A History of Philosophy
07 God and Plato on the Human Soul
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A couple of notes on the board to remind you. The weekly colloquium tomorrow continues the discussion with Scott Chaydon on aesthetics. Last week, you recall, he was talking about a nominalist view of musical composition.

And this week, he's critiquing a realist view. Nominalists, there are no objectively real universals. In Realism, there are.

So universal aesthetic values. Critiquing a realist view of musical composition. Nick Waldersdorf is well known.

He used to teach at Kelvin College. He's now at Yale Divinity School and has written a couple of books on aesthetics that are very good. So that's what Chaydon is taking to task, if you want to join us in the seminar room.

And we said we'd have an optional discussion in the afternoon tomorrow. I'm suggesting room 272. It's a little cozier for a small group than this.

So see you down there. 272 is at that end. OK, second floor.

Now, before we move on to the next topic with Plato, what I'd like to do is to take some time to look at the Timaeus and the segment from the Laws, which you've been reading. It's there that in fuller detail than anywhere else, Plato talks about cosmology, the stuff we were on last time. And I thought it might help if we try and highlight and disentangle what he's saying and then take time to absorb, discuss a bit, perhaps, what he's up to.

OK? So turn in Kaufman, if you would, to page 253. I hope by now you've developed the habit of bringing Kaufman. If not, I guess you will after this one.

Page 253. Notice that he starts, or Timaeus starts, by talking about making things. And at the bottom of the first column, whenever the maker of anything looks to what is unchanging and uses a model of that description in fashioning the form and quality of his work, all that he thus accomplishes must be good.

But if he looks to something that has come to be, something, in other words, which is not eternal, which has come into existence, is part of the world of becoming another particular, then it will not be good. So the obvious point of departure, then, in this segment is the notion of particulars being shaped, being made, in accordance with

some unchanging, eternal pattern, model, or archetype. And you immediately begin to tie it into the theory of forms that we were on a couple of days ago.

He goes on, however, to apply this overall notion to the making of the whole heaven and world, the cosmos. Call it by whatever name you like. Has it always been? Or does it have some beginning? Has it come to be? Yes, it has come to be, because it's a physical kind of thing.

The cosmos as we know it, the material elements, as the Greeks generally thought, may well be eternal. But the ordered cosmos as we know it is something that has come to be. And so is the world of time and change.

And so in the middle of that second column, he points this out. That which becomes must be come by the agency of some cause. And in that, you have, if you like, one of the very first formulations of a causal argument for the existence of a transcendent divine being who brought the cosmos into being in the way we know it.

The seed of what comes later. He goes on, the maker and father of this universe is a hard task to find. And having found him, it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind.

Sounds like an echo of Protagoras the Sophist, who said he had no way of knowing if God is, and if he did, it would be very hard to communicate. Gorgias took that further. Thus far, nothing particularly new, just continuing along the line of thought of the predecessors.

But then he goes on. Go back to the question about this world. After which of the two models did the builder frame it? After what is always the same, unchanging, eternal, or after that which has come to be? There's the choice.

Now this world, this cosmos, is good, and its maker is good. Remember, we commented last time about Plato saying that the maker wanted to be good, wanted to make everything good. The world is good.

It's maker is good, eternal. If this is the case, if the world is good, then clearly you have to look to the eternal. But on the contrary supposition, if this world is a pretty bad place, then it may well be a copy of something which has come to be, a very imperfect copy of a very imperfect something.

Well, obviously, the world is such an ordered unity that we have to look to an eternal archetype, an eternal model. And so this cosmos is shaped according to some eternal ideal, some archetype, some eternal form. So this business of forms and particulars applies not only to particular cats and dogs like the archetypal form of catness and dogness, but it applies not only to two equal-length sticks, equal after the ideal of

equalness, but it applies to the cosmos, this physical cosmos, a cosmos after the eternal ideal of an ordered cosmos of some sort.

So the line of thought moves in that direction. Then on 254, the very bottom of the first column, state for what reason this universe was framed by him who framed them. And here's the response.

He was good, and in the good, no jealousy in any matter can arise. So, being without jealousy, he decided that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself. The cosmos is shaped in a way that would be like the maker.

Now, that theme here in Plato's Timaeus, as you might anticipate, is one that was picked up by Christian theologians and carried throughout the Middle Ages. God created a world to reflect his perfection and splendor. Everything exists, exists then to be as like to God as it can be in being the kind of thing it is.

And the conception of human beings created in God's image is simply part of that whole picture. So the Platonic clue here is picked up and used in Christian theology later on. But taking it as it stands in Plato, it's simply a matter of this particular cosmos being like some eternal ideal.

Spell that out in the second column, the middle paragraph. Taking thought, the maker, the artificer, the demiurge, as we noted last time. Taking thought, the maker found among things that are visible no work that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that has intelligence.

So when he framed the universe, he fashioned reason within soul and soul within body to the end that the work accomplished might be by nature as excellent and perfect as possible. So here's the notion that not only do humans have a rational soul within the body, which is the topic we'll be getting into shortly, but that the physical cosmos has with its physical body some sort of world soul. You see? A rational ordering principle that can govern the body of the cosmos, the way a human rational soul guides the bodily life of the human.

You say that sounds mythological. Yeah, from our standpoint, maybe. Because we are so indoctrinated with Newtonian science, this universe is a thing so dead, remember? But not for the Greeks.

Thalins. The world is besold and full of divinity, you see? Alive, besold. It has some driving, animating force, power.

Plato is particularly fond of referring to Anaximenes, did I say Anaximenes? Who do I mean, huh? Who said there is a cosmic mind? The Gnus, Anaxagoras. Thanks. Yeah, Plato was particularly fond of referring to Anaxagoras.

You see, there is mind in the universe, giving it rational order and direction. So he's picking up on those pre-Socratic notions. And this is why he goes on to say, this world came to be by God's providence, in very truth, a living creature with soul, reason.

Anaxagoras was right, according to Plato. But obviously, he has to spell that notion out. It's a purely germinal idea in Anaxagoras, undeveloped.

Plato wants to develop it a bit. And that's what he tries to do in the following segments. The last paragraph at the bottom of 254, he likens the world, because of this soul and body approach, to a living creature, of which all other living creatures are parts.

So we, as living things, are part of this overall living creature. He's using the analogy. And at the top of 255, first column, the god, that is to say the demiurge in this case, I think, wishing to make the world most nearly like that intelligible thing that's best and in every way complete, fashioned it as a single living thing, a universe containing within itself all living things like that.

But how is this going to be understood? And on 255, just over halfway down, that which comes to be, which came into being, was body, visible, tangible. And that required the basic elements. But in order that it be a unified thing, it had to be bonded together in some way.

And it's of the nature, at the bottom of the column, of a continued geometrical proportion. Echoes of Pythagoras. This is a mathematically ordered universe, you'll see.

And in the middle of 255, the four elements then abound together in a world visible and tangible. Four constituents in number, the body of the universe, coming into concord by means of proportion, mathematical proportion. From these, it acquired amity.

There's Empedocles' notion of love, distinct from hate, a bonding force. So that coming into unity with itself, it became indissoluble by any other, save him who bound it together. Only the demiurge could disintegrate it.

Such is the unifying force. Well, on page 256, top of the second column, all this was the plan of the God who is forever, the God who was some time to be. The plan of the God who is forever, for the God who was some time to be.

That is to say, for the world's soul, you see. And so this spherical cosmos is smooth, uniform, and everywhere equidistant from its center. In the center, he set a soul, caused it to extend throughout the whole.

The Greeks had the notion of the soul as diffused throughout the whole body. That's how you're going to have sensitivity in your tones, as well as in the top of your head. Diffused throughout the body.

And he wrapped the body around the soul on the outside. And so the world was brought into being. Then the bottom of that column, when the father who had begotten the cosmos this way, set it in motion, saw it set in motion and alive, like a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, yes, to be like God.

He rejoiced, was well pleased, as if almost an echo of the biblical phrase, it was good. Curious, isn't it, the parallel? Some of the early Christians were so profoundly impressed by this passage that they said Plato must have read the book of Moses. You may recall reading that he was once in Syracuse to try to teach the heir to the throne at Syracuse so that he could be a real philosopher king, as Plato idealized for society.

The guy turned out to be uneducable in those regards. So Plato went off home and got captured by slave traders on the way, and ended up on the block for sale in Egypt. Some of his friends recognized him there, bought him, gave him his liberty, and he came home and swore never again to leave Athens.

You see? But all right, what you have then is a living being, eternal. The father, who had forgotten it, said, " This is good. You see? Well, they thought that when he was in Egypt, remember the date, late 300s, early 300s, rather shortly after 400 BC, during the captivity, the Asphara, the Jewish community developing in Egypt, he must there in Egypt have read the books of Moses, they thought.

Well, it's a beautiful ad hoc hypothesis, but a shred of evidence that he did. They therefore had to come up with other explanations of the similarity, and that gets to be exciting. They appealed to the Logos doctrine to explain it.

There is the one Logos that enlightens every mind that comes into the world. But it's this sort of passage that triggered that. Not only did Moses say that God looked at the world he made and said it was good, but Plato said that God looked at the world that was made and said it was good.

Curious parallel. Well, the result is that the world that is made is, at the very bottom of 256, a moving likeness of eternity. And that becomes Plato's definition of time.

A changing image of the eternal. Yes, because time is the realm of particulars. The eternal is the realm of forms.

What are particulars? The changing images of eternal forms. So what is time? But a changing image of the eternal. And here that's applied to the whole cosmos.

We have given this the name time, he says. Well, as you move on, you notice on page 259 that the account gets more detailed, but he comes to refer to what he calls the receptacle. Receptacle.

That, as it were, in which the elements are bonded together in this way, to provide one unified whole. What is this receptacle? And this receptacle as a whole encompasses the world of becoming, yes, but the receptacle is obviously space. A spatial world.

So here are his notions of space and time. Space is a vast, empty receptacle into which things can come. I mentioned before, there's some ambiguity about how to interpret Plato.

This is a ripe time, I think, to say another word about that. The two interpretations I mentioned before are dualist and idealist. The dualist interpretation is that what the demiurge does is to take eternal forms and to combine them with eternal material elements, or some eternal, even more primal matter.

But two eternal realities form a matter in making this cosmos. And certainly the Timaeus might be read that way. This soul, like eternal form, you'll see.

And the receptacle for matter, you'll see. On the other hand, the idealist interpretation, which is developed in both middle and neo-Platonism, and really becomes the historical force of Platonism later on, the idealist interpretation is that the only reality is what Plato calls being, the realm of forms. The realm of forms.

Now, on the other extreme, you have, of course, the realm of non-being, literally nothing, you'll see. How, then, do we get this world of becoming, you'll see? Well, this world of becoming is a manifestation of eternal forms, where there would have been nothing, but only a manifestation, a shadow of, a reflection of. The idealist of this sort is saying that there are all sorts of images and likenesses and approximations to form, you'll see.

But they have no being of their own. You perceive an image on a screen when a video is playing, but it has no reality of its own, that image. It's a visual manifestation of something that's producing it, you'll see.

And in the idealist sense, that's what the entire physical side of the cosmos is. It's a manifestation of the eternal form in the receptacle, which otherwise would be just nothing in particular, but nothing at all. Yes.

Well, that begins to emerge at the bottom of 261, where he says, at the bottom of the first column, we must agree that there is first the unchanging form, ungenerated and indestructible, which neither receives anything into itself from elsewhere nor enters into anything else anywhere, invisible or otherwise imperceptible, but in fact which thinking has for its object. What is the object of knowledge? Forms. What is it you think? You think in terms of qualities and kinds of things and so on and so forth.

Forms. Second, that which bears the same name and is like the form, is sensible, is brought into existence, but is in perpetual emotion, like shadows and images and images on the screen, you see, or in Plato's cave. Coming to be in a certain place, vanishing out of it, apprehended by a belief that involves perceptions, but not knowledge.

That's the second. Third is space. Everlasting, not admitting destruction, providing a situation for all things that come into being, it's self-apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, not even a legitimate reasoning, to say when you think of empty space, you can't think of empty space, you see.

You sort of hypothesize it. Hardly even an object of belief. Well, he sums up the new paragraph halfway down the second column, 261.

Let this, then, be given as the tale summed up according to my judgment, that there are being, space, which is not anything, and becoming. Being, empty space, becoming. Three distinct things, even before the heaven came into being.

Now, the nurse of becoming, being made watery and fiery, two of the elements, receiving the characters of earth and air, the other two elements, and qualified by all these other affections that go with these, had every sort of diverse appearance to the site because it was filled with the powers that were neither alike nor evenly balanced, and so on and so forth. So it's from these three that things are made. Before that, all there was was without proportion, without measure.

And the conclusion, then, on 263, the last paragraph, at last let us say that our discourse concerning the universe has come to an end, having received in full its complement of living creatures, mortal and immortal, this world has thus become a visible living creature, embracing all that are visible, and an image of the intelligible, a perceptible God, supreme in greatness and excellence, in beauty and perfection, this heaven single in its kind and one, this universe. Well, that's the picture. The anthology follows that with a few pages from the laws, where you get another hint of a causal argument for the existence of God.

You get a reference to the world's soul being like the human soul, being the source of motion. You get, on 269, the recognition that the world's soul is divine, but then the word God is used so broadly for all souls are like divinities, you see. But what he seems to be doing is reiterating further, but in the laws, he makes more explicit than anywhere else, I think, in his writings.

One, the concept of the shaper of the universe as the one supreme God. And that, second, that this has profound moral implications. Because if we are to be like that one God, rationally ordering our lives, which is akin to his concept of justice, being just, being good.

Then, says Plato, those who do not believe in God, atheists, should have no place in his ideal republic. You see, if what you want is a just society, they would be treasonous beings. And you get this utopian thinking on Plato's part.

Extending the idea of an ideal republic, which he develops in the Republic, extending it further, but extending it in this direction, we need not only to have a justly ordered society, but we need to pay attention to the grounds of morality, you see, which he sees in belief in God. Well, so much for Plato on God and cosmos. You might think he would have fared well in Nathanael Hawthorne's New England.

Yeah, there was a platonic influence in those days and those parts. You might think that Calvin's Geneva would have appreciated Plato. Well, Calvin was closer to Cicero than to Plato.

But Cicero had been influenced a bit by Plato. And Platonism was still an influence in Cicero's day. So, an interesting guy.

And when it comes to political matters, you find Plato both blessed and cursed by the writers. He's treated as the source of all ideological totalitarianism, fascism, and so forth. But he's also treated as the inspiration for the whole conception of a just society.

Interesting, paradoxical sort of thing. OK, any questions, comments about Plato on God and cosmos? David? I have a question about Plato's, I guess, semiurge. I can't hear you.

I have a question about Plato's concept of the cosmos. Yeah. It seems very clear that this semiurge has reason, or the principle of reason is working.

But besides the personification that he uses, is there any other indication that this semiurge is self-contained? Yeah, that's a good question, David. Notice that Plato says that the semiurge has reason, or is reason. Has is more like his language.

You sometimes wonder if what he really means is is. He's simply personifying the notion of logos, or reason, and abstract rational order, you see. Particularly in the Timaeus, he seems to be personifying and using that sort of personified language.

And so you ask the key question. If we want to know if Plato is what we might call a personal God, a personal being, you'd have to have consciousness. Self-consciousness.

So there is self-awareness in the process of thinking rationally, thinking about how to order for good ends. The universe, you see. Did Plato think that way? I guess I'm inclined to think so.

And I suspect for two reasons. You try to figure out why you think what you do. And I can see two reasons why I'm inclined to think so.

One is that he plainly has no place in this scheme for the Greek pantheon, all the various Greek gods. And in terms of running the universe, this God seems to take that place. Which seems to imply, if there is to be an analogy, some kind of personal being.

Now that may be an overly naive sort of reading. Certainly, Plato's successors became increasingly clear about a conscious personal God, building on what Plato said. Okay, that's one reason.

The second reason is that I'm not sure how clearly Plato distinguished personification from the real thing. Now we have no difficulty, ourselves, in distinguishing a personification of nature. When you write nature with a capital N and say she.

From the notion that there really is a personal being consciously engaging in rational activities. I'm not sure that that's a clear distinction at this stage. By virtue of the way in which the Greeks seem not to have a clear conception of person, the distinguishing thing for them is between that which has soul and that which does not.

The soul is the source of life, of spontaneous motion, as well as of consciousness and thought. You see? And the distinction between what becomes known as rational soul and non-rational soul, I think I'm right in saying, doesn't emerge until you get to Aristotle. You see? And without that distinction, are we in a position to distinguish person from personification? Okay.

Does this walking through the Timaeus selection help? Okay. You probably feel you want to go back and mull through it again and then again, once or twice. But very influential segment of Plato.

Probably had more to do with the shaping of Christian theology than any other passage in Plato. Okay. Karl King, are you here? Afterwards.

Good. Okay, let's turn our attention then to our next topic, which I think you'll find a lot easier to get a handle on. Plato on the human soul.

This topic is pervasive in the dialogues. In the Republic, sure. In the Phaedo that you've been reading a portion of, in the Phaedrus that you're reading this week, as well as in the Timaeus and the Laws and elsewhere.

You observe I keep referring to the Republic. Until you've read the Republic through, you're not educated. Read the Republic.

You can get paperback editions, real cheapies, no excuse. Read the Republic. I mean, it's classic.

After the Bible, perhaps the most influential book in the history of Western civilization. Read the Republic. Get the message? Read the Republic.

Okay. What the cosmos is as a whole, body and soul, the human individual is as a microcosm of the whole, a part of the whole, body and soul. Plato means that in a sense that's very analogous to the way body and soul are referred to in traditional Christian language.

That is to say that these are two separate entities that are united as one being only in this life. Okay. Two separate entities that are united as one being only in this life.

I say that's sort of traditional Christian language. I said it that way carefully with intent. I'm not sure that's biblical language.

In fact, I'm quite sure that's not biblical language, though it may be typical Christian theology because of the influence of Plato on the shaping of theological readings of the biblical language. Okay. But Plato has a clear-cut body-soul dualism.

And he's very explicit that the soul is eternal, the body is generated, dies, and disintegrates. The soul rules, guides, gives life to the body, unifies, coordinates its functions, like the picture we just had of the world soul in the cosmos. And this is simply the standard sort of Greek notion of soul.

Remember that I said the word soul can well be translated simply as life. To speak of a living soul is, in that sense, a tautology. You see.

Now, one of the things that he gives most attention to is the eternality of the soul. And by eternality, I mean precisely that, not just the notion that the soul survives death. That's not saying the soul is eternal, but only immortal.

And there's more to eternality than to immortality. The eternal is uncreated and always was. So to talk of eternality, you have to talk of both pre-existence and immortality.

The soul precedes physical conception, birth, and survives physical death, the eternality of the soul. Now, quite obviously, Plato is not the sort of writer, after all, he is a philosopher, to simply assert something and take it for granted without giving reasons for believing it. He wants his beliefs tethered.

So what sort of arguments does he use to tether the belief in the eternality of the soul? And I've identified four arguments that I find in his writings. There may be four, or you might cut the cake differently and organize them into more or less. One of them that you run into in the Mino and the Phaedo is an argument from knowledge by recollection.

You remember Socrates' encounter with the slave boy who had never studied mathematics. And Socrates, with his intellectual midwifery, is able to bring to birth, in that fellow's mind, and bring it out into the open in verbalized form, a mathematical knowledge that he had never learned. And the conclusion is that it must be innate.

It must have been in the soul that came into this body. So the soul must have preexisted. The body and all this world experience.

So you get that argument from innate knowledge to a preexistent state in which that innate knowledge was acquired. That is to say, the soul, freed from the encumbrances of a body, is able to think, clearly perceive with the eye of the mind, the eternal forms. And it's that which is recollected under the stimulus of dialectic.

That's the first argument. The second is an argument from the cyclical recurrence of opposites. From the cyclical recurrence of opposites.

You can read this on page 117 in the Phaedo, but I won't take the time to read it to you. You can check that for yourselves very readily, get clear about it. Essentially, what he says is this.

If the soul preexisted the body, before it came into this life, where did the soul come from, if not from the death of some other body? So you get a cycle of death followed by life. And in that case, at the death of this body, a soul which preexisted can exist

independently of this body again, and it will survive death and be immortal. Now, a couple of things in that are interesting.

One, that he's playing with that cyclical view of time processes that a lot of the pre-Socratics had. Cyclical view of history. Cyclical view of nature's processes.

Cycles brought about by the conflict and separation of opposites that are drawn together and then separated by alternating forces, as it seemed. We noticed it with regard to the cosmos, you remember, where God, as it were, winds it up and then lets it go, and it unravels and winds it up again and lets it go, and it unravels. That cyclical process, Empedocles' opposite forces, attraction and repulsion, love and hate, as he calls them, and so forth.

So that's one of the interesting things in this. The other thing, of course, is that what he's talking about is some notion of transmigration, reincarnation. Yeah, so that your moral development, which is what Plato is so concerned with, your moral development is not just in this life, but forever and ever and ever.

And if you make progress in this life, you'll get a better beginning next time with a better bodily situation. But if you flub it in this life, you'll end up with something worse. The chauvinist in him says a man might become a woman and the woman a beast.

We've come a long way since people could get away with saying that. But the notion of successive incarnations is involved in this cyclical view. That's the second kind of argument.

The third is that the soul is a simple rather than composite thing. The terms simple and simplicity in this context have nothing to do with being simple-minded. To be simple is to be an indivisible unit.

Theologians talk about the simplicity of God, and they certainly don't mean that God is simple-minded. What they mean is that God is indivisibly one. And even the Trinity is an indivisible unity.

The simplicity of God, in that sense. Now, the soul being immaterial is not a composite of material parts. And here's an argument that you might formulate this way.

What is immaterial is unchoppable. What is unchoppable is indestructible. What is indestructible is immortal.

Now, don't describe to him the word unchoppable. But the idea is his. If it's immaterial, it's indivisible.

If it's indivisible, it's indestructible. If it's indestructible, it's immortal. So the soul, being immaterial, is immortal.

This is a natural immortality. In and of its own nature, it is immortal. It doesn't have to be sustained in existence.

In and of its own nature, it is immortal. Natural immortality, by its own nature, is self-existent. Now, the paradoxical thing is that Christian writers, even Saint Augustine, used that argument for the existence of the soul.

While it seems to me that no consistent theist would want to argue that the soul is a self-sustaining, self-existing thing that exists by its own nature. Where the very essence of theism is that God not only brings things into being but holds them in being. Continues to impart existence.

God is the only self-existent being who shares existence with others. But this is an argument that has appealed to Christian writers. You find it in the Phaedo, pages 118-119.

Now the fourth argument. The fourth argument comes up in the Phaedrus, which is part of this week's reading. And there the notion is that the soul is the life of the body.

The life-giving ingredient. That activates the bodily potential. So life functions, motion, as well as reason.

Now that which gives life can't lose it. As the source of life, of course, it is living, ever-living. Immortal.

So you've got those four kinds of arguments. Yeah, Kristen. Does everyone share part of the same one large passive soul? Again, I'm inclined to say I wish I knew.

Does everyone share in the one all-inclusive world soul? In Neoplatonism, in the 3rd and 4th centuries, the answer becomes yes. In Plato, I think the answer is I don't think so, but he never says. Unless they're in the Timaeus, he wants that notion of other souls as parts of the world soul taken literally.

Yes, Eve. Well, then, if there are separate souls, do they all share the same characteristics? Yeah. If these are separate souls, do they share the same characteristics? Yes and no.

They share some. All souls are life-giving forces. But not all souls are rational.

In other words, human souls have powers that cat and dog souls don't have. Let alone the souls of flies and mosquitoes. So, yes, with regards to some of the most basic, no later.

What Aristotle does, we'll see, is to distinguish actually three kinds of souls. You see? The lowest are what he calls vegetative souls. Let us say the sort of life that vegetation has with functions of nutrition and reproduction.

So quips Aristotle, if all you're interested in is food and sex, you know better than a cabbage. Nutrition and reproduction. You see? Then there are animal souls with the additional functions, additional functions, of sensation and locomotion.

If all you want to do is run around sniffing and smelling and seeing and tasting, you know better than a pig. You see? And then there is the human soul, which is, in addition to the other functions, rational, capable, that is to say, of deliberative thought. Now, that's Aristotle.

But Aristotle was a student of Plato. And I see no reason in this case to think that Aristotle is changing anything that Plato might have had in mind. I think this delineation is implicit in Plato.

In fact, I found one or two places in his writings where it's hinted at. Okay. The human soul.

Yeah. Perhaps some animal souls. Or experiences, at least.

Now, what do you say as far as remembering, as far as the soul remembering where it was before it was in you, or anything like that? No. Now, there seems to be no recollection. In the cave analogy, the prisoner is suffering from amnesia.

Okay? He does not remember. He remembers particulars. But I don't think Plato anywhere talks of the soul recalling where it was, what it was, in previous existences.

So, where's the line drawn between where it was or what it was and what knowledge it can? Oh, well, what... The thing we remember is not particularly where. A previous existence would have been some particular thing. You don't recall particular things by recollection.

Particular things are not objects of knowledge. Okay? Objects of knowledge are universal principles, forms, those ideals, essences. That's what you remember.

Suresh? A bit louder, please. Yeah. Well, time isn't a thing like a soul is a thing.

You see? The notion of substance. You can have material substances, physical, and immaterial substances. Time is not a substance.

For Plato, time is... I think I'm inclined to say something of a relationship between events. It's a moving image of the eternal. You know what I'm saying? Yeah.

Yeah, I don't see in Plato the Newtonian conception of time as a vast, empty duration like another receptacle. No, it's not a Newtonian conception. It's more of a relational conception.

Yes? You probably hinted at this when you were talking about the last question, but do souls have personality? Or personality to individuals? Do souls have personality, or do individual personality traits develop in this life? And again, I don't think he says. Why not? He's not interested in individuated particulars. You are.

He's not. He's interested in the essential nature of the human being, the ideal. Now, it's obvious that people have individual traits.

He recognises that. He recognises that souls... that people, by virtue of who they are, have different soul characteristics. Now, is this due to the undeveloped soul? Or is this because souls come with different potentials to begin with? And again, he's not clear in that regard.

You mentioned Aristotle's idea that a soul can progress from one level to another. Yes. Yes, you can make some progress in a lifetime. In different lifetimes.

Yes. Yes, because it's conceivable that the one who really lives like a beast will next life have to start where he left off. Like a beast.

I'm not sure that he talks about that at all. And that he may have an unexpressed line that he draws in there. It's not at all clear.

Well, our time has gone. We'll pick it up here next time. At that juncture.

And we'll move from this into the final and larger topic that really amounts to how to improve your soul. In his discussion of the good life.