

The Origin of Plato's Cave

Author(s): John Henry Wright

Source: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 17 (1906), pp. 131-142

Published by: Department of the Classics, Harvard University

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/310313>

Accessed: 03-10-2019 05:31 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.

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



JSTOR

Department of the Classics, Harvard University is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*

THE ORIGIN OF PLATO'S CAVE

BY JOHN HENRY WRIGHT

I

THE philosophical meaning of Plato's famous allegory of the Cave has on the whole been correctly apprehended, though the history of its interpretation affords some interesting and amusing examples of inept exegesis. The question, however, of the origin of the similitudes employed in the allegory has not yet been satisfactorily explored. In the suggestions here made on this subject hardly more than probability is claimed for the explanation offered, perhaps not more than a possibility.

The allegory of the Cave is introduced at the opening of the Seventh Book of the *Republic*, in part to explain more fully a simile which Plato has previously employed (in the Sixth Book), that of the Divided Line, the several sections of which stand for the four stages of knowledge and of their respective objects of knowledge; in part to give a picture which shall clearly illustrate the condition or experiences of human beings from the point of view of their advancement in intelligent apprehension. "Imagine," says Socrates to Glaucon and the other members of the little group at the house of Polemarchus, "a number of men living in an underground habitation like a cave which has an entrance that opens toward daylight. The way into [the lowest part of] the cave is long, and is as wide as is the cave [i. e., the lowest part of it]. Here these men have been in bonds from childhood, their legs and their necks so fastened that they cannot move and can see only before them, being prevented by the chains from turning their heads around. Imagine a bright fire burning at some distance behind and above them, and between this fire and the prisoners a roadway at an elevation; along this roadway a low wall is constructed like the screens jugglers set up, above which they show their puppets." "I see." "And do you see men carrying past this wall all sorts of vessels that rise above the wall, as

well as statues and various figures of animals made of wood and stone and all kinds of materials; some of the bearers of these objects, as may be expected, are talking, others silent." "A strange picture, and prisoners strange." "Like ourselves. . . ." Such prisoners would hold that the shadows (of the manufactured objects) which they see moving upon the wall of the cave before them were the only realities. . . . Let us suppose one of the prisoners to be released, to be turned around, and led toward the fire. . . . He would be puzzled at first and would regard his former visions of shadows as truer than the actual objects now forced upon his attention. . . . If then he were dragged reluctantly up the rough and steep ascent of the cavern and brought finally into the light of the Sun he would at first be dazzled, but afterward would become habituated to perceive objects in this upper world, and finally to observe and contemplate the Sun himself; he would then draw the conclusion that the Sun is the author of the seasons and years, and the guardian of all things in the visible world, and in a manner the cause of all those things that he and his companions used to behold.¹

A cave that fulfils the requirements of this description would have an elevation something like that indicated in the accompanying cut.

As an allegory the cave carries with it these implications and comparisons: the Cave-World, whose light is a Fire; the Visible World, whose light and source of both phenomena and perception of phenomena is the Sun; the Ideal World, whose light and source of both Being and Knowledge is the Form or Idea of the Good.²

II

Where did Plato get this extraordinary figure or picture of the Cave, and of its chained prisoners who behold shadows dancing on the high wall of the cave before them, shadows of figures and images that are borne along a platform or roadway behind them, shadows made by a bright fire higher up?

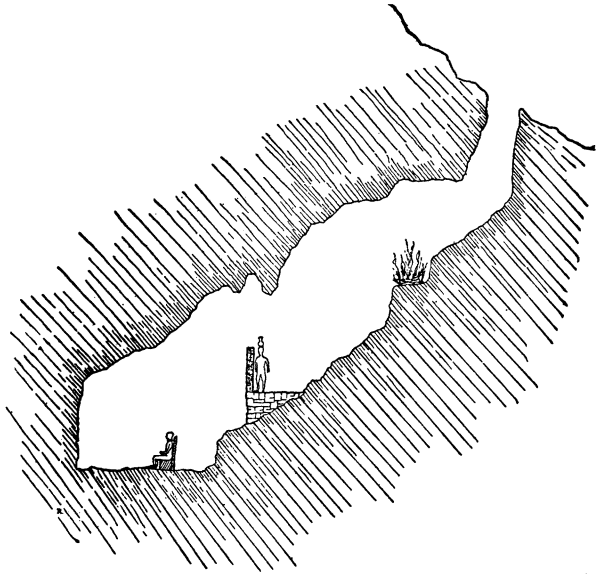
It is hardly possible that this picture originated in pure imagination, borrowing no suggestion whatever from without, though imagination must have had much to do in the development of it. The previous discussion as carried on by Socrates, which is recorded in the Sixth

¹ Plat. *Rep.* 7, 514A-516C.

² Plat. *Rep.* 7, 517B-C.

Book, of the grades of reality and of knowledge, makes necessary here, if an allegory is to be told, an aspect of life and thought far removed from the high unseen world of the ideal, — obviously deep down below it. The simile of the Divided Line had been used; if one end of this, the end that represents the section of Ideal Truth, is imagined as rising into the empyrean and beyond it, the other end must necessarily sink deep into the earth. Plato assumes these proportions: —

In the Ideal World, the truly educated are to those who lack education, as, *in the Visible World*, those who know physical objects are to those who guess about them, and as, *in the Cave-World* [or Fire-light world], those who distinguish from the shadows the objects that cast the shadows are to those who take the shadows for realities. These proportions would require Plato merely to place in fire-light the people who are at the lowest stage of knowledge. The purely imaginative requirements for this allegory are, then, a habitation within the



earth, the light of which is fire-light with dancing shadows that are misconceived by the denizens of the place. More than this is not required. But the allegory actually has many additional features for the origin of which an explanation may very properly be sought.

Was there anything in the popular thought or in literature contemporary or earlier, or anything in Plato's own writings previously composed, that would force this figure upon him or give him any of the specific details and features that make the picture so vivid?

Orphic seers and teachers of the times preceding Plato — with whose visions and doctrine he shows great familiarity¹ — conceived of life in the body as a sort of penitential sojourn on earth, an imprisonment in the flesh — a fate to which souls have been condemned for some ancient crime; ² deliverance therefrom could come only after many transformations through purifications and other ritual observances. Empedocles³ in particular — in whom much Orphic lore is gathered, if it did not in large measure, at least for later times, take shape in him — in certain well known passages in the poem which is significantly entitled *Purifications* shadows forth the Orphic view. From the more important of these passages, which though for the most part preserved independently may be woven together in their probable sequence,⁴ we gain a picture as follows: —

The poet, speaking in his own person,⁵ as one of the fallen souls — spirits who are doomed to the lot of living and wandering for three times ten thousand seasons afar from the Blessed, and of passing through all forms of mortal existence — says that he became an exile from the gods and a wanderer; ⁶ he became youth and maiden, shrub, and bird

¹ Cf. Diels, *Parmenides*, pp. 12 f., and the index of Adam, *The Republic of Plato* Weber, *Platonische Notizen über Orpheus* (1899), is unsatisfactory. Clear references to the Orphics are found in Plat. *Symp.* 179D, 218B; *Phileb.* 66C; *Crat.* 402B f.; *Rep.* 2, 363C, 364E; *Laws* 4, 715E; *Tim.* 40D.

² On *incarnation as incarceration* see especially *Phaed.* 62B, and *Gorg.* 492E f. The popular Orphic explanation connected *σῶμα* and *σῆμα*, but Socrates connects *σῶμα* with *σῆμα*, *Crat.* 400B-C. Though *ἐν φρούρα ἐσμὲν οἱ ἄνθρωποι* was sometimes understood to mean 'we are on guard,' Ps.-Plat. *Axioch.* 365E gives the meaning currently accepted by the Platonists: *ζῶον ἀθάνατον ἐν θνητῷ κατειργμένον φρουρίῳ*. Cf. Plotin. *Ennead.* 4, 8, 1.

³ O. Kern, *Archiv f. Geschichte d. Philos.* I, pp. 498 ff. Empedocles's relation to Parmenides, and the latter's to Hesiod and others are sketched by Diels, *Parmenides*, *passim*.

⁴ The contexts in which these scattered verses are preserved, as well as the general drift of the verses, furnish sufficient clues to their probable order. I follow Diels's arrangement of the fragments and also use his numbers: *Poetarum Philosophorum* [*Graecorum*] *Fragmenta* (1901), and *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1903).

⁵ *Fr.* 112. Empedocles does not use *ψυχή* in this sense; the fallen spirits are *δαίμονες* (*Fr.* 115, 5), with whom the poet — a *θεὸς ἀμβροτος* (*Fr.* 112, 4) — identifies himself.

⁶ *Fr.* 116.

and flashing fish that leaps from the brine ;¹ " I wept and wailed when I descried the strange spot" [a grotto-like place where mortal existence was to be passed], and "as I thought from what honor and glorious estate I had fallen thus to dwell among mortals."² " *We entered that grotto with its overhanging roof,*³ a joyless place, where Murder and Wrath and the troops of other dire Dooms, where parching Diseases and Putrefactions and Floods surged to and fro in the gloom on the field of Atè ;⁴ where were Mother-Earth, and the far-seeing Goddess of the Sun, blood-stained Discord, Peace with gentle visage, the Dames Beauty, Shame, and Haste, lovely Truth, and dark-haired Uncertainty.⁵ . . . From beings of life we were made as it were mere corpses,⁶ for she [the goddess Necessity] had compassed us about with the strange vestiture of flesh."⁷

There can be no manner of doubt that Empedocles in general profoundly impressed the imagination, though he seems to have contributed but little to the doctrine, of Plato.⁸ There are numerous passages in Plato where reminiscences of Empedocles occur—direct quotations from him and references to him by name, together with allusions and imitations where his name is not mentioned.⁹ Earlier passages in the

¹ *Fr.* 117. *ἔλλοπος* as an epithet of a fish is enigmatical. The variant *ἔμπορος* is a palaeographical corruption. Possibly Cyril's *φαλδιμος* is a gloss which gives its true meaning. This, I take it, is Burnet's view (*Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 234).

² *Frgs.* 118, 119.

³ *Fr.* 120. This is the Orphic *σπέος*, as mentioned in the verses cited by Proclus, in *Tim.* 95D, *ταῦτα πατήρ πόλησε κατὰ σπέος ἡροειδές* (Abel, *Orphica*, p. 184).

⁴ *Fr.* 121. These verses, like the Orphic verse cited in the preceding note, contain Homeric reminiscences, as of *Od.* 11, 94 and *Il.* 2, 470. For the imagery Diels compares Dem. 25, 52. Men criticized Empedocles for calling the earth the Meadow of Atè: cf., cited by Diels, Themist. *Or.* 13, 178, *τὸν ἐπιγείων τόπον καὶ Ἄτης λειμῶνα ἐπονομάζοντα*.

⁵ *Fr.* 122.

⁶ *Fr.* 125.

⁷ *Fr.* 126. In this and the preceding fragment the Orphic doctrine that *σῶμα* is *σῆμα* is poetically expressed.

⁸ We cannot enter into the question how far the Empedoclean element is pure and how far it is due to Parmenides, who inspired Plato sometimes directly, sometimes through Empedocles.

⁹ Plat. *Gorg.* 498E; *Phileb.* 59E; *Phaedr.* 235A. The doctrine of Empedocles is referred to in *Meno* 76C. Cf. *Tim.* 45D and *Theaet.* 152E, 156B-E, with *Phaedr.* 251B; also, perhaps, *Phaed.* 96B and 65E; *Symp.* 190A; *Polit.* 270A. See Dümmler, *Akad.*, p. 222.

Purifications were the inspiration of that marvellous vision of the ascent of the Souls in their chariots with winged steeds up the vault of the heavens which is described in the *Phaedrus*.¹

At the same time there are such striking differences between the Grotto of Empedocles and the Cave of Plato that it is improbable that the latter is a close imitation of the former. The Cave of Plato is well in the earth; a deep and steep descent leads into its fire-lit interior, where, apparently in comfortable contentment with their lot, in a long row sit the chained prisoners, a high roadway behind them whereupon moves a constant procession of men carrying images. The Grotto of Empedocles, on the other hand, with its broad overhanging roof is like the caverns of the sea;² its light is darkness visible; from it extends in level stretches the great plain of Death, thronged with horrid and mysterious figures, a veritable chamber of Hell.³ To be sure, the Grotto of Empedocles in the extant fragments is nowhere clearly and fully described, and it might be urged that certain features of the original Grotto, of which the description has not reached us, may have been to a very large extent the source of Plato's detailed imagery. This is unlikely, and principally for two reasons: in their main outlines the two pictures are essentially very different; secondly, one writer, Plotinus, who appears to have had before him the complete text of Empedocles, in speaking on the same page in the *Enneads* of the Grotto of Empedocles and the Cave of Plato makes no mention whatever of any likeness between the two, and in fact intimates that the language of Empedocles owing to its highly poetic form was obscure, a statement that he could not have made had the two descriptions resembled each other.⁴

¹ *Phaedr.* 248c ff. Cf. Diels, *Parmenides*, p. 22, and *P. Phil. F.*, pp. 104 and 151.

² This conception is perhaps the source of the image in the *Phaedo* (109B) where life on earth is represented as passed not on the real surface of the earth, but at the bottom of a great sea of air.

³ To the Orphics and Empedocles the earth is the real Hell: *orcus Empedocli est terra* (Diels, *P. Phil. F.*, p. 155; cf. Rhode, *Psyche*³, 2, p. 178). The Cave of Death, in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (11, 469-490), repeats and expands some of Empedocles's imagery.

⁴ Plotin. *Ennead.* 4, 8, 1. Plotinus here juxtaposes the Grotto of Empedocles and the Cave of Plato. Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus, similarly puts the two

The conclusion that we must draw from the foregoing consideration of Plato's relation, in the use of the simile of the Cave, to the Orphics and Empedocles, is that Plato found it easy to use human existence in a cave to represent man's life in the flesh, and to conceive such life as that of prisoners. Further than this, at least in the light of our present knowledge, so far as the relation of Plato in this matter to literary originals is concerned, we can hardly go. Various features of the Cave, essential and characteristic, are not found in Plato's literary progeners; these are original with him. While, therefore, we must admit that the figure of *a* Cave is Orphic, that of *the* Cave is distinctly Platonic.¹

III

Having drawn the conclusion that the Cave of the Seventh Book of the *Republic* is original with Plato, we may next ask, first, whether there are any distinct references in Plato's earlier writings to grottoes and caves, either imaginary or actual, that might have led him to the amplified simile of the *Republic*; and, secondly, whether there were any caves known to Plato and presumably visited by him that might have been suggestive to him.

The first question must be answered in the negative: no caves or cave-like dwellings that could in any way have been suggestive are elsewhere mentioned by Plato. In the myth of the *Protagoras*, Protagoras tells of the time when the gods fashioned mortal creatures of earth, within the earth (γῆς ἔνδον), and ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them and to provide them with their proper qualities; for some small animals Epimetheus provided a defence in wings, to others he assigned habitations in the ground (κατάγειον οἶκῃσιν), whither they

together, in the passage in the *De Antro Nympharum*, 8, to which we owe the preservation of the clearest reference to the Empedoclean Grotto (*Fr.* 120). Frequently Porphyry is little more than an echo of Plotinus, but here he seems to be independent. To him, as to his master, the chief importance of the two caves is that each is symbolical, that is, of the *κόσμος*, the terrestrial universe or the theatre of man's mortal existence. Furthermore, in this passage from the *De Antro*, Porphyry gives us confirmation of the fact that the doctrine that the caves were symbolical was believed to be Orphic in origin: ὅτι μὲν οὖν σύμβολον κόσμου τὰ ἄντρα καὶ τῶν ἐγκοσμίων δυνάμεων ἐτίθεντο οἱ θεολόγοι [i. e. the Orphics] διὰ τούτου δεδήλωται.

¹ Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 235 n.

might escape by burrowing.¹ In an earlier passage in the *Republic*, a grotto is referred to in a simile cited from Homer: "Even as bats flit gibbering in the secret place of a wondrous cave (*ἄντρον θεσπεσίοιο*) . . . so the souls [of the suitors of Penelope] gibbered as they fared forth."²

Several times, mainly in the *Phaedrus*, Plato speaks of the cult of the Nymphs and Pan, whose dances — obviously as represented on works of art, paintings or reliefs — were imitated by Bacchic revellers.³ These divinities often had seats of worship in caves whither came their devotees to do homage in the sacred dance and to make offerings of images and other suitable objects.

There were three famous caves on Greek territory, or rather two single caves and a third group of caves or grottoes, with which we may safely assume Plato to have been familiar. These are the Quarry-Grottoes of Syracuse (the *λιθοτομῆαι*), the Corycian Cave above Delphi, and the Cave of Vari in Attica.

No visitor in Syracuse, where Plato spent several years of alternate hope and disappointment, could have failed to see and visit the Quarry-Grottoes,⁴ so fateful and fraught with such painful memories to every Athenian. Here men in chains were for centuries forced to work in excavating stone from the stubborn walls of the deep caverns.

Professor Stewart remarks: "Plato *sees* the Cave and *makes us see* it, and there is much more to be seen there than the mere purpose of the Allegory requires. Perhaps Plato, when he was at Syracuse, saw such a gallery in the stone quarries (there are such galleries still to be seen in the *Latomie* at Syracuse) lighted up with a fire, and the miners — it may be slaves or convicts in chains — working at the far end with

¹ *Protag.* 320E.

² *Rep.* 4, 387A (from the *Od.* 24, 6 ff.). In the *Law*s the Cave of Zeus in Crete is twice referred to (625B, 319E); and again in a Homeric citation (*Od.* 9, 112 ff.) the Cyclopes are described as living in caves near the tops of mountains. In the *Republic* the Cave is spoken of as an *οἰκησιν κατάγειον* (514A, 532B); as *σπήλαιον* (514A, 515A, 539D), and as *σπηλαιωδής* (514A). The word *σπήλαιον* is not elsewhere used by Plato.

³ *Phaedr.* 253A; *Law*s 7, 815B.

⁴ In *Ps.-Plat. Ep.* 2, 314E there is a reference to a man who had been released from the Quarries; but there are no other mentions of these caverns in the Platonic corpus.

their backs to the fire, while their shadows and the shadows of people and things behind them flitted on the walls. Be this as it may, Plato's Cave is a mysterious place. We enter it wondering, and soon forget, in our wonder, that there is 'another meaning.' We acquiesce in what we see — the prisoners among the shadows, and the Redeemer coming down through the dimly-lighted gloom, like Orpheus, to lead them up into the daylight."¹

But the Syracusan Caves are not within the earth, as was Plato's Cave; the sunlight, though obstructed, reaches into them and the rains and storms beat into them so that, as Thucydides tells us,² men that were there imprisoned suffered gravely from exposure. Still, the spectacle of gangs of chained men in these quarries may have suggested to Plato an item or two in his picture.

The Corycian Cave above Delphi was visited by many travellers to Apollo's shrine. Several hundred feet above a wide plateau which lies back of the twin gleaming cliffs of Delphi, and reached from this plateau by a steep and rocky ascent, is the mouth of the Corycian Cave with its many chambers. Though the cave is in the side of the mountain, there is little descent into its "upper end"; in fact it penetrates the mountain horizontally (about two hundred feet), so that from well within it one may look *down* out upon the ground at the mouth. "The effect as you look out from the interior of the gloomy cavern through the grove of stalactites and stalagmites to the green grass and the sunlight at the mouth of the cave is highly picturesque; it is like a fairy grotto."³ Daylight reaches into the cave, for, as Pausanias says,⁴ "you can go a great way through it without lights." In this famous cave were worshipped Pan and the Nymphs, while on the plateau far below torches blazed at night and wild revels took place in honor of these divinities and of Dionysus.⁵

¹ *The Myths of Plato*, p. 252. Stewart's suggestion that the book *Karðβασις εἰς Ἄϊδον* (Abel, *Orphica*, p. 214) may have been in Plato's mind when he drew this picture of the Redeemer cannot be accepted, if—as Diels (*Parmenides*, p. 15) appears to prove—this poem contained Platonic elements. If there is any connection between the poem and the *Republic*, the latter rather is the inspiration of the former. Diels suggests that Heracleides Ponticus may have been the author.

² Thuc. 7, 87.

³ Frazer, *Pausanias*, 5, pp. 399 f.

⁴ Paus. 10, 32, 7.

⁵ See Frazer's note *ad loc.*

The Corycian Cave, then, as well as the Quarry-Grottoes of Syracuse, lacks many of the essential features of the Platonic Cave.

On the other hand, a cave¹ on Mount Hymettus, near the village of Vari about a dozen miles southward of Athens, has some remarkable peculiarities that constrain one, quite independently of any historical traditions concerning it, to associate it with Plato's Cave. In brief, there is nothing in Plato's Cave that is not found also in the Cave of Vari, and there are no features in the latter — except a single unimportant one, to be mentioned immediately — that are out of keeping with those of the former. The Cave of Vari is deep within the earth; its floor slopes steeply (for about sixty feet) to its lower end, where it becomes level (for about sixteen feet): in front of this level floor rises nearly vertically the back wall of the cave (about fourteen feet high); roughly parallel with this wall and about fourteen feet from it there runs for about eighty feet a *raised platform* faced with stone, its upper level surface being about seven feet above the floor. The width of the cave at its bottom and for nearly half-way up is about the same, though further up, as one approaches the mouth, the cave narrows, so that the ground plan of the interior approaches the shape of an isosceles triangle, instead of the rectangle which Plato would seem to have imagined. This is the only point of divergence. One who ascends from the floor of the cave to its mouth, so as to come out into the light of day, must climb up a steep and difficult slope. The cave is practically dark, very little light from outside penetrating into it; artificial light is needed for visitors, either that of torches or a fire. The latter would need to burn, not at the foot of the cave, whence its smoke rising upward toward the opening would be suffocating, but rather part way up the slope. The excavators found "frequent signs of burned wood and small piles of ashes."²

This cave when fully explored in 1901 was found to contain, besides objects noted by former visitors, a multitude of objects, including inscrip-

¹ This cave was finally and fully explored in February, 1901, by students of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. An excellent history and description of the cave, as well as accounts of the excavations and of the objects found, have appeared in the *American Journal of Archaeology*, VII, 1903, pp. 263-349, under the general editorship of C. H. Weller.

² Weller, *l. c.*, p. 278.

tions, that attested the use of the spot as a seat of the cult of Pan, the Nymphs, and Apollo from long before the time of Plato far down into the Christian era. Among the objects of the late fifth century B.C. were several beautiful carved reliefs representing Pan and the Nymphs, as well as charming terra-cotta images and many inscriptions. It would seem that at the time of one Archedemus, who on epigraphical grounds may be dated at about 400 B.C., there was a revival of the cult of the divinities of the place and something of a restoration of their modest shrines. The raised platform, which is in many respects one of the most interesting features of the cave, appears to belong certainly not later than this period. It "would have been a suitable place for the stately dances, possibly past the altar of Pan as portrayed in several of the reliefs. The darkness of the grotto with its flickering lights would have made such a worship weird and impressive in the highest degree."¹

My theory is, in brief, that Plato has associations with this spot. He had been there; had seen the people dancing in the fire-light, or carrying in solemn procession along the platform various images and other votive objects, all typical of something beyond them; he had seen the shadows of all these figures playing on the wall beyond. Hence, when he came to use the simile of a cave, in the *Republic*, the recollection of the vision of the cave on Mount Hymettus and its strange spectacle of shadows of things themselves as it were but shadows, removed by two stages from reality, crowded in on his mind and shaped and colored his development of the simile.²

There is a special reason why Plato should have been here, should have visited the Cave of Vari in his maturer years. An interesting ancient tradition seems to connect Plato with this spot.³ It emerges into view, apparently independently, in Aelian (A.D. 200) and in Olympiodorus (A.D. 500).⁴ Aelian notes that the infant Plato, while his

¹ Weller, *ibid.*, p. 281.

² The sketch of the elevation of the Cave described in *Rep.* 7 *ad init.* (see above, p. 133) is actually based on that prepared for the Cave at Vari, by Weller (pl. ii).

³ Aelian, *V. H.* 10, 21; Olympiod., *Vita Platonis*, p. 383 Westerm. (cf. *Vita Anon.*, p. 390 Westerm., which expands and modifies the tale).

⁴ The story of bees alighting on Plato's lips—there musically buzzing or even making honey—is of course widely current in ancient literature (Cicero, *De Div.* 1, 36, who represents the infant Plato as sleeping in his cradle—*in cunis*; Plin. *N. H.*

father was sacrificing "on Hymettus to the Muses or the Nymphs," was visited by a swarm of bees who gathered upon the lips of the sleeping babe and murmured there in prophecy of his future melliflence. Olympiodorus gives the further items that his parents laid the infant Plato down "on Hymettus," wishing on his behalf to offer sacrifices to the divinities of the place—Pan, the Nymphs, and Apollo Nomios. Now though neither Olympiodorus nor Aelian mentions a cave but only a place "on Hymettus," we must conclude, since there is no other spot "on Hymettus" where Apollo, the Nymphs, and Pan were anciently worshipped together, that the tradition of a visit of the parents of Plato to a shrine of these divinities had reference to this very cave at Vari. Such a tradition has the marks of authenticity. If Plato visited the cave in his infancy, what is more probable than that he should revisit it in later life, and at a time when the mysterious impressions of the place, with its moving figures and flickering shadows, would stamp themselves ineradicably upon his memory?

11, 17; Val. Max. 1, 6, 3, etc.). This tale of the bees, that of the visit to the cave, and that of Plato's divine parentage appear in the same context in Olympiodorus and the *Vita Anon.*, and undoubtedly go back to a very much earlier original. The legend that Plato was the son of Apollo was at least mentioned by Speusippus, Plato's nephew, and by other writers only a little later than Speusippus (Diog. Laert. 3, 2). Speusippus is said by Apuleius to have been *domesticis instructus monumentis* (*De Doctr. Plat.*, p. 46). Is it not probable that this story of Plato's visit as an infant to the cave on Hymettus was a family tradition which was handed down to literature by Speusippus, Plato's sister's son?