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and time, the latter being the εἰκὼν of the former. So the realm of γένεσις has its appropriate eternity or immortality.

It seems, however, as if this relative perfection of time is based on its circular character: Plato speaks of the forms (εἶδη) of time that imitates eternity and circles round according to number (χρόνου... αἰῶνα μιμουμένου καὶ καθ' ἄριθμὸν κυκλουμένου *Tim.* 38A); moreover, he says that Time came into being together with the Heaven; they are, in fact, co-existent (37DE, 38BC). So the immortality of mortal nature (by means of begetting) in the last resort rests on the 'eternal' (i.e. circular) nature of the process of γένεσις. It will be clear now, that this immortality is not a person's own, but that of mankind, — or, rather, it is a person's only insofar as he is a link in the continuous chain of generations that forms the human race. Finally, it may be reminded, that the first of Plato's arguments, or, rather, the first stage in his argumentation for the immortality of the soul, is based precisely on the circular process of γένεσις, by which things keep on turning into their opposites, e.g. from being dead into being alive, and vice versa³.

We find the same idea of the eternity of the sort, in Aristotle⁴. In *De Anima* II, 4, 415A 26-B7 (on reproduction as one of the two functions of the nutritive soul) he explains, that it is by means of procreation that living creatures partake in the eternal and the divine (τοῦ ἀεὶ καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ): as it is impossible for them to possess personal eternity (because nothing in the world of perishables can abide numerically one and the same), it is thus given to them to enjoy the eternity of the sort. Aristotle is not specifically dealing with human procreation, but this and other texts enable us to see that the positive view of (human) procreation as providing some kind of eternity (—unlike Plato, he does not use the words ἀθάνατος or ἀθανασία—) has a metaphysical background: in order to safeguard the completion of the universe (i.e. its relative eternity and participation in the divine) God provided the continuity of the (process of) γένεσις (ἐνδελεχῇ ποιῆσας τὴν γένεσιν)⁵; this continuity of engendering supplies, in the realm of the Becoming, the eternity of the Being; that is why the continuous process of γένεσις καὶ φθορά is seen as suitable (εὐλογῶς). Aristotle, who in this matter is obviously influenced by Plato⁶ makes it understood that it is the circular (or, rather, elleptic) motion of the firmament that is both the cause and the model of the continuity of engendering (*De gen. et corrupt.* II, 10, 336B2-3).

It appears from this brief comparison that there is a close similarity between Plato's and Aristotle's ideas on the circular process of γένεσις: both describe it as a way, however imperfect, to immortality (Plato) or eternity (Aristotle); for both, this relative perfection of γένεσις and time roots in the circular, and therefore continuous, motion of this process.

We have dwelt for some length on a subject which at first sight seems irrelevant for the purpose of this study. But it should be noticed, that the relation which in the view of both Plato and Aristotle exists between human procreation and immortality (eternity) is not purely psychological as might seem to follow from the context in which the idea appears in the Symposium (Eros), but has its metaphysical roots in a conception of γένεσις and time. In the course of this article we will have more than one occasion to point to this relation between marriage (procreation) and time.



3. *Phaedo* 70A-72A; see esp. 72AB.

4. See J. PÉPIN, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne*, Paris 1964, p. 214-216.

5. *De gen. et corrupt.* II, 10, 336B27f; cf. *De Philos.*

fr. 31 (in: R. WALZER, *Aristotelis dialogorum fragmenta*, Florence 1934, p. 97): ἀκατάληκτον ποιῆσας καὶ συνεχῇ [ταύτην] τὴν γένεσιν.

6. PÉPIN, *o.c.* p. 215, refers to *Tim.* 37D.

