Making the World Body Whole and Complete

*Plato's Timaeus, 32c5-33b1*

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**Abstract**

Plato's demiurge makes a series of questionable decisions in creating the world. Most notoriously, he endeavors to replicate, to the extent possible, some of the features that his model possesses just insofar as it is a Form. This has provoked the colorful complaint that the demiurge is as raving mad as a general contractor who constructs a house of vellum to better realize the architect's vellum plans (Keyt 1971). The present paper considers the sanity of the demiurge's reasoning in light of *Timaeus* 32c5-33b1, where he invokes considerations of wholeness, completeness, uniqueness, and eternity in deciding to build the body of the world from all of each of the simple bodies. Since the passage makes no appeal to the demiurge's intelligible model, one can mine it for indications of the value that the demiurge takes those features to have independent of mimetic goals. I argue that, for Plato, those features are intrinsically good-making and, thus, that it is not only appropriate for them to characterize Forms qua Forms but also that it is appropriate for the demiurge to aim at replicating them, to the extent possible, in his creation. In particular, I argue that the demiurge's success in instilling a circumscribed version of each feature in his creation helps to qualify it as a genuine *being* despite the fact that it *comes to be.*

**Keywords**


In Plato's *Timaeus*, Timaeus claims that because the model that the demiurge consults in creating the world is complete, unique, and eternal, the world that he creates as a likeness of that model will, so far as possible, also be complete (30d1-31a1), unique (31a3-4), and eternal (37d1-2). This line of reasoning has
provoked the colorful complaint that Plato’s demiurge is a “mad craftsman,” whose decision to replicate the formal features of his model secures his own likeness to one who, hoping to aid the war effort, makes “a paper shield… and justifie[s] himself on the grounds that his pattern was of paper” (Keyt 1971, 231). Since completeness, uniqueness, and eternality are indeed formal features of the demiurge’s model (they belong to each Form just insofar as it is a Form), the sanity of his decision turns on whether, as the complaint would have it, the demiurge fails to appreciate that they are in fact formal features of the model analogous to the pattern of the shield’s being of paper.

My aim below is to explore some of the Timaean (and, more generally, Platonic) grounds for taking such features to make the created world better,1 thus providing the demiurge with at least a reasonable basis for deciding to replicate them in his creation. I focus on completeness and, for reasons that will become apparent, wholeness. On the interpretation that I develop, wholeness and completeness contribute to making anything that possesses them a genuine being. In addition, even when only imperfectly realized in demiurgic creations, these features bolster their possessors’ ontological standing. In particular, I will argue, it is because the created world is in a robust sense whole and complete (and unique and eternal) that it merits a higher status than that which merely comes to be.

1 Desiderata for Interpretations of Timaeus 32c5-33b1

Instead of concentrating on passages in which the demiurge reasons from the features of his model to those of his creation, I aim to here consider a related passage whose bearing on the demiurge’s reasoning has, to my mind, not been adequately appreciated: namely, Timaeus 32c5-33b1. The demiurge there invokes considerations of completeness, alongside those of uniqueness and eternality no less, in deciding to build the body of the world from all of each of the simple bodies. But importantly, he makes no appeal to the intelligible

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1 We should distinguish two ways in which possessing a given feature might make the created world better. On the one hand, it might make the created world better as an image of its model, the Living Thing. For some approaches of this sort, see Parry (1979; 1991) and Patterson (1981). On the other hand, a given feature might be intrinsically good-making, in which case possessing it would make the created world better simpliciter, regardless of whether that also makes it a better image of its model. For some approaches of this latter sort, which I will suggest we should favor, see McCabe (1994, chap. 6.2), Mohr (1985; 2005, chap. 1), and Sedley (2007, 112).
model in the process. As a result, the passage is apt to more directly display any value that he might take those features to have independent of mimetic goals.

In this section, I mine the contours of the passage for interpretive guides and constraints. It runs as follows:

[E]ach one of the four constituents was entirely used up in the process of building the world. The builder built it from all the fire, water, air, and earth there was, and left no part or power of any of them out. His intentions in so doing were these:

[R1] First, that as a living thing it should be as whole and complete as possible and made up of complete parts.

[R2] Second, that it should be just one world, in that nothing would be left over from which another one just like it could be made.

[R3] Third, that it should not get old and diseased. He realized that when hot or cold things or anything else that possesses strong powers surrounds a composite body from outside and attacks it, it destroys that body prematurely, brings disease and old age upon it and so causes it to waste away.

That is why he concluded that he should fashion the world as a single whole, composed of all wholes, complete and free of old age and disease, and why he fashioned it that way.2

All else equal, I submit, an interpretation of the passage is to be preferred over its rivals if it satisfies the following interpretive desiderata. To begin, note that Timaeus presents each reason as a separate motivation for the demiurge’s decision to use all of each of the simple bodies.3 As such,

[ID1] R1, R2, and R3 should be distinct.

Yet, while distinct, Timaeus also evidently takes the demiurge’s reasons to cohere. In fact, he at least once refers to them collectively in the singular.4 Accordingly, even if only loosely,

2  Unless otherwise noted, translations of Plato’s work follow those in (Cooper 1997).
4  See “dia tên aitian” at 33a6. Cornford’s translation, “for this reason,” more literally renders the Greek than Zeyl’s “That is why,” quoted in the body of the paper. There may be a second such reference via “ton logismon” in the same line; the phrase is ambiguous between the demiurge’s reason and his reasoning.
[ID2] R1, R2, and R3 should complement one another.

Third, in keeping with Timaeus’ use of “dianoêtheis” (32c8), “aitian” (33a6), and “logismon” (33a6), each should at least plausibly help to explain why the demiurge “built [the world body] from all the fire, water, air, and earth there was” (32c6-7). That is,

[ID3] R1, R2, and R3 should actually function as reasons.

Finally, since the demiurge ultimately acts on behalf of these reasons, they should comport with the “preeminent principle [archên kuriõtatê]” guiding his creative action: namely, the desire to make things “as much like himself”—or, more informatively, as “good”—as possible (29e2-30a3). That is, all else equal, an interpretation is to be preferred to the extent that it addresses how, for Timaeus or Plato,

[ID4] the ends expressed in R1, R2, and R3 should make the world body better than it otherwise would have been, either in itself or as a part of the created world as a whole.5

These desiderata impinge upon interpretations of the demiurge’s use of wholeness and completeness in R1, specifically, as follows. They suggest that, all else equal, we should prefer a reading that explains the way in which those features are better-making, at least in regard to the world body, and that shows how they could reasonably motivate the demiurge, in a manner that complements but does not obviate the considerations presented in R2 and R3, to use all of each of the simple bodies in his creation.

2 Making the World Body Whole and Complete

With those desiderata in place, I now turn directly to the interpretation of R1. I will argue that the demiurge’s immediate aim is to ensure that his creation is internally well-unified. This is by no means obvious. Traditionally, it has been

5 Since these are merely interpretive desiderata, as opposed to requirements that any viable interpretation must meet, ID4 does not beg the question against Keyt (1971). A commitment to even a very weak principle of charity should make a mad demiurge less interpretively attractive than a sane one, regardless of whether one ultimately finds the demiurge’s reasoning compelling.
thought that concerns for the world body’s plenitude are instead at the fore of the demiurge’s mind.

That traditional conclusion, which I will partly revise and partly supplement, has been advanced along two different lines. Since it is not clear whether the emphasis in Timaeus’ formulation should be placed on wholeness or on completeness,⁶ one has a choice of interpretive starting points. On the one hand, with Proclus, one might stress the demiurge’s desire to make the world body complete. As Proclus analyzes it, the complete “is that which has all its parts and the things that fill it out within itself” (in Tim. 11. 58.24-25, trans. Baltzly).⁷ On that understanding, using all the earth, water, air, and fire in building the world body might seem to serve the demiurge’s end, for “if there is nothing outside” the world body, it will have “received all things” in itself (58.25-59.1, trans. Baltzly). On the other hand, with Aristotle, one might stress the demiurge’s desire to make the world body whole. This, too, has led interpreters to think that a concern for the world body’s plenitude is at work in the demiurge’s reasoning because Plato himself glosses “whole,” at least on occasion, in roughly the way that Proclus glosses “complete.” A whole, Plato writes, is “that from which no part is missing” (Parm. 137c7).⁸ Using all the earth, water, air, and fire in building the world body might therefore seem to analogously advance the demiurge’s end since, in Aristotle’s words, nothing could be missing from his creation if “all substance has been expended on it” (Frag. 19 R³).⁹

Nonetheless, these traditional readings of R1, at best, only capture a facet of the demiurge’s reasoning. They are deficient on at least two counts. First, they do not yet satisfy ID3. This stems from the fact that “whole” and “complete,” on

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6 “Whole [holon]” is syntactically underscored (see Ion 534e2 for a parallel); “complete [teleon]” is highlighted by the second occurrence that characterizes the world body’s parts. Both “whole” and “complete” figure prominently in Timaeus’ later summary at 33a7, where “whole” is duplicated instead.

7 This analysis is probably informed by Aristotle. Plato only hints at treating “complete” in this manner (e.g., Parm. 157e1). By contrast, in a passage noted in connection with Ri by Archer-Hind (1888, 100), Aristotle presents the primary meaning of completeness as “that outside which it is not possible to find even one part” (Meta. Δ.16, 1021b12-13; here and below, translations of Aristotle’s works are those in [Barnes 1984]).

8 See also, Tht. 205a4-5: “won’t this very same thing—that from which nowhere anything is lacking—be a whole?” In her excellent treatment of Platonic mereology, Harte (2002, 43) unfortunately only mentions these passages in passing. Koslicki (2008, 121 n. 33 and 143 n. 48) is similarly brief but offers a much fuller discussion of Aristotle’s appropriation of this concept of wholes to which my views on the matter are indebted.

their analysis, are normative. They presuppose some sort of standard establishing what should belong to a thing as its parts. For example, my mint julep might fail to be whole and complete if someone had already drunk half of it or if the bartender had made it without bourbon. In each case, something appropriate to my drink would be missing from it. By contrast, the bartender does nothing to jeopardize the virtue of my drink by making you a black russian; since vodka and coffee liqueur are not parts of a mint julep, they are in no way missing from mine. Similarly, the demiurge’s intelligible model is not part of the world body and so in no way missing from it, Proclus’ “nothing outside [mêden exô]” and Aristotle’s “all substance [sumpasan tén ousian]” notwithstanding. The traditional readings, however, have little to say about an applicable standard that could help to determine the proper members of the world body. While the world body had already been said to comprise earth, water, air, and fire (Tim. 31b-32b), nothing was stipulated about the absolute amounts of those simple bodies. As such, the traditional reading of R1 verges on circularity, asking us to assume that all the earth, water, air, and fire belong to the world body rather than providing a reason for taking the world body to be naturally constituted in that way.

10 As Aristotle clarifies, “each thing is complete and every substance is complete, when in respect of its proper kind of excellence it lacks no part of its natural magnitude” (Meta. Δ.6, 1021b20-23). See also, Meta. Δ.26, 1023b26-27: “We call a whole that from which is absent none of the parts of which it is said to be naturally a whole.”

11 McCabe claims that “whole” functions in the context of R1 only as a complete expression. She writes, “We cannot say . . . of this universe that it is a whole cosmos, all right, but not a whole galaxy . . . . It is just whole,” in the sense of “exhaustive, all-inclusive” (1994, 164-165, original emphasis). That the intelligible model, among other things, is not a part of the world body (either descriptively or normatively) tells strongly against her claim since it implies that there is a standard dictating what should belong to the world body as its parts insofar as it is a thing of some specific kind. While I agree that “whole” here functions as a complete expression, it should not be thought of as limited to functioning in that way. In this respect, my reading of “holon” parallels Brown’s (1999) reading of “esti” since, even when used as a complete expression, it allows for a completion.

12 One might wonder whether the parts of which the world body is composed should be so quickly identified with the simple bodies. While there are multiple candidates for the parts of the whole created world (e.g., visible creatures [30d1], visible species [41b7-c2], and cosmic regions [62d9]), I see no other viable contenders for the parts of the world body specifically. Neither the elemental triangles nor the corpuscles, taken individually, suitably fit the context.

13 The phrase “as a living thing [zôon]” (Tim. 32d1) in Timaeus’ formulation of R1 might hint at a more robust standard, but if so, considerably more remains to be said. After all, I am alive, and I am presumably alive in precisely the same sense that the created world
Second, the traditional readings do not yet satisfy ID4. Without specifying such a normative standard, it remains unclear why making the world body from all of each of the elements is for the best. Consider again my mint julep. Did the bartender slight me in failing to make my drink with all of the bourbon on the rack, let alone all the bourbon ever distilled? Glib remarks aside, she certainly did not. Over the course of an evening, the bartender can make many bourbon-based drinks, mint juleps included, and still rightly please all of her customers. We should thus want to know what is different about the case of the world body, but the traditional readings provide no answer.

The demiurge’s reasoning in R1 is therefore likely to be more subtle than has traditionally been thought. We may begin to make some headway on the missing normative standard, and so also on the sense in which the world body is whole and complete, by more closely examining the local context of the passage. For the interpretation of R1, the most salient feature of that context is Timaeus’ claim that the world body’s parts are not simply earth, water, air, and fire, but more precisely, those simple bodies when bonded by proportion. When appropriately bound, Timaeus claims, the ingredients “will all of necessity... have the same relationship to each other” in that what earth is to water, water will be to air, and air will be to fire (Tim. 32b5-7).14

In light of this emphasis on proportion, one might suppose (wrongly, I will argue) that just as in the more familiar case of mixing a drink, the ingredients to make the world body are ready-to-hand for the demiurge. That is, just as the good bartender pulls a bottle of mature bourbon from the shelf when making a mint julep, so, too, one might imagine, the demiurge draws from established stockpiles of earth, water, air, and fire in creating the world body. The requisite ingredients, on this supposition, are all suitably prepared and at the demiurge’s disposal; all that is needed is for him to combine them in the proper proportions.

Such a supposition has two principal drawbacks. First, it brings us little closer to satisfying ID3. While the proportional structure that Timaeus sketches is well suited to serving as a standard determining what should belong to the world body as its parts (more on this point in a moment), it so determines

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14 This is satisfied when their respective volumes or powers—the precise nature of the relata are disputed (see Pritchard [1990])—can be modeled by a four-term continued geometric proportion, such as 8:12 :: 12:18 :: 18:27 or, more generally, E:W :: W:A :: A:F. For general commentary, see Archer-Hind (1888, 98-99), Heath (1921, I.89; 1925, II.294), A. E. Taylor (1928, 96-99), and Cornford (1937, 45-52).
them in far too course-grained a manner. After all, a mixture of $2.5$ ounces of bourbon, $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of water, and $\frac{1}{6}$ ounce of mint realizes the very same proportion as a mixture of $5$ ounces of bourbon, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of water, and $\frac{1}{6}$ ounce of mint. In fact, the quantity of any one ingredient may be varied indefinitely without threatening the overall proportional relationships among the mixture provided that the quantities of the other ingredients are varied accordingly.\textsuperscript{15} On the supposition under consideration, the context that we have surveyed thus provides a reason for the demiurge to combine earth, water, air, and fire \textit{in the specified proportions}, but it only provides him with a reason for using all of each of them on the off chance that the simple bodies happen to antecedently bear those proportional relationships to one another. On the face of it, this is rather unlikely.\textsuperscript{16} A typical bar, to continue the parallel, would run out of mint far faster than bourbon if its patrons repeatedly ordered mint juleps. If such a bar were to mix all of their mint julep ingredients from the get-go, the result would be a radical failure of proportion.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, if the simple bodies are ready-to-hand, the demiurge can, at best, only by sheer luck have a reason for using all of each of them in his creation. Further, even in that improbable case, since the ideal proportion could still be variously instantiated, his reason could not be a sufficient one.

Second, and for related considerations, this supposition also brings us little closer to satisfying ID4. Admittedly, it is no doubt appropriate for the demiurge to aim at realizing \textit{proportion} in his creation. As Timaeus understands it, craftsmanship essentially consists in ordering, and so the craftsman’s job, \textit{qua} craftsman, is to bring about order.\textsuperscript{18} One finds this to be the demiurge’s central

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  \item\textsuperscript{15} The proportional structure that Timaeus discusses is actually even more permissive than the example in the body of the paper might suggest. 8E:12W:18A:27F is incommensurate with 8E:16W:32A:64F (the two are different recipes, so to speak), but both satisfy the constraints that he presents.
  \item\textsuperscript{16} See \textit{Tim.} 69b5-6: before the demiurge set to work, the pre-cosmic traces of the simple bodies “had no proportionality at all, except by chance.”
  \item\textsuperscript{17} Compare \textit{Phil.} 64d1-e: “there would be no blending in such cases at all but really an unconnected medley.”
  \item\textsuperscript{18} On this point, see Johansen (2004, chap. 4). Among the passages he cites is \textit{Grg.} 503e4-504a1: “take a look at painters for instance, if you would, or housebuilders or shipwrights or any of the other craftsmen you like, and see how each one places what he does into a certain organization and compels one thing to be suited for another and to fit to it until the entire object is put together in an organized and orderly way.”
  
  Lennox argues that human craftsmanship is, for Plato, “an activity of ordering \textit{materials}” (2001, 289, original emphasis). While I largely agree, I find his emphasis misplaced, especially if extrapolated to divine craftsmanship. As I argue below, ordering is not
role throughout the dialogue.19 Moreover, it is a role he accomplishes chiefly through realizing proportional structures because, on Timaeus’ view, one can only make something well by making it proportional. As he claims, “all that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not ill-proportioned” (Tim. 87c4-5). Indeed, this is a central component of a stronger position we find elsewhere in the corpus. For things with parts, the proportional order of those parts is not only necessary for goodness but also sufficient for it. As Plato puts it in the Gorgias, if a body “gets to be organized and orderly it would be a good one, and if it gets to be disorganized it would be a terrible one” (504a7-8).

Nevertheless, because we are dealing with proportional relationships, which can be variously instantiated, one would seem to be capable of making a good mixture without using all of each ingredient. Most of the excellent mint juleps ever made have used no more than a few ounces of bourbon. Even the largest mint julep on record²⁰ fell far short of using all of the world’s bourbon, refined sugar, potable water, or fresh mint leaf. Accordingly, if the simple bodies were ready-to-hand for the demiurge, it would be just as absurd for him to aim at an all-encompassing creation as it would for the ideal bartender to aim at an all-encompassing drink. This is especially true, of course, if the available amounts of those ingredients did not, as chance would have it, happen to be appropriately proportional.

This suggests that the supposition in question should be abandoned. What, though, is the alternative to the view that the simple bodies were ready-to-hand for the demiurge, existing independently of his impending creation? It is not simply that the demiurge had to create the simple bodies in order to create the world body.²¹ For even in that case, the demiurge might still have recourse to the pre-established stockpiles at the root of the problems above. It is rather that, properly speaking, there is no earth, water, air, or fire independent of the world body. The simple bodies, on this alternative, are what they are only within the context of composing the world body; they ontologically depend upon their proportional relationships to one another and to the

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19 See, for example, Tim. 30a2-6, 37d5-6, 53a7 ff., and 69b2-c3. Carone (2005, 29) calls establishing order the demiurge’s “practical function,” as opposed to his “theoretical function” of apprehending the intelligible structure of the model.

20 It was mixed at Churchill Downs for the 2008 Kentucky Oaks and Derby races and comprised more than 200 gallons.

21 Though, unlike the bartender, the demiurge does make the ingredients for his creation.
well-proportioned whole that they compose. As a consequence, the simple bodies can only truly come to be in tandem with the world body itself.

The context of R1 helps to confirm this view of the simple bodies and their relation to the world body. As Harte notes, the demiurge creates the world from precisely four simple bodies—as opposed to, say, three or seven—only because the proportional structure that he deemed mathematically appropriate for the world body required four distinct terms (Tim. 32a7-b3). Just two simple bodies are hypothetically necessary otherwise: earth to make the world body tangible and fire to make it visible (31b5-6). Further, at this point in

22 The obvious comparison is to Aristotle’s treatment of organs, which are what they are only when actually composing an organism, but Plato does not specify the nature of this dependence clearly enough to assess the strength of the parallel.

The idea that, for Plato, the parts of a whole might ontologically depend upon that whole was popularized and systematically explored by Harte (2002), who presents it as a central component of Plato’s positive mereological project. See also Koslicki (2008, sec. v.4.2.2), who offers, as a speculative determination of the idea, a view she calls “reverse mereological essentialism.” Whereas a mereological essentialist holds that a whole cannot survive the gain or loss of a single part, the reverse mereological essentialist holds that “one and the same part cannot survive gaining or losing its whole. In other words, no single object could survive, for example, becoming a part of a whole of which it is not already a part or ceasing to be part of a whole of which it is part” (ibid., 114).

A referee observes that, insofar as passages like Tim. 30a3-5 might be thought to suggest that the demiurge brings the very same things “from a state of disorder to one of order,” it would appear to be in tension with this claim that the simple bodies would not be what they are but for their composing the world body. And indeed, a reading of the sort that I am advancing is committed to the view that, for Timaeus, the imposition of order is in certain types of cases at least akin to substantial change. The parallel to Aristotle, who occasionally treats the contraries involved in substantial change as principles of order and disorder (e.g., Phys. 1.7, 190b15-17 and Meta. Α.4, 1070b28-29), is again enticing though difficult to assess.

23 This, I submit, is why the pre-cosmic traces do not “qualify at all [to parapan ouden] for the names we now use to name them, names like fire, water, and so on” (Tim. 69b6-8). Timaeus’ point is that, but for their proportionate relationships to one another when already composing a whole, the simple bodies would not be what they are, and so would not deserve their names. However one reads 49a6-50a4 (see Zeyl [2000, lvi-lxiv] for an overview of the options), the point here is thus rather different.

24 Broadie (2012, 91) to my mind convincingly argues that the demiurge’s goal here is to make the world body perceptible. One might object that such a line of reasoning implies that earth and fire each are what they are—or, at least, have a determinate character—inde- pendently of composing a world body. This would indeed be problematic for me if it were true of the parts of the world body as such. But the passage need not be read that way.
the dialogue, their primary characterization—and, for water and air, their only characterization—is in terms of the proportional relationships that they bear to one another once already well ordered. This suggests, as Harte puts it, that the simple bodies are not so much objects to be ordered by the demiurge but rather “manifestations of that ordering in action” (2002, 233).

Adopting this alternative view of the relation between the world body and its parts has considerable benefits. Most significantly, it allows one to overcome the deficiencies that plagued the traditional interpretation of R1. Consider first the satisfaction of ID3. If what it is to be earth, for example, just is to be a certain part of the world body, then earth, as such and en masse, belongs to the world body as one of its parts. Accordingly, if one wanted to make the world body whole and complete, in the sense of leaving out no part that rightfully belongs to it, then one would ensure that it comprised all the earth there is, and mutatis mutandis for the other simple bodies. Indeed, given the parameters Timaeus describes, since the world body is the first bodily thing that comes to be, its creation entails the creation and incorporation of all of each of the simple bodies there is then.25

The discussion above also suggests an initial resolution to the worry about ID4. Since the proportional structure constituting the nature of the world body26 determines what counts among the world body’s parts, fashioning the world body so as to be whole and complete, in the sense of leaving out no part that rightfully belongs, ensures that the world body will realize its proportional nature. As a result of being well-proportioned, the world body will be beautiful and good,27 thereby advancing the demiurges’ “preeminent principle” of making things as good as possible and so satisfying ID4.

The demiurge may very well instead be attending to his intelligible model and reasoning on the basis of his knowledge of the eternal Forms of fire and earth, which are neither objects of his creation nor parts of a world body. On such forms, see Tim. 51b ff., where they appear in the only general argument for the existence of Forms in the entire Platonic corpus; compare further Phd. 103c ff., Soph. 266b2-7, Epist. VII 342d6-7, and, albeit more hesitantly, Parm. 130c2.

While I have framed the point temporally, my argument is not meant to depend upon a “literalist” interpretation of the Timaeus, on which the demiurge’s activity is temporally structured and/or the world has a literal beginning.

With Koslicki (2008, 106 ff.), I take such wholes, for Plato, to be essentially structured rather than essentially structured, as Harte (2002, passim) occasionally puts it.

See Tim. 87c4-5 and Grg. 504a7-8, quoted above in the body of the paper.
3  Unity and the Being that is Divisible and Comes-to-be

There nonetheless remains a complementary but deeper story to tell about why, for Plato, the demiurge should maintain wholeness and completeness as ends. Since Plato’s basic commitments are rarely if ever transparent, I take a more synoptic and literary approach to the text in this section of the paper in order to reconstruct a line of reasoning that unfolds in concerted stages across the presentation of R1, R2, and R3. On the interpretation that I will develop, the current that runs through the demiurge’s aims in R1-3 springs from a desire to make the world body, as far as possible, a being despite the fact that it comes to be.

The backdrop for my interpretation is a family of Platonic distinctions involving being and becoming. While probably most familiar from seminal passages in the middle dialogues (e.g., Rep. v, 479a-e and vii, 534a), the Timaeus presents a justifiably famous case. Timaeus in fact begins his account by distinguishing between [a] “that which always is and has no becoming [to on aei, genesin de ouk echon], and . . . [b] that which becomes but never is [to gignomenon, on de oudepotel]” (Tim. 27d5-28a1). So framed, Timaeus’ distinction establishes two mutually exclusive categories. The former always is; the latter never is. The former has no becoming; the latter becomes.

Yet, while Timaeus unmistakably draws a mutually exclusive distinction on the basis of being and becoming, the distinction drawn is not obviously one between being and becoming. Note that the mutual exclusivity of the categories distinguished is established in two ways—via a distinction with respect to being (always v. never) and via a distinction with respect to becoming (having none v. having some)—neither of which directly contrasts, or even relates, being and becoming with one another. Indeed, if the two dimensions along which that mutual exclusivity is established are taken to be logically

28 It is often assumed that the distinction made at Tim. 27d5-28a1 is identical to those made elsewhere in the middle dialogues—i.e., that the various passages are merely different presentations of the very same distinction—though, see Bolton (1975) for a notable dissection. While my discussion cannot but bear upon questions of whether and how the distinction at Tim. 27d5-28a1 is related to those presented in the middle dialogues, I do not intend to settle such questions here.

29 Reflecting work by Whittaker (1969; 1973) and Dillon (1989, 60-63), Zeyl’s translation (in Cooper 1997] omits the “aei” modifying “gignomenon” in some manuscripts at Tim. 28a1. Its retention would undermine this second basis for mutual exclusivity.
independent, then they delineate four categories in total—the two already expressly mentioned as well as [c] that which always is but becomes and [d] that which never is and has no becoming—one of which, [c], actually associates being and becoming.

Since there are obstacles to welcoming these additional categories, it bears noting that even if we take Timaeus’ distinction to be exhaustive and so preclude [c] and [d], there are still grounds for resisting the view that Timaeus, in the words of one commentator, “treats γένεσις and οὐσία from first to last as simple incompatibles” (A. E. Taylor 1928, 32). For later in the very sentence in which he presents the distinction, Timaeus glosses [b] as that which “comes to be . . . but never really is [ontōs oudepote on]” (Tim. 28a3-4). This qualification could signal that, while there is a privileged sense of being that is withheld from anything that becomes, there may well be other, less exalted but still genuine senses of being that something that becomes may partake of.

Initially, then, it is at least an open question as to whether becoming is compatible with some nontrivial sense of being. This is important since, as I will argue, Timaeus is in fact concerned to show that the created world, although it comes to be, is nonetheless a genuine being. Further, it merits that status, intermediary between mere becoming, on the one hand, and that which always is (in the proper sense) and has no becoming, on the other, in no small part because it is robustly whole and complete.

Consider first wholeness and its genus, unity. For nearly all classical Greek philosophers, unity goes hand in hand with being. The marriage of the two

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30 The two dimensions are at least logically distinct since “always is” and “never is” are contraries, but “has no becoming [i.e., does not become]” and “becomes” are contradictories. The use of “de” may suggest that the matter is not merely one of formulation.

31 As a referee notes, it would be odd for Timaeus, if he recognized these as separate categories, not to explicitly call attention to them both, or at the very least [c], right from the outset.

32 I owe this observation and the interpretation of its potential significance to Frede (1988, 39).

33 Timaeus explicitly introduces a kind of being that comes-to-be at 35a2-3 and ascribes both being and becoming to the cosmos at 38c3. I take such statements to form one part of a much larger Platonic project to undermine the appearance of a thoroughgoing dichotomy of the metaphysical terrain into that which always or really is and that which merely becomes. See Cherniss (1957, sec. 1) for a sizeable catalog, though different reading, of pertinent passages. It is often claimed that Plato’s uses of “being” in such passages are metaphysically innocent. I aim to complicate such a strategy for dealing with these passages by showing that, at least in Timaeus, they track metaphysically-loaded distinctions.
might be considered the first dogma of Greek ontology. As he puts it, “oneness always possesses being and being always possesses oneness” (*Parm.* 142e6-7). This has implications not only for being and unity, but also for beings and unities. Anything that is, he writes, “must always, as long as it is, be some one thing” (144c4-5). And conversely, anything that is one, must always, as long as it is one, be—thus Theaetetus’ incredulity “that a ‘one’ [could] be found among the things which are not” (*Thet.* 188e8; cf. *Rep.* V, 478b12).

Now, at first glance, requiring each being to be one being might seem innocuous. One would probably balk at a sentence in which a grammatically singular subject (specifically, a thing that is) was treated as a plurality, or perhaps even an indeterminate number of things. But should we turn our gaze from grammar to metaphysics, the requirement begins to cause some trouble, particularly if the things that are are in any way complex. Unlike a mereological atom—which, having no parts, is straightforwardly a unity and so a being—a complex thing has parts, and having parts, “it must be stated what it is that makes it one out of many” (Aristotle, *Meta.* H.3, 1044a4-5). The challenge, that is to say, is to explain how the parts of a complex thing are genuinely unified in composing it.

This is no small matter. Democritus—who, while unmentioned by name, is evidently present to Plato’s mind throughout the *Timaeus*—seems to have doubted the viability of any such explanation. Atoms are fundamentally distinct. As such, he argued, “it is impossible for one thing to come to be from two” (*DK* 68A42). The key and the lock, for example, do not generate a third thing just because their motions become, for a time, mutually constrained. Nor do atoms. No matter how entangled, a plurality of atoms is still just that—a plurality. Yet, this is to say that, for Democritus, any purportedly complex body is

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34 In Aristotle's terms, being and unity are convertible: “being and unity are the same and are one thing in the sense that they are implied in one another” (*Meta.* T.2, 1003b22-24).

35 The Stoics, so far as I am aware, are the first to have challenged the dogma. In proposing *something* as a higher genus than *being* (cf. Seneca, *Letters* 58.13-15 = *LS* 27A), at least some Stoics appear to have countenanced unities that were not beings.

36 English, with Greek, tends to preclude sentence-frames like “the person are ____.” British English often grants exceptions to the rule when a grammatically singular subject is thought to denote a mere aggregate, as in “the audience are lovely.”

37 For my purposes, it matters only that Democritus could have been plausibly read in the manner outlined in the body of the paper. For a more permissive account of the Atomists’ ontology, see C. C. W. Taylor (1999, 151-152 n.141).

not a unity. Given the first dogma of Greek ontology,\textsuperscript{39} neither then is it a being. Strictly speaking, then, Democritus’ ontology is populated only by atoms and the void. Everything else is relegated to the realm of mere appearance, having no legitimate purchase on reality. Thus Plutarch’s report: “color and sweetness and the compound [sugkrisin] and the rest are by convention, but the void and the atoms in reality” (Adv. Col. 8, 1110e-f).\textsuperscript{40}

To those dissatisfied with such a sparse ontological landscape, Democritus bequeaths a challenge: namely, how can one account for the unity of a thing’s parts and thereby ground the possibility of complex beings. The mereological model that Plato deploys in treating the world body does much to meet that challenge. When the parts of a whole are understood to be ontologically prior to or independent of the whole itself, as in the case of a mere aggregate, for example, then the unity of that whole is indeed questionable. On the model that Timaeus presents, though, it is instead the whole that is ontologically primary. Since the parts of such a whole do not exist independently of their composing the whole that they do, their plurality poses no serious threat to the whole’s unity. In Timaeus’ words, the essential nature of the whole, proportion,

\textsuperscript{39} Democritus never explicitly states the dogma, but it can nonetheless be viewed as conditioning much of his metaphysical thought. One can see its pull, for example, in Atomistic characterizations of the void. On the one hand, insofar as the void is a clear departure from Eleatic ontology, the Atomists are pressured to deprive it of the orthodox Parmenidean characterizations of what is, with being and unity foremost among them. The former is reflected in one of their names for the void: namely, “to mê on,” or “what is not.” The latter is reflected in yet another appellation: namely, “ouden,” a composite of the negative prefix “oud-” and the neuter singular “hen,” literally equivalent to “not one.”

On the other hand, since the Atomists are committed to finding a place for the void within their ontology, they have a competing motivation to regard it both as a unity and as a being. Thus, with regard to unity, the Atomists explicitly disavow the proper morphology of “ouden.” Rather than contrasting it with “hen” (i.e., one), as would be expected, the Atomists instead contrast it with “hen” (see Moorhouse [1962] on this neologism), which they use to refer to the atoms. The void, accordingly, is characterized as being a non-atom rather than as a non-unit. To a similar end, but with regard to being, the same sources that attest to the name “what is not” for the void also note the Atomists’ claim that “what is is no more than what is not” (e.g., DK 67A6 and 68A38). This is not a denigration of the atoms, or “what is,” but rather an elevation of the void, as we see in the famous line, “in reality atoms and void” (DK 68B9).

\textsuperscript{40} This report is unique in explicitly placing compounds among that which is by convention [nomôi]. For commentary, see Kechagia (2012, 181-182, with n. 5). But again, for my purposes, the issue is how Democritus might plausibly have been read by Plato.
has “truly [made] a unity of itself together with the things bonded by it” (Tim. 31c2-4).41

This discussion of unity, I submit, provides a fruitful perspective from which to consider Timaeus’ eventual introduction of the being that comes to be. The critical passage is Tim. 33a1-3, where he presents two kinds of being: [i] “the being that is indivisible and always changeless” and [ii] “the being that is divisible and comes to be [gignomenês] in the corporeal realm.”42 The first can be identified with [a] “that which always is and has no becoming.” Timaeus had earlier described it as “unchanging” (28a3). He now simply adds that it is “indivisible [ameristou].” Since something of this sort lacks (a-) parts (merê) into which it even could be divided, its unity and so being are, like those of a Democritean atom, unassailable.43 But the second kind of being, given its share of becoming, is novel. Something of this latter sort, unlike its more exalted cousins, has parts (merê) into which it is divisible (meristê). Yet, it still counts as a being since its parts are suitably unified, or not actually divided from one another. That which merely becomes, in contrast to both, is not one, and so not a being, in either sense; its parts do not cohere well enough well enough to merit a privileged status.44

The demiurge’s aim of making the world body a whole of the kind in question is thus tantamount to the aim of making it, so far as possible, some one thing and so also a being, despite its having come to be. His attention to the world body’s completeness complements that aim. For Plato, the completion

41 Timaeus, of course, is not the first to offer an account on which the simple bodies are proportionally related. Empedocles—who, as the originator of the four-element theory, is an important foil for Timaeus’ account—also took the roots, or at least love and strife, to be proportionally related (see, e.g., DK 31Br.19-20). For Empedocles, however, proportion does not have a unifying function. That role, on his view, belongs instead to love. Timaeus’ use of proportion thus has the advantage of helping to dispel internal threats of cosmic strife.

42 There is, further, “a third, intermediate form of being, derived from the other two” (Tim. 35a3-4). Since the world soul is prior to and more excellent than the world body, it is fitting for Timaeus to countenance still more exalted kinds of being that nonetheless fall short of [a].

43 Compare Soph. 245a8-9: “Surely a thing that’s truly one, properly speaking, has to be completely without parts.”

44 Compare Aristotle, Meta. 1.3, 1054b20-23: “The one and the many are opposed in several ways, of which one is the opposition of the one and plurality as indivisible and divisible; for that which is either divided or divisible is called a plurality, and that which is indivisible or not divided is called one.” As for Plato, that which is divisible but not divided occupies an intermediary position.
of a living thing is the realization of what it is “meant to be,” or the mature expression of its nature (Waanders 1983, 132). To make the world body complete, then, just is to fully realize the proportional structure that is its nature. As a corollary, however, since that structure does all the work of unifying the world body, to make the world body complete is, in effect, to unify it and so to make it, as far as possible, a being.

That aim of making the world body, as far as possible, a being despite its coming to be is further advanced through the demiurge’s attention to uniqueness and eternality in R2 and R3. As with unity, Plato associates both features with being and shows them to come in distinct, hierarchically ordered grades. In addressing them, I thus hope not only to lend a measure of confirmation to the interpretation so far advanced, but also to show how the demiurge’s reasons might be thought to complement one another, in keeping with ID2.

In R2, the demiurge’s express aim is to make the world body unique, or one of a kind. Because a model, as such, can have multiple likenesses, the created world belongs to an ontological type that admits of plurality. In typical cases of craftsmanship, a craftsman cannot secure his creation’s uniqueness simply by refraining from creating more of them. A second image of the model might

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45 In his comprehensive study, Waanders argues that “all occurrences of telos and teleô [and their derivatives and compounds] can be explained in a plausible way, directly or indirectly, from the basic meaning ‘performance, realization’ for the noun, and ‘to carry out, perform, achieve, realize’ for the verb” (1983, 1).

46 This is borne out by his concern that there might be something else “just like [toioouton]” the world body (Tim. 33a2), rather than that there might be something else simpliciter.

It merits noting that, as Plato presents it, being unique is a way of being one. Indeed, in the present passage, Timaeus reserves the term “one [hen]” as a label for the world body’s uniqueness instead of its wholeness. But being unique is a rather different way of being one. Sensitive to this point, McCabe presents the difference between wholeness and uniqueness as a difference between an internal and an external sense of unity. In making the world whole, the demiurge establishes an ordered structure among its parts in virtue of which they compose some one thing. The world is thus “a unity from within” (1994, 166, original emphasis). In making the world unique, the demiurge individuates it, making it, in McCabe’s phrase, a “unity… from without” (ibid., original emphasis).

This is true of likenesses, as such, even if they happen to be one of a kind. On this point, compare Aristotle’s argument (Meta. Z.15, 1040*27-b2) that the sun, though unique, is distinct from its formula—which is capable of being multiply instantiated—making it, as Ross’ comments, “as much an individual member of a class of suns as Cleon is a member of the class of men” (1924, 11.217). His point is of course nicely borne out by the fact that our sun is one among many after all. Aristotle draws a related distinction in his own treatment of the world’s uniqueness at DC 1.9, for commentary on which see O’Keefe and Thorsrud (2003).
come to be through the work of a different craftsman or perhaps even by mere chance. Special measures are therefore needed to guard against the generation of other likenesses. Ordinarily, such measures are directed at the craftsman’s model. A photographer might burn her negative after developing a lone photograph. A sculptor might break her mold. Since the demiurge’s model is eternal, however, this approach to staving off plurality is not open to him. He must instead direct his efforts at the means of production. Using all the earth, water, air, and fire in creating the world body is an effective gambit to that end, in keeping with ID3. It guarantees that “nothing would be left over from which another one just like it could be made” alongside the first (Tim. 33a1-2), whether by the demiurge himself, by another, or by chance.48&49

But why should the demiurge care whether the world body is one of a kind?50 Consider the alternative. Suppose there were, for example, three world bodies

48  The demiurge’s reasoning allows us to neatly distinguish the strength of R2 from that of both R1 and R3, in keeping with ID1. Since the world body is the first bodily thing to come to be, in creating it, the demiurge necessarily uses all the earth, water, air, and fire that there is. This much we know from considering R1. Yet, R1 remains compatible with the demiurge ordering only a small portion of the pre-cosmic chaos. R2 demands more. Since the simple bodies come to be from the pre-cosmic traces, to secure the world body’s uniqueness, the demiurge must exhaust enough of at least one of them that nothing just like the world body could come to be. This, however, is still compatible with the existence of some extra-cosmic non-world and non-world-forming stuff. R3, as we will see, is stronger still, demanding that the demiurge impose order on the entire pre-cosmos; i.e., that nothing at all of the pre-cosmos be left over after his creation.

49  Mohr objects that Plato “did not entertain the possibility that two distinct entities could have all the same parts, that, for instance, both the Elks Club of Smallsville and the Republican Party of Smallsville might each contain all the citizens of Smallsville” (2005, 7 n. 6). His example, like others to the same effect, trades on the assumption that the parts of such wholes are independent of the wholes they compose. Since the mereological model discussed in conjunction with R1 contravenes that assumption, Plato is so far on firm footing.

Plato might more legitimately be suspected of failing to have attended to another possibility, however. If one were to make a statue using all of the world’s bronze, a second such brazen statue could still be created by pilfering some of the original’s material. That is, even though “nothing would be left over [after creating the first] from which another one just like it could be made,” another one just like it might still be made nonetheless. This worry, I take it, will be at least partially forestalled by R3’s dictum against the world body’s becoming diseased.

50  My reading of Plato’s conception of uniqueness and its import, as presented in this paragraph, draws heavily on Marmodoro (2008).
rather than just one. If so, there would need to be some basis for their numerical difference from one another. Their stipulated threeness would otherwise be impossible. However that basis is construed, it necessarily overruns the content of the nature that each instantiates, for they instantiate, by hypothesis, one and the very same nature. The basis for any one instance’s numerical difference from the others is thus an addition to its constitution. That is, each of the three world bodies would be minimally constituted by the nature it shares with the other two plus something to ground its numerical difference from them. This constitutional addition does not merely ground the differences among the instances, then. In going beyond the content of the instances’ nature, the basis for any one instance’s numerical difference from the others, whatever it might be, represents a departure from the nature that it instantiates. As Marmodoro puts the point, “this addition to the constitution of the recurrent is a kind of deformation of it” (2008, 225).

In making the world body whole and complete, the demiurge, I argued, assured that it was some one instance of a determinate nature. In so doing, he maintained a distinction between his creation, a structured whole, and the nature that it realized, the structure itself. The demiurge’s reasoning in R1 has thus already shown that the world body and its nature are non-identical, with the consequence that the world body, in one sense, is not what it is. If the world body were a one among many, as above, then it would not only fail to be identical with its being, it would also, as a result of its bloated constitution,

51 Many of Plato’s predecessors—the Atomists are again a notable case (e.g., DK 68A40)—held that there were infinitely many cosmoi. Timaeus seems to take five to be the pressing finite comparison (Tim. 55c7-d6). Paparazzo (2011), developing a proposal made by A. T. Nicol, suggests that this stems from the fact that there is a fifth Platonic solid, the dodecahedron, since substituting a dodecahedral simple body for either the earth, water, air, or fire in the paradigm from Tim. 32b5-7 could neatly account for the additional four worlds considered there. But if this is right, it is not clear that the case is strictly parallel. If earth, water, air, and fire are ontologically dependent upon the proportional relation they bear to one another, as argued above in section 2, then there would not, properly speaking, be a way to exchange any one of them for an altogether different simple body. Each of the world bodies entertained at 55c7-d6 might thus be better construed as unique instances of five specifically different though perhaps generically related natures.

52 As a haecceity, as an idiosyncratic quality or cluster thereof, etc.

53 The nature instantiated grounds the specific sameness of the instances, not their numerical difference.

54 Compare Rep. X, 597a4-7: “if he [the carpenter] doesn’t make the being of a bed, he isn’t making that which is, but something which is like that which is, but not it. So, if someone were to say that the work of a carpenter or any other craftsman is completely that which is, wouldn’t he risk saying what isn’t true?”
be a deformation of that being. That is, if the world body were a one among many, it would, even in a predicative sense, be what it is in a qualified manner only. In making the world body unique, the demiurge deflects that latter challenge to its being. Because it is one of a kind, the world body is individuated by default, having no relevant specific competitors. Since there are in fact and will be no other world bodies for it to be different from, there is no need for the demiurge to append to its constitution a basis for its numerical difference from them, thus allowing the world body to be what it is without adulteration.

The demiurge’s concern for the world body’s uniqueness thus advances a line of thought focused on attaining as much being as is possible for it. And as with his conception of unity in R1, we find a similar hierarchy of grades of uniqueness underpinning his reasoning in R2. Beings, in the primary sense, are unique by nature. The Form of Living Thing, for example, is not the type of entity that even admits of plurality. The world body, though not unique in that manner, is one of a kind nevertheless. Its uniqueness is instead physically necessary, determined as it is by inviolable factors of the demiurge’s design that preclude the coming to be of a second. This further bolsters its status intermediary between that which always is (in the proper sense) and has no share of becoming, on the one hand, and the many which merely become, on the other.

Nonetheless, the demiurge’s work is not finished. While he has, with R2, precluded the generation of other world bodies, he has not yet precluded the world body from coming to be of a kind with something else, say through the degradation of its proportional nature. Thus far, that is to say, the demiurge has yet to ensure that the created world will forever remain unified and unique. Given the traditional associations of being and stability that Timaeus retains, this is important. Being, in the primary sense, as Timaeus characterizes it, “always is” and is “unchanging.” If the created world is, in some sense, to be a being, it should also, in some sense, be unchanging.

55 I am here assuming that that which makes an instance of a specific kind this very instance is not also, at least necessarily, that which makes it an instance of that kind to begin with.

56 Compare the verdict, though expressed with some hesitation, of Rep. X, 597C1-5: “the god, either because he didn’t want to or because it was necessary for him not to do so, didn’t make more than one bed in nature, but only one, the very one that is the being of a bed. Two or more of these have not been made by the god and never will be.” Plato flags the importance of a Form’s uniqueness by twice challenging it in the Parmenides, first with the largeness regress, or third man argument (132a1-b2), and then again with the likeness regress (132c12-133a6).

57 If, for example, a pestilence somehow precluded the coming to be of any further caterpillars, existing caterpillars would not, for that reason, be prevented from metamorphosing into butterflies.
The demiurge’s proximate concern in R3, that the world body “should not get old and diseased” (Tim. 33a2-3), is here to the point. At its root, Timaeus will later explain, disease is due to the corruption of proportion and so to the ascendency of disorder where order once reigned (87c2ff). This is fitting in light of my reading of R1. If a whole is essentially structured, then the dissolution of that structure is the dissolution of that thing, perhaps into something that is no longer even a unity, let alone one of a kind. The demiurge takes pains to preclude this. Whereas, earlier, it might have been acceptable for a little pre-cosmic fire to be left over, since fire cannot, on its own, be used to create a second world body (31b4-32c2), this will no longer do. On Timaeus’ account, “when hot or cold things or anything else that possesses strong powers surrounds a composite body from outside and attacks it, it destroys that body prematurely” (33a3-5). If the demiurge wants to defend against such destruction, he thus needs to guard against there being anything at all with commensurate powers external to the world body that could, simply in virtue of those powers, threaten its persistence. Accordingly, he did not merely use all the earth, water, air, and fire in creating it, but also “left no . . . power of any of them out” (32c6-8), thus exhausting the pre-cosmic traces. This ensures, first, that nothing, save the demiurge himself, could compromise the internal unity of the world body and thus, second, that the world body will not degenerate so as to become of different kind and, in so doing, deviate from its nature.

58 Compare Laws xxi, 960b7-8: “Only when you have ensured complete and perpetual security for your creation can you reckon to have done everything that ought to have been done.”

59 On Plato’s treatment of disease across the corpus, see Lloyd (2004, chap. 6). For a general account of Timaeus’ theory specifically, see Miller (1962). The political and ethical colorings of the latter are explored by Johansen (2004, 19-22) and Carone (2005, passim).

60 Thus Phil. 64d9-11: a whole “that does not in some way or other possess measure or the nature of proportion will necessarily corrupt its ingredients and most of all itself.”

61 On the distinction between the demands of R1, R2, and R3, see note 48, above.

62 Creating the world body involves balancing the powers associated with the simple bodies. Compare Laws x, 903b4-9: “The supervisor of the universe has arranged everything with an eye to its preservation and excellence, and its individual parts play appropriate active or passive roles according to their various capacities. These parts, down to the smallest details of their active and passive functions, have each been put under the control of ruling powers that have perfected the minutest constituents of the universe.” Compare, further, Prometheus and Epimetheus’ efforts to dispense powers so as to preserve the community of species in the myth at Prot. 320d ff.

63 The demiurge possesses the ability to dissolve the world he creates (see Tim. 32c3-4 and 41a7-8) but is guaranteed never to exercise that ability because the world is good (41b1-6).
This allows for one last distinction between that which always is and has no becoming, that which is but comes to be, and that which becomes but never is. While, unlike its model, the world body is not perfectly unchanging, it nonetheless partakes in a circumscribed but significant form of changelessness. Namely, unlike that which merely becomes, it remains the same, for all time, with respect to its nature. Since time, on Timaeus account, just is a certain kind of change, one may recast the point as follows. That which always is and has no becoming is eternal. It cannot but be what it is, and so it is what it is timelessly. That which is but comes to be is sempiternal. Since it changes, it is in time, but it has been and will be what it is for all time. That which merely becomes lacks a stable nature altogether. The demiurge has thus once again labored to make his creation, so far as is possible for it, a being despite the fact that it has come to be.

Provided that, for Plato, being is better than the alternative ontological standings, the demiurge makes his creation better in making it changeless in this way, just as he makes it better in making it as unified and as unique as possible. And this, I submit, is the linchpin in the defense of the demiurge’s sanity, against Keyt’s charge. There is a clear sense in which a blueprint presents a builder’s model as being blue. It would indeed be absurd for a builder to build a blue house simply for that reason; since the blueness of the builder’s model is irrelevant, such a builder would, as Keyt charges, be revealed as having failed to distinguish between the formal (incidental) and the proper (non-incidental) features of her model. But this in no way implies that it is unreasonable, in general, for a builder to build a blue house. Perhaps those who commissioned

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64 Namely, the motions of the heavenly bodies.
65 That Plato positively values being is, I think, clear enough. Why he positively values being and whether he is justified in doing so are altogether thornier questions. To challenge the demiurge on this front, however, is not to challenge his sanity but rather to engage in a substantive debate about the appropriate objects of value and bases for one’s valuations.
66 Keyt (1971, passim) construes the formal features of a model as those which are “irrelevant” to it, in the sense of being safe for a craftsman to ignore. In some of Keyt’s examples, a craftsman’s decision to realize such a feature in his creation is not merely incidental to his aim, but also actively interferes with it. Since paper cannot support the functional nature of a shield, there is a twofold challenge to the sanity of a craftsman who makes “a paper shield...on the grounds that his pattern was of paper” (ibid., 231). That choice of materials displays a misconception of the salient features of his pattern and undermines the craftsman’s ability to succeed in making a shield. The latter kind of failure is only so much rhetorical flourish, however. Keyt in no way alleges that the demiurge’s decision to make the world complete, unique, and eternal interferes with his ability to succeed in actually creating a world.
the house expressed a preference for that color, or perhaps market research showed blue houses to command a premium. It is not, then, the builder’s decision to make a blue house that challenges her sanity, but rather her failure to appreciate that the blueness of her model might be irrelevant. In considering *Timaeus* 32c5-33b1, I have argued that the demiurge has independent grounds for taking unity, uniqueness, and changelessness to be valuable. Each feature can contribute to making its possessor a genuine being even if it has come to be. The demiurge, then, in making the world as unified, unique, and changeless as is possible for it, is not acting merely on the grounds that his model possesses those features. As such, his decision to replicate them in his creation is no more suspect than the decision of a typical builder to build a blue house.67

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