 1999, vii). Thesleff is clearly after historical accuracy. He is not interested in doing philosophy with Plato, or against Plato, or through Plato. Nor is he interested, therefore, in demonstrating the ongoing relevance of Plato's philosophy. What he is interested in doing, rather, is recovering the actual philosophy of Plato, or more specifically, the philosophy intended in and through the dialogues of Plato. Hence, he is excited by the prospects of historical accuracy, and it is there that he finds conclusive results unlikely, thus determining the modesty of his own claims.

4. PHILOSOPHICAL RELEVANCE

Much of what Thesleff makes of the philosophy of Plato revolves around the paradigm of complementary levels making up a single reality in a solitary world. Notwithstanding the modesty of his approach, always presented as a thought experiment amounting to little more than a tentative proposal, practically everything he says of philosophical significance either proceeds from or refers back to his two-level model. It is easy to see why, for the model is not just intuitively appealing as a reflection of what Plato appears to be doing, but also infinitely rich in terms of explanatory power. It can be invoked in articulation of every aspect of Plato scholarship, ranging from the composition of a typical dialogue as a dialectical process with a leader and an apprentice, thus mirroring the structure of the two-level model, to the organization of the world as a combination of complementary elements in productive co-existence, again drawing on the two-level format. The center of attraction, however, is the metaphysics of the model, particularly its ontological implications, but also its cosmological applications.

Why two levels as opposed to two worlds? If the central idea is the creative synergy of apparent opposites that are actually integrated complements, could that possibility not be explored through two worlds just as well as it can through

two levels in a single world? Could separate worlds not complement each other in the relevant way? Is the monism of worlds strictly necessary for the viability of the model? Is the monism of worlds even defended, embraced, or promoted by Thesleff as vigorously as productivity through opposition, or as persistently as perfection through completion, especially in early formulations of the model (as in Thesleff 1999), where the emphasis is more on complementary contrasts than on metaphysical monism, and more on productive interaction than on structural holism? Despite the obvious emphasis on contrasts, the monism is indeed embraced just as strongly, especially since the complementary relationship is no more separated from the monistic structure than is the creative process from the holistic perspective, but the preceding questions are nevertheless important.

Such questions represent philosophical misgivings that go to the heart of the matter in ontological terms: Demonstrating the possibility of interaction despite the reality of separation is a methodological requirement whether reality consists of two separate levels or two separate worlds. Proceeding with levels, Thesleff uses the notion of "bridges" to account for that possibility (1999, 33, 62, 110). This is his provision for a connection between the two levels, whose integration he recognizes as requiring a satisfactory explanation even though they both belong to the same world. He identifies the Forms in particular as the main bridge: "Among the many attempts to bridge the levels and explicate their internal relations, the most explicit, ambitious and famous one was the theory of Forms" (Thesleff 1999, 33). Yet he regards the Forms as merely one part, albeit the most prominent part, of a vast network of such bridges: "The theories of the soul, anamnesis, eros, hypothesis, the classifying method sometimes called dihaeretics, and the mediatory role of the philosopher are other bridge-building efforts within the frame of the model" (Thesleff 2009, xv).

A potential avenue of opposition opens up where Thesleff identifies the Forms not only as the main bridge between the two levels but also as the main constituents of the upper level. The objection here would be that the combination presents an inconsistency whereby the Forms end up being bridges to themselves. This does not actually follow, though, because Thesleff never says that the Forms *are* the upper level of reality, instead intimating that they are *in* the upper level of reality. Just as the George Washington Bridge can be, and, in fact, is, in New York, as opposed to constituting the entirety of New York, which it instead serves

as a gateway to New Jersey, so too can the Forms be in the upper level of reality, and indeed are presumed to be there, without constituting the entirety of the upper level, which they likewise serve as a mode of connection with the lower level. More importantly, there is no real benefit to maintaining strict standards of structural correspondence in the employment of the same constructs to explicate different aspects of a philosophical enterprise in figurative language. It is good enough that the chosen examples illustrate the specific point for which they are invoked, as they often do, without simultaneously illuminating every other context in which they may come up.

Even if one accepts the idea of bridges, however, as an ontological facility in a solitary world with complementary levels, the solution adopted can leave one wondering about the possibility of a similar arrangement under metaphysical dualism, that is, within the framework of two separate worlds that somehow complement each other. If such bridges are both necessary and sufficient to connect the upper and lower levels of Plato's gradation of reality, thus accounting for the possibility of a productive interaction between them, might not the same bridges, or similar ones at any rate, be necessary and sufficient in an alternative model where the aim is to connect two separate worlds instead of two complementary levels in a single world? Put differently, why is it that bridges can join and reconcile different levels in just the right way, thereby establishing a workable connection, but they cannot join or reconcile separate worlds in any way at all? And why is it, pray tell, that Thesleff even needs bridges if he is working with complementary levels in a single world?

The common answer to all such questions is that the operative distinction is not merely between two levels and two worlds, as if two of anything always worked the same way, one pair being no different from any other regardless of what they are, but between a unitary framework and a dualistic context, as manifested in the parallel distinction between integration and separation. A connection, coalition, or consolidation between different things, points, or levels is a more natural presumption where they all belong to the same world than it is where they each belong to a different world, thus becoming alien in addition to being separate. Even if bridges, metaphorical though they may be, are required to connect different levels of the same world, the separation of worlds introduces a decidedly different kind of disparity to be reconciled, for which mere bridges

may not be sufficient.

It is one thing to travel from Washington Heights to Fort Lee, or vice versa, on the George Washington Bridge, quite another to complete a comparable journey between Earth and Mars, where a spaceship would be required in lieu of a bridge, and harder still to attempt one between our position in the Milky Way and any position in the Andromeda Galaxy, where a stable wormhole would be required in addition to a spaceship and in lieu of a bridge. The problem is not just distance either. Granted, there is a distance beyond which the construction of a bridge between two places may not be feasible, which would be a practical problem, but there are also situations where it may not even be relevant, which would be a conceptual problem. When the relevant difference is a matter of ontological disparity rather than one of physical distance, as it is between transcendent Forms and sensible phenomena residing in separate worlds, however that may work, all bets are off for a natural connection, in the absence of which we are at the mercy of thought experiments on the possibility of a metaphysical relationship.

Invoking a separate world to accommodate a difference in kind complicates matters beyond what is strictly required to distinguish between things that are not identical in nature or comparable in function. This is not merely because the notion of a world is not itself all that clear, but also because no amount of clarification stands to make the separation of worlds any more necessary than it is in the absence of such clarity. The sense of a second world to accommodate the existence of Forms is not about another planet, a different solar system, or a distant galaxy, all of which are physical locations for sensible phenomena rather than magical receptacles for intelligible essences existing in transcendence of physical reality. It is not even about a parallel universe, which would still be a concrete venue for sensible phenomena as opposed to an abstract repository for intelligible objects without a material manifestation. It has to be about a different reality, but there is no different reality. Reality consists of what there is, which has no room for anything else, different or otherwise. A different reality would be just more reality, which is already included in the notion of reality.

The duality of worlds, therefore, is not as meaningful as it may appear to those who embrace it simply to make room for Forms. It is rather fanciful to introduce a second world just because the notion of Forms does not make sense without it.

The truth of the matter is that, if the Forms do not make sense without a second world, that can only be because they do not make sense at all, in which case the problem is not with the original world, that is, with the only reality there is, but instead with the Forms. The thing to do is not to conjure up a second world, but to get rid of the Forms, or to find a different interpretation for them, preferably one that does not require making things up. Introducing a second world willy-nilly, without the slightest explanation or justification, is to pass the buck and avoid the problem by stipulating a condition that cannot be validated or corroborated. It is to make an assumption just because it is needed and not because it is warranted.

The solution envisaged is hardly more credible than a magic show. It is a matter of pretending that the mystical combination of this world and that world makes enough sense to make up for whatever it is about the Forms that does not make sense, which we all know is their transcendence. Either accept the Forms, transcendence and all, or reject them, lock, stock, and barrel. Do not go through the motions of a solution, while in fact sidestepping the problem, by imagining a second world as if it were a perfectly reasonable assumption. That is not a solution, but a workaround, and not a very good one at that. Not only is it not reasonable, it is not even meaningful. The alternative of a single reality, even if it comes with its own problems, chief among them being transcendence, is at least not an assumption that is difficult to understand without further explanation of how reality might be all there is.

5. MONISM VERSUS DUALISM

The transcendence of reality, notoriously attributed to the Forms, is the principal problem, at least upon first glance, with a metaphysical monism of the kind associated with the two-level model of Thesleff. How indeed can the Forms be transcendent if there is just one world? To parse the problem further, how can the Forms exist in transcendence of reality — which is what "transcendence" already means without invoking "reality" as a benchmark to be transcended — if reality is, in fact, all there is? What they would have to transcend is obvious: It is the world. But if there is only one world, where would they do this transcending? Where would they be, when would they be, how would they be, once they transcended the world? If there is nowhere to go, that leaves nowhere

to be. Forms that transcend the world, where there is only one world, are as good as no Forms at all. Or so it seems, if transcendence is construed as existence in another location, whether or not we add that it must also be at another time.

Yet if we need and add another world to overcome apparent obstacles to transcendence in this one, that is a requirement and a complication, not a solution or a discovery. Moreover, invoking one simply because it helps rather than because it works, even if that were a reasonable approach, would still leave us with the vagaries of postulating a reality beyond reality, as discussed above, whereas there is no reality other than just plain reality. Any more of it, even if it differs from the aspects or portions under consideration, is still a part of what there is in all, not something else besides. Adding a second world multiplies facilities, which is not the same as validating transcendence. It may be objected that external facilities beyond this world is exactly what is needed to validate transcendence from our perspective, which is the perspective of the present world, but such an objection would reduce transcendence to a storage problem. The nature of transcendence is metaphysical rather than physical, which makes it a cohesion problem rather than a storage problem.

The right way to think about transcendence is in terms of a different way of existence as opposed to a different place for existence. But once we switch from expecting a spatiotemporal transfer to exploring conceptual accommodations as the meaning and fulfillment of transcendence, we are already past a solution that can be achieved by adding more worlds to the mix. That is why accounting for transcendence is a problem to be solved, if it can be solved at all, in the world in which we live. A different way of existing must either be rejected from the outset as an absurdity, or impossibility, or otherwise be established through elaboration on the notion of existence. The postulation of a second world promises a diversification of places in which to exist, instead of producing a differentiation of senses in which to exist, consequently leaving us without a clarification of the meaning of existence.

Not only is the duplication of worlds an expansion of reality as opposed to a confirmation of transcendence, but it is also a product of the imagination rather than a requirement of empirical evidence or rational reflection. Even the resulting diversification of places in which to exist is problematic. Invoking a second world simply to make room for the Forms is more like an *ad hoc* solution

to a contrived problem than like the application of a general principle or the implementation of a demonstrable truth. It is indeed like grasping at straws. This is because invoking a second world to accommodate the existence of Forms boils down to invoking a second world to accommodate ontological diversity, which is not necessarily a binary affair, on the contrary, being almost certainly a pluralistic prospect, which then requires not just one more world but many more worlds, perhaps endlessly many, at least as many as there are different kinds of things, provided that the difference is ontologically significant.

Even upon setting aside natural differences between things, as in the difference between sticks and stones, for example, or between lions and tigers and bears, for that matter, which can presumably all be accommodated in the same world, we would still be left with supernatural differences and metaphysical differences. Supernatural differences concern differences in kind between, say, spirits, demons, or fairies, on the one hand, and ordinary persons made of flesh and blood, on the other. Metaphysical differences represent a more general category, including differences between numbers, propositions, and the like, on the one hand, and both sensible phenomena, such as human beings, and supernatural things, such as spirits, on the other. If we really needed another world for the Forms, would we not need additional worlds for all these things, that is, for all the things that are neither Forms nor whatever it is that is so incompatible with Forms as to require another world for the Forms?

The question is not a reflection of idle speculation and vacuous generalization outside the realm of relevance. Plato himself is as quick to speak of gods, demigods, divinities, souls, satyrs, centaurs, and such, as Marvel Comics is to dream up superheroes of mysterious origins and mesmerizing characteristics. If Marvel does not require multiple worlds for its diverse ontological commitments, why would Plato need them for his? The Avengers, for example, bring together, among others, a man with superhuman strength, caused by exposure to gamma rays, another with spiderlike abilities, caused by the bite of a radioactive spider, and yet another with godlike powers, owing to his status as an actual god, a Norse deity to be specific. I am talking, respectively, about the Hulk, Spider-Man, and Thor. As imaginative as science-fiction writers are, however, in their unbridled predisposition to make things up, they do not complicate things further by placing their superheroes in different realities. Even Asgard, the mythical home of Thor,

is portrayed by Marvel as part of the world, instead of being placed in an alternate universe.

Why might that be? With little incentive and no obligation to observe scientific principles or philosophical limitations, why would an entertainment franchise pass up the opportunity to be even more creative, and thereby more entertaining, through the introduction of different worlds with an untapped potential for plot development? It is because the proliferation of realities is inversely correlated with the prospects for interaction. Even the USS *Enterprise* (NCC-1701), whose primary objective, as stated in its "five-year mission," is "to explore strange new worlds" and "to boldly go where no man has gone before," rarely goes anywhere beyond the local galaxy, often ending up back in twentieth-century Earth, where everything is all so familiar.[14] Despite the allure of exploring an alternate reality, that opportunity is exploited only on occasion in the entertainment industry, where creative directors generally prefer to keep everything in the same world. How indeed would all their superheroes be able to join one another in captivating adventures, where they form alliances against the forces of evil, if each one lived in a reality suitable for its own heritage and powers?

We may reasonably ask a similar question of Plato, given that he, too, gives us a host of things of different kinds, each with different characteristics and different requirements. His gods and souls and centaurs, for example, not to mention the *daimonion* of Socrates, or the demiurge of Timaeus, seem to differ in ontological status both from sensible phenomena and from transcendent Forms no less than the latter two differ from each other. If a second world is required for Forms, just because they are not the same kind of thing as sensible phenomena, would that not open the door to a third one for gods, just because they are not the same kind of thing as sensible phenomena or transcendent Forms, and to a fourth one for souls, just because they are not the same kind of thing as sensible phenomena or transcendent Forms or gods, and so on with centaurs if you please, to which we may add any number of other things that may differ in significant ways from all of these?

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[14] This is the mission statement of the USS *Enterprise* (NCC-1701), the flagship of Starfleet, which is the division responsible for space exploration and homeland security under the auspices of the United Federation of Planets, with the entire ensemble constituting the dramatic setting of the television series *Star Trek* (1966–1969).

We may even ask, without being unreasonable, about separate worlds for stick and stones and such, that is, for anything that is different in any way from anything else. The answer in this case, of course, is just as reasonable as the question. Truth be told, it is not merely reasonable but indubitable as well. It is that sticks and stones are not different enough from anything else in our phenomenal experience, nor from each other in isolation from everything else, to require additional worlds to account for their existence. Their existence can be accommodated, without the slightest problem, no matter where we happen to be in our existential encounter with reality. And that is exactly why all the preceding questions are both relevant and decisive against a dualism or pluralism of worlds, which does not alter the nature of the encounter contemplated.

To spell it out, it is because the answer just given associates the multiplication of worlds directly with the significance of the difference adduced in favor of it. That makes the pluralism of worlds a methodological facility that is available for addressing potential problems in the mutual coexistence of any combination of things rather than a special workaround relevant only to the distinction between transcendent Forms and sensible phenomena. And this constitutes yet another problem in the postulation of a separate world just for the Forms. At least two prior problems, both discussed above, are the vagaries associated with and the difficulties created by the introduction of additional worlds, where the vagaries pertain to the complete uncertainty of what it means for there to be more worlds than one, while the difficulties include the conceptual obstacles to meaningful interaction in the context of radical separation.

6. CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

One may be tempted to object, as a fellow philosopher actually did upon reading a previous draft of the present paper, that souls and gods do not require a separate world for each one, nor even a separate world for either one apart from the world of Forms, because all these things are similar enough, at least as far as Plato is concerned, to belong to the same world, as confirmed, for example, by the third argument of the *Phaedo* (78b–80b) for the immortality of the soul. Commonly known as the affinity argument, the third argument of the *Phaedo* is where the dramatic Socrates submits that souls are different enough from sensible phenomena, and similar enough to intelligible phenomena, with the latter

notably including gods as well as Forms, to make it reasonable to infer that souls are deathless if gods and Forms are deathless.[15] Drawing on this appeal to similarity, the objection of my critic was that Plato clearly places these three categories of things, namely souls, gods, and Forms, in the same world, which definitively precludes the possibility of a separate world for each one.

My immediate reaction was a sense of relief that the strongest objection of a competent judge was grounded in the weakest argument of a single dialogue. Upon further reflection, though, my initial impression seemed a bit hasty. There was something about it that did not sit quite right. What that was dawned on me like an epiphany: I was not looking at the big picture. The affinity argument, it then occurred to me, is probably not just the weakest argument of the *Phaedo*, but quite possibly the worst argument in the entire corpus of Plato. What makes it so bad, mind you, is not that it fails to establish its conclusion. It does fail in that regard, but so do a lot of other arguments. What makes it so bad, rather, is that it fails to attract any support from interested parties, who instead either abandon the argument (Socrates) or challenge the rationale (Simmias and Cebes), which quickly precipitates a crippling interlude with misology, the hatred of reason (88c–89b), thus paving the way for the urgent warning of Socrates (89b–91c) against giving up rational discourse altogether on account of one bad experience with specious reasoning.[16] What we have, then, is not simply a bad argument but a grand disappointment that occasions a pep talk of the kind that Captain America delivers to motivate his fellow Avengers when their mutual progress toward a common goal is disrupted by an unexpected setback.[17]

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[15] Socrates fleshes out the details of the similitude relevant to the affinity argument (*Phaedo* 78b–80b) in terms of a synoptic distinction between the soul and the body, or more specifically, between the analogical correlates of the soul and the analogical correlates of the body: "the soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same" (*Phaedo* 80b).

[16] Even Socrates himself, immediately after articulating its basic rationale, practically disowns the affinity argument of the *Phaedo* (cf. 78b–80b for the central argument, 80c–84b for the supporting imagery), as he expresses serious misgivings regarding its plausibility (84c), which is what encourages his dialectical partners, Simmias (85b–86d) and Cebes (86e–88b), to present their counterarguments. While Socrates does not exactly repudiate his own argument, not in so many words anyway, his lack of satisfaction comes through loud and clear: "There are still many doubtful points and many objections for anyone who wants a thorough discussion of these matters" (84c).

[17] The foregoing inferences from what Socrates, Simmias, and Cebes say and do in the *Phaedo* are not intended to suggest that we can deduce the philosophical positions of Plato from the words and actions of

Be that as it may, the objection itself comes with sufficient textual support, on top of strong intuitive appeal. It is not enough, therefore, to denigrate the argument on which it is based. It is conceivable, after all, that an argument that fails to establish its own conclusion might incidentally confirm some other fact, relation, or association. Just because its conclusion does not follow from its premises does not mean that nothing in it is remotely plausible. What that means in this case is that the affinity argument could fail to prove the immortality of the soul, while succeeding in demonstrating its similarity to Forms and gods, at least to a degree that is sufficient to place them all in the same world, though obviously not to a degree that is sufficient to infer every property for the soul, including the property of not being susceptible to death, that is commonly accepted to be exhibited by Forms and gods. The objection would then be that souls, gods, and Forms are so similar that they cannot reasonably be assigned to different worlds, no matter how badly the affinity argument fails to establish the immortality of the soul.

This iteration of the objection liberates the appeal to similitude, particularly as a dialectical instrument, from the confines of a solitary argument with a specific purpose. At the same time, however, it opens up the possibility of invoking similarity standards in other contexts that might undermine the very objection that similitude is supposed to support. Recall that similarity, or likeness, is, in fact, one of several models employed to articulate, explicate, and elucidate the relationship between Forms and particulars.[18] Particulars are the way they are,

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his dramatic characters. While it may sometimes, by no means always, be possible to do that, knowing when, where, and how is no mean matter. The earliest example of efforts in that area is Diogenes Laërtius (*Lives* 3.52), who identifies four mouthpieces for Plato: Socrates; Timaeus; the Athenian Stranger; the Eleatic Stranger. Those are indeed reasonable choices, but even Socrates does not always speak for Plato. Some question whether he ever does. A good source for critical consideration is *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity* (2000), a collection of scholarly essays edited by Gerald A. Press. I myself do not know how to sort all the characters out in that regard. All I am claiming, however, is that the monistic alternative of two levels in one world is a reasonable way of reading what Plato wrote, regardless of whether what Plato wrote represents what Plato believed.

[18] Other models for the relationship between Forms and particulars include: (1) *koinōnia* (*Phaedo* 100d; *Republic* 476a), translated in various ways, including "association," "communion," "fellowship," and "partnership"; (2) *methexis* (*Parmenides* 132d), *metechein* (*Parmenides* 129a, 132e), and *metalambanein* (*Parmenides* 129a), all in reference to a particular thing as "sharing in" or "partaking of" the corresponding Form; (3) *mimēsis* (*Cratylus* 423e; *Republic* 510b; *Timaeus* 19d, 39d, 48e, 50c, 51b), translated as "imitation," where particulars are said to

so we are told, because they resemble the Forms, that is, because they are like them in some way or other, presumably being similar to them in just the right way, possibly so much so as to create an infinite regress of similitude, or of likeness (*Parmenides* 132d–133a).[19] Given that the relationship determines the way the world works, the similarity depicted there is too strong to ignore the discrepancy with the objection on hand: If the resemblance of particulars to Forms is not enough to keep the Forms in the same world as particulars, why should the affinity between souls and gods, and between souls and Forms, be sufficient to accommodate all of them in the same world?

The answer is largely irrelevant, for the question is entirely rhetorical. I am shamelessly fishing for an answer in my favor. As it turns out, a critic pursuing this line of attack does not even need the affinity argument (regardless of its validity, soundness, or strength) to demonstrate that souls and gods belong in the same world — so long as we are talking about Plato's world. At least some of the other arguments by Plato for the immortality of the soul outright identify the soul as a god, wherefore souls and gods cannot be assigned to separate worlds, because they are not even different things.[20] Then again, this does not mean that Plato takes souls to be gods, just that one particular type of argument invokes such an association, which is not enough to support a general principle or universal equivalence. Just the opposite is corroborated throughout the Platonic corpus, where we discover not only that the soul is not the same thing as a god, but also

"imitate" (*mimeomai*) the relevant Form; (4) *parousia* (*Phaedo* 100d), translated as "presence," "presentation," or "manifestation," indicating that the Form is somehow present in the thing of which it is a Form.

[19] Representing one of several paradigms for the relationship between Forms and particulars, as outlined in the preceding footnote, some type of "resemblance" (*homoiōsis* or *homoiotēs* at *Parmenides* 129a, 131a, 132d–133a), including "likeness" and "similitude," is invoked as a model wherever sensible phenomena are said "to resemble" (*homoion* at *Parmenides* 132d–e), "to appear like" (*eoikenai* at *Parmenides* 132d), or "to be similar to" (*proseoika* at *Phaedo* 74e) their respective Forms. Reginald Edgar Allen (1960), among others, warns against misconstruing "imitation" (*mimēsis*) as "resemblance" (*homoiōsis* or *homoiotēs*), presumably including "likeness" and "similitude" under the latter rubric as well.

[20] The best examples are prototypes of the cosmological argument for the existence of God, especially where Plato employs them as a proof for the immortality of the soul. He invariably construes the soul as a first cause, or prime mover, in that context. The most memorable instantiations are in the *Phaedrus* (245c–246a) and the *Laws* (891d–899d), where the soul's divinity, along with its immortality, is attributed to its natural ability to move itself, while also moving others, without itself ever being moved by anything else. Explicit impressions of the divinity of the soul include the following references in the *Laws*: "soul itself being, if the truth were told, a divinity" (897b); "every single one of us is bound to regard it as a god" (899a); "we shall insist that these souls are gods" (899b).

that the possession of a soul is not even a privilege reserved exclusively for gods, instead being a property common to all living things, including plants and animals, as well as the world itself.[21]

The dialectic in progress can continue to alternate point with counterpoint without ever reaching a conclusive resolution. Neither side is decisive, no matter the evidence. The question whether Plato is best read as embracing a single world, or as postulating two, is not a matter of whether he would, by his own rationale, be forced to put souls and gods in separate worlds, if he were to assign Forms and particulars to separate worlds. The mere possibility of such an implication simply illustrates the stark reality of the underlying complication, namely the assumption that only one kind of thing can be so different as to require a separate world altogether. My point is not that souls and gods are so different from each other, with each one, in turn, being so different from Forms, that Plato must acknowledge a separate world for every single one of these categories. It is that, if differences in kind are indicative of distinctions between worlds, then it is not clear that a binary division between the world of Forms and the world of particulars is a compelling place to stop, given all the other differences in kind.

Why indeed stop there? If things I can touch, like sticks and stones, are so different from things I cannot touch, like souls, gods, and Forms, that we need two separate worlds, one for the former category, one for the latter, why might not things with a mind and a will of their own, like souls and gods, not be considered different enough from things without a mind or a will of their own, like Forms, that we need two separate worlds in that case as well, one for the former category, one for the latter. If sensibility versus intelligibility is a compelling point of demarcation, why might not sentience versus insentience, or more simply, being alive versus being inanimate, present a legitimate point of demarcation? Maybe not every last hobgoblin has to have his or her own world,

[21] The *Timaeus* alone contains all the evidence one might require on the common nature and pervasive presence of the soul, though further corroboration is available throughout the Platonic corpus. Not only does the dialogue confirm that all living things, even plants (77b–c), have a soul, but it also goes so far as to assign a soul to the world at large, commonly known as the World Soul (34b–37c). Perhaps even more significant is its depiction of the human soul as having both an immortal component (41a–44d), which is assembled directly by the demiurge, from the same ingredients as the World Soul (34b–37c), though with a lower grade of purity (41d–42e), and a mortal component (42e–44c, 69d–72d), which is put together by lesser gods created by the demiurge.

but there is something disingenuous about assuming that the Forms deserve a separate world just because we do not know where to put them here, nor even what to do with them anywhere, while quietly pretending that everything else that constitutes an awkward fit with what appears to be possible in, or compatible with, our own world is just fine where it is.

I will gladly concede that Forms need their own world, with occasional visits from souls and gods (*Phaedrus* 246e–249d), if someone can tell me where to put all the dragons, dreams, numbers, properties, propositions, songs, and unicorns, to say nothing of theoretical constructs like dark matter or dark energy, which straddle the border between the sensible and the intelligible. What I am getting at is that, if it is necessary to imagine a separate world for Forms, just because they are different in kind from sensible phenomena, then it might be at least helpful, if not strictly necessary, to keep that imagination active for the sake of other things that differ in kind, not just from sensible phenomena but also from Forms and from each other. Yet if we really do not need to do that, which we clearly do not, and if we can figure things out without shoving them out, which we certainly can, then maybe we can do that with the Forms as well. Any semblance of confidence behind this bold statement is, of course, strictly about the plausibility of an alternative, not about the impossibility of the original.

7. POSSIBILITY VERSUS REALITY

The challenge-and-response dialectic of the preceding section is not so much a step toward a comprehensive solution, or a stage in a definitive demonstration, as it is a vehicle for exploring some of the conceptual and methodological concerns coming up in connection with the metaphysics of Forms, especially with respect to the number of worlds indicated for their smooth operation. No part of it confirms either that Plato did or that he did not imagine a separate world for Forms, but perhaps some of it illustrates why anyone might, with good reason, refrain from doing so. The latter is a possibility that gets neglected as scholars uncritically adopt and inadvertently perpetuate the traditional interpretation of the "separation of Forms" as "an isolation of Forms" in a "separate world for Forms." Is a separate world for Forms not possible? Maybe it is, maybe it is not. It depends on what is meant by a "separate world for Forms." But the possibility is not the issue. The reality is. Even so, before challenging the reality, it will help to consider why the possibility might not be as compelling as it seems for those

accustomed to taking it for granted. For they do appear to be too comfortable with the notion of a separate world for Forms.

Or does it only seem that way to me because I am not comfortable with the possibility in question, perhaps not even with the possibility of possible worlds? On the contrary, I am as comfortable with possible worlds as Anya Jenkins seems to be where she illustrates the concept through the fairly tame example of a world without shrimp, proceeding immediately afterwards to suggest the possibility of a world with nothing but shrimp, the combined implication being that the possibility is neither determined by how reasonable it seems nor precluded by how strange it sounds. Before anyone goes off on a wild goose chase in search of this Philosopher Queen of thought experiments, I should disclose that Anya Jenkins is not the new Judith Jarvis Thomson. She is a vengeance demon serving as the Patron Saint of Scorned Women, having been appointed to that position more than a thousand years ago by D'Hoffryn of Arashmaharr.[22] Anyone refusing to do philosophy with a vengeance demon may also wish to skip the parts about the *daimonion* of Socrates referenced throughout the Platonic corpus, the talking laws stealing the show in the *Crito*, the flying horses serving the charioteer of the *Phaedrus*, and the demiurge putting everything together in the *Timaeus*.

Anyone reveling in the latter icons, on the other hand, might appreciate the former image as well. To return to the thought experiment of Ms. Jenkins, then, a world without shrimp may well be tolerable in addition to being possible. We might even miss the shrimp, if we were in a world with shrimp to begin with, only to have them all taken away. But we could live with their absence. A world with nothing but shrimp, in contrast, sounds not just boring, pointless, and intolerable, but inconceivable as well. The reason why it seems inconceivable is that shrimp are life forms, whose existence as living organisms depends on the satisfaction of certain biological functions and environmental conditions, all of which are precluded by the very idea of a world with nothing but shrimp. No world, possible or actual, could host all that shrimp, or even a single shrimp, without a supporting

[22] Created by Joss Whedon and portrayed by Emma Caulfield, Anya (Anyanka Christina Emmanuella) Jenkins is a fictional character in the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Her illustration of the concept of possible worlds through the correlative examples of a world without shrimp and a world with nothing but shrimp is a recurring theme originating in the episode "Superstar," which first aired on The WB network on 4 April 2000.

ecosystem. Any candidate must therefore contain various other things in order to qualify as a world of shrimp, which would not, however, be a world with nothing but shrimp, as stipulated, if it actually included all the things that are required to accommodate however many shrimp there are.

What does this tell us about the realm of Forms from the perspective of Plato? Nothing if the realm of Forms is just an aspect of reality that we visualize in metaphorical terms to make sense of things in themselves in the only world there is. Yet if the realm of Forms is a world of Forms, where the latter is conceived as a literal world existing separately from the one we inhabit, then maybe the shrimp analogy does reveal a potential problem. A world of Forms may not, upon initial consideration, seem quite as strange as a world of shrimp, but a world with nothing but Forms sounds very much like what Kant once described as concepts without content.[23] Anyone perking up following this transition to a central figure of the European Enlightenment, after suffering through an encounter with the folksy wisdom of a vengeance demon, may interpret Forms without particulars in the metaphysical outlook of Plato as the analogical correlates of concepts without content in the critical philosophy of Kant.[24] As for kindred spirits who are willing to work with a vengeance demon, they can visualize either one of those formal categories as the metaphorical counterpart of shrimp without ecological support in the unbridled imagination of the Patron Saint of Scorned Women.

If the very existence of shrimp depends on the existence of other things besides the shrimp, then maybe it is in a comparable sense, though obviously not

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[23] This incisive assessment by Kant (1781/1787) runs as follows in its original context: "Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind" (KrV A51/B75). The reference above to "concepts without content" is a loose and partial rendition of the standard translation: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." See the translations by Kemp Smith (1929), Pluhar (1996), and Guyer and Wood (1998), all listed under Kant (1781/1787).

[24] Alfred Edward Taylor argues that Plato had anticipated Kant's appraisal of concepts versus content through his own assessment of Forms versus particulars. Convinced that "Plato's fundamental problem is essentially identical with that of Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*" (1908, 37), Taylor maintains that "the theory [of Forms] does full justice to both parts of the Kantian *dictum* that 'percepts without concepts are *blind*, concepts without percepts are empty'" (1926, 188). He fleshes out the similarity he finds between Plato and Kant in terms of an organic bond between Form and particulars that is reminiscent of a symbiotic relationship: "there are no 'forms' except those which sense-experience suggests, or, to use the language which will meet us later in the dialogue [*Phaedo*], there are no 'forms' which are not 'participated in' by sensible particulars" (Taylor 1926, 188, n. 1).

in an identical one, that the intelligibility of Forms depends on the sensibility of particulars. Does this mean that Plato's Forms might not even exist without sensible phenomena? It means more than that. It means that transcendent Forms would not even make sense without sensible phenomena — much like Kant's concepts without content. Transcendent Forms existing all by themselves in a world of their own, without any sensible phenomena to instantiate them, would be empty, for lack of a better word, just as sensible phenomena existing all by themselves in a world of their own, without any Forms to instantiate, would be nebulous, amounting to nothing more than a perceptual field of unstructured confusion. Empty Forms would be no more intelligible than their material counterparts would be sensible, the former suffering from a lack of instantiation and incorporation, the latter from a lack of individuation and differentiation.[25] There is no upstairs, as Thesleff reminds us, without a correlative downstairs, or perhaps more to the point, no abstraction without a reciprocal sensation, and therefore, no theory without practice.[26]

Is a separate world for Forms not possible, then, perhaps not even conceivable? It depends on whether one believes in the possibility of meaningful interaction after hard separation. Lest there be any doubt, I am not challenging the philosophical notion of possible worlds. I am simply opposing the whimsical proliferation of actual worlds, which is exactly what is required to accommodate the transcendence of Forms through the postulation of another world. That other

[25] This is not a denial of the possibility of empty Forms. It is merely a reminder that a world with nothing but Forms may well have nothing but empty Forms. And it will do no good to object that we can also put souls and gods in that world, for there would then be empty Forms plus souls and gods, perhaps with the souls and gods instantiating a couple of the empty Forms, namely those of souls and gods, if there are such Forms. All the other Forms would still be empty. As for the possibility itself, that is, the possibility of Forms that are not instantiated by any particulars, the scholarly literature on the subject shows no tendency toward a consensus. Those who accept the possibility include Gail Fine (1984, 74–85), Erkka Maula (1967, 12–50), and Gregory Vlastos (1969, 301). Those who reject the possibility include Ian MacHattie Crombie (1963, 153–246), Arthur Lovejoy (1936, 45–55), and Michael David Rohr (1978, 268–283 [= 1981, 19–56]), in addition to Alfred Edward Taylor (1926, 188, n. 1) as cited in the preceding footnote. The prospects for a solution depend on the clarification of the question, which requires specifying at least whether what is meant is Forms that are accidentally and temporarily empty or Forms that are essentially and permanently empty. Further discussion is available in Alican (2017; 2021, 169–223).

[26] Here is how Thesleff puts the matter in his own words: "Both Platonic levels (including sub-levels illustrated in the Divided Line allegory) belong somehow together, like day and night, upstairs and downstairs, theory vs. practice, abstract vs. concrete or the laws of nature vs. phenomena in modern thinking, and there are mediating forces" (2017, 181).

world must, in fact, be not a merely possible world but another actual world, one that is no less real than the world to be transcended. Even with the extreme modal realism of David Lewis (1986), where possible worlds are just as real as the actual world, a separate world for Forms would require a second actual world, not a suitable possible world, the latter of which, though no less real, would be too alien to have manifestations or instantiations in our world, and therefore in the only reality that is relevant under the circumstances.[27] While I am not dismissing the tenability of how David Lewis handles the metaphysics of modality,[28] namely through a radical realism,[29] I am indeed denying the viability of a second world for Forms even under his approach to realism.

The modal realism of Lewis is admittedly not the only kind of realism with respect to possible worlds.[30] It may not even be the only kind of realism that is relevant in the present context. A second world for Forms, however, is no more warranted under one kind of realism than it is under another kind, given that what is required for transcendent Forms to exist in another world while being instantiated by sensible phenomena in our world is at least two actual worlds, one

[27] David Lewis (1986) holds that the only difference between the actual world and possible worlds is that *we* happen to be in the actual one, which is no more real, concrete, or substantial than any of the possible ones, all of which exist not in a different way but with a different population. The distinction is purely indexical, being entirely a matter of where the speaker is located, or where the rational agent contemplating the matter is located, which then makes that world the actual world, as against any number of possible ones that are just as real, but not actual relative to the speaker.

[28] Nor do I agree with David Lewis (1986) that the explanatory power and theoretical utility of possible worlds warrants an ontological commitment to their commensurate reality, let alone requiring such a commitment. Even where their explanatory power makes it reasonable to believe that they are real, it does not make it unreasonable to believe that they are not real.

[29] Although the modal metaphysics of David Lewis (1986) is commonly considered a type of realism, in fact, often being described as "extreme" modal realism, it is not universally construed as such. Alvin Plantinga (1987), himself a modal abstractionist, more specifically a modal actualist, classifies Lewis as a modal reductionist rather than a modal realist: "Lewis is a modal reductionist: He offers reductive analyses of the phenomena of modality: he reduces possible worlds to maximal objects, propositions and states of affairs to sets of maximal objects, essences to sets of concrete objects, and essential and accidental property possession to similarity and set membership" (1987, 213). Plantinga's own views, comprising a variety of actualism, originate in a monograph on necessity (1974, 48–51), followed by a journal article on possible worlds (1976).

[30] The modal realism of David Lewis (1986) differs, for example, from the modal realism of Alexius Meinong (1904), in that the former takes all possible objects to exist in the same way and to the same degree, just in different worlds, only one of which happens to be actual without being any more real, whereas the latter countenances different kinds of being as equally real, as well as espousing the possibility of existence beyond being and non-being.

for us, one for Forms. The discrepancy stands to be even greater, or at least more conspicuous, under an interpretation of possible worlds without a commitment or subscription to modal realism, especially under some type of modal abstractionism, where the world envisaged for Forms, which somehow do not belong in our own world, would not even be real or concrete, let alone being actual. It would be an abstract state of affairs that is merely possible rather than actual, which is hardly the place for ontological constructs expected to be relevant in the actual world.

In the final analysis, the multiplication of worlds, just to accommodate the transcendence of Forms, is an extravagant move that assumes too much to prove too little. The metaphysics of it is neither all that clear nor all that convincing where it is clear. With or without any detours through the modality of possible worlds, a separate world for Forms transports the problem elsewhere rather than solving it where it emerges. Not only does a pluralism of worlds create confusion while failing to solve the problem of transcendence, if there is such a problem to begin with, but it also creates uncertainty regarding the possibility of individuation in the actual world, where Forms can have no influence whatsoever if they are not a part of that reality.[31] Adopting a metaphysical dualism of worlds, as a paradigm for the relationship between Forms and particulars, is more trouble than it is worth, particularly when a simpler solution without the same difficulties is available through a monism of worlds, as in the one Thesleff articulates through complementary levels in a single world.

8. TRANSCENDENCE VERSUS IMMANENCE

The foregoing considerations in favor of a monism of worlds over a dualism or pluralism of the same can be judged on their own merits. They are obviously

[31] This is not to say that the problem has no solution, just that it is indeed a problem, and therefore that it definitely requires a solution. The placement of Forms and particulars in two separate worlds does not automatically produce a viable metaphysical system. The consequent relationship, if any, requires explanation, elaboration, and justification. The position of the present paper is not that such justification is impossible but that it is necessary. The necessity can, of course, be considered or confronted, possibly even satisfied. Sean Kelsey (2004), for example, invokes the possibility of teleological causality to explain how transcendent Forms can be metaphysically relevant in the sensible world without being an integral part of it. Whether or not this strategy, or any complementary effort, solves the interaction problem arising from the separation of worlds, the approach of Thesleff presents an alternative that avoids that problem altogether.

relevant to the viability of the two-level model, but they are neither derived from it nor demonstrative of it. Any attempt at a validation of the model itself, even where coverage is limited to metaphysical implications, must take stock of how Thesleff himself handles each point under discussion. Fortunately, there is an abundance of sources for a comprehensive survey of that sort. The gold standard is Thesleff's own *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999). Acquaintance with that volume can profitably be supplemented by a consultation of various publications preceding and following it. All we need in the present context, however, is a basic understanding of his provisions for the joint resolution of transcendence and immanence in a single world differentiated only in terms of levels. Even if general considerations support that possibility, it is important to observe how Thesleff accounts for it.

The transcendence of Forms is typically discussed in connection with the instantiation or manifestation of Forms, which is often envisaged as the immanence of Forms. The combination suggests a complication to be avoided, explained, or resolved. The common question tying them together is about how any Form can be immanent if all Forms are transcendent. This is to ask, following Aristotle, how a Form can be in the thing of which it is a Form, if its defining characteristic, or principal attribute, is its separation from the thing of which it is a Form. The difficulty, if one accepts both the transcendence and the immanence of Forms, is that they represent opposing forces, or opposite states of affairs, that are mutually incompatible. The most promising solution, if at all possible, is to soften or remove the contradiction by unpacking the meaning of either transcendence or immanence, preferably clarifying both, or of either separation (*chōrismos*) or communion (*koinōnia*), likewise clarifying both.

Thesleff, for one, does not regard transcendence as a serious threat to immanence, nor, therefore, does he take separation as a decisive obstacle to communion. This is because he confines both sets of possibilities, which describe the same situation anyway, to the same world, where neither disjunct in either set is difficult to accommodate, nor their mutual satisfaction hard to imagine. For one thing, he regards transcendence and immanence not as actual events taking place in two separate worlds but as rational intuitions anchored to two levels of the same world, which automatically reduces the gravity of the problem, provided, of course, that one is on board with the two-level model in the first place. For another, he does not construe either transcendence or immanence in

a particularly strong form. His immanence does not assign the Forms a physical presence any more than his transcendence pushes them out of this world, be it into a separate world, as Plato allegedly does, or into an unspecified limbo, as the alternative would seem to suggest.

As a result, Thesleff does not take an active part in scholarly discussions of transcendence versus immanence. Neither his "transcendence" nor his "immanence" is much like what one might expect to find in the literature.[32] He emphatically denies any sort of transcendence beyond the world: "It is natural, also, to infer from the two-level vision that all 'Ideas' (whatever terms used), are (in spite of the κοινωνία between the levels) somehow 'transcendent,' i.e. distinct (χωρίς) from and pointedly primary in relation to sensible things (though they are certainly not 'beyond being'): being 'divine,' invisible and attainable by intellect only, they belong entirely to the higher level in Plato's vision" (Thesleff 1999, 58; cf. 55, n. 97; 63). He also minimizes the relevance of immanence, making it nothing more than a vague sense of inherence: "It is a specific characteristic of the entities of Plato's first ('higher') level to be, somehow, inherent (rather than 'immanent') in the corresponding entities of the second ('lower') level" (Thesleff 1999, 30).

His avoidance of commitment in either direction is grounded in his perception of the distinction as overblown: "It is again worth noting that there is no distinct gap of difference between the two levels in Plato's vision, no pointed χωρίς, no deep separation of the 'immanent' from the 'transcendent'" (Thesleff 1999, 63). Thesleff's *koinōnia* is no stronger than his *chōrismos*, wherefore the relationship between them, especially the overall balance, is nothing like a contradiction between the two. The possibility of immanence in transcendence,

[32] Some scholars treat transcendence and immanence, especially in Plato, as correlative issues deserving equal attention and a joint resolution: Daniel T. Devereux (1994); Eric D. Perl (1999); John M. Rist (1964). Others focus primarily on transcendence, though in acknowledgment of its problematic implications for immanence with respect to their mutual consistency: Gail Fine (1984; cf. 1980); Frank A. Lewis (1979); J. D. Mabbott (1926); Donald Morrison (1985a; 1985b; 1985c); Lynne Spellman (1995); Gregory Vlastos (1987). Yet others do the opposite, focusing primarily on immanence, while addressing implications for transcendence: Russell M. Dancy (1991, 9–23, 53–56; 2004, 11–19); Gail Fine (1986); Mohan Matthen (1984). As the preceding references may readily indicate, the most comprehensive treatment is by Fine, whose contributions on separation (1984) and immanence (1986) have become classics in the literature. Morrison's (1985b) critique of Fine, Fine's (1985) reply to Morrison, and Morrison's (1985c) reply to Fine's reply further clarify the issues. See James L. Wood (2017) for a more recent treatment with an exclusive focus on the *Philebus*.

or immanence despite transcendence, is thus grounded in a *koinōnia* that is as loose as the correlative *chōrismos* is subtle, owing largely to a sliding scale of reality where neither end is cut off from the other in complete isolation or polar opposition. This leaves Thesleff without an internal conflict, the absence of which deprives him of an incentive to debate the matter.

His tendency to remain outside the debate in the secondary literature is clearly visible in his latest work on the subject (Alican and Thesleff 2013, 16, cf. nn. 9, 12), where he refers readers to the contributions of others (Gail Fine 1984; 1986; Daniel T. Devereux 1994; Debra Nails 2013), though he does show a personal interest in the relevant passages in the primary sources, both in the complications discussed by Plato (*Parmenides* 126a–135c) and in the objections advanced by Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 987a29–b35, 1078b7–1079a4, 1086a30–b12). Never developing any further interest in the question of transcendence versus immanence, nor therefore in the possibility and implications of immanent Forms that transcend reality, Thesleff ultimately declares the question "*non liquet*" (Alican and Thesleff 2013, 33).

While this may not sound like a decisive conclusion, the expression "*non liquet*" has a special place in the stylometric tendencies of Thesleff. It comes up regularly in his study of Platonic chronology, for example, where he evaluates countless attempts to establish the composition order of Plato's dialogues, with their designation as "*non liquet*" emerging as the hallmark of profound dissatisfaction on his part.[33] His use of it in the present context is thus indicative of a categorical alignment against the prevailing perspectives on how to interpret or resolve the problem under consideration. Despite the modesty of his claims, Thesleff simply sees no serious alternative to interpreting Plato's view of reality as anything but a single world with two complementary levels.

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[33] The expression "*non liquet*" occurs eleven times in Thesleff's *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (1982), ten of which are in reference to matters of chronology (19, 52, 73, 80, 82, 98, 125, 147, 150, 184), with the one remaining occasion being a playful reference, in the preface, to the book itself. It occurs twice in his *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model* (1999), where both instances are, again, references to problems in chronology (109, 111), in a short chapter dedicated to that topic (108–116).

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