

# Introduction

Aristotle famously describes Plato's Forms in terms of a "One-over-Many" formula where a separate Form corresponds to each multitude of things bearing characteristics common and peculiar to them as a group (*Metaphysics* 990a33–991a8, 1079a7–b3; *Peri Ideōn* [= Alexander of Aphrodisias: *In Aristotelis Metaphysica Commentaria*] 80.8–81.10; cf. *Republic* 596a; *Parmenides* 130d–e, 135a–d; *Timaeus* 51c). He then goes on to exaggerate their separation, placing the Forms in a different world from the sensible phenomena instantiating them, and thereby multiplying the number of worlds required to account for Plato's conception of reality (*Metaphysics* 990b34–991a3, 1079a32–34). Plato, of course, hardly needs Aristotle's help to be misunderstood in that regard, as he himself tends, on occasion, to speak of the Forms either as existing in heaven (*Republic* 509d), which sounds distant enough as it is, or as existing outside or beyond heaven (*Phaedrus* 247c), which sounds even further removed from familiar territory in ontological discourse. There is, in short, sufficient if superficial evidence in and around Plato for a thoroughgoing metaphysical dualism, both of things and of the worlds in which they exist.

Underneath all the metaphorical expressions and hyperbolic testimonialia, however, lies the real One-over-Many pattern shaping Plato's metaphysics: the world itself as a single reality with various different parts, levels, dimensions, and characteristics. The aim of this book is to present and promote this unitary pluralism, essentially a monism of worlds with a pluralism of things, as an alternative to the metaphysical dualism commonly attributed to Plato as the received view of his conception of reality. That is the One-over-Many in the title. The opposition intended is not to the distinction between Forms and sensible phenomena, but to the reservation of a separate world for each, and to the restriction of

reality to just those two kinds of things. There are still Forms and sensible phenomena, to say nothing of other things, but they are all in the same world as opposed to two different worlds. They also continue to differ in all the same ways, but not in separate worlds or universes. Everything is here with us, Forms and all, in the only world there is.

Unitary pluralism takes Plato to be working with degrees of reality in a single universe whose ontological constitution is best understood in terms of two main levels and countless subdivisions blending into each other through a gradation of reality where the Forms occupy the upper level while sensible phenomena reside in the lower level. This is not a strictly binary division where the universe consists of nothing but Forms and sensible phenomena, neatly separated into two distinct ontological levels in polar opposition to each other. That would be a contrived monism, a kind of dualism in disguise, replacing the traditional dualism in name only, while embracing the same distinction as before. The point is not to call the traditional dualism something else but to replace it with something else.

The alternative here may be considered monism with respect to the number of worlds acknowledged to exist, pluralism with respect to the variety of things recognized as content, the latter being indexed to significant ontological differences. The traditional dualism, in contrast, has exactly two of each, clearly and strictly so in terms of the number of worlds, and at least by emphasis and implication in terms of the kinds of things in existence, with the Forms residing in the ideal world, sensible phenomena in the material world. The alternative in this book is more conservative with respect to the number of worlds and more liberal with respect to the corresponding population of things. It restricts the number of worlds to one, and only one, that can accommodate infinite diversity in its ontological structure. This makes the model both monistic and pluralistic, depending on the perspective. It is a monism of worlds in consolidation of a plurality of things. It is, therefore, the pluralism in and of a unitary reality. Hence, a unitary pluralism.

The two main levels, together with all their subdivisions, constitute relative positions along a continuum of ontological stratification, extending from the highest reality at the top to the lowest at the bottom, without a fixed line of demarcation separating the two with any precision. Just as the oceans of the earth are different in meaningful ways from the land masses separating them, though they are both part of the same planet, so too are the Forms different and distinct from the sensible phenomena

instantiating them, though they are both part of the same universe. The upper level houses the Forms, but not to the exclusion of other possibilities, while the lower level houses sensible phenomena, again with room to spare for other things. What this means is that the upper level is open to things besides Forms, perhaps intermediates and possibly also concepts and abstractions that are not fully reified, certainly not at the level of Forms, while the lower level contains not just sensible phenomena but also an assortment of things of lower ontological rank or significance, including everything confined to the lower segment of the line in the celebrated analogy of the *Republic* (509d–511e). Intermediates may alternatively, and just as reasonably, be construed as occupying a central region between the two levels instead of the lower portion of the upper level, either alternative being the same as the other, given the fluidity of the border between the two main levels.

The Forms themselves represent three distinct kinds of intelligible phenomena in the upper level of reality. They exhibit differences that make them more comprehensible in different categories than as a homogeneous collection of reified abstractions, any one of them the same as any other. Even a cursory survey supports a rough division into values, concepts, and relations. With some reflection and refinement, that skeletal breakdown can be fleshed out into a formal classification comprising Ideal Forms, Conceptual Forms, and Relational Forms.

- (1) Ideal Forms are transcendent value paradigms instantiated in our phenomenal experience through their earthly manifestations in things that are deemed good in and of themselves, such as justice, piety, and temperance. Despite a predominantly moral orientation, this division is not limited to the domain of ethics. The Forms in this category are ideals, or ideal goods, broadly construed, hence not just moral values and virtues but anything of intrinsic value, including, for example, beauty, knowledge, and life itself.
- (2) Conceptual Forms are reified concepts and abstractions that are ontologically significant but not intrinsically valuable. They are objectively real universals corresponding to types, properties, events, actions, experiences, and the like, all regularly invoked as part of our cognitive interaction with our perceptual field. Examples might include horseness,

redness, competition, running, and winning, to illustrate, respectively, albeit loosely, the possible subdivisions listed in the preceding sentence.

- (3) Relational Forms are complementary metaphysical categories accounting for the fundamental nature and structure of the universe through pairs of contrasting relations, as illustrated, most notably, in rest versus motion, and same versus other, both pairs being familiar from the “greatest kinds” (*megista genē*) of the *Sophist* (254d–e). The relationship between the paired elements is strictly complementary and never polarized into mutually exclusive forces in diametrical opposition.

From a modern perspective, available to Plato only in approximate anticipation, these Forms are all universals with an objective reality, though they are also much more than that, as the present initiative is intended to demonstrate. To return to the skeletal scheme preceding the fuller classification, what we have here as Forms, all told, are transcendent values, reified concepts, and structural relations. Ideal Forms are the noetic sources of intrinsic value, Conceptual Forms are reified universals that are value-neutral, and Relational Forms are the ontological building blocks of reality correlated with the cognitive structure regulating our phenomenal experience.

The most distinctive characteristic of Ideal Forms is their intrinsic value, while the most distinctive characteristic of Relational Forms is their structural significance, but there is nothing inherently distinctive about Conceptual Forms. Their not being like either of the other two, however, is sufficiently informative for a provisional distinction. The defining difference between all three categories may thus be reduced to the intrinsic value that sets Ideal Forms apart from the other two, and the cosmic pairing that sets Relational Forms apart from the other two, the combined effect of which is to place everything else, hence any reified universals that are neither valuable in themselves nor paired in complementary contrasts of cosmic significance, under the rubric of Conceptual Forms. While this is not a complete picture, it is a useful distinction for a preliminary understanding of the classification scheme.

What may seem like a world of Forms versus a world of sensible phenomena is instead a monistic universe hosting various different kinds

of Forms in the upper level of reality, manifested as sensible phenomena in the lower level. Strictly speaking, there is no proof, be it textual, testimonial, empirical, or logical, either of the monism or of the dualism of worlds. And the same is true of the pluralism of the things existing within. The goal here is to show that a monistic world with a pluralistic population, though no more or less open to verification than the standard dualistic reading, carries greater explanatory power and portrays Plato as a better philosopher.

Unlike the dualism typically attributed to Plato, the unitary pluralism advocated here is not just an ontological model but a philosophical vision. The traditional dualism is at best an interpretive template that is consistent with some of what Plato appears to be saying in specifically ontological terms, perhaps also extending to broadly metaphysical terms, but falling short of universal relevance. No doubt, Plato does seem at times to be referring to a world of Forms as distinct from the world of sensible phenomena. But that is only a figure of speech reinforcing the distinction, to make sure the difference is appreciated, even if it is exaggerated. With an illustrious teacher and an outstanding student, neither of whom separated universals from the particulars instantiating them, Plato must have developed an affinity for any opportunity, philosophical or rhetorical, to distinguish his Forms from sensible phenomena, with some embellishment for good measure. That is why he can consistently if erroneously be read as a metaphysical dualist, even though there is really no particular textual confirmation of that reading as opposed to a monistic alternative, unless one is inclined to take every metaphor literally for the sake of an otherwise whimsical interpretation.

The paradigm of unitary pluralism, on the other hand, provides comprehensive coverage of Plato's general worldview with greater explanatory power, including not just his ontology and cosmology but also his epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, not to mention his social and political philosophy, which is, at bottom, a unitary pluralism of city and soul, each with its own organic structure, and the two of them together as one of the most memorable analogies in Plato, if not in the history of political thought.

The methodological cornerstone of unitary pluralism as an interpretive model is the gradation of reality in a single universe. The ontological stratification acknowledged therein introduces degrees of reality placing the Forms in the upper level and sensible phenomena in the lower level of an integrated whole, where the contrast between Forms and sensible

phenomena serves as a reflection of the more fundamental division and relationship between the levels themselves, thus including both the Forms and sensible phenomena without being restricted to them. The relationship between the levels, that is, the way one level is oriented relative to the other, is not so much opposition as it is completion, much like anywhere upstairs in relation to a reciprocal downstairs. They are complements rather than opposites.

Despite a unifying focus with a central thesis and integrated strategies toward its establishment, this book is not a scholarly monograph drafted in one sitting. It is a series of five previously published essays bundled together with two new ones composed especially for this collection. The first five essays in chronological order, listed below with publication details, were originally produced in accordance with an overarching plan of development, starting with a presentation, demonstration, and illustration of the basic model, followed by various implications and applications, all focusing primarily if not exclusively on the Forms:

- “Rethinking Plato’s Forms” (with Holger Thesleff), *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 47 (2013): 11–47.
- “Rethought Forms: How Do They Work?,” *Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica* 48 (2014): 25–55.
- “A Horse Is a Horse, of Course, of Course, but What about Horseness?,” in *Second Sailing: Alternative Perspectives on Plato*, edited by Debra Nails and Harold Tarrant in collaboration with Mika Kajava and Eero Salmenkivi, 307–324, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 132 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2015).
- “Ontological Symmetry in Plato: Formless Things and Empty Forms,” *Analysis and Metaphysics* 16 (2017a): 7–51.
- “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Does Plato Make Room for Negative Forms in His Ontology?,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2017b): 154–191.

These essays have been reproduced here, with some emendations and variations, in the order in which they were conceived, produced, and published. The revised versions, recast as chapters, use the same titles as

before. They remain faithful to the main positions in the original essays, drawing on the same combination of analysis and argumentation employed there toward their establishment. Other than stylistic changes for the sake of uniformity, deviations are limited largely to refinements introduced in the process of looking for better ways of expressing the same ideas. The present publisher and I are grateful to the previous publishers for their kind permission to reprint the corresponding material with modifications.

The transition from a unitary project executed in stages to a comprehensive presentation of the results in a single volume came with a choice between preserving the autonomous nature and internal coherence of the individual essays and avoiding the accretion of redundancy in the volume as a whole. With the entire project revolving around a common platform, namely that of a unitary pluralism with a gradation of reality and a trinitarian classification of Forms, thematic redundancy was building up gradually as each essay proceeded independently to set up the same model in pursuit of its own aims and in execution of its own strategies. A tempting alternative emerging during the compilation process was to replace the mutually redundant portions with a passing reference to the basic model in its original exposition. Avoiding the cumulative redundancy, however, would have disrupted the natural flow of the individual essays, with a jarring void replacing substantive development. The most effective means of presentation, particularly in terms of perspicuity, turned out to be to retain the episodic reintroduction of the central paradigm where it became relevant in the course of each chapter.

Although this periodic reaffirmation of the unitary pluralism of Plato's world comes with a certain degree of repetition, the collective redundancy is mitigated by distributive enhancements and organizational advantages, including the continuing accessibility of each chapter as a standalone essay. This compromise of redundancy in exchange for coherence represents a match between the purpose of the project and the structure of the presentation. The point is not to advocate one reading of Plato over another, in the manner of a logical or methodological exercise in textual interpretation and philosophical reconstruction, but to establish a compelling exegetical platform that actually advances our understanding of Plato's intellectual output. The interpretation must be not just plausible but also illuminating. It must make a difference in addition to being different.

The structure best serving that aim is a succession of essays developing the central position and exploring its various implications in an effort to demonstrate not only that the alternative presented here makes sense

but also that it helps solve important problems in Plato scholarship that otherwise defy a solution under the standard interpretation of Plato as a metaphysical dualist. The balance achieved between the desired form and the intended function facilitates a consistent and systematic demonstration of how the paradigm of unitary pluralism, including its inherent gradation of reality and its attendant classification of Forms, solves some of the most nagging problems in Plato's metaphysics, such as the existence of empty Forms (Forms without particulars) and Formless things (particulars without Forms), the possibility of negative Forms (injustice, impiety, ugliness, etc.), and the controversy over intermediates (ontological constructs of an intermediate nature between Forms and sensible phenomena).

These are merely the highlights of a host of issues addressed throughout this book. Each of the main issues constitutes an independent topic of discussion in Plato scholarship. The book is therefore designed to treat each problem as a separate area of concern, complete with its own background, attempted solutions, and unique complications. The key to overall success is to show how the central model, if valid and viable, contributes to a solution to each problem. That is why the respective questions were originally addressed through a series of journal articles in the first place. The goals and circumstances pertinent to each essay consequently determined the motivating impetus for the book: the consolidation of the separate subjects in a single volume where each chapter can still be consulted on its own as a self-contained solution to the specific problem it addresses.

Bringing everything together at the end was always the object of the extended exercise from the beginning, as intimated in the preface to the book. The creative process required not just the transformation of journal articles into book chapters but also the provision of a holistic and coherent reading experience from cover to cover, while retaining the independent nature and structure of the essays reorganized as chapters. The editorial aspect of the process was a matter of appraising consistency and rewriting chapters to achieve unitary integrity within a cohesive presentation. The substantive aspect was the production of entirely new material to complement the existing essays and to complete the project: the present introduction, essentially an unnumbered chapter, plus two standard chapters, one at the beginning (chapter 1), one at the end (chapter 7), with the new material adding up to half the length of the book. A brief outline of each chapter will help develop a fuller perspective of the book as a whole.

Chapter 1 ("Plato's World: The Standard Model") is an overview of Plato's metaphysics in accordance with and elucidation of the traditional

interpretation, which the present volume is dedicated to replacing with a better alternative. While the very notion of a standard interpretation of Plato on any issue may be open to debate, the intention here is to set up a dialectical target for the alternative promoted throughout the book. That target is the habitual reading of a strict dualism of Forms versus sensible phenomena, including the allocation of a separate world to each, as the central metaphysical outlook of Plato.

Much of the focus is on the evidence pertaining to Forms in the dialogues, that is, on clues for what Plato takes them to be (given that he does not come right out and say what he takes them to be) as well as on what he does with them and how he conceives of their interaction with sensible phenomena. These considerations are complemented by an exegetical and critical assessment of the reasons and motivations for employing a model of metaphysical dualism in interpretation of Plato's conception and utilization of Forms. The critical dimension, however, is not a confrontational one, at least not at this point. A critique is intended only in the sense of reflective evaluation as against reception without consideration. With the remainder of the book developing and recommending an alternative model of interpretation, this chapter is dedicated to presenting the received view in the best possible light, including not just a documentation of original sources but also an examination of the associated reception.

Chapter 2 ("Rethinking Plato's Forms"), originally written in collaboration with Holger Thesleff, constitutes the inaugural presentation of the alternative model placing the Forms in the upper level and sensible phenomena in the lower level of a single world exhibiting a gradation of reality indicative of unitary pluralism. Given its chronological position in launching what later developed into a personal project executed in stages, it is focused more on explicating the basic model than on providing details or pursuing implications. It introduces the two main levels as correlative benchmarks instituting ontological differentiation in place of the polar opposition ingrained in the strict dualism of the traditional interpretation. It also proposes a classification of Forms into the aforementioned groups, consisting of Ideal Forms, Conceptual Forms, and Relational Forms, jointly forging a platform of conceptual variegation in rejection of the prevailing assumption of ontological homogeneity in Forms.

The trinitarian organization of Forms in the upper level of a single reality represents the methodological core of the recommended departure from the traditional interpretation, plotting a course away from both a

dualism of worlds and a dualism of things, in favor of a monism of worlds and a pluralism of things. The diversity of Forms is not the full extent of the pluralism imagined but a revealing expression of it. The pluralism itself, grounded in the underlying gradation of reality, permeates both levels, not just the upper level of Forms. The nature and extent of the inherent pluralism is explored further in subsequent chapters, particularly in the second half of the book, where the focus is on the application of the proposed paradigm to commonly encountered problems in the metaphysics of Plato.

Chapter 3 (“Rethought Forms: How Do They Work?”) elaborates on the interpretive model introduced in the preceding chapter, devoting particular attention to features requiring greater emphasis for a fuller appreciation of the comprehensive platform envisaged and for an accurate evaluation of the rationale provided. It is concerned especially with the relationship between the upper and lower levels of Plato’s world as the structural pillars of a gradation of reality accommodating unity in plurality. While the two main levels are central to a proper understanding of the system, they are not the sole constituents of Plato’s world, but the most conspicuous manifestations of an infinite diversity reflecting an ontological stratification pregnant with endless possibilities and implications.

The elaborative effort here is the first step toward unpacking the various dimensions and corollaries of the gradation of reality. It initiates an extended process of redirecting the focus of attention from the two levels themselves to the unitary pluralism in which they serve as guideposts to reality as Plato saw it. The purpose of this shift is not to deny the primacy of the two main levels, nor even to minimize the importance of their distinction, but to determine the differentiation and diversification they were meant to sort out in the first place. Coverage includes the notion of “ontological ascent,” a conceptual process or phenomenon through which the other two types of Forms can and sometimes do come to resemble Ideal Forms, which is a sign of the fluidity of Plato’s experimentation with abstraction and concept formation, which, in turn, is indicative of the pluralism of the world he envisioned. The chapter thus identifies Plato’s “stratification of reality” (section 3.3) as the ontological basis for his “classification of Forms” (section 3.4) in a foundational and comprehensive “continuum of abstraction” (section 3.5).

Chapter 4 (“A Horse Is a Horse, of Course, of Course, but What about Horseness?”) is the third and final chapter concerned with the presentation and promotion of the model itself rather than with the contemplation and

investigation of its various implications and applications. Originally conceived as a contribution to a collection of essays commemorating Holger Thesleff's ninetieth birthday, this chapter approaches the ontology of Plato, specifically the question of his alleged dualism, from the perspective of the doxastic attitudes and perceptual predispositions implicit in competing interpretations. It thus stands apart from the rest of the contributions, both in the original collection and in this volume, as a psychological study of the reception of Plato, as opposed to a logical, philological, philosophical, or literary assessment of the ideas or works of Plato.

The main question here is not whether the traditional metaphysical dualism or the alternative unitary pluralism is a better interpretation of Plato, but why anyone would be inclined to believe one over the other, if either at all. The response unfolds accordingly as an exploration of the psychology behind the ontology imposed upon Plato by his readers. The conclusion is that what we make of Plato, especially in connection with the matter of a monism versus dualism of worlds, depends ultimately on our own preconceptions concerning the nature of reality. Focusing predominantly on the Forms and taking them as a manifestation of Plato's attempt to explain unity in plurality, among other things, this chapter exposes the conceptual groundwork for the unitary pluralism of Plato's world.

Chapter 5 ("Ontological Symmetry in Plato: Formless Things and Empty Forms") is the first installment of the second stage of the project, the practical and demonstrative phase concerned with implications and applications of the interpretive model being promoted. The center of discussion here is the ontological structure of the correspondence between Forms and sensible phenomena: Is the relationship a symmetrical one, such that there are Forms for everything and things for every Form, whereby neither Forms nor sensible phenomena ever stand alone, one without the other? Or is the relationship an asymmetrical one, allowing for the possibility of Formless things (what we might now think of as particulars without a corresponding universal) and empty Forms (what we might now think of as uninstantiated universals), perhaps one or the other, or possibly both at once?

Previous efforts to answer these questions, typically taken up separately rather than jointly, have been undermined both by a lack of evidence in the Platonic corpus and by a lack of clarity in the questions themselves. The distinctive contribution of the present approach is a fresh analysis in light of the unitary pluralism advocated here in place of the metaphysical dualism traditionally invoked to describe Plato's metaphysics.

An additional contribution facilitating a proper evaluation of the answers is the prior reassessment and clarification of the questions. The key with respect to Formless things is to agree upon the precise nature and function of Forms so that we may decide whether we are talking about exactly the same thing when we ask whether there is a Form for everything. The key with respect to empty Forms is to distinguish clearly between the question whether the Form under consideration is or is not instantiated and the question whether that particular Form exists at all. The conclusion, stated briefly, is that Formless things are not, whereas empty Forms are, consistent with a proper understanding of Plato.

Chapter 6 (“The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Does Plato Make Room for Negative Forms in His Ontology?”) takes up the question of negative Forms, namely whether there are any in Plato’s ontology. The question, to be clear, concerns negative Forms in the sense of evil, as opposed to that of logical negation, and it concerns evil in the broad or generic sense of undesirability, including, but not limited to, its particular manifestations in moral, aesthetic, and religious contexts. Hence, it asks whether Plato acknowledges a Form of the bad, the ugly, the unholy, and so on, setting aside the altogether different matter of whether he acknowledges Forms for not-good, not-beautiful, not-holy, and the like. The short answer is yes. The evidence for the short answer is that negative Forms are either mentioned or contemplated rather openly throughout the canonical corpus, in fact, with such abundance and variety that the relevant references can effectively be compiled into a representative list of passages: *Euthydemus* 301b; *Euthyphro* 5c–6e; *Hippias Major* 289c–d; *Phaedrus* 250a–b; *Republic* 475e–476a; *Theaetetus* 186a.

The long answer is that the short answer is wrong. The evidence for the long answer is that serious scholars keep trying to prove either that Plato did or that he did not accept negative Forms, as if he had said nothing at all about them and we had to deduce his position from our conception of his general philosophical outlook. This answer is pursued through a case study comparing the acknowledgment of negative Forms in Plato by Debra Nails and the rejection of negative Forms in Plato by Holger Thesleff and me. Because the format of a case study comparing two opposing viewpoints works best with a third party presenting the case and adjudicating the dispute, I do my best here to conceal my agreement, alliance, and collaboration with Thesleff, until the completion of what I take to be a dispassionate presentation of the facts and arguments on both sides. The overall conclusion is that Plato seems to have never warmed

up to negative Forms, and that he would have rejected them outright if pressed on the matter, because of his unwavering association of reality with value, as evidenced most vividly, for example, in his conviction that the supreme metaphysical principle guiding the creation of the universe is goodness (*Timaeus* 29d–30c).

Chapter 7 (“Between a Form and a Hard Place: The Problem of Intermediates in Plato”), as the title makes clear, concerns the question of intermediates in Plato, both the mathematical ones in the testimony of Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 987b14–18, 1028b19–21) and any and all nonmathematical ones immediately suggested by the very possibility of mathematical ones, though not with the blessing of Aristotle himself, whose testimony actually rules out any others (*Metaphysics* 997b12–32, 1059b2–9). This is an interesting question at the intersection of the absence of textual evidence in the Platonic corpus and the availability of testimonial evidence in the Aristotelian corpus. What makes it interesting is that this evidentiary connection, indirect though it may be, should have been satisfactory in view of the close relationship between the parties concerned, but it has failed to generate a scholarly consensus with respect to the question of intermediates in Plato. This creates the perfect opportunity for probing the question further through the paradigm of a unitary pluralism grounded in a gradation of reality, the singular relevance of which makes this chapter both the culmination and the conclusion of the application phase of the extended project.

The methodological aim of the chapter is to make full use of the paradigm to illustrate, though not necessarily to demonstrate beyond any doubt, that there is room in the philosophical orientation of Plato for every conceivable kind of intermediate ontological entity, or construct, between Forms and sensible phenomena. Although this may admittedly be taken as a partial confirmation of the testimony of Aristotle, it is actually motivated by a partial yet serious dissatisfaction with the testimony of Aristotle, whose assistance is valuable but confusing. The conclusion is that Plato can reasonably be interpreted as embracing intermediates of all kinds whether or not they are in Aristotle’s testimony. In the interest of full disclosure, this is not to deny that Plato can reasonably be interpreted as rejecting intermediates of any kind, nor even to deny that he can reasonably be interpreted as accepting just the ones in Aristotle while rejecting all others, but only to affirm that he can be read, with impeccable internal consistency, as accepting them all, meaning simply that this position is perfectly reasonable even though the alternatives are not unreasonable given the evidence we have to work with.

The general aim of the book, as well as that of each chapter, is friendly persuasion rather than conclusive proof, the latter of which is not a realistic option for either the monism or the dualism of worlds. The original effort, starting with the first article, was conceived as a thought experiment, and expressly presented as one, where the emphasis was on inspiration and suggestion rather than on proof in the strictest sense of the term. That conception has been a guiding principle for the comprehensive project as well.

A caveat regarding the position of the present work in relation to the oral tradition in Plato may be in order before moving on to the substantive material. The interpretive model developed here is intended as an alternative to, and hence as a replacement for, nothing more than the strict dualism of Forms versus sensible phenomena, including the duplication of worlds that comes with the radical separation commonly accompanying that perspective. The model does not, in addition, represent an alternative to, or constitute a replacement for, the Tübingen Paradigm, where the one and the great-and-the-small emerge as fundamental metaphysical principles, prior in importance to the Forms. The Tübingen approach, whether or not it is valid, viable, or verifiable, is compatible with the model presented here, which is neither a friend nor a foe of the legendary unwritten doctrines, so long as the latter are interpreted as underlying rather than undermining Plato's explanation of the world in terms of a relationship between Forms and sensible phenomena. After all, any interpretive system assigning supreme importance to the one and the great-and-the-small as the ultimate principles of reality is itself an exercise in unitary pluralism.

Finally, a note on documentation: References to Plato employ Stephanus numbers in correlation with the Oxford Classical Texts edition of his opera (Plato 1900–1907). Translations of specific passages, except where noted otherwise, follow the Hackett edition of his complete works (Plato 1997). The latter collection may not represent the best translation of each work, but it does represent the best compromise for convenient access, since different scholars tend to favor different translations anyway. A similar convention governs references to Aristotle, using Bekker numbers for pagination, and the revised Oxford edition of his complete works for translation (Aristotle 1984). As for terminology, the first letter of the word “Form” (or “Idea”) is capitalized whenever the reference is to Plato's Forms (or Ideas), but the individual Forms themselves do not take on an initial capital unless the reference otherwise remains ambiguous between a Form and an instantiation bearing the same name.