

Template - A Structural Analysis

1. The *Idea*

An *idea* is a general aspect, from an Indo-European root pertaining to seeing (compare the Latin verb *video*). The general aspect is a feature seen throughout all particulars sharing that feature. It should be distinguished from a concept, which is the abstraction formed in one's mind from similar particulars. The *idea*, being in the particulars rather than in the mind, can be dramatized; it is for the reader to form the concept.

2. The *Eidos*

The general aspect (the *idea*) may be divided into specific aspects (*eidē*, the plural of *eidos*), which together comprise the whole of the *idea*. For example, the *idea* of Animal may be divided into the *eidē*: Animal of the air, Animal of the land, and Animal of the sea. The word *eidos* is cognate with *idea*, being derived from the same Indo-European root pertaining to seeing.

3. The *Paradeigma*

The term *paradeigma* literally means “something beside things shown”. The *deigmata* are “things shown”. The *paradeigma* is the exemplar, while a *deigma* is an example. A potter, for instance, makes for sale pots of a certain type according to a model not for sale. Customers are not shown the exemplar, but examples. Each example resembles the exemplar while possessing additional details.

In a Platonic dialogue, the *paradeigma* is a putative minimal concrete entity reflecting an *eidos*. To take our example, the *paradeigmata* would be an aerial animal, a terrestrial animal, and an aquatic animal. Such generic entities do not exist. There must be as many *paradeigmata* as there are *eidē* to complete an idea divided according to a particular criterion.

4. The *Deigma*

A generic entity with additional individuating details is a *deigma*, an example. In a Platonic dialogue, there must be at least one representative of each *paradeigma* in order to allow the reader to understand the conceptual underpinning of the dialogue. Were a dialogue to be composed concerning Animal, it might include as participants an eagle called Edward, a lion called Rupert, and a blue whale called Obadiah. Other *deigmata* would be further instances of one or other of the three *paradeigmata* of Animal.

5. The Conversation

The conversation must contain sufficient indications to allow the reader to understand that the dialogue concerns the *idea* Animal, while not actually providing true statements about the *idea* Animal, or even about *idea* itself. The confusions must be unforced, arising from the internal logic of the dialogue. In this way, the reader must apply dialectic in order to arrive at an understanding of the dialogue as a whole, and, by extension, of the *idea* Animal.