

The Challenge of Body for Plato

Abstract

Body presents a special challenge for Plato. *Prima facie*, body is an object of perception and so sharply distinguished from soul; but perception can never serve as a source of knowledge. So either body is unknowable or it must be known in a way that does not rely on perception. I first consider the origin of this problem in the rejection of natural science and sensation as a source of knowledge in the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus*.

I then turn to the account of likeness-making in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Likeness-making results in an icon that conforms to the proper measure of the original in length, breadth, depth, and color. Indeed, likeness-making is identified with divine art, which makes divine products, including all living things and the elements; these in turn produce their own offspring, i.e., the images we experience in perception and dreams. This account of likeness-making, I argue, is complemented by the analysis in *Laws X* of soul as self-moving motion that generates body. Taken together the arguments about proper measure and soul's productivity provide an account of what body is and how it becomes that meets the challenge defined by the rejection of natural science and sensation as a source of knowledge.

Throughout each of these accounts, the metaphors that explain both body and its generation are exclusively political. This character should give us pause for thought in understanding body for Plato, especially in the *Timaeus*, about which I shall have some suggestions in my conclusion.

Helen S. Lang
Professor
Department of Philosophy
Villanova University
Villanova, PA 19085 USA