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TIME AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE: EARLY GREEK THOUGHT AND PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY OF TIME*

The problem of time seems to be central to Plato's philosophy. Since forms are eternal while the world and everything within it are temporal, the differentiation between time and eternity lies at the heart of his ontology. Despite the crucial importance of the concepts of time and eternity for Plato's philosophy, not until the *Timaeus*, one of the last dialogues in the *Corpus*,¹ does he offer a more or less complete analysis of these concepts.² Even in the *Timaeus* Plato's words are far from unambiguous, as his famous definition of time: is as follows: "an eternal image (αἰώνιος εἰκών), moving according to number, of eternity (αἰών) which abides in unity" (*Tim.* 37d).

Most intriguingly, Plato reserves the task of the definition of the concepts of time and eternity not for a *pure philosopher*, but for someone who is well-grounded in politics, too. As Socrates introduces Timaeus in the dialogue, "not only has he occupied the highest offices and posts of honor in his State but he has also attained, in my opinion, the very summit of eminence in all branches of philosophy" (*Tim.* 20a, trans. by W.R.M. Lamb). The question "Why is it important to be a politician, not only a philosopher, to discuss the problem of time?" is crucial for me. Thus, in this article, I will reconstruct the intellectual context relevant to Plato's "philosophy of time".

The essential aspect of this context, I believe, is the *multiplicity of times*, peculiar to early Greek thought until the second half of the 4th century BC and, overcome partly owing to Plato's philosophical reflection. By the multiplicity of times I mean the absence of a common temporal framework for different events and experiences, and thus the co-existence of distinct, or at least hardly compatible, temporal structures. This

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¹ About the dating of the *Timaeus* see: D.J. Zeyl, *Plato: Timaeus*, Indianapolis 2000, pp. xvi-xx.

² Regarding Plato's ideas about time we should keep in mind passages where he distinguishes *aei onta* and *gignomena*, even while he did not strictly conceptualize it in temporal terms; the explicit discussion of *chronos* and *aiōn* in the *Timaeus* (37c-38b) is central; there are important passages about time in the second part of the *Parmenides* (140e-141e; 152a-155d), especially about *exaifnēs* (155e-157b); the cosmological myth of the *Statesman* (268d-274e); since Plato explicitly connects time with celestial motions (*Tim.* 38b-39e), his astronomy, including passages about Cosmic Soul, could be considered as temporology (e.g., *Tim.* 34c-37c; 38b-42e; *Rep.* VII. 527d-530d and especially myth of Er: X. 614b-621b; *Leg.* VII. 820e-822c; first-order reception in the pseudo-Platonic *Epin.* 985e-992e).

multiplicity is fixed, for example, at the lexical level or at the level of ways of organising time. Although both time-words and calendars are important, in this article my approach refocuses on *the images of time*. By the images of time I understand more or less stable complexes of associations and ideas about time, reflected in concepts, narrative structures, and even things. Although these objects traditionally belong to different disciplinary fields – e.g. the time of literary and dramatic fiction, the physical gauge of time (clepsydra), psychological aspects of time (affectivity) – I believe they should be considered together as forming an area of productive intellectual imagination.

It is important to remember that ancient Greek philosophy did not exist separately from other types of wisdom, such as poetic, rhetorical, historical, etc., but acquired its specific status in interaction and competition with them.³ Thus, *interdisciplinarity* is an essential methodological claim for studying Plato's philosophy of time. It means that it is necessary to keep in mind that not only does Plato prepare the groundwork for future philosophies of time, but he also reacts to the ideas and images of time created by his contemporaries – poets, historians, astronomers, etc.⁴

The standard approach to discussing Plato's philosophy of time is to incorporate it into the grand narrative of European philosophy. According to this approach, Plato begins (or is sometimes preceded by the Eleatics) the tradition of the philosophy of time, continued by Aristotle and Plotinus, Boethius and Augustine, Newton and Kant, etc.⁵ Such incorporation is essential and entirely legitimate for the history of philosophy: it helps to set ancient Greek philosophy in a broader intellectual context. Nevertheless, it is not the only possible way to speak about Plato's philosophy of time. Plato can be considered not as the starting point (or one of the starting points) of the global „philosophical temporology“ but as the culmination of a different, i.e., local, tradition.⁶

³ For a general review of the intellectual and cultural context and different types of wisdom in Ancient Greece with an extensive bibliography, see: G.E.R. Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom: Studies in the Claims and Practice of Ancient Greek Science*, Berkeley 1989, pp. 50-108; A.W. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 17-21; 29-35.

⁴ Both my methodological claims are not innovative, and I am just trying to implement the instructions of eminent French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who wrote that to understand ancient Greeks' temporal images it is necessary to consider philosophical ideas about time in the broadest possible intellectual context (P. Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Ancient World*, Baltimore 1986, p. 39).

⁵ E.g., П.П. Гайданко, *Время. Длительность. Вечность*, Москва 2006; A. Bardou, *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Time*, Oxford 2013.

⁶ The same approach is actualized in B.M. Sattler, *How natural is a unified notion of time? Temporal experience in early Greek thought*, [In:] *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Temporal Experience*, ed. I. Phillips, London-New York 2017, pp. 19-29.

The statement that Plato is “the last Presocratic” looks provocative, but, in a certain sense, he certainly is.⁷ Moreover, I believe it is heuristically productive to consider Plato's philosophy in the context of the time and culture in and from which it originated. Such an approach can be called *reconstructionist* since it attempts to base interpretations of Plato's ideas on culturally and historically genuine context.

Multiplicity of Times

As Hermann Fränkel convincingly demonstrates in his seminal article “Die Zeitauffassung in der Frühgriechischen Literatur” (1931), the early Greek tradition did not have one single concept of time. Moreover, it certainly did not share our understanding of time as a homogeneous medium for both inanimate matter and animate creatures:

For what we call “time” in many respects had not yet become conscious as a specific and integral object throughout the ancient Greek Archaic period: individual elements of time are subsumed in differently centered complexes, others are not perceived at all.⁸

To describe the experience of time, early Greek authors use different concepts, such as αἰών, χρόνος, ἡμαρ, καιρός, etc., which cannot be seamlessly unified in an abstract notion of time. While they are connected, “qualitative” time-καιρός is different from “quantitative” time-χρόνος; and “holistic” αἰών, as the entirety of life and time, is different from both these notions.⁹

The multiplicity of temporal notions is not the only manifestation of multiple temporalities in Ancient Greek culture. Lidia Winniczuk, the eminent Polish classicist, nimbly called the chapter about Greek calendars and clocks “Chaos in time – time in chaos” to emphasize a profound discordance of time-systems in different city-states.¹⁰ The significance of the unification of various time-scales for foreign affairs is explicit: without it action coordination is problematic. Moreover, the need for the proper organization of time, bringing time into order out of chaos, was considered one of the vital policy challenges within the borders of a city-state. The temporal systems of the *poleis* contributed to citizens' political self-identity.¹¹

⁷ P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought*, Las Vegas 2004, p. 228.

⁸ H. Fränkel, *Die Zeitauffassung in der Frühgriechischen Literatur*, [In:] *Wege und Formen Frühgriechischen Denkens: Literarische und Philosophiegeschichtliche Studien*, 2nd ed., München 1960, p. 1.

⁹ E.g., H.M. Keizer, *Life Time Entirety. A Study of ΑΙΩΝ in Greek Literature and Philosophy, the Septuagint and Philo*, Amsterdam 1999, pp. 55-57; P. Sipiora, *Introduction. The Ancient Concept of Kairos*, [In:] *Rhetoric and Kairos Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, eds. P. Sipiora and J.S. Baumlin, Albany 2002, p. 15; B.M. Sattler, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23.

¹⁰ L. Winniczuk, *Ludzie, zwyczaje i obyczaje starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 149-158.

¹¹ D.S. Allen, *A Schedule of Boundaries: An Exploration, Launched from the Water-Clock, of Athenian Time*, “Greece & Rome” 1996, 43 (2), pp. 161-162.

For instance, in the parabasis of the *Clouds*, Aristophanes describes the Moon's complaint about a change in calendar organization (607-623):

She [*the Moon – Author*] also said she's angry with you. She claims you've made her suffer a lot / Despite the manifest ways in which she helps the lives of one and all. / For a start her light saves money for you, at least a drachma on torches per month / [...] She helps you in other ways too, she insists, but you've let your calendar get out of joint. / You break the regular pattern of days and throw everything into total confusion. / And then it's the Moon herself at whom the rest of the gods keep making their threats / When they turn up for dinner and find it's not there and have to go home on an empty stomach / Because their festivals haven't occurred on the days when the calendar states they should. / At the times assigned for sacrifice, you're torturing slaves and holding trials. / But at other times, when we the gods decide to abstain from eating food / Because of our grief for fallen heroes, the likes of Memnon or Sarpedon, / You pour libations in festive mirth (trans. by Stephen Halliwell).

Parabasis is a point in the play when all of the actors leave the stage, and the chorus is left to address the audience directly. The chorus partially or entirely abandons its dramatic role to talk to the audience on a completely irrelevant or only remotely relevant topic to the subject of the play. As Victor Noévitch Iarkho notices: “Whoever is depicted by the choir, the parabasis is usually devoted to *urgent, topical socio-political issues* [*the italics are mine – Author*]”.¹² Surprisingly, the problem of calendar organization was considered urgent by ordinary citizens in Aristophanes' time.¹³

The multiplicity of dissonant temporal notions as well as the diversity in time marking and measuring in Ancient Greece is well studied in the literature.¹⁴ Thus, I will not bring it to sharper focus. After all, the global standardization of times and scientific objectivation of the concept of time occur quite late in European history.¹⁵ What I would like to discuss further is the idiosyncratic experience of time connected with fear of the disappearance of order from the world, and how time was turned into a political resource worthy of common concern. Lambros Couloubaritsis in his article “How else can we appropriate Ancient philosophy?”, argues that an investigation of the multiple temporalities in ancient Greek philosophy, i.e., a rethinking of temporal problematics in ancient writings, can be one of the most significant and promising tasks for the history of ancient philosophy in the 21st century.¹⁶ I agree with his thesis and believe that *constant reflection on time* is a peculiar feature of ancient

¹² В.Н. Ярхо, *Аристофан и его комедии*. In *Аристофан. Избранные комедии*, Москва 1974, p. 9.

¹³ Otherwise, taking into account the failure of the *Clouds*, should be understood so by design of Aristophanes.

¹⁴ E.g., И.Е. Суриков, *Темпоральные Представления в Древней Греции Полисной Эпохи*, [In:] *Образы Времени и Исторические Представления*, ed. А.П. Решина, Москва 2010, pp. 113-144; R. Hannah, *Time in Antiquity*, London and New York 2008; L. Winniczuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-158.

¹⁵ See: V. Ogle, *The Global Transformation of Time*, Cambridge (MA) 2015.

¹⁶ А. Кулаубарицис, *Как Еще Можно Осваивать Философию Античности?*, “Логос” 2011, 83 (4), pp. 51-54.

Greek intellectual history. Thus, my two cases are an attempt to expand the borders of the discussion.

The Instability of Time

The search for an understanding of the dynamic organization and order of the cosmos, even without the conceptualization of a unified notion of time, is one of the guiding tasks of early Greek philosophy. It can be illustrated by the first preserved fragment of European philosophy (DK 12B1): “The things that are perish into the things from which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time” (trans. by Richard D. McKirahan); Heraclitean *logos*, revealed in the harmony of opposites (παλίντονος αρμονία); Empedocles’ conceptualization of the Cosmic Cycle. It is small wonder that the names of many of the major ancient Greek philosophers are traditionally associated with astronomical observations, adjusting calendars and/or creating tools for measuring time. The movement of the heavenly bodies is an accessible landmark for timekeeping and its measurement. Thus, Diogenes Laertius, for instance, credits Thales with predicting eclipses and solstices, Anaximander – with the invention of the gnomon, Anaximenes – with exercising observational astronomy, etc.¹⁷

Nevertheless, emphasis on a temporal problematic is not a feature of exclusively philosophical or (proto)scientific consciousness. Already Hesiod’s *Works and Days* offers a kind of instruction for farmers, based on observations of seasonal changes and the starry sky. On closer examination, it becomes clear that he is speaking not only and not so much about training as a farmer but about general issues of justice:

Significantly, the man who is identified as practicing “true justice” is not a judge but a farmer [...] In its concern with justice and ethical behavior, the poem uses the farmer to think with because it is through farming that humans are most immersed in natural processes, and the farmer is the human type who most obviously must accord his behavior with the exigencies and contingencies of nature’s patterns.¹⁸

The interrelation of human life and cosmos reveals a fear of the *impermanence of time*.¹⁹ By the impermanence of time I mean the possibility of violation of the dynamic world order, which leads to the disappearance of the ultimate boundaries that shape the cosmos. The holistic nature of archaic thought presumes the interdependence of the

¹⁷ DL. I. 23; II.1; 3.

¹⁸ L.M. Slatkin, *Measuring Authority, Authoritative Measures: Hesiod’s “Works and Days”*, [In:] *The Moral Authority of Nature*, eds. L. Daston and F. Vidal, Chicago 2004, p. 28.

¹⁹ This fear remains familiar to our time, and in some disaster movies it paints a picture of how technoscientific hubris or natural disaster or natural disaster, or sometimes one caused by the other, abolish the world as we know it (or even bring the end of time).

global and the individual, the macro- and the microcosm. Thus, the impermanence of time could be caused either by (i) human' transgression of prescribed limits or (ii) cosmic disasters.

(i) In *Works and Days*, Hesiod complains about belonging to the fifth age generation and speaks about the imminent destruction of "iron people" by Zeus:

If only then I did not have to live among the fifth men, but could have either died first or been born afterwards! For now the race is indeed one of iron. And they will not cease from toil and distress by day, nor from being worn out by suffering at night, and the gods will give them grievous cares. Yet all the same, for these people too good things will be mingled with evil ones. But Zeus will destroy this race of speech-endowed human beings too, when at their birth the hair on their temples will be quite gray (Hes. *WD.*, 174-181, trans. by Glenn W. Most).

Hesiod finds the cause of the abolishment of iron people in the fact that, like his brother Perses, they choose violence (βία) and what is unjust (ἄδικος) rather than justice (δίκη) and divine law (νόμος).²⁰ Iron people foster outrageousness (ὑβρις), in more general terms, they have ceased to square their lives with the life of the cosmos. This sin is manifested in violation of the prescribed, right measure and in untimely behavior,²¹ Such behavior leads not merely to failures in agricultural activity or loss of wealth, but to disruption of the cosmic order, leading to inevitable brutal punishment:

The sign of the last stage of corruption among mortals, when they have become so degenerate that Zeus will destroy them, is a stunning one: the mark of their corruption is that their *timing is out of sync*. [...] When newborns have the features of old men, the seasons of our lives are truly out of joint.²²

(ii) The asynchronization of time does not necessarily depend on the behavior of corrupt people but may be the result of natural disasters. For example, Archilochus of Paros (7th century BC) describes the solar eclipse in a very colorful and emotional way (122, 1-9 West):

There's nothing now / We can't expect to happen! / Anything at all, you can bet, / Is ready to jump out at us. / No need to wonder over it. / Father Zeus has turned / Noon to night, blotting out / The sunshine utterly, / Putting cold terror / At the back of the throat. / Let's believe all we hear. / Even that dolphins and cows / Change place, porpoises and goats, / Rams booming along in the

²⁰ E.g., Hesiod's appeals to Perses (*WD* 213-224, 274-286, 298-302) or kings "gift-eaters" (202-212).

²¹ It is worth paying attention to the synonymy of μέτρον–καιρός and δίκαιον–καιρός in early Greek writers, e.g., the famous apophthegm "recognize moderation" (καιρὸν γνῶθι) attributed to Pittacus, one of the Seven Sages, or Theognis' opposition of what is just (δίκη) and "what against what is appropriate" (παρα καιρόν). Hesiod once uses μέτρον and καιρός as a full synonym (*WD* 694), and taking into account the usage of μέτρον=measure in his texts (*WD* 349-351; 600), it reconciles καιρός with the ethical, legal and political contexts of δίκαιον (see: J.R. Wilson, *Kairos as 'Due Measure'*, "Glotta" 1980, 58 (3/4), pp. 178-180; Л.В. Бугай, *Правовое мышление в архаической Греции: Дике у Гомера и Гесиода*, "Вопросы философии" 2010, 9, pp. 110-116).

²² L.M. Slatkin, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

offing, / Mackerel nibbling in the hill pastures. / I wouldn't be surprised, / I wouldn't be surprised (trans. by Guy Davenport).

As mentioned above, norms of ethical behavior are not isolated from the laws of the cosmos. Thus, if in Hesiod the violation of prescribed limits by iron men leads to the reversal of time (children are born old), then in Archilochus the temporal bug (an eclipse, a sudden substitute of a day by night) leads to the disappearance of all limits in the world.

An echo of this fear can also be found in the texts of early Greek philosophers. The following fragment of Heraclitus (B94 DK): "Helios (Sun) will not overstep his measures; otherwise the Erinyes, ministers of Justice, will find him out" (trans. by Miroslav Marcovich) refers the reader to the same sense of instability of time. As Danielle Allen notices, a prescriptive, almost legislative statement "The sun will not transgress his measures" is supplemented by an indication that even the sun would be punished in the case of inappropriate behavior. In other words, the logic of the fragment is not simply "The sun will not overstep," but "The sun will not overstep [I hope]".²³

Fear of the impermanence of time results in specific Greek *heroic epistemology*. On the one hand, it is important to search for the laws of nature to synchronize our personal lives with them; on the other hand, these laws, despite their seeming stability, can suddenly be unfaithful to a person. To illustrate this idea, I would like to return to the fragments of Archilochus, the traveling poet and mercenary soldier, who is rarely focused on by historians of philosophy. As Herman Fränkel writes, Archilochus reflects on the world around him in the spirit of the Homeric tradition, explicitly recognizing the complete dependence of human beings on the divine will (131 West): "The heart of mortal man, / Glaukos, son of Leptines, / Is what Zeus makes it, / Day after day, / And what the world makes it, / That passes before our eyes" (trans. by Guy Davenport). But in the vortex of human passions, Archilochus urges man to seek the rhythm of events and to be guided in life by knowledge (γίγνωσκε δ' οἷος ῥυσιμὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔχει – 128 West).²⁴ Thus, the discovery of laws that determine both the cosmos as a whole and the world of humans in particular is necessary for the life and survival of humankind. Nevertheless, these laws could be altered, depriving men of fundamental reference points as day and night, and uttering death threats.

²³ D.S. Allen, *The Flux of Time in Ancient Greece*, "Daedalus" 2003, 132 (2), p. 64. Andrei Lebedev notes that the reference to Erinyes in the fragment may be a figure of speech, typical for the oaths of ancient Greek athletes (A.B. Лебедев, *Логос Гераклита. Реконструкция Мысли и Слова*, Санкт-Петербург 2014, p. 73). However, the origin of the figure does not imply the impossibility of violation of the oath, since there were cases of cheating athletes in the ancient Greek tradition (see: C.A. Forbes, *Crime and Punishment in Greek Athletics*, "The Classical Journal" 1952, 47 (5), pp. 169-173; 202-203).

²⁴ H. Fränkel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

The feeling of the possibility of the disappearance of the last and ultimate boundaries of the world, experienced in everyday life as fear of the instability of time, forces a person to search for the laws of nature so that he can harmonize his life with it. These laws, however, have little in common with the abstract laws of modern science: they act as a kind of regulative scheme, always filled with concrete life content. Individual life is connected with the life of the cosmos, and it is possible (and desirable) to find the common rhythm of both. But at some point this rhythm can be disturbed either because of human hubris or because of a cosmic disaster. To use a metaphor, the laws of nature are like a river bed: they limit and direct the rapid flow, but do not guarantee the impossibility of flood. When settling on the river bank for a better life, one can expect, but not predict, loss because of sudden high water.

Common Time as a Political Task

Up until now, I considered the instability of global cosmic time, but at there is also variability the level of the personal time of ordinary human life. Various emotions – anger, sadness, joy – affect the individual experience of the flow of time. The emotional state of a person determines the flow of time for him, and this phenomenon can be called the *affectivity of time*. By affectivity of time, I mean the difference in the phenomenological experience of the flow of time depending on the psychological (emotional) state of an agent, despite (and against the background) of some independent time scale (any sustainable regularity, like changing days and nights or the rhythm of a poetic meter).

The analysis of the relation of poetic time to historical time in the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* shows that early Greeks were well acquainted with the relativity of time. The *Iliad*, in terms of chronology, is a poem about the Trojan War, describing the ten-year campaign of the Greeks with the goal of destroying Troy as revenge for the abduction of Helen. However, Homer describes only about forty days of the ten-year campaign, of which fourteen days get a relatively detailed description, and more than half of the poem (fourteen books) is mainly dedicated to three days.²⁵ This discrepancy between historical and poetic times illustrates the aforementioned thesis that time in early Greek writings unthinkable without its content; in other words, intensity of actions determines chronology. But what is more important, the intensity of actions is directly linked to heroes passions. After all the *Iliad* is a hymn to emotions: «Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles...» (trans. by Richmond Lattimore).²⁶

²⁵ See: O. Taplin, *Homeric Soundings: the Shaping of the Iliad*, Oxford 1992, pp. 14-26.

²⁶ The reading of the *Iliad* as a reflection on the importance of emotion-regulation became commonplace for the European intellectual tradition ever since Plato. In book III of the Republic, dedicat-

The interplay of emotions underlies the cooperation of characters and to a large extent determines its results. When, for example, Patroclus sees the exhaustion, injuries, and deaths of his fellows in arms, he exclaims (*Il.* XVI, 30): “But you, Achilles; who can do anything with you? May no such anger (χόλος) take me as this that you cherish!” (trans. by Richmond Lattimore) and asks Achilles to send him to battle as soon as possible, quickly (ὄκκα – XVI, 38). After a rather long speech, Achilles, whose heart and soul are filled with “a bitter sorrow” (αἰνὸς ἄχος – XVI, 52), finally gives his permission, but in contrast with Patroclus’s emotional impulse (“Why [...] are you crying like some poor little girl, Patroklos [...]?” – XVI, 7) seems almost lifeless. As Danielle Allen notices:

Greek meter was quantitative: any given epic line, written in dactylic hexameter, ought to have taken essentially the same amount of real time to perform as any other, and so the poem in fact establishes a fixed grid of reference against which to convey the total variability of individual temporal experience.²⁷

The affectivity of time should have a significant impact on the political life of ancient Greeks. Given the different speed of time flow, depending on the emotional state of a person, any common action is threatened. A *community* is impossible without *communication* and *common action*, but it also requires a *common time* for its members. As shown previously, there is a mutual dependence between human and cosmic order, in other words, between the global and the personal. Since passions can influence the experience of time flow, the objectification of time must shape the emotions of every citizen. Thus, the common time was meant to promote a generally dispassionate and unbiased life.

The ‘unification of time’ became one of the most urgent political tasks in Athens in the second half of the 5th century BC. Approximately in 430th BC, Meton installed a Gnomon on the Pnyx, a small stone hill near the western slope of the Acropolis. This Gnomon was the simplest sundial, designed to streamline the time of the ecclesia, the principal assembly of the democracy of ancient Athens. The functioning of the gnomon had severe limitations, and its accuracy was quite low since it could not be used at night, and the twelve hours the day was divided into were “stretched” or “compressed” depending on the season.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Gnomon performed its ‘political’ function quite successfully. It was an easy landmark for the citizens, thanks

ed to the discussion of *paideia*, Homer’s Achilles becomes an almost paradigmatic example “to illustrate [...] argument about the importance of appropriate nurturing for developing the capacity to regulate one’s emotions” (S. Shanker, *Emotion regulation through the ages*, [In:] *Moving Ourselves, Moving Others. Motion and Emotion in Intersubjectivity, Consciousness and Language*, eds. Ad Foolen et al., Amsterdam and Philadelphia 2012, p. 115).

²⁷ D.S. Allen, *The Flux of Time...*, pp. 68-69.

²⁸ For example, in Athens, the length of one hour varies from 47 minutes in the middle of win-

to which every member of the ecclesia could easily find out when it was beginning.²⁹ Whether the citizens were filled with anger or joy, they knew that it was time for community service.

Approximately at the same time, waterclocks become an integral part of the Athenian justice system,³⁰ culminating in the synonymy of the law-court and the clock, in Aristophanes.³¹ The clepsydra was used in courts so that the accuser and the accused were given the same conditions, i.e., had the appropriate time for oral arguments. The text of the *Athenian Constitution* conveys the complexity of the court processes concerning temporary organization (*Const. Ath.* 67):

There are water-clocks with tubes as outlets: water is poured into these, and speeches in trials must keep to the time thus measured. There is an allowance of ten measures in suits for more than 5,000 drachmae, and three measures for the second speech; seven measures and two measures respectively for suits up to 5,000 drachmae; five measures and two measures for suits up to 2,000 drachmae; six measures for adjudications, when there is no second speech. The man appointed by lot to take charge of the water-clock closes the tube whenever the secretary is about to read out a law or testimony or the like. However, when a trial is being timed by the measured-out day, he does not stop the tube for the secretary, but there is simply an equal allowance of water for the plaintiff and for the defendant. This day is measured out according to the length of days in Posideon, since this allowance can be applied to the days of the other months. Eleven jars are used, and are distributed in fixed proportions: the juror in charge of the clock sets aside three jars for the voting, and the opposing litigants take equal shares of the remainder. Previously plaintiffs used to be eager to compress the defence into a very small share of the time, so that the defendants had to make do with whatever water was left; but now there are two separate containers, one for the plaintiffs and one for the defendants (trans. by P. J. Rhodes).

Nevertheless, if emotional states affect people's sense of time, then the 'standardization' of time should influence the alignment of the emotional background of the process' participants. In court, where passions cannot be entirely ruled out, they must be strictly controlled. Thus, the common time scale, represented by the clepsydra, is crucial for this task.

Probably the most exciting thing is that both individual 'passionate' time and common 'political' time is linked with natural 'cosmic' time here. After all, the measures of water, choes (~5.76 liters) chous (~3.27 liters), or less frequently, amphora (~26,26 liters), which determined the time for appearing in court, were tied to the solar time.³² While the length of the trial varied depending on the kind of the case, it corresponded to the 'measured' or 'counted' day (διαμεμετρημένη ημέρα), the shortest day of the

ter to 1 hour 14 minutes in mid-summer. See: R. Hannah, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75; see also: И.Е. Суриков, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

²⁹ T. Roark, *Aristotle on Time: A Study of the Physics*, Cambridge 2011, p. 20.

³⁰ See: R. Hannah, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-106; И.Е. Суриков, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³¹ Aristoph. Ach. 694; Wasps 93, 857-858; Birds 1695.

³² See: И.Е. Суриков, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

Attic month Poseideon (~9,5 hours). Regardless of the time of year, persons appearing in the court on the same types of case were guaranteed equal amounts of time. Thus, individual time was invariably embedded in global time.³³

Plato: Towards Unification of Times

It seems plausible that the discussed problems, the instability of global time and the emotive variability of personal times, were significant for Plato's philosophy of time. The main discourse of the *Timaeus*, a "likely account" (εἰκῶς λόγος) or a "likely story" (εἰκῶς μῦθος) about the constitution of the cosmos,³⁴ is an answer to Socrates' request to "liven up" his picture of the ideal state (*Tim.* 19b-c). Politics in the *Timaeus* gets metaphysical grounding and cosmic historization. Nevertheless, the ultimate question of politics for Plato concerns justice (δικαιοσύνη), initially relating to the domain of 'psychology' and transferred to the field of 'politics' for ease of investigation (*Rep.* II. 368e-369b). Thus, Plato pulls his metaphysics, cosmology, politics, and ethics together. Temporality, understood in a broad sense as the questions of time and eternity, plays a crucial role in all these fields and connects them.

First, as for the instability of global time, Plato conceptualizes this problem in the form of a question about the retrograde motions of celestial bodies. On the one hand, observation of the vault of heaven leads to the assumption that time is irregular, since some planets have backward movements (ἐπανακύκλησις – *Tim.* 40c-d). On the other hand, Plato insists that celestial motions are regular, since the circle of fixed stars and planetary spheres presupposes regular motions. He gives a metaphysical explanation for the apparent instability of time: it is inevitable because not only the nature of the Same but also the nature of the Different underlies the trajectories of the movements of planets (*Tim.* 36b-d). Moreover, planets, these organs of time (ὄργανα χρόνου – *Tim.* 42d), have bodies (*Tim.* 38c-d), and embodiment necessarily puts limits on rational planning (*Rep.* VII. 530a-b; *Tim.* 55c³⁵). But the same explanation gives space for more strict science of theoretical astronomy, able to save the regularity of 'planetary' motions (the Greek πλανῆται means 'wanderers'). Since "Intellect prevailed over Necessity by persuading it to direct most of the things that come to be toward what is best" (*Tim.* 48a, trans. by Donald J. Zeyl), observable

³³ See: R. Hannah, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁴ Εἰκῶς μῦθος – *Tim.* 29d, 59c, 68d2; εἰκῶς λόγος – 30b, 48d, 53d, 55d, 56a, 57d, 90e. For a discussion on the status of *Timaeus*' account see: M.F. Burnyeat, *Eikōs Mythos*, "Rizai" 2005, 2.2, pp. 143-165.

³⁵ In contrast to the initially desired spherical shape for the body of the cosmos (33b), the Demiurge had to be satisfied with the dodecahedron as the closest to the sphere form, which can be compounded from the elements (55c).

instabilities in the movements of celestial bodies have to be explained through the general patterns of genuine theoretical astronomy.³⁶ It is no surprise that theoretical astronomy becomes a necessary element of the future philosophers-rulers educational program (*Rep.* VII. 527d-530d).

Second, as for the emotive variability of personal times, Plato was not satisfied with the attempt to synchronize it through its external objectification in clocks. If common time constitutes a sphere of dispassionate and unbiased life, then the clepsydra apparently could not cope with its task: its presence in the court did not save Socrates from his unjust sentence. In the *Timaeus* Plato discusses two types of causes, necessary and divine (*Tim.* 68e-69a). The one presupposes a kind of *mechanical* explanation through at reduction to material causes (a sort of ‘pre-Socratics’ style’); the other is at *teleological* explanation referring to the rational order of the whole. Eventually, the divine cause is the most important, since it governs necessity (*Tim.* 48a). The problem is that the clepsydra in court is an attempt at *mechanical necessitation*. Up to the time of Plato, the clepsydra and necessity were contextually connected to the extent that the lexicographer Hesychius (5th A.D.) glossed ἀνάγκη (necessity) as ἡ δικαστικὴ κλεψύδρα (a judicial water-clock).³⁷ Plato bears it in mind in his colorful criticism of the unnatural wisdom of the rhetoricians, whom Plato describes as slaves of the clepsydra in the *Theaetetus* (172d-173b):

[T]he other – the man of the law courts – is always in a hurry when he is talking; he has to speak with one eye on the clock. Besides, he can’t make his speeches on any subject he likes [...] The talk is always about a fellow-slave, and is addressed to a master, who sits there holding some suit or other in his hand [...] Such conditions make him keen and highly strung, skilled in flattering the master and working his way into favor; but cause his soul to be small and warped. His early servitude prevents him from making a free, straight growth; it forces him into doing crooked things by imposing dangers and alarms upon a soul that is still tender. He cannot meet these by just and honest practice, and so resorts to lies and to the policy of repaying one wrong with another; thus he is constantly being bent and distorted, and in the end grows up to manhood with a mind that has no health in it, having now become – in his own eyes – a man of ability and wisdom (trans. by M. J. Levett, rev. by Myles Burnyeat).³⁸

True objectification of time cannot be external, so “We should redirect the revolutions in our heads [...] by coming to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the

³⁶ See Plato’s critics of observational astronomy: *Rep.* VII. 529d-530b. Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle’s *De Caelo* notices that it was Plato who inspired latter astronomers and mathematicians (particularly, Eudoxus of Cnidus) to search for mathematical explanations of retrograde motions (*Simpl. In Cael.* 488, 16-24).

³⁷ See: D.S. Allen, *A Schedule of Boundaries...*, pp. 157-168.

³⁸ Also: *Theaet.* 201a-b. On the ontological implications of language and its necessary limitations see: A. Pleshkov, *Plato’s Theory of Language: the Isomorphism of Kosmos and Logos in the Timaeus*, “Problemos” 2017, 91, pp. 128-140.

universe, and so bring into conformity with its objects our faculty of understanding” (*Tim.* 90c-d, trans. by Donald J. Zeyl). Thus, the common time has nothing to do with mechanical devices; it can be reached only through consistent philosophical education.

Conclusion

My reflections are only an outline of an interpretation of Plato's philosophy of time. Nevertheless, the proposed reconstructive approach sheds light on how and why political reasoning is inseparable from cosmological and metaphysical issues in Plato's philosophy. Time is what allows us to connect the micro-level of individual behavior with the meso-level of politics and macro-level of nature. Only by considering metaphysics, cosmology, politics, and ethics together, can we understand our place as individuals and members of a political community in the cosmos.

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TIME AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE:
EARLY GREEK THOUGHT AND PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY OF TIME

S u m m a r y

In the article, the author reconstructs the intellectual context relevant to Plato's "philosophy of time". First of all, since the tradition preceding Plato did not produce a unified concept of time, the problem of multiplicity of times is discussed. Then, the author examines the peculiar experience of the instability of time, linking dimensions of human behavior and cosmic order. Finally, the problem of affectivity of time and the need for standardizing time for political coexistence is considered. It is argued that the concept of time is what allows Plato to connect the micro-level of individual behavior with the meso-level of politics and macro-level of nature.

Keywords: time, eternity, philosophy of time, multiplicity of times, instability of time, affectivity of time, community, politics, Plato, early Greek thought

CZAS JAKO ŚRODEK POLITYCZNY –
WCZESNA MYŚL GRECKA I FILOZOFIA CZASU PLATONA

Streszczenie

W artykule autor rekonstruuje kontekst intelektualny „filozofii czasu” Platona. Ponieważ do Platona nie wytworzono jednolitego pojęcia czasu, najpierw omawiany jest problem wielości czasów. Następnie autor bada osobliwe doświadczenie niestabilności czasu, łączące wymiary ludzkiego zachowania i kosmicznego porządku. Na koniec rozważany jest problem afektywności czasu i potrzeba ujednoczenia czasu dla politycznego współistnienia. Autor stwierdza, że pojęcie czasu jest tym, co pozwala Platonowi łączyć mikro poziom indywidualnego zachowania z mezopoziomem polityki i makro poziomem przyrody.

Słowa kluczowe: czas, wieczność, filozofia czasu, wielość czasów, niestabilność czasu, afektywność czasu, wspólnota, polityka, Platon, wczesna myśl grecka