

"Big D, little d: The Demiurge God in Plato's *Timaeus*"

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by
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"Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created...Was the world, I say, always in existence and without beginning, or created, and had it a beginning?"

--Timaeus 28b

This question spawns a dialogue devoted to the creation of the universe in Plato's *Timaeus*. Causality and purpose, not in the modern logical sense, underpins one of Plato's final accounts of cosmology in his dialogues. Many readers of Plato find it unusual that he would develop a teleologically theistic cosmology when, as Aristotle remarks in his *Metaphysics*, Socrates was more concerned about ethics. Knowledge and truth underlie Plato's view of the world in his famous doctrine of the forms or ideas, and these are mirrored in the material world of becoming to be discovered through dialectic. Plato attempted to grasp the metaphysical through many different avenues and theology was one of them. Theology in Plato's dialogues generate criticism from modern interpreters, and non more so than the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. The goal of this paper is to present and analyze Plato's presentation of the Demiurge in his dialogue the *Timaeus*. and then argue for his transcendence. Our first focus will be on the rudiments of Plato's cosmology as offered in the *Timaeus*, then the Demiurge itself, and finally, some comparisons from other dialogues as well as some reflections.¹

I. Cosmology in the *Timaeus*

Myth is the major means of communication of this grand scheme in this dialogue. Socrates uses myth through Timaeus' account in a palpably Pythagorean perspective to combat the Atomists and *Phusiologoi* who want a singular oneness to the universe. The creation

¹ The Hamilton and Cairns translation will be used for this paper

myth is a “likely account,” which indicates Socrates opinion that strict science cannot elucidate origins and thus his warning not to take the story as *au pied de la lettre*. Induction from particulars can “furnish only statistical averages,” but these averages are a “poor substitute for creative genius.”² It is difficult to accept the account in the *Timaeus* whole-heartedly as dogmatic, since the roles of ultimate factors in creation change between dialogues and there is a toggling back and forth between story and philosophical speculation, however Plato is more concerned about ascribing metaphysical worth to his world than generating doctrine. This is why the mythological nature of the dialogue is intrinsic to what Plato is attempting to say.

The *Timaeus* begins where the *Republic* finished just a day prior. Plato introduces his Pythagorean-numerical perspective at the outset of the dialogue by counting the number of his interlocutors present 1, 2, 3. Indirectly, and purposefully in Plato, Timaeus introduces the theme of the dialogue when he attempts to recall what took place in the discussion the day before. Timaeus says to Socrates “will you briefly recapitulate the whole, and then the particulars will be more firmly fixed in our memories” (17b). Plato’s teleologically desires to connect the Good of the whole with the parts; for the doctrine of the Whole is of incredible importance to Plato’s cosmology. The *Timaeus* offers two “likely accounts” of creation, both on the whole appeal to the metaphor of production and derivation. The Platonic conception of craftsmanship is vital in reading the dialogue as it is, and not anachronistically adding to Plato’s thought (e.g., Plotinian emanation). Timaeus then remarks that the narrative of Solon matched “almost every particular” of Socrates’ city in the *Republic* (26a). Perhaps Plato is constructing a certain bridge between the ethical focus of the earlier dialogues and the cosmology of the later ones. After invoking the gods to be gracious in case their

² Boodin I. 497

opinion is in error, the ultimate factors of the creation account are introduced.

The infamous question of causality is presented rhetorically by Timaeus at (28b). He asks “was the world always in existence and without beginning, or created, and had it a beginning?”³ Timaeus opines that it was created because everything that is must have a cause. The first appearance of the Demiurge is presented here, when he appears as the “creator” who makes the “form and nature” of his work after an “unchangeable pattern.” He is also called the “father” and “maker” of all the universe, and Timaeus declares that he is “past finding out” and “if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible.”⁴ Timaeus then makes an important remark about the nature of the blueprint for creation that the world must be fashioned after the unchangeable pattern rather than the changeable:

The world is the “fairest of creations and [God] the best of causes. And having been created in this way, the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and must therefore of necessity be a copy of something.”⁵

First, God is good because “He can never have any jealousy of anything.”⁶ Socrates does not conceal his need to make God good in the *Timaeus* or in any other dialogue, and this contention overrides any nature or activity that can be ascribed to him. Because of his freedom from jealousy, God desired that all things should be “as like himself as

³ Plato also asserts a plurality in reality, which would eliminate a monistic conception of the *en kai pan*, see A. E. Taylor, *Timaeus*. 75.

⁴ *Timaeus* 28c.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29a.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 30a.

they could be.” The copy of perfection that the Demiurge fashioned was “good and nothing bad,” so far as this “was attainable” in the visible realm of becoming. Plato believed the universe to have a beginning in creation, but the visible world was already in existence in chaos until the Demiurge brought order and mind to it. Order came from the divine mind of the creator and worked with necessity to generate an ordered mind-reflecting cosmos. The Demiurge “contemplates” his pattern for the world like a painter looks at her model. So, an intelligible world will image an intelligible pattern. In order for this imaging to take place, soul must be present to bring life to intelligence. Timaeus summarizes this process in the following way:

The creator, reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole could ever be fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole, and again that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. For which reason, when he was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best. On this wise, using the language of probability, we may say that the world came into being—a *living creature* truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God.⁷

The pattern is a “creative factor” in that it is “ultimate in the metaphysical situation, self-existent, and timeless.”⁸ Nature is determinable because the pattern or necessity is determinant. Analogously, the pattern must be an organic whole system with parts

⁷ *Timaeus* 30b.

⁸ Demos, 562.

interdependent because the visible world is so arranged. Plato even calls the pattern “a living creature” or an intelligible animal.

Timaeus next addresses the question of infinite worlds in (31b). He says that “the creator made not two worlds or an infinite number of them, but there is and ever will be one only-begotten and created heaven.” Plato’s reasoning runs like this. If the visible world is to correlate with the original, there must be only one copy or else there would be another part that would share in the whole and the part thus taking resemblance and differentiation away. For the whole of the universe to be what it is, an image of an eternal whole that is self-contained within itself and its parts must be a One over many. This question arises by endeavoring to find the animal that the world is fashioned after.

After creating a model for this single universe, the four elements of the cosmos are brought together—earth, water, air, and fire. These eternal elements are compounded through a third type of being. God created the universe in the form of a globe, the fairest of shapes without the change that comes from arms and legs. At the center of this self-sufficient globe, the Demiurge placed its soul in the center and infused it throughout the whole. Thus, he made the universe “a circle moving in a circle, one and solitary, yet by reason of its excellence able to converse with itself, and needing no other friendship or acquaintance. Having these purposes in view he created the world to be a blessed god.”⁹ God made the structure of the cosmos eternal like himself, an eternal living being; but visible in the world of process and change. Since the Demiurge is the energizing act of creation, motion and time were

⁹ *Timaeus* 34b.

created.¹⁰ He crafted a “moving image of eternity” that moved according to number and rhythm. Time is simultaneous with creation; for as Timaeus says “there were no days and nights and months and years before the heaven was created, but when he constructed the heaven he created them also.”¹¹

Timaeus moves on to discuss the creation of the four forms of animal or creature: the heavenly race of the gods, the race of birds of the air, the watery species of the ocean, and land creatures.¹² The Demiurge delivers a speech to the race of heavenly gods. These gods were not necessarily the Theosognous gods of Hesiod, since Socrates promoted a reconstruction of religion indirectly, but their role is a subordinate one as secondary causes in creation. These junior gods are in charge of creating the material capstone for the creature of man.

Plato states that secondary causes of the world, like heat and cold, are seen by most men to be primary causes. But Plato adjures that “we should explore causes of intelligent nature first.” The naturalistic explanation should not be written off automatically, but should a “distinction be made between those which are endowed with mind and are workers of things fair and good, and those which are deprived of intelligence and always produce change effects without order or design?”¹³ Humankind can understand things truly only when they look in terms of value and purpose, which cannot be explained naturalistically.

Timaeus then focuses on the difficult concept of necessity in the creation account. Timaeus’ first account focused on the combining of the

two classes of the eternal form or pattern and the visible matter or image; and this next account adds a third class, the ever evasive receptacle. Plato thinks that the material causes of the universe have not been dealt with sufficiently, and he spends the rest of the dialogue attempting to take them into account. The condition of the material world is of necessity, and it has been persuaded by the ruling power of Mind/Demiurge to “bring the greater part of created things to perfection.”¹⁴ Necessity here means the necessary nature of the elements prior to creation in order to be causable for the ordering, generation, and intelligibility of the world by the Demiurge. Muscles and bones are not the cause for my existence, but they are necessary conditions for my existence. In the *Phaedo* (99b), there is a distinction between a “real cause” and the conditions and factors “without which the cause would not be a cause.” Necessity works with the Demiurge, and now the receptacle, to generate the world.

Generation requires a third class of sorts. God provides the structure, form, and number for things in the world, but becoming and space need something else to come into existence.¹⁵ Plato states that the receptacle is difficult to explain, since it is not an intelligible thing. He calls her the “nurse of all generation,” the “mother,” and “space.”¹⁶ The receptacle “receives all bodies” and “she never departs at all from her own nature and never, in any way or at any time assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her.” All things that go in and out of her are “likenesses of eternal realities modeled after the patterns in a wonderful and mysterious manner.”¹⁷ She also participates in the intelligible realm and gives form to everything while herself being formless. Being, space, and generation are all said to be prior to

¹⁰ Movement is found in Plato and in Greek thought generally, to be originally in soul, see *Phaedo* 105c. Here God is said the create time with the universe.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34b

¹² *Ibid.*, 40a.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 46e.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48a.

¹⁵ Boodin “Cosmology in Plato’s Thought part II,” 65.

¹⁶ *Timaeus* 49b,50d, 52c.

creation. The mind apprehends the form of things, the body is what is visible, and space is grasped by a “spurious reason” because we know of its existence without it being visible or tangible.¹⁸

The receptacle then “shakes” up the indefinite and unreasonable elements within her like a winnowing machine and produced the various things in the universe. This leads Plato to conclude that the nature of the elements prior to creation (or first principles) is only “known by God” or a “friend of God.” After taking account of the four elements fire, water, air, and earth, coming into being through the receptacle, Plato concludes the dialogue showing how God takes the necessary causes and forms complex structures in nature like the human body.

II. The Demiurge

Plato is a figure in the history of Philosophy who is very difficult to get ones mind around, let alone deciphering his own beliefs. Scholars have raged a great battle of interpretation in the last century to elucidate the God or Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. Throughout the Platonic dialogues, the search for the relationship between the idea and the thing has taken on many forms, but the fullest expression of this relationship is unfolded in the cosmological account of this late dialogue of Plato. Within this account of the myth of Solon in the *Timaeus*, Plato presents the creator God of the cosmos, and this part of the paper will seek to unfold and demonstrate that Plato sees the Demiurge as a transcendent deity.

Before the issues at hand are discussed, a few preliminary remarks must be made. First, our method in this inquiry will not read a Judeo-Christian worldview back onto the *Timaeus* account. There are clear differentiations between the two that will be addressed, but the aim here

¹⁷ Ibid., 50c.

¹⁸ Ibid., 52b.

is to surface the description of Plato’s Demiurge as found in the *Timaeus*. Related to this endeavor, our investigation will not focus on other versions of God found in other dialogues (e.g. Mind in *Philebus*). Also, many scholars attempt to “demythologize” the text and reduce all depictions of the transcendent to an immanent principle in the cosmos or opine that Plato is merely using metaphors for the forms since the forms are the only metaphysical features in Plato’s thought.¹⁹

I assert that Plato wants the myth to be a “likely story” (*eikōs muthos*), but not a mere fabrication. Even further, only by conceiving of an ontologically distinct deity is the full explanatory power of the dialogue given expression. So, in the vein of being true to Plato’s robust cosmological account, the Demiurge will be constructed from the text as he is presented.

III. Who or What is the Demiurge?

There is a comical expression in Platonic studies that if you take the flux of Heraclitus and divide it by the one of Parmenides, you end up with the Ideas of Plato. Though Plato spent a great deal of time focusing on ethics, his metaphysics undergirded his pursuits. Metaphysics compelled him to account for the world of appearances, and Plato presented several reasonable accounts throughout his corpus. Mind (nous) presents itself early in the *Phaedo* as an explanatory cause. Socrates well-known criticism of Anaxagoras is the first instance of a demand for an all-inclusive teleological approach. Anaxagoras names Mind as the orderer of the cosmos and mover of the cosmos, and then

¹⁹ Cornford demythologizes the myth in an immanentist way. His goal to eradicate any Judeo-Christian concepts from Plato causes him, in my opinion, to neglect the essential need for myth to explain the account of creation. He argues that the forms are what are in view, except that Plato never mentions the forms once in the dialogue, see his *Plato’s Cosmology* 34-35.

proceeds to discuss phenomena in the physical world leaving mind behind. Socrates says: "I discovered that the philosopher made no use of mind and assigned to it no causality for the order of the world, but adduced causes like air and ether and water and many other absurdities."²⁰

What Socrates wanted was an ultimate cause because there is a difference between "the cause of a thing and the condition without which it could not be a cause."²¹ Ultimately, material antecedents only constitute the *condition sine qua non* of the phenomenon.²² There must be a ground for something to be a causable thing, and the Demiurge is such a ground. In the *Philebus*, Socrates says: "And now I think I have sufficiently shown that Philebus' goddess is not to be regarded as identical with the good." Philebus responds: "No, and your reason isn't the good either, Socrates; the case against it looks like being just the same." Socrates responds with an important remark: "That may well apply to my reason, Philebus—not, however, to the true divine reason which, I fancy, is in rather a different position." The divine reason takes the stage in the *Timaeus* through the Demiurge.

The Timaeus repudiates an impossible task of naming (*legein*) to all men the "maker and father of the universe" (28c3–5); this god is not named in the text, but is merely referred to in common and relational terms as maker, father, craftsman (*dēmiourgos*), composer (*sunistas*), and the like. The Demiurge comes from the Greek word (*dēmiourgos*). Scholars use the noun form to assign a proper name to him. Plato purposefully selects the identification of producer to him, to indicate his necessary qualification as being one who acts. A God who acts is needed to account for movement in the universe, and this is what begins the

²⁰ *Phaedo* 98c.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 99b.

²² Solmsen, 100.

teleological analysis that differs from Aristotle.²³ Plato's God is not thought thinking itself, but one who creates.

(a.) God the creator: Timaeus claims at the beginning of his tale that "the creator" is responsible for the "world of generation."²⁴ The Demiurge brought "order out of disorder, considering that this was in every way better than the other."²⁵ Since God's nature was the fairest and he wanted to make everything as like himself "as it could be,"²⁶ he fashioned the world according to his own ordered intelligible nature.²⁷ Plato carries the comparison further to connect mind and soul with matter in God's ordering (mind into soul into body). God's mind brings rationality to both soul and body as far as possible because "mind could not be present in anything (*paragenesthai tō*) which was devoid of soul."²⁸ There is a dual dependence on the Creator for both the form

²³ *Kinesis*, or movement, in Greek indicates motion communicated to a thing from without, or spontaneous and originating within the thing which moves. Plato uses *pseuke* in the *Laws X* as "the motion which can move itself," see Taylor, 76.

²⁴ *Timaeus* 29d.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30b

²⁶ I take note of Dr. Keyt's article "The Mad craftsman," where he points out the fallacy of division three times in Plato's account of creation. It basically generates a scenario where the Demiurge images everything including imperfect things. Though this is a helpful clarification, it does not subtract from this thesis.

²⁷ Pre-existent time is a difficult issue in this passage. Plato seems to indicate irrational pre-existent matter and soul prior to the creation. Obviously, Plato would not prescribe to a creation *ex nihilo* for this is beyond the scope of Plato's Demiurge. Time (speaking of *kronos* time involving orderly motion in the cosmos) in (37a-38b) is said to have come into existence with the creation of the heavens, but even Plato's successor denied that Plato meant time to be created in such a radical fashion, see A. E. Taylor pp. 79.

²⁸ The relation of God to *nous* and *pseuke* will be address later, but I would like to state that I neither concur with Cornford that mind is simply reason or the world-soul itself, nor do I agree with Menn that *nous* is God in Plato, see Corford, 197; Menn, 10. Though in other dialogues, such as the *Philebus*, *nous* personifies many of the

and number in creation. He, as Boodin states, "gave the teleological structure to matter."²⁹ Without the intervening work of the creator, the visible and invisible nature of the universe would be un-intelligible. God brings the factor of limit into creation infusing order with intelligibility.

Rapheal Demos defines limit in Plato (from the *Philebus*) as "the principle of division that is, on non-being, creating the world of definite qualities and objects, each of them separate, independent, and self-sufficient."³⁰ An ordered world will set boundaries within the flux and breaking up events; it "binds the Unlimited."³¹ *Telos* and purpose (the Limit) are injected into unrest (Unlimited) to give it shape and substance (the Mixed), which reflects back upon itself in such a way that it is intelligible to intelligible creatures. So, by God's "providence" the world came into being a "living creature" (*zoeon*).³²

The Demiurge not only created the world, but created the soul of the world. Plato says:

The soul, interfused everywhere from the center to the circumference of heaven, of which also she is the eternal envelopment, herself turning in herself, began a divine beginning of never-ceasing and rational life enduring throughout all time. The body of heaven is visible, but the soul is invisible and partakes of reason and harmony, and, being

characteristics of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, mind is used in the *Timaeus* by the Demiurge to contemplate the pattern for creation (29a-c). Mind is an agent that does not possess the productive and constructive powers of the Demiurge.

²⁹ Boodin II., 66.

³⁰ Demos, "*Plato's Metaphysics*," 567. He lays forth a wonderful corollary between the *Timaeus'* father, mother, child imagery and the *Philebus'* Limit, Unlimited, and Mixed terminology.

³¹ *Philebus*, 27d.

made by the best of intellectual and everlasting natures, is the best of things created.

Harmony and symmetry pervade Plato's account of creation of the world-soul. Movement in Plato is attributed to the soul³³, and the Demiurge designed a universal soul that would self-generate the heavenly bodies and become a "blessed god."³⁴ The eternity of God was made manifold in the universe by the eternal soul forming it. In addition to this, the God determined to make the universe even more like himself and create eternal motion and cycles of the cosmos. This feature of the world is what Plato called the "moving image of eternity."³⁵ *Timaeus* calls this motion the best and the most rational part (*peri noun kai phronésin malista ousan*) of the body of the world.³⁶

God makes one more step into complexity by creating the world of earthly creatures. The Demiurge created four kinds of beings: heavenly gods (which includes planets), birds, watery species, and land creatures. The Demiurge is the "creator of creators," as Howison phrases it, since these junior gods are given the task of creating the physical part of mankind's nature. God took on the responsibility for the soul of humans, the intelligible part of humankind's make-up, and this also is reflected, along the hierarchy of the good, in the mind of humans and their physical ordering. *Timaeus* says:

³² *Timeus* 30c.

³³ *Phaedrus*, 245c; also John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* (London, 1914) 334. Plato also holds that the soul is immortal and before the body (*Timaeus* 35a).

³⁴ *Timaeus* 34b.

³⁵ Time here has to do with rhythmic motion instead of motion in general. Boodin notes that there "is not inconsistency in Plato's speaking of a disorderly motion before time was created," Boodin "Cosmology in Plato's Thought part II," 63.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34a.

God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.

The perfection, harmony, and beauty of the eternal are mirrored in every level of reality, and it even enables rational creatures to contemplate the eternal so as to more align their lives to the eternal. This in turn leads us to God's goodness.³⁷

(b.) God's goodness: Timaeus offers a conception of God that goes beyond most of Plato's other dialogues. First, He states that the Demiurge is "good."³⁸ Good is the highest principle in Plato's traditional hierarchy, which indicates God's relation to the forms. Plato contrasts God later in contrast with evil in his speech to the lesser gods. There he says "only an evil being would wish to undo that which harmonious and happy."³⁹ Not only does the Demiurge possess the *principium qua principium* of Good, but inherent within Plato's conception of God being good is his lack of "jealousy" (*phthonos*).⁴⁰ Without the selfish restraints of jealousy, God *desired* that all things should be like himself. Plato further says that this account is in "truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men."⁴¹ What major assumptions lie within these lines? A. E. Taylor comments on the *uperpleres* of this Neo-Platonists, where the supreme

³⁷ For an exposition of the good and beautiful in relation to the perfection of God see Solmsen's *Plato's Theology*, (Ithaca: NY, Cornell University Press, 1942) 103-106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29e.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 41b.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,

one, which is also the Good, necessarily has to overflow from being more than full.⁴² This is an adequate answer to why the good creator must act or create at all.⁴³ Taylor also draws an analogy to early Christian thinkers of "love that will not remain idle." This should not be read back unto Plato, but there is more to this Demiurge than arranging of materials. Obviously, such a deity sparks the kind of language that borders on the religious, since Plato sees him as the *summum numen*. There is also an indication of benevolence in the passages that discuss mankind being endowed with reason and able to become more like the unchanging (44c, 47c). Though the Demiurge is bound by some necessity in creation (in the *Timaeus*), he still creates as close as possible to the eternal. Humanity is not totally lost, and there is a supreme amount of fervor in the language of the *Timaeus* for the perfection of the whole and the parts through the whole. Also, in God's speech to the lesser gods he created, he promises not to dissolve them but to use his powerful bonds to keep them together. Finally, it can be argued that there are budding notions of virtue in the reference to God's goodness and acting out of desire and lack of jealousy. Though much of the dialogue does not contain statements of the Demiurge's nature, there are positive qualities that should not be cast away as poetic allegory.

(c.) God's Omnipotence: The *Timaeus* account of God's ruling power is varying among itself and in comparison to the other dialogues. Within the dialogue itself, there are references in the beginning to God's creating with present un-intelligible "elements" already in the cosmos. Then, in the speech of the Demiurge to the lesser

⁴¹ *Ibid.*,

⁴² Taylor, "The Polytheism of Plato: An Apologia," 190.

⁴³ Cornford argues that a literal reading of this passage would make Plato advocating worship of deities like the cult in the *Epinomis*. He also claims that creator is more of a mythical statement, rather than a religious one. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*. 35.

gods he created, there are claims to be able to “dissolve” everything that was created. Finally, “necessity” and “reason” enter into the dialogue to take part in the creation account as determinable factors that God has to persuade. Though a thorough elucidation of necessity is not possible in the space of this paper, there are a few remarks that can be made.

Logically, omnipotence does not unambiguously mean that all limitations are removed. This is an old logical problem that I do not need to go over, but scholars do use the existence of necessity, what Taylor and Cornford both term “brute fact,” to argue that the Demiurge should not be elevated to a metaphysical principle since he has to persuade reason to create a certain way. This is the “as far as possible” addendum at (30a). Often, this is called the dysteleology in nature, where certain arrangements do not appear to have a purposeful arrangement. God’s omnipotence is not thrown out due to outside limitations. Not all things which are singly possible are also compossible; “it is true that God cannot combine the impossible, but the reason why God cannot do so is not that he is confronted by conditions independent of Him in the face of which He is powerless, but that the undertaking is, in its own nature, irrational, and is therefore made impossible to God by His own intrinsic rationality.”⁴⁴ This is a traditional answer to the argument, and it can be buttressed by the fact that nothing in the text forces the interpretation that God is powerless to such ultimate factors; to do so would require an explanation as to the problem of evil. It would also lead to the absurdity in interpretation that God was one of the principles he created.

(d.) God and Evil: The *Timaeus*, to my knowledge, does not address any full blown theodicy. Plato is focusing on the glory of the whole, not on the parts. The dialogue suggests God’s governing of the universe (42e), but it never deals with evil particulars. The stuff or

principle of necessity is the closest thing the dialogue comes to. The anomalies in nature come not from the Demiurge, but from the limitation of the materials he works with. Also, the dialogue does contain the notion of free moral agents (47a-e). So in the *Timaeus*, omnipotence is not completely eradicated as some immanentists would like to assume, but omnipotence on a larger scale does take place in book X of the *Laws*. Here, there is a theodicy.

The God in the *Laws* is in complete control and evil actually plays a part in the whole:

For each and all there are, in every case, governors appointed of all doing and being done to, down to the least detail, who have achieved perfection even to the minute particulars...Thou hast forgotten in the business that the purpose of all that happens is what we have said, to win bliss for the life of the whole, it is not made for thee, but thou for it.⁴⁵

Though the corollaries between the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* and the soul-god of the *Laws* are not exact, it demonstrates that omnipotence in a strong sense is not beyond Plato’s thinking, and that the problem of evil is not the focal issue in the *Timaeus*. Plato is asserting the metaphysical value of a theistic teleological cosmology. Thus, omnipotence and the problem of evil are not insurmountable barriers to the Demiurge being a transcendent deity.

IV. Conclusion

Though there are many other considerations surrounding the figure of the Demiurge, the space of this paper will have to put those aside for another examination. What this investigation sought to prove was the

⁴⁴ Taylor, “Polytheism in Plato,” 195.

⁴⁵ *Laws* X, 903.

transcendence and individuality of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. It has been shown how the mythical element is needed alongside the philosophical in order for the full explanatory power of his thinking to surface and be made intelligible. Also, failure not give him the metaphysical dimensions attributed to him lead to no ultimate cause for the good and leave room for the absurdity of creating himself. Further, the roles of creating the world-soul and organizing the elements go beyond previous accounts in Plato's cosmology.

The Creator's goodness and lack of jealousy extends his teleological import beyond a mere mixer of elements. Finally, the Demiurge's omnipotence is not logically, nor textually demanded, to be overrun by necessity and thus truncate his position to a more immanentist principle. Plato was very concerned not to let this happen since a hierarchical teleology was his constant focus in the *Timaeus* and in other dialogues. All of these factors taken as a whole, suggest that Plato was asserting a transcendent divinity to the Demiurge. Philosophy begins in mystery and it is no surprise that the richness of the *Timaeus* creation account generates a profound and lasting awe. The "moving image of eternity" does indeed go on as Vaughan wrote:

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved...

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