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Plato and the Prophet Moses: Between the Question of Receiving and the Possibility of Intertextuality

Abdelkader Bouarfa  

Oran2 University URSH, Oran, Algeria

 bouarfah9@gmail.com

Abstract. The study examines the potential intellectual interplay between Plato's philosophy and the teachings of the Prophet Moses, focusing on the mechanisms of reception and intertextuality. By analyzing historical, cultural, and textual parallels, the research investigates whether Plato's works reflect influences from Hebrew traditions or vice versa. The comparative analysis centers on key doctrinal themes, including conceptions of the divine, cosmological narratives involving the creation of dual worlds, and anthropological models exemplified by the tripartite composition of the soul. The study employs a critical framework to assess claims of direct influence, acknowledging the lack of concrete evidence for a translated Torah in Plato's time, while exploring alternative pathways, such as oral transmission, during his travels to Egypt and Sicily. Notable parallels include Plato's "*Demiurge*" in *Timaeus* and the monotheistic Creator in Genesis, as well as shared motifs of spiritual ascent and ethical dualism. The analysis also addresses critiques of the "Greek Miracle" narrative, which historically marginalized Eastern contributions to philosophy. Scholars like Numenius and early Christian thinkers (e.g., Justin Martyr) are cited to contextualize debates about cross-cultural borrowing. While the study refrains from asserting direct intertextuality, it underscores the significance of overlapping ideas in challenging Eurocentric historiography. Ultimately, the research proposes that these parallels reflect a broader, interconnected intellectual heritage rather than unilateral influence. It advocates for a nuanced understanding of how philosophical and religious traditions evolve through dialogue, even in the absence of documented contact. This framework invites further exploration of antiquity's multicultural exchanges and their role in shaping foundational Western thought.

Keywords: reception theory, cultural exchange, critique of the Greek Miracle, historiography

Conflict of interest. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Платон и пророк Моисей: между вопросом восприятия и возможностью интертекстуальности

А. Буарфа  

Университет Оран 2 URSH, Оран, Алжир

bouarfah9@gmail.com

Аннотация. Рассматривается возможное интеллектуальное взаимодействие между философией Платона и учением пророка Моисея, с акцентом на механизмы восприятия и интертекстуальности. Анализируя исторические, культурные и текстуальные параллели, работа исследует, отражают ли труды Платона влияние еврейских традиций — или наоборот. Основные области сравнения включают теологические концепции (например, природу божественного), космогонию (создание двух миров) и антропологию (триединую душу). Исследование использует критический подход к оценке заявлений о прямом влиянии, признавая отсутствие конкретных доказательств существования переведенной Торы во времена Платона, но рассматривая альтернативные пути передачи, такие как устная традиция во время его путешествий в Египет и Сицилию. Среди значимых параллелей — Платоновский «Демиург» в «Тимее» и монотеистический Творец в «Бытии», а также общие мотивы духовного восхождения и этического дуализма. Анализ также затрагивает критику нарратива о «греческом чуде», исторически маргинализировавшего вклад Востока в философию. Упомянуты ученые, такие как Нумений, и ранние христианские мыслители (например, Иустин Мученик), чтобы контекстуализировать дебаты о межкультурных заимствованиях. Хотя исследование воздерживается от утверждения о прямой интертекстуальности, оно подчеркивает важность совпадающих идей в контексте вызова европоцентричной историографии. В конечном счете исследование предлагает рассматривать эти параллели как проявление более широкой, взаимосвязанной интеллектуальной традиции, а не как одностороннее влияние. Оно призывает к более тонкому пониманию того, как философские и религиозные традиции развиваются через диалог — даже при отсутствии документированных контактов. Такой подход открывает возможности для дальнейшего изучения мультикультурных обменов в древности и их роли в формировании основ западной мысли.

Ключевые слова: теория рецепции, культурный обмен, критика «греческого чуда», историография

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Introduction

For centuries, the West perpetuated the myth of the “*Greek Miracle*”, with most European historians believing that philosophical (theoretical) thought crystallized with the Greek city, and that the Eastern world in particular knew no philosophical thought. They believed that the reason for this was the lack of rationality and theoretical consideration, as Eastern man was drowned in religious hymns and immersed in practical behavior, while Greek man possessed rationality and practiced theory, and this is what we conclude from the words of Ernest Barker: “Its origin is connected with the calm and clear rationalism of the Greek mind. Instead of projecting themselves into the sphere of religion, like the peoples of India and Judea, instead of taking this world on trust and seeing it by faith, the Greeks took their stand in the realm of thought, and daring to wonder about things visible, they attempted to conceive of the universe in the light of reason.” [1. P. 314].

This belief led the West to adopt the idea of Western centralism, which traces its roots to Aristotle (384–322 BCE). Aristotle argued that despite the homogeneity of Africa and Asia, these regions were influenced by their hot climates, unlike the temperate and cooler Greece. According to him, climatic conditions shape intellectual nature, the former being impulsive (hot) and the latter moderate and calm (cool): “Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; and therefore, they retain comparative freedom, but have no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and intelligent. Hence, it continues free, and is the best-governed of any nation, and, if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the world.” [2. P. 161, 162].

This superiority-based view led most Greek philosophers and historians to reject earlier intellectual traditions, often not realizing that they had been borrowed or influenced by them. However, some honest historians, such as Herodotus, acknowledged in numerous texts the significant role of Eastern civilizations in shaping Greek thought.

Herodotus even insisted that the Greeks were merely diligent students of the great East. Since the Enlightenment, the West has clung to the idea of Western superiority (superman), emphasizing the concepts of emotion and excitement as

well as calm and clarity. They believe that pre-Greek humanity was so impulsive and pragmatic that it left no theoretical legacy like that of the Greek philosophers, especially the Athenians.

Abdelkader Bouarfa addressed this issue in his book *The City and Politics*, where he said: “The West, through its institutions, tries to make the Greek cities, especially the Athenian period, the starting point of global civilization, although this is a great fallacy” [3. P. 88].

Western thought has always portrayed Plato and Aristotle in particular as the fruit of Greek genius, and that rational thought alone refined them and led them to compose the most wonderful and immortal philosophical texts, without which no subsequent civilization has managed, especially the great philosophies of the Middle Ages: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The myth of the “*Greek miracle*” was the driving force behind the West’s efforts to become the centre of the world.

A careful study of history shows that some of the great Greek philosophers were influenced by Eastern thought and utilized it extensively without naming their sources — most notably Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle. This is supported by several contemporary studies that emphasize the remarkable and far-reaching similarities between Plato’s works and the Bible, *the Old Testament*. Scholars of the Hellenistic and Roman eras also devoted themselves to uncovering and explaining the striking similarities between the Bible and Greek literature, particularly Plato’s dialogues.

We will focus exclusively on Plato in this study because many of his ideas have raised questions within the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Such was the reverence for Plato that some religious scholars considered him a prophet or messenger and believed that his detailed discussions of creation, the Creator, paradise and sin could only be divinely inspired. [4. P. 366, 383].

However, researchers and scholars have hypothesized that Plato’s frequent travels familiarized him with the Hebrew heritage, particularly with certain texts such as Genesis. This hypothesis was explored by many contemporary scholars and supported by ancient thinkers such as Philo of Alexandria, St Augustine and others who held this view.

So, we ask the following question: Was Plato inspired by the Torah and did he include it in his writings? Or is it just a question of intertextuality?

I. Epistemology of the Question and Scope of the Hypothesis

Some Western critics start from the epistemological premise that it is illogical that Greek thought should have emerged from nothingness or emptiness. Genius, however remarkable, always draws on the ideas of its predecessors. There are no exceptional peoples; the principles of reason are universal. As René Descartes said: “Good sense (reason) is the most evenly distributed thing in the world; for everyone believes himself to be so well endowed with it that even those who are most difficult

to please in every other respect usually want no more of it than they already have” [5. P. 5].

Western thinkers are divided into two prominent camps on this issue. The first camp argues for the unity of human reason, while the second camp advocates the unity of Western reason and the idea of a superior ethnicity, as expressed in the philosophy of Friedrich Hegel.

The first camp seeks to establish the interconnectedness of human history and believes that humanity, regardless of its different forms and geographical contexts, is fundamentally one. They argue that the unity of human reason requires a continuity of thought across interconnected historical phases, even when these phases are separated by time. A notable exponent of this view is Émile Bréhier, who always sought to understand the unity of human reason because he firmly believed in the certainty of its evolutionary continuity. François Châtelet also discussed this idea at length. He argued in favour of re-evaluating the intellectual contributions of the Greeks. Recent findings show that Greek philosophers used and refined the Eastern heritage without recognizing it in their writings, revealing a contradiction among Western philosophers. Thus, Châtelet states something in several texts of his Dictionary of Political Works that contradicts these earlier arguments. He claims: “The Mosaic state of the desert, if we are to believe the description in the Pentateuch, is the earliest known model of a power that incorporates ideological control and uses consensus in its mechanisms” [6. P. 1061].

Homer’s epics, which are often cited as proof of the intellectual superiority of the Greeks, suggest that the Greek city-states imitated Eastern systems culturally, socially and politically. According to the Iliad, the Greeks did not deny the intellectual prowess of the East, but they rejected its political system, which they saw as tyrannical and patriarchal. The ongoing debate among Western philosophers about the origins of Greek philosophy is a sign of historical consciousness. This debate undermines theories of ethnic uniqueness and supports theories of the unity of human reason. This study situates its hypothesis within a framework of reception and intertextuality. We agree with Abdullah Ibrahim’s assertion: “The problem of the origins of Greek philosophy reveals two interrelated issues. First, the immense constraints imposed on the true origins of this philosophy, especially its Eastern sources. Second, the strategy employed by the method of unity and continuity (the unity of European reason) to exclude natural contributions to that philosophy and to project a modern perspective produced by Western centrism” [7. P. 270].

These epistemological premises lead us to the hypothesis that Plato was influenced by the Torah and the teachings of the prophet Moses. This hypothesis is based on an epistemological approach based on analysis and criticism. We also rely on the writings of Numenius, a disciple of Pythagoras, who is famous for his statement: “Who is Plato if not Moses-speaking Attic Greek?” [8. P. 217–225; 9. P. 234–250; 10. P. 7–30].

So how can we make this connection, which many Western scholars consider particularly complex?

II. Study Tools

Plato lived in the 4th century BC (427 BC / 347 BC), while Moses lived about nine centuries earlier. This considerable time gap suggests the faint possibility that Plato was influenced by the teachings of Moses, especially since many historical studies indicate that the Torah was not translated into Latin and that there were no copies of the Torah in Greek libraries. However, temporal differences are not definitive proof against the transmission of knowledge; there are always connections between antiquity and the present. It is not necessary that Plato was a contemporary of Moses to receive teachings from him; he could have learnt through various intermediaries, especially through oral tradition. This is a counter-argument to the claim that the Torah was not translated and therefore cannot be used as evidence in favour of this hypothesis. Given the complexity of this issue, we will use several tools in our study:

A. Travelling and journeys:

Plato was known for his extensive travels, which historians have documented through various journeys to neighboring regions. These journeys ensured that he learnt about the cultures of the peoples he visited and interacted with their educated elites. In this way, he gained new knowledge that he later incorporated into his dialogues. Some notable journeys include:

1. **Sicily:** He visited Sicily more than three times, as he mentions in his Seventh Letter. His first visit was in his youth, in 377 BC, under the tyrant Dionysius I, who became angry with Plato and had him sold into slavery. However, Plato's friends rescued him from the slave traders and enabled him to return to Athens, where he founded the Academy and wrote famous dialogues such as *The Republic* and *The Banquet*.

He returned again during the reign of Dionysius II in 366 BC. Sicily was known as a crossroads of neighbouring civilizations, where its inhabitants came into contact with Eastern cultures through maritime trade. Many sciences and forms of knowledge probably reached Sicily through Egyptian, Carthaginian, and Phoenician traders.

2. **Egypt:** Some historians believe that Plato visited Egypt, although no exact date is given for this visit. Despite the lack of direct evidence, many scholars confirm his journey to Egypt: "The ship docks at Megara, then sails to Egypt and Cyrene before reaching Taranto and stopping on the coast of Sicily" [11. P. 89, 90].

It is likely that he learnt about the Hebrew heritage through oral tradition, as Egyptian oral culture after the Exodus was rich in the teachings of Moses.

George G. M. James noted that Plato encountered Eastern wisdom in Egypt and stated: "We are told in the *Timaieus* of Plato, that aspirants for mystical wisdom visited Egypt for initiation and were told by the priests of Sais, 'that you Greeks are but children' in the Secret Doctrine, but were admitted to information enabling them to promote their spiritual advancement" [12. P. 26].

The Comprehensive Encyclopedia states: "St. Jerome tells us that in ancient history we read of men who visited lands and crossed seas so extensively

that we can imagine them alongside those who saw what they read about in books” [13. P. 3965].

So, Plato visited the prophetic priests in Memphis. One can rely on what the monk Origen of Alexandria (second / third century A.D.) said that Plato knew Moses, or at least that during his journey to Egypt, he met people who presented him with passages from the Jewish holy books. Let us consider his statement: “It is not very clear, indeed, whether Plato fell in with these stories by chance, or whether, as some think, meeting during his visit to Egypt with certain individuals who philosophized on the Jewish mysteries, and learning some things from them, he may have preserved a few of their ideas, and thrown others aside, being careful not to offend the Greeks by a complete adoption of all the points of the philosophy of the Jews, who were in bad repute with the multitude, on account of the foreign character of their laws and their peculiar polity¹”.

Hassan Hanafi says in this regard: “The Greeks are students of the Egyptians and the Prophets, either as two independent paths or as one path. The prophets are in Egypt, and Egypt is in the prophets’ legacy. The Greek philosophy has an Egyptian source. Most of the Greek philosophers drew their wisdom from Egypt: Pythagoras, Thales, Plato, Herodotus, Plotinus, Hermes. It does not matter who Egypt is historically” [4. P. 279].

B. Texts:

We will rely primarily on Plato’s texts, focusing on the following dialogues:

1. *Phaedrus*.
2. *The Republic*.
3. *Timaeus*.
4. *Phaedo*.
5. *Cratylus*.

We have limited the Hebrew texts to a collection of books belonging to what is known as the Old Testament *the Bible*, referred to in Hebrew as *Tanakh*, a term derived from the initial letters of its three groups: *Torah (the five books)*, *Nevi'im (the prophets)*, and *Ketuvim (the writings)*. Regarding the ancient Hebrew heritage, we have used texts from the five books, especially Genesis and Deuteronomy.

C. Hypothesis:

We hypothesize that Jews arrived in Athens during Plato’s time and shared their culture while interacting with the philosophers. A significant narrative attributed to Aristotle (384 B.C. — 322 B.C.) states that Josephus quoted Clearchus as noting that Aristotle was astonished by the thoughts and character of a Jewish scholar.

He only mentions that Clearchus the Peripatetic claimed to know a Jew who had met Aristotle. It is also said that Plato referred to him as “*the reader*” when he said: “It is said that Plato called him ‘the reader’ (ὁ ἀναγνώστης)” [14. P. 51].

¹ Origen, 248/2020, IV. 39.

This assumption may be reinforced by the saying that the Greeks are “*thieves*” of wisdom, which we find in the texts of many Western historians, such as George J.M. James, author of the book *Stolen Legacy*.

This suggests a deep respect for Jewish intellectual contributions. Historian Bezalel Bar-Kochva has presented several accounts supporting the hypothesis of interactions between Greek philosophers and some Jews since Plato’s era, stating: “The conclusion that the account attributed to Aristotle does not impute to the Jew superior wisdom, let alone superior Jewish wisdom, is supported by the testimonium of Clement of Alexandria” [14. P. 91–102].

Nevertheless, we should not be swayed by the claims of Judah Aristobulus (2nd century B.C. / 103 B.C.), an early Jewish philosopher who explicitly claimed that Greek thinkers such as Plato and Pythagoras borrowed from Jewish sources. His writings suggest that he viewed Greek philosophy as rich with Jewish thought, particularly in the ethical and metaphysical realms [14. P. 143].

III. Moses and Plato: Symmetry and Similarity

Before proceeding with the analysis of the texts, it is important to address an issue of significance: we observe confusion about what Plato wrote about the god. On the one hand, he speaks of gods in the plural, in line with the polytheistic beliefs of his society. On the other hand, he refers to a singular God who cannot be perceived by the senses. This ambiguity has troubled scholars, leading to conflicting interpretations of the concept of the One and its relationship with the lesser gods.

I believe that Plato speaks of the divine in two forms: the social form, which requires discussing the gods of Greece within a local cultural context, as seen in his statement: “...we must pray for the help of the gods and goddesses, and pray so that our words may gain their acceptance above all, and as a result, we will receive it” [15. P. 411].

On the other hand, he speaks of a singular God within a new philosophical perspective, as reflected in his words: “All men who have any wisdom, whether small or great, O Socrates, always call upon God before all work” [15. P. 410].

This dual perspective on the concept of God supports the view that Moses influenced Plato’s idealistic philosophy. The idea of a singular God was not present in Greek society. So, from where did Plato derive the concept of the Creator (the Creator, the One)?

Some Christian and Jewish theological studies have attempted to trace the concept of the singular God back to Hebrew influence, especially through Plato’s travels, and argue for its validity by comparing Plato’s texts with Hebrew texts, especially those in the Book of Genesis.

To understand the issue, let us draw a comparison between the two texts (the Platonic and the Hebrew) as follows:

1. Concept of God (The Demiurge & Creator)

Plato defines God as an absolute essence, imperceptible through the senses but comprehensible through mental abstraction. This means that God has neither body

nor image, distinguishing Plato's conception from the embodied gods of Greece. Instead, he refers to a singular divine entity that initiates and governs all motion: "Our proof that soul, since it is found to be the source of movement, is the first-born of all things is absolutely complete" [16. P. 288].

From here, we can say that the self-moving existence is the source of all movement and the first to appear among things in a state of stability, as well as the original and strongest principle of movement and change among things moved by others. The movement of others follows it.

Plato likens the divine to the sun, portraying it as the primary source of illumination and the fundamental cause underlying all being. Just as the sun provides light and life in the physical world, the "Idea of Goodness" functions as the source of illumination and vitality in the realm of ideals. This conception of God emphasizes His uniqueness, transcendence, and absolute detachment from the sensory or material realm.

In the Hebrew text of the Book of Genesis, the concept of God likewise reflects a unified nature and function, emphasizing divine oneness and creative sovereignty. God declares: "I am the Lord [Yahweh] your God; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:3–4).

Furthermore, Genesis describes God as eternal: "In the name of the eternal God" (Genesis 1:1).

This refers to eternity and unchangeable, reflecting God's nature as a being of eternal existence. In the Bible, God is referred to as "eternal" or "everlasting" in several passages, such as: "Before the mountains were born, or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Psalm 90:2)

Here we find a significant overlap with Plato, who conceives of "*the One*" as eternal and unchanging. Plato's metaphor of God as the sun coincides with the Hebrew portrayal of God as light: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1:1–4).

In the context of Greek heritage, one encounters a polytheistic worldview centered around a divine city governed by Zeus, the father of the gods. The pantheon was hierarchically structured, with deities assigned specific domains — such as the god of the sea, the goddess of beauty, the god of war, and the muse of poetry — each embodying a particular aspect of the cosmos and human experience. Each god had his followers and his opponents. They drank wine, kidnapped virgins, and had sons from the earth, called demigods, such as Hercules. Accordingly, it seems strange indeed that the Platonic text speaks of the one God who cannot be imagined or embodied, and this is what led the researcher Gmirkin Russell to observe: "The older gods of the land were consolidated into a single new deity who

closely resembled the one eternal, supreme creator god of Plato's writings. The reinvented god of the biblical text was not, however, the abstract philosopher's god, Nous, a new god for worship by the ruling elite. Instead, the biblical authors directly identified this supreme deity with Yahweh, a local god traditionally worshipped in Judea and Samaria, who was newly conceived in elevated terms as (in the words of Josephus) 'One', uncreated and immutable to all eternity; in beauty surpassing all mortal thought, made known to us by His power, although the nature of his real being passes knowledge" [17. P. 263].

Justin Martyr, an early Christian apologist, went further, asserting that Plato borrowed his ideas from Moses: "And that you may learn that it was from our teachers... that Plato borrowed his statement ... hear the very words spoken through Moses, who, as above shown, was the first prophet, and of greater antiquity than the Greek writers; and through whom the Spirit of prophecy, signifying how and from what materials God at first formed the world, spake thus: [the text quoted above] ... So that both Plato and they who agree with him, and we ourselves, have learned, and you also can be convinced, that by the word of God the whole world was made out of the substance spoken of before by Moses" [18. P. 484, 285].

Justin Martyr claimed that Plato and other philosophers had drawn from Moses, who taught that: "All things were created by God's word" (John 1:3). He claimed that this concept predated Greek philosophy and insisted that what the Greek poets called "*Erebus*" had already been revealed in the writings of Moses.

2. The Creation of the Two Worlds (Ideal / Sensory)

Plato divided the world into two realms: the world of ideals and absolute goodness, and the world of sensual matter. The first is eternal and essential, while the second is transient and accidental. The former is the origin, while the latter is only an imperfect copy of the ideal.

This imperfection is not due to a flaw in the creation, but to the inherent nature of its material structure. Plato states: "When words are connected to the eternal and the comprehensible, they must themselves be eternal and stable, invulnerable and as unassailable as their nature permits — no less. But when they pertain only to the copy or the likeness and not to the eternal objects themselves, they must match and correspond to the prior words: as being is to becoming, so truth is to belief" [15. P. 413].

This idea is powerfully illustrated by Plato in his allegory of the cave (Book VII, *Republic*), where he depicts the journey from illusion to true knowledge. This allegory depicts people in their earthly state, like prisoners bound from birth, locked in a cave where they can see only the wall of the cave. Behind them, a blazing fire casts shadows of objects on the wall. These prisoners believe that the shadows are the truth and base their knowledge on this belief. If one of the prisoners was freed and climbed out of the cave, he would see that the truth is above, not below.

The allegory of the cave symbolizes the sensible world, where shadows represent sensible knowledge and the real objects that cast those shadows represent ideals. Plato believed that creation emanates from the Word and embodies the word

“*to be*” emphasizing the One (*the Creator*): “Before the heavens were formed, there were no days, nights, months, or years — for these are all parts of time, and time itself began only with the creation of the cosmos. Time came into being alongside the heavens, as their moving image. The Demiurge, in shaping the universe, fashioned time by ordering the motion of the celestial bodies. Thus, he brought into existence the past and the future — temporal distinctions that apply to becoming, not to being. We say that what eternally exists ‘was’, ‘is’, or ‘will be’, but in truth, only ‘is’ properly belongs to eternal reality. ‘Was’ and ‘will be’ are spoken of by mistake, for they describe change within time, not the timeless realm of true being” [15. P. 421, 422].

The pre-Platonic Torah divides the world into two realms: the upper and the lower, the eternal and the mortal, heaven and earth. The upper world is inherently good, while the lower world is mortal, mixing good and evil. The upper world was created by God in its most perfect, complete, and absolute form, while the lower world was created relatively-not completely absolute in perfection, nor completely deficient in imperfection. Everything in the material universe is a miniature reflection of what exists in the upper realm. All created beings are images of what God conceived in His absolute realm, with humanity being the closest reflection of God’s image. The sensory world was uniquely created in six days.

The Torah begins with the verse: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

And, to make a fundamental distinction between the heavenly realm and the earthly realm. On the second day of creation, God separated the two realms: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters” (Genesis 1:6).

This firmament, called “*heaven*”, separates the “*waters above*” from the “*waters below*”, further defining the upper and lower worlds and elevating the upper as superior to the lower.

These verses illustrate the Torah’s portrayal of the cosmos as divided into two realms: the upper and the lower, with the heavens representing the divine and eternal, while the earth symbolizes the mortal and worldly.

The similarity between Plato’s vision and the ancient Hebrew text’s reference to time shows an intellectual convergence between the philosophical and religious concepts of understanding the relationship between time and the universe. Both texts link the origin of time to the creation of the heavens and planets and present time as a fundamental element linked to the movement of the celestial bodies. This similarity opens the door to a reflection on the unity of human thought in the search for cosmic answers, and shows how philosophy and religion, despite their different starting points, can meet on common ground.

The process of creation also seems similar, as Plato believed that the Creator mixed materials and created spirits and things based on eternal wisdom. In his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato presents a conception of the creation of the world by a mythical figure he calls the “*Demiurge*” (Δημιουργός), a rational being who used

ideal models (*the Forms*) to create the material world. He did this by using a technique of mixing raw materials that existed in a state of disorder, giving them harmony and structure, and thus shaping them into what they are today: “He turned once more to the bowl he had used previously to mix and blend the soul of the universe. He poured into it what was left of the ingredients he had used before and mixed them in the same way, with the only difference being that they were no longer as unfailingly pure as before but were a grade or two lower in the scale of purity. Once he had a complete mixture, he divided it up into as many souls as there are stars, and he assigned each soul to a star” [19. P. 31].

In the Torah, God creates things from raw material (dust), then breathes into them, transforming chaos into a complete being with a noble soul, as we read: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7).

3. Time and Motion

Plato addresses the issue of time in his dialogue *Timaeus*, where he posits that the “*One*”, after creating the two worlds, created time as a means of measuring the movement of beings and determining the interval in which the anticipated transformation from the world of matter to the world of forms occurs. Plato describes this concept as follows: “Now, all the stars were necessary for the creation of time once they reached their proper orbits. When they all became living creations with bodies bound by vital chains and discovered their appointed laborious task, which is to move in varied motion, governed by the unified movement of their kind, then they revolved in a wider orbit for some and a narrower one for others.” [15. P. 423].

He believed that time and the heavens came into existence simultaneously, and asserted that since they were created together, they would cease to exist together. Plato believed that the heavens were formed according to the model of eternal nature. Thus, the divine mind conceived of time when it created the heavens, and it is He who created the sun, the moon, and the five other heavenly bodies known as the planets, to distinguish and preserve the measures of time.

Similarly, the Hebrew text reflects almost the same principle. In the Book of Genesis, it says that God created the heavens, the stars, and the earth, and made the stars as lights to signify time: “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth’. And it was so. God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning_ the fourth day” (Genesis 1:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19).

4. Creating Universal Soul

Plato believes that “the One” created eternal beings in the world of ideals as essential universals, including the universal soul: “And so, the Demiurge formed the soul according to his will” [15. P. 421, 422].

In this metaphysical schema, the Universal Soul emerges as a direct manifestation of the Will of the One, shaped in perfect conformity with His intended Form. It is neither as perfect as the One Himself, nor completely lacking: “He infused the Soul everywhere, from the center to the outermost sphere of the heavens, encircling them as it turned upon itself. In this way, it began an incessant movement that sustains spiritual life for all eternity. The body of the heavens is visible, but the soul remains invisible. It participates in reason and harmony, and being created with the finest and most eternal of intellectual natures, it is the best of all created things” [15. P. 420].

In the Hebrew text, God created Adam in Eden, and in his original form, Adam represented the whole (the father of humanity). God created Adam in His image, not as an equal, but as the finest creation He had brought into existence. Adam represents the spirit that God breathed into the matter He chose to be His vessel. As stated: “So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him” (Genesis 1:27).

And also: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26)

While Plato believed that the function of the world soul in the world of ideals was to gain knowledge, Adam’s role in Eden was to gain knowledge: “And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

This implies, of course, that God taught Adam the names of all things so that he could understand and preserve them.

5. Dividing the fragmented soul

When we read the *Torah*, we find that the Creator created man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils to make him a living being: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Genesis: 2:7).

This divine breath caused the human soul to be divided into three parts, according to the book “*Kabbalah*”, which is considered the most important book in the interpretation of the *Torah*:

A. **Nefesh**: The lower layer of the soul, representing man’s physical instincts from the moment of birth.

B. **Ruach**: The middle layer of the soul, capable of distinguishing between good and evil.

C. **Neshamah**: The upper layer of the soul, which distinguishes man from the rest of living creatures.

While in the dialogue *Phedon* [20. P. 213] and *Republic* we find that Plato divides the soul into three types, which are as follows:

A. **The rational soul**: This is the golden soul (rational / head), which loves wisdom and distinguishes between good and evil.

B. **The angry soul**: This is the silver soul (courage / heart), which loves strength and makes war and courage.

C. The sensual soul: This is the copper soul (sensual / the belly), the love of self and desire.

It seems clear that there is a great similarity between this ancient Hebrew division and the Platonic division, and then the Qur'anic division (the contented soul, the blaming soul, the soul that commands evil), and also Sigmund Freud's division (the ego, the id, the super-ego).

6. Language and Naming Things

Adam's first task in the Garden of Eden was to learn how to name things, and indeed, God taught Adam the names: "For YAHWEH-God had formed from the soil every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them before the man to see what he would call them. So, whatever the man called the living creature, that was its name. He gave names to all the various cattle, birds, and wild animals" (Genesis 2:19–20).

This text implies that Adam spoke in a natural language, the mother tongue of all languages that humankind would come to know. Even after Adam descended to earth, his language remained the only language at that time: "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech" (Genesis 11:1–9).

In Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*, the debate between Socrates, Cratylus, and Hermógenes revolves around the "*giver of names*", where the dialogue begins with the question whether names are "*artificial*" or "*natural*". Plato attempts to defend the idea that the original language of existence is a single language, the natural language in which the universal soul communicated in the world of ideas, and that the languages in use today are merely copies of the original language: "It seems to me [ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ] that whatever name anyone gives [θῆται] to anything is the correct one [τὸ ὀρθόν]; and if one then changes it to something else, and no longer calls it that other name, the later one is no less correct than the earlier one. It's the same way as we change the names of our slaves, for no name is of such a nature [πεφυκέναι] as to belong to any particular thing by nature [φύσει], but only by the custom and habit [νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει] of those who set it down [ἐθισάντων] and call it that [καλούντων]" [21. P. 97].

This congruence between names and sounds originates from the fact that language originally had a single source, and the linguistic differences arose when winged souls descended to earth. There, each people became familiar with and accustomed to new dialects of the mother tongue, which led to linguistic diversity, despite the unity of origin.

Plato stresses in *Cratylus* the idea of the unity of language, despite the differences and diversity that have emerged. Language, in its essence, is one, and it is not influenced by our desires but by the essence of the things we name: "It must be assumed that these things have a permanent and specific essence that is not related to or influenced by us so that it does not change according to our desires. Rather, it is independent, and its essence maintains the relationship that nature has determined for it" [21. P. 97].

Plato believes that the reason for the difference in tongues after the original unity is due to custom, tradition, and human whims. These factors distorted the natural language: “Thus, the dialogue will lead us to conclude that names should be given according to a natural process, with natural tools, not according to our whims. Only in this way can we give things their correct names” [21. P. 98].

The same idea appears in the Hebrew text, where the confusion of tongues is the result of divine intervention: “Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Genesis 11:7–8).

According to the Genesis narrative, the Lord dispersed humanity from that place across the entire earth, causing them to cease construction of the city. Consequently, it was named *Babel*, for it was there that the Lord confounded the language of all the earth, marking a pivotal moment of linguistic and cultural fragmentation.

7. Tree of Knowledge, Sin and Falling Wings

The Tree of Knowledge has a great status in Jewish texts, as its words and meanings explain what happened to Adam from temptation, disobedience, and then expulsion from the Garden of Eden... The story begins when the Lord said: “You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don’t eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you’re dead” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam in the Hebrew text represented a complete soul, and this soul needed another soul to keep him company in Paradise, so God created Eve: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

The concept of Eve being created from Adam’s rib, as described in the Hebrew text, can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of an original unity that was divided to form two complementary parts. This idea resonates with certain philosophical and metaphysical notions, including those found in Platonic philosophy. The biblical narrative, in which Eve is created from Adam’s rib, underscores a fundamental connection between the two, suggesting that they are not entirely separate entities but rather components of a unified whole. This symbolism underscores the interdependence and complementarity of male and female, reflecting a primordial unity that exists prior to their division. This, unity is not merely physical but also spiritual and relational, implying that both Adam and Eve share a common origin and essence.

In Plato’s philosophy, the concept of a universal soul, regarded as the origin of all individual or partial souls, is congruent with this idea. In Plato’s *Banquet*, he delineates the notion that humankind was once a unified entity, characterized by its spherical shape. This state, according to Plato, was subsequently fractured by divine intervention, resulting in the division of humankind into two distinct entities. This schism, as conceptualized by Plato, engenders an intrinsic yearning within each half to reunite with its other half, thereby inciting the pursuit of love and union. This notion resonates with the biblical narrative, as both emphasize the concept of an

initial state of unity that has been fractured, resulting in a ceaseless pursuit of re-unification and wholeness.

The concept of duality emanating from unity is a recurring theme in both narratives, with the branch (Eve or the partial soul) emerging from the original (Adam or the universal soul). This relationship implies that the branch maintains an inherent connection to its source, and the separation does not invalidate the underlying oneness. Instead, it engenders a dynamic tension between the two entities.

In Plato's philosophy, the concept of a universal soul, regarded as the origin of all individual or partial souls, is congruent with this idea. In Plato's "Symposium", he delineates the notion that humankind was once a unified entity, characterized by its spherical shape. This state, according to Plato, was subsequently fractured by divine intervention, resulting in the division of humankind into two distinct entities. This schism, as conceptualized by Plato, engenders an intrinsic yearning within each half to reunite with its other half, thereby inciting the pursuit of love and union. This notion resonates with the biblical narrative, as both emphasize the concept of an initial state of unity that has been fractured, resulting in a ceaseless pursuit of re-unification and wholeness.

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The notion of the "*total soul*" as the origin of the "*partial souls*" can be interpreted as a philosophical underpinning to the concept of soul fragmentation. This notion is employed to elucidate the concept of "departure from perfection" or "*original unity*", a term coined by Plato to describe the fall of souls from the "*total soul*" as a form of retribution for sin. This philosophical underpinning is primarily articulated in Plato's *Timaeus*, where the "*total soul*" is described as formed by the "*Creator*" (*Demiurge*): "When he had finished this speech, he turned again to the mixing bowl he had used before, the one in which he had blended and mixed the soul of the world. He began to pour into it what remained of the previous ingredients and to mix them in somewhat the same way, though these were no longer invariably and constantly pure, but of a second and third grade of purity. And when he had compounded it all, he divided the mixture into a number of souls equal to the number of the stars and assigned each soul to a star..." [19. P. 31].

This notion of fragmentation and subsequent restoration has persisted as a recurring theme in human thought, reflecting a fundamental understanding of existence as a continuous cycle of unity, fragmentation, multiplicity, and proliferation. This concept can be interpreted as the human aspiration to revert to a primordial state of unity and regain the perfection that was once lost [22. P. 59].

In the context of the preceding narrative, the couple is representative of a composite soul, a combination of Adam's intellectual soul and Eve's desirous soul. Adam's quest for knowledge, (As Prometheus myth), represents his desire to expand his existing intellectual horizons. In contrast, Eve's pursuit of eternal life in

paradise, reminiscent of the immortality of God, (As exemplified by the myth of Aphrodite created from the severed members of Uranus, the sky god), can be seen as a longing for a state of being that transcends mortality. The act of disobeying God's command to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge led to the pair's transgression, as recorded in the Torah: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).

In response, the woman articulated her understanding of the divine decree, stating: "But God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die'" (Genesis 3:3).

In turn, the serpent offered a counterargument, asserting, "You will not surely die.

For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Genesis 3:6).

The Hebrew text continues to narrate what happened to the two souls. Following their consumption of the fruit, their nakedness was revealed, and subsequently, God commanded them to descend to the earth. The text continues: "Therefore, the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So, he drove out the man, and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:23–24).

Following their transgressions and subsequent descent into the underworld, God deprived them of the privileges they had previously enjoyed in heaven. Consequently, death became their inevitable fate, and oblivion their characteristic state. Their earthly existence was subject to a final judgment that would determine their ultimate destiny.

It appears that Plato does not differ significantly from what Moses conveyed. He believed that the universal soul, being composite, was divided: "Since it is composed of the same, the different, and the existent these three things — it is both divided and unified in necessary proportion, returning to itself in its cyclical motion" [15. P. 421].

Due to this division, the universal soul erred when it failed to grasp the truth of the Forms, leading to its fragmentation into individual souls, each with wings. Since it was no longer a universal soul, the One expelled it from the realm of the Forms but allowed it to soar back toward Him. Here, the soul inclined toward the logos retains the ability to ascend into the realm of the Forms, whereas souls drawn toward *Thymos* (Anger) and *Eros* (desire) descend to earth, taking on bodies, losing many of their advantages, and forgetting much of what they once knew. In the dialogue *Phaedrus*, it is stated: "As for the soul that loses its wings, it remains crawling until it comes upon some solid object, where it settles and assumes an

earthly body, appearing to move while in reality it is the source of its own strength” [23. P. 63].

Plato believed that life is merely a phase of self-critique and purification. The person who remembers their original state and whose rational soul dominates over the spirited and appetitive souls deserves to return to the realm of the Forms, living eternally and happily within it. On the other hand, those unable to free themselves from materiality and the allure of the sensible world are cast into the fiery underworld or punished through reincarnation.

This imagery is present in the Hebrew text as well, where God created humanity to purify themselves of sin and worship the Creator. Those who achieve this merit eternal paradise, while those who fail are cast by God into hell. The Hebrew text states: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

In the Platonic text, it is written that pure souls will return to the heavens, while those unable to purify themselves will be cast by the One into a lower place deep within the earth. In the story of the soldier Er, Plato recounts how souls choose their fates after death based on their actions. Er says: “He said that when his soul left his body, it went on a journey, with c many others like it, until they came to a wonderful place where there were two openings side by side in the ground, and two others, up above in the heavens, corresponding to these. In between were seated judges, who when they gave their judgments ordered the just to take the way which led to the right and upwards, through the heavens, and to wear on their front the marks of the judgments made about them. The unjust, they’d ordered to take the left-hand, downward way” [23. P. 337].

IV. Criticism of the idea of reception and intertextuality

Many scholars have criticized the hypothesis that Plato had access to the Hebrew texts, arguing that while the idea may seem plausible, it lacks academic foundation in terms of scholarly criteria. Their primary argument is that the Torah had not been translated into Greek. However, this argument can be countered for two academic reasons:

First: The existence of a translated text is not a prerequisite for influence or reception. Influence could have occurred through oral translations by priests or those familiar with the Torah, or through intellectual dialogues among scholars. This was the view of Saint Augustine, who believed that although Plato was unaware of Moses (peace be upon him), he was indirectly exposed to some of his ideas. Notably, Plato travelled extensively. A debate arose between Saint Augustine and his teacher, Saint Ambrose (340–397 CE), who rejected the notion that Plato influenced Christianity, asserting instead that Plato himself was influenced by the Old Testament, leading to overlaps between his writings and Christian teachings, the eminent Bishop Ambrose, upon discovering through his historical investigations that Plato had journeyed to Egypt during the time of the Prophet

Jeremiah, argued that it was likely Plato acquired certain ideas through Jeremiah that later appeared in Christian literature [24. P. 49].

Saint Augustine, however, dismissed his teacher's claim of a meeting between Plato and Jeremiah, noting that Jeremiah had died long before Plato's visit to Egypt. Augustine maintained that any influence occurred in Egypt through translations provided by the priests Plato encountered — a view shared by many modern thinkers. For instance, Eric Walter Frederick Tomlin, in his book *Philosophers of the East*, states: “And no doubt the importance assigned to myth in Plato's philosophy has led certain commentators to suppose him to have been immersed in Eastern lore, and even to have undertaken secret journeys to Babylon and Persia²”.

Second: There is a hypothesis suggesting that Ancient Greece was familiar with translations of the Torah. The earliest reference is attributed to Hecataeus of Miletus (5th century BCE), who described Moses as a wise and courageous leader who left Egypt and settled in the region of *Judah*.

The historian Herodotus (484–425 BCE), during his visit to Egypt, mentioned the city of “Kadesh” (Jerusalem) and recounted texts about the Festival of Amun (Abraham), known as the Festival of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), as well as Jewish-Egyptian hymns. He also noted the ritual impurity of pigs and their prohibition in Ancient Egypt. Additionally, he visited Lake *Qarun*, believing it to be associated with the Egyptian king Amenemhat III.

It is recorded that Greece's first Jewish community, known as the Romaniotes, was established around 400 BCE, particularly after the Persian king Xerxes I permitted Jewish refugees to settle in Greece.

From the above, it is evident that cultural contact between ancient Hebrew and Greek civilizations existed, and the exchange of ideas was clear and undeniable. This cultural interaction often occurred through oral dialogue between Greeks and temple priests.

We note that some of the Church Fathers were extremely radical, viewing Greek philosophy as mere theft of Hebrew heritage. This view was adopted by Father Clement of Alexandria, who stated: “The Greeks stole the best ideas from the Jews and presented them as their own concepts” (Strom. V 19,1; II 1,1).

In modern times, numerous Western writings argue that Greek philosophy is merely a synthesis of Eastern cultures. Perhaps the most controversial of these is *The Stolen Legacy* by George James, who posits that most teachings were transmitted to Greece via the island of Samos, then to Croton and Elea in Italy, before finally reaching Athens in Greece. Figures such as Pythagoras, the Eleatic philosophers, and the Ionian philosophers played a significant role in spreading Eastern philosophical traditions, particularly Egyptian ones [12. P. 17].

V. The Epistemic Resolution

The question of whether “Plato read the heritage of Moses” cannot be conclusively resolved by favoring one side over the other. Epistemic caution

² Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*. Book V; 19.1. P. 20.

requires us to treat this issue as interpretive rather than definitive. The thematic overlap between their ideas may suggest indirect influence, possibly through exposure to ancient Hebrew texts, or it may reflect a broader cultural heritage shared among ancient civilizations. Nevertheless, I argue against the notion of direct intertextuality between them, as the extent of conceptual convergence surpasses what intertextuality alone can plausibly explain. For instance, the Deuteronomic conception of war as a democratic endeavor aligns closely with Greek thought [25. P. 199].

Thomas Bridgman attempted to address the problem of Plato's familiarity with Moses, noting Plato's inclination to absorb teachings attributed to Moses, who preceded him by a millennium. Yet, Bridgman argues that the issue must be studied without absurdity. He considers Clement of Alexandria's claim — that the Greeks "stole" many ideas from the Hebrews — to be preposterous. Bridgman suggests that rather than academic "*theft*", the Greeks merely repurposed transcontinental ideas, most of which reached them through oral transmission rather than written texts.

Many contemporary studies have sought to unpack the relationship between Plato and Moses, revisiting the hypothesis popularized by Philo of Alexandria, Clement, Ambrose, and others. These scholars argue that the defence of sacred scriptures motivated the campaign against Plato and Greek philosophy more broadly, leading to their famous slogan: "They skillfully steal the sun's rays from the sun" [12. P. 26].

Conclusion

It is evident from the history of ideas and beliefs that Plato's corpus was not purely Platonic. It was a synthesis of multiple cultural and religious influences. When carefully analyzing key themes including the theory of the universe, creation, the concept of the One, the soul, sin, the soul's descent, divine punishment, and immortality, the religious nature of the text becomes distinctly evident." This cannot be dismissed as mere intertextuality between Plato and the Prophet Moses, for intertextuality typically involves a single idea or a few, whereas the overlap here is far more profound [9. P. 234–250].

The confusion that befell Christians regarding Plato's texts was indeed startling: How could a pagan, born centuries before Christ, articulate ideas so central to the Gospels? This led to the question: Did Christ influence Plato? Such a question underscores profound perplexity and anguish, and ignoring it could undermine Christianity. Hence, Christian scholars to this day continue to explore Plato's relationship with the Old Testament, clinging to the theological defence that Christ did not borrow from Plato — rather, Plato drew from Moses and the Hebrew scriptures.

A similar dilemma arises in Islamic thought. Plato posed a major challenge, dividing scholars: some considered him a prophet, while others presented him as a model of the intellect's connection to revelation and vice versa.

Historically, scholars have shown that Greek philosophy was not the exceptional phenomenon it is often portrayed to be. Its most famous figures — Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle — were undeniably influenced by other traditions. For example, many of Aristotle’s ideas were largely derived from texts brought by his students from regions conquered by Alexander the Great, including Indian Vedic scriptures, Chinese works, and Egyptian manuscripts.

Numerous studies indicate a notable intersection between the writings of Plato specifically and the Talmud [26. P. 65].

Frederick Nietzsche was among those who criticized the purity of Greek philosophy, arguing that most philosophers were outsiders. This view was later championed by Gilles Deleuze, who courageously challenged advocates of Greek centrality and exceptionalism. He asserted that philosophy was Greek only in name, as most of its founding figures were not of Greek origin: “Even if philosophy was Greek, the philosophers were foreigners” [27. P. 101].

Despite all this, Plato remains an immortal philosopher. His intellectual genius produced a body of work that endures in its presence, and contemporary thought continues to study and interpret it. This alone is Plato’s greatest victory. His method of synthesis, far from diminishing his philosophical stature, stands as a testament to his brilliance synthesis itself is a mental endeavour mastered by few. Thought, in its essence, is influence, intertextuality, embodiment, and creativity.

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About the author:

Bouarfa Abdelkader — Professor, Oran2 University, 49 Mujahid Moqaddem Abdelkader St., Oran, Algeria. ORCID: 0000-0001-8631-872X. E-mail: bouarfah9@gmail.com

Сведения об авторе:

Буарфа Абделькадер — профессор, Университет Оран 2, Алжир, Оран, ул. Моджахида Мукаддама Абделькадера, д. 49. ORCID: 0000-0001-8631-872X. E-mail: bouarfah9@gmail.com

³ Калифорнийский университет в Беркли имеет статус организации, деятельность которой признана нежелательной на территории Российской Федерации.