

What is it to be a Platonist?

It is to think that the universal principle of being is not the uttermost abstraction but rather something concrete, or superconcrete, and yet eternal, an "*actus purus*," immune to change and becoming, even though in no way an empty abstraction inferior in value to any of the concrete manifestations of, or creations by, the principle.

Thus it is to think that "goodness itself" must be the best or most good thing, or that the absolute measure of beauty must be the supremely beautiful thing. But this is to commit a sort of "homological" fallacy: the eternal and necessary principle is thought of as in no way abstract or inferior to concrete, contingent actualities.

But if contingency is in the step from universal to particular, or from more to less universal forms, then it is also in the step from the more abstract to the more nearly concrete. Accordingly, the necessary is to be looked for in exactly the opposite direction—not as the most concrete, but as precisely the most abstract.

Suppose, however, we take what is often termed the Aristotelian view of universals or forms, in which they are not ultimately and absolutely separable from concrete instances, being mere universals not particularized, or mere forms not specialized or concretized, at all. In this anti- or non-Platonist view, contingency cannot be in the step from "predicate" to "exemplified predicate," because *some* predicates have to be exemplified lest there be nothing, either universal or particular, to talk about. No, the ground of contingency lies in the contrast between more general and more specific predicates, or less and more determinate ideas. More specific predicates always involve mutual exclusiveness, because they are competitive ways of specializing more general notions, alternative "determinates" under higher "determinables." But being "somehow specialized, somehow concretized," is not competitive with anything

positive whatever, but only with the ultra-Platonic, or Platonist, negation, "mere form not specialized, not concretized at all."

The "essence" or individuality of God is to be conceived as a pure determinable, which like all pure determinables, must be determined somehow, i.e., somehow particularized, somehow specialized and concretized. Although God is truly an individual, albeit the unique individual incapable of coexisting with any other in the same class, yet God's bare existence, in the sense of God's "essence" or individuality being "somehow actualized," is no less abstract, no less nonspecific or noncompetitive, than "reality as such." It has the same absolutely infinite range of variations, the same unrestricted flexibility. God is an individual, but also in an exact sense *the* individual, the individual whose defining functions are strictly universal—such as influencing and being influenced by all things, being related actually to all actual things, potentially to all possible things, and so coextensive with, or all-inclusive of, modality itself, bound to be instanced (or instantiated) no matter what more special abstractions are or are not instanced.

Thus deity, as the "essence," individuality, or necessary aspect of God, is simply the ultimate determinable as bound to be determined somehow, bound to be included in all less ultimate determinables as well as embodied in some concrete determinate actuality or other.

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