

---

The Interpretation of Plato, *Timaeus* 49 D-E

Author(s): Norman Gulley

Source: *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (Jan., 1960), pp. 53-64

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/291759>

Accessed: 21-12-2017 11:08 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*The Johns Hopkins University Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Journal of Philology*

THE INTERPRETATION OF PLATO,  
*TIMAEUS* 49 D-E.

In the course of a recent article on the relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's later dialogues (*A. J. P.*, LXXVIII [1957], pp. 225-66) Professor Cherniss argued (p. 245) that *Timaeus* 49 D-E says nothing at variance with *Cratylus* 439 D8-9 and *Theaetetus* 182 C9-D7 on the question of the proper way of designating "what is perpetually becoming," and he appealed to his article in *A. J. P.*, LXXV (1954), pp. 113-30, as a "proof" that any interpretation of the *Timaeus* passage as a proposal "to designate what is perpetually becoming as τοιοῦτον" is "self-refuting and incorrect." While agreeing with him that what the *Timaeus* passage says is far different from what the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus* say, I wish to argue that his own interpretation of it is self-refuting and incorrect, and that what the passage says is at variance with the assertions of the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*. I will first give my own translation of the *Timaeus* passage and show in what respects it is at variance with assertions in the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*; I will then examine Cherniss' translation.

Here is a bald translation of *Timaeus* 49 D-E:

Since thus never do any of these things<sup>1</sup> present the same appearance, of which of them can one confidently assert, without shame, that it is any definite "this" and not any other thing? It is not possible, but by far the safest course is to speak of them in the following way. Whenever we see a thing continually changing its appearance, fire for example, in every case we should not call fire "this," but "what is of such and such a kind," nor water "this," but always "what is of such and such a kind," nor anything else "this," as though it had some permanence, among the things which we point to with the use of the words "this" or "that," thinking that we are indicating something. For it slips away, not waiting to be called "that" or "this"<sup>2</sup> or any term which indicts them of being stable.<sup>3</sup> We must not in fact apply

<sup>1</sup> Plato has just been speaking of the "elements" earth, air, fire, and water and of their apparent perpetual transformation into one another.

<sup>2</sup> Omitting, as Cherniss does, *καὶ τὴν τῶδε*.

<sup>3</sup> The transition from singular to plural in this sentence suggests that Plato began the sentence with the subject "anything else" in mind, and

any of these terms; the description we must apply,<sup>4</sup> in each and every case, is “the such and such which is perpetually recurring as similar”; thus we should call fire “what is always such and such,” and so with everything that comes to be.

Translated in this way, the argument of the passage is, briefly, that since the visible world is one of perpetual change, it is necessary to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of describing it. “This” or “that” (τόδε καὶ τοῦτο) is always wrong, since these terms suggest a reference to something substantial and permanent, whereas in fact the sensible world is a world of transient, yet recurrent, qualities or groups of qualities (subsequently called “copies” or “likenesses” of the eternal realities—50C, 51A), which are properly described as “of such and such a kind” (τοιούτων). Thus the fact that the visible world is in continual flux does not entail that it is devoid of determinate and recognisable characteristics, but it does entail that there are no substantial and permanent “things” in it. Against this, both the *Theaetetus* and the *Cratylus* argue that the fact that the visible world is in continual flux *does* entail that it is devoid of determinate and recognisable characteristics, and make it clear that it is as illegitimate to apply the term “of such and such a kind” to any part of it as it is to apply the terms “this” or “that.” Thus the *Theaetetus* argues that if everything in the sensible world is continually changing both in respect of place and character, then no description can meaningfully be applied to it, since it possesses no determinate characteristics whatsoever which can give any description significance (182C-183C). Not even the words “so” or “not-so” can be used to describe any aspect of it (183A), nor “this” nor “that” nor “any other word that brings things to a standstill” (157B; cf. 152D). Plato is, of course, here attempting to refute the thesis that knowledge is perception as based on the theory that *all things* are in change (he emphasises this point in 183C: κατὰ γε τὴν τοῦ πάντα κινεῖσθαι μέθοδον), and no doubt means to imply that for knowledge to be possible its objects must be other than sensibles. Yet even if

completed it with “the things which we point to . . .” in mind. It is of no significance.

<sup>4</sup> Cornford is right, I think, in taking οὕτω (before καλεῖν) as “resuming the long phrase that precedes.”

objects of knowledge are postulated free from the objections brought against sensibles, this would not in itself affect the alleged implications of the flux doctrine. In other words the implication that a sensible world in flux in all respects is a world which precludes the possibility of any significant description being applied to it is, if valid, as valid if Forms are postulated as if they are not. And, as Cherniss acknowledges, it is clearly implied by the *Theaetetus* that both "this" and "of such and such a kind" are equally inapplicable as descriptions of sensibles. Much the same argument appears in the *Cratylus* (439C ff.). Here it is said that what is in perpetual flux cannot properly be referred to as "this" or as "of such and such a kind," for it is never in any determinate condition (439D).

It is clear from this comparison of the *Timaeus* with the *Theaetetus* and the *Cratylus* that in the *Timaeus* Plato is contradicting the assertions of the two other dialogues and is no longer willing to accept what he had earlier propounded and accepted as implications of the theory that the sensible world is in flux. This is a reflection of the greater consistency of doctrine about the status of sensible "images" of Forms which is found in the late dialogues. A major inconsistency in the middle dialogues is that side by side with a theory which gives the sensible image a fundamental part to play in the recovery of knowledge there is a theory of perception which condemns the sensible world as an aid to knowledge, a theory which, as Sir David Ross has put it, is "a false and dangerous disparagement of all particulars, in the supposed interest of Forms."<sup>5</sup> It is this attitude of disparagement which is found in the assertions of the *Theaetetus* and the *Cratylus*, and which leads Plato to exaggeration in finding, in the flux doctrine of sensible things, implications radically inconsistent with his assumption of the "participation" of sensible things in Forms and of their "likeness" to Forms. What the *Timaeus* does is to explain, through its doctrine of soul, the efficient cause of the ability of sensible particulars to function as images of Forms, and in the section (48E-52D) in which our passage occurs an attempt is made to specify more exactly the nature of the sensible image in relation to the Forms and to space, the result being a doctrine which, unlike that of the middle dialogues, is consistent with the granting to sensible

<sup>5</sup> *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, p. 39.

images of an important rôle in the recovery of knowledge and consistent too with the attitude of the late dialogues as a whole towards the cognitive value of sense perception.<sup>6</sup> Thus the discrepancy between (i) *Timaeus* 49D-E and (ii) *Cratylus* 439 D8-9 and *Theaetetus* 182 C9-D7 is explicable as the result of a development towards greater consistency in Plato's theory of knowledge. Professor Cherniss argues, however, that only by a mistranslation of *Timaeus* 49D-E can this discrepancy be found. For him Plato's doctrine with regard to sensibles is consistent not only within the middle dialogues, but also within the middle and late dialogues together. It is in defence of this view that he offers a new translation of the *Timaeus* passage.

Here is his translation of 49D-E:<sup>7</sup>

- 49 C7-D1 Since these thus never appear as severally identical, concerning which of them could one without shame firmly assert that this is any particular thing and not another? It is not possible, but by far the safest way is to speak of them on this basis: What we ever see coming to be at different times in different places, for example fire, not to say "this is fire," but "what on any occasion is such and such is fire" nor "this is water" but "what is always such and such is water" nor ever "(this)," as if it had some permanence, "is some other" of the things that we think we are designating as something when by way of pointing we use the term "this" or "that." For it slips away and does not abide the assertion of "that" and "this" or any assertion that indicts them of being stable. But (it is safest) not to speak of these as severally distinct but so to call the such and such that always recurs alike in each and all cases together, for example to call that which is always such and such fire and so with everything that comes to be.
- 49 D5
- 49 E1
- 49 E5

In this translation the distinction between "this" ( $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ ) and

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion, with references, of the developments in Plato's views on sensible imagery, see my remarks in *O. Q.*, N. S., IV (1954), pp. 197-209.

<sup>7</sup> *A. J. P.*, LXXV, p. 114. The translation here extends as far as 50A4, and on p. 125 is continued as far as 50 B5. But the crucial passage, as Cherniss recognises in his later article (*A. J. P.*, LXXVIII, p. 254), is 49 D-E and it is this which I shall principally consider. To determine the correct translation of 49 D-E is to determine the correct translation of the rest, as far as the discrepancy in question is affected.

"such" (τὸ τοιοῦτον) does not mark a distinction between two modes of description, incorrect and correct respectively, of a common object, but a distinction between two objects of description, "this" referring to what Cherniss calls "phases of the phenomenal flux" or "transient phenomena," "such" referring to the "distinct and self-identical characteristics" which "enter and leave" the Receptacle, the "likenesses" of the Forms. To give the passage this significance Cherniss' first step is to take "this" in 49 D2, 5 and 6 and "such" in 49 D5, 6, as subjects, and not, as in my translation, predicatively. The question whether "this" and "such" in D5 and D6 refer to different objects is not, however, simply the question whether "this" and "such" are subjects or predicates. To take them predicatively does, certainly, entail that they are different ways of describing the same object, but to take them as subjects does not entail that they refer to different objects. For it may be argued that the "this," as subject, in the assertions "this is fire" and "this is water" is intended by Plato to have an emphasis which will make his criticism of it a criticism *as a mode of description*. Cherniss assumes that no such emphasis is intended. For him "this" in D5 and D6 is merely taking up the antecedent relative clause ὁ καθορῶμεν . . . γιγνόμενον, and refers to a "transient phenomenon," while "such" is quite independent of that clause and different in its reference. I can see no grammatical impossibility about this. Granting this, the question now is whether or not the rest of the passage supports Cherniss' view of the emphasis and significance to be given to "this" and "such" in his translation. For the rest (D7-E2: μηδὲ ἄλλο . . . ἡγούμεθά τι) of the sentence being discussed, and for the following sentence (E2-4: φεύγει γὰρ . . . φάσις), the only significant difference between Cherniss' translation and my own is at the beginning, where while we each assume that τοῦτο προσαγορεύειν is implied as supplement to μηδὲ ἄλλο ποτὲ μηδέεν in D7, I take the τοῦτο predicatively and take the phrase "as though it had some permanence" with ἄλλο μηδέεν, Cherniss takes the τοῦτο as the subject of ἄλλο μηδέεν and takes the phrase "as though it had some permanence" with τοῦτο. From this point up to E4 (. . . ἐνδείκνται φάσις) our translations are substantially the same. Yet what Plato says here is fatal to Cherniss' thesis.

His first difficulty is the clause "the things which we point to

with the use of the words 'this' or 'that,' thinking that we are indicating something." A very special emphasis is given here (as it is in the next sentence) to the terms 'this' or 'that' (τόδε καὶ τοῦτο), and the seemingly obvious implication of the clause is that, since the use of the terms 'this' or 'that' carries with it the assumption that a definite "something" is thereby being indicated, it is wrong to apply these terms to what is *not* a definite "something." If this is Plato's point here, consistency seemingly demands that his point in the examples in the previous part of the sentence is that it is wrong to apply the terms 'this' or 'that' to what is not a definite "something," to fire or to water (D5, 6), which are continually changing their appearance (C7-D1, D4-5). These are "the things which we point to by the use of the words 'this' or 'that'." The antecedent to ὅσα in the clause ὅσα δεικνύντες . . . is ἄλλο μὴδὲν (τούτων), which means any other of the things such as fire or water—the examples already given—which are said (in C7-D1) never to present the same appearance. Thus the sentence D4-E2 is saying that the terms 'this' or 'that' should not be applied to γιγνώμενα. Before substantiating, however, the apparently obvious implications of the clause ὅσα . . . ἡγούμεθά τι, Cherniss' attempt to deny these implications must be considered. Having argued that in the previous part of the sentence τοῦτο is not being criticised as a term illegitimately applied to γιγνώμενα, it is essential for him to maintain this point for the τόδε καὶ τοῦτο at the end of the sentence. His first step is to argue that "the clause ὅσα . . . ἡγούμεθά τι does not itself mean 'phenomena'" (n. 5, p. 117). "It means simply," he says, "X, where X is what we mean to designate as something when by using the deictic pronoun we say 'this is X'."<sup>8</sup> This, according to Cherniss, makes the reference of the clause the *predicates* 'fire,' 'water,' 'earth,' etc., which are applied to 'this'

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to say whether or not Cherniss intends any shift in his position about the significance of 'this' when he talks about "using the deictic pronoun." His point about the contrast between τοῦτο and τοιοῦτον strictly depends on taking the τοῦτο in D5 simply as a *grammatical* pointer to its antecedent δ καθορώμεν . . . γιγνώμενον. Its function as a "deictic pronoun" in Cherniss' example here is an additional function. To ascribe this additional function to the τοῦτο in E1 goes a little way, perhaps, towards easing the transition to the significance of τοῦτο in the τόδε καὶ τοῦτο of 49 E2-3 and 50 A1-2. But this transition is, as we shall see, still fatal to Cherniss' thesis.

or 'that' "phase of phenomenal process," and makes the clause mean "not that you should not designate a phenomenon 'this' or 'that,' . . . but that you should not call the phenomenon anything (like 'fire' or 'water,' the examples already given) that is designated in such statements as 'this is X'" (p. 118). In other words, preserving the interpretation given to the previous part of the sentence, the meaning is that these predicates should not be applied to what "this" refers to ("a transient phenomenon") but to something else. This is an extremely ingenious attempt to avoid the apparently obvious implication of the clause—that 'this' or 'that' should not be applied to "phenomena." It is true of course, as we have seen, that the antecedent to ὄσα is ἄλλο μηδὲν (τούτων), and that this means "anything other" than 'fire' or 'water,' the previous examples. This makes it strictly true to say that the clause ὄσα . . . ἡγούμεθά τι does not itself mean "phenomena" (my italics). But this is not to say that Plato does not intend the clause to be a reference to "phenomena." In fact, as we have also seen, Plato has previously made it clear that the 'elements' fire, water, air, and earth are constantly changing phenomena, and this in itself makes it implausible to read into what follows an injunction not to apply these terms (fire, water, etc.) to constantly changing phenomena, quite apart from what I consider to be the implausibility of ascribing to Plato here the subtlety of the distinction between phenomena and "X, where X is what we mean to designate when by using the deictic pronoun we say 'this is X'." There is, however, further and more decisive evidence in the rest of the passage to show that Cherniss' interpretation of the clause ὄσα . . . ἡγούμεθά τι and of the sentence D4-E2 as a whole is incorrect. In the first place there is the fact that Plato repeats the phrase "by the use of the words 'this' or 'that'" (τῶ ῥήματι τῷ τότε καὶ τοῦτο προσχρόμενοι) a little later on (50 A1-2)<sup>9</sup> in a context which leaves no doubt of the significance which he is giving to the 'this' and 'that,' and it seems inconceivable to me that Plato should repeat the phrase so exactly within the space of a few lines, and yet give an entirely different significance in it to the "this" and "that." The phrase is repeated in the sentence immediately following the translated passage 49 D-E. Contrasting phenomena and the Receptacle itself, Plato says

\* In 50 A1-2 there is δνόματι for the ῥήματι in 49 E1.



(49 E7-50 A2) that “that and that only in which all of them<sup>10</sup> appear as they come to be in it and again vanish out of it should be designated by the use of the words ‘this’ or ‘that.’” Cherniss does not dispute that this means that we should “designate the receptacle alone when we employ the words ‘this’ or ‘that.’” (p. 124). And this certainly implies that we should not designate anything else by the words ‘this’ or ‘that.’ Cherniss, however, apparently considers that he has done enough to save his thesis here if he is able to show that what immediately follows (50 A2-4) is not an explicit statement of what has just been implied. Continuing his argument that the Receptacle alone should be designated by the use of the words ‘this’ or ‘that,’ Plato says: “but that which is of any quality—hot or cold or any of the opposites or anything composed of these—we should not call that any of these.” This is ambiguous. It may mean that we should not apply to the Receptacle qualitative terms such as those here specified (so Cherniss, aptly comparing 51 A5-6). Alternatively it may mean that we should not apply to “what is of any quality” the terms just mentioned as applicable only to the the Receptacle—“this” and “that.” Cherniss simply condemns this, unjustifiably, as “perverse” (p. 124). But to adopt the other interpretation does not save Cherniss’ thesis, for it does not affect the implication of what immediately precedes. And once we compare the *τούτο καὶ τόδε* in 50 A1-2 with the *τόδε καὶ τούτο* within the same phrase in 49 E1, we have confirmation that in the sentence 49 D4-E2 it is the legitimacy of the application of these terms to *γγινόμενα* which is in question, and this makes clear that the reference of the clause *ὅσα . . . ἡγγούμεθα τι* is the same as the reference of the clause *αἰεὶ ὁ καθορώμεν ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ γινόμενον* at the beginning of the sentence. Thus Cherniss’ argument that Plato’s point in 49 D4-E2 “is not that you should not designate a phenomenon ‘this’ or ‘that.’” falls down. Moreover, the sentence which immediately follows (49 E2-4: *φεύγει . . . φάσις*) says explicitly that one cannot legitimately apply the

<sup>10</sup> I. e. “transient phenomena.” For similar language to describe the world of “becoming” (*ἐγγινόμενα αἰεὶ ἕκαστα αὐτῶν φαντάζεται καὶ πάλιν ἐκείθεν ἀπόλλυται*) cf. 28A, 49 C7-D1, and *Theaetetus* 157 B. Cherniss takes *ἕκαστα αὐτῶν* to indicate “the perpetually identical characteristics which are severally distinct,” and not “phases of the flux” (he takes *ἕκαστα* in the same way in 49 D1 and 49 E4). But to do so will not save his thesis here.

terms 'this' or 'that' to transient phenomena, and thus, apparently, explicitly refutes Cherniss' interpretation of the previous sentence. There can be no question that 49 E2-4 means what it says. For a passage with which it immediately invites comparison, see *Theaetetus* 157 B (οὔτε τόδε οὔτ' ἐκείνο οὔτε ἄλλο οὐδὲν ὄνομα ὄτι ἀν' ἴσθη). Nor can there be any question that what it says is very closely linked with the point made by the previous sentence. It is, in the first place, intended to be an explanation of that point (φεύγει γὰρ . . .). Further, its phraseology matches that at the end of the previous sentence—the μόνιμα ὡς ὄντα in E3 balances the ὡς τινα ἔχον βεβαιοτήτητα in D7, and the τόδε καὶ τοῦτο in E2-3 repeats the τόδε καὶ τοῦτο in the preceding line. It is, finally, a perfectly reasonable and consistent explanation of what precedes it, taking what precedes it as an injunction not to apply the terms "this" or "that" to "transient phenomena." To preserve his thesis, Cherniss must *either* (i) maintain that τόδε καὶ τοῦτο are used by Plato in the same way in E2-3 as they are, according to him, in E1—which the meaning of E2-4 makes impossible: *or* (ii) maintain that τόδε καὶ τοῦτο are not used in the same way in E2-3—which ascribes to Plato a quite incredible perversity. It is (ii) which he adopts. He does not consider, or even mention, the sudden switch in significance of τόδε καὶ τοῦτο which this entails. Indeed it seems that he does not consider that the fact that E2-4 is pointing out that it is wrong to apply "this" or "that" to "transient phenomena" raises any problems for his thesis, for the only indication of his acceptance of this fact is a remark in brackets in the course of note 5 and brief references to it at the end of note 6 (p. 118) and in note 8 (p. 119) when dealing with other parts of the passage. In note 5 (interpreting the clause ὅσα . . . ἡγούμεθά τι), after saying that "the point is not that you should not designate a phenomenon 'this' or 'that'," he adds, in brackets: "the fact that you cannot do so is in the next sentence given as the reason why you *should not* do what this sentence enjoins" (p. 118). Thus, accepting that E2-4 says that "this" and "that" are inapplicable to transient phenomena, he argues that it is thereby giving reasons for what he takes to be the injunction of the previous sentence—that terms such as "fire" and "water" should not be used to describe transient phenomena. In other words, if even "this" and "that" are inapplicable, then "fire" and "water" and so on

are inapplicable. Cherniss assumes, of course, that the subject of *φείγει* in the sentence E2-4 is *τοῦτο* (the *τοῦτο* to be understood, together with *προσαγορεύειν*, in 49 D7) in the “innocent” sense he has given to it in his interpretation of the sentence D4-E2 (if D4-E2 is interpreted as an injunction not to apply “this” or “that” to *γιγνόμενα*, then *ἄλλο μηδέν* is to be taken as the subject of *φείγει*). Thus the sentence E2-4 is now a statement that the “innocent” *τοῦτο* (the subject) cannot be called *τοῦτο* or *τόδε*. And the fact that you cannot apply *τόδε* or *τοῦτο* to *τοῦτο* explains, says Cherniss, why you should not predicate fire, water, and so on, of *τοῦτο*. This is awkward, and involves obvious difficulties—the difficulty of a remarkable juxtaposition of an “innocent” and a “guilty” *τοῦτο* in E2-3, and the difficulty of a sudden change in significance from the *τόδε καὶ τοῦτο* of E1 to the *τόδε καὶ τοῦτο* of E2-3. There are none of these difficulties once the sentence D4-E2 is interpreted as an injunction not to apply “this” or “that” to *γιγνόμενα* (which is, as we have seen, the seemingly obvious implication of the last part of the sentence); the sentence E2-4 is now a clear and straightforward explanation of what precedes it. Thus, having said that it is safest “not to call anything else ‘this,’ as though it had some permanence, among the things which we point to with the use of the words ‘this’ or ‘that,’ thinking we are indicating something” (D7-E2) Plato adds, as explanation, that “it (i. e. any other of the things, etc.) slips away, not waiting to be called ‘this’ or ‘that’ or any term which indicts them (*αὐτὰ*) of being stable.” It is perhaps worth noting also that this allows a much more natural explanation of the transition from singular to plural in this sentence. There is no difficulty in assuming that, after beginning the sentence with the indefinite *ἄλλο μηδέν* as subject, Plato should refer to ‘them’ (*αὐτά*), where *αὐτά* refers back to (*τούτων*) *ὅσα . . .* in D7 of which *ἄλλο μηδέν* is the antecedent. Cherniss, however, cannot refer *αὐτά* back to *ὅσα . . .*, a clause which he assumes not to mean phenomena. He suggests therefore, unconvincingly in my opinion, that “apparently Plato, just because he has said that “it,” the phenomenon, does not abide, immediately and without further explanation refers not to “it” as a single thing but to “them,” the multiple and transient phases of the phenomenal flux that cannot be identified as distinct objects” (pp. 118-19).

My conclusion is that the sentence D4-E2 is contrasting *τοῦτο* and *τὸ τοιοῦτον* as terms, incorrect and correct respectively, to apply to *γγυόμενα*, and is using them predicatively. The sentence E2-4 presents no difficulty once D4-E2 is interpreted in this way, and is itself strong confirmation that this interpretation of D4-E2 is correct. In the next sentence (E4-7) there are ambiguities and difficulties, all of which Cherniss clearly brings out,<sup>11</sup> but what precedes and what follows this sentence make clear that there is no warrant for trying to import into its meaning a distinction between "this" and "such" as references to different objects. It seems clear to me<sup>12</sup> that Plato is here reiterating what he said in the previous two sentences, before passing on to the point that to the Receptacle alone are the terms "this" or "that" applicable (49 E7 ff.). There is one final point to be made. If Plato was trying to make a distinction in 49 D-50 B, not only between the Receptacle and the sensible characteristics or qualities which "come to be and pass away" in it, but also between "distinct and self-identical (sensible) characteristics" and "phases of the flux," would not this additional distinction find some clear reflection in the *Timaeus* outside this one difficult passage? In both his discussions of the passage, Cherniss appeals to only one other passage to support this distinction. He says that "the distinct and self-identical characteristics," the "images" of the Forms, "are not the same as the transient phenomena, for the latter are the *apparent* alterations of the receptacle induced by their continual entrance into it and exit from it (50 C3-4)."<sup>13</sup> But 50 C3-4 neither says nor implies that "transient phenomena" are apparent alterations of the Receptacle induced by the entrance and exit of copies of Forms. Plato has just stressed that the Receptacle is "always the same" and never itself possesses any of the characters which "come to be and pass away" within it; it is subsequently described as "a nature invisible and characterless" (51 A). And in 50 C3-4 he says that the diversities brought "by the things that enter into it," i. e. the sensible characteristics which are "images" of Forms, make the Receptacle itself *appear* to have different qualities at

<sup>11</sup> Pp. 119-24. See also Taylor, *Commentary*, pp. 318-19.

<sup>12</sup> See my translation.

<sup>13</sup> *A. J. P.*, LXXV, p. 129, and LXXVIII, p. 246. "Their" refers to the "images" of the Forms. The italics are Cherniss'.

different times (though *in fact*, as he has just said, it has not). In other words, if anyone ascribes to the Receptacle itself the diversity and change which belong to the sensible qualities continually "coming into it and going out of it," he is wrong. Thus the force of "appears" in saying that the Receptacle *appears* to be so-and-so is not in any way to imply a distinction between "phenomena" and "self-identical characteristics," but to imply the falsity of any inference from the diversity and change of sensible qualities to the diversity and change of the Receptacle itself. The only sensibles which figure in this passage, or in any other part of Plato's discussion, are, quite obviously, the "images" of the Forms. Indeed, Plato makes perfectly explicit, both at the beginning and at the end of his discussion of the Receptacle in 48 E-52 D, that throughout the discussion he is dealing with three factors, and three only—(i) the Forms, the eternally unchanging model; (ii) "that which becomes," a copy (*μίμημα*) of this model, sensible and perpetually in motion; (iii) space, the Receptacle of "all that becomes" (48 E-49 A, 50 C7-D2, 52 A-D1). The distinction within (ii) which Cherniss tries to find in 49 D-50 B is neither mentioned nor implied here; there is no room for it.

If my interpretation of 49 D-E is substantially correct, it follows, as Cherniss would agree (*A. J. P.*, LXXVIII, p. 245), that the *Timaeus* is here at variance with *Cratylus* 439 D8-9 and *Theaetetus* 182 C9-D7. And it is important that this discrepancy should be recognised, for it is, as I noted earlier, one of the important indications in the late dialogues of a development towards greater consistency in Plato's theory of knowledge. Cherniss, in his attempt to remove the discrepancy, shows himself once more as a vigorous and scholarly champion of the tradition in American Platonic scholarship of the unity of Plato's thought. It is a tradition which has contributed much to the understanding of Plato. But to push it to the point of assuming that no inconsistencies are to be found within Plato's work is, I think, to push it too far.

NORMAN GULLEY.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL.