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L. Pitteloud (2017). *La séparation dans la métaphysique de Platon*. Sankt Augustin, Academia Verlag.

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This book addresses a crucial topic in Plato's metaphysics, namely Forms' separation from sensible things (SEP). Due, at least in part, to Aristotle's report on the theory of Forms, separation is often seen as a central but problematic feature of that theory; it differentiates it from other essentialist theories, especially Aristotle's, and, according to many critics, it is the feature that makes

the theory particularly difficult to defend. In this book (written in French), Luca Pitteloud addresses the following questions: Are Forms separate from sensible things? And if so, what is meant by separation? To answer these questions, Pitteloud undertakes a survey of the whole platonic corpus: starting with the *Hippias Major* he examines several major dialogues, including *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, finally concluding with the *Timaeus*. The outcome of this meticulous and comprehensive survey is that: (1) Forms are separate from sensible things, and (2) separation means that Forms are related to sensible things in the way that a model is related to its image, namely (2i) sensible things are ontologically dependent on Forms but (2ii) to look at the model and to look at the image is to look at the same thing from two different viewpoints.

This interpretation stands out from the common view about separation, according to which separation centres on the capacity Forms have to exist independently of sensible things. In Chapter 2, Pitteloud tackles the crucial question, addressed in the *Phaedo*, of the relation between the separation of the soul from the body, and the separation of Forms from sensible things. The core question is whether separation in these two cases is comparable. The major claim that Pitteloud defends in this chapter is that although Plato does say that the soul is separate from the body, this is different from the way in which Forms are separate from sensible things. Indeed, that the soul is separate from the body means that the soul can exist unembodied, and this can happen in two ways: (SEP1) when the soul is separate from the body through death and (SEP1') when the soul is separate from the body through philosophical activity. In other words, talking about how the soul is separate from the body amounts to talking about different ways the soul can exist: embodied or disembodied. According to Pitteloud however, this is different from separation in the case of Forms and sensible things (SEP) for (i) Plato does not discuss different modes of being in the case of Forms and (ii) we do not find the idea that Forms must be purified from sensible things, as, it seems, the soul must be when separated from the body.

Pitteloud's point is not to deny, of course, that there is a sense in which Forms are independent from sensible things, namely in so far as Forms do not depend on sensible things for being what they are. His point is, rather, that this is not what Plato is after when dealing with separation. On Pitteloud's reading, the question that motivates the topic of separation is the question how Forms are related to sensible things. For there is a tension between, on the one hand, Forms being not only different but also independent from sensible things, and, on the other hand, their being deeply connected with the sensible things that resemble them, participate in them, and of which they are causes. For Pitteloud, this tension can be observed from the two 'viewpoints' on Forms, as he himself labels them, that are found in the dialogues: sometimes, Forms and sensible things are described as being two different ontological categories (CAT), whereas, at other times, they are described as comprising two degrees within the same ontological category (DEG). A point that Pitteloud makes in the book is that while Plato seems to favor the (CAT) viewpoint in dialogues like the *Phaedo*, he ultimately comes to reject it and adopts (DEG). This evolution, or development in Plato's treatment of separation is reflected in the structure of the book, as the six chapters follow Plato's progression on the topic. Although it is not the purpose of the book to enter the debate between developmentalism and unitarianism, Pitteloud's analysis of separation is set up within a familiar pattern of reading Plato's dialogues according to which the so-called late dialogues are meant to correct issues that arose from Plato's earlier views. The difficulty that arises from the (CAT) viewpoint is that it is not at all clear to which ontological category sensible things belong. On the one hand, Forms are sharply distinguished from sensible things in that Forms belong to the category of being whereas sensible things are excluded from it. On the other hand, sensible things are something as opposed to nothing at all; hence they cannot simply belong to the category of not-being. Both horns lead to a dead-end.

The key for understanding separation, and the turning point in Plato's reflection, is the analysis of the image metaphor in the *Republic*. In Chapter 4, Pitteloud argues that this metaphor can be

understood in two ways that he sees as complementary: (a) Forms are the model of which sensible things are the images, just like a painting is an image made after a model, or just like Socrates' reflection in the mirror is the image of the real Socrates. (b) Thinking about craftsmanship, a Form is a model in the sense of being the structure on the basis of which all the particular instances are made. This metaphor brings in two important elements to understand the relation between Forms and sensible things in Pitteloud's reconstruction. First, if Forms are related to sensible things in the way a model is related to its image, then we need something in which the image appears, which is neither identical with the image nor with the model (e.g. a mirror in the case of Socrates, stone or bronze in the case of the statue). Second, there is a sense in which looking at the image and looking at the model amounts to looking at the same thing but from a different perspective. For instance, to look at Socrates himself or to look at his image in the mirror is just two different ways of looking at Socrates. This applies equally to Forms: they can either be considered in themselves or as they appear in the sensible.

In Chapters 5 and 6 Pitteloud shows how the changes invited by the image metaphor are taken on board in later dialogues. In the *Sophist* (Chapter 5), Plato upgrades the status of sensible things, first by drawing a distinction between an image and an illusion, and second by introducing changing things into being, thereby broadening the scope of being. The next, crucial step is taken in the *Timaeus* (Chapter 6), where Plato posits the existence of the Receptacle, that is, that in which sensible things appear. Forms themselves are not in the Receptacle; only their images, i.e. sensible things, are. In this way, the Receptacle is that which provides for the possibility of the image's existence; without anything in which it can appear, there can simply be no image. The introduction of the Receptacle entails that sensible things are not only ontologically dependent on Forms, but they are also ontological dependent on the Receptacle. Being both dependent on Forms and on the Receptacle, sensible things are 'in between', they are properly 'intermediate'. For Pitteloud, taken together, these changes are the sign that by the time of the *Timaeus*, Plato has abandoned the (CAT) viewpoint and now

defends the (DEG) viewpoint. Ultimately, if there are two different categories, they are that of the model and that of the Receptacle. But sensible things are not a different category from Forms, rather, both Forms and sensible things are different degrees within the category of being. That the *Timaeus* does not solve all the problems related to the relation between Forms and sensible things is clear, but for Pitteloud, it contains Plato's final word about the issue of separation.

Pitteloud's book has a number of strengths, not least its methodical treatment of the issue of separation. Special mention should be made to the long appendix at the end of the book that provides, amongst other things, a comprehensive account of all occurrences of the terms for 'paradigm', 'image', 'copy' and for 'separation' in Plato that is extremely useful. The core of the book, and what makes it stand out from other works on the topic, is the alternative account of separation that it defends. It seems that Pitteloud has a point when he argues that we should be careful not to apply the conclusions we can draw from separation in the case of the soul and the body to the case of Forms and sensible things. His own solution, namely the claim that the image metaphor is the key to separation, is convincingly argued for and the textual evidence he provides is substantial. More to the point, Pitteloud's interpretation avoids many of the difficulties that normally arise when dealing with separation. To begin with, the view that Forms are separate is often read as implying that Forms are self-sufficient. This is the idea that a Form can exist itself by itself, that it need not enter into any relations to be what it is. This view, however, creates difficulties every time Plato suggests that Forms are related to one another. By contrast, the image metaphor makes clear the respect in which Forms are self-sufficient: namely in respect of their relation to sensible things. Indeed, Forms do not depend on sensible things for being what they are, whereas the converse is not true. But this by no means implies that Forms are not related to one another. Another typical problem that is often associated with separation is the question of the immanence or transcendence of Plato's Forms. Now, if we follow this idea that Forms are to sensible things what a model is to its image, then the question whether Forms are immanent or

transcendent is of little relevance. For we would hardly be willing to say about Socrates that he is in his reflection, or that he is in the mirror that reflects him. Rather, it is a property of the mirror to be such that it can contain an image of Socrates, and it is his image that is in the mirror, not Socrates himself. Thus with the image metaphor, the emphasis is on the distinction between Forms, their images and that in which their images appear. This brings me to a last point in favor of Pitteloud's reading, namely the role it gives to the Receptacle. Often the question is how to conceive of the receptacle, whether it is space or matter. On Pitteloud's reading however, we need not choose between the two options. Indeed, the Receptacle being that in which the image appears, it is in a sense both space and matter. This sheds new light on this difficult aspect of the *Timaeus*.

Less convincing however is Pitteloud's claim that separation requires Plato to move from a (CAT) reading to a (DEG) reading of the relation between Forms and sensible things. The main worry is that Pitteloud seems to take (CAT) and (DEG) to be plainly incompatible: Plato would hold the one or the other but could not hold both. In other words, Pitteloud seems to rule out from the start the possibility that one can, at the same time, divide existing things in two different categories and also assert that these two categories are related in such a way that the one is dependent on the other for what it is. It is not clear, however, that this is so. Admittedly, the one does not imply the other, that is, one can defend a two-category ontology without at the same time defending the view that there is an ontological dependence between these two categories. But this does not imply that the two are incompatible. It seems that Pitteloud's rationale for holding the incompatibility between (CAT) and (DEG) is that, in the specific case of Plato, the one category is, precisely, the category of being. Hence the following problem: if the one category is that of being, then what can the other be? Now, this is a problem only if by 'being' here, one means the totality of what there is. For in that case, it seems that there can be no category outside of being. But this is not the only way to conceive of being, and certainly not the only way available to Plato. For Plato himself often uses 'being' in the sense of 'primary being', and not in the sense of the totality of

what there is. So it is not clear why Pitteloud rules out the possibility that (CAT) and (DEG) are compatible. Opposing (CAT) to (DEG) even seems to generate more problems than it solves. For, as Pitteloud himself acknowledges, there is a passage at *Timaeus* 48e3 where Timeaus declares that he is now going to distinguish a third kind (*triton genos*) on top of the two kinds (*duo eidê*) he already admitted. This is certainly a back reference to the previous account of the universe that he gave, but it is also a reference to *Phaedo* 79a6 which is the basic reference for the (CAT) viewpoint. Moreover, Pitteloud himself suggests that the model and the Receptacle may ultimately be two distinct categories. But he does not say why what he thought was problematic in the case of sensible things is not longer problematic in the case of the Receptacle. All in all, we might have expected more clarity regarding some of the metaphysical theses defended in the book. Nevertheless, it remains the case that Pitteloud's book makes a significant contribution to the field by defending an alternative, and convincing, account of separation.

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