

Part **03** of **29**.

*THE DIALECTICA MANIFESTO: The Enigma of the Platonic Dialectic.*

# *The Dialectica Manifesto:*

*Dialectical Ideography*

and

the Mission of **F.E.D.**

by

**Foundation Encyclopedia Dialectica**

## *The Enigma of the Platonic Dialectic.*

The following extracts provide an overview of the difficulties confronting modern scholars of Plato in deciphering the unified meaning of *the Platonic dialectic* / the Platonic <<arithmoi eidetikoi>>.

Prior to the insights of Jacob Klein, Denise Schmandt-Besserat, and others regarding ancient arithmetic, and the integration of those insights in the work of Karl Seldon and Sophya St. Germain, no such unified meaning had been recovered.

We learn, for instance, in J. O. Urmson's *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary*, in the entry for the Greek word <<arithmos>> — which is translated, in this entry, simply as “*number*” — of the “*psychohistorical*” fact that the ancient Greek concept of “*number*” differed markedly from — and was, in some ways, ‘*ideo-ontologically*’ *shrunk* with respect to — our own.

However, in another way, that ancient conception was ‘*ideo-ontologically*’ *expansive* relative to the modern one, in that it included a concept of “*nonaddible*”, and therefore apparently of *qualitative* – *qualitatively heterogeneous* – “*numbers*”:

“Zero was unknown as a number, and one also was not counted as a number, the first number being the *duas* — two.” [J. O. Urmson, *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary*, Duckworth & Co., Ltd. [London: 1990], pp. 31-32].

We also learn of a key — “obscure” — distinction in Plato's “unwritten doctrines”, between Plato's concept of ‘*dianoiac*’ “mathematical numbers”, the <<arithmoi monadikoi>>, versus his *dialectical* “‘*idea-numbers*’”, the <<arithmoi eidetikoi>>:

“From the Pythagoreans ... — who consider number to be the first principle — number played a great role in metaphysics, especially in Plato's unwritten doctrines, involving obscure distinctions of e.g. <<sumblêtoi>> and <<asumblêtoi>> — addible and *non-addible* — *numbers*.” [Urmson, *ibid.*, *emphasis added* by F.E.D.].

Thus it appears that Plato too, with the Pythagoreans, considered “number” to be the “first principle”.

But Plato “*also*” considered the “*Forms*”, the <<eide>> — the <<ideai>> — to be the “first principle”.

However, these “*two*” considerations, for Plato, constituted no contradiction.

The <<ideai>> or <<eide>> were, for Plato, “*numbers*” — i.e., <<arithmoi>> — namely, the <<arithmoi eidetikoi>>, the very <<arithmoi>> of his <<dialektiké>>.

This “*idea-number*” notion of Plato’s has been replete with all manner of perplexity for modern scholarship:

“*arithmós*: *number* (see also *arithmos eidetikos* and *arithmos mathematikos*)

... 3. The most perplexing aspect of ancient number theory is Aristotle’s repeated assertions that Plato taught that the *eide* were numbers (e.g. *Meta.* 987b), a position that must be distinguished from 1) the existence of the *eide* of numbers (see *arithmos eidetikos*) and 2) the existence of the “mathematicals” as an intermediate grade of being (see *mathematika, metaxu*). But nowhere in the dialogues does Plato seem to identify the *eide* with number. To meet this difficulty some have postulated a theory of later “esoteric” Platonism known to Aristotle (but see *agrapha dogmata*), while others have attempted to see the emergence of the *eide-arithmos* theory described in such passages as *Phil.* 25a-e, the reduction of physical objects back to geometrical shapes in *Tim.* 53c-56c (see *stoicheion*), and the increasing stress on a hierarchy among the Forms (see *Soph.* 254d and *genos, hyperousia*), which, according to Theophrastus, *Meta.* 6b, would suggest the descending series *archai* (i.e., *monas/dyas* or *peras/apeiron*, qq.v.), *arithmoi, eide, aistheta*. Still others say that Aristotle either deliberately or unknowingly confused the position of Plato with those of Speusippus and Xenocrates (see *mathematika*).” [F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical terms: A Historical Lexicon*, NYU Press [NY: 1990], pp. 25-26].

In the entry for the Greek word <<[dialektiké](#)>>, translated, in this same reference, as the English “[dialectic](#)”, we learn the following:

“On the testimony of Aristotle dialectic was an invention of Zeno the Eliatic, probably to serve as a support for the hypothetical antinomies of Parmenides ... But what was a species of verbal polemic (what Plato would call “eristic” or disputation...) for the Eliatics was transformed by Plato into a high philosophic method. The connecting link was undoubtedly the Socratic technique of question and answer in his search for ethical Definitions..., a technique that Plato explicitly describes as dialectical (*Crat.* 390c). ... With the hypostatization of the Socratic definitions as the Platonic *eide* ... the role of dialectic becomes central and is the crown of the ideal curriculum described in the Republic: after ten years devoted to mathematics the philosopher-to-be will devote the years between thirty and thirty-five to the study of dialectic. ...

What is dialectic? The question is not an easy one since Plato, as usual, thought about it in a variety of ways. There is the view of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, which envisions dialectic as a progressively more synoptic ascent, via a series of “positions” (*hypotheseis*, q.v.; the Theory of Forms is one such in the *Phaedo* 100b), until an ultimate is reached (*Phaedo* 101d, *Rep.* 511e). In the *Republic*, where the context of the discussion is confessedly moral, this “unhypothesized principle” is identified with the good-in-itself (*auto to agathon*; *Rep.* 532a-b) that subsumes within itself all of the lower hypotheses (*ibid.*, 533c-d) [cf. the Hegelian core concept of dialectic, named by the German word <<[aufheben](#)>> — [F.E.D.](#)] ... If the dialectic of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* may be described as “synoptic” ..., that which emerges from the *Phaedrus* onward is decidedly “diacritic”... it is introduced in *Phaedrus* 265c-266b (compare *Soph.* 253d-e) and consists of two different procedures, “collection” (*synagoge*, q.v.) and “division” (*diairesis*, q.v.), the latter process being amply illustrated in subsequent dialogues like the *Sophist*, *Politicus*, and *Philebus*. The earlier dialectic appeared similar to the operations of *eros* (q.v.) [recall Herbert Marcuse’s comment, in his *Reason and Revolution*, to the effect that “*eros is the force that binds matter together into ever higher unities*”—[F.E.D.](#)], but here we are transported into an almost Aristotelian world of classification through division; ascent has been replaced by descent. While it is manifest that we are here still dealing with ontological realities, it is likewise clear that a crucial step has been taken along the road to a conceptual logic. The term [i.e., the terminus — [F.E.D.](#)] of the *diairesis* is that *eidos* which stands immediately above the sensible particulars (*Soph.* 229d), and, while this is “really real” (*ontos on*) in the Platonic scheme of things, it is significant that the same process ends, in Aristotle, in the *atomon eidos*, the *infima species* in a logical descent (*De an.* II, 414b)...” [Peters, *ibid.*, pp. 36-37].

Within the kind of <<[arithmoi eidetikoi](#)>> structure described in the extract from Jacob Klein’s book, and depicted in the illustrations of the section immediately preceding this one, both the ““ascending”” and ““descending”” paths are intrinsic. Further clues regarding this — supposedly only *synchronic / eternal* — [dialectical structure](#) may be gleaned from the entry on <<[diairesis](#)>> in the above-sited lexicon, by Peters:

“**diairesis**: separation, division, distinction

1. Division, a procedure that did not interest Socrates since the thrust of his enquiry was *toward* a single *eidos* (see *epagoge*), becomes an important feature in the later dialogues where Plato turns his attention to the question of the relationship between *eide*. Expressed in terms of Aristotelian logic *diairesis* is part of the progress from genus to species; but, as is clear from a key passage in the *Parmenides*, where he first puts the question (129d-e), Plato did not see it as a conceptual exercise. The dialectical search of which *diairesis* is part has as its object the explication of the ontological realities that are grasped by our reflection (*logismos*).

2. The pursuit of the interrelated *eide* begins with an attempt at comprehending a generic form (*Phaedrus* 265d); this is “collection” (*synagoge*, q.v.). It is followed by *diairesis*, a separation off of the various *eide* found in the generic *eidos*, down to the *infima species* (*Soph.* 253d-e). Plato is sparing of details in both the theory and the practice of *synagoge*, and, while the *Sophist* and the *Politicus* are filled with examples of *diairesis*, there is relatively little instruction on its methodology. We are told, however, that the division is to take place “according to the natural joints” (*Phaedrus* 265e). What these are becomes clearer from the *Politicus*: they are the differences (*diaphorai*, q.v.) that separate one species from another in the generic form (*Pol.* 262a-263b, 285b).

3. The method of division raises certain serious questions, so serious, indeed, that they might very well shake confidence in the existence of the *eide*. ... Do the species constitute the genus or are they derived from it? ... [Peters, *ibid.*, pp. 34-35].”

Regarding the meaning of this ‘second movement’ ‘sub-method’ of the Platonic [dialectical method](#), termed <<[diairesis](#)>>, the Urmson source provides the following:

“*diairien* (in past tense, *dielein*), **diairesis**: to divide, division, used in many contexts in Greek as in English. In philosophy particularly the logical division of a genus into species. In the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist* Plato speaks of a [F.E.D.: sub-]method of *sunagôgê* — collection — and [F.E.D.: a sub-method of] *diairesis* — division — as the supreme method of philosophy: ... and, Phaedrus, I myself am a lover of divisions and collections in order to become able to speak and think (Pl. *Phaedrus* 266b); ... — unless one is capable of dividing things and subsuming each thing individually under a single form, one will never become skilled in discussion to the limit of human capacity (Pl. *Phaedrus* 273d): ... — a longstanding laziness about dividing genera into species (Pl. *Soph.* 267d). [Urmson, *ibid.*, pp. 39-40].”

The “mystery” of the ‘first movement’, and ‘sub-method’, of the [dialectical “method of discovery”](#), <<[synagoge](#)>>, is also further addressed in our two sources:

“*sunagein*: to collect; *sunagôgê*: the action of collecting. Non-technically: ... we shall bring together the brides and the bridegrooms (Pl. *Rep.* 459e). Also used as a technical term by Plato, particularly in the *Sophist* and the *Phaedrus*, where the contrary of *sunagôgê* is *diairesis*, division: ... — I am myself, Phaedrus, a lover of these divisions and collections (Pl. *Phaedrus* 266b). Collection appears to be bringing together under a single genus a variety of things which are then to be divided formally into species and sub-species: ... — to survey under one form things that are scattered in many areas (Pl. *Phaedrus* 265d). [Urmson, *ibid.*, pp. 158-159].”

“synagôgê: collection

The Platonic type of “induction” (for the more normal type of induction, i.e., a collection of individual instances leading to a universal, see *epagoge*) that must precede a division (*diairesis*) and that is a survey of specific forms (*eide*) that might constitute a genus (*Phaedrus* 265d, *Soph.* 253d). An example is *Soph.* 226a, and the process is also suggested in *Rep.* 533c-d, and *Laws* 626d... . [Peters, *ibid.*, p. 188].”

Parts of the entries under <<*eidos*>> in the Peters source can serve as a summary of our findings, above, regarding *the enigma of the Platonic dialectic*:

“*eidos*: appearance, constitutive nature, form, type, species, idea

... 12. At various points in the dialogues Plato seems to grant preeminence to one or other [*sic*] of the *eide*. Thus, both the Good (*Rep.* 504e-509c) and the Beautiful (*Symp.* 210a-212b) are thrown into relief, to say nothing of the notorious hypotheses of the One in the *Parmenides* (137c-142; see *hen, hyperousia*). But the problem of the interrelationship, or, as Plato calls it, “combination” or “communion” (*koinonia*), and, by implication, of the subordination of the *eide* is not taken up formally until the *Sophist*. It is agreed, again on the basis of predication, that some *eide* will blend with others and some will not, and that it is the task of dialectic to discern the various groupings, particularly through the diacritic method known as *diairesis* (q.v.; *Soph.* 253b-e). ... . [Peters, *ibid.*, p. 49, *emphasis* added by **F.E.D.**].”

“... 8. Though the *eide* are the centerpiece of Platonic metaphysics, nowhere does Plato undertake a proof for their existence; they first appear as a hypothesis (see *Phaedo* 100b-101d) and remain so, even though subjected to a scathing criticism (*Parm.* 130a-134e). They are known, in a variety of methods, by the faculty of reason (*nous*; *Rep.* 532a-b, *Tim.* 51d). One such early method is that of recollection (*anamnesis*, q.v.), where the individual soul recalls the *eide* with which it was in contact before birth (*Meno* 80d-85b, *Phaedo* 72c-77d; see *palingenesia*). Without the attendant religious connotations is the purely philosophical method of *dialektike* (q.v.; see *Rep.* 531d-535a; for its difference from mathematical reasoning, *ibid.*, 510b-511a; from *eristic*, *Phil.* 15d-16a). As it is first described the method has to do with the progress from a hypothesis back to an unhypothesized *arché* (*Phaedo* 100a, 101d; *Rep.* 511b), but in the later dialogues *dialektiké* appears as a fully articulated methodology comprising “collection” (*synagoge*, q.v.) followed by a “division” (*diairesis*, q.v.) that moves, via the *diaphorai*, from a more comprehensive Form down to the *atomon eidos*. Finally, one may approach the *eide* through *eros* (q.v.), the desiderative parallel to the earlier form of dialectic (see *epistrophe*). [Peters, *ibid.*, pp. 47-48].”

There is also another central Platonian theme — more **Heraclitean**, less **Parmenidean**; more **diachronic**, less **synchronic** than the others noted above — that forms a part, in our view, of *the enigma of the Platonic dialectic*: that of <<**autokinesis**>>, that of “**self-change**” or “**self-motion**” — that of the **self-induced motion** of a “**self**”, e.g., of an **agent, subject-object**, or [ev]entity, human/self-sentient, **or pre-human**.

Our re-discovery of Plato’s “**dialectical arithmetic**” emerged in the context, also, of our study of this, the most advanced development of Plato’s thinking, as embodied in his final dialogues, beginning with *The Parmenides*.

In those later dialogues, Plato advances beyond his earlier-asserted, ‘Parmenideanic’ *eternal* «*stasis*» of the “*Forms*”, or «*eide*», to embrace a theoretical commitment to the fundamentality of “*self-change*”, or «*autokinesis*», and to the primacy of this “*self-derived motion*” over “*other-derived motion*”, i.e., over *other*-induced, *externally*-induced change:

“The dialogues of the Socratic period provide that view of the world usually associated with Plato. *The period of transition and criticism, and the final synthesis, are little noted* ... *The Parmenides* can be taken as signaling the change. In this dialogue Socrates is unable to defend his Doctrine of Ideas. ... Where the *Republic* and *Phaedo* stressed the unchanging nature of the soul, the emphasis in the *Phaedrus* is exactly reversed. In this dialogue, the soul is the principle of *self-motion*, and we are told that the soul is always in motion, and what is always in motion is immortal. The difference now between spirit and matter is *not changelessness* in contrast with *change*, but *self-motion*, the essence of the soul, in contrast with *derived motion*. The emphasis on *self-motion* is continued even in the *Laws*, Plato’s final dialogue. [William L. Riese, *Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy: Eastern and Western Thought*, Humanities Press, Inc. (New Jersey: 1980), pages 442-443, *emphasis added* by F.E.D.]”

Is there a connection between the late-Platonic principles of «*autokinesis*», of *self-change* and *self-movement*, and the Platonic concept of «*dialektiké*»?

Considering the following extracts on «*autokinesis*» from the Platonic dialogues cited in the quote extracted above may help us to advance us in our consideration of this question:

[*Phaedrus*]: “But that which while imparting motion is itself moved by something else can cease to be in motion, and therefore can cease to live; it is only *that which moves itself* that never intermits its motion, inasmuch as *it cannot abandon its own nature*; moreover this *self-mover is the source and first principle of motion for all other things that are moved*. Now a first principle cannot come into being, for while anything that comes to be must come to be from a first principle, the latter itself cannot come to be from anything whatsoever; if it did, it would cease any longer to be a *first* principle. Furthermore, since it did not come into being, it must be imperishable, for assuredly if a first principle were to be destroyed, nothing could come to be out of it, nor could anything bring the principle itself back into existence, seeing that a first principle is needed for anything to come into being.

The *self-mover*, then, is the first principle of motion, and it is as impossible that it should be destroyed as that it should come into being; were it otherwise, the whole universe, the whole of that which comes to be, would collapse into immobility, and never find another source of motion to bring it back into being. [Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, E. Hamilton, H. Cairns, editors, Princeton U. Press [Princeton: 1989], *Phaedrus*, 245c-e, pp. 492-493, *italic and bold-italic colored text emphasis added* by F.E.D.]”

[*Laws*]: “When we have one thing making a change in a second, the second, in turn, in a third, and so on – will there ever, in such a series, be a *first* source of change? Why, how can *what is set moving by something other than itself* ever be the first of the causes of alteration? The thing is an impossibility. But when *something which has set itself moving* alters a second thing, this second thing still a third, and the motion is thus passed on in course to thousands and tens of thousands of things, will there be any *starting point for the whole movement of all*, other than *the change in the movement which initiated itself*? ...

Suppose all things were to come together and stand still – as most of the party have the hardihood to affirm. Which of the movements we have specified must be *the first* to arise in things? Why, of course, that which can *move itself*, there can be no possible previous *origination of change* by anything else, since, by hypothesis, *change was not previously existent in the system*. Consequently, as *the source of all motions whatsoever*, the *first* to occur *among bodies at rest* and *the first* in rank in *moving bodies, the motion which initiates itself* we shall pronounce to be necessarily *the earliest* and mightiest of all *changes*, while *that which is altered by something else and sets something else moving* is *secondary*. [*ibid.*, *Laws*, 10.894e-10.895b, pp. 1450, *bold-italic, underlined, and colored text emphasis added* by F.E.D.]”

The above-rendered considerations, then, adumbrate the challenge that Karl Seldon and Sophya St. Germain faced in their project to recover their hypothesized original unity of the Platonic conception of «dialektiké», and of its «arithmoi eidetikoi», from the enigma of its seemingly disparate doctrines, as portrayed in the extracts above, *viz.* --

1. Of “‘ideas as ‘unaddable’ numbers’”, and of «dialektiké» as an “‘arithmetic of ideas’”; the arithmetic of the «arithmoi eidetikoi»;
2. Of «dialektiké» as the highest philosophic method, one similar in its operation to that of eros; a synoptic method, a method of ascent, via a series of “positions”, or “hypotheses”, until an ultimate is reached, that subsumes *within itself all of the lower hypotheses*;
3. Of «dialektiké» as a diacritic method, a method of descent — of synchronic ‘ideo-systematics’, ‘ideo-taxonomics’, or ‘ideo-meta-genealogy’, for the correct determination of the ... «gene», the «species», and the sub-«species» ..., etc., of the «eide»... — a method composed of two distinct, opposite procedures, or “‘orchestral’” [dance of discourse] movements; first by one of “collection”[«synagoge»], into «gene», followed, second, by one of “division” [«diairesis»], into “classes” — into «species», sub-«species», ..., etc. — of the fundamental «idea» that, per Plato, overlord this «kosmos», and;
4. Of «arché kinesis» as «auto kinesis».

Moreover, this challenge emerged in the context of the effort of Karl Seldon and Sophya St. Germain to discover and advance the theory of diachronic, historical dialectics, and of its calculus; a theory and a calculus of the ‘auto-kinesic’, temporal, “‘chrono-logical’” -- and, moreover of the ‘chronogenic’ -- ‘self-speciation of species’ and ‘self-generation of genera’, in a way ‘con-«gene’-ial’ with their immanently-critiqued version of the more synchronic-eternal, “‘systematic dialectics’” that Plato emphasized.

All of these considerations converge in the exposition of the rest of this letter, and of its next section, entitled: The Secret of the Historical Dialectic.