

THE COSMIC CYCLE IN THE *STATESMAN* MYTH. I*

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In this paper I will defend what is called the ‘traditional interpretation’ (abbreviated TI hereafter) of the myth in Plato’s *Statesman* against the new interpretation (abbreviated NI), proposed by L. Brisson,¹ modified² and defended³ by C. Rowe, and further modified by G. Carone (who is closer to Brisson than to Rowe). This paper is written primarily in response to Carone’s version.⁴ The NI and its philosophical implications were criticised by some scholars,⁵ but, to the best of my knowledge, textual foundations of the NI have never been discussed in detail. In what follows I intend to show that these foundations are weak and that the TI, although in need of modification, still holds true: the cosmic cycle of the *Statesman*’s myth consists of two (and not three) phases – that of the rule of the Demiurge, when the universe rotates in the

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¹ The new interpretation was first proposed by L. Brisson in his *La Mème et l’Autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon* (Paris 1974) 488–496 (reprinted: Sankt Augustin ³1998 with an additional note: p. 605) and later clarified and developed, in his “Interprétation du mythe du *Politique*”, in C. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin 1995) 349–363.

² C. Rowe (ed.), *Plato: Statesman with Translation and Commentary* (Warminster 1995), see Introduction, 11–13, and commentary, 186–197.

³ C. Rowe, “Zwei oder drei Phasen? Der Mythos im *Politikos*”, in M. Janka and Chr. Schäfer (eds.), *Platon als Mythologe* (Darmstadt 2002) 160–175.

⁴ G. L. Carone, “Reversing the myth of the *Politikus*”, *CQ* n. s. 54 (2004) 88–108. Her monograph, *Plato’s Cosmology and Its Ethical Dimension* (Cambridge 2005), became available to me when the present paper had been completed, but, as the relevant section of the book is practically identical to the earlier article, I refer to the latter throughout this paper.

⁵ M. Erler, “Kommentar zu Brisson und Dillon”, in Rowe (n.1) 375–380; G. R. F. Ferrari, “Myth and Conservatism in Plato’s *Statesman*”, in Rowe (n.1) 389–397; M. S. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman* (Cambridge 1998) 99–117, and in the more detailed form: M. M. McCabe, “Chaos and Control: Reading Plato’s *Politikus*”, *Phronesis* 42 (1997) 98–108; Chr. Horn, “Warum zwei Epochen der Menschheitsgeschichte? Zum Mythos des *Politikos*”, in M. Janka and Chr. Schäfer (eds.), *Platon als Mythologe* (Darmstadt 2002) 137–159. Horn’s paper and that of Rowe (n. 3) are not taken in account by Carone; D. O’Brien’s unpublished critical comments are cited in Rowe (n. 3).

direction West – East, and that of the autonomous universe (the contemporary era), when the universe rotates in the direction East – West. Since one of the arguments against the TI brought forward by Brisson and Carone is that the image of the contemporary universe abandoned by the Demiurge contradicts Plato's views attested elsewhere, I will also touch on theological doctrines in other Plato's dialogues, most importantly in the *Timaeus* (see Part II).

The myth is a part of a conversation between the Eleatic Stranger (ES) and the Younger Socrates (YS), who are looking for a definition of the true statesman, or of the king. The interlocutors recognise that the initial definition of the true statesman as the shepherd or the rearer (τροφός) fails to distinguish the specific mode of herd-rearing, essential to the statesman: whereas shepherds of other herds cater for all needs of their nurslings – food, reproduction, parenting, and entertainment, representatives of the other professions (merchants, peasants, doctors, and trainers) challenge the statesman's position as the rearer of the human herd (267 e – 268 b). The immediate purpose of the myth narrated by the ES is to clarify what distinguishes the statesman from other alleged rearers (268 b 6 – e 2).

I shall start by summarising the whole story.

Evidence of the tradition: the ES brings up three myths. First is the myth of Atreus and Thyestus, in which Zeus makes the sun and other stars to rise and to set in places opposite to the original ones, which implies the change in the rotation of the universe from the previous direction (West – East) into the contemporary (East – West).⁶ Second is the myth of the reign of Cronus on the earth; third is the myth that human beings previously were born from the earth and not by sexual reproduction. These three myths are, in fact, separated and distorted pieces of evidence about the same sequence of events (268 e 8 – 269 c 2);

Theoretical preliminaries: the ES argues that the universe, formed by the Demiurge from the primeval chaos and endowed by reason, in one period rotates with the help of his creator and in the other period is set free to rotate in the opposite direction; each time the change in the direction of rotation causes destruction of living beings on a large scale, as well as various changes in them (270 b 1 – d 2).

The following story narrates the events of the cosmic cycle:

a) the most important of these changes takes place whenever the universe changes direction opposite to the contemporary one, i. e. from E–W to W–E. At this moment, ageing of living beings stops and they begin changing in the opposite direction, from old age to childhood, gradually diminishing in size and at the end entirely disappearing (270 d 6 – 271 a 2);

⁶ I designate hereafter as the 'E–W rotation' the rotation of the universe in the direction East – South – West – North – East with the visible East – West path of the sun (the actual rotation of our universe, according to the geocentric cosmology), and as the 'W–E rotation' respectively the opposite rotation in the direction West – South – East – North – West with the visible West – East path of the sun (the reversed rotation of the myth).

b) in this stage of ageing backwards sexual reproduction ceases to take place; instead, the living beings spring from the earth. (The myth of the earth-born refers in fact to those who returned to life from the earth in that time; our ancestors, who lived in the beginning of the contemporary rotation, were witnesses of these earth-born, 271 a 5 – c 2);

c) the traditional stories of the reign of Cronus retain a dim memory of the era when the Demiurge took care of the universe revolutions; the herds of all living beings on the earth, including the humans, were tended by the *daimones*, who guaranteed order and peace among the humans and animals; there were no states, no wives and children in this era; the human beings came back to life from the earth; an abundance of spontaneously grown fruits and mild climate made farming, clothes, and houses unnecessary (271 c 8 – 272 d 4);

d) after a certain period, when all the souls that have accomplished the prescribed number of incarnations fell into the earth, where the bodies of living beings were formed, the Demiurge left the helm of the universe and withdrew to his observation-post. The ‘fatal inborn desire’, which is inherent to the universe, impelled it to rotate in the opposite direction; the subordinate deities, who were in charge of the regions under the supreme reign of the Demiurge deprived the parts of the universe of their care (272 d 6 – 273 a 1);

e) the reversal of rotation produced the great earthquake and ‘another perishing’ of various kinds of living beings; but afterwards the universe returned to its ‘accustomed course’, started to control itself and its inhabitants and to take care of them recollecting the teaching of the Demiurge; at first it follows⁷ this teaching closely, but gradually forgets it and gets more and more under the impact of its bodily element; the universe now imparts cruelty and injustice to its inhabitants, and at the end the evils produced by it prevail over the goods. At that point, when the universe is at the verge of dissolution and sinking into the primeval chaos, the Demiurge returns to the helm, reverses the direction of revolutions and sets the universe again in order, imparting to it immortality; this is ‘the final point of everything’ (273 a 5 – e 5);

f) now the story-teller approaches the main point, which should shed light on the difference between the statesman in the contemporary universe and the shepherd of the human herd: after ‘the reversal of the universe to the contemporary way of generation’, the ageing backwards stopped and the living beings underwent change contrary to the one that happened during the previous reversal: those who then had diminished until they disappeared entirely began to grow again, and those who had just appeared from the earth began to die and return to the earth; the birth from the earth by the help of the external agency became impossible, and, following the order given to the universe to live autonomously, the living beings now had to conceive, to produce the offspring and

⁷ From this point the present tense is used instead of historical tenses.

to rear them by their own means; the animals, set free from the rule of the lesser gods, turned wild and began to ravage human beings; an abundance of spontaneous food came to the end, and the humans could not procure livelihood, as previously they had not experienced any need that might have taught them how to do so; then, according to an ancient tradition, the fire was donated to the humankind by Prometheus, the crafts by Hephaestus and Athena, seeds and plants by other gods – everything that helped to establish human life took origin from these gifts (273 e 6 – 274 d 8).

According to the TI, the cycle consists of two phases, one (A) of the Demiurge's rule (age of Cronus), with the W–E rotation of the universe, and another (B) of the autonomous universe (the contemporary era), with the E–W rotation; these phases continually alternate. The story starts from the Demiurge's return to the helm (the phase A); he reverts the rotation in the direction opposite to the contemporary one (i. e. the universe begins to rotate in the W–E direction); the parts of the story a–c (the destruction of living beings; the end of the development forwards; the start of the development backwards; regeneration of the dead from the earth; blessings of the Paradise) belong to the same phase.

The following parts of the story describe the end of the divine era and the following autonomous era (phase B): the Demiurge withdraws, and the lesser gods deprive the human beings of their care (d); the universe reverts to its contemporary E–W rotation, sets itself in order, but then bit by bit degrades and approaches the catastrophe, until, at the end of the contemporary era, the Demiurge returns to the helm, reverts the universe to the W–E rotation and revitalises it (e); the new cycle starts with the phase A. In the following part (f) the story-teller returns to the beginning of the contemporary era, to describe the reappearance of development forward, sexual reproduction and the beginnings of civilised life.⁸

Against this traditional view, L. Brisson, C. Rowe and G. Carone argue that the universe in the contemporary era rotates in the same direction (E–W) as in the era of divine rule. They believe that the myth presupposes the third, intermediate, phase, when the universe rotates in the direction opposite both to the previous era and to the following ones, i. e. W–E. Furthermore, since the ageing backwards of

⁸ For the treatment of the myth in the traditional vein see L. Campbell (ed.), *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* (Oxford 1867), introd. XXVIII–XLI, and comm. 41–72 (second pagination), the most detailed and sensitive to the details of the text, in my view; J. Adam (ed.), *The Republic of Plato: Edited with Critical Notes, Commentary and Appendices II* (Cambridge 1902) 295–298 (remarks in the Appendix on Plato's Number); A. Diès (ed.), *Plato, Œuvres complètes IX/1. Le Politique* (Paris 1935) XXX–XLI; J. Skemp, *A Translation of the Politicus of Plato with Introductory Essays and Footnotes* (London 1952) 82–111. Since the two-phase interpretation raised no doubts in those days (Skemp apparently was not aware of the alternative interpretation of Lovejoy and Boas, see n. 9), the today debatable points of the cycle are often beyond the scope of these earlier works.

living beings starts when the universe reverts to the rotation opposite to the contemporary one (270 d 4), the proponents of the NI argue that the ageing backwards is produced by the Demiurge's withdrawal, not by his return, and thus in the era of Cronus the living beings, although sprung from the earth, develop forwards, as in the contemporary era. The ageing backwards, which stops at the beginning of the contemporary era, with the reversal to the E–W rotation (273 e 6–10), thus belongs to the interim era with the W–E rotation, opposite both to the rotation in the era of Cronus and in the contemporary one. Thus, the proponents of the NI try to find in the text, additionally to the reversal at the moment when the Demiurge lets the universe go and it starts to rotate in the opposite direction (it becomes W–E, according to the NI), one more reversal, which should return the universe to the rotation it has in the contemporary era, i. e. E–W.⁹

Here the versions of the proponents of the NI diverge. According to Brisson and Carone, the text gives hints that the Demiurge is at the helm in the contemporary era, although his rule is more detached than in the era of Cronus; there are indications that the subordinate deities are present, too. Since, however, both the Demiurge and the minor deities leave the universe at the end of Cronus' era, Brisson and Carone argue that the passage, usually taken as a promise of the return of the Demiurge at the end of the contemporary era (273 d 4 – e 4, the end of the section e), in fact points out to his return that has already happened in the beginning of the contemporary era: the god has already come back after the interim godless era of the W–E rotation, saved the universe from the danger of total destruction, having reverted it to the contemporary E–W rotation and rejuvenated it in the beginning of the contemporary era.¹⁰

Rowe accepts Brisson's proposal insofar as the universe rotates nowadays in the same direction as it did under the rule of the Demiurge and that there is an interim era of the W–E rotation between these two eras. He dismisses, however, the alleged indications in the text of the god's rule in the contemporary era as a mere convention, and agrees with the TI that the universe today is entirely deprived of the Demiurge's presence. Instead, Rowe proposes the following version: after the withdrawal of the Demiurge, the universe, which rotated E–W in

⁹ This is the core of Brisson's view shared by Rowe and Carone. Brisson (n. 1, 1974) 352 n. 11 refers to A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore 1935, repr. 1997) 158 f. as having anticipated his proposal, as concerns both admitting of three phases and the transposition in the order of story. On the other hand, he is not correct when ascribing the similar view to H. Herter, "Gott und die Welt bei Platon: Eine Studie zum Mythos des *Politikos*" (1958), in idem, *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1975) 316–330. Herter in fact admits two alternating periods, with two opposite rotations, one of god's rule and another of his withdrawal, the latter being the world we live in; he only argues that the universe, even during the contemporary is not deprived entirely of the divine care (p. 325–327).

¹⁰ Brisson (n. 1, 1995) 350–351, 360; Carone (n. 4) 101–104.

Cronus' era, reverts to the W–E rotation, following its irrational desire; then, after a relatively short interim era, it reverts, again by itself, but now following its intelligent nature (see 269 d 1–2), back to the E–W rotation it had under the god's rule; this initiates the contemporary era. This second reversal is implied at 273 a 4–b 1: after the turbulences of the reversal to the W–E, the universe calms down and returns to its 'accustomed course'. Rowe admits, contrary to Brisson and Carone and in agreement with the TI, that the picture of degradation of the universe (273 b 2–d 4) corresponds to the contemporary era, not to the interim one, and that the return of the Demiurge, the new reversal, and salvation of the universe (273 d 4–e 4) refer to our descendants; in other words, the era of the god's rule, similar to the era of Cronus, should follow the contemporary era.

The proponents of the NI claim that the three phase interpretation fits the text better than the traditional view. However, there are several major assumptions that underlie their attempt to re-interpret the myth.¹¹ For Brisson, the three phases back up the view that the contemporary era is a synthesis between the total disorder of the universe entirely abandoned by the Demiurge and the overall order of Cronus' era; he further asserts that this view of the contemporary era suits well the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, which represents the universe as the realm both of the divine intelligence and of the necessity.¹² Carone believes that the view of the contemporary era as deprived of the Demiurge's rule contradicts the late Plato's dialogues 'which rather tend to emphasize the existence of a divine *nous* that is responsible for the way our world is arranged, which is the best and the most beautiful way possible'.¹³ Rowe's reasons for following the three phase interpretation are mainly of philological character, but he believes that his own proposal – the universe reverts to the direction it had under the rule of the Demiurge – corresponds better than the TI to the statement that the universe is an intelligent creature (269 d).¹⁴ In one way or another, all proponents of the NI seem to believe that the contemporary era, according to the TI, appears gloomier than one should expect from Plato. I will discuss the issue in the

¹¹ The reasons for their dissatisfaction with the NI are summarised by Brisson (n. 1, 1995) 350 f.; Rowe (n. 2) 189 ad 270 b 7–8, and Carone (n. 4) 92–95.

¹² Brisson (n. 1, 1974) 490–492; (n. 1, 1995) 361; Rowe (n. 2) 197 ad 274 e 1 and Carone (n. 4) 103 endorse this view.

¹³ Carone (n. 4) 88. According to her (p. 88 n. 4) such passages as *Phil.* 28 c ff.; *Tim.* 46 c–e; *Leg.* 966 d–e, 967 d–e point out "that the world as a cosmos is orderly due to the presence of a designing *nous* that orders it". The problematic word here is 'the presence': these passages point out that the divine intelligence is responsible for perfection of the existing order, but do not state unambiguously that this divine intelligence rules over the universe by its permanent presence in it after completing the creation (see Pt. II).

¹⁴ Rowe (n. 2) 13: "If it were the case that it always went to the opposite direction when left to itself, its claim to rationality would look weak, given that on any account it is its non-rational elements (body, 269 d–e, 'its allotted and innate desire'), which cause the reversal, 272 e 5–6".

context of Plato's cosmological and theological views in the second part of this paper.

Before discussing textual difficulties of the myth, it should be said that there are some *prima facie* indications that favour the TI. According to the argument of the theoretical preliminaries, there are only two phases with two opposite directions, one under the Demiurge's rule and the other of the autonomous universe (270 a 1 – a 9); this statement can be reconciled with the views of Brisson and Carone, but not with that of Rowe, who asserts that one of the two autonomous rotations of the universe (that of the contemporary era) proceeds in the same direction as in the divine era. Then, the story-teller at the end of the myth mentions only two modes of human existence, which correspond to two modes of existence of the universe – one is the autonomous of the contemporary era and the other of the era of the Demiurge's rule (274 d 7–8); this statement is difficult to reconcile with Rowe's view,¹⁵ and it definitely contradicts Brisson's and Carone's version.¹⁶ Further, the story-teller, resuming how the myth sheds light on the mistake of the initial defining of the statesman as a shepherd, points out that such a definition fits the ruler in the divine era, but not in the contemporary one, i. e. again only two eras are envisaged; moreover, he opposes them in terms of the rotation of the universe (274 e 9 – 275 a 3):

“Ὅτι μὲν ἐρωτώμενοι τὸν ἐκ τῆς νῦν περιφορᾶς καὶ γενέσεως βασιλέα καὶ πολιτικὸν τὸν ἐκ τῆς ἐναντίας περιόδου ποιμένα τῆς τότε ἀνθρωπίνης ἀγέλης εἴπομεν, καὶ ταῦτα θεὸν ἀντὶ θνητοῦ, ταύτη μὲν πάμπολυ παρηγέχθημεν.

This fits the TI, but not the NI in both its variants.¹⁷

¹⁵ Rowe argues ([n. 2] 197 ad loc.) that the third mode of life, that of the interim era, is not mentioned, as the essential point here is the contrast between the era of divine rule and the contemporary era; notice, however, the general terms of the statement that only two modes of life exist.

¹⁶ Since Brisson and Carone believe that according to the story the Demiurge rules both in the era of Cronus and in the contemporary era, although with a different mode of presence, in contrast to the interim era which is deprived of his rule totally, it would be puzzling if the era of Cronus and the contemporary era were opposed absolutely only in terms of divine rule and autonomy and the third era were not mentioned at all. For Carone's attempt to weaken this contrast, see Pt. II.

¹⁷ Rowe (n. 2) 198 ad loc. argues that ἡ ἐναντία περίοδος does not refer to opposite direction of rotation, but only to the fact that rotation (and generation of living beings) took place in an 'opposite way', i. e. under the god's guidance (cf. the paraphrase of Carone, 98 n. 29). Taken that περιφορά and περίοδος are virtually synonymous (see 270 d 4; 271 b 1), and that ἐναντίος is consistently used to designate opposite directions of the rotation throughout the story, the interpretation is far-fetched; cf. 271 b 8 for the development of living beings 'opposite' to the contemporary.

The starting point of the story is the destruction of living beings that accompanies the reversals of the universe, and the changes the living beings undergo at these periods. The most important of these changes takes place whenever the revolutions of the universe become ‘the opposite to that exists nowadays’ (270 c 11–d 4):

ΞΕ. Φθοραὶ τοίνυν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τότε μέγισται συμβαίνουσι τῶν τε ἄλλων ζώων, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ὀλίγον τι περιλείπεται· περὶ δὲ τούτους ἄλλα τε παθήματα πολλὰ καὶ θαυμαστά καὶ καινὰ συμπίπτει, μέγιστον δὲ τὸδε καὶ συνεπόμενον τῇ τοῦ παντὸς ἀνειλίξει τότε, ὅταν ἡ τῆς νῦν καθεστηκυίας ἐναντία γίγνηται τροπή.

This change is described in the following passage as the end of development forwards and the beginning of ageing backwards, disappearance of living beings as the result of it, and birth from the earth of the next generation of living beings. The generation from the earth is represented as one of the constituents of the rule of the Demiurge; it is said that the last earth-born were witnessed by the ancestors of the contemporary humankind, who lived in the beginning of our rotation and in the proximity to the *previous* one (271 a 8–b 2). Thus, the traditionalists assume that the story follows the order of events and that the reversal of the universe to the direction *opposite to the contemporary one* with perishing of living beings and the reversal of ageing from forward to backward starts the era of the divine rule.¹⁸

The proponents of the NI argue against this: the era with the rotation of the universe opposite to the contemporary is not the divine era, but the third interim era of the universe abandoned by the god. One of the arguments is that the destruction of living beings, which accompanies this reversal, is incompatible with the salvation that the Demiurge brings to the universe.¹⁹ In order to assign these events to the interim phase, the proponents of the NI suggest that the story starts from the destruction of living beings and the beginning of development backwards at the moment of the Demiurge’s *withdrawal*, after the age of Cronus.²⁰ Brisson and Rowe (who follows him) propose that the narrative diverts from the order of events in the cycle: (1) at first, the withdrawal of the god (the reversal to the W–E rotation implied), perishing of living beings, reversal of ageing to the backward and appearance of the earth-born witnessed at the dawn of our era (270 d 6–271 c 2); (2) the story returns back to the preceding era of the Demiurge with the E–W rotation, abundance of fruits and the earth-born who developed forwards (271 c 8–272 d 6); (3) [=1] the story switches

¹⁸ So, explicitly, e. g. Adam (n. 9) II, 295.

¹⁹ See Rowe (n. 2) 189 ad 270 b 7–8: “large-scale destruction (270 c–d) ... seems an inauspicious way of inaugurating what is supposed to be a golden age”.

²⁰ Carone, who also admits that the narrative starts from the withdrawal of the god, believes that the story follows strictly the order of the events, and introduces the additional phase for this purpose (see further).

again, now explicitly, to the withdrawal of the Demiurge, the reversal of the universe to the W–E rotation, the turbulences accompanying it and to the perishing of living beings already mentioned earlier (272 d 6–273 a 4); (4) the reversal to the contemporary era with the E–W rotation (described at 273 a 4–b 2, according to Rowe; at 273 d 4–e 5, according to Brisson);²¹ (5) the contemporary era (273 e 6–274 d 8).

First, we shall deal with the argument that the return of the god to the helm is incompatible with the perishing of living beings on large scale. The direct statement in the text dismantles this wishful thinking: *both* possible reversals of the universe, according to the theoretical introduction, are accompanied by the greatest destructions of living beings, so that only a small part of the humankind survives (270 b 7–d 1).²² Moreover, this brutal handling of humankind by the god is significant. The universe in its degraded phase, at the verge of dissolution, is involved in the whole complex of evils, both physical (growing old and illnesses) and moral, and it conveys these defects to its inhabitants (273 c 5–d 4). It is hardly surprising then that the Demiurge who returns to the helm to save the universe destroys these degraded living beings in order to clean the stage for better ones. According to the story, he cures the universe by ‘the turning round of what had got diseased and destroyed in the previous era’ (273 e 1–2); this corresponds admirably to the reversal of ageing, with its forceful rejuvenation.²³ The destruction is not only an inescapable device of improving the universe, but also, beyond any doubt, the act of justifiable requital in Plato’s eyes: the last generation of the autonomous universe, according to the story, is extraordinarily wicked, and the previous generations, as we shall see, deserve a better lot.²⁴ Last, there is an indirect proof: the reader can detect here coinci-

²¹ See above on this divergence and on differences in assigning of 273 b 2–d 4 either to the contemporary era (traditionalists and Rowe) or to the interim era (Brisson and Carone).

²² This is correctly stated by Diès (n. 8) XXXIV: “c’est que chaque renversement de mouvement commence par détruire ce qui est, pour faire place nette à ce qui viendra”, cf. also Horn (n. 5) 150.

²³ μέγιστον by itself only means that one effect of the reversal to the direction opposite to the contemporary one, namely the appearance of backward ageing, is the most considerable *among the other effects* (270 d 1–4); it says nothing about the relative scale of the destruction. However, the destruction, which accompanies this reversal, seems to be on the larger scale than the one that accompanies the Demiurge’s withdrawal: those who lived during the age of Cronus did not remember the previous era, as they *all* revived from the earth (272 a 1–2). On the contrary, those who had survived during the reversal to the contemporary rotation preserved memory of the ‘earth-born’ of the previous period (271 a 5–b 1). This should explain why no tradition of the era before the Golden Age survives, although, according to the story, the cycles alternate continuously.

²⁴ This view of the cataclysm as the divine punishment has parallels in later Plato’s dialogues. According to the *Timaeus* (22 d 6–7), the gods regularly purify the earth from the most part of population of highly developed and (for this reason) morally decayed

dence of the narrated events with Hesiod's myth of generations, the constant source of eschatological imagination throughout the story, which accurately reinterprets it in the light of advanced cosmology: Hesiod promises that Zeus will destroy the wretched race of the contemporary humankind (*Op.* 180 f.), possibly expecting the creation of the better race after that (*Op.* 175), i. e. the start of the new cycle, as many today's commentators understand Hesiod's myth and as Plato must have understood it. Thus, the salvation of the universe does not imply benefits for the last inhabitants of the autonomous universe. It is the good of the whole and not individuals that is the primary purpose of the Demiurge's return, with a possible exception of the good of individual souls (see further).

On the other hand, some references in the text do not allow proposed changes in the order of the story. First, it is said that the reversal of the universe after the withdrawal of the god caused 'again one more destruction' of living beings (273 a 3 ἄλλην αὖ φθορὰν ζώων παντοίων). The single destruction mentioned before was the one that caused the ageing backwards, when the universe reverted to the rotation *opposite to the contemporary one* (270 d 11 – 271 a 2). If both destructions referred to the same event, as Brisson and Rowe claim, ἄλλη at 273 a 3 is surprising at the least.²⁵

Furthermore, at 271 a 3 – b 2, the interlocutors maintain that sexual reproduction was impossible when the ageing was backwards: instead, the living beings were born from the earth and this form of generation is explained as the result of the ageing backwards: the people born at that time were in fact the revived dead. In the era of Cronus, as the story mentions further, the living beings were also born from the earth. Let us assume that the era of Cronus precedes the ageing backwards, and that the birth from the earth in the era of Cronus, when the living beings were formed by the god and developed forwards, should be distinguished from the birth from the earth that accompanies ageing backwards, as Brisson and Rowe argue. In this case one should expect that the story-teller, when depicting the era of Cronus, would point out the difference between two forms of the birth from the earth. He, however, does not hint at any difference; on the contrary, he says that the generation in the age of Cronus was a generation from the earth, *as the reader knows already*: ἐκ γῆς

civilisations by the floods; the comparison of the moral health of the primitive society after the flood to the city culture destroyed by a cataclysm, in the *Laws* (III. 677 b 5–8; 678 b 1–3; 679 b–e), implies the same providential role of cataclysms.

²⁵ According to Rowe ([n. 2] 195 ad loc.), ἄλλη refers to the similar destructions in the previous cycles. This is not entirely impossible (especially if πάλιν 272 e 5 has temporal, not spatial meaning, which is not certain), but is less natural than taking ἄλλη as referring to the destruction explicitly mentioned earlier, as Carone ([n. 4] 101 n. 41) admits. Note also that ἄλλη appears at the place, where, following Brisson's and Rowe's interpretation, one would expect a reminder that this destruction is the *same* as the one that had been already mentioned.

γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες (272 a 1), i. e. knows from the depiction of the reversal of ageing and its results. On the other hand, if the birth from the earth as the result of the development backwards is the next phase after the birth from the earth in the era of Cronus, one should expect some indication that one mode of birth transformed into another; however, the birth from the earth as the result of the development backwards is introduced as an entirely new phenomenon, which requires a detailed explanation, without any hint that another form of the birth from the earth existed earlier, in the age of Cronus. Both these difficulties are resolved, if the ageing backwards and the birth from the earth occur at the moment of the Demiurge's return to the helm, after the era similar to ours, and if the ES, following the order of events, now proceeds to describe the reign of Cronus with the same mode of birth as the one he just explained.²⁶

Carone, modifying the previous versions of the NI, in fact admits that the narrative here follows the order of events. She also links, as Brisson and Rowe do, the ageing backwards (270 d 6–271 a 1) to the withdrawal of the god and to the reversal of the universe to the W–E rotation. She proposes, however, that this withdrawal happens not at the end of the age of Cronus described at 272 d 6 ff., but at the end of the previous era of Demiurge's rule.²⁷ Thus, 270 c 11–271 b 4 describes the god's withdrawal, the reversal of the rotation – it now becomes opposite to the contemporary one – and the ageing backwards as a consequence of this reversal. At 271 b 4–c 1 the text indicates, according to Carone, the change in the form of generation: the living beings are still earth-born, as they were previously, but now they are born as infants and age forwards. This implies the god's return to the helm, the reversal of the universe (now to the E–W direction) and the beginning of the new era of Cronus, which is described at 272 d 6 ff. She further argues that the beginning of the ageing forwards at the dawn of the contemporary era (those who grow smaller and almost disappear began to grow up again, 273 e 6–11) does not take place immediately after the era of Cronus, as the traditionalists believe. This change implies the start of another interim era after the god's withdrawal: the universe reverts to the W–E rotation, the living beings begin to develop backwards. After that, the god returns, reverts the universe to the E–W rotation, stops both the ageing backwards and the birth from the earth, and our era begins (Carone assumes, following Brisson, that this return is described as the saving of the universe from the danger of dissolution, 273 d 4–e 4).²⁸ Thus, according to Carone, the whole

²⁶ It is not clear for me why Brisson (n. 1, 1995) 351 is certain that the reversal of ageing at 270 d 6–271 a 2 cannot follow the era with the sexual reproduction, but only the era with generation from the earth.

²⁷ Brisson (n. 1, 1995) 352 earlier pointed out this possibility as an alternative.

²⁸ Carone (n. 4) 96–98.

story describes four phases, with three reversals, instead of traditionalists' two phases with one reversal.

This ingenious attempt to save Brisson's proposal overcomes some difficulties produced by his hypothesis, most importantly, the alleged transposition in the order of the narrative that Brisson and Rowe presuppose, which conflicts with the text, as it was shown above. However, the price paid for this improvement is high – we now have a much more complicated cycle, with two interim eras instead of one. More important is the question whether the textual foundations for this new version are solid. These foundations are reduced to two passages: (1) the comparison of the souls which fall into the earth as seeds during the era of Cronus (272 e 3), which Carone together with the other proponents of the NI interpret as evidence that the living beings in this era developed forwards, that is, as nowadays and in the direction opposite to the interim era(s); (2) 270 b 11 – 271 a 2, which she takes as an indication that the transition from ageing backwards to ageing forwards takes place and that it marks the beginning of a new era.

Let us start from the second passage (271 a 2 – c 4):

NE. ΣΩ. Γένεσις δὲ δὴ τίς τότ' ἦν, ᾧ ξένη, ζώων; καὶ τίνα τρόπον ἐξ ἀλλήλων ἐγεννῶντο;

ΞΕ. Δῆλον, ᾧ Σώκρατες, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἀλλήλων οὐκ ἦν ἐν τῇ τότε φύσει γεννώμενον, τὸ δὲ γηγενὲς εἶναι ποτε γένος λεχθὲν τοῦτ' ἦν τὸ κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον ἐκ γῆς πάλιν ἀναστρεφόμενον, ἀπεμνημονεύετο δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων προγόνων τῶν πρώτων, οἱ τελευτώσῃ μὲν τῇ προτέρᾳ περιφορᾷ τὸν ἐξῆς χρόνον ἐγειτόνουν, τῆσδε δὲ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐφύοντο· τούτων γὰρ οὔτοι κήρυκες ἐγένονθ' ἡμῖν τῶν λόγων, οἱ νῦν ὑπὸ πολλῶν οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀπιστοῦνται. τὸ γὰρ ἐντεῦθεν οἶμαι χρῆ συννοεῖν. ἐπόμενον (Stallbaum, ἐχόμενον *mss*)²⁹ γὰρ ἐστὶ τῷ (T, Eus. [IO]; τὸ βW, Eus. [BN]) τοὺς πρεσβύτας ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς ἰέναι φύσιν, ἐκ τῶν τετελευτηκότων αὐτῶν, κειμένων δὲ ἐν γῆ, πάλιν ἐκεῖ συνισταμένους καὶ ἀναβιωσκομένους, ἔπεσθαι (om. β) τῇ

²⁹ I follow Stallbaum's emendation ἐπόμενον of the manuscript ἐχόμενον, accepted by the majority of editors: ἐχόμενον in the meaning 'next to, related to, partaking in' normally governs the genitive and not the dative (ἐάν τις σε τὰ ἐχόμενα τούτοις ἐφεξῆς ἅπαντα ἐρωτᾷ, *Gorg.* 494 e 2–3, was similarly changed into τούτων by I. Bekker; but E. R. Dodds [ed.], Plato, *Gorgias* [Oxford 1959] ad loc., retains the manuscript text, making τούτοις dependent on ἐφεξῆς, not on ἐχόμενον); 271 c 3, κομιδῇ μὲν οὖν τοῦτό γε ἔπεται τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν gives some support to this emendation. Campbell's suggestion ἐχόμενον ... τοῦ τοῦς πρεσβύτας will give a sense similar to that of Stallbaum, while his cautious defence of ἐχόμενον with the dative is hardly acceptable; τὸ τοῦς πρεσβύτας κτλ. of one part of the manuscripts (the family β, and a part of Eusebius' mss.) might be an attempt to emend the text with ἐχόμενον; this attempt makes the awkward syntax even more awkward and turns the ageing backwards into one of the results of an unclear antecedent, instead of it being this antecedent. It is interesting that the participle ἐπόμενον, normally governing the dative in Plato, may govern also the genitive (*Pol.* 271 e 3, see, however, Campbell ad loc., for an alternative construction; *Rep.* 504 b 10 with J. Adam ad loc.; *Leg.* 899 c 8 συνεπόμενα with E. B. England).

τροπή συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τάναντία τῆς γενέσεως, καὶ γηγενεῖς δὴ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐξ ἀνάγκης φυομένους, οὕτως ἔχειν τοῦνομα καὶ τὸν λογόν, ὅσους μὴ θεὸς αὐτῶν εἰς ἄλλην μοῖραν ἐκόμισεν.
NE. ΣΩ. Κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν τοῦτό γε ἔπεται τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν.

The passage follows immediately the description of the reversal of the universe, the starting of ageing backwards until total disappearance of human beings (270 b 11 – 271 a 2). According to Carone, all these processes belong to the era of the Demiurge's withdrawal and this era is described until the word ἐπόμενον. The ἐπόμενον γὰρ ἐστὶ τῷ τοῦς πρεσβύτας κτλ. indicates, on the contrary, that the birth from the earth accompanied by the ageing backwards, from old age to childhood (τοῦς πρεσβύτας ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παιδὸς ἰέναι φύσιν), now transforms into the birth from the earth accompanied by the ageing forwards, from childhood to old age; ἔπεσθαι τῇ τροπῇ συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τάναντία τῆς γενέσεως should point out to this reversal in the mode of ageing, i. e. that it changes into the opposite to the ageing backwards.³⁰ This change implies that the Demiurge returned to the helm, reverted the universe, and produced the new stock of the earth-born.³¹ The exception at the end of this resuming sentence, ὅσους μὴ θεὸς αὐτῶν εἰς ἄλλην μοῖραν ἐκόμισεν, represents the god as an agent and thus confirms that we are already in the divine era, and not in the autonomous one, to which the ageing backwards belongs.

This alleged transition from one form of birth from the earth to another in the passage in question turns out, however, a ghost one. The immediate purpose of the whole reasoning is evident from the introductory statement and the resuming remarks of the ES. The YS wonders how living beings were created at the time of ageing backwards. The ES states that the sexual reproduction ceased to exist and the living beings were created from the earth; this creation cannot be called birth in absolute sense, but rather the revival of the dead. Our ancestors who lived in the beginning of our rotation and in the proximity to the previous one witnessed this mode of birth; they passed on to us the stories about the earth-born, stories suspected today, unjustly. What follows is only the endorsement of this unusual view, as shown in the resuming remark of the ES (καὶ γηγενεῖς δὴ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον³² ἐξ ἀνάγκης φυομένους, οὕτως ἔχειν

³⁰ Brisson and Rowe assign all process of revival to the interim autonomous era, sandwiched between the era of Cronus and the contemporary era, while the traditionalists assign them all to the era of Cronus.

³¹ Carone (n. 4) 97 f.

³² The editors of the New Oxford Plato prefer the τὸν τρόπον of Eusebius to τὸν λόγον of Plato's mss; the former variant seems, however, to have originated from an attempt to avoid the repetition of the λόγος in the same sentence, repetition, which, in fact, is not alien to Plato's style. Anyway, τὸν τρόπον emphasises even more definitely that the whole passage is devoted to only one mode of generation.

τοῦνομα καὶ τὸν λόγον), which stresses the causal connection between the reversal of ageing and re-birth from the earth. The whole reasoning shows why it is logical to accept as credible the contemporary stories about the earth-born and, at the same time, to elucidate, in accordance with the usual narrative strategy of the ES, how these stories distort the truth – they fail to mention that the birth from the earth was the direct result of the ageing backwards.

This final remark refers also to the contemporary stories about the earth-born (οὕτως ἔχειν τοῦνομα καὶ τὸν λόγον, i. e. ‘they have the name [of the earth-born] and the corresponding stories’), and resumes the beginning of the reasoning: the earth-born created by the ageing backwards were witnessed by our ancestors at the dawn of the contemporary era (τούτων γὰρ οὗτοι κήρυκες ἐγένονθ’ ἡμῖν τῶν λόγων, οἱ νῦν ὑπὸ πολλῶν οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀπιστοῦνται).³³ Hence, the form of generation that ceased to exist at the dawn of our era was the same that appeared together with the start of development backwards, i. e. with the return of the Demiurge to the helm, according to the TI.

So far, there is no reason to insert the transition from the earth-born of the era with ageing backwards to the earth-born with the aging forwards. The sentence, which, according to Carone, introduces the new phase in creation of living beings (ἐπόμενον γὰρ ἐστὶ τῷ τοῦς πρεσβύτασ κτλ.), simply indicates that the birth from the earth was a natural consequence of the ageing backwards: if the old are getting young, the infants are disappearing and dying, then the dead should follow the same reversed order of events and thus revive (Greek tradition, let us remember, knows the birth, but not the re-birth of the dead, from the earth).³⁴ Taken that the συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τὰναντία τῆς γενέσεως refers to the same ‘reversal of generation’, from the ageing forwards to the ageing backwards, as described before, the controversial sentence may be rendered as follows:

For it was the sequence [or the next step] of the development from the old age to the childhood that the [earth-born], having been formed again from the dead lying in the earth and coming back to life, followed the reversal [of the universe], when the generation began to circle back together with this reversal,

³³ According to Carone (n. 4) 100 n. 42 the sense of these words is that our ancestors witnessed not exactly this birth from the earth with the accompanying ageing backward, but another generation *of the same type* which emerged in the transitional era between the age of Cronus and our epoch; the arguments in favour of this transitional era are untenable, as we shall see; the immediate context does not imply this duplication of the eras either.

³⁴ Both ἐπόμενον and τὸ γὰρ ἐντεῦθεν, as well as the ἔπεται in the approving answer of the YS (271 c 3, κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν οὗτο γὰρ ἔπεται τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν) may have the meaning both of causal connection and of temporal succession. The crucial point is not the choice between these two meanings, as Carone puts it, but the question whether the temporal succession implies the break of causal connection, as she wishes the case were. In my view, nothing suggests this break. Cf. *Polit.* 293 a ἐπόμενον (sc. ἐστὶ) τούτῳ introduces the next step in the argument.

and having thus come into existence in the necessary way as the earth-born, according to this reasoning, have this name and this reputation in the sense *as explained above*, – all those whom god did not translate to another destiny.³⁵
Y. S. Yes, this follows certainly from what went before.³⁶

Now, taken that the ageing backwards and regeneration are results of the Demiurge's return to the helm and the reversal of the universe to the direction opposed to the contemporary (as I have argued), the reasoning we have just discussed must refer to the divine era. The exception at the end of the passage (ὅσους μὴ θεὸς αὐτῶν εἰς ἄλλην μοῖραν ἐκόμισεν) is in agreement with this view; and the point that our ancestors, who lived in the proximity to the previous rotation witnessed those who revived from the earth as an effect of ageing backwards, confirms the traditional view that the era of the Demiurge precedes *immediately* our era.

We are now in the better position to assess another passage, which adjoins this explanation of the revival. Answering the question of the YS, whether the era of Cronus belongs to the contemporary rotation of the universe or to the earlier one, the ES states that this era in no way belongs to the contemporary rotation, it *also* belongs to the earlier one (271 c 4 – d 4):

NE. ΣΩ. ἀλλὰ δὴ τὸν βίον ὃν ἐπὶ τῆς Κρόνου φῆς εἶναι δυνάμεως, πότερον ἐν ἐκείναις ἦν ταῖς τροπαῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖσδε; τὴν μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄστρον τε καὶ ἡλίου μεταβολὴν δῆλον ὡς ἐν ἑκατέραις συμπίπτει ταῖς τροπαῖς γίνεσθαι.
ΞΕ. Καλῶς τῷ λόγῳ συμπαραηκολούθηκας. ὃ δ' ἤρου περὶ τοῦ πάντα αὐτόματα γίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἥκιστα τῆς νῦν ἐστὶ καθεστηκυίας φορᾶς, ἀλλ' ἦν καὶ τοῦτο τῆς ἔμπροσθεν. τότε γὰρ αὐτῆς πρῶτον τῆς κυκλήσεως ἦρχεν ἐπιμελούμενος ὅλης ὁ θεὸς κτλ.

The most obvious sense of this conversation is that the era of Cronus belongs *also* to the rotation that immediately precedes the contemporary one, like

³⁵ I take it that τῆ τροπῆ [sc. the reversal of the universe] depends both on ἔπεσθαι and on συνανακυκλουμένης, συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τάναντία τῆς γενέσεως being the *genetivus absolutus*, cf. 270 d 3 for a similar construction with a similar sense. Another possibility is that τῆς γενέσεως κτλ. depends on τῆ τροπῆ (the revived followed the reversal of the generation that started together with the reversal of cosmic revolutions, συνανακυκλουμένης implies τῷ κόσμῳ). The omission of ἔπεσθαι in β approved by Campbell as the genuine reading is certainly possible (τῆ τροπῆ συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τάναντία τῆς γενέσεως would be in that case the *genetivus absolutus*).

³⁶ ἔπεσθαι τῆ τροπῆ συνανακυκλουμένης εἰς τάναντία τῆς γενέσεως, independent on the treatment of the syntax, shows (as Carone [n. 4] 72 rightly stresses) that the story suggests the strict correspondence between the development of living beings and the direction of cosmic revolutions. This rules out an otherwise possible modification of the traditional view, namely that the living beings develop forwards in both eras, the Cronus' and the contemporary one, although the universe rotates in the opposite directions, and that the ageing backwards took place only at the moment of the reversal, which made the time go back only for those who lived at this moment.

the ageing backwards and the revival of the dead, mentioned before. Rowe, however, argues *contra* that the remark that accompanies the question of the YS, ‘there is a cosmic reversal in each of two rotations’ (τὴν μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄστρον τε καὶ ἡλίου μεταβολὴν κτλ.),³⁷ would be irrelevant for the traditional two-phase interpretation. The remark, according to him, implies a radical difference of the conditions of the age of Cronus and of the present era, which should be explained by cosmic reversal. Since, however, the reversal at the end of the present era is hardly pertinent (Rowe assumes that ἐν ἑκατέραις συμπίπτει ταῖς τροπαῖς points to the reversals *at the end* of each two rotations), ἐν ἑκατέραις should mean at the end of the divine era and at the end of the interim era. Thus, the question of the YS is whether the age of Cronus belongs to the rotation steered by the Demiurge (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς τροπαῖς) or to the contemporary rotation (ἐν ταῖσδε), but the latter embraces *two* rotations, that of the interim era and of the contemporary one, which have *opposite* (!) directions.³⁸ This is awkward enough, and becomes even more awkward when the ES answers ἥκιστα τῆς νῦν ἐστὶ καθεστηκυῖας φοράς, ἀλλ’ ἦν καὶ τοῦτο τῆς ἔμπροσθεν, thus showing that he understands under the present rotation only the contemporary one, since καθεστηκυῖα φορά would be an absurd expression for two opposite rotations.

In fact the meaning of this conversation is simple. The question is whether the age of Cronus occurs during the more remote reversals of the universe or during the contemporary ones (πότερον ἐν ἐκείναις ἢ ἐν ταῖς τροπαῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖσδε). The following remark explains uncertainty of the YS: the μεταβολαί of the sun and the stars, i. e. the reversals of the universe, happen during *both* modes of rotation (τὴν μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄστρον τε καὶ ἡλίου μεταβολὴν δῆλον ὡς ἐν ἑκατέραις συμπίπτει ταῖς τροπαῖς γίνεσθαι). The remark is pertinent, for the TI, – the age of Cronus, according to the preamble of the story, is a part of evidence in tradition for the reversals of the universe and accompanying radical changes (269 a 7–b 3). Such changes are concomitants of two reversals – from the rotation steered by the god to the autonomous one and vice versa – and they occur *at the beginning* of each of the two rotations (270 b 10–12). Only these reversals and two opposite rotations are known to the YS and to the reader up to this moment, no matter whether the TI or the NI is correct. The YS thus shows that he is aware of the connection between appearance of the age of Cronus and one of the two reversals, but is uncertain with what reversal, or with what rotation exactly the age of Cronus should be linked.

At first sight, it is strange that the YS does not catch immediately that the age of Cronus is a part of the era of Demiurge’s rule. One should take in account,

³⁷ It is preferable to understand τροπαί here and in the preceding sentence as ‘revolutions’, not ‘reversals’ (Rowe [n. 2] 191 ad 271 c 4–7, against Brisson), not only because otherwise it makes ἄστρον τε καὶ ἡλίου μεταβολὴν pleonastic, but also because the ES renders in his answer τροπαί as φορά.

³⁸ Rowe (n. 2) 191–192 ad 271 c 4–7; 192 ad 271 d 2.

however, that the previously described processes of ageing backwards, destruction of the previous generation and revival of the new generation from the earth (all these being consequences of the Demiurge's return, according to the TI) were not favourable to human beings. Moreover, it is not entirely correct, as Rowe assumes, that the YS should have grasped immediately that the differences in conditions between Cronus' age and our world imply the cosmic reversal *between* them: the tradition does not transmit any evidence of any catastrophe on the cosmic scale separating Cronus' age from the contemporary universe. The YS might have thought that the beginning of the contemporary era was a more appropriate moment for Cronus' age than the era of the Demiurge's rule.

The question of the YS thus supposes only two opposite rotations, one under the rule of the Demiurge and the other autonomous. The reply of the ES introduces no modification: the age of Cronus was *also* during the previous rotation, and it was the rotation opposite to the contemporary one.³⁹ Thus, no interim era is implied in this part of the dialogue, and the *also* testifies that the age of Cronus belongs to the same era to which the reversal of ageing and regeneration from the earth described in the previous part belong.

There remains, if my previous argumentation is correct, only one passage that allegedly proves, according to the proponents of the NI, that living beings in the age of Cronus developed forwards, as nowadays, in contrast to the earth-born who were created as the result of the ageing backwards. This is the passage related to the end of the Demiurge's rule (272 d 6–e 6):

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντων τούτων χρόνος ἐτελέωθη καὶ μεταβολὴν ἔδει γίνεσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ γήινον ἤδη πᾶν ἀνήλωτο γένος, πάσας ἐκάστης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς γενέσεις ἀποδεδωκυίας, ὅσα ἦν ἐκάστη προσταχθὲν τοσαῦτα εἰς γῆν σπέρματα πεσοῦσης, τότε δὴ τοῦ παντός ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης, οἷον πηδαλίων οἶακος ἀφέμενος, εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη, τὸν δὲ δὴ κόσμον πάλιν ἀνέστρεφεν εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία.

The proponents of the NI believe that the comparison of the souls with the seeds that fall into the earth implies that the development of the earth-born in the era of Cronus was the same as nowadays, from infant to the old.⁴⁰ Presumably,

³⁹ For this reason, since the YS envisages only these two opposite rotations and the ES accepts the same alternative, one should reject the proposal of Carone (n. 4) 98 that the answer ἀλλ' ἦν καὶ τοῦτο τῆς ἔμπροσθεν implies not the era immediately preceding the contemporary (it should have the rotation opposite to the contemporary rotation), but the era earlier than the contemporary (it can rotate in the same direction).

⁴⁰ According to Carone (n. 4) 94 f., 97, the souls falling into the earth as seeds in the era of Cronus imply the normal process of development, like the plants in that era presumably had. Rowe notices that an abundance of spontaneously grown fruits in the era of Cronus (272 a 4–5) implies that the plants developed then forwards, and infers that the same is true for the animals and human beings. In my view, Plato might have not considered at all how this

they suppose something like the process of organic development, surely of an extraordinary type, but still entailing the formation of a germ in the earth, its growth and development into the organism as in womb, and then the appearance of the living being from the earth and their further development forwards.⁴¹ First, it should be said that not the souls themselves are compared with the seeds, but their falling in the earth is compared with sowing ('each soul fell in the earth so many times in a way of sowings as it had been prescribed to the each').⁴² Now, the 'sowing' of the souls on the earth and planets by the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* (42 d) does not imply any following gradual development of the organism, as if from the germ. On the contrary – the lesser gods, who overtake the task of creation from the Demiurge, mould the bodies for the souls sown by him.⁴³ The sowing in the *Statesman* does not

traditional feature of the era of Cronus may be harmonized with the processes of growth he describes; however, if he did, he may well have implied that the plants were produced by the divine force in the same way as the living beings, without any sowing, from the remnants of plants of the previous era; their development should be accordingly the same, from the old age through flourishing up to diminution and total destruction at the end.

⁴¹ Note that according to the NI the sowing implies that the soul is a germ from which the body develops, the idea certainly alien to Plato.

⁴² The phrase is often misconstrued, as if σπέρματα is apposed to the τῆς ψυχῆς ... πεσοῦσης. However, if it were the case, we would have expected the *genitive* σπερμάτων; in fact, τοσαῦτα σπέρματα πεσοῦσης is the internal accusative (cf. examples in *Kühner – Gerth*, I. 305–307), which means 'so many sowings', as pointed out already K. F. Hermann (*Platonis opera* [Lipsiae 1872], praef. XXIX ad loc.: "σπέρματα ipsas cadendi vices significare"; Hermann rejected the emendation proposed by H. Sauppe τῆς ψυχῆς ... εἰς γῆς σπέρματα πεσοῦσης as superfluous); cf. Campbell (n. 8) 62 f. ad loc., who compares for the verbal meaning of σπέρμα Hes. *Op.* 781 (Μηνὸς δ' ἰσταμένου τρεῖσκαίδεκάτην ἀλέασθαι / σπέρματος ἀρξασθαι) and Soph. *OR* 1246; see on Hesiod M. L. West (ed.), Hesiod, *Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 355 ad *Op.* 781. This usage of σπέρματα may have an archaic flavour, as indeed the phrase itself.

⁴³ Typically, Plato re-interprets the birth by the earth of the Greek myths as creation from the earth by the god(s): according to Protagoras' myth (*Prot.* 320 d), the humans are moulded and equipped with everything necessary in the depth of the earth by the gods; the future guardians of the Kallipolis should be persuaded by the 'Phoenician lie' that they are born from the earth (*Rep.* III. 414 d–415 a), and this entails that they are created by a god (415 a 4: ὁ θεὸς πλάττων). Plato's resistance to the idea of spontaneous generation is not only implicit: in the *Phaedo* (96 b 2–3) Socrates criticises, among the other doctrines of his predecessors who admitted in their cosmogonies material causality only and ignored rational agency, the view that the living beings are generated by putrefaction produced by 'the hot' and 'the cold'; the creation of the humankind by the gods in the *Tim.* 42 d is clearly presented as an alternative to these materialistic views: the Demiurge (see above) sows the souls into the Earth, the Moon and the other planets and then hands over to the subordinate gods to mould the human bodies; the creation of the Athenians by Athena and Hephaistos in the *Critias* (109 d 1–2) obviously illustrates this latter process. The mechanistic formation of living beings in the interim era, as the proponents of the NI suggest, would be out of tune with this insistent creationist stance. Only in the earlier *Menexenus* (238 b 1–2) the earth

need to imply the gradual development of an embryo and the ageing forwards. There are reasons to believe, as we shall see, that the lesser gods play in the *Statesman* myth the creative role similar to that in the *Timaeus*.

The birth from the earth in the result of the ageing backwards is described as the re-formation of the dead bodies, which lay in the earth, and their revival: *πάλιν ἐκεῖ συνισταμένους καὶ ἀναβιωσκομένους* (271 b 7). Brisson and Rowe treat this formation of living beings as purely mechanical and assign it to the period deprived of divine rule.⁴⁴ There are two indications in the text that prove, to the contrary, that this is the process directed by divine forces.⁴⁵ The first is the retrospective *γάρ* at 272 a 1 already cited (*ἐκ γῆς γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες*), where the revival from the earth in the age of Cronus is mentioned. It implies that it is the same mode of birth as explained above (271 b 7), i. e. revival of the dead that was the result of the ageing backwards. The second indication is in the beginning of the description of the contemporary era: here the ES opposes the new form of sexual reproduction and parenting to the creation of living beings with the help of external agents in the era of the god's rule (274 a 3 – b 1):

οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν ἔτ' ἐν γῆ δι' ἐτέρων συνιστάντων φύεσθαι ζῶον, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ τῷ κόσμῳ προσετέτακτο αὐτοκράτορα εἶναι τῆς αὐτοῦ πορείας, οὕτω δὲ κατὰ ταῦτα καὶ τοῖς μέρεσιν αὐτοῖς δι' αὐτῶν, καθ' ὅσον οἶόν τ' ἦν, φύειν τε καὶ γεννᾶν καὶ τρέφειν προσετέτακτο ὑπὸ τῆς ὁμοίας ἀγωγῆς.

The passage refers to the mode of creation under the god's rule as something the reader already knows. Now, as we have seen, this mode was not described explicitly, but only briefly referred to (272 a 1, *ἐκ γῆς γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες*) as identical to the mode of birth that appeared as a consequence of the ageing backwards (271 b 7, *πάλιν ἐκεῖ συνισταμένους καὶ ἀναβιωσκομένους*). Thus, the reference in 274 a 3 is related ultimately to 271 b 7, and *πάλιν ἐκεῖ συνισταμένους καὶ ἀναβιωσκομένους* (271 b 7) is the same process as *ἐν γῆ δι' ἐτέρων συνιστάντων* (274 a 3), the creation of the living beings by the divine forces, not the 'mechanistic process' of formation in the earth of the proponents of the NI, for which there is no traces in the story at all.

Now to a more difficult point: the final stage of the development backwards is diminishing and total disappearance of a body (270 e 8–10). On the other hand, the earth-born of the era of Cronus are the dead who, *lying in the earth*, were put together again and revived (271 b 4–7). Here arises a difficulty for the TI: if the revived of the divine era were those who had died in the course of

itself is represented in a more traditional vein, as a *creatrix* who then gives her children to the gods for education.

⁴⁴ Rowe (n. 2) 191 ad 271 b 6–7; 194 ad 272 d 8–e 3; idem (n. 3) 166 n. 9.

⁴⁵ Rowe ([n. 3] 166 n. 9) takes into account this possibility but regards these indications as non-conclusive.

ageing backwards, there would have been no remnants in the earth to make new bodies for them.⁴⁶ Rowe uses this discrepancy to show that the development backwards and the revival as its consequence belong not to the divine era, but to the era of god's withdrawal, and that those who came back to life (born old from the earth) were those who had died in the previous, divine era (described later in the text, as he believes). According to his interpretation, those who came back to life in the era of Cronus as the earth-born were totally different: they were produced by gods with new bodies, "from the sowing of earth with souls", grew from the earth as infants, developed normally, died old and came back to life as grey-haired in the next era after the Demiurge's withdrawal.⁴⁷

However, given that the development backwards and the revival of the dead as its consequence belong to the era of the Demiurge's return, as I argue, the difficulty is easily overcome: the revived under the rule of the god were those who had died in the previous era of the autonomous universe.⁴⁸ This explains why the end of the era of Cronus coincides with *using up the entire earth-born generation* (272 d 6–e 1): ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πάντων τούτων χρόνος ἐτελεώθη καὶ μεταβολὴν ἔδει γίγνεσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ γήνον ἤδη πᾶν ἀνήλωτο γένος, πάσας ἐκάστης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς γενέσεις ἀποδεδωκυίας, ὅσα ἦν ἐκάστη προσταχθὲν τοσαῦτα εἰς γῆν σπέρματα πεσοῦσης. If the revived of the divine era were those who had died during that era, who grew forwards, died old and were created permanently, as Rowe proposes, the process might have continued endlessly.⁴⁹ But if the revived were those who had died in the previous era, the revival had its natural end, and this again explains why every soul fell into the earth the prescribed number of 'sowings': it had to incarnate as many times as it was necessary to revive the all dead of the previous era.⁵⁰ The revival during the divine era of those who had died during the

⁴⁶ See e. g. Skemp (n. 8) 114: "they live from maturity to infancy in the opposite course to us and *disappear in utmost infancy into the earth to be the seed of further generations of the earth-born*" (my italics).

⁴⁷ Rowe (n. 2) 191 ad 271 b 6–7; 194 ad 272 d 8–e 3; 196 ad 274 a 3–4.

⁴⁸ Here I develop a brief proposal of Lane ([n. 5] 105 with n. 8), in her criticism of Rowe. Earlier, Campbell ([n. 8] 54 ad v. 1 and 68 ad v. 1) made a similar albeit less clear proposal, but it seems to have been overlooked by other scholars.

⁴⁹ Rowe (n. 3) 164 n. 6, 166 n. 9 supposes that the adjective γήινος was chosen with the purpose to distinguish the earth-born of the era of Cronus from the earth-born of the following interim era, who are called γηγενεῖς. In fact, the epithets imply no difference (γήινος means simply 'of the earth matter', see e. g. *Phaedr.* 246 c 3; *Epin.* 981 c 8; 982 a 6; 984 b 3; cf. Semon. 7. 21 f. West: τὴν δὲ πλάσαντες γήινην Ὀλύμπιοι ἔδωκαν ἀνδρὶ πηρόν).

⁵⁰ The amount of souls is fixed, according to the *Rep.* 611 a; it is equal to the amount of the stars, according to the *Tim.* 41 d 8–e 1; apparently, the number of the dead of the autonomous era exceeds this amount. An alternative proposal (D. O'Brien, *Empedocles' Cosmic Cycle* [Cambridge 1969] 90 f.; Rowe [n. 2] 194 ad loc.) is that the limit of

autonomous era, similar to one in which we live, full of defects and sins, is certainly much more meaningful and relevant for us than the revival of those who had died during the blessed and sinless era of the divine rule during the alleged third era, the distorted counter-world, on which nothing is reported in the story, apart of the ageing backwards, according to the NI.

Some other details of the revival of the dead are significant: since the souls, following the order of the Demiurge, had to fall into earth several times, the revival of the dead of the previous era was not simultaneous. Rather, it was a gradual process, which went together with the rotation of the universe in the direction opposite to that of the autonomous era – one can imagine that when the universe attained the certain point, those who died at that moment came to life.⁵¹ The souls, most naturally, had to incarnate into the bodies in which they incarnated previously, during the autonomous era, but now in the order opposite to the order of their previous incarnations. Plato in general does not think that the next incarnation of any soul in the autonomous era is necessarily worse than the previous one (there are certainly those who are able, due to virtuously lived life, to improve their lot in the next generation, see further on the minority exempted from the revival), but for the majority of souls it is certainly the case. The reverse order of incarnations makes for them possible to attain, under the divine guidance, the initial perfection they did not attain by their own efforts during the autonomous era:⁵² they now ought to live back their previous incarnations in order to escape from the sins they had committed previously, and to do so under the divine control, which rules out any possibility of further sins.

incarnations is implied in the doctrine of the *Phaedrus*, where *all* souls fallen from the highest of the heaven should regain their wings after ten incarnations in 10 000 years and return to the heavenly region, except the souls of those who lived three philosophical lives one after another and are released quicker, only in 3000 years (*Phaedr.* 248 e–249 a; cf. 257 a on floating of the worse souls around for 9000 years between incarnations). This proposal is less plausible, since, contrary to the *Phaedrus*, each soul in the *Statesman* should incarnate individual number of times, not one and the same number for all. Moreover, the widespread belief that the cycle of reincarnations in the *Phaedrus* implies the cosmic cycle (already Ed. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* II/1 [Leipzig 1922] 811 n. 4, identified the period of reincarnations in *Phaedr.* 248 c–e with the *Weltjahr*) is not correct: since the souls fall on the earth not simultaneously, the period of 10 000 years for one soul does not coincide with the same period for another.

⁵¹ The present participles συνισταμένους και ἀναβιωσκομένους ... φουμένους (271 b 7–c 1) confirm that the revival should be seen as a continuous process. It is not clear for me why Rowe ([n. 3] 166 n. 9) believes that if all those revived in the era of Cronus were the dead of the previous epoch, the divine era would have been enormously short (for this reason, he prefers to assign the process of revival to the interim epoch, which *is* short on his interpretation). Presumably, he admits that the revival must be simultaneous, but it is certainly not the case.

⁵² According to the *Timaeus* (41 e), the souls have equal chances at the point of their first incarnation and the Demiurge is free of suspicion of unfairness to any of them.

The proponents of the NI resist the view that the ageing backwards may be an element of the Demiurge's rule. We have seen that this abnormal development makes sense as far as the fortune of souls is concerned. But it has also other important functions. As we have seen, it is an effective device to remove from the stage the deprived people of the autonomous era, and an ingenious explanation of the birth from the earth, an essential constituent of the divine era. Moreover, both the question of the YS and the answer of the ES (271 a 3–5) show that they take incompatibility of ageing backwards and sexual reproduction for granted, presumably because an embryo would diminish and disappear, instead of growing, in the era of development backwards. Now one of the important elements of the rule of the Demiurge is the absence of family, which is necessary to contrast the all-controlling ruler of that era with the ruler of the contemporary world, whose competence is much more limited, *inter alia* by the parental power. Without the ageing backwards it would be necessary to find some additional device to explain why not only the first generation of the Cronus' people was the earth-born, but also the next generation was produced from the earth, from the ashes of the dead of the previous era.

At the same time, the ageing backwards is an appropriate demonstration of the divine agency in its effects upon natural processes. The ageing backwards is not an automatic process, it implies overriding the usual growing old and degradation, which are inevitable under normal conditions.⁵³ And this corresponds finely to what one may expect from the salving action of the Demiurge, who, according to the story, conveys to the universe immortality and agelessness it had initially, at the moment of creation, by curing the illnesses it acquired during its autonomous existence (270 a 4–6; 273 e 3–5). The ageing backwards, which works on individual level, implies an analogous rejuvenating process on the scale of the universe. At the end of this process all dead of the previous era are revived and the totality of souls attains again its initial perfection. It also means that at the end of the divine era the universe is entirely clean from the dead bodies, and in the beginning of the next autonomous era it is perfect and sane, as it was when it was created.⁵⁴

⁵³ There is a significant remark that the bodies of those, who suffered violent death in the time of ageing backwards, were destroyed so rapidly that there were no traces of them within a few days, *undergoing the same process as those who went through the normal back-ageing* (270 e 9–271 a 2). This acceleration of the processes opposite to rotting implies that supernatural forces stay behind the process of ageing backward. Rowe argues ([n. 3] 166 n. 9) that violent death cannot belong to the era of the god and contends that the ageing backwards is a part of the interim epoch, after the withdrawal of the god. But the violent death is a necessary concomitant of any reversal of the universe (see above).

⁵⁴ Although the reincarnations of souls backwards are more important than the revival of bodies, it seems nevertheless that purification of the earth from the dead bodies has also its own significance in the vision of cosmic cycles. The interest in this matter, of much

Now I turn to another debatable point: at what age the human beings were born from the earth in the era of Cronus? Here the difficulty lies in the passage that describes the end of the development backwards and the start of development forwards in the beginning of the contemporary era (273 e 6–11):

στρεφθέντος γὰρ αὖ τοῦ κόσμου τὴν ἐπὶ τὴν νῦν γένεσιν ὁδὸν τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας αὖ πάλιν ἴστατο καὶ καινὰ τὰναντία ἀπεδίδου τοῖς τότε. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ σμικρότητος ὀλίγου δέοντα ἠφανίσθαι τῶν ζῶων ηἰξάνετο, τὰ δ' ἐκ γῆς νεογενῆ σώματα πολιὰ φύντα πάλιν ἀποθνήσκοντα εἰς γῆν κατήει.

L. Campbell and many scholars after him believed that the human beings in the age of Cronus were born from the earth as adults in prime of their life and then developed backwards into infants until they disappeared.⁵⁵ The *πολιὰ φύντα* in the cited passage would mean that these adult new-born in the moment of reversal suddenly *became grey* and began to die, instead of growing younger. According to J. Adam, however, *πολιὰ φύντα* means ‘born with grey hair’ (*πολιὰ φύντα*),⁵⁶ and this implies that in the age of Cronus the people were normally born as old and then went backwards through all ages to childhood and disappearance; now, in the moment of reversal, these new-born die, instead of their usual transformation. The proponents of the NI accept Adam’s understanding of *φύντα* as ‘born’. Since they believe that not the age of Cronus, but the interim era immediately precedes our contemporary rotation, they assign this development from old age to infancy to this era, completely abandoned by the god.⁵⁷

The choice is not easy, but I think that Adam’s understanding of *πολιὰ φύντα* is preferable to that of Campbell, for the following reasons.⁵⁸ First of all, the ageing backwards, which, as I argued, started in the beginning of the divine era, was the development from old age to childhood and then to total disappearance (271 d 6–e 9), and the story does not imply any changes in this process.

more realistic kind, can be seen from the special provision in the *Laws* (959 d 6–e 6), to bury only in the earth that is unsuitable for cultivation. There the considerations are not so much ecological as ethical and religious: facing inevitably lack of arable land in the course of time, the state would be constrained either to destroy graves or to sacrifice its urgent needs for the sake of piety. This might explain how increase of burials on the global scale became for Plato one of the symptoms of the universal decay. The famous exhumation of the dead on Delos, accompanied by the prohibition of burying on it in future, during purification of the island by the Athenians in the 420s (Thuc. 1. 8. 1; 3. 104. 1–2, see further R. Parker, *Athenian Religion* [Oxford 1996] 150) might have been a realistic counterpart to Plato’s eschatological vision.

⁵⁵ Campbell (n. 8) 54 and 68, followed by Diès (n. 8) XXXIV; P. Frutiger, *Les mythes de Platon* (Paris 1930) 243 n. 5; Skemp (n. 8) 110–111; McCabe (n. 5) 107 n. 56. Campbell’s main reason is that old age was unknown to Hesiod’s Golden Race.

⁵⁶ Adam (n. 8) II, 297, see also Ferrari (n. 5) 390 n. 2.

⁵⁷ Rowe (n. 2) 196 on 273 e 9–10; Carone (n. 4) 100, cf. 94.

⁵⁸ *φύομαι* + adjective certainly can have both meanings, ‘born as such’ or ‘grown as such’ (for the latter see 270 d 6–e 1).

Given the promptness of the author to paradoxes, one should not expect from him the silent admission of the young earth-born of the lore; on the contrary, *πολιὰ φύντα* would be an appropriate reminder that they were born as old.

Second, there is a more formal consideration: the passage depicts the end of previous development and the start of the opposite one; it focuses on two extreme points of the process – the infants, who are about to disappear, instead start to grow, and the new-born, who grew younger earlier, start to die. Now the first transformation is depicted as the beginning of the contemporary processes, as we know them – the infants started to grow, obviously at normal pace (*impf.* *ἡϋξάνετο*). The second transformation should be imagined as similar – the new-born began to die (*πάλιν ἀποθνήσκοντα εἰς γῆν κατήει*) – also gradually. Accordingly, these new-born should be old; if they were young or adults, one would expect that the story-teller would depict their gradual growing old, instead of immediate getting grey (*part. aor.* *φύντα*) and then dying.⁵⁹ The reminiscence of Plato's age of Cronus in Theopompus (Ael. *VH* 3.18 = *FGrH* 115 F 75 C) does not contradict this understanding, even if it does not support it directly.⁶⁰ If, as I argued, the revived of the divine era were the dead of the previous autonomous era, it is natural that they were revived as old (or the majority of them, at least), since in that era they developed forwards and died old, as nowadays.

So far, if one admits that the human beings were born as old before the reversal that initiated the contemporary era, the proponents of the NI have no means to demonstrate that the interim era, and not the era of Cronus immediately precedes the contemporary one. Since the story depicts that ageing backwards started when the Demiurge returned to the helm and no change in devel-

⁵⁹ If *ἔκ γῆς* depends on *φύντα*, rather than on *νεογενῆ*, we have a symmetrical structure with two descriptions of two opposite states before the reversal of ageing, and two verbs in the *imperfect* that describe the transformation in the beginning of it.

⁶⁰ Theopompus mentions the trees on the borders of the land of the *Meropes* which grow on the banks of two rivers, Grief and Pleasure. The fruits of the first make the eaters to cry the rest of their life, the fruits of the second to forget all previous desires and to live back all previous phases from the old age to childhood, then to the state of embryo and at last to total disappearance. Since E. Rohde ("Zum Griechischen Roman" [1894], in idem, *Kleine Schriften* II [Tübingen – Leipzig 1901] 22–24), this story is considered to be influenced by Plato. Frutiger (n. 55) 243 and Skemp (n. 8) 111, who assume that in Plato's era of Cronus the old age did not exist, find a difference between Theopompus and the *Statesman* (Frutiger supposed that Hesiod, Plato and Theopompus follow independently and develop differently the same tradition). In fact, independent on how development of living beings in Plato's era of Cronus is interpreted Theopompus certainly borrowed from the *Statesman* the ageing backwards from the old age to childhood and disappearance during the reversal of the universe (270 d 6–271 a 1). Moreover, he made not the permanent youth, but the ageing backwards an important constituent of blessed life, i. e. he believed (rightly, in my view) that Plato ascribes this detail not only to the transitional period but also to the era of Cronus.

opment of living beings is implied in the description of the age of Cronus, as I argued, the grey new-born are the last instances of the same process.

Hesiod represented the golden race *as having no old age to come* (*Op.* 112–115). Since the physical world and human organisms cannot be exempted from change entirely,⁶¹ Plato ingeniously adapted Hesiod’s image and made the old age as lying not in front of us, but behind us. Contrary to the prevailing view of the scholars, the development backwards is a part of idealization of physical conditions of man’s existence: it is a constituent of blessed life to know that the troubles of old age do not wait you in future. But why did not Plato abandon the old age in this marvellous era entirely, in contrast to the prevailing stories about the Golden age, as well as to the stories of the earth-born, who were represented as adults, not as old? Probably because the world he depicts is not an ideal world of the dream, but rather the world of renovation and redemption of the contemporary era: the revived dead of the previous era should be mostly, albeit not exclusively, people of old age.⁶² The inspiration for this idea could have been again Hesiod: Zeus will destroy the iron generation on the top of its vices, at the moment when the newborn turn out to be grey-headed (*Op.* 180 f.). Hesiod also hints at some improvement after the destruction of the contemporary generation (*Op.* 175), i. e. he seems to favour a cyclical view of the development of the humankind.⁶³ It looks like Plato reads Hesiod’s prophecy of the end of the contemporary era as pointing to the beginning of the divine era when the living beings will be born as old.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See *Tim.* 37 d 3–4; cf. the similar approximation to divine inalterability: the reversal of rotation the universe received from the Demiurge is the minimal declination from the eternal movement the universe would have had if it were entirely divine (269 e d 7–e 3).

⁶² The underlying idea might be that ageing backwards gives sufficient time for learning: those who lived long in the age of Cronus cumulated knowledge and experience while still preserving physical and mental abilities. Growing younger both in soul and body (270 d 5–8) need not imply diminishing of these abilities, at least, for the most part of life.

⁶³ Μηκέτ’ ἔπειτ’ ὄφελλον ἐγὼ πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ’ ἢ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι. For the classical, Byzantine and modern debates whether these words imply Hesiod’s faith in a better race in future, and thus a cyclical view of history, see Th. G. Rosenmeyer, “Hesiod und die Geschichtsschreibung” [1957], in E. Heitsch (ed.), *Hesiod, Wege der Forschung* 44 (Darmstadt 1966) 631–633; West (n. 42) ad loc.

⁶⁴ I follow here Adam’s proposal ([n. 8] II, 296 f.). The other scholars who compared *Pol.* 273 e 6–11 with Hesiod’s prophecy, stressed on the contrary the different role of grey-haired infants. In fact, the passage in the *Statesman* points to the *end* of the process of being born as old in the beginning of our era, while Hesiod prophesies the *beginning* of this process to come (in the end of contemporary rotation, in terms of the *Statesman*). Hesiod’s verses are not free of ambiguity since τελέθωσιν can mean both ‘become’ and ‘turn out to be’, i. e. point either to the infants who grow grey-haired immediately after the birth, or to the infants born with grey hair; West ([n. 42] 199 ad loc.) points out rightly, that τελέθωσιν

Hesiod's people of the Golden race continue to live after their death as invisible guardians of mortals, the δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι (*Op.* 122–123), i. e. they are not under the earth as the dead of the following generations. It is tempting to think that the latter detail inspired Plato when he exempted Cronus' people from the usual death: their bodies disappear at the end of life;⁶⁵ their souls, having performed all prescribed incarnations, become, before the beginning of the next autonomous era, the pure spirits, as in Hesiod. According to Hesiod, these spirits serve as the φύλακες, the invisible overseers of the contemporary humankind, in service of Zeus. There is, however, an 'improvement' on Hesiod in this point: according to the *Statesman* myth, the *daimones* rule the humankind in a much more direct way in the era of the Demiurge, under his supreme command.

There is an important hint in the myth itself at who these *daimones* might be: in the course of ageing backwards all the dead from the earth returned to life, apart from those whom the god took *to another destiny*, or more literally, the god carried them into another division (271 c 2 ὄσους μὴ θεὸς αὐτῶν εἰς ἄλλην μοῖραν ἐκόμισεν). It is tempting to see in these souls those, who, according to Plato's standard view, already attained perfection in their previous life (in the autonomous era, like the contemporary one, due to philosophical way of life)⁶⁶ and are released from further rein-

in these verse has the latter meaning. Plato of course could interpret these verses as he wished, but there are reasons to think that he took them as pointing to the birth of grey-haired infants (see below).

⁶⁵ In the *Crat.* 397 e 12–398 a 2 Plato cites *Op.* 121 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ μοῖρα κάλυψε versus κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψε of Hesiod's manuscripts. Some scholars prefer Plato's variant as more logical (the people of the Golden race in Hesiod *did not go* below the earth). West ([n. 42] 181 ad loc.) argues *contra* in defense of manuscripts that according to Hesiod their bodies *were buried* as usual and supposes that Plato's variant results from a slip of memory. However it might be (I suppose that Plato willingly or unwillingly adapted Hesiod's text to suit his own view of the *daimones*, but he also could have relied on somebody's attempts to make Hesiod's text more consistent), the citation in the *Cratylus* corresponds to the view of the *Statesman* that there were no buried bodies in the age of Cronus. When citing the following vv. 122 f. of the *Works and Days* in the *Cratylus* (loc. cit.) and in the *Republic* 469 a, Plato seems to give an 'improved' version: here it is omitted that the Golden race owed their posthumous lot to Zeus' will (Zeus' role contradicts *Op.* 111: the Golden race lived when Cronus, not Zeus, ruled, but corresponds to *Op.* 253: the invisible deities are Zeus' guardians of justice). Plato's version stresses the connection of the *daimones* with Cronus, not with Zeus, which is important for the myth in the *Statesman*. On the other hand, ὑποχθόνιοι (*Crat.* 398 a 1 mss βT versus ἐπιχθόνιοι mss δ; *Rep.* 469 a 1 and the rest of tradition) seems to be a real slip, influenced by similarly sounding *Op.* 141, made either by Plato or by scribes, since this variant definitely contradicts Plato's thought on the *daimones*.

⁶⁶ *Phaedo* 114 c, cf. 80 e–81 c; 82 c; it is necessary to live three philosophical lives during three successive incarnations, according to the *Phaedr.* 249 a; in the *Timaeus* (90 a–d) philosophy provides mental health and the salvation from reincarnations, either after the

carinations.⁶⁷ It is further tempting to identify these chosen souls with the *daimones*, who rule human herds in the god's era (it is hard to see what might be another reason of mentioning this exception). There is an insistent claim in some dialogues that the *daimones* are not the representatives of a certain race or of a certain age, but those among us who have attained perfection due to virtuous life and philosophy, the latter being the necessary precondition of the former.⁶⁸

first incarnation in the human form (42 b) or after numerous further incarnations, including that in the form of animals (42 c; 90 d); the released souls return to the unmoved stars they initially inhabited (42 b).

⁶⁷ Rowe ([n. 2] 191 ad 271 b 6–7, c 2; 193 f. ad 272 e 5), who treats, on the contrary, the ageing backwards and rebirth as mechanical processes of the interim era deprived of god's presence, sees in the exempted philosophers of the previous era of Cronus. The story-teller, however, leaves uncertain whether in this era pure knowledge was pursued at all (272 b–c). An alternative would be that the exempted from revival are sinners, whose souls are incurable and who bear the permanent penalty in the underworld. This possibility is rejected by Rowe, since he believes that revived are the people of the era of Cronus where there is no place for incurable sinners. If they are the dead of the autonomous era, as I argue, this is possible; nevertheless, it is far more effective to hint at the award for philosophers under the rule of the Demiurge, who controls the process of revival, than at the eternal punishment of the incurable that should have been imposed on them already in the previous era, by the underworld gods, as usual. An additional detail in favour of the high rank of these exempted souls: the expression ὅσους μὴ θεὸς αὐτῶν εἰς ἄλλην μοῖραν ἐκόμισεν is similar to the version of the Hes. *Op.* 121 Plato cites twice (*Crat.* 397 e–398 a; *Rep.* 469 a), on behalf of the Golden race appointed after the death to be the guardians of living humans: ἀντάρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ μοῖρα κάλυψε (see above n. 65); cf. also his own paraphrase of these verses: ἐπειδὴν τις ἀγαθὸς ὢν τελευτήσῃ, μεγάλην μοῖραν καὶ τιμὴν ἔχει καὶ γίγνεται δαίμων κατὰ τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως ἐπωνυμίαν (*Crat.* 398 b 9–11).

⁶⁸ This notion underlies the etymology of δαίμων in the *Crat.* 397 b: the genuine form of the word is δαήμων, i. e. the wise – the *daimones* are not only the people of the Golden race, but *all* dead wise men. In the *Republic* (V. 468 e 3–469 b 3), the authority of Hes. *Op.* 122 f. provides to those members of the ruling class who excelled in virtue, posthumous worship after, either as *daimones*, or as divine beings, in accordance with the decision of Pythia: the earthly *phylakes* or their assistants are thus transformed in the heavenly *phylakes* of Hesiod. Again, the rulers who attained the highest philosophical knowledge, the Idea of the Good, after the death dwell on the Isles of the Blessed (Hesiod located there the dead heroes under the permanent rule of Cronus!) and are worshipped similarly as δαίμονες or as εὐδαίμονες and divine, depending on Pythia's prescription (*Rep.* VII. 540 b–c, oracle might be necessary, as otherwise it is not clear whether this virtuous life is the last of three virtuous lives, the *sine qua non* for release from further reincarnations). The special funerary rites, prescribed in the *Laws* for the dead εὐθνοὶ, who blamelessly performed their functions, are remarkably deprived of usual signs of mourning (white clothes of the procession, 947 b 4–5) and are free of pollution for attending priests, in contrast to usual funerals; Pythia again should approve these honours (947 b–d). This may imply the daemonic status of these chosen dead, as suggested O. Reverdin, *La religion de la cité platonicienne* (Paris 1945) 125–139.

Plato, I think, could not resist a temptation to promise that philosophers, the only true rulers, will govern the humankind in the divine era as pure spirits, even if they lived in our era as private persons; according to the *Republic*, they ought to perform their duties against their natural desire to follow contemplative life (496 b–497 b, 519 b–521 b); this earthly duty thus acquires an eschatological dimension in the *Statesman* myth.⁶⁹ Although these considerations might have impelled Plato to modify Hesiod's view on *daimones* as φύλακες of the contemporary humankind, this view probably was not abandoned altogether: at the end of the divine era, all souls, after a due number of incarnations, will attain the initial perfection; after that they should incarnate again in the era deprived of Demiurge's rule.⁷⁰ They will be the φύλακες of the contemporary humankind, as in Hesiod, but in the spiritualized sense: according to the *Timaeus*, the δαίμων represents the intelligence, the divine part in us that assures possibility for everybody to return to the original perfect state (42 c 1–d 2; 90 a; c–d).

Some scholars believe that the development backwards in the age of Cronus causes the people of this era to lack memory.⁷¹ But the very possibility that the people of Cronus could spend time accumulating knowledge, speaking to each other and animals for this purpose (272 b 8–c 6), even if the story leaves uncertain

⁶⁹ Plato treats the daemonic beings as intermediate between the gods and the humans in many different ways; there is no certainty that the *daimones* who rule over the humankind in the era of Cronus, according to the *Statesman* and the *Laws* (*Polit.* 271 e 5–7; *Leg.* IV. 713 c–e), are the souls elevated to this rank. Still, there is insistent tendency in Plato to treat the virtuous dead as daemonic deities, leaning on Hesiod (see the previous note). On the other hand, Plato re-interprets the old view of δαίμων as a human lot and as a human guardian in the sense that the δαίμων is the intelligent and deathless part of the soul created by the god and surviving through all incarnations; this δαίμων if he is duly cherished, provides return of the soul to its initial perfect state (*Tim.* 41 c 6–42 d 1; 90 a 2–d 7; cf. also *Leg.* 775 e: ἀρχὴ γὰρ καὶ θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἰδρυμένη σὺζει πάντα, τμῆς ἐὼν τῆς προσηκούσης αὐτῆ παρ' ἐκάστου τῶν χρωμένων λαγχάνη). Taking these two tendencies into account, it would not be too hazardous to identify the philosophical souls exempted from the incarnations with the *daimones* who rule in the age of Cronus in the *Statesman* myth.

⁷⁰ According to the *Tim.* 41 e, the Demiurge provides equal chances of salvation for each soul before their initial incarnation in the beginning of the world, thus freeing himself from responsibility for their further vices (42 d). The *Statesman* shows how this perfect state is attained again at the end of each era of the Demiurge's rule.

⁷¹ H. Scodel, *Diaeresis and myth in Plato's Statesman*, Hypomnemata 85 (Göttingen 1987) 89 n. 9; Ferrari (n. 5) 393–394; McCabe (n. 5) 107. According to Ferrari, the lack of memory should explain why the people of Cronus do not possess *technai*. However, this is explained sufficiently by an ideal environment the story-teller refers to when he proceeds to describe inability of the humankind to cure itself when this Paradise came to the end in the beginning of the contemporary era (274 b 4–d 5).

whether they in fact did so, shows that they are not imagined as creatures without memory.⁷² Further, the story implies the dim memory of the age of Cronus; the first humans of the contemporary era, i. e. the survived representatives of Cronus' epoch, preserve memory of the birth from the earth (271 a 5–b 4). This would be impossible if they acquired memory only after the transition to the contemporary way of reproduction and development.⁷³ In fact, the single explicit reference to the lack of memory is a part of the explanation why there were no states and no possession of wives and children in the reign of Cronus – the nurslings of Cronus possessed no memory of these things, since they all were revived from the earth (271 e 7–272 a 1).⁷⁴ Apparently, what is meant here is not oblivion of the events of their individual life, but oblivion of the previous era, when the state and the family existed. The intellectual experiment of the *Statesman* consists in possibility of living your previous life once again in the reverted order to avoid its mistakes, rather than in mechanic repetition of the same life. Keeping alive the memory of the individual past, while living backwards, would be essential for this life of redemption.⁷⁵

(to be continued)

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⁷² The purpose of this question, in my view, is not to evoke the negative answer and to point to disadvantages of the era of Cronus, as often assumed, or to hint, on the contrary, at the existence of philosophy in that era, as Rowe believes. Since the answer is earnestly uncertain, the purpose of the question is rather to show that the relative value of life depends entirely on whether it is devoted to pursuit of pure knowledge and that it depends on us whether we use favourite external circumstances for pursuit of knowledge or for consumption only. It also may hint that this pure knowledge arises independently from the development of crafts that emerges under constraints of need in the contemporary era only.

⁷³ Ferrari (n. 5) 393 in fact believes that the first representatives of the contemporary humankind acquired memory immediately after stop of ageing backwards; he compares this with the recollection of the divine teaching by the universe in its autonomous period. But the universe certainly possessed memory, otherwise it would not have been able to recollect the lessons of its creator.

⁷⁴ Carone ([n. 4] 106 n. 64) rightly points this out but argues that living beings under Cronus developed forwards.

⁷⁵ The state and family are unnecessary in the era of Cronus because they are replaced by the divine shepherds and by birth from the earth respectively. However it might be the case that the mankind, although unable to reproduce sexually, still had sexual desires. Thus, the destruction of memory of the previous mode of life might be an additional proviso to maintain a harmony. Cf. a distant analogy: the citizens of the ideal state, in the first instance the guardians and their assistants, should be persuaded that they had been born from the earth and that their previous life was only a dream (*Rep.* III. 414 d).

В статье критически рассматриваются различные варианты “новой интерпретации” мифа в платоновском *Политике* (Л. Бриссон, Кр. Роу, Г. Кароне), согласно которой космический цикл, описанный в этом мифе, состоит из трех фаз, а не из двух, как обычно понималось: космос под управлением божественного Демиурга вращается в том же направлении с востока на запад, что и в современную эру, живые существа во время обеих эр развиваются одинаковым образом – от детства к старости; между двумя этими фазами, в третью промежуточную эру, мир вращается с запада на восток, а живые существа развиваются в обратном направлении – от старости к детству. В противовес подобным толкованиям в статье защищается правильность традиционного понимания цикла как состоящего только из двух фаз – эры правления Демиурга (“век Крона”), когда мир вращается с запада на восток, а живые существа развиваются в направлении от старости к детству, и автономной эры, подобной современной. При этом доказывается, что уничтожение прежнего, деградировавшего рода людей в момент возвращения Демиурга к управлению космосом согласуется с его ролью в мифе как спасителя и обновителя мира; рождение из земли, которое миф трактует как воскрешение мертвецов, означает возвращение к жизни тех, кто жил в прежнюю, автономную эру: они появляются на свет, соответственно, стариками и проживают жизнь в направлении, обратном предыдущему существованию; вселение душ в воскресающие тела предполагает, таким образом, искупление прежней, неправильно прожитой жизни. Конечный пункт каждой божественной эры – восстановление всех душ в их начальном совершенстве и освобождение земли от мертвых тел – возвращает мир к тому состоянию, в котором он находился некогда в момент творения, согласно *Тимею*.