

# **Paper Three**

## *An Examination of Group Forms*

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*Human Situation*

*Team  $\alpha$*

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## Colophon

For convenience, I have taken the typographical liberty of capitalizing improper nouns when they refer to the Form of an object. For example, “Cat” refers to the Form of a cat. Body text is set in Palatino Linotype, which is a digital reworking of Hermann Zapf’s famous Palatino from the 1950s, a robust serif which is supremely readable. Headings and small capitals are set in various weights of Optima, another sublime face by Zapf which was “influenced by the stone inlay alphabets of Roman Antiquity as well as typefaces of the early Renaissance.”

## Notes

Approach this paper like you had never heard of any of the concepts before. The ideas have evolved quite a bit from the original discussions on the subject, and any preconceived notions might incorrectly color interpretation. In addition, this paper operates on the presupposition that Forms exist, and is an expansion of that theory rather than a validation of it. No trees were harmed in the making of this paper. (Okay, maybe one or two.)

**I**N THE COURSE of studying the human situation through the prism of antique literature, what we're really examining is answers to the questions inherent in our existence. An answer without a problem is simply a vacuous exercise of thought. In examining Plato's theory of forms it is tempting to try to expand it, but any attempts to do so usually end up adulterating the pureness of the theory, which in itself is exceedingly elegant. Therefore, any attempt to expand the theory must follow a sort of Hippocratic law, that is, to do no harm to the original thesis. Forms not only provide a definition of our reality, they provide a unifying concept, the one among the many of everyday objects that are seemingly disparate, but transcendently unified in our thought and speech. What I would like to propose is that Forms can be understood on a higher level if you look at not only the Forms in and of themselves but also the harmony of like Forms, and the way in which they form Groups.

NOTHING EXISTS in a vacuum; life is not a collection of objects but rather a series of interactions. Time is the defining aspect of our reality, and things that exist naturally exist as we know them now because of evolution over time. A straightforward reading of Forms works on too micro of a scale; it cannot see the forest for the trees. Just as forms explain distinct natural phenomenon, there are natural harmonies that exist in our world. It might be tempting to say that a

Forest is merely a collection of Trees and leave the definition at that. However, this doesn't address a fundamental question: Why do trees group as they do? Obviously, an underlying principal causes this type of grouping. The underpinnings are biological in nature—the work of the Dartmouth professor Herb Bormann found that trees actually form networks where their roots graft and large trees tend to pass nutrients to weaker or smaller trees<sup>1</sup>. Stumps have been kept alive in this manner for decades, continuing to grow even though they do not have any leaves, the normal manner in which trees get energy.

JUST AS ARISTOTLE came up with a set of guidelines for men to lead more perfect lives; to come closest to attaining their full potential, nature has dictated a set of rules that facilitate potential as well. A tree can come fulfill its function of Treeness best when it is in the company of other Trees. The forest is greater than the sum of its parts, and the delta is where the concept of Group Forms comes in.

To explain this concept, let us assign arbitrary numeric values of Treeness, or the fulfillment of the function of being a tree. Let us say that there are twenty-five trees, each with a Treeness quotient of 4, and that the sum of these 25 tree's Treeness quotients is 100. However when these trees are in relatively close, in a manner which we might call a forest (albeit a small one), their proximity

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<sup>1</sup> *The Global Citizen*, Donella H. Meadows

articulates their ability to realize their Treeness; let's say it raises their arbitrary quotient by 2 because of the natural advantages trees have when they are in large groups and mentioned above, therefore making the sum of all the quotients 150. The 50 is the delta ( $\Delta$ ) I referred to earlier, the difference in Treeness between when there is a group scattered, and when there is a group in their *natural* formation of a Forest. Ergo, a Forest is more than just a group of Trees, it is the also the harmony in which these Trees can synergize their individual strengths. A Soldier may be perfect in every way it needs to be, but with an Army, the total strength is greater than the simple sum of its parts. Therefore, I would like to posit that a Group Form should be defined as any Group where the increase in function is geometric rather than linear.

Fish would be another good example of this kind of harmony in a Group Form. When some types of fish group into Schools they are less likely to be eaten by a predator, therefore allowing them to fulfill their function of being a Fish better than if they had been eaten. Our language, in an effort to grasp these types of Forms, has even developed a word to explain this naturally occurring Group, in this case "school." The Language evolved the same way the Fish did in an effort to describe the Group Form of Schools. This is not to say that every group that we have a specific name for is in fact a Group, nor to say that every Group has a name; it is merely an interesting correlation, which I think reinforces the

point. As a contrary example, a group of masseurs is called a “pummel,” that is not to say that a pummel is a Group Form, even if we assumed that there was a Form of Masseuse and that this group was made up of nothing but perfect Masseurs. The same thing goes for an ostentation of peacocks, a murder of crows, a fifth of Scots, or a syzygy of stars<sup>2</sup>. Of course, several of these last so-called groups discussed are artificial constructs, and therefore excluded from being Forms by definition.

I WOULD GO as far as to say that all naturally occurring groups are in fact Group Forms because the harmony would not develop if there were not beneficial synergies in the first place. In this light, the Theory of Group Forms is a very Darwinian idea, or rather, dovetails nicely with evolutionary thought. If we see natural objects as works in progress rather than immutable, then the application of Forms is much broader. This also does not preclude the idea of perfect Forms existing; evolution can be seen as the extended process of ‘real’ objects moving closer to their Form.

Thus far, we have three parts that make up the definition of a Group Form:

1. It is made up of nothing but Forms.
2. The sum function of the Group must be geometric, not linear.

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<sup>2</sup> *An Exaltation of Larks*, James Lipton 1993

3. It is naturally occurring.

Using these three rules we can fully comprehend, or grok, how micro Forms can interact and flourish in a macro scale. This understanding of Groups can allow a thoughtful individual to rationally consider things in a different way, a way in which perhaps will lead to a better understanding or grasp of the *logos*.

*Amote quæramus seria ludo.*

*fin*