Literary Paternity, Literary Friendship

Essays in Honor of Stanley Corngold

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5 Allusions to and Inversions of Plato in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*

MARK W. ROCHE

The importance of Plato for German idealism cannot be overestimated. Whereas Kant's ethics, with its principle of noncontradiction, owes a great deal to Socrates, the influence of Plato is especially prominent in the reemergence of objective idealism, with its claim that nature is neither foreign to human consciousness nor the result of human consciousness, but the manifestation of an objective principle that constitutes both nature and human consciousness. Hölderlin believed in the existence of such objectivity, which represents not one sphere among others, but is itself the essence of all spheres—nature, consciousness, and intersubjectivity. Hölderlin was greatly influenced by Plato, but he did not simply represent Plato's positions in modernity, he reworked and revised them, especially in his novel *Hyperion*.[1] As with many cases of literary paternity, Hölderlin's relationship to Plato is marked by both appropriation and differentiation. Correspondingly, this paper has two parts: it discusses allusions to Plato in *Hyperion*, including a number of previously unrecognized allusions (I), and it analyzes the ways in which Hölderlin inverts some of Plato's positions in order to establish his own version of objective idealism (II).

I

"I believe that in the end we'll all say: sacred Plato, forgive us! You have been gravely wronged" (2:257).[2] Thus ends the preface to the penultimate version of *Hyperion*. What does Hölderlin mean with this prominent suggestion? In what way has modernity ignored Plato's wisdom? The preface opens with a reflection on the greatness of Greek antiquity, including its concept of beauty. Hölderlin redefines originality as depth of insight,

not newness of creation: "I wouldn't wish in the least that it be original. Originality is for us novelty; and there is nothing dearer to me than what is as old as the world. / To me originality is sincerity, depth of heart and spirit. But nowadays one appears to want to know very little about this, at least in art" (2:255).[3] Hölderlin then develops his triadic notion of history: an original unity, "blissful unity, being, in the only true sense of the word," has been lost, and we must embrace this loss, if we are to achieve the higher state of reconstituting unity through consciousness. Our goal is "the peace of all peace, which is higher than all reason." Neither "knowledge" nor "action," the spheres of Kant's first and second critiques and the two modes Schleiermacher discusses in the second of his *Speeches on Religion*, will lead us there; knowledge and action are relegated to the sphere of infinite approximation. Beauty differs: "that infinite union, that being, in the only true sense of the word . . . is present—as beauty" (2:256–57). Hölderlin's paean to Plato follows.

For Hölderlin, poetry is not the creation of what is new; it is a recollection of what is already present. The contemplation of beauty awakens this recollection—both of originary unity and of the dissonance integral to a higher harmony. Not *poiesis* but *anamnesis* is the guiding force. It is for this reason as much as any other that Heidegger elevates Hölderlin in his critique of the *verum-factum* principle that dominates Western metaphysics: for Hölderlin, in contrast to much of the Western tradition, truth is not what is made. For Plato, as for Hölderlin, truth and beauty are not creations of the subject, but objective forces already present. They must be uncovered and recollected: like Heidegger after him, Hölderlin employs a concept of truth derived from the Greek *aletheia*, or unconcealment.[4] Both in the concept of originary "all-unity" and in his emphasis on narrative recollection, Hölderlin's character aligns himself with the Platonic concept of knowledge as recollection or *anamnesis*. Hyperion even evokes the Platonic concept of a "pre-Elysium," which is an equally mythic representation of preexisting, rather than subjectively created, truth.[5]

The Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis* suggests that there is truth (or knowledge) that precedes experience and is nonetheless not hypothetical. Ideas do not have their origin in experience; on the contrary, experience presupposes certain (eternal) ideas and itself strives to recognize them (cf. *Phaedo* 74ff). What the doctrine of *anamnesis* captures mythologically, Kant calls synthetic a priori knowledge. But where ideas have for Kant only

regulative validity, for Plato and Hölderlin they have ontological valence: they are not chimeras of consciousness, but present in experience. Moreover, according to Hölderlin, what is eternally valid, what is to be recollected, is best grasped aesthetically.[6] Through divine possession, or through what Hölderlin likes to call intellectual intuition, the poet has an initial grasp of preexisting unity and eternal truth.

Because truth already exists, our task is to uncover its essence. Plato argues that we can be virtuous because humanity is potentially already virtuous; virtue as the essence of humanity is reached through reflection on this essence. In a similar vein, Hyperion receives from Adamas in letter four the invocation of his essence, through his name, in its parallel to the sun: "Be, like this! Adamas cried" (2:23), which is reinforced by Diotima in letter twenty-eight: "your namesake, the glorious Hyperion of the heavens, is in you" (2:83). This idea, also invoked by way of the concept of the "god in us," reaches back beyond the Stoics to the Platonic concept of a *daemon* (2:25).[7] Development for Plato and Hölderlin presupposes knowledge or recollection [*Erinnerung*] as a path into oneself, into one's essence, which is ideally an analogue of the higher sphere.[8]

Hölderlin's view of nature, which deviates from the subjective idealist view, is related to this evocation of Plato. For Hölderlin, as for the father of objective idealism, nature is not an extension of ourselves; it has, as a manifestation of objectivity, its own dignity and purposefulness and contains within itself the ultimate harmony sought by humanity; it is to be honored and embraced as an independent reflection of the absolute.[9] The "divine spirit that is particular to each of us and common to all" encompasses also the Logos of nature (2:162). Hyperion's hymns to nature in his second and sixtieth letters must be grasped from this framework, which harkens back not only to the Stoics, but also ultimately to Plato. Nature is not the product of subjective thinking, but is itself an independent and sacred entity ("sacred earth! . . . blessed nature!" [2:15]) containing within it the objective laws of beauty and reason, and it is capable of triggering recognition of the same.[10]

Most central in Hölderlin's reception of Plato in *Hyperion,* beyond the resurrection of *anamnesis* and the elevation of nature, is the integration of his theory of eros, evident in the name Diotima, which comes from the *Symposium,* and in allusions to the *Symposium,* as in Hyperion's reflection, "I came back to Smyrna like a drunk returning from a banquet [wie ein

Trunkener vom Gastmahl]" (2:29). It is also evident in two allusions to Aristophanes' myth of eros and in references, direct and indirect, to the definition of love as the child of plenty (*Poros*) and want (*Penia*). In addition, Hölderlin reflects on parallels between beauty, including artwork, and love, especially homoerotic love.

One of Plato's great achievements in the development of Greek philosophy is his ability to recognize unity and multiplicity not as two autonomous categories, but in their organic relation, as mutually connected. He offers us thereby an ontology that synthesizes the positive and the negative.[11] This unity behind all duality is especially prominent in Aristophanes' myth in the *Symposium.* Plato's concept of love, as told to us through Diotima and Socrates, suggests that both irrational and rational moments are integrated. The location of eros is in the soul, thus between the purely ideal noetic realm and nature, between the one and the many. Eros is not pure positivity—as Agathon suggests earlier in the dialogue—but a striving for the good and the beautiful. It belongs to a sphere between the two—being itself neither beautiful nor ugly—and so unites the two poles. Love is midway between wisdom and ignorance. This mediary status also captures the essence of humanity, which can be compared with both the sacred and the abysmal, as in the opening of Hyperion's tenth letter (2:51).

Hölderlin, like Plato, associates love with art. According to Plato's Diotima, both the initial catalyst for love and its ultimate telos is beauty. Hyperion, motivated by Diotima, acts precisely according to this structure. Moreover, for the Plato of the *Symposium,* art performs a mediating function; like eros, it has an in-between status, being both material and spiritual. Hölderlin, too, embraces both senses of mediation—from the gods to humans and between the ideal and the sensuous. Love not only integrates two diverse moments (the ideal and the sensuous), it is, if we read Aristophanes' myth symbolically, fully round (much like the perfect artwork). Aristophanes' myth is integrated into the novel at the conclusion of letter fifteen when it takes on a cosmic dimension (the earth strives to reunite with the sun) and in letter twenty-eight when Hyperion describes his burgeoning love for Diotima ("Never before had my spirit strained so fervently, so implacably against the chains that fate wrought for it, against the iron, inexorable law that kept it divorced, that would not let it be *one* soul with its adorable other half [nicht Eine Seele zu sein mit seiner liebenswürdigen Hälfte]" [2:80]). *Hyperion* has often been analyzed in the light of circular

structures: the hero passes through a dialectic, with the synthesis involving a return to the origin; the narrator becomes conscious of himself, and the subject reflects on itself as an object; the novel ends with Hyperion's trip to Germany (the final letter) and begins with an account of his return to Greece (the first letter), so that on the story level, the final letter leads into the first. Even the name of the novel and its titular hero, with its allusion to the sun, evokes a circular image.[12]

In letter thirty, drawing on a quotation from Heraclitus in the *Symposium* (187a), Hyperion defines beauty as the unity of opposites or, more specifically, as the unity that is divided within itself, the *hen diapheron heauto,* which is also a classic idealist definition of love (2:92). The novel captures the unity of opposites throughout, not only on the narrative level, with the unity and diversity of the experiencing and the reflective Hyperion, but also as a dominant theme, involving the interplay of dissonance and harmony, of strife and reconciliation.

Central to the Platonic concept of love is its origin in wealth or plenty and poverty or want.[13] Hyperion refers to this dialectic when he shies away from it in an early passage, preferring to see in Diotima no lack whatsoever: "Let not your beauty age in the trials of the earth. For this is my joy, sweet life! that you carry within you the carefree heaven. You should not become needy, no, no! You should not see in yourself the poverty of love" (2:75). Hyperion, echoing Plato, writes: "What makes us poor amidst all wealth is that we cannot be alone, that the love in us, as long as we live, does not perish" (2:24). In another passage he embraces this concept of insufficiency or want by considering the untenability of its opposite: "Envy not the carefree, the wooden idols who are in want of nothing . . . who do not ask about rain and sunshine because they have nothing to cultivate" (2:48). The prose draft of the metric version is even more explicit: "when poverty united with abundance, there was love. Do you ask, when that was? Plato says: On the day Aphrodite was born" (2:208). Central to this dialectic is the idea that eros is characterized by its never reaching fulfillment or closure—so too *Hyperion,* with its concluding words, "More soon."[14]

Of interest for the integration of love and beauty is the elevation of homoerotic love. Beyond the question of physical attraction, at least two external reasons existed for the Greek elevation of homoerotic love. First, the mentoring relationship between the older and more active partner or lover, the *erastēs,* and the younger partner or beloved, the *erōmenos,* played

a prominent role in helping future citizens develop intellectual and social virtues.[15] Second, in ancient Greece women tended not to be recognized for their intellect or as equals; such recognition is essential for the depth and symmetry of love.[16] But there may have been an additional moment. A dominant theory of the sexual act sees as its primary purpose procreation; thus, its end is instrumental and is driven by nature. A competing theory argues that the sexual act is primarily a physical analogue of the love relationship and an end in itself. The Greeks may have elevated homoerotic love—love without procreation, love outside of the *oikos*—not only for the reasons noted above, but also because of an emerging valuation of the concept of loving one particular individual as an end in itself.

The relationship between Hyperion and Alabanda is not exhausted by the hyperbolic rhetoric characteristic of eighteenth-century friendship. There are hints of a homoerotic relationship. Surprisingly, this has for the most part gone unnoticed.[17] Consider the following passages from letter seven. The first three might be grasped within the innocuous rhetoric of the age: "My horse flew to him like an arrow" (2:33); "Great one! I cried, wait and see! you shall never surpass me in love" (2:33); and "We became ever more intimate and happier together" (2:34). The cumulative effect of these passages, however, if not the following passage by itself, seems to suggest homoerotic, not to say homosexual, tendencies: "We came together like two brooks that pour forth from the mountain . . . in order to clear the way to each other, and to burst through until, now embracing and being embraced with equal force, they are united in *one* majestic stream, beginning the journey to the spacious sea [vereint in Einen majestätischen Strom, die Wanderung in's weite Meer beginnen]." After an account of the longings of each, Hyperion continues: "Wasn't it inevitable that the two youths should embrace one another in such joyous and tempestuous haste?" (2:35). And following a description of their reading Plato together, Hyperion continues with passages such as the following: "Alabanda flew to me, embraced me, and his kisses penetrated my soul" (2:36). The double entendres are unmistakable in a passage such as the following: "And yet I had been unspeakably happy with him, had so often sunk into his embraces, only to awaken with invincibility in my breast, had so often been hardened and purified in his fire, like steel!" (2:44). Finally, Hyperion speaks of their "days of betrothal together" (2:39), and when he is betrayed, he writes, "I felt like a bride who discovers that her betrothed is secretly living with a

whore" (2:43). This is the same language Hyperion uses later in the letter to describe, in analogy to the Alabanda-Hyperion friendship, the Achilles-Patroclus friendship, which was seen in the post-Homeric era, for example, in Plato's *Symposium* (179e, 180a), as having an erotic dimension (2:44).[18]

The novel's simultaneous allusion to homoeroticism and veiling of it are underscored by the opening of the fourth letter: "Do you know how Plato and his Stella loved each other? / So I loved, so was I loved. Oh, I was a fortunate boy!" (2:19). In naming Plato's lover, Hölderlin avoids the Greek *Aster* or *Stern* in favor of the Latin *Stella,* which in German is a female name. Although the possessive pronoun should identify the gender of Plato's lover, this marker might easily be overlooked in the light of Stella's status as a female signifier. By employing the Latin term, Hölderlin seems to veil the gender to most of his readers, but the close reader and the student of antiquity will catch the homoerotic allusion, which is then deepened in Hyperion's later relationship with Alabanda.

Hyperion and Alabanda have the common purpose intrinsic to all love relationships; in this case, it is heroic longing.[19] The relationship, however, is also an end unto itself, a structure, as I have suggested, that is privileged in homoeroticism. An analogy exists with Hölderlin's concept of art: the idea of aesthetic education suggests that art serves a purpose, but the great artwork is also an end unto itself, a position that Hölderlin shares with Kant. The preface emphasizes the two Horatian moments of *prodesse* and *delectare.* Art, like love, contains this double moment, and like love, it is always incomplete. Thus, the novel ends with a reference to its fragmentary nature. By integrating Alabanda, through the double moment of erotic love, into his concept of art, Hyperion brings together in his writing not only his experience with Diotima, who essentially calls him to his artistry, but with Alabanda as well. We see in the novel not only the Socratic analogy between love and art but also an analogy between love and education. This is especially prominent in the fourth letter, which opens with the allusion to Plato and his lover and devotes itself almost entirely to the education of Hyperion through Adamas. According to Socrates, both love and education are characterized by a lack, by the striving for what they not yet are.[20] Education, not unlike love, is a contradiction, born of resource and need. For Socrates, education is consciousness of incompleteness and the desire for fulfillment. Like philosophy, love strives toward the good and the beautiful by overcoming its deficiencies. Each is a negation of negativity. Love and

wisdom signal a reconstitution of original unity on a higher level. Here, too, is a recognition of truth as revealedness. Education, always incomplete, seeks originary unity. As further evidence of the parallel between education and love, note a passage such as the following where Hyperion uses the Platonic symbol of enlightenment in connection with love: "Yes! man is a sun, all-seeing, all-illuminating when he loves, and when he doesn't love, he is a dark residence, where a smoking lamp burns" (2:85).[21]

Hölderlin, elevating his own artistry, views Plato on behalf of Hyperion, not first and foremost as a philosopher, but as a poet on a level with Homer.[22] Not insignificantly, the fourth letter, which addresses the theme of aesthetic education, opens with Plato and closes with Homer. Clearly, the two are invoked as the great artists of Greek antiquity, the last and the first. The last comes first because the last seeks what is contained in the first, not vice versa.

II

Even as Hölderlin expresses his veneration for Plato, he also offers a different perspective on several fundamental questions. First, whereas for Plato art is merely the imitation of an imitation, two steps removed from the ideal, Hyperion, in his embrace of the sensuous moment, suggests that those who believe they have experienced "joy," but have not seen beauty, are themselves twice removed from light: "You have yet to see even the shadow of its shadow!" (2:60). For Hyperion, Diotima, the embodiment of beauty, is not removed from the ideal, but its fulfillment: "I have seen it *once,* the one thing my soul sought, and the perfection that we remove up there beyond the stars, that we put off until the end of time, I have felt it in its living presence. There it was, the highest, in this circle of human nature and things, it was there!" (2:61–62). This ideal is still present, if hidden: "it is now only more concealed in the world" (2:62). What Hyperion calls "the highest and the best" and that which is sought by others in "knowledge" or "action," in "the past," "the future," or the distant stars is beauty: "Do you know its name? the name of that which is one and is all? / Its name is beauty" (2:62). This echoes the conclusion of the penultimate preface, with its reference to Plato's *Phaedrus* and its idea that the higher reality is accessible through beauty.

Plato's view of art is complex. Though he is, as Hölderlin suggests, a great artist, and though Plato recognizes that the artist is capable of integrating truth, he sees that the artist, working instinctively rather than rationally, can also deliver untruths and can isolate pure form at the expense of substantial content. Because of its unconscious and unpredictable nature, art does not guarantee truth; truth is its chance product. Indeed, art contains much untruth.[23] This leads Plato, on the one hand, to dismiss art, and, on the other hand, to sublate it into his philosophy. Art guided by philosophy has its legitimacy. Similarly, Hölderlin sublates momentary enthusiasm into the greater stability of reflection—thus the essence not only of *Hyperion* but of Hölderlin's later reworkings of his earlier odes—and Hölderlin recognizes the untruth within art that must be sublated into a higher, more reflective whole (consider, for example, the positions of the Sophocles motto or of "Hyperion's Song of Fate" within the novel).[24] But Hölderlin also gives beauty a higher position as the source of all later reflection. Beauty has cosmic and ontological status insofar as it represents originary unity and harmony. Hölderlin extols beauty in contrast to a philosophy that elevates analysis [Verstand] and infinite approximation [Vernunft], thus the essence of his elevation of beauty and critique of contemporary philosophy in the thirtieth letter. Hölderlin shares with Plato a valuation of beauty and reflection, but he deviates from him when he endorses the artist as the carrier of beauty and embraces the sensuous and material moment within beauty.

Whereas Plato, not Socrates, would have us move upward on a heavenly ladder to contemplation of a purely idealized form of beauty, Hölderlin embraces the sensuous moment—image, language, appearance. Whereas Plato emphasized only the one movement, from the world of reality to that of the forms, Hölderlin aligns himself with the neo-Platonic tradition, which, beginning with Plotinus, stresses a complementary movement from the ideal to reality, expressed as emanation or radiance.[25] The idea that the ideal can be made sensuous was of course reinforced through the Christian idea of the incarnation. In contrast, Plato sees the human body as a prison,[26] a position invoked by the early Hyperion when he describes "the moments when we are set free, when the divine bursts open the dungeon . . . when it seems to us as if the unshackled spirit, its suffering and servitude forgotten, were returning triumphantly back into the halls of the sun" (2:61). The elevation of the sensuous also sets Hölderlin apart from his contemporary Hegel, who

saw the sensuous as a sphere that must be left behind in the pure reflection of philosophy.

A bold inversion of Plato is evident in Hölderlin's short ode "Socrates und Alcibiades," where the original relationship is reversed: in the *Symposium,* Alcibiades loves Socrates, whose mind is focused on what transcends the physical; in Hölderlin, Socrates, the intellectual, turns to the figure of Alcibiades: "He who thinks most deeply, loves what is most alive [Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste]" (1:205).[27] Indeed, Hölderlin's gesture is a double inversion, for not only does Hölderlin invert Plato, but the Greek philosopher had himself transformed the common image of a homosexual relationship initiated by the more mature partner.[28] Socrates is beyond this relationship and must resist the advances of the younger and less experienced Alcibiades, who of course had expected the more mature Socrates to initiate the relationship.[29] In *Hyperion,* Hölderlin does not simply reaffirm the traditional Greek image of homoeroticism, with its link to an educative relationship.[30] To be sure, Hyperion opens the fourth letter with an analogy between Plato and Adamas and Hyperion and Stella. This conforms to the traditional image of an asymmetrical, educative homoerotic relationship that may have symmetry as its goal, but is itself asymmetrical. The more pronounced homoerotic relationship in the novel, however, is between Hyperion and Alabanda. Hölderlin thus lays on to the traditional Greek structure the modern concept of symmetry. Hyperion and Alabanda love each other as equals. This represents an inversion of the most prominent paradigm of ancient Greek homoeroticism.

Plato's signature image is that of the cave. *Hyperion,* not surprisingly, is replete with allusions to the metaphor of light as the realm of truth and beauty. For Hölderlin, beauty is higher than everyday reality; it touches an essence, anticipates the ideal, and makes it once again present. This valuation is behind the idea of aesthetic education, which draws indirectly on the Platonic analogy between temperance (harmony of the soul), friendship (harmony between individuals), and justice (harmony in the state), suggesting that the harmony of art nurtures these virtues, which are in the end all one. In letter forty-five Hyperion elucidates the connection between Diotima's harmony and the harmony of the state ("our world is yours, too. / Yours, too, Diotima, for it is the copy of you. O you, with your Elysian repose, could we but create, what you are!" [2:127]), and already in letter

twenty-six he invokes Harmodius and Aristogiton, who are celebrated in Plato's *Symposium* for their ideal friendship, which inspired them to free Athens from tyranny (2:72; cf. 182c).

Here, too, however, is a nuance of difference. Plato was the first intellectual to suffer what we might call the problem of the owl of Minerva. Plato, like Hegel after him, believed that philosophy arrived too late and could not change the world.[31] Spirit became dominant only in an age of decay when it was, tragically, too late to alter the course of events. For Hyperion, in contrast, insight into truth leads to change: thus, his mission as an educator. The language of Hyperion as educator is analogous to the language of the divine becoming human. Diotima again alludes to the essence of his name: "You must shine down, like the ray of the sun, descend, like the all-refreshing rain, into the land of mortality, you must illuminate, like Apollo, shake and enliven, like Jupiter, otherwise you are not worthy of your heaven" (2:99). Hölderlin's rejection of Plato's theorism derives from his prolepsis of nineteenth-century this-worldliness, as it would be represented by Feuerbach, Marx, and Nietzsche, among others.

Similar in a sense to Hölderlin's revision of Plato's concept of beauty is Hölderlin's reworking of Plato's concept of nature. Plato believes that nature has value because it is a reflection of the *Idea.* The *Timaeus,* central to the revival of the objective-idealist view of nature in Hölderlin's age and well known to the poet, explicates nature as following the model and essence of the Idea: the cosmos is a sensuously perceptible divinity, or "the sensible God" (92c). In a letter to Neuffer that alludes to the *Timaeus,* Hölderlin himself speaks of "the soul of the world" (3:102). Hölderlin, however, believes that nature has value because in nature the Idea is *real.* Immanence, not transcendence, is the dominant motif for the later thinker, who nonetheless holds to an integrative and organic, not a materialist or mechanical, paradigm of nature. In his letter to Neuffer, as in the concluding sentences of *Hyperion,* the world soul and nature are captured in the language of the heart and its arteries, with their unifying separation and return.[32]

We recognize Hölderlin's reevaluation of Plato also by studying the Christological references in the novel. As Mark Ogden has argued, Hölderlin's novel is characterized by a latent Christology, but Ogden has not recognized the extent to which Diotima's death is part of a (Christian) dialectic that embodies the moments of universality, particularity, and individuality. Plato's Diotima is characterized by stillness, the stillness of the pure forms.

Her greater mysteries teach a sublimation that culminates in contemplation of the immovable and eternal; ultimately she rejects life for intellectual vision. Hölderlin's Diotima undergoes significant (Christian) transformation, which allows her to embrace life. She is, if you will, an embodiment of Socratic, not Platonic, eros.

Why does Diotima die? On the superficial level of external causality, her death serves the plot: the death of Diotima and the departure of Alabanda free Hyperion from the spheres of love and heroism so that he can enter the sphere of poetry. But an immanent causality exists as well. First is the idea that God has assumed human shape. Diotima affirms human essence (God has become visible) not just by appearing in the world, but by passing away as well.

Second, an idea Hyperion internalizes in the course of his reflections is that death is an integral part of perfection: in death (or negativity) is divinity, for without death, and correspondingly the limits and possibilities of consciousness, divinity would be empty, barren, a waste.[33] This is both a revitalization of Plato's idea of the dialectic of opposites in the *Phaedo,* to which Hölderlin's novel alludes,[34] and an inversion of Plato's concept of the divine as removed from the vicissitudes and wants of humanity.[35] Hyperion's praise of Diotima as "free from want" and "divinely content" early in the novel (2:68) corresponds to Plato's vision of the deity in the *Timaeus,* where he speaks of "the self-sufficing and most perfect god."[36] But this concept is reevaluated in the course of the novel; the narrator deems such pure and timeless bliss empty: "I want nothing better than the gods. Must not everything suffer? And the more excellent, the more deeply! Does not sacred nature suffer? O my Divinity! That you could mourn, as you are blissful, for a long time I couldn't grasp that. But the bliss that does not suffer is sleep, and without death there is no life. Should you be eternal, like a child, and slumber, as does nothingness?" (2:164).

Third, and this reflection moves Hölderlin toward his great final hymns, Diotima has particularized divinity. She must die in order to release divinity from her particular person so that it can be transformed into spirit through Hyperion's narrative. Divinity is no longer localized in one person but available to a larger community, which encompasses all recipients of beauty. This idea will be more fully developed, first in *The Death of Empedocles* and then in the hymn "Patmos," but its seeds are already apparent in *Hyperion.*

The complexity of Hölderlin's relationship to Plato is clearest in his de-

velopment of Diotima. Hölderlin's stress on Diotima's immanence, on the incarnation of divinity, would have been alien to Plato; here, the influence of Christianity and that of Spinoza are dominant. Nonetheless, the telos of Diotima is the death of her body as the transformation of her essence into spirit, a concept as Platonic as it is Christian.

III

Plato influenced Hölderlin in many ways during his writing of *Hyperion,* most prominently in his theory of objective idealism, with its recognition of preexisting truth and elevation of nature, and his theory of eros. Hölderlin integrates the former into his reflections on the triadic structure of history and his critique of the subjective idealism of Fichte, which draws as well on the writings of Spinoza.[37] Through Hyperion's accounts of education and beauty and his friendship and homoerotic relationship with Alabanda, we recognize elements of the Platonic eros, including the interconnections between art, education, and love. Despite the contemporary stress on a fragmentary, anti-organic Hölderlin, the poet, successful or not, was an integrative thinker, for whom the good, the true, and the beautiful were one.[38]

But Hölderlin does not merely represent Plato for the present. First, Hölderlin does not disparage art as twice-broken mimesis, but elevates it in the form of beauty as the origin and telos of all thought. Plato, too, elevated beauty in this way, but only after removing its sensuous dimensions. Hölderlin affirms along with the principle of sublimation the sensuous moment, and he recognizes along with the movement of human consciousness toward the absolute the complementary movement of the absolute into the world. This, too, colors Hyperion's view of nature. Like Plato, Hyperion sees in it a reflection of the ideal, but Hyperion in his pantheism affirms the reflection along with the Idea and in some moments even sees the reflection and the Idea as one and the same. Also moving beyond Plato, Hölderlin gives Diotima a Christian ontology: where Plato viewed Diotima as the disembodied spokesperson for the ideal forms, in Hölderlin's novel she becomes a Christ figure, who enters the world, giving particular shape to the universal, and passes away, releasing divinity from her particularity and allowing it to be reshaped for the community as art and spirit.

If aesthetic value, as Hölderlin suggests, is defined by the interplay of intellectual content and sensuous form, then reflection on the reception of Plato in Hölderlin's novel enlightens us not only with regard to intellectual-historical reception and inversion, it also brings into focus aspects of the work's aesthetic value. And it does so in a way that tells us not only what Hölderlin wanted to show, but why he wanted to do so, for Hölderlin, like Plato, philosopher and poet in one, wrote works that ask questions that have increasingly shifted from philosophy to art itself: what is the relationship of art to philosophy, and what are the intrinsic and extrinsic merits of the artwork? It speaks for Hölderlin that he is able to answer these questions in ways that exhibit neither the hubris of philosophy, with its claim that its sphere is in all respects superior to others, nor the despair common in contemporary art, with its never-ending search not for meaning but for the value of its own creation. Hölderlin's model of objective idealism freed him of both dangers, first by affirming the absolute in the world (and not just in spirit), and second, by recognizing that aesthetic merit is as objective as it is elusive.

NOTES

1. Much of Plato's influence on Hölderlin has been documented in critical editions, occasional references, and a few devoted studies. The most important study in English is R. B. Harrison, *Hölderlin and Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 43–83, which, besides its references to earlier literature on the topic, focuses on the biographical development of Hölderlin's encounters with the Greeks, including Plato. Harrison cites numerous works besides *Hyperion,* but sees the novel as the most central text for Hölderlin's reception of Plato. Stephan Lampenscherf in his article, "'Heiliger Plato, vergieb . . .' Hölderlins 'Hyperion' oder Die neue Platonische Mythologie," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 28 (1992–93): 128–51, also focuses on *Hyperion* and brings forth some interesting insights: the mediation of Plato through the writings of Carl Philipp Conz and the fictional travelogue of Abbé Barthélemy; analogies between Plato and Adamas and Stella and Hyperion; and Hyperion's embodiment of elements of eros, including his being awakened to love through beauty. Inversions of Plato do not play a role for Lampenscherf. Neither study integrates all the themes or passages I do, nor does either study relate the various themes to one another. If further evidence were needed for a closer examination of the topic, consider that several of the allusions I present below have not been recorded in the as yet most extensive critical apparatus to the novel, which was created by Jochen Schmidt in his comprehensive edition of Hölderlin (Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe,* ed. Jochen Schmidt. [Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992–1994]). Note for example, overlooked allusions to the *Symposium* in letters 6, 15, and 28 or the missed

reference to Plato's mimesis doctrine in letter 13. Finally, for the most recent general discussion of Hölderlin's reception of Plato, without extensive reference to *Hyperion,* see Michael Franz, "'Platons frommer Garten.' Hölderlins Platonlektüre von Tübingen bis Jena," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 28 (1992–1993): 111–27.

2. Hölderlin is cited, according to the Schmidt edition, as the edition most likely to be both in libraries and on scholars' private shelves. The translations from German are my own, although I consulted and benefited from the translation of *Hyperion* by Willard Trask (Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece,* trans. Willard R. Trask [New York: Ungar, 1984]).

3. The passage anticipates Gottfried Keller's programmatic redefinition of originality in the preface to his *Stories of Zurich* as that which "deserves to be emulated" because of its excellence and uncommonness, "even if it is not something unprecedented and ultra-inventive" (Gottfried Keller, *Züricher Novellen.* [Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1977], 21). These two authors, not normally linked, have in common an extraordinary respect for the accomplishments of their predecessors.

4. On Hölderlin's use of truth in the Greek sense of *aletheia,* or unconcealment, see for example, "Bread and Wine," v. 81–82 and "Germania," v. 17–18.

5. 2:80; see also 2:504; compare *Phaedo* 72e and *Meno* 85e.

6. See Hölderlin's letters to Schiller of 4 September 1795 and to Niethammer of 24 February 1796.

7. Compare, for example, *Phaedrus* 242b. Note in particular Hyperion's use of the concept in letter 56, "the god in us, the loving one" (2:147), with its allusion to the *Symposium* (195e).

8. Note Hegel's gloss on "Erinnerung" or recollection as "making oneself introspective, turning inward [Sich-innerlich-machen, Insichgehen]" in his discussion of Plato (G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden,* ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970], 19:44).

9. In the first great comprehensive study of Plato in German, Tennemann underscores the contemporary recognition of Plato as an objective idealist who recognizes a higher reason in both humanity and nature. See, for example, M. Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie,* 4 vols. (Leipzig: Barth, 1792–1795), 1:245 and 2:123–27.

10. In the *Phaedrus* (238d), Plato portrays Socrates—not unlike Hölderlin's later depiction of Hyperion—as being transfigured (divinely possessed) by his experience of nature.

11. See, above all, Hösle's magisterial account of Plato as the culmination of the logical development of Greek philosophy. Vittorio Hösle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte: Studien zur Struktur der Philosophiegeschichte unter paradigmatischer Analyse der Entwicklung von Parmenides bis Platon* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984).

12. On the novel's complex circularity (which is not without moments of both linearity and openness), see Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlins Hyperion. Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1965), Friedbert Aspetsberger, *Welteinheit und epische Gestaltung. Studien zur Ichform von Hölderlins Roman "Hyperion"* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1971), and especially Howard Gaskill, *Hölderlin's Hyperion.* (Durham: University of Durham, 1984), 50–65.

13. *Symposium* 203b–204c.

14. For commentary on this passage, see Mark William Roche, *Dynamic Stillness: Philosophical Conceptions of Ruhe in Schiller, Hölderlin, Büchner, and Heine* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987), 106–7.

15. Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World,* trans. Cormac Cuilleanáin. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 16.

16. Ibid., viii–ix.

17. The only exceptions I could find in the vast Hölderlin literature were, first, Derks's reference to *Hyperion* in a broad survey of homosexuality and German literature (Paul Derks, *Die Schande der heiligen Päderastie: Homosexualität und Öffentlichkeit in der deutschen Literatur 1750–1850* [Berlin: Winkel, 1990], 393–400) and, second, Bertaux's allusion to the novel within his highly speculative thesis of a homoerotic relationship between Hölderlin and Sinclair (Pierre Bertaux, "Hölderlin-Sinclair: 'ein treues Paar'"? *Homburg vor der Höhe in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte: Studien zum Freundeskreis um Hegel und Hölderlin,* ed. Christoph Jamme und Otto Pöggeler. [Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981], 189–93).

18. Note in this context also the following passage from *Hyperions Youth:* "Finally one spoke also of the many wonders of Greek friendship, of Achilles and Patroclus, of Dion and Plato, of all the lovers and loved ones, who ascended and perished, inseparable like the fraternal stars" (2:238).

19. The danger of this common bond is that heroism will turn into violence, and so the friendship between Hyperion and Alabanda eventually falls victim to one-sidedness. Hyperion, having learned from Alabanda both the advantages and disadvantages of the heroic, tempers this sphere with what Diotima teaches him of stillness. Compare Gregor Thurmair, *Einfalt und einfaches Leben. Der Motivbereich des Idyllischen im Werk Friedrich Hölderlins* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1980) and Roche.

20. For a fuller account of the Socratic analogy between love and education, see Laszlo Versényi, *Socratic Humanism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963).

21. Compare letter 41: "Magnanimous one! Things have never gone as well for me, as when I felt the light of your love on me" (2:118).

22. Plato was known in the late eighteenth century for both his poetic genius and philosophical acumen, but the weight of Hölderlin's emphasis can be measured against the contemporary view of Plato in Tiedemann's study, which opens with a reflection on the proximity of "poetic genius and philosophical mind" (Dieterich Tiedemann, *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie,* vol. 2. [Marburg: Neue Akademische Buchhandlung, 1791], 63) but then leaves behind any additional references to Plato's poetic power and attends in the remaining 135 pages only to his philosophy. Similarly, Tennemann acknowledges Plato's poetic power, but rejects the idea that Plato is "more poet than philosopher" (1:150) and likewise devotes his study to Plato as a thinker.

23. For a discussion of Plato's view of art's potential untruth, with references to the dialogues, see Hösle 569–74.

24. Compare Roche 80–107, especially 96–98. In this context, see also Hölderlin's letter to his mother of 8 July 1799 and the following passage from "Reflections": "Only that is the truest truth, in which even error becomes truth, for truth posits error in the totality of its system, in its time and place. Truth is the light that illuminates itself and the night as well. This is also the highest poesy, in which even the unpoetic becomes poetic, for it is said at the right time and in the right place within the whole of the artwork" (2:521).

25. Compare Plotinus, for example, III:8.8, IV:8.5, V:1.3, V:1.5–7, V:2.1–2, V:4.1–2, VI:9.9.

26. For example, *Phaedrus* 250c, *Phaedo* 62b, *Cratylus* 400c.

27. For an earlier illustration of Hölderlin's inversion of Plato, whereby the poet integrates movement not only upward to the forms but also downward to reality—and with this, recognition of the absolute in the world, see "Hymn to Beauty." The theme continues to surface in the late works, for example, in "The Only One."

28. "The homosexual relationships that were conventionally approved by classical Greek society were strongly asymmetrical. A younger male was desired by an older, but did not himself desire the older; mutual desire between peers was not recognized" (K. J. Dover, "Greek Homosexuality and Initiation," *The Greeks and their Legacy: Collected Papers Volume II: Prose Literature, History, Society, Transmission, Influence* [New York: Blackwell, 1988], 118.)

29. *Symposium,* 217c; see also 183e–184e.

30. On the connections between pederasty and pedagogy in Greek antiquity, see especially Bernhard Sergent, *L'Homosexualité initiatique dans l'Europe ancienne* (Paris: Payot, 1986) and William Armstrong Percy III, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

31. For an analysis of Plato's view of philosophy as being too late, see Hösle 589–605.

32. In this letter Hölderlin writes of the "divine hours, when I returned from the bosom of blissful nature or from the grove of the plane trees by the Ilissus river, where I laid down among the students of Plato, watched the flight of the magnificent one, as he traversed the dark distances of the primeval world, or followed him dizzily into the deepness of the depths, to the most remote ends of the spiritual world, where the soul of the world sends its life into the thousand pulses of nature and to which the forces that have streamed out return after their immeasurable cycle" (3.102). At the end of *Hyperion* we read: "O soul! soul! beauty of the world! you indestructible one! you enchanting one! with your eternal youth! you are; what then is death and all the lamentations of men?—Ah! Those strange creatures have spoken many empty words. Yet from delight all comes, and all ends in peace. / Like the discord of lovers are the dissonances of the world. Reconciliation is present in the midst of strife, and all things that are parted find one another again. / The arteries separate and return to the heart, and all is one eternal, glowing life" (2:174–75).

33. On Hyperion's rejection of static divinity and his paradoxical recognition of incompletion as intrinsic to perfection, or the most desirable state, see Roche 63–119.

34. See Harrison.

35. Harrison (77–83) sees in Hölderlin's references to "aging and rejuvenation" (2:35) an allusion to the idea of the reciprocal generation of opposites in the *Phaedo.* Harrison stresses thereby the Platonic-Hölderlinian theme that death belongs to life, that everything is part of one big cycle. Lampenscherf, in contrast, argues that the passage refers to the myth of the reigns of Cronus and Zeus in the *Statesman.* Lampenscherf emphasizes the depravity of the age of Zeus, when divinity is absent, and the possibility of returning to the age of Cronus, an age of divinity and peace, which, however, is the result of divine not human action. Schmidt reads the passage as an allusion to the discussion of immortality and palingenesis in the *Meno* (2:996–97). He comments thereby on the theme of death and rebirth in nature and society. Each interpretation preserves elements of plausibility. Harrison's general suggestion of the importance of Plato's theory of the alternation of opposites for Hölderlin is not refuted even if one sides with Lampenscherf or Schmidt.

36. Timaeus 68e. Translation from Plato, *The Collected Dialogues including the Letters,* ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

37. See Uvo Hölscher, "Hölderlins Umgang mit den Griechen," *Jenseits des Idealismus. Hölderlins letzte Homburger Jahre (1804–1806),* ed. Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Bonn: Bouvier), 326–27 and Margarethe Wegenast, *Hölderlins Spinoza-Rezeption und ihre Bedeutung für die Konzeption des "Hyperion."* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990). In rightly elevating the influence of Spinoza, Wegenast nonetheless underestimates the influence of others, including Plato.

38. Consider in this context Hyperion's description of the ideal of Greek antiquity: "In the Olympus of the divinely beautiful, where out of eternally young springs, the true arises with all that is good" (2:108).