SELECTED PAPERS FROM
THE XXIII WORLD CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY

The Platonic Idea of Ideal and its Reception in East Asia

NOBURU NOTOMI
KEIO UNIVERSITY

Abstract: In the history of philosophy, Plato's theory of Forms has enchanted many philosophers, but it has faced more adversaries than proponents. Although it is unusual for contemporary philosophers to believe in the Platonic Forms, I confront Plato seriously and try to defend his thought by reflecting on its reception in modern Japan. For this purpose, the Japanese word "*risō*" (理想), which was originally a translation of the Platonic "Idea" or "Form," will give us valuable hints.

I discuss Aristotle, Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Popper, each of whom raised fundamental questions about the Forms as transcendent entities. First, Aristotle ignores one fundamental factor of the Forms, i.e., *Eros*: we aspire for the perfect or ideal state in our life with reference to the Forms. Next, Popper misses the important difference between the Form and the Ideal: i.e., the ultimate reality and its expressed form in words. Aspiring for the latter does not necessarily lead us to totalitarianism. Then, I argue that Nietzsche shares the same framework with Plato in considering the notion of "ideal." We have to face his radical question of whether we should hold an "ideal" in everyday life.

Finally, I introduce a brief history of how philosophers confronted reality by learning Plato in modern Japan. Michitaro Tanaka, in particular, cast critical eyes on the pre- and post-war society by studying Plato's philosophy. To consider and discuss the Forms changes views and meanings of the world and of life. Plato thereby invites us to this common search through his dialogues, and leads us to the *ideal* (*risō*).

1. PLATO IN THE ACADEMY

Plato (*Platōn*), son of Ariston, founded his school here in the sacred site called *Academeia* around 387 BC, after his first trip to southern Italy and Sicily. After

Special Supplement, *Journal of Philosophical Research* pp. 137–147

doi: 10.5840/jpr201540Supplement18

that, the Academy was a centre for philosophy and sciences until 529 AD (when it was closed down by Emperor Justinian I). It produced a number of eminent philosophers, above all, Aristotle.

From the testimonies, we can imagine how Plato pursued philosophy in the Academy. Aristoxenus reports an interesting episode[1]: When Plato gave a lecture "On the Good," people came expecting to hear something about human happiness, but they got perplexed and disappointed since the discussion was all about mathematical sciences and its conclusion was that Good is One (ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἕν). This famous episode seems to suggest that he did not give lectures regularly. Instead, he raised "problems" and discussed them with his students. The Academy was probably not a school where the master lectures his own doctrines and pupils learn his system. But it was more like a scientific institute where colleagues collaborate and share inquiry on common subjects. In fact it was the first University in the world.

This view of the Academy is supported by the fact that Plato's pupils openly and severely criticized his master's ideas, in particular, what we call "theory of Forms." Both Speusippus, his nephew and successor of the Academy, and Xenocrates, the second headmaster, developed their own thoughts against Plato's theory. And Aristotle forwarded several formidable arguments against the theory of Forms, including the so-called "Third Man Argument," in his early treatise "On Forms" (Περὶ ἰδεῶν). This fact shows one fascinating feature of the philosophical activities in Plato's Academy: Plato did not expel pupils who disagreed with his thought, but he seems to have appreciated any criticisms and even encouraged colleagues to provide strong arguments against his ideas.

Thus, the famous declaration of Aristotle, when he sets out to criticize the theory of Forms, represents the philosophical spirit of Plato and his Academy:

[Text 1: Aristotle, *EN*. I.6, 1096a14–17]:

δόξειε δ' ἂν ἴσως βέλτιον εἶναι καὶ δεῖν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ γε τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἀναιρεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ φιλοσόφους ὄντας· ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντοιν φίλοιν ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

> Yet it would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends. (W. D. Ross—J. O. Urmson trans.)

I believe it is this spirit which created genuine philosophy and kept it alive in the history of Western philosophy.

I follow this tradition in a different way from Aristotle and the others. In the history of philosophy, Plato's theory of Forms has enchanted many philosophers, but for centuries, it has faced more adversaries than proponents. Today it is unusual even for Plato scholars to believe in the Platonic Forms! Against this contemporary trend in philosophy, I confront Plato seriously and try to defend his thought by reflecting on some remote legacies of this tradition, namely the reception of Plato's philosophy in modern Japan and East Asia. I discuss the Japanese word "*risō*" (理想), which was originally a translation of the Platonic "Idea" or "Form."

2. THREE CRITICS OF THE PLATONIC FORMS

Of the formidable opponents of Plato, I focus on three: Aristotle (384–322 BC), his own pupil in the Academy, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), a German philosopher who prefigures Postmodern Philosophy in the late nineteenth century, and Karl Popper (1902–1994), the severest critic of Plato's "Ideal State" in the mid-twentieth century. Each of them raised fundamental questions about the Forms as transcendent entities. Their criticisms tend to lead our mind to depreciate Plato's thought. But no matter how much we may acknowledge Plato's intellectual legacy, I suspect that it is futile to use any of his ideas without seriously considering the core of his philosophy, i.e., the Forms. Therefore, I try to confront the criticisms and to defend his original thought, so as to develop it further.

It is well known that Aristotle severely attacked the theory of transcendent Forms, and he proposed instead the theory of immanent forms (εἶδος). His main claim is that the Platonic Forms are redundant or superfluous.

[Text 2: Aristotle, *Metaph*. B2 997b5–12]:

πολλαχῇ δὲ ἐχόντων δυσκολίαν, οὐθενὸς ἧττον ἄτοπον τὸ φάναι μὲν εἶναί τινας φύσεις παρὰ τὰς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ταύτας δὲ τὰς αὐτὰς φάναι τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς πλὴν ὅτι τὰ μὲν ἀΐδια τὰ δὲ φθαρτά. αὐτὸ γὰρ ἄνθρωπόν φασιν εἶναι καὶ ἵππον καὶ ὑγίειαν, ἄλλο δ' οὐδέν, παραπλήσιον ποιοῦντες τοῖς θεοὺς μὲν εἶναι φάσκουσιν ἀνθρωποειδεῖς δέ· οὔτε γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐποίουν ἢ ἀνθρώπους ἀϊδίους, οὔθ' οὗτοι τὰ εἴδη ἄλλ' ἢ αἰσθητὰ ἀΐδια.

While this presents difficulties in many ways, the most paradoxical thing of all is the statement that there are certain things *besides* those in the material universe and that these are the same as sensible things except that they are eternal while the latter are perishable. For they say there is a man-in-himself and a horse-in-itself and health-in-itself, with no further qualification,—a procedure like that of the people who said there are gods, but in human form. For they were positing nothing but eternal men, nor are they making the Forms anything other than eternal sensible things. (W. D. Ross trans.)

Aristotle maintains that the separation (χωρισμός) of Forms is not only unnecessary but also a wrong way of thinking of the world. He suggests that we should see *reality* (οὐσία) in this experienced world.

Next, Nietzsche, an excellent classicist and historian of ancient Greek philosophy, critically examined the history of moral thinking and concluded that Socrates and Plato, together with Christianity, are responsible for the generation of "slave morality." He insists that Plato's way of seeing reality *behind* our world—which he calls "Back-world" (Hinterwelt)—is nothing but a perversion against nature. Nietzsche calls Plato—as a promoter of Ideals—"the higher fraud" (höherer Schwindel)[2] and declares war against "Idealism":

[Text 3: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Menschliches, Allzumenschliches,' 1]:

Sieht man genauer zu, so entdeckt man einen unbarmherzigen Geist, der alle Schlupfwinkel kennt, wo das Ideal heimisch ist,—wo es seine Burgverliesse

> und gleichsam seine letzte Sicherheit hat. Eine Fackel in den Händen, die durchaus kein "fackelndes" Licht giebt, mit einer schneidenden Helle wird in diese **Unterwelt** des Ideals hineingeleuchtet. Es ist der Krieg, aber der Krieg ohne Pulver und Dampf, ohne kriegerische Attitüden, ohne Pathos und verrenkte Gliedmaßen—dies Alles selbst wäre noch "Idealismus." Ein Irrthum nach dem andern wird gelassen aufs Eis gelegt, das Ideal wird nicht widerlegt—**es erfriert** . . . —fast überall erfriert "das Ding an sich."
>
> If you look more closely you will find a merciless spirit who knows all the hiding-places where the ideal is at home,—the mountain where its dungeon lies and, as it were, its ultimate security. With a steady torch in hand, this *underworld* of the ideal is illuminated with a searing clarity. It is war, but a war without powder or fumes, without belligerent posturing, without pathos and contorted limbs—all this would still be "idealism." One mistake after another is calmly put on ice, the ideal is not refuted, it is *frozen to death* . . .—"the thing-in-itself" is frozen to death almost everywhere. (R. J. Hollingdale trans.)

Idealism entails a negation of reality or necessity, and is thus deadly hostile to life. Nietzsche attacks it as a typical form of *decadence*, or "the degenerate instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness" (den **entartenden** Instinkt, der sich gegen das Leben mit unterirdischer Rachsucht wendet).[3] Plato's idea of the Back-world emerged from human incapacity and suffering, and weakens the power of life. The Platonic striving for Forms and Ideals *behind* this world is regarded as perversion. Thus, Nietzsche attempts to overturn Platonism and to repudiate "Idealism."

Third, Karl Popper published *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, whose first volume is entitled "The Spell of Plato," in 1945, after moving to New Zealand away from Nazi Austria. He sees in the theory of Forms the basic intention of Plato's political philosophy: Plato, on the one hand, sees in history a general tendency towards corruption, but on the other hand, he believes that there is a possibility that we may stop further corruption. Therefore, he proposes the theory of Forms, in order to realize the best perfect state, "which is free from the evil of change and corruption" (3.2). Popper's criticism of his totalitarianism focuses on the theory of Forms:

> [Text 4: Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: 1. The Spell of Plato*, 3.5]:
>
> According to our analysis, the theory of Forms or Ideas has at least three different functions in Plato's philosophy. (1) It is a most important methodological device, for it makes possible pure scientific knowledge, and even knowledge which could be applied to the world of changing things of which we cannot immediately obtain any knowledge, but only opinion. Thus it becomes possible to enquire into the problems of a changing society, and to build up a political science. (2) It provides the clue to the urgently needed theory of change, and of decay, to a theory of generation and degeneration, and especially, the clue to history. (3) It opens a way, in the social realm, towards some kind of social engineering; and it makes possible the forg-

ing of instruments for arresting social change, since it suggests designing a 'best state' which so closely resembles the Form or Idea of a state that it cannot decay.

It is this third function that Popper most severely attacks in the name of "Utopian engineering." He insists that, since the Form is fixed as the absolute end, this engineering does nothing but wield absolute power to realize it. In other words, Plato's theory of Forms, without any checking system, inevitably leads to dictatorship and totalitarian government.

Each critic raises different points against Plato. The idea of Forms is, for Aristotle, superfluous and mistaken, for Nietzsche, perverted, and for Popper, terribly dangerous. Seeing the three major criticisms, I try to defend Plato's arguments as much as I can.

3. THE EASTERN CONCEPT OF "*RISŌ*" (IDEAL)

In order to assess how much relevance Plato's proposal has to today's world, I seek some hints in the history of modern Japan and East Asia, where his thought has prevailed in an astonishing way.

When Japan came in contact with Western civilization after opening the country in the mid-nineteenth century, it rapidly introduced Western thoughts and things. The earlier thinkers of Enlightenment faced a serious difficulty in terms of how to understand and to *translate* Western terms of philosophy and sciences. In 1873, Amane Nishi (西周, 1829–1897) wrote a short treatise of a history of Western Philosophy, entitled "Seisei-Hatsuun" (生性発蘊), and explained Plato's philosophy by using some new words. In the main text, he translates "Form or Idea" as "*kwan-nen*" (観念), which was originally a Buddhist concept and had already been widely used in Asia. But in the footnote of this word, he used another new word "*risō*" (理想), which is a combination of two Chinese characters, "*ri*" (理, reason, logic) and "*sō*" (想, thought). This was a new term, of which we find no earlier example either in Japanese or in Chinese. Nishi tried to explain the essence of the Platonic Form with this coinage. While the "Form" is later translated more often as "*kwan-nen*" or "*ri-nen*" (理念)—another similar combination of Chinese characters—Nishi's new word "*risō*" soon prevailed in modern Japan in the sense of "ideal" and became an everyday word even in China and Korea. Today, this word is so common in East Asia that nobody is aware of its Platonic origin.

The European word "ideal" never appeared in ancient Greek or classical Latin. The Latin word "*idealis*"—the adjective of "idea"—(used since the fifth century AD, Martianus Capella) became our notion of "ideal" (both adjective and noun) through medieval and modern philosophy.

It seems to me particularly interesting that the two Japanese words, "*kwan-nen*" and "*risō*," are allotted for two senses of "idea" or "ideal," depending on the context. The European word "idealism" (or "idealist") has two general meanings. "Idealism," in a philosophical sense, represents Plato's philosophy, as contrasted with "Empiricism," e.g., of Aristotle. This sense of "Idealism" (uppercase) is more often used for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German philosophers (Kant,

Fichte, Hegel et al.), as contrasted with "Materialism." In Japanese, "Idealism" in this sense is "*kwan-nen-ron*" (観念論).

On the other hand, the everyday use of "idealist/idealism" (lowercase) signifies someone who desires a perfect state, which is actually impossible but exists only in one's imagination or as a fantasy in the mind. This second sense is contrasted with "realist/realism" in an ordinary sense. We should note that this last contrast is inapplicable to Plato's Idealism, since for him, Forms are *reality*. In Japanese, "idealism" in this everyday sense is "*risō-shugi*" (理想主義).

Thus, while the Western languages preserve a single word "ideal" for Plato's philosophy and for ordinary experience (though people naturally make a distinction in context), the Asian languages separate the philosophical tradition of Plato and Idealism from the everyday use of "ideal." In this distinction, I want to ask what "ideal" in the ordinary sense is. What relation does it have with Plato's Form? I think we can expect Plato to provide an argument for the possibility of the *ideal*. Let us return to the criticisms of Plato with this question in mind.

4. *EROS*: A REPLY TO ARISTOTLE

Aristotle's empiricist criticism of the Platonic Forms has attracted and convinced many philosophers. They believe that we need Ockham's razor here: i.e., the principle of parsimony that the simpler theory is more likely to be true. According to this principle, Plato's Forms are regarded as unnecessary metaphysical entities; philosophy can do without them. They should be shaved away by Ockham's razor. Then, our question is whether we can live a happy life without the Forms.

Aristotle completely ignores one salient feature which occupies the centre of Plato's theory of Forms, namely, *Eros*. The *Symposium*, one of Plato's middle dialogues, put forward the Form of Beauty in explaining the essential role played by *Eros* (Love) in human life and the world. *Eros* is a great *daimon* striving for beauty and the good. He helps human beings give birth to beautiful speeches and "true virtues," to be as immortal as they can. Diotima of Mantinea says to Socrates about the Great Mysteries of love:

[Text 5: Plato, *Symposium* 211b–d]:

τοῦτο γὰρ δή ἐστι τὸ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικὰ ἰέναι ἢ ὑπ᾽ ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ ἀεὶ ἐπανιέναι, ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον, . . . καὶ γνῷ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἔστι καλόν. ἐνταῦθα τοῦ βίου, ὦ φίλε Σώκρατες, . . . εἴπερ που ἄλλοθι, βιωτὸν ἀνθρώπῳ, θεωμένῳ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν.

This is what it is to approach love matters, or be led by someone else in them, in the correct way: beginning from these beautiful things here, one must always move upwards for the sake of that beauty I speak of . . . so that one may finally know what beauty is, itself. It is here, my dear Socrates, if anywhere, that life is worth living for a human being, in contemplation of Beauty itself. (C. J. Rowe trans., slightly modified)

This passage of the ladder of love, or ascent to the Form of Beauty (209e–212a), is regarded as a representative and most attractive description of the Platonic Forms.

It is worth noting that Aristotle mentions Plato's *Symposium* only once throughout his works, namely in *Politics* B4 1261b11 (Aristophanes, 192c) in criticizing his idea of love and friendship in the Ideal State in the *Republic*.[4] On the other hand, Platonic philosophy has been most influential probably in the field of the aesthetics of love, since Platonism and Marsilio Ficino's *De amore* (1475). It is understood as dynamic aspiration or stirring of our soul to convert to *reality*. In other words, the Forms are what our awakened soul sees, so as to live a real and good life.

This *erotic* feature of the Forms is also implied in such dialogues as the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. In the *Phaedo*, our sensual experiences are said to tell us that "all the things in the sense-perceptions are striving for *what equal is* (sc. Form of Equality), yet are inferior to it" (πάντα τὰ ἐν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἐκείνου τε ὀρέγεται τοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἴσον, καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐνδεέστερά ἐστιν, 75b). Equal stones are not exactly equal; beautiful things are not always or in every aspect beautiful. But things in the sense-perceptions strive for the perfect character, that is, the Form.

The transcendent Forms may seem useless and superfluous if we treat them solely as a formal or explanatory cause of sensible things. The static relationship between Forms and their participants may give us an impression that they are a mere reduplication of sensible things [Text 2]. However, Plato impressively shows the significance of the Forms in a different way, as the ultimate object for our aspiration, which allows us to transcend this world to reach a perfect state. We human beings are pregnant both in body and in soul so that we give birth to beautiful speeches and virtues, aspiring for immortality and perfectness. Although we human beings are defective in many ways and live in the middle of *nothing* and *all*, we strongly love what is *beyond* our present state. This experience of transcendence is *erotic*.

The idea of the transcendent Forms reveals a gap between the present state and the perfect or ideal state in our life. We want to become what we *should* be, and for this aspiration, we need to postulate Forms as an object of love. The gap is not easily dismissed as useless or illusory, since it enables us to move from our present state to a better one. As moral beings, we critically reflect what we *are* now and make every effort to realise what we *should be*. This process is to be pursued rationally with reference to the transcendent Forms. For if we restrict moral duty, or the "should," within our current condition, our life is always relative to change and flux, and the goal is susceptible to arbitrariness and situational ambiguity. What we seek must be something *beyond* us. For Plato, *Eros* is a power guiding us to overcome our current condition and to lead us up to a better and higher state, towards the transcendent reality.

Aristotle implicitly appeals to this idea when he explains the first principle in terms of an "Unmoved mover," which moves all other things by making them aspire to it. This takes over the basic idea of Plato's Forms as *erotic* object. In this sense, I think Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic Forms is only partial. We should take the other side more seriously. That is, we should imagine and consider the *erotic* power of Forms to change our life to a better state.

5. IDEAL: A REPLY TO POPPER

It is exactly this absolute nature of Forms that Popper severely attacks. He maintains that the Utopian engineer who posits the Forms as the true and absolute goal pursues them rationally but in fact violently, which results in dictatorship and totalitarianism. Our next question is whether the transcendent Forms only bring a negative result in our sincere pursuit of happiness. Here it is worth considering the notion of "ideal" (*risō*).

Popper assumes that Plato's proposal of the "Ideal State" (καλλίπολις) in the *Republic* depends entirely on the theory of the Forms.

> [Text 6: Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, 1. The Spell of Plato, Aestheticism, Perfectionism, Utopianism*]:
>
> It is therefore to be expected that ideas and ideals will change. What had appeared the ideal state to the people who made the original blueprint may not appear so to their successors. If that is granted, then the whole approach breaks down.

Here Popper argues as if Forms and ideals are interchangeable. But they should be seen as crucially different in one respect. The Form is by definition changeless and absolute, but the ideal, our conception and image of the Form, as it were, may not be so. Plato often describes the former as if it is seen or intuitively grasped, but the ultimate reality is probably beyond our description or verbal grasp. In contrast, the "ideal" is what we depict in the mind and express in words through discourse. With the two words, "Form" and "ideal" (*risō*), we can distinguish two aspects of the Platonic Forms: the ultimate reality and its expressed form in words. This subtle difference is crucial for answering Popper's criticism.

In the *Republic*, although Plato does not use the word "ideal," I suggest that it corresponds to a "model" (παράδειγμα). By looking at it, we produce works (500b–501c). The divine model (τὸ θεῖον παράδειγμα, 500e) signifies the Form which a philosopher tries to imitate. In Book 5, when Socrates is asked about the realizability of the Ideal State, he explains the model:

> [Text 7: Plato, *Republic* V 472c]:
>
> Παραδείγματος ἄρα ἕνεκα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐζητοῦμεν αὐτό τε δικαιοσύνην οἷόν ἐστι, καὶ ἄνδρα τὸν τελέως δίκαιον εἰ γένοιτο, καὶ οἷος ἂν εἴη γενόμενος, καὶ ἀδικίαν αὖ καὶ τὸν ἀδικώτατον.
>
> It was in order to have a model that we were trying to discover what justice itself is like and the completely just man would be like, if he came into being, and what kind of man he'd be if he did, and likewise with regard to injustice and the most unjust man. (Grube-Reeve trans.)

By observing such a model, we can investigate and observe justice and injustice, happiness and unhappiness. Therefore, while the main object of inquiry is the *Form* of Justice, the Ideal State, which Socrates and his interlocutors present in words, is not a Form but a *model* to let us observe that Form. This inquiry is compared to a painter's drawing of a most beautiful person. The Ideal State is such a model. This

model need not actually exist in this world. On the other hand, as far as "ideal" is derived from "Form" or "idea," it must be based on this absolute reality.

Our particular ideals may be different in times and places in this world, but nevertheless, they are neither relativistic nor groundless. Ideals are particular models to be examined, and they invite us to open discussion and undertake a common search for the truth.

Therefore, I believe, *contra* Popper [Text 6], that no endeavour to pursue the ideal will be in vain, even if successors change the original plan. To discuss and examine a model (ideal) is to engage in rational argument about both goals and methods. What is our human happiness? How can we realise it? Such discussions are a chief concern for philosophers (alien to practical politicians or ordinary people).

Plato's proposal of the Ideal State ("*Risō-koku*," 理想国) in the *Republic* is indeed quite open to many criticisms. Aristotle critically examines it in the second book of *Politics*. It opens up a series of discussions about "*politeia*" and "Ideal State" from Zeno the Stoic, Cicero and St. Augustine to Thomas More and modern utopian thinkers. We know that many of them were severe critics of Plato's original suggestions, but at the same time, they engaged in the discussion raised by Plato. In other words, they share Plato's concern for seeking the *ideal*. History proves that Plato's argument about the *ideal* does not exclude any thinker, Popper himself included. Even if Popper is right in that Plato's "Ideal State" contains some serious errors, it does not entail that Plato's theory of Forms is automatically to be rejected. We should reconsider Popper's problem with care and sincerity. But Plato's philosophy is, I believe, never the enemy of the open society but the open arena for people to seek the good.

6. FORMS: A REPLY TO NIETZSCHE

The third opponent of Plato's theory of Forms, Friedrich Nietzsche, is probably the strongest and most influential in the contemporary world. Postmodern philosophy is sometimes characterized as "overturning of Platonism" (Umdrehung des Platonismus). It is interesting to observe how often Nietzsche makes severe comments against the "Ideal" and "Idealism," of which he sees Plato as champion. According to him, "Idealism" i.e., the belief in Ideals, weakens the power and will of life.

However, we can notice one interesting feature of Nietzsche's argument. When he criticizes the "ideal" and "Idealism," in the ordinary sense as well as the philosophical sense, his argument is directed against Plato's philosophy itself. He believes that "Idealism" in our life is inseparable from, or even derives from, the theory of Forms. Therefore, Nietzsche attempts to drive Ideals and Forms out of our life.

One may wonder what is wrong with holding an ideal in everyday life. Most people in some way have their ideals, e.g., in terms of professional career, marriage, friendship, and society. Yet, Nietzsche keenly discerns that the belief in the transcendent Forms forms the basis for everyday ideals. Both "Forms" and "Ideals" are things in the Back-world. In this way, he turns out to share a strong conviction with Plato that "ideals" cannot exist without the transcendent Forms. This looks

strange to many of us, since we normally assume that each person holds "ideals" without any commitment to the Platonic Forms. Contrary to this common view, Nietzsche strongly insists that we must overturn Platonism and "freeze the *ideal* to death" [Text 3] at the same time.

I think that Nietzsche shares the same framework with Plato in considering the notion of "ideal." It is often pointed out that Nietzsche resembles Plato in many ways: for example, the notion of philosophy as "erotic." If we, the philosophers of the twenty-first century, take his challenge seriously, we should also take Plato's proposal of Forms seriously. The question is whether we can and should live our life without any "ideal." Nietzsche said "Yes." But if you say "No," as I do, how can you hold ideals in this life? This is what Plato keeps considering in his life and what we should learn from his philosophy.

7. THE NOTION OF "*RISŌ*" IN JAPAN

Plato engaged in a shared dialectical inquiry into Forms in the Academy. That inquiry was and is open to anyone who shares his passion and intention of doing philosophy and living well together. Dialogue is necessary, even more so in our contemporary world, for avoiding empty relativism and violent antagonism. To pursue dialogue, we must look at the world and reality from different angles on the shared ground of inquiry. Then, we can see a better life and a better society.

Let me finish my paper with one historical episode in modern Japan. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japanese people eagerly learned the essential ideas of Western philosophers, notably John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Darwin, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx. Plato was also very popular among intellectuals and ordinary people, and his masterpiece *Republic* ("*Risō-koku*," 理想国) played a central role in the intellectual history of modern Japan.

But just as in Germany of the early to mid twentieth century, Plato was misused or abused in pre-war Japan by nationalist thinkers, such as Kazunobu Kanokogi (鹿子木員信, 1884–1949), to support the totalitarian ideology of the Japanese government, and his thought was associated with traditional Japanese spiritualism. On the other hand, we should also remember that several serious thinkers, in particular Shigeru Nanbara (南原繁, 1889–1974), evoked Plato on theoretical grounds against Nazism and totalitarianism. They detected that Plato's "Idealism" is essentially different from apparently similar ideologies.

Michitaro Tanaka (田中美知太郎, 1902–1985) belonged to the latter group. He studied and taught Greek philosophy, in particular, Socrates, the Sophists and Plato, and calmly discerned, even before the war, the situation of Japan as doomed to ruin. In the article entitled "Idea" published in 1943 (during the war), he examines the potentiality of Plato's theory of Forms in an academic fashion, but under the surface, we can see his critical eyes on the fascist government and life under war:

[Text 8: Michitaro Tanaka, *Logos and Idea*, p.290]:

> If what we rely upon is immediately lost and our entire existence is shaken from the very bottom, what shall we live on? When desperate endeavour with

> death in mind does not save us from the present situation and every hope becomes empty, we should hold something to believe, even in dying. But it will be pathetic if one lives or dies being deceived by *nominal* things. But if there is nothing other than what is called "reality," one can only despair and throw oneself upon the nominal, when that "reality" collapses. Yet, Socrates never despaired in life or in facing death. What did he rely upon? That is a mystery. But Plato took it to be the Forms as *risō*. (N. Notomi trans.)

We see here a deep wrath against the situation, where young people went to the battlefields to kill and be killed in the *name* of the Emperor and the country. It was like a shadow deep in the cave. Tanaka firmly believed that, in order to see the *reality*, we must seek absolute truth and standards, as in the Platonic Forms. In post-war Japan, he continued encouraging the academic study of Greek philosophy, in particular reading Plato.

To discuss and consider the Forms is to change ourselves. It changes views and meanings of the world and of life. It awakens our soul to live a real life. Plato invites us to this common search through his dialogues, and thus he is still a champion of such dialogue, encouraging and leading us to the *ideal* (*risō*). I believe that we should read Plato's philosophy again today in order to do real philosophy together.

NOTES

This paper was read in the Special Session at the site of Plato's Academy on 6 August 2013. I thank the organizers of the 23rd World Congress of Philosophy, in particular Professor Konstantinos Boudouris, for this special opportunity.

1. *Elementa harmonica* II 30–31.
2. *Götzer-Dämmerung*, 'Was ich den Alten verdanke,' 2.
3. *Ecce homo*, 'Die Geburt der Tragödie,' 2.
4. Cf. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, secunda edition, 1870, S. 598.