

ARISTOTLE

Who, at age seventeen, enrolled in Plato's academy and later founded his own school in Athens; who believed that knowledge could be obtained through interacting with physical objects and recognized that personal associations played a role in our understanding of those objects.

It is the same with almost all the early phallic songs: they were not treated seriously. The ludicrous, however, must be seen as a subdivision of the ugly, and even the ugliest of uglies, once implanted, so to speak, can give the liveliest pleasure. Nature herself discovered the tendency. What a man chooses to show or sheath (or show and sheath repeatedly) reveals his moral compass, be it true north or any of the lesser angles, and it is by such choices that man is made happy or the reverse. These principles being established, let us discuss the proper structure. A beautiful object must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order, not to mention an order of magnitude that is, well . . . breathtaking to say the least. A lot depends on length. The limit of length in relation to the sensuous presentment is no small part here. The greater the length, the more beautiful will the object be by reason of its size, in so long as it can be adequately, if painfully, embraced by the . . . how shall I put it? The *muscle* of memory. Neither must it begin nor end haphazardly but must instead define the matter roughly. And roughly again until the sequence of events presented, according to the laws of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad, on the part of the receiver of the object, that is, the audience (at least if the audience is both keen and daring), or so I tutored Alexander the Great before he conquered

Athens with his long sword in his hand. Of course, I was charged with impiety for the lesson and forced to flee with my object between my legs.

PLOTINUS

In whom Augustine said Plato lived again, some six-hundred years later; who attempted unsuccessfully to get Emperor Gallienus to rebuild the abandoned settlement of Campania into a city named Platonopolis, founded under the constitution set out in Plato's *Laws*; who spent his final days in seclusion there.

“This was the man I was looking for.” Of course, his eyesight was so bad he said it to a snake slipping under the bed and hissing like Ammonius.

His life had been almost coextensive with one of the most disastrous periods in Roman history, but that was okay because the world of ideas—that eternal world of goodness and beauty as opposed to this illusory experience of ruin and misery—awaited him.

“Strive to give back the Divine in yourself to the Divine in the All,” he told the snake, and the snake carried these, his last words, through a hole in the wall.

On the other side, he felt a chill and so went toward the light, in which he basked for seven hours before it faded away. *Hmph*, he hissed, not expecting that, and began a footless glide through time and space. He flowed like a sheet, yet his underbelly felt scraped. Another illusion of the senses, or had pure intellect misapprehended what he would find here? Anyway, happiness is attainable only within consciousness, and the accidents of anyone's historical experience are unimportant.

Upward ascending now, through so many grabbing arms, pausing only to consider night's pitch upside down, suspended from a limb . . . It looked still like pitch (though poor eyesight, once again, could have been to blame). When he could go no higher, he laid himself out and seemed to sleep, or to pass, while the fingers of a breeze gave him shape.

A head and nothing more emerged from the form and plopped into a roiling sea of ideas, leaving behind a knot of tissue-paper for the birds to peck, the used wrapper of a soul's embodiment, imprinted with these words: Strive to give back the Divine in yourself to the Divine in the All.