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significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the  
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Elizabeth Ellen Pender

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## ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH ELLEN PENDER

### IMAGES OF PERSONS UNSEEN The Cognitive and Rhetorical Significance of Plato's Metaphors for the Gods and the Soul

The aim of this thesis is to discover the cognitive role of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the soul; that is, what part they play in the expression and elucidation of his philosophical theories and arguments. I maintain that these metaphors are primarily illustrative and persuasive; that they serve both to illuminate certain concepts and ideas and to persuade the reader into accepting them as true. But I also believe that in very particular circumstances, that is, in the formulation of radically new theories, Plato uses metaphors to develop and to express ideas for which no literal terms already exist.

In Part I the cognitive role of metaphor is discussed. Three modern views (the Epistemic, Non-Informative and Illustrative) are set out and compared both to Aristotle's account of metaphor and to Plato's comments on the philosophical significance of figurative language.

Part II opens with a discussion of the role of metaphor in theology, embracing both modern perspectives and the views of Plato. The various groups of metaphors for the gods are examined and three passages from the dialogues are analysed in detail, showing how metaphors can function as very effective instruments of persuasion.

In Part III the debate turns to Plato's metaphors for the soul. First I argue against the view that Plato's soul myths provide, or were intended to provide, special cognitive access to the soul. Second I examine the significance of metaphors for the immortality of the soul, the soul/body relationship and for the inner nature of the tripartite soul. Finally I offer a new interpretation of the development and rhetorical significance of the metaphor of spiritual pregnancy in the *Symposium*.

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University.

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IMAGES OF PERSONS UNSEEN  
THE COGNITIVE AND RHETORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF  
PLATO'S METAPHORS FOR THE GODS AND THE SOUL

ELIZABETH ELLEN PENDER

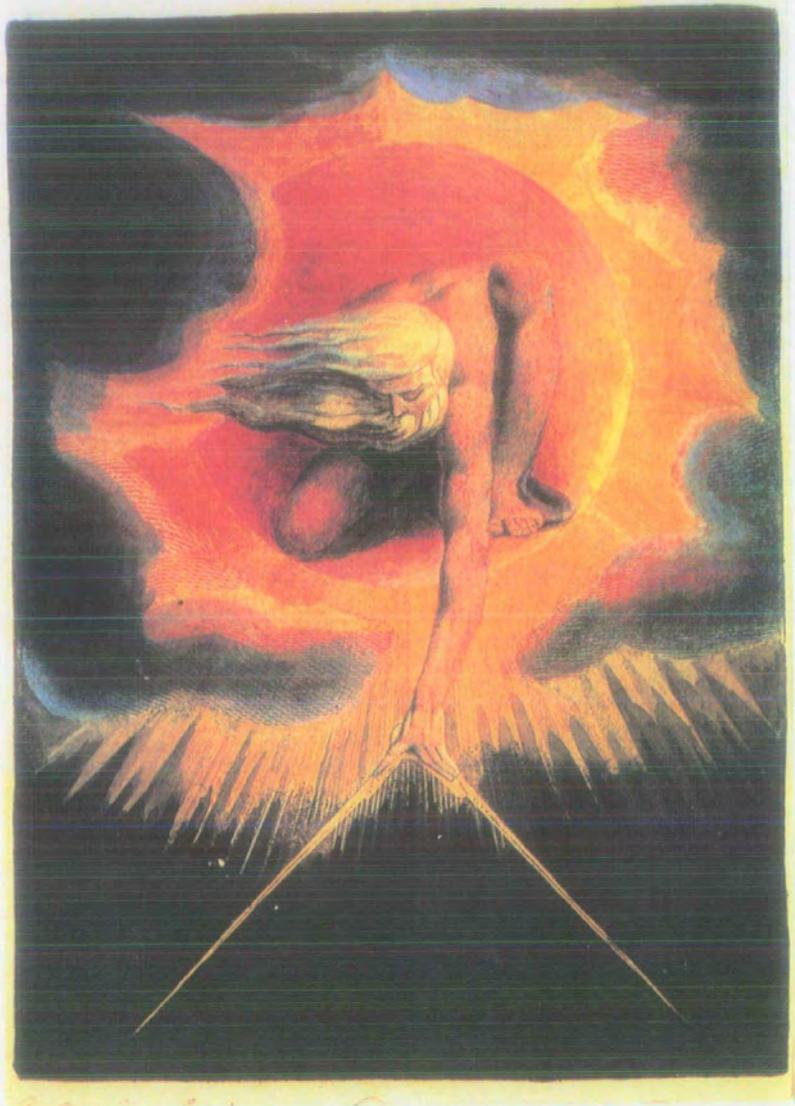
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Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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26 AUG 1992



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I owe many thanks to my supervisor Professor Michael Stokes: earlier versions of the thesis have benefited greatly from his close and detailed attention and in numerous conversations over a long period of time he has guided my exploration of Plato's text and its background. Professor Tony Woodman has been a constant source of advice and support since my days as an undergraduate; three of the present chapters originated as papers which he encouraged me to give. Dr John Moles discussed with me many issues arising from my thesis and offered perceptive criticism of two chapters.

I was fortunate to enjoy the use of a room in the Department of Classics; departmental word-processing facilities were also available to me, and my thanks go to Professor Peter Rhodes, Dr Clemence Schultze and Mrs Sylvia Stoddart for helping me with these. I am especially grateful for the computing expertise of Miss Jill Hart and for the time and energy she spent solving numerous problems.

In the early part of my research Dr Iain MacLaren devised a word-search computer program which greatly helped me to organise my material. Dr Susanne Schech gave patient instruction in the program needed to create the series of tables in the appendices. In the very last stages Mr Dave Robinson made possible their final editing and printing. Meg Pomfret, Jane Brown and Dr Damien Nelis kindly translated and clarified for me important French works on Plato's metaphors.

I am grateful to the British Academy for funding the first three years of this research; financial support from my family ensured that the work was completed.

I regret that my aunt, Joan Handley, died before this work was finished, but hope that my uncle, George Handley, together with my father, James Pender, and grandmother, Elizabeth Mulcahy, are pleased with the end-product. I cannot possibly thank my family enough for the support and care that they have given during the writing of this thesis. My father and grandmother have inspired me and have kept before me what is important in life. Most of all I thank both of them for their very individual, but equally glorious, senses of humour.

8 Quarry Heads Lane has always been an interesting place to live and through the years I have been fortunate to share this space with many creative people; I think especially of Franz and Angelika Pedit, Susanne Schech, Jonathan Renouf, Steve Poletti and Jane Chaplin. I am very grateful for the friendship and kindness of Jane and Richard Brown. Both have contributed to the production of this thesis in innumerable ways and have taught me a great deal. I thank my friends in Durham and in other towns, especially those who welcomed me into their homes during my nomadic writing-up period. Special thanks go to Matthew Brown for constant encouragement; for many hours spent working through ideas and arguments; for expert proof-reading and for insights into the value of movement, difference and change.

In memory of  
Elizabeth Pender, Declan Mulcahy and Joan Handley

and dedicated to  
Elizabeth Mulcahy and James Pender

οὐδένα πώποτε λόγον ἐν μέτρῳ οὐδ' ἄνευ μέτρου  
μεγάλῃς ἄξιον σπουδῆς γραφῆναι

Plato

*'What then?' sang Plato's ghost. 'What then?'*

Yeats

## Translations and Abbreviations of Greek Works

In the text translators will be referred to by surname only. Abbreviations listed here will be used throughout. Further details of works are given in the bibliography.

### PLATO

#### *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (CDP)

E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (eds.),  
Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton, 1961)

#### *Early Socratic Dialogues* (ESD)

T. J. Saunders (ed.), (Penguin, 1987)

<i>Apology</i>	( <i>Apol.</i> )	Hugh Tredennick (1954, CDP)
<i>Crito</i>		Hugh Tredennick (1954, CDP)
<i>Phaedo</i>	( <i>Phdo.</i> )	Hugh Tredennick (1954, CDP)
<i>Charmides</i>	( <i>Charm.</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1953, CDP)
<i>Laches</i>	( <i>Lach.</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1953, CDP)
		Iain Lane (1987, ESD)
<i>Lysis</i>	( <i>Lys.</i> )	J. Wright (1910, CDP)
		Donald Watt (1987, ESD)
<i>Euthyphro</i>	( <i>Euthyph.</i> )	Lane Cooper (1941, CDP)
<i>Menexenus</i>	( <i>Menex.</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1892, CDP)
<i>Hippias Major</i>	( <i>Hipp. I</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1953, CDP)
		Robin Waterfield (1987, ESD)
<i>Hippias Minor</i>	( <i>Hipp. II</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1892, CDP)
		Robin Waterfield (1987, ESD)
<i>Ion</i>		Lane Cooper (1938, CDP)
		Trevor J. Saunders (1987, ESD)
<i>Gorgias</i>	( <i>Gorg.</i> )	W.D. Woodhead (1953, CDP)
		T. Irwin (1979)
<i>Protagoras</i>	( <i>Prot.</i> )	W.K.C. Guthrie (1956, CDP)
<i>Meno</i>		W.K.C. Guthrie (1956, CDP)
		R.W. Sharples (1985)
<i>Euthydemus</i>	( <i>Euthyd.</i> )	W.H.D. Rouse (1961, CDP)
		Robin Waterfield (1987, ESD)
<i>Cratylus</i>	( <i>Crat.</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1892, CDP)
<i>Phaedrus</i>	( <i>Phdr.</i> )	R. Hackforth (1952, CDP)
		C.J. Rowe (1986)
<i>Symposium</i>	( <i>Symp.</i> )	Michael Joyce (1935, CDP)
		W. Hamilton (1951)
		S.Q. Groden (1970)
<i>Republic</i>	( <i>Rep.</i> )	Paul Shorey (1930, CDP)
		G.M.A. Grube (1974)
<i>Theaetetus</i>	( <i>Theaet.</i> )	F.M. Cornford (1935, CDP)
<i>Parmenides</i>	( <i>Parm.</i> )	F.M. Cornford (1939, CDP)

<i>Sophist</i>	( <i>Soph.</i> )	F.M. Cornford (1935, <i>CDP</i> )
<i>Statesman/Politicus</i>	( <i>Polit.</i> )	J.B. Skemp (1952, <i>CDP</i> ) H.N. Fowler (1925)
<i>Philebus</i>	( <i>Phil.</i> )	R. Hackforth (1945, <i>CDP</i> )
<i>Timaeus</i>	( <i>Tim.</i> )	Benjamin Jowett (1953, <i>CDP</i> ) F.M. Cornford (1937, <i>Plato's Cosmology</i> )
<i>Critias</i>	( <i>Crit.</i> )	A.E. Taylor (1929, <i>CDP</i> )
<i>Laws</i>		A.E. Taylor (1934, <i>CDP</i> ) T.J. Saunders (1970)
<i>Clitopho</i>	( <i>Clit.</i> )	
<i>Alcibiades I</i>	( <i>Alc. I</i> )	

#### ARISTOTLE

*The Complete Works of Aristotle* (CWA)  
Jonathan Barnes (ed.), Vols. I and II,  
Bollingen Series 71.2 (Princeton, 1984)

<i>Poetics</i>	I. Bywater (1984, <i>CWA</i> )
<i>Rhetoric</i>	W. Rhys Roberts (1984, <i>CWA</i> )
<i>Meteorology</i>	H.D.P. Lee (1951)
<i>Metaphysics</i>	H. Tredennick (1933)

LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon*  
Compiled by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott,  
revised by H.S. Jones and R. McKenzie,  
(Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, 9th edition repr.)

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**PART I**

**METAPHOR**

# Chapter 1

## THE MODERN DEBATE

### 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to discover the cognitive role of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the soul, that is, what part they play in the expression and elucidation of his philosophical theories and arguments. It is my view that these metaphors are primarily didactic and persuasive; that they serve both to illustrate certain concepts and ideas and to persuade the reader into accepting them as true. Contrary to certain modern theories, I do not believe that metaphors in any way provide access to real 'truths' which are inexpressible in literal discourse. However, I do accept that in very particular circumstances, that is, in the formulation of radically new theories, metaphors can be used to develop and to express ideas for which no literal terms already exist. Plato's tripartite theory of soul provides one instance of the use of such 'theory-constitutive' metaphors.

In this thesis Plato's use of metaphor will be examined in the light of various contemporary views of metaphor. Since the enormous number of metaphors in the dialogues makes a complete survey an impossible task for a Ph.D. thesis, I have confined my inquiry to the metaphors used by Plato to speak of the gods and the soul, concepts which are relatively obscure and around which metaphors proliferate. If metaphor does have special power in 'expressing the inexpressible', as has been claimed, then it might be reasonable to suppose that this power would manifest itself in discourse about concepts such as these.

In this chapter I will set out the modern debate about the cognitive role of metaphor. Three broad theses will be identified

which will serve as a starting point for the inquiry into the cognitive significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the soul. It will be impossible to cover all of the current views, because of the sheer volume of works recently written on metaphor,<sup>1</sup> but I will, I hope, be able to show some of the trends of thought in the contemporary debate.

One question which will not be discussed is whether metaphors are merely ornamental. This view of metaphor as ornament was once the standard view within philosophy, but today it does not enter into the mainstream debate at all. The idea that metaphor was simply an added ornament to speech was dominant in early thought and criticism, especially from the 16th to 18th century. Terence Hawkes in his book, *Metaphor*, tells of the work of the 16th century critic Peter Ramus, and the effect of the subsequent Ramist revolution with its pursuit of clarity in language. As Hawkes says, this revolution led to (p.31):

the notion of metaphor as some kind of special added 'ornament' to a language which, if left metaphor-less, would carry its meanings simply, naturally and more efficiently.

Hawkes tells how this view of metaphor influenced the Puritan notion of an acceptable literary style (p.27):

it is hardly surprising that the Puritan mind, anxious to rid itself of the merely decorative in all spheres should conceive the notion of a literary 'style' which made little or no use of metaphor at all.

The strength of feeling against metaphor in the 17th century can be seen, as Hawkes points out (p.31), by the fact that in 1670 Bishop Samuel Parker advocated an Act of Parliament forbidding the use of 'fulsome and luscious' metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson in their book,

*Metaphors We Live By*, chart some of the history of metaphor and tell how (p.190):

with the rise of empirical science as a model for truth, the suspicion of poetry and rhetoric became dominant in Western thought, with the metaphor and other figurative devices becoming objects of scorn once again.

They show both Hobbes' and Locke's disregard of metaphor and quote this memorable passage from an essay of Samuel Parker, which, as they say, wonderfully sums up 'the empiricist distrust and fear of metaphor' (p.191):

All those Theories in Philosophy which are expressed only in metaphorical Terms, are not real Truths, but the meer products of Imagination, dress'd up (like Children's babies) in a few spangled empty words...Thus their wanton and luxuriant fancies climbing up into the Bed of Reason, do not only defile it by unchaste and illegitimate Embraces, but instead of real conceptions and notices of Things, impregnate the mind with nothing but Ayerie and Subventaneous Phantasmes.

This rationalist or empiricist hostility towards metaphor was dominant for a long period and was only challenged later by the Romantic movement of the 19th century, through the work of writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. Lakoff and Johnson write (p.191):

As science became more powerful via technology and the Industrial Revolution became a dehumanizing reality, there occurred a reaction among poets, artists and occasional philosophers: the development of the Romantic tradition.

Terence Hawkes outlines the Romantic view of metaphor (p.30):

the Romantics tend to proclaim metaphor's 'organic' relationship to language as a whole, and to lay stress on its vital function as an expression of the faculty of the imagination.

For the Romantics the imagination was a means of achieving 'higher truth' (Lakoff and Johnson, p.192) and they perceived metaphor as instrumental in this achievement. In spite of the Romantic movement,

however, the traditional view of metaphor as a substitutable ornament lingered on. But as McFague<sup>2</sup> notes:

increasingly, over the last two centuries, that opinion has been reversed and metaphor has been seen not as a trope but as the way language and more basically thought works.

Mark Johnson opens the preface to his book *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (1981) with the remark: 'We are in the midst of metaphormania' and in his introduction comments on the way that metaphor has become a central concern of philosophers in recent times (p.3):

In the last decade or so the study of metaphor has become, for an ever-increasing number of philosophers, a way of approaching some of the most traditional concerns of philosophy. Metaphor is no longer confined to the realm of aesthetics narrowly conceived - it is now coming to be recognized as central to any adequate account of language and has been seen by some to play a central role in epistemology and even metaphysics.

Thus in recent times there has been a marked reversal of opinion amongst philosophers and critics about metaphor and indeed this reversal seems on occasion to lead to an exaggerated view of the importance of metaphor in thought. David Cooper in a review<sup>3</sup> of Earl MacCormac's *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* writes:

MacCormac enthusiastically endorses the fashionable view that metaphor is of immeasurable importance for better or worse, in science, philosophy and culture at large. Precisely because this view is so fashionable - witness the mushrooming of titles like *The Metaphorical Brain*, *Physics as Metaphor*, or 'The Rule of Metaphor' - it threatens to become as much of a received opinion as the traditional dismissal of metaphor as mere ornament to serious thought.

Thus the idea of metaphor as merely ornamental has disappeared and most critics now assume that metaphor plays an important role in

language and the way we think. Philosophers and critics are now mostly interested in metaphor as a cognitive tool. Kittay<sup>4</sup> says:

Today, metaphor is experiencing a revitalized interest within philosophy...Metaphor is plumbed not for its affective and rhetorical efficacy, but for its cognitive contribution. From our own work-centred perspective, if metaphor is to be prized, it must do work, and the work that most interests philosophers is that which is cognitively meaningful.

The debate today, then, is concerned with what role metaphor can play in cognition. It is this question that we will now explore. Although critics manifest a range of opinions on this point, it is possible to reduce these different views to three basic positions. First there is what we may call the 'epistemic' view; this holds that metaphor plays a unique role in cognition, as its distinctive expressive and cognitive capacities provide a special kind of epistemic access which other forms of discourse cannot provide. Second there is what I will call the 'non-informative' view - the view that it is a mistake to see metaphor as a vehicle for carrying information. The critics who hold this view see metaphor rather as a means of stimulating certain responses, emotions and lines of thought - a point which is acknowledged but not given prominence on the epistemic view. The third view - the 'illustrative thesis' - also accepts that metaphor stimulates responses, emotions and lines of thought, but claims that metaphors *can* be used as devices for carrying information. According to the illustrative thesis metaphors can play a didactic role in illustrating ideas, a persuasive role in recommending ideas and a heuristic role in developing new lines of inquiry. However, on this view metaphors are not irreducible or irreplaceable, since other types of discourse can formulate and express the same ideas in different ways. Let us now examine the claims of each of these theses.

## 1.2 The Epistemic Thesis

### 1. Black

Black's view of metaphor is a development of the 'interaction' theory first offered in rudimentary form by I.A. Richards (1930 and 1936). Richards identified two subjects in metaphor, which he named 'tenor' and 'vehicle'. The tenor is the 'principal' subject while the vehicle is the subsidiary, external idea introduced by the metaphor. In the metaphor of the 'ship of state' the tenor is 'state' and the vehicle the external idea of 'ship'. The essence of the 'interaction' theory is that the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor affect each other, as the principal subject is seen in terms of the secondary, and that as a result of this 'interaction' new meaning arises. Black's development of this view is to be found in his book *Models and Metaphors* (1962).

Black's argument is that interaction allows metaphor to restructure one concept in terms of another and consequently to create new meaning. His interactive theory holds that (p.44):

the metaphor selects, emphasises, suppresses and organises features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject.

Black contends that a metaphorical statement is not a substitution for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement (p.37). In his view metaphors do not simply express the perception of previously existing similarities between tenor and vehicle, but they actually *create* the similarity. By creating similarities and resemblances metaphors provoke new insights which change our conceptual systems.

In a later article, 'More about Metaphor' (1979), Black addresses the question of metaphor's cognitive role and presents his view that metaphors generate insight in an 'irreplaceable' way (p.21). Having posed the question (p.34): 'Why try to see *A* as metaphorically *B*, when

it literally is not *B?*', he answers: 'because metaphorical thought and utterance sometimes embody insight expressible in no other fashion'. In this article Black sets out his central proposition in the following terms (p.37):

I intend to defend the implausible contention that a metaphorical statement can sometimes generate new knowledge and insight by *changing* relationships between the things designated (the principal and subsidiary subjects).

Black's claim that the ideas a metaphor can give rise to constitute 'new knowledge and insight' reflects not only an attribution of special power to metaphor, but also a particular approach to knowledge and reality. Black believes that metaphors can create similarities, which once perceived 'then truly exist', and thus these similarities become for him 'aspects of reality'. He explains this view in the following way (p.39-40):

I still wish to contend that some metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor's production helps to constitute. But that is no longer surprising if one believes that the world is necessarily a world *under a certain description*, - or a world seen from a certain perspective...Some metaphors can create such a perspective.

For Black metaphors do not simply give insight into external reality but rather create perspectives and perceptions which are then to be understood as new realities. On the question of metaphor's cognitive role, we see that for Black metaphor does provide a special kind of epistemic access, but it is access to new perspectives and new realities which the metaphor itself helps to produce. Metaphor for him is cognitively irreplaceable because it generates knowledge by creating aspects of reality. However, although Black is happy to talk about metaphors creating reality, he does not wish to attribute 'truth' to such reality. Speaking about the notion of metaphorical

truth, a notion much debated by critics, he says (p.41): 'It is a violation of philosophical grammar to assign either truth or falsity to strong metaphors.'<sup>5</sup> It is Black's view that metaphors are 'representational' devices which relate to 'how things are' but cannot be regarded as statements of fact. He explains (p.41):

Such recognition of what might be called the representational aspect of a strong metaphor can be accommodated by recalling other familiar devices for representing 'how things are' that cannot be assimilated to 'statements of fact'. Charts and maps, graphs and pictorial diagrams, photographs and 'realistic' paintings and above all, models...In such cases we speak of correctness and incorrectness without needing to rely upon those overworked epithets 'true' and 'false'.

Thus Black wishes to keep some sort of distinction between metaphors which represent 'how things are' and 'statements of fact' and prefers to speak of metaphors as 'correct' or 'incorrect' rather than 'true' or 'false'. At one point Black is explicit about metaphor's relation to reality, when he says that metaphors which survive a particular type of critical examination (p.41), 'can properly be held to convey, in indispensable fashion, insight into the systems to which they refer', and concludes (p.41): 'In this way, they can, and sometimes do, generate insight about "how things are" in reality'. The view that the world is necessarily seen from a certain perspective and that metaphors can create perspectives, thereby helping to constitute new aspects of reality, is developed further in the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who reject all standard notions of reality, facts and truth.

## 2. Lakoff and Johnson

In their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson devote a chapter to the question of 'Truth' (ch.24). First they reject

altogether the notion of objective truth (p.159) and later (p.180 ff.) establish their own view (p.180):

Since we understand situations and statements in terms of our conceptual system, truth for us is always relative to that conceptual system. Likewise, since an understanding is always partial, we have no access to the 'whole truth' or to any definitive account of reality. Understanding something requires fitting it into a coherent scheme - thus truth will always depend partly on coherence.

For Lakoff and Johnson, as there is no objective reality, 'reality' is that which we have accepted as our conceptual framework and 'truth' is simply that information which is accepted as fitting in with the established framework. The nature of metaphorical truth is thus no longer problematic since, as with the truth of literal statements, the truth of a metaphor is simply relative to whatever conceptual framework we have accepted for a particular idea at any given time. The 'meaning' of a metaphor for these critics is equally unproblematic as it is simply the new understanding arising from the metaphor. Of course, it may be more difficult on certain occasions to specify what exactly that new understanding is, but the examples they use, mostly culled from everyday speech, offer no real interpretive problems and thus no difficulties arise in their text.

For Lakoff and Johnson metaphors are (p.184): 'basically devices for understanding and have little to do with objective reality, if there is such a thing' and the most important contribution that metaphor makes in cognition is in providing new understanding and insight into our experience. Lakoff and Johnson believe that many of our experiences (moral, emotional, aesthetic, spiritual etc.) have no 'clearly delineated structure' and that the only structure the experiences have is that established by metaphors. This in turn means that metaphors provide our only understanding of these experiences.

Like Black, they believe that the way metaphors create structures for different concepts is by highlighting or masking certain features of them. To illustrate this process they use the example of a metaphor for love, 'Love is a collaborative work of art' (p.139) and show how this highlights certain features of love such as mutual responsibility and shared experience, whilst masking other features such as disturbance and passion, - features which another metaphor such as 'Love is madness' would evoke. In their view metaphors such as this generate new meaning and new understanding of the concept involved, but they point out that this understanding can only ever be partial (p.89). Nevertheless, in the case of certain concepts partial understanding is all that can be achieved and often, as in the case of certain experiences, metaphor alone can provide structure.

Does this view commit Lakoff and Johnson to the epistemic or illustrative thesis concerning metaphor's cognitive role? The answer lies in their belief that certain concepts derive whatever structure they have from metaphor alone and that metaphor provides whatever understanding we have of them. For if whatever understanding I have of love is gained only through metaphor, then metaphor has performed a unique cognitive function that other forms of discourse have been unable to match. It is true that this understanding can never be complete, but nevertheless, as metaphor provides a partial understanding of concepts which have no 'clearly delineated structure', it must still be acknowledged as having a special cognitive force over and above other forms of discourse, which have not provided even this partial insight. Thus, it seems, Lakoff and Johnson, although they never state it explicitly, would accept the epistemic thesis that metaphor plays a unique and irreplaceable cognitive role.

It must be stressed at this point that when we examine the views of critics on different sides of the debate, we must remember that they are not themselves always primarily concerned with the particular question I am dealing with. Thus we cannot expect their views always to fall neatly into the three categories we are discussing. This, I think, is the case with Lakoff and Johnson, whose aim is not to establish the precise role of metaphor as useful or essential in different areas of cognition, but to show how a great deal of our everyday thought is metaphorical. Thus, although they never explicitly state the epistemic thesis, I believe we can attribute this position to them, as it is the consequence of views they express on other aspects of metaphor's role in thought. But in such cases as this, it seems we must accept that the best we can achieve is an approximate fit of widely varying views (from equally varying perspectives) into our three theses.

### 3. Boyd

Unlike Lakoff and Johnson, Boyd is explicitly concerned with metaphor's role in cognition. His article, 'Metaphor and Theory-Change' (1979) accepts many of Black's claims about metaphor, but develops a different version of the epistemic thesis. Boyd accepts that metaphors can create new perspectives and that they are able to express ideas which are otherwise inexpressible. He focuses on metaphor's role in scientific theory-change and argues that metaphors can introduce new scientific theories in a unique way, by expressing claims for which there are no adequate literal paraphrases. The special role of metaphor in this context results from its

open-endedness which allows general claims to be made without the specific details. Boyd states his view thus (p.357):

There exists an important class of metaphors which play a role in the development and articulation of theories in relatively mature sciences. Their function is a sort of catachresis - that is, they are used to introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed. Nevertheless, they possess several, (though not all) of the characteristics which Black attributes to interaction metaphors; in particular, their success does not depend on their conveying quite specific respects of similarity or analogy. Indeed, their users are typically unable to precisely specify the relevant respects of similarity or analogy, and the utility of these metaphors in theory-change crucially depends upon this open-endedness.

Boyd terms these metaphors 'theory-constitutive' and tells how they are useful for dealing with new theories and ideas. He explains (p.363):

The reader is invited to explore the similarities and analogies between features of the primary and secondary subjects, including features not yet discovered, or not yet fully understood...(p.364) Indeed the utility of theory-constitutive metaphors seems to lie largely in the fact that they provide a way to introduce terminology for features of the world whose existence seems probable, but many of whose fundamental properties have yet to be discovered.

He thus sees such metaphors as a means of (p.372) 'providing a tentative and preliminary account of the properties of presumed kinds' and of 'disambiguating terms referring to presumed kinds of the same general sort', since they refer to kinds whose properties are in some respects better understood. For Boyd these metaphors are extremely useful in the setting out and exploration of hypotheses. He believes that these metaphors are not to be viewed as merely exegetical or pedagogical but as 'theory-constitutive', that is, linguistically and

cognitively irreplaceable. Boyd cites as examples of such metaphors those employed 'in abundance' (p.361) in cognitive psychology.

Boyd goes further than Black in his ideas on the 'truth' of metaphors. Arguing that metaphors can represent not just hypotheses, but truths about their subjects, he says (p.401):

If the articulation and refinement of a body of metaphors all involving the same metaphorical theme proves to be genuinely fruitful in scientific theory-construction, then the only epistemologically plausible explanation is that most of the relevant metaphorical expressions refer, and that the metaphorical statements in question...express important truths.

Since Boyd does accept that metaphors are genuinely fruitful in scientific theory-construction, he would presumably hold that metaphorical statements can express 'important truths' that cannot be expressed in other terms. Thus Boyd accepts in regard to certain scientific metaphors the epistemic thesis that metaphors play a unique cognitive role.

#### 4. Petrie

Another critic who holds that metaphors have a special role in cognition is Petrie. In his article 'Metaphor and Learning' (1979) Petrie voices his support for the interactive theory of metaphor and argues that by means of metaphor one can acquire new knowledge. He sets out his view thus (p.439):

It can be claimed that the very possibility of learning something radically new can only be understood by presupposing the operation of something very much like metaphor. This is not just the heuristic claim that metaphors are often useful in learning, but the epistemic claim that metaphor, or something like it, renders intelligible the acquisition of new knowledge.

He points out that Plato posed the problem of how it is possible to learn something new (*Meno* 80e) and then sets out his own solution (p.440):

It is my thesis that metaphor is one of the central ways of leaping the epistemological chasm between old knowledge and radically new knowledge. The result of changed structures is what I call radically new knowledge...what I shall suggest is...that metaphor can provide a *rational* bridge from the known to the radically unknown, from a given context of understanding to a changed context of understanding.

We can see from this that for Petrie, as for Black, metaphor is able, through the process of interaction, to bring about changes in our conceptual structures - a view which leads him to claim in his conclusion that metaphors are (p.460): 'epistemologically necessary in that they seem to provide a basic way of passing from the well-known to the unknown'.

#### 5. Kittay

Eva Kittay is another critic who accepts the interactive view of metaphor and the idea that metaphor changes our conceptual structures. In her book, *Metaphor - its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, she tells how her own theory of metaphor, which she calls 'perspectival', is a development of the interactive approach (p.14). She links Black's view with the thesis that metaphor plays a distinct cognitive role (p.6):

Black put forward the interaction theory of metaphor which asserted that metaphors have an irreducible meaning and a distinct cognitive content.

and says (p.13):

Black's (1962) essay on metaphor has engendered a literature committed to developing and exploring the thesis that metaphor has an irreducible cognitive force.

She explains why she uses the term 'perspectival' for her own view (p.14):

To call our theory perspectival is to name it for the function metaphor serves: to provide a perspective from which to gain an understanding of that which is metaphorically portrayed. This is a distinctively cognitive role...the speaker makes use of one linguistically articulated domain to gain an understanding of another experiential or conceptual domain and similarly, it is the means by which a hearer grasps such an understanding.

For Kittay, as for Black, this understanding arises from the structuring or restructuring that metaphor imposes on given concepts. This restructuring generates new meanings which then give rise to new insights and information. Kittay is very careful, however, to describe the particular kind of new information that metaphor can express. Whereas other critics argue that metaphors can generate radically new knowledge, Kittay makes a more modest claim. For she holds that metaphor works cognitively by ordering and reordering certain relations, and therefore that metaphor does not introduce radically new information or knowledge, but simply reorders knowledge or information that we already have (p.39):

The cognitive force of metaphor comes, not from providing new information about the world, rather from a (re)conceptualisation of information that is already available to us. Information which is not articulated and conceptualised is of little cognitive importance... Metaphor is a primary way in which we accommodate and assimilate information and experience to our conceptual organisation of the world...In the process of accommodation and assimilation through metaphor, we gain a needed epistemic access to the metaphorical referent.

Kittay elsewhere calls the result of this accommodation and assimilation a 'perspectival shift' (p.301). For Kittay, as for Black, metaphorical meaning cannot be paraphrased in literal language because (p.301) 'by the reordering of the topic domain, indefinitely many

interpretations are made possible'. She believes that the particular cognitive role of metaphor emerges from these various possible interpretations (p.301):

To the extent to which these possible interpretive explications are useful to the understanding of the subject of the metaphor and to the extent that there are explanatory, predictive and prescriptive resonances, the metaphor is cognitively significant. It receives the cognitive content through a perspectival move captured in the reordering of one content domain in accordance with the relations governing another semantic field. To the extent that the speaker has no other linguistic resources to achieve these ends, the metaphor is cognitively irreplaceable.

She is again careful to stress that metaphor does not posit new information (p.302):

Metaphor achieves its cognitive aims not by positing new existents, but by forcing a reconceptualisation of what is already given.

However, she does allow for the possibility of new discoveries in certain circumstances (p.313):

In the process of the (re)description we may be guided to discover some new object or phenomenon. In that case, metaphor serves as a generator of hypotheses.

This view recalls Boyd's ideas on 'theory-constitutive' metaphors which are extremely useful in the setting out and exploration of hypotheses. However, Kittay qualifies her claim by noting (p. 313):

But we have to know our way around the subject matter to know which sort of hypotheses generated by a metaphor are worthy to pursue and which are not.

Her conclusion on this point is that (p.313): 'the role of metaphor is not to tell us of something new, but of something new about what we already know.' For Kittay metaphor's special cognitive force comes from its ability to make us see one thing in terms of another, a

process she calls 'reconceptualisation', and it is this that makes certain metaphors cognitively irreducible (p.313-4):

The shift to a distinct semantic field...provides epistemic access to the referent not otherwise available...The detour through a semantic field that normally applies to another domain is the distinct metaphorical move to reconceptualisation. It is such a reconceptualisation that makes metaphor, when it is cognitively significant, irreducibly so.

It is Kittay's view, then, that some metaphors play a unique cognitive role, providing a special kind of epistemic access which other forms of discourse cannot provide. However, we must observe that in her view this is not an access to radically new information, but is a new *perspective* about information that we already have.

Having set out the various views which can be classified together as 'the epistemic thesis', we can now turn to the second approach to metaphor, the 'non-informative' view, which rejects the theory of interaction and the idea that metaphors have a special cognitive content. On this view metaphors do play a certain cognitive role in conveying particular kinds of understanding, but this understanding is not for the most part propositional in character and thus metaphor is not to be regarded primarily as an information-giving device. Both Donald Davidson and David Cooper develop this view.

### 1.3 The Non Informative Thesis

Davidson and Cooper reject the interactive theory and its notion of special metaphorical meaning. Davidson presents his view on the nature of metaphorical meaning in his essay, 'What Metaphors Mean' (1978). At the beginning of this essay he states his thesis very clearly (p.245):

This paper is concerned with what metaphors mean, and its thesis is that metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.

Together with this rejection of special meaning, Davidson also dismisses the idea that metaphors have a special cognitive content. He writes (p.260):

If a metaphor has a special cognitive content, why should it be so difficult or impossible to set it out? If... a metaphor 'says one thing and means another', why should it be that when we try to get explicit about what it means, the effect is so much weaker..? Why inevitably? Can't we, if we are clever enough, come as close as we please?

His solution to the problem of metaphorical meaning is that (p.261):

We must give up the idea that a metaphor carries a message, that it has a content or meaning (except, of course, its literal meaning)

and he concludes (p.263):

Since in most cases what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely, or even at all, recognition of some truth or fact, the attempt to give literal expression to the content of the metaphor is simply misguided.

Thus Davidson's conclusion is that metaphor is not to be seen as primarily a device for relaying information (p.246):

The concept of metaphor as primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas, even if unusual ones, seems to me as wrong as the parent idea that a metaphor has a special meaning.

David Cooper in his book, *Metaphor*, also proposes the view that metaphor has no special content or meaning. He accepts Davidson's account and interprets it thus (p.90):

Since a metaphor conveys no 'cognitive content' beyond what the sentence literally conveys, and since 'meaning' should...be restricted to this, then there are no metaphorical meanings.

Cooper quotes Davidson's view that, 'there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to

notice is not propositional in character' (p.107), and says that what emerged from Davidson's account was (p.108):

that metaphor *etc.* is to be taken out of the orbit occupied by the information-giving devices of language and brought into, or close to, the one occupied by songs, poems, myths, allegories, and the like.

To support this view Cooper refers to the opinion of another critic, Paul Valéry, saying (p.108):

Valéry compared the idea that poetic metaphors should state how things are - the failure to see that they reflect a 'decision to alter the function of language' - with the view that dancing is simply an unusual way of walking.

Cooper regards metaphor as having a poetic rather than a scientific or didactic function and rejects the idea that they have a special meaning or truth. On the question of metaphorical meaning he says (p.177): 'Any account of metaphor in terms of special metaphorical meaning, semantic or pragmatic, is mistaken.' He also makes clear exactly what kind of theory of meaning he is rejecting (p.88):

It is important to be clear about just what we are rejecting. The point is not that there is no possible sense of 'mean' in which it is alright to say 'The meaning of that metaphor is...' or 'By the metaphor the speaker meant that...', in which the dots are replaced by a description of a proposition that a speaker wants his hearers to take up and which is distinct from the one his words mean. The uses of 'mean' are too various and elastic for us to say that, and they no doubt include ones in which 'mean' is roughly equivalent to 'have in mind' or 'want to evoke'. The point rather, is that the notions of meaning involved in such statements are very different from the privileged notion treated of in a theory of meaning concerned to explain how we understand one another on the basis of our words.

Cooper is equally opposed to the idea of metaphor as a vehicle for a special kind of truth - for truths that cannot be conveyed adequately or perhaps not at all by ordinary terms (pp.216-38). He believes that this idea goes back to both Aristotle<sup>6</sup> and the Romantics and that it

can also be found in the works of contemporary critics such as Roland Barthes, Philip Wheelwright and Paul Ricoeur (pp.221-3). He discusses this view that metaphors have a special mimetic power of presenting things 'as they truly are', and quotes the following claims: that poetry with its metaphors is 'the first and last of all knowledge' (p.199, Wordsworth); that 'Metaphor is a medium for fuller, riper knowing' (p.199, Wheelwright); and that 'Metaphors enable one to perceive a world or complex system of connections in an indefinable, but marvellously precise way' (p.219, Valéry). Cooper finds an inconsistency in the views of such critics as first they insist that 'mimetic metaphors' convey truths in a way that literal language cannot, but then say what metaphors are trying to say in perfectly literal terms. He elaborates on this point, arguing that there is only one way in which a case for 'special' metaphorical truth could avoid this paradox (p.238):

The understanding and truth would have, in a certain sense, to be *ineffable*. By this I do not mean that absolutely nothing could be said about them. I mean rather, that the understanding and truth in question cannot be of a kind which is propositionally specifiable in such formulas as 'It is the understanding that...' or 'It is the truth that...'. For, to repeat, understanding or truth specified in this way would no longer be 'extra', no longer be 'special'... 'Special' metaphorical truth must not only be irreducible to the literal truth of propositions hinted at by a metaphor but must, so to speak, have a quite different *grammar* from the latter.

Cooper believes that only one account allows for such a notion of special metaphorical truth: the Heideggerian account of truth as the 'disclosure' of information which is not propositionally specifiable' (pp. 251-7). Cooper holds that metaphors can be interpreted in various ways (pp.240-4) and that their importance lies not in delivering particular truths or propositions but in inspiring 'lines of imaginative thinking' (p.250). Thus, using Heidegger's view, he can

present metaphor as an instrument which 'may reflect, help to effect or otherwise participate in disclosing' (p.255). Cooper maintains that it is only with this notion of 'disclosure' that the idea of 'special' metaphorical truth is at all feasible.

For Cooper, then, as for Davidson, metaphors are not to be seen as information-giving devices, but rather as figures of speech which prompt imagery, evoke moods and feelings, convey attitudes and stimulate lines of thought. Thus on his view:

Interesting metaphors should be compared not to statements, but to paintings. They can do a great deal for us, but not by stating a particular proposition.

Since metaphors are not to be seen as either stating particular propositions or as conveying any specific information, they are left with a more emotive than scientific or didactic function. However, they are not removable ornaments to thought or speech. For they display particular capacities that are very different from those of literal speech, capacities such as eliciting certain responses and provoking different kinds of thought. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between this and the function proposed by the epistemic thesis, namely that of generating new and special knowledge about reality.

#### 1.4 The Illustrative Thesis

The illustrative thesis has certain points in common with both of the previous approaches to metaphor's cognitive role but rejects their central claims. It shares with the epistemic thesis the view that metaphors provide a means of gaining new understanding and thus accepts its claims that metaphor is a useful pedagogic and heuristic device. However, the illustrative thesis does not accept that

metaphors have an irreducible cognitive role in generating insight which cannot be generated or expressed in literal terms. Those who hold the illustrative thesis reject the idea that metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable and maintain that any insight that can be conveyed by metaphor can be analyzed and translated into literal terms. In this last respect the illustrative thesis is in accord with the non-informative view, as Davidson and Cooper also reject the idea that metaphors can convey ideas which cannot be conveyed by ordinary or literal terms. The illustrative thesis accepts the claim of the non-informative view that metaphors evoke moods and feelings, convey attitudes and stimulate lines of thought. However, it does not share with the non-informative view the rejection of the idea that a metaphor carries a message and has content or meaning. The illustrative thesis holds rather that metaphors can and do state particular propositions and that metaphors can play important roles in teaching and in the development of new ideas and theories. But according to this thesis metaphors cannot generate new knowledge or truth in any special way. For the illustrative thesis holds that when metaphors are used in teaching, they pass on information already known to the teacher, and, when they are used in the setting out and exploration of new hypotheses, they must be described as generating, not knowledge or truth, but ideas and possibilities. In this respect, then, the illustrative thesis differs from both the epistemic and non-informative views.

In this review of the modern debate about metaphor my concern is to identify the different approaches to metaphor. I am not, however, claiming that the critics hold blanket views on metaphor. Often critics argue that metaphors work in different ways in different contexts and the claims they make about particular types of metaphors

are not intended to cover all metaphors in all circumstances. Those who hold the epistemic view, for example, are not committed to the proposition that *every* metaphor generates new knowledge; their claim is rather that *some* metaphors are able to achieve this. Consequently these critics can accept that certain metaphors work in the way described by the illustrative thesis while still claiming that others have a more significant and irreducible cognitive role. This is the case with Boyd and Petrie, who believe that while some metaphors are irreducible and irreplaceable, others serve a useful but not essential purpose in cognition.

#### 1. Boyd and Petrie

As we have seen, Boyd draws a distinction between metaphors in science which play a pedagogical role and those which are 'theory-constitutive'. Although he is clearly more interested in the latter, he nevertheless recognises that the importance of the role of pedagogical metaphors must not be underestimated. He says (p.359):

Certain metaphors, which might be plausibly termed exegetical or pedagogical metaphors, play a role in the teaching or explication of theories which already admit of entirely adequate non-metaphorical, or, at any rate, less metaphorical formulations.

He gives as examples of such exegetical metaphors the term 'electron cloud' and the reference to atoms as 'miniature solar systems'. He then comments on the significance of such metaphors (p.359):

The fact that these metaphors, and others like them, do not convey theoretical insights not otherwise expressible does not indicate that they play no important role in theory change. Kuhn's work has made it clear that - at least insofar as the actual social practices of scientists are concerned - the establishment of a fundamentally new theoretical perspective is a matter of persuasion, recruitment and indoctrination. It cannot be irrelevant to these enterprises that there is a body of exegetically, or pedagogically, effective metaphors.

Thus Boyd believes that some metaphors function as persuasive devices that play a very significant role in the articulation of theories which can be expressed in non-metaphorical terms.

Like Boyd, Petrie accepts that metaphors can serve two very different purposes in cognition, first by rendering intelligible the acquisition of new knowledge (the epistemic thesis) and second by performing a useful role in learning. He says (p.439):

it can be argued that metaphor enables one to transfer learning and understanding from what is well-known to what is less well-known in a vivid and memorable way, thus enhancing learning.

Petrie, therefore, claims that metaphors are useful in learning and that they are epistemologically necessary (p.446):

the educational functions I am proposing for metaphor are that it does, indeed, make learning more memorable and that it does, indeed, help one move from the more familiar to the less familiar. But I am also claiming that metaphor is what enables one to pass from the more familiar to the unfamiliar in the sense that it provides one mechanism for changing our modes of representing the world in thought and language.

Let us now turn to the views of other critics who support the illustrative thesis, as accepted by Boyd and Petrie, but reject the epistemic view.

## 2. Pylyshyn and Green

In the article, 'Metaphorical Imprecision and the "Top-Down" Research Strategy' (1979) Pylyshyn rejects the epistemic view of metaphor as providing a special cognitive access. He criticises Boyd's view thus (p.425):

By this account metaphors are not qualitatively different from other general terms in science. They are all seen as having real underlying referents and serving as stages in the ongoing process of providing epistemic access.

This view does not satisfy Pylyshyn, for he believes it fails to make a necessary distinction between different scientific aims (p.426):

One must distinguish between the general programmatic enterprise of trying to illuminate a new phenomenon and the much more demanding goal of establishing the validity of an explanatory theoretical principle... What all this suggests to me is that while metaphors may be interesting and insightful in certain contexts and relative to certain goals, there are other contexts in which they are quite powerless to settle an issue.

Pylyshyn believes that the use of metaphors in certain scientific contexts can be unproductive and misleading (p.431):

any metaphor which leaves one feeling that a phenomenon has been 'explained' even though only a superficial level of functional reduction or process explanation has been offered, is, to my mind...unproductive. ...It is, in my view, particularly serious in those cases where the metaphor makes prediction possible without affording explanation.

He cites as examples metaphors in psychology and psychophysics, in particular the 'mind's eye' metaphor and the notion that we judge different shapes by 'mentally rotating them'. He believes that: 'the cognitive satisfaction such accounts provide rests simply on the "comfortable metaphor"' and concludes (p.432):

That the accounts involve metaphor is, as Boyd has emphasised in his chapter, not a sign of ultimate deficiency. But that the accounts come to rest on it, because of its subjective comfort, is to my mind a more serious problem.

He says that the difference between those who accept such metaphors and those who do not lies in: 'differing views concerning what, in principle, would constitute an ideal complete explanation.' At the end of his article Pylyshyn sets out in what way it is permissible to use metaphors in science (p.436):

Being committed to the view that we are literally describing mental activity, we take on the responsibility

of giving an explanation by functional reduction - an explanation which does not itself terminate with an appeal to metaphor, empirical generalizations, stipulated properties of different media...and the like, except as these are clearly marked to be explanatory debts to be repaid at a later time and in a particular manner (that is, as further explicated computations).

Thus we can see that Pylyshyn believes that metaphors are useful in the development of certain theories as they work as 'explanatory debts', that is, stating views that are not yet fully worked out but which are expected to be so in the future. On this view, then, metaphors are useful for the expression and development of certain ideas, but they are not able to explain or prove them.

Thomas Green is another critic who rejects the epistemic thesis for metaphor's cognitive role. In his article, 'Learning without Metaphor' (1979) he specifically argues against Petrie's view. He rejects Petrie's claim that metaphor is 'epistemologically necessary' (p.462), but accepts his view that metaphor performs a useful function in education (p.466):

Petrie early in his paper, reminds us of a view that we are all familiar with. It is the view that the function of metaphor in education is to make memorable, in a compact expression, what we have learned through literal, but more extended language. This is the view that metaphor is a mnemonic or heuristic device. And surely, that is sometimes true.

He still denies, however, that metaphors are necessary in cognition and tells how Petrie's account has shown what is necessary for making students think, but that (p.472):

What he has not described is any epistemological necessity for metaphor. Rather he has been able to help us see how metaphor might be useful sometimes in that essential step of learning that I have described as 'exercising imagination'.

In opposition to Petrie, it is Green's view that (p.472-3):

Learning something radically new is quite understandable - as understandable as it can be - without the introduction of metaphor at all. Metaphors are nice; sometimes they are needed; oftentimes they are useful; but epistemologically necessary they are not.

So for Green metaphor is useful in learning as it makes memorable what we have already learned by means of literal language. It is memorable, he believes, because of both its vividness and compactness, that is, its ability to express a great deal of information in a short space. Green also makes a further point that metaphors may be indispensable in one particular area of thought (p.473):

If there is any setting in which metaphors come closest to being absolutely indispensable, it would be, I believe, in those settings where they are used by religious teachers. But that is another topic entirely.

This topic will be explored in Chapter 3 when the role of metaphor in theological discourse will be examined.

### 1.5 Conclusions

Under the three headings of 'epistemic', 'non-informative' and 'illustrative' theses, I have dealt with various views of the cognitive role of metaphor. It has been shown that according to the epistemic thesis, metaphors:

- i) can create, through the process of interaction, new meanings which then constitute new realities;
- ii) can effect changes in our conceptual structure;
- iii) are able to express partially what cannot be expressed totally (Lakoff and Johnson);
- iv) are able to express what has not previously been 'encoded' or 'digitalised' (Kittay) and what is otherwise inexpressible (Black);

v) are the means by which we can acquire new insight and understanding of our experience (Lakoff and Johnson), and in some cases, radically new knowledge (Petrie);

and therefore,

vi) have a distinct and irreducible cognitive force which provides a special kind of epistemic access not provided by other forms of discourse.

In opposition to this we have seen that the non-informative view rejects the claim that metaphors can create new meanings through the process of interaction and argues that, although metaphors perform certain cognitive functions such as stimulating lines of inquiry and evoking certain responses, it is not the primary role of metaphor to convey information. Finally, the claims of the illustrative thesis were set out, that metaphors:

i) provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things that can be said in other ways;

ii) are persuasive;

iii) are useful in the development of hypotheses, providing preliminary and tentative accounts of things which are presumed to exist;

and therefore,

iv) are useful in cognition, but provide no new knowledge over and above that which can be expressed and conveyed in literal terms.

These views will serve as a useful starting point for our inquiry, as they establish the parameters of the contemporary debate and provide a framework within which we can locate Plato's

metaphors. Before going on to examine Plato's use of metaphor (Parts II and III), it will be helpful to discover whether Plato himself gives any indication of his own attitudes to and expectations of metaphor. The next chapter will therefore seek a 'Platonic account' of metaphor.

<sup>1</sup>An extensive bibliography of works on metaphor is given in Appendix 1. This contains details of all discussions referred to in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>McFague (1983), 37.

<sup>3</sup>*Mind and Language* Vol. 1 (No.3) (1986), p.275.

<sup>4</sup>Kittay (1987), 2.

<sup>5</sup>A strong metaphor for Black is one that is 'both markedly emphatic and resonant.' (p.26).

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle's views on metaphor will be examined in Chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup>Quotation from lectures on metaphor given by Prof. Cooper at Durham University.

## Chapter 2

### ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

#### 2.1 Introduction

To establish Plato's own views of his metaphors and images is not a straightforward task, as Plato offers no account of metaphor. In fact, the rhetorical term *μεταφορά* makes no appearance at all in the dialogues. However, although this word is not used and although metaphor *per se* is not discussed, we can discover in the dialogues certain remarks which shed light on Plato's attitude to 'imagery'.

Since Plato does not discuss, or indeed identify, metaphor, and since his views on figurative language are likely to be very different from those of modern critics, I think it will be useful to establish the position of another Greek philosopher who did offer an account of metaphor. Although *μεταφορά* first appears as a rhetorical term in Isocrates,<sup>1</sup> Aristotle was the first critic to analyse the nature and expressive power of metaphor. As Aristotle's account was accepted as the standard view of metaphor for many centuries, and as critics today still have a high regard for the insights he offered into metaphor's role in discourse, Aristotle's views can serve as a bridge between the modern ideas we have considered in Chapter 1 and the ideas of Plato. Although Aristotle's outlook and approach to philosophy was very different from Plato's, nevertheless, an appreciation of his views will give us some understanding of ancient attitudes to imagery and metaphor, which will provide a very useful background to our discussion of Plato.

## 2.2 Aristotle on the Cognitive Role of Metaphor

The following discussion is not intended to offer a full account of Aristotle's views on metaphor,<sup>2</sup> but aims to set out his general opinion regarding metaphor's cognitive role. Aristotle identifies metaphor as 'the transference of a name that belongs to something else' and tells how this can be of four different kinds (*Poetics* 1457b 7):

μεταφορὰ δὲ ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον.

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.

(tr. Bywater)

Aristotle goes on to classify metaphor among types of speech which deviate from the ordinary thus conferring a certain 'excellence of diction' (*Poetics* 1458 a18):

λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴ εἶναι. σαφεστάτη μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκ τῶν κυρίων ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ ταπεινὴ. παράδειγμα δὲ ἢ Κλεοφῶντος ποίησις καὶ ἢ Σθενέλου. σεμνὴ δὲ καὶ ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν ἢ τοῖς ξενικοῖς κεχρημένη. ξενικὸν δὲ λέγω γλῶτταν καὶ μεταφορὰν καὶ ἐπέκτασιν καὶ πᾶν τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον.

The excellence of diction is for it to be at once clear and not mean. The clearest indeed is that made up of the ordinary words for things, but it is mean, as is shown by the poetry of Cleophon and Sthenelus. On the other hand the diction becomes distinguished and non-prosaic by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e. strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech. (tr. Bywater)

This same view is also to be found a few lines later at 1458a 31 and in the *Rhetoric* at 1404b 5. Thus Aristotle lists metaphor as one among other devices for adorning language, a view which had also been expressed earlier by Isocrates (*Evagoras* 9-10):

Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ποιηταῖς πολλοὶ δέδονται κόσμοι· καὶ γὰρ πλησιάζοντας τοὺς θεοὺς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οἷόν τ' αὐτοῖς

ποιῆσαι καὶ διαλεγόμενους καὶ συναγωνιζομένους οἷς ἂν βουληθῶσιν, καὶ περὶ τούτων δηλώσαι μὴ μόνον τοῖς τεταγμένοις ὀνόμασιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ξένοις, τὰ δὲ καινοῖς, τὰ δὲ μεταφοραῖς, καὶ μηδὲν παραλιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν τοῖς εἶδεσιν διαποικίλαι τὴν ποίησιν.

For to the poets is granted the use of many embellishments of language, since they can represent the gods as associating with men, conversing with and aiding in battle whomsoever they please and they can treat of those subjects not only in conventional expressions, but in words now exotic, now newly coined and now in figures of speech [metaphors], neglecting none, but using every kind with which to embroider their poesy. (tr. van Hook)

Although Isocrates was writing before Aristotle, modern critics for the most part ignore his contribution and regard Aristotle as the originator of the idea that metaphor is the substitution of a decorative word or phrase for an ordinary, prosaic one.<sup>3</sup> It may be more correct to say that Aristotle shared the standard view of his time that metaphor was an ornamental or decorative device. However, what is more important for our study is that this is not Aristotle's only view of metaphor. For he also acknowledges more cognitively significant features of metaphor: first, he observes metaphor's ability to name things which have no special name of their own; and second, he says that metaphor can lead us to new insights.

On the matter of naming things, Aristotle in the *Poetics* explains metaphor by analogy and says at 1457b 25:

ἐνίοις δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ὄνομα κείμενον τῶν ἀνάλογον, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἥτιον ὁμοίως λεχθήσεται· οἷον τὸ τὸν καρπὸν μὲν ἀφιέναι σπείρειν, τὸ δὲ τὴν φλόγα ἐπὶ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνώνυμον· ἀλλ' ὁμοίως ἔχει τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἡλίον καὶ τὸ σπείρειν πρὸς τὸν καρπὸν, διὸ εἴρηται 'σπείρων θεοκτίστην φλόγα.'

It may be that some of the terms thus related have no special name of their own, but for all that they will be described in just the same way. Thus to cast forth seed-corn is called 'sowing'; but to cast forth its flame, as said of the sun, has no special name. This nameless act, however, stands in just the same relation to its object, sunlight, as sowing to the seed-corn. Hence the expression in the poet, 'sowing around a god-created flame'. (tr. Bywater)

This passage has been regarded as significant by a number of critics who argue that Aristotle viewed metaphor as more than an ornamental device.<sup>4</sup> I agree with Soskice that (p.9):

here...Aristotle shows his sensitivity towards the capacity of metaphor to name the unnamed, that is, to fill what linguists now call lexical gaps;

but I am not convinced, as she seems to be (p.9), that this particular passage supports the view that Aristotle saw metaphor as a means to extend understanding. This idea is voiced more explicitly by Eva Kittay. Speaking of the passage at *Poetics* 1457b and the idea of the sun 'sowing' its flame, she says (pp. 2-3):

This act is nameless because it was not conceived as an act until the perception was so formulated by the metaphor. The metaphor was itself instrumental in having identified a *something* to be named. The metaphor thereby provides us with a way of learning something new about the world, or about how the world may be perceived and understood.

It seems, however, that Kittay has misunderstood this passage, for Aristotle is not claiming that the metaphor of the sun 'sowing' its flame has identified something new or has provided us with a way of learning something new. The idea of the sun sending out its rays can be expressed in a number of ways and it would be absurd for Aristotle to suggest that 'sowing the flame' expresses or draws attention to an act which had hitherto not been conceived as an act at all. The Greeks spoke often of the sun casting its light<sup>5</sup> and it was obviously an idea quite familiar to them. Aristotle's point is not that no-one has previously conceived of the act but simply that there is no special term in Greek for it. The metaphor is thus providing a name for something which has no special name of its own.

I do not think it is appropriate to talk of this metaphor providing us with a way of learning something new about the world. But I do think that Aristotle's point about metaphor's capacity of providing new names is an important one. For he recognises that we understand metaphors through a process of analogical reasoning and that this allows new terms to be assigned and comprehended in a logical way. This is a significant observation and, although the poetical context is obviously very different from that of theory-construction, this can still be seen as an ancient precursor of Boyd's view (see 1.2 (3)) that metaphors can be used to 'introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed'.

That Aristotle saw metaphor as more than an ornamental device is also shown by a passage in the *Rhetoric*. In Book III chapter 10 Aristotle speaks of metaphor in the context of 'lively and taking sayings' (τὰ ἀστεῖα). He regards metaphor as very useful in oratory as it is able to convey information in a striking way, which serves to impress the audience and thus to make new ideas more acceptable.<sup>6</sup> The opening chapter of this section presents the view of metaphors as lively sayings and tells how they are useful in conveying new insight (1410b11):

ἀρχὴ δ' ἔστω ἡμῖν αὕτη. τὸ γὰρ μανθάνειν ῥαδίως ἡδὺ φύσει πᾶσιν ἐστὶ, τὰ δὲ ὀνόματα σημαίνει τι, ὥστε ὅσα τῶν ὀνομάτων ποιεῖ ἡμῖν μάθησιν, ἥδιστα. αἱ μὲν οὖν γλῶτται ἀγνώστες, τὰ δὲ κύρια ἴσμεν· ἡ δὲ μεταφορὰ ποιεῖ τοῦτο μάλιστα· ὅταν γὰρ εἴπη τὸ γῆρας καλάμην, ἐποίησεν μάθησιν καὶ γνῶσιν διὰ τοῦ γένους· ἀμφω γὰρ ἀπηνθηκότα.

We will begin by remarking that we all naturally find it agreeable to get hold of new ideas easily: words express ideas, and therefore those words are most agreeable that enable us to get hold of new ideas. Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh. When the poet calls old age 'a withered stalk', he conveys a new idea, a new fact, to us by means of the general notion of 'lost bloom', which is common to both things. (tr. Rhys Roberts)

This is an important passage as it shows that Aristotle considers metaphor a means by which we can grasp new ideas. Using the example of Homer's<sup>7</sup> metaphor of old age as a withered stalk, Aristotle tells how the poet conveys 'μάθησιν καὶ γνῶσιν' through the 'general notion' (γένους) of lost bloom. By offering us a new perspective on old age the poet generates new knowledge. Does this mean that Aristotle can be said to hold the epistemic view that metaphor conveys new knowledge about reality? At first sight it seems that it does and this is the reaction of Paul Ricoeur who comments (1978, p.26): 'This apprehension of the genus by means of resemblance makes metaphor truly instructive'. However, although it is true that Aristotle here acknowledges metaphor's capacity for conveying new insight and although this is an important cognitive role, we must be careful to keep this comment in perspective. First the context of the remark must be borne in mind. The statement on metaphor comes not as part of a treatise on how new knowledge can be gained, but as part of a work on rhetoric, which is concerned with the presentation of ideas. Here Aristotle is considering how the orator can most effectively convey new ideas to his audience. He makes no mention of whether metaphor is the *only* way that this μάθησιν καὶ γνῶσιν can be communicated, but says simply that for rhetorical purposes metaphor is the best way of conveying new ideas.

However, even with these qualifications, Aristotle's comment is a striking one and we might feel some justification in accepting Kittay's conclusion (p.3) that Aristotle 'saw in metaphor a conceptual tool of much power'. But does this view hold only for metaphors in rhetorical contexts? Modern critics of metaphor have, for the most part, confined themselves to Aristotle's comments in the *Poetics* and

*Rhetoric*, but comments from other works are also extremely important in establishing a more complete picture of Aristotle's views on metaphor. G.E.R. Lloyd in his excellent treatment of analogy in Aristotle (*Polarity and Analogy*, pp. 360-420) quotes passages from various works which reveal a quite different attitude to metaphor.

In the *Meteorology* Aristotle considers the saltness of the sea. After rejecting the idea that it is an admixture of earth that makes the sea salt, he says (357a 25):

Ὅμοίως δὲ γελοῖον κἂν εἴ τις εἰπὼν ἰδρῶτα τῆς γῆς εἶναι τὴν θάλατταν οἴεται τι σαφὲς εἰρηκέναι, καθάπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς· πρὸς ποιήσιν μὲν γὰρ οὕτως εἰπὼν ἴσως εἴρηκεν ἱκανῶς (ἢ γὰρ μεταφορὰ ποιητικόν), πρὸς δὲ τὸ γνῶναι τὴν φύσιν οὐχ ἱκανῶς.

It is equally absurd for anyone to think, like Empedocles, that he has made an intelligible statement when he says that sea is the sweat of earth. Such a statement is perhaps satisfactory in poetry, for a metaphor is a poetic device, but it does not advance our knowledge of nature.(tr. Lee)

In the same vein is a criticism of Plato's metaphors for the forms which is to be found in two passages in the *Metaphysics* A9 991a 22 and M5 1079b 25. The same sentence appears in both places:

τὸ δὲ λέγειν παραδείγματα αὐτὰ εἶναι καὶ μετέχειν αὐτῶν τᾶλλα κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορᾶς λέγειν ποιητικᾶς.

To say that the Forms are patterns and that other things participate in them is to use empty phrases and poetical metaphors. (tr. Tredennick)

Lloyd observes Aristotle's disregard for metaphor and comments (p.403):

In reviewing earlier theories on various problems, as he so often does before proposing his own doctrines, Aristotle is quick to draw attention to, and to criticise, the use of an image or analogy.

Lloyd also discusses the passages where Aristotle considers imagery and analogy in general and says on these (p.404-5):

first we may note that he condemns the use of metaphor in reasoning and particularly in giving definitions. At *APo.* 97b 37f. he says εἰ δὲ μὴ διαλέγεσθαι δεῖ μεταφοραῖς, δῆλον ὅτι οὐδ' ὀρίζεσθαι οὔτε μεταφοραῖς οὔτε ὅσα λέγεται μεταφοραῖς,<sup>8</sup> and in the *Topics* (139b 32ff.) he again criticises definitions which contain metaphors, giving as one example the definition of earth as a 'nurse' (cf. Plato, *Ti.* 40b) and<sup>9</sup> concluding that 'every metaphorical expression is obscure'.

It appears from these passages in the *Meteorology*, *Metaphysics*, *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics* that Aristotle would support the empiricist view that metaphors are merely poetic devices which have no place in scientific inquiry or in philosophical argument, and indeed this is the view that Lloyd attributes to him (p.405):

It is true that elsewhere when he discusses *style* he approves of certain types of metaphor, especially those which express proportion<sup>10</sup>, and at *Top.* 140a 6ff. we find him contrasting metaphor with what is (even) worse than metaphor, namely expressions that are quite unclear, and pointing out that 'in some sense metaphor does make its meaning clear, because of the similarity [on which it is based]'. But it is obvious that Aristotle's approval of metaphor is confined to its use as an ornament of style, while he condemns its use in reasoning altogether.

If we accept Lloyd's assessment, we must conclude that Aristotle saw metaphor as serving merely a poetic function and thus as having no significant cognitive role. This has been firmly rejected by Ricoeur, Kittay and Soskice, and although I do not accept their views which would commit Aristotle to a far more developed view of metaphor than I think he held, nevertheless I believe these critics are right to argue that Aristotle did not see metaphor simply as an ornament. The passage which most clearly supports this argument is *Rhetoric* 1410b 13-15, which states that metaphor conveys μάθησιν καὶ γνῶσιν. I cannot accept that this statement is a comment merely on style and so I must reject

Lloyd's conclusion on Aristotle's position. It seems to me that Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* is not only concerned with style, but also with the best method of conveying new information, and he acknowledges that metaphor, especially proportional metaphor, is very effective in helping people to grasp new ideas. There is indeed a great difference between Aristotle's attitude to metaphor in poetic and dialectical contexts, but this does not mean that he believes metaphors are only ornamental. It is true that he expresses the view that when metaphors are used in dialectical context they are a cause of obscurity and thus constitute a weakness in the argument, and it is true that he condemns the use of metaphor in reasoning and in giving definitions, but this does not prevent him from believing that metaphors in other contexts can be instructive and does not cancel out his view that a metaphor can make something known. In view of these two different attitudes Burrell's comment (*Analogy and Philosophical Language*, p. 71) that Aristotle's views on metaphor are 'distinctly ambivalent' would seem to be correct. Summing up Aristotle's views we can say that he believed that metaphors:

i) can lead to the perception of resemblances through analogical relations and so can be useful in learning;

ii) can name things which have no name;

iii) have a liveliness of expression which gives them a certain persuasive power;

but

iv) are a cause of obscurity in dialectical argument and in giving definitions, where clarity is essential;

and

v) do not on their own advance our scientific knowledge.

It seems, then, that Aristotle does not develop in a scientific or dialectical context his view that metaphors can convey new insight. However, although he condemns the use of metaphors in reasoning, he still uses them extensively in his own theories as preliminary hypotheses, as Lloyd shows. Lloyd sets out an impressive array of Aristotle's various arguments by analogy (pp. 362-377) and observes (p.377):

Aristotle uses comparison to elucidate obscure phenomena, whether to infer facts or to suggest or to support explanations of causes.

His conclusion is that Aristotle's discussion of comparison and analogy is incomplete (p.414):

for while he analyses it successfully from the point of view of demonstration, he devotes far less attention in the *Organon*, to the heuristic function of analogy and to the question of its role in scientific method as a source of preliminary hypotheses, although in practice analogies figure prominently in this role in both Aristotle himself and throughout early Greek natural science.

It seems, then, that there is a discrepancy between Aristotle's theory and practice with respect to metaphor, comparison and analogy.

Our assessment of Aristotle has shown that although he believes that metaphors can be useful in learning and in conveying new insight, he still sees them as a cause of obscurity in argument and in giving definitions, and as insufficient on their own to provide new knowledge of the world. Let us now turn to Plato to see whether he shares with Aristotle this ambivalent view of metaphor's cognitive role.

### 2.3 Platonic Views on 'images'

Since Plato does not use the rhetorical term 'μεταφορά',<sup>11</sup> can it seriously be claimed that he had a particular view of metaphor's

cognitive role? Strictly it cannot, for since the term does not appear, it seems that Plato had not distinguished metaphors from other images or types of comparison. Thus Plato can hardly be said to hold a particular view about a figure of speech he was not aware of. However, I do not believe that this has to be the final word on Plato's attitude to what we know as metaphor. For Plato uses terms which refer directly to what would now be classed as metaphors, and certain comments can be found in the dialogues which reflect a particular opinion about the role of these figures in discourse. The noun 'εἰκῶν' [image] and the related verbs 'ἀπεικάζω' [express by a comparison; liken, compare with] and 'εἰκάζω' [represent by an image or likeness, portray; liken, compare; describe by a comparison] are general terms for comparisons and illustrations. However, I believe that they also refer to metaphors and my first task in this section will be to prove this.

#### *Εἰκῶν* referring to metaphor

In *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison* Marsh H. McCall has examined the use of 'εἰκῶν' in ancient texts and this discussion will serve as a starting point for our study. McCall is primarily interested in simile and his aim is to show that 'εἰκῶν' in Plato refers to simile as well as to other rhetorical comparisons. McCall tells how (p.12) more than sixty passages containing 'εἰκῶν' are listed in Ast and that 'over twenty are in rhetorical contexts.'<sup>12</sup> However, as McCall observes, only a small number of these refer to similes (p.12): 'Of these only three may be said certainly and a fourth possibly to refer narrowly to simile'. The three occurrences where εἰκῶν certainly refers to simile are at *Meno* 80a4-7, *Phaedo* 87b

and *Symposium* 215a, and the possible reference is at *Politicus* 309b.<sup>13</sup>

I agree with McCall's point that εἰκὼν refers to simile in these passages and I accept his conclusion on the use of the term in Plato (p.17):

The total impression of Plato's concept of εἰκὼν is hardly in doubt. Of the four instances in which the term refers at least in part to simile, all but one (the *Symposium* passage) allow in fact considerable latitude of meaning. More than a dozen other instances show εἰκὼν in an unambiguous sense of 'illustration' 'image' or 'comparison'.<sup>14</sup> This is certainly Plato's understanding of the term.

I agree with McCall that the most common rhetorical usage of εἰκὼν is in the general sense of 'illustration', 'image', 'comparison', but I also believe that just as the term can be shown to refer to simile, so it can be shown to refer to what we would call metaphor. Thus I do not accept the view that McCall expresses early in his book when commenting on a passage in the *Phaedrus* (p.5):

Nothing in the context narrows εἰκονολογία to any specific form of likeness, let alone equates it with metaphor (μεταφορά) for which the simple term εἰκὼν is never a synonym.

His point about εἰκονολογία may be true, but although in the strict sense it is true that εἰκὼν is not used as a synonym for μεταφορά in Plato, as the word does not occur in the dialogues and as Plato was not familiar with it as a rhetorical term, nevertheless εἰκὼν does refer to what now would be called a metaphor, a point which McCall overlooks. There are two occurrences of εἰκὼν which McCall classes as references to general comparisons but which in fact refer to metaphors. The first of these is at *Meno* 72a and the second at *Republic* 531b2-4.<sup>15</sup>

1. Meno 72a

Socrates has asked Meno to explain his idea of virtue and Meno replies by saying that there are different virtues for men, women, children, old men, free men and slaves. Socrates then rather wryly comments (72a6):

Πολλῇ γέ τιμι εὐτυχία ἕοικα κεχρησθαι, ὦ Μένων, εἰ μίαν  
ζητῶν ἀρετὴν σμήνος τι ἀνηύρηκα ἀρετῶν παρὰ σοὶ κείμενον.  
I seem to be enjoying a great piece of good luck, Meno,  
if, when I was looking for a single excellence, I have  
found a swarm of excellences in your possession. (tr.  
Sharples)

So we find the phrase *σμήνος ἀρετῶν* (swarm of excellences), with *σμήνος* being the term for a swarm of bees. Thus we find a comparison in the grammatical form that we would refer to as a metaphor, that is, a tenor (virtue) and vehicle (swarm of bees) brought together with no explicit words of comparison. Socrates then comments on his own turn of phrase (72a8):

ἀτάρ, ὦ Μένων, κατὰ ταύτην τὴν εἰκόνα τὴν περὶ τὰ σμήνη,  
εἴ μου ἐρομένου μελίττης περὶ οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, ...  
But, Meno, to follow this image of 'swarms': if I asked  
you what constitutes being a bee, ... (tr. Sharples)

If there was any doubt before, this passage confirms that the notion of bees was indeed present in *σμήνος* and that the application of this term to virtues constitutes what we would call a metaphor. While Sharples translates *εἰκόνα* as 'image', which is strictly correct, Guthrie in his translation recognises that *εἰκῶν* here refers to a metaphor: 'But seriously, to carry on this metaphor of the swarm...'. McCall, I believe, is wrong to class this occurrence of *εἰκῶν* as a reference to an illustration or image, since although metaphor clearly is part of their family group, nevertheless it is a separate term with its own distinguishing features which can be readily recognised in

this passage. The feature that distinguishes metaphor from other linguistic devices and other forms of comparison is, what has in recent times been called, its 'energy tension' or its 'semantic clash'.<sup>16</sup> This 'tension' or 'clash' is what alerts us to the fact that the words in this formation are not to be taken literally and it is the result of the bringing together of two terms from separate domains of reference. As we find this 'clash' in *σμήνος ἀρετῶν*, the term *εἰκόνα* is being used to refer to a metaphor.

## 2. Republic 531b

The occurrence of *εἰκῶν* in this passage is also judged by McCall to be a reference to a general illustration or comparison. Again I believe the term refers to a metaphor. McCall comments on this passage (p.16):

In Book VII in the discussion of the study of harmony, Glaucon outlines the absurdities of those who approach harmony purely empirically. Socrates begins his answer, "You, said I, are speaking of the worthies (τοὺς χρηστοὺς) who vex and torture the strings and rack them on the pegs." (531b 2-4); he then continues:

ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακροτέρα ἢ εἰκῶν γίγνεται πλήκτρῳ τε πληγῶν γιγνομένων καὶ κατηγορίας περὶ καὶ ἐξαρνήσεως καὶ ἀλαζονείας χορδῶν, παύομαι τῆς εἰκόνοσ καὶ οὐ φημι τούτους λέγειν. (531b4-7)

but - not to draw out the comparison with strokes of the plectrum and the musician's complaints of too responsive and too reluctant strings - I drop the figure, and tell you that I do not mean these people.

Here *εἰκῶν* refers to the torture imagery that has been applied to the approach of the 'worthies' to harmony, and Socrates refuses to continue the strained and unattractive figure.

In a footnote (p.16) McCall says that Jowett translates *εἰκῶν* here 'carelessly' with 'metaphor'. It is my view that this is not a careless but a reasonable translation (although, of course, Plato himself did not use the term 'metaphor'), since *εἰκῶν* refers to the

figure that we know as 'metaphor'. The Greek in the first part of the passage is:

Σὺ μὲν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τοὺς χρηστοὺς λέγεις τοὺς ταῖς χορδαῖς  
πράγματα παρέχοντας καὶ βασανίζοντας, ἐπὶ τῶν κολλόπων  
στρεβλοῦντας.

The phrase ταῖς χορδαῖς πράγματα παρέχοντας (causing trouble to the strings) is a metaphor, as it speaks of the strings as if they were people. The metaphor is then developed by βασανίζοντας and στρεβλοῦντας. It is possible to take these words literally in this context as they can mean 'testing' and 'tightening', but both terms carry very strong secondary senses of 'torturing' and 'stretching on the rack', and it is clear that these senses are activated, as πράγματα παρέχοντας has already established the relationship of persecutor and victim. As there is a 'semantic clash' in the phrase τοὺς ταῖς χορδαῖς πράγματα παρέχοντας, and as there are no explicit terms of comparison, I believe that we should understand εἰκῶν here as a reference to a metaphor rather than to a general illustration or comparison, as McCall suggests.

In the next section I will deal with the verb ἀπεικάζω, which, although it is closely related to εἰκῶν is not discussed by McCall. In the same way as εἰκῶν, ἀπεικάζω is used to refer to both general and specific types of comparison and I hope to show how the verb is used on two occasions in the dialogues to refer to metaphor.

#### Ἀπεικάζω referring to metaphor

##### 1. *Philebus* 59e.

In this passage Socrates and Protarchus are discussing how the best kind of life will be one that contains a measure of both wisdom and

pleasure. As their discussion develops wisdom and pleasure come to be seen as the materials out of which the best life will be constructed:

Εἶεν. τὸ μὲν δὴ φρονήσεως τε καὶ ἡδονῆς πέρι πρὸς τὴν ἀλλήλων μεῖξιν εἴ τις φαίη καθαπερὶ δημιουργοῖς ἡμῶν ἐξ ὧν ἢ ἐν οἷς δεῖ δημιουργεῖν τι παρακεῖσθαι, καλῶς ἂν τῷ λόγῳ ἀπεικάζοι.

Then here, one may say, we have at hand the ingredients intelligence and pleasure ready to be mixed, the materials in which or out of which we as builders are to build our structure, that will not be a bad metaphor. (tr. Hackforth)<sup>17</sup>

The progression in this passage works as follows:

- i) intelligence and pleasure are spoken of as physical materials lying near at hand (παρακεῖσθαι) and ready to be joined together (μεῖξιν);
- ii) they are regarded as the materials out of which (ἐξ ὧν) or in which (ἐν οἷς) a structure is to be built (δεῖ δημιουργεῖν), the structure being the best type of life;
- iii) this leaves Socrates and Protarchus, as they create their model of the best life, in the role of builders or craftsmen, (καθαπερὶ δημιουργοῖς);

The comparison as a whole is developed from the basic idea of intelligence and pleasure as physical materials, a metaphor first presented to us by the word μεῖξιν and continued thereafter by a simile and other metaphors. In view of this one can see why Hackforth has translated ἀπεικάζω as 'forming a metaphor' rather than as 'forming, using a comparison' - although, as I said of Jowett's translation of *Republic* 531b, Plato himself did not distinguish metaphor from its family group of images and illustrations.

## 2. Laws 655a.

In this passage of Book II the Athenian is discussing music and musical terms. Speaking of the correct terms of musical appreciation he says (655a4-8):

ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μουσικῇ καὶ σχήματα μὲν καὶ μέλη ἔνεστιν,  
περὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἀρμονίαν οὔσης τῆς μουσικῆς, ὥστε  
εὐρυθμον μὲν καὶ εὐάρμοστον, εὐχρῶν δὲ μέλος ἢ σχῆμα οὐκ  
ἔστιν ἀπεικάσαντα, ὥσπερ οἱ χοροδιδάσκαλοι ἀπεικάζουσιν,  
ὀρθῶς φθέγγεσθαι.

But music is a matter of rhythm and harmony, and involves tunes and movements of the body; this means that while it is legitimate to speak of a 'rhythmical' or a 'harmonious' movement or tune, we cannot properly apply to either of them the chorus-masters' metaphor 'brilliantly coloured'. (tr. Saunders)

Ἀπεικάσαντα and ἀπεικάζουσιν refer to the use of the term 'brilliantly-coloured' when applied to movement or music and thus the verb denotes the forming of an expression which we would readily identify as a metaphor.

Apart from these two examples, ἀπεικάζω is used most commonly as a rhetorical term for general comparisons and illustrations, as is the case with εἰκόν.<sup>18</sup> These verbs are also used in non-rhetorical contexts for forming and expressing likenesses<sup>19</sup> and in the sense of 'serving as an image for'.<sup>20</sup> In the middle voice ἀπεικάζω also means 'make oneself like, copy',<sup>21</sup> and in the passive 'to be made like, be made as a copy'.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.4 Plato on the Cognitive Role of Εἰκόνες

Now that we have established that Plato uses the term εἰκόν for metaphors, similes and other types of comparisons and illustrations, our next task is to discover Plato's opinion of the cognitive role of these 'images'. The term 'image' in Greek, as in English, covers more than figurative language and it will help our understanding of Plato's attitude to images if we observe the range of meanings of εἰκόν

outside the rhetorical sphere. An examination of the use of the term in the dialogues shows that it also covers works of art, reflections, shadows, copies and imitations.

i) εἰκῶν as artistic representation, work of art

McCall observes (p.ix) that before being used as a rhetorical term, εἰκῶν meant 'statue' or 'portrait'. In Plato εἰκῶν is used of statues (*Phaedrus* 235d and *Critias* 116e), and of paintings, the figures in paintings, the likenesses captured by paintings<sup>23</sup> and artistic representations in general.<sup>24</sup> In addition εἰκῶν also denotes representation in music<sup>25</sup> and the likenesses created by actors on stage: at *Laws* 935e it refers to a mimicking gesture and in the *Philebus* (49c) there is a reference to the 'image of strong ignorance' being portrayed on stage. Finally εἰκῶν also denotes the representations of good and bad characters in poetry (*Rep.* 401b).

ii) reflection, shadow

Εἰκῶν is used in these senses at *Phd.* 99d; *Rep.* 402b, 509d and 510e.

iii) copy, imitation

As well as denoting copies or imitations in works of art, εἰκῶν also appears in two dialogues, the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*, as Plato tells how features of our world are copies of the Forms. At *Timaeus* 29b,c and 92c the world itself is said to be a εἰκῶν of the world of the Forms and at 37d5-7 Time is said to be the 'moving likeness of eternity':

εἰκὴ δ' ἐπενόει κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ  
διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ'  
ἀριθμὸν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον ὄν δὴ χρόνον  
ὠνομάκαμεν.

But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he made of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number - that to which we have given the name Time. (tr. Cornford)

This use of εἰκῶν arises in part from the dominant metaphor of the *Timaeus* of god as a craftsman. In terms of this metaphor, the world becomes the created copy of the perfect, uncreated world of the Forms, which acts as the artist's model. But εἰκῶν also appears in the *Republic* (402c) when features of our world are spoken of as copies of higher realities. Thus the range of uses of εἰκῶν is as follows:

1. Illustration, comparison
2. Simile
3. Metaphor
4. Artistic representation, work of art
5. Reflection, shadow
6. Copy, imitation

To understand what the term εἰκῶν meant for Plato we must ask what features are common to the different types of εἰκόνες. The answer to this would seem to be that each image either compares *a* to *b* or is a likeness of something else. In illustrations object *a* is compared to *b*, as, for example, the soul is compared to the state in the extended illustration of the *Republic*. In a simile or metaphor the tenor is compared to the vehicle. A work of art, such as a statue or realistic painting, is a likeness of the original. Reflections and shadows are like the objects which cast them, and copies and imitations are obviously designed to be as alike as possible to their originals. Each image, then, is like the original in some way, but is also distinct

and quite different from it, as Plato points out in the *Cratylus* at 432b and 432d:

Soc.: μὴ...ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντίον οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν δέη πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷόν ἐστιν ᾧ εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι.

I should say rather that the image, if expressing in every point the entire reality, would no longer be an image. (tr. Jowett)

Soc.: ἢ οὐκ αἰσθάνη ὅσου ἐνδέουσιν αἱ εἰκόνες τὰ αὐτὰ ἔχειν ἐκείνοις ὧν εἰκόνες εἰσίν;

Crat.: Ἔγωγε.

Do you not perceive that images are very far from having qualities which are the exact counterpart of the realities which they represent?

Yes. I see. (tr. Jowett)

Image and reality, then, are different in important respects and for Plato the reality or truth is always far superior to the image. In the *Cratylus* Socrates speaks of names as images and asks whether it is better to test ideas against the names/images of things or against the things themselves (439a6-b3):

Soc.: ποτέρα ἂν εἴη καλλίων καὶ σαφεστέρα ἢ μάθησις; ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνοσ μαθάνειν αὐτὴν τε αὐτὴν εἰ καλῶς εἴκασται, καὶ τὴν ἀληθειαν ἧς ἦν εἰκὼν, ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτὴν τε αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτῆς εἰ προπόντως εἴργασται;

Crat.: Ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας μοι δοκεῖ ἀνάγκη εἶναι.

Which is likely to be the nobler or clearer way - to learn of the image whether the image and the truth of which the image is the expression have been rightly conceived, or to learn of the truth whether the truth and the image of it have been duly executed?

I should say that we must learn of the truth.

(tr. Jowett)

Plato is also careful to separate image from reality in a passage in the *Republic*. Speaking of the nature of dialectic Socrates regrets that he cannot tell Glaucon its true nature but can only offer an image (533a1-4):

Οὐκέτ', ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ᾧ φίλε Γλαύκων, οἷός τ' ἔση ἀκολουθεῖν - ἐπεὶ τό γ' ἐμὸν οὐδὲν ἂν προθυμίας ἀπολίποι - οὐδ' εἰκόνα ἂν ἔτι οὐ λέγομεν ἴδοις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀληθές, ὃ γε δὴ μοι φαίνεται -

Not yet, my dear Glaucon, I said, will you be able to follow - it is not that keenness is lacking on my part - for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are discussing but the truth itself, or so it seems to me. (tr. Grube)

The whole of the allegory of the cave in the *Republic* also shows that Plato was concerned with the gulf between image and reality and considered images very much the inferiors of the realities they reflect or represent. Richard Robinson (1980) observes (p.220):

Plato's whole theoretical philosophy is largely a condemnation of images and a struggle to get away from them.

Lloyd (1966) also tells how Plato criticises images and likenesses on a number of occasions and quotes the following passage from the *Sophist*, together with others from the *Phaedo*, *Theaetetus* and *Phaedrus* (p.394 ff.), (*Sophist* 231a6-8) (p.395):

Soc.: τὸν δὲ ἀσφαλῆ δεῖ πάντων μάλιστα περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητας ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν φυλακὴν· ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος.

But a careful person should always be on his guard against resemblances above all, for they are a most slippery tribe. (tr. Lloyd)

Lloyd concludes on these passages (p. 395): 'These texts leave no doubt that Plato was well aware that likenesses are often deceptive.' Therefore since Plato's view was that images and likenesses are inferior to reality and are often deceptive. we might suppose that he decided it was best to avoid them altogether. However, the use of likenesses in illustrations, paradigms and analogies is not wholly condemned by Plato, but is sometimes actually recommended, as Lloyd observes (p.395):

But elsewhere in the middle or late dialogues there are other passages we must now consider in which the use of analogies is recommended in certain contexts, whether for didactic purposes, i.e. in order to instruct a pupil, or indeed, in order to intuit or reveal the truth.

The other passages are *Rep.* 368d, *Soph.* 218c-d and *Polit.* 277d. In his discussion of these Lloyd observes (p. 397-400) that analogy was regarded by Plato as having both didactic (as at *Polit.* 277d ff.) and heuristic functions (as at *Soph.* 218c-d). However, we must qualify Lloyd's claims about these passages since they do not explicitly talk of likeness or analogy; the *Republic* and *Sophist* passages comment on the comparative analysis of large and small instances of the same phenomenon and the *Politicus* passage discusses the use of examples. It is perhaps safer, then, to say that these passages imply analogy rather than speak of it directly. Nevertheless, there are passages in the dialogues, which Lloyd does not mention, where likenesses and indeed images are *explicitly* spoken of as illustrating and clarifying certain points.

In the *Laws* the Athenian presents an image of human beings as puppets to illustrate the nature of virtue, vice and self-control, and introduces the image in the following way (644cb9-c2):

Σαφέστερον ἔτι τοίνυν ἀναλάβωμεν τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ὅτι ποτὲ λέγομεν. καί μοι δι' εἰκόνοσ ἀποδέξασθε ἕάν πως δυνατὸς ὑμῖν γένωμαι δηλῶσαι τὸ τοιοῦτον.

Let's take up this point again and consider even more closely just what we mean. Perhaps you'll let me try to clarify the issue by means of an illustration. (tr. Saunders)

In the *Critias* the image of paintings of human and divine subjects is given to illustrate a point about discourses on these themes and Critias says he employs the image 'to make my meaning still clearer' (107b). On numerous occasions in the dialogues images and illustrations not only clarify points, but are also explicitly referred to as being used for this purpose.<sup>26</sup> In addition Plato is aware of the rhetorical force of images, as can be seen from a passage

in the *Gorgias* where Socrates refers to images as a means of persuasion. At 493c Socrates presents the image of the soul as a leaky jar and afterwards says to Callicles:

But now do I persuade you at all to change your mind, and agree that the orderly are happier than the intemperate?  
(tr. Irwin)

Callicles indicates that it will take more than this to change his mind but still Socrates presses on, introducing a new image with the words (493d5):

Φέρε δὴ, ἄλλην σοι εἰκόνα λέγω ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου τῆ  
νῦν.  
Come on then, I'll tell you another comparison, from the  
same school as that one. (tr. Irwin)

When he has finished he again asks Callicles (494a):

When I tell you this, do I persuade you at all to concede that the orderly life is better than the intemperate, or don't I persuade you? (tr. Irwin)

Callicles is not persuaded by Socrates' εἰκόνες but it is clear from Socrates' words that he intends them to be persuasive. Thus it seems that Plato was aware of the rhetorical potential of images, although he did not comment explicitly on this feature.

I accept Lloyd's interpretation of Plato's attitude to likenesses and analogy; that Plato regarded them as having both didactic and heuristic functions, but I think his point that Plato *recommended* the use of εἰκόνες as a means of attaining the truth (see p.395 quoted above, p.394 and p.402) is misleading. I agree with Lloyd that (p.400):

In practice Plato often seems to ignore the recommendations and warnings which appear in many of the passages in which he discusses the use of images and likenesses.

and I accept Robinson's observation that Plato sometimes assumes, with no independent verification, that conclusions reached on the basis of likenesses are correct.<sup>27</sup> However, it seems to me that Plato was very careful to make a strong distinction between εἰκόνες and truth/reality and thus, regardless of his actual practice, it seems misleading to say that Plato *recommended* the use of images as a means of intuiting the truth. Plato's concern to distinguish images from truth or reality can be seen at *Cratylus* 432d and *Republic* 533a (quoted above) and in his views on artistic εἰκόνες. In a famous passage of the *Republic* (596a-97e) Plato divides reality into three levels - the Forms, visible objects and images. As Verdenius points out (*Mimesis*, p.13):

these images are situated on the lowest level of reality and they are two grades away from the essential nature of things.

Plato here describes the tragic poet, together with all artists as (597e6) τρίτος τις ἀπὸ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας πεφυκώς ('third in succession from the throne of truth', tr. Cornford) With such an awareness of, and emphasis on, the distinction between image and truth/reality, it would be surprising if Plato were to suggest that images could on their own lead to the truth, and indeed he does not do so. The use of images and likenesses always remains a preliminary or second-best method of undertaking an inquiry. Images are not substituted for reality and Plato is careful to distinguish accounts of reality from accounts involving images or likenesses. In the *Republic* at 506d Glaucon says that he and Adeimantus would be happy to hear an account of the Good presented in the same way as those on the other virtues. Socrates then replies:

That, my friend, I said, would also quite satisfy me, but I fear I shall not be able to do so, and that in my eagerness I shall disgrace myself and make myself

ridiculous. But, my excellent friends, let us for the moment abandon the quest for the nature of the Good itself,...I am willing to tell you what appears to be the offspring of the Good and most like it, if that is agreeable to you. (tr. Grube)

Similarly, when discussing the nature of reason in the *Laws* (897d ff.), the Athenian advises switching from an examination of the object itself to an image of it (897d8-e2):

Still, in answering this question we mustn't assume that mortal eyes will ever be able to look upon reason and get to know it adequately: let's not produce darkness at noon, so to speak, by looking at the sun direct. We can save our sight by looking at an *image* of the object we're asking about. (tr. Saunders)<sup>28</sup>

Thus images are quite clearly distinguished from truth or reality and are offered only as the next best thing when truth or reality is, for whatever reason, impossible to set out.

Plato is critical of images and likenesses since they are inferior to truth and reality. But when he is unable to give a direct account of various objects, he uses images to tell what the objects are like, clearly believing this to be a worthwhile exercise. However, for all his reliance on images when speaking of certain concepts, I still think it is true to say that Plato would not, at least in theory, accept his own εἰκόνες as the truth, as he is always careful to make a very strong distinction between images on the one hand and truth and reality on the other.

## 2.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to establish Plato's own view of his metaphors. This was acknowledged to be a far from straightforward task, since Plato offered no account of metaphor and did not distinguish metaphors from other comparisons and images. However, I

argued that this did not have to be the final word on the subject since on the noun εἰκῶν [image] and the verb ἀπεικάζω [express by a comparison] refer to the use of metaphor and since Plato expressed certain views on the role of εἰκόνες.

In the absence of a systematic account in Plato of verbal imagery, and acknowledging the respect of modern critics for Aristotle's account of metaphor, Aristotle's views provided a bridge between modern and ancient views. We saw that Aristotle, like Isocrates, viewed metaphor as one among other devices for adorning language. Plato does not address the matter of 'poetics' in the same way as his pupil and makes no comment on this aspect of 'images'. Plato also says nothing on the potential of proportional metaphors or εἰκόνες to name things which have no special name of their own - a point which Aristotle makes in the *Poetics*. However, Plato shares with Aristotle three points of view on metaphors/images. The first is the negative opinion that metaphors/images are unhelpful in inquiry or argument. In the *Meteorology*, *Metaphysics* and *Topics* Aristotle notes that metaphors are obscure and are unable to advance our knowledge. Plato, in the same vein, observes in the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus* that arguments relying on images rather than proofs are unreliable, and points out in the *Phaedrus* and *Sophist* that likenesses may be deceptive. The second common point of view is the appreciation of metaphor/images as a means of conveying or achieving insight. Aristotle tells in the *Rhetoric* that the metaphor can convey 'μάθησιν καὶ γνῶσιν' and this attitude emerges in the work of Plato in passages where images are spoken of as a means of illustrating and clarifying certain points.<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, both Aristotle and Plato are aware of the rhetorical force of metaphor/images, with Aristotle speaking in the *Rhetoric* of metaphors

enabling ideas to be more readily accepted and with Plato drawing attention at *Gorgias* 493c-94a to a speaker using images as persuasive instruments. Another common feature, as Lloyd has shown, is that both Aristotle and Plato, despite their criticisms of metaphor/images, continued to make great use of images, likenesses and analogies in their own arguments.

However, despite these common points, there are important differences between the views of Aristotle and Plato. For, whereas Aristotle expresses views specifically on metaphor and deals with it as a quite distinct figure of speech, Plato offers no explicit account of metaphor and makes no distinction between it and other types of verbal images. Further, for Plato verbal images are part of a much wider class of likenesses, copies, imitations and representations, and his views on verbal εἰκόνες must be seen as affected by his overwhelming concern to differentiate image and reality. For Plato images are like their originals in some respects, but are always to be regarded as inferior to them. Images for him will always be less real or less true than the objects which cast them or which they attempt to represent. Therefore to understand the views of Plato on verbal images, we must be aware of his views on the whole class of images, which is not the case with our appreciation of the views of Aristotle, or indeed of the modern critics.

In conclusion Plato's views on the cognitive role of images can be set out as follows:

- i) images can illustrate and clarify certain points;
- ii) can under certain conditions serve as heuristic as well as didactic devices;

iii) are persuasive;

but

iv) are inferior both to truth and reality and to direct accounts of truth and reality;

and

v) may be deceptive.

Now that this chapter has established that Plato uses the term *εἰκῶν* of both metaphor and simile (as well as of other types of comparisons and illustrations), I would like to set out my own approach to the question of the relationship between metaphor and simile, since this will affect my treatment in Parts II and III of Plato's *εἰκόνες* for the gods and the soul.

Broadly speaking, scholars are divided into two groups on this issue: those who think that the difference between metaphor and simile is simply one of grammatical form and those who believe that this difference in form leads to very important differences in function and effect. Debates on the merits of the comparison and interaction theories of metaphor often provide the context for discussion of the relationship between metaphor and simile. We can deal only very briefly with this very interesting question, but fuller discussions can be found in a number of modern works.<sup>30</sup>

David Cooper and Donald Davidson are among those who see a difference only of grammatical form between metaphor and simile (Cooper p.187; Davidson p.211). In contrast other critics such as Kittay consider that metaphor and simile are quite distinct as the result of semantic differences. For Kittay (p.143-9) metaphor has a special 'second-order' meaning which simile and other forms of discourse do not, which means that we understand metaphors by

different cognitive processes. Metaphor for her has 'a double semantic import', unlike simile which has no 'second-order meaning' and thus 'is not a connotative semiotic' (p.149). My own view is that the presence of 'like' or 'as' in the grammatical form of a simile does not make it significantly different from metaphor and in this I follow the view of Aristotle. Using the term εἰκών for simile, Aristotle writes in the *Rhetoric* (III, 4, 1-3):

ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν μεταφορά· διαφέρει γὰρ μικρόν· ὅταν μὲν γὰρ εἴπῃ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα, <sup>31</sup>  
ὡς δὲ λέων ἐπόρουσεν,  
εἰκὼν ἔστιν, ὅταν δὲ 'λέων ἐπόρουσε', μεταφορά· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἄμφω ἀνδρείους εἶναι, προσηγόρευσε μετενέγκας λέοντα τὸν Ἀχιλλέα... οἷστέαί δὲ ὥσπερ αἱ μεταφοραὶ· μεταφοραὶ γὰρ εἰσι διαφέρουσαι τῷ εἰρημένῳ."

The simile is also a metaphor; the difference is but slight. When the poet says: He leapt on the foe as a lion, this is a simile; when he says of him 'the lion leapt', it is a metaphor - here, since both are courageous, he has transferred to Achilles the name of 'lion'...[Similes] are to be employed just as metaphors are employed, since they are really the same thing except for the difference mentioned. (tr. Rhys Roberts)

The view that there is only a slight difference between metaphor and simile is stated again at *Rhetoric* 1410b and 1412b-1413a.

Another reason for seeing no significant difference between metaphor and simile is the fact that many similes are not literal statements of comparison, but offer the same interpretative challenges as metaphors.<sup>32</sup> In view of this I do not accept the claim of Pierre Louis<sup>33</sup> that simile 'apparaît toujours comme un hors-d'oeuvre facilement détachable' (always seems like an easily dispensable hors d'oeuvres). Many passages in Plato show that similes can be as integral as metaphors to the development of particular ideas and, as we shall see throughout this thesis, Platonic similes cannot be disregarded as mere ornaments that can be stripped from the sense of the text. In many passages similes and metaphors are used in

conjunction with one another to develop particular images and in these passages it becomes difficult and indeed irrelevant to remember the precise grammatical forms in which the image was introduced and subsequently developed.<sup>34</sup> I will therefore undertake no separate analysis of Plato's similes for the gods and the soul, and my practice will be simply to ignore the grammatical distinction between the two figures unless the presence of simile merits special comment.

In Part I of this thesis I have set out a number of modern approaches to metaphor's cognitive role and have added to these the views of Aristotle and Plato. In Parts II and III I will concentrate on Plato's use of metaphor and will assess the cognitive role of the metaphors in the light of both modern and ancient views.

<sup>1</sup>Evagoras 190D, see W.B. Stanford (1936) p.3.

<sup>2</sup>For detailed accounts see sections on Aristotle in Ricoeur (1978), Burrell and Lloyd.

<sup>3</sup>See McFague p.37; Kittay p.4; Soskice p.8.

<sup>4</sup>Ricoeur p.20; Soskice p.9; Kittay p.2.

<sup>5</sup>See e.g. Aeschylus *Persae* 502: *χῶστις μὲν ἡμῶν πρὶν σκεδασθῆναι θεοῦ/ ἀκτῖνας ὠρμήθη, σεσωσμένος κυρεῖ.*

<sup>6</sup>See 1410b- 1413b.

<sup>7</sup>*Odyssey* XIV 213.

<sup>8</sup>But if metaphors should not be used in reasoning, it is clear that one should not use metaphors in giving definitions, nor should one define metaphorical expressions', Lloyd, p.405 note 1.

<sup>9</sup>Aristotle's words here are: 'πᾶν γὰρ ἀσαφὲς τὸ κατὰ μεταφορὰν λεγόμενον.' See Lloyd, p.405 note 2.

<sup>10</sup>Lloyd quotes as examples *Rhetoric* 1405a8 ff., 1407a 14ff., 1410b 36-1411b 23 (p.405, note 3).

<sup>11</sup>The noun *μεταφορά* does not occur as a rhetorical or non-rhetorical term, but the related verb *μεταφέρω* does occur as a non-rhetorical term meaning 'carry across, transfer' - *Timaeus* 58b and 73e.

<sup>12</sup>The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* computer program confirms this, showing seventy seven occurrences of forms of *εἰκών* with twenty three of these in rhetorical contexts.

<sup>13</sup>McCall pp.12-15.

<sup>14</sup>For the use of the term in these senses see McCall pp.15-17.

<sup>15</sup>McCall cites *Meno* 72a in a footnote (p.14) and discusses *Rep.* 531b on p.16.

<sup>16</sup>Cooper (1986) pp.59 and 186-7; Ricoeur (1978) p.190.

<sup>17</sup>Hackforth translates *μεῖξιν* in the sense of 'mixing', but it can also mean simply 'joining together', which may be more appropriate in a context of craftsmanship.

<sup>18</sup>For examples of this use of *ἀπεικάζω* and the related verb *εἰκάζω* see: *Phd.* 76e1, 92b7, 99e5; *Crat.* 431c3; *Theaet.* 198c10; *Polit.* 297e8; *Parm.* 137a2; *Symp.* 221c8, d4; *Phdr.* 265b; *Meno* 80c3, 98a9; *Rep.* 404d12, 464b1, 488a1, 489c3; *Laws* 905e5, 906d7, 964d7, 967c7.

<sup>19</sup>*Crat.* 414a8, 426e2; *Rep.* 488a5; *Critias* 107d1, 107e2.

<sup>20</sup>*Crat.* 432b; *Phil.* 61c4.

<sup>21</sup>*Rep.* 396d3, 536a5.

<sup>22</sup>*Tim.* 39e.

<sup>23</sup>*Crat.* 424e, 431c; *Soph.* 236a; *Phil.* 39b.

<sup>24</sup>Prot. 312d; *Laws* 669a,b,c, and 931a.

<sup>25</sup>*Laws* 668c.

<sup>26</sup>See e.g. *Phaedo* 87b; *Gorgias* 517d; *Rep.* 487e, 509a, 514a, 517b; *Theaet.* 198d; *Laws* 720c, 969b.

<sup>27</sup>Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p.205: 'introduced merely as a likely way of suggesting hypotheses about the individual, [analogy] gradually comes to profess not merely to suggest such hypotheses but also to prove them true, and in the process it produces a wealth of political philosophy.'

<sup>28</sup>See also *Phaedrus* 246a, which will be discussed in ch.6.

<sup>29</sup>See *Rep.* 368d, *Soph.* 218c-d, *Polit.* 277d, *Critias* 107b, *Laws* 644c etc.

<sup>30</sup>Kittay pp.17-19, 31, 143, 152, 187-8, 191; Cooper (1986) pp.12-17,55-58, 141-143, 152, 187-8, 191; Soskice pp.58-61; Searle pp.101-113; Sheppard pp.182-3; Davidson pp.253-257; Hester pp.23-25; Stanford p.25ff; Richards 1930 p.235; Ortony pp.186-201; G.A. Miller pp.202-250; Black (1962) pp.35-37 and (Ortony (ed.), 1979) pp.31-33; McFague (1983) pp.37-38.

<sup>31</sup>*Iliad* XX, 164

<sup>32</sup>See Cooper (1986) p.58 and 143; Kittay pp.17-19.

<sup>33</sup>Louis p.5.

<sup>34</sup>Passages on the gods or the soul where metaphor and simile are active together include: *Phd.* 83d; *Phdr.* 254e; *Rep.* 401b, 561b, 614e, 621b; *Polit.* 272e; *Tim.* 69d, 73c, 73d, 77c-d, 78b; *Laws* 902e.

**PART II**

**GODS**

As Orpheus represented his mysteries by tales and Fables, Pythagoras by numbers and Symbols, so Plato and his followers have (in imitation of them) communicated their Notions by Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Parables, heaps of Metaphors, Allegories, and all sorts of Mystical Representations (as is vulgarly known). All of which upon the account of their obscurity and Ambiguity are apparently the unfittest signes in the world to express the Train of any man's thought to another: For beside that they carry in them no Intelligible Affinity to the Notices which they were designed to intimate, the Powers of Imagination are so great, and the instances in which one thing may resemble another are so many that there is scarce anything in nature in which the Fancie cannot find or make a Varietie of such Symbolising Resemblances; so that Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Allegories, though they are prettie Poetick Fancies, are infinitely unfit to express Philosophical Notions and discoveries of the Natures of things; and besides, seeing that they have left us with no key to these dark Cyphers, there can be no sure and constant way to unriddle what conceptions are lock'd up under them; so that it does not only require a great deal of pains to frame conjectures of their meaning, but the surest we can pitch upon are withal so uncertain and ambiguous that they unavoidably leave us fluctuating in meer uncertainties.

Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure  
of the Platonick Philosophie*, 1666

## Chapter 3

### THEOLOGICAL METAPHORS

#### 3.1 Introduction

My aim in Part II of this thesis is to discover the cognitive role of metaphors in Plato's discourse about the gods. Chapters 4 and 5 will consider Plato's use of divine metaphors, while this chapter will assess his attitude to them in relation to modern views.

In Chapter 1 (section 1.4 (2)) I quoted Thomas Green's opinion that:

If there is any setting in which metaphors come closest to being absolutely indispensable, it would be, I believe, in those settings where they are used by religious teachers. But that is another topic entirely.

The study of religious metaphors is indeed quite different from that of metaphor in general and a great deal of attention has been given in recent years specifically to the use of metaphor in theological speculation. The first section of this chapter will consider modern views on theological metaphors and will review some of the responses to the question raised by Green, i.e. how far these metaphors are cognitively indispensable. Although there is a wide range of opinions about the cognitive role of theological metaphors, nevertheless, three main positions can be discerned, which broadly correspond to our three theses about metaphors in general. Our first task, then, will be to identify briefly these three positions. One important point which must be mentioned at the outset of this discussion is that the modern theologians whose ideas will be discussed are all working within the Christian tradition, and thus are concerned with metaphors for a god that is very different from those gods we find in Plato. However,

their debate about theological metaphors is primarily concerned with the general problems of speaking about the divine nature rather than with the specific question of the use of metaphors for the Judaeo-Christian God, and thus their views are relevant for our study of Plato's gods.

### 3.2 Metaphorical Theology: Three Modern Perspectives

A thorough study of recent developments in theological studies on metaphor is to be found in Janet Martin Soskice's book, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, and our review will be based mainly on her account. Soskice discusses the wide range of views held by modern theologians on the question of metaphor's role, but for our purposes these can be reduced to three basic positions, which we will name the 'emotive', the 'metaphor-as-fiction' and the 'critical realist' views.

#### 1. The Emotive View

On this view metaphors have a significant effect on the hearer, stimulating certain responses and evoking particular moods and feelings, but do not convey information. Soskice sees this view as developed from literary critics such as Ogden and Richards, who have concerned themselves with the 'meaning' of metaphors whilst giving up any claims that metaphors have reference or express truths (p.98).

Soskice tells how this view has been taken up by certain theologians and discusses the account of Frederick Ferré. She discusses how Ferré and other theologians have recently spent much time comparing the use of metaphors in theology with their use in science while still wishing to claim that theological metaphors do not

refer to reality in the same way as scientific metaphors. She comments on this view (p.104):

Ferré's difficulty, and that of many others, is that while he wishes to say that the theist's models and metaphors guide our thought about God and are in some sense descriptive and explanatory, he faces the alleged impossibility of specifying their referent in a way independent of further models and metaphors. At the critical stage for his comparison of the cognitive use of models elsewhere, Ferré is constrained to say that the theistic models cannot be assessed in terms of truth and reference but only in terms of their valuational significance.

Soskice argues that the view that metaphors in theological discourse work only at the level of the feelings is unsatisfactory. Her argument is essentially that metaphors can only evoke a response if they have some cognitive content and are in some way explanatory (pp. 26 and 110).

The emotive view of theological metaphors shares with the non-informative approach to metaphors in general the idea that a metaphor's role is not to carry information but to evoke moods and stimulate particular responses.

## 2. Metaphor as Fiction

Soskice identifies two other views of metaphor in theology which, although they begin with very different premises, still end with the same conclusion that metaphors are heuristic fictions. These two are the empiricist and the idealist views.

### i) The Empiricist Position

In discussing this view Soskice refers to the opinions of two critics, A.J. Ayer, whom she describes as 'a noted modern empiricist openly

hostile to religious belief' (p.142) and Don Cupitt, a Christian theologian. She quotes (p.144) Ayer's view that:

to say something transcends the human understanding is to say that it is unintelligible. And what is unintelligible cannot be significantly described...

and discusses Cupitt's criticism of 'theological realism' (p.142). For Cupitt this realism maintains that Christian worship is addressed to (p.142), 'a King of the universe who makes all things, knows all things and rules all things...a cosmos-transcending absolute being', and it is his opinion that this view is indefensible. Soskice comments (p.142):

This objectifying and metaphysical theism is, according to Cupitt, spiritually vulgar, morally suspect and philosophically indefensible. Not only do the traditional proofs for the existence of God fail, we cannot even know what it means to speak of a being who is omniscient, pure spirit, and beyond the realm of experience.

On this view, as Soskice points out, since theists cannot make statements which are 'just and adequate and correspond to God's real nature', then, (p.144) 'we have no right with tentative and approximating statements to claim to speak of him at all.'

This empiricist criticism of inadequate statements about God naturally holds for all attempts to speak of the divine and so clearly also applies to the use of metaphor. Bishop Parker's criticism of Plato's theology (quoted as the frontispiece of Part II) deals specifically with Plato's theological metaphors and expresses the empiricist view that these metaphors 'carry in them no Intelligible Affinity to the Notices which they were designed to intimate.' On such a view, whether it is that of Ayer in regard to Christian language about God or Parker on Platonic expression, metaphors are fictions

which are distinctly unhelpful and play no useful cognitive role whatsoever. However, as Soskice observes, there is another view which, while it accepts that metaphors are fictions, nevertheless sees them as useful cognitive devices. Soskice names this the 'idealist view'.

## ii) The Idealist Position

Soskice first discusses this view in regard to science and tells us that in the idealist's belief metaphors and models are (p.120): 'important and even indispensable to the scientific enterprise, but not as descriptions of any external reality.' She says that few contemporary philosophers would fit into this position, but that (p.121): 'The category does, however, include a fair number of philosophers of religion.' Soskice argues that although the idealist position seems at first to be the antithesis of the empiricist, nevertheless they share a number of common assumptions, which lead both to regard the theist's models as fictions (p.121 and p.147). However, while the empiricist believes that using such fictions is pointless, the idealist regards this as a fruitful way of practising theology.

Although not quoted by Soskice, we can see that the idealist position is taken by the theologian Sallie McFague. In two of her books, *Metaphorical Theology* and *Models of God*, McFague expounds her view that using metaphors helps us to speak of God, but does not teach us any more about what 'God' is. In the preface to *Models of God* she says that her theology is (p.xi): 'principally an elaboration of a few basic metaphors and models.' She then continues (p.xi):

As remythologization, such theology acknowledges that it is, as it were, painting a picture. The picture may be full and rich, but it is a picture. What this sort of

enterprise makes very clear is that theology is mostly fiction: it is the elaboration of few key metaphors and models. It insists that we do not know very much and that we should not camouflage our ignorance by either petrifying our metaphors or forgetting that our concepts derive from metaphors. Nevertheless, admitting that theology is mainly fiction, mainly elaboration, we claim that some fictions are better than others...So we try out different models and metaphors in an attempt to talk about what we do not know how to talk about.

This idealist view of metaphor as useful fiction accords with the illustrative thesis set out in Chapter 1 (section 1.4). For both views accept that metaphors do not provide new knowledge, but serve as heuristic devices, suggesting possibilities and tentative accounts of things which are presumed, but cannot be proved, to exist. For the idealist, then, using and analysing metaphors is an indispensable method of practising theology but is not a means of establishing new knowledge about God.

### 3. Critical Realism

Soskice rejects all of the above views of the cognitive role of metaphor in theological discourse and seeks to establish her own 'critical realist' position. The central feature of this is that metaphors for God are 'reality depicting'. It is Soskice's opinion that the theist (p.141):

can coherently claim that his language is referential or, as we prefer reality depicting, without claim to definitive knowledge.

The critical realist view is based upon recent causal theories of reference which claim that reference need not involve 'unrevisable description' (p.125). These theories hold that causal relations allow reference without definition, i.e. that if  $x$  causes  $y$ , then I can speak of  $x$  even though I do not know and cannot say what it is. The

theological application of such theories of reference rests on the view that God is the cause of the world (Soskice, pp.138-40). If we accept this causal relationship, then, Soskice argues, we can refer to God without attempting to define him.

Soskice argues first that although it is difficult to speak meaningfully of God, it is possible, and second that metaphor has a central role to play in any discourse on God. She believes that metaphors can refer to and can depict reality without being required at the same time to give an exhaustive or 'unrevisable description' of it. She maintains that this special feature makes metaphor an invaluable tool in our attempts to speak of God (p.140):

this separation of referring and defining is at the very heart of metaphorical speaking and is what makes it not only possible but necessary that in our stammering after a transcendent God we must speak, for the most part, metaphorically or not at all.

Soskice believes that theological metaphors are not mere fictions but are depictions of reality - a view which, as she says, depends upon the acceptance of causal theories of reference. Without these theories, it would be impossible to claim that metaphors depict transcendent states and relations and one would be left with either the empiricist or idealist position (p.148). For Soskice metaphors are invaluable in theology but even on her strong view the claim is not made that metaphors are *absolutely* indispensable. For she does not say that metaphors are our *only* means of speaking about god, but that we must 'for the most part' speak metaphorically.

Soskice believes, then, that theological metaphors depict reality but her claim is tempered with the point that the critical realist is concerned not with proof but with possibility (p.148):

In defending theological realism, we defend the theist's right to make metaphysical claims, but we have stressed that it is not our object to prove the existence of God, still less to prove that the models and metaphors which Christians use in speaking of God have a special validity. Our concern is with conceptual possibility rather than proof, and with a demonstration that we may justly claim to speak of God without claiming to define him, and to do so by means of metaphor. Realism accommodates figurative speech which is reality depicting without claiming to be directly descriptive.

Such comments with their emphasis on conceptual possibility seem to me to be very similar to the metaphor-as-fiction view. For this also sees metaphors as suggesting possibilities and also acknowledges that metaphorical theology rests upon certain beliefs about God, beliefs which cannot be proved. If we point out that theologians such as McFague regard theological metaphors as useful fictions, but still believe that the God that is represented thereby is real, there seems to be little difference between this view and Soskice's account. For both the critical realist and the idealist believe, but cannot prove, that God is real and both see metaphors as an inadequate but nevertheless useful means of suggesting possibilities about the reality they believe in. However, although it seems that Soskice's position slides a little here, she is at pains to argue that there is a crucial difference between the idealist and the critical realist views. Despite her statement that theological metaphors suggest only conceptual possibilities and despite her view (p.131 and 136) that they do not provide 'privileged accounts', she still maintains that metaphors can depict transcendent reality - which entails the view

that they afford epistemic access to that reality (p.132). She sees her account as more in line with Richard Boyd's views on 'theory-constitutive' metaphors,<sup>1</sup> views which we examined in Chapter 1 in the section on the epistemic thesis. She comments (p.131):

What we are committed to is something more like Boyd's idea that some general terms 'afford epistemic access to kinds which are 'natural' in the sense of corresponding to important causal features of the world' (Boyd p.392).

Since Soskice distances her own view from the idealist and empiricist positions, which see metaphors as fictions, since she claims that theological metaphors are 'reality depicting' and quotes Boyd with evident approval, it seems that the critical realist position is to be aligned not with the illustrative thesis but with the epistemic thesis of metaphor's cognitive role.

We have now examined the three basic positions taken by modern theologians on the question of metaphor's cognitive role: the 'emotive', the 'metaphor-as-fiction' and the 'critical realist' views. We have also seen that these three positions broadly relate to the three theses concerning metaphors in general which were discussed in Chapter 1. Having established various modern views, we can now turn to Plato to discover his attitude both to theological discourse and to images of the gods.

### 3.3 Plato on Theological Discourse and Images of the Gods.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Plato does not discuss the figure of speech we know as metaphor and does not make any distinction between it and other verbal comparisons. Thus it will be impossible to find any statement about the role of theological metaphors in the dialogues. However, as the previous chapter has shown, Plato does

express certain views about εἰκόνες - a term which is used to refer to metaphors - and it will be the aim of this section to discover whether he expresses any opinions about images of the gods and their role in cognition. Before we turn to Plato's statements about divine images, it will be helpful to establish his view of the nature of man's understanding of the gods.

### 1. 'Of the Gods We Know Nothing'

In the following pages I will examine a number of statements from the dialogues which express the view that the nature of the gods lies beyond the limits of human understanding. The passages come from the *Cratylus*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus*.

In the *Cratylus* the discussion focuses on names and at one point (396a-d) Socrates offers an 'explanation' of the name 'Zeus'. A little later Hermogenes asks if he has any more explanations of the names of other gods and Socrates replies (400d6-9):

Ναὶ μὰ Δία ἡμεῖς γε, ὦ Ἑρμόγενης, εἴπερ γε νοῦν ἔχοιμεν, ἓνα μὲν τὸν κάλλιστον τρόπον, ὅτι περὶ θεῶν οὐδὲν ἴσμεν, οὔτε περὶ αὐτῶν οὔτε περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων, ἅττα ποτὲ ἑαυτοὺς καλοῦσιν·

Yes, indeed, Hermogenes, and there is one excellent principle which, as men of sense, we must acknowledge - that of the gods we know nothing, either of their natures or of the names which they give themselves.

(tr. Jowett)

Before beginning his account of the names of the other gods, Socrates is concerned to make quite clear to the gods the nature of their inquiry (401a1-5):

εἰ οὖν βούλει, σκοπῶμεν ὥσπερ προειπόντες τοῖς θεοῖς ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν οὐδὲν ἡμεῖς σκεψόμεθα - οὐ γὰρ ἀξιούμεν οἰοί τ' ἂν εἶναι σκοπεῖν - ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἧν ποτέ τινα δόξαν ἔχοντες ἐτίθεντο αὐτοῖς τὰ ὀνόματα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνεμέσητον.

Let us then, if you please, in the first place tell them that we are not inquiring about them - we do not presume we are able to do so. But we are inquiring about the meaning of men in giving them these names - in this there can be small blame. (tr. Jowett)

From these two statements, then, it is clear that in Socrates' view human beings know nothing of the gods and would be blameworthy if they believed that they were even able to inquire about them, let alone proclaim any knowledge. Thus Socrates sees the nature of the divine as beyond the limits of human knowledge, a view he expresses again later where he says (425c1-3):

προειπόντες ὡςπερ ὀλίγον πρότερον τοῖς θεοῖς, ὅτι οὐδὲν εἰδότες τῆς ἀληθείας τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων δόγματα περὶ αὐτῶν εἰκάζομεν.

..saying by way of preface, as I said before of the gods, that of the truth about them we know nothing, and do but entertain human notions of them. (tr. Jowett)

Thus we have a restatement of the view expressed at 400d together with a new distinction between knowledge and truth (εἰδότες, ἀληθείας) on the one hand, and opinion and guesswork (δόγματα, εἰκάζομεν) on the other. So we see from the *Cratylus* that the best that humans can achieve in regard to the gods are opinions based on guesswork and conjecture, while knowledge of the truth about them remains beyond their grasp. The view that human beings do not have knowledge of the divine nature is also to be found in the *Phaedrus* at 246c.

Here Socrates is discussing the soul and tells how the perfect soul is winged and journeys on high, but how the soul that has lost its wings sinks down and fastens onto an earthly body. Having observed (246c) that this composite structure of soul and body is termed

'mortal', he then turns to the question of what an immortal being is and says (246c6-d2):

ἀθάνατον δὲ οὐδ' ἔξ ἐνὸς λόγου λελογισμένου, ἀλλὰ  
πλάττομεν οὔτε ἰδόντες οὔτε ἱκανῶς νοήσαντες θεόν  
ἀθανατόν τι ζῶον, ἔχον μὲν ψυχὴν, ἔχον δὲ σῶμα, τὸν ἀεὶ  
δὲ χρόνον ταῦτα συμπεφυκότα.

'immortal' is a term applied on no basis of reasoned argument at all, but our fancy pictures the god whom we have never seen, nor fully conceived, as an immortal living being, possessed of a soul and body united for all time. (tr. Hackforth)

Thus we find Socrates saying that the term 'immortal' is used with no rational account of the nature of immortal beings and that people simply imagine the nature of god to be of a particular type, a type which is based on their own experience of what it is to be a living being. Hackforth translates the verb 'πλάττομεν' as 'our fancy pictures', highlighting the verb's senses of 'forming in the mind' and 'making up, fabricating' (LSJ). The primary sense of the verb, however, is 'to form, mould, shape' which according to LSJ is 'properly used of the artist who works in soft substances such as earth, clay and wax'. If we take the verb in this sense, we arrive at a notion of 'forming, moulding the god', an idea I will return to later in this section. For the moment, however, we need only observe the clear distinction Socrates makes between giving a reasoned account of the god and imagining a nature which one has never seen nor adequately conceived. As in the previous passages, then, human understanding of the divine is limited to guesswork and imagination.

In the *Timaeus* (28c) we find another statement that human beings do not have knowledge of the divine - this time, specifically, of the creator-god. At this point in the dialogue Timaeus has reached the conclusion that the world is created, since it is visible, tangible

and has a body, and next turns to the question of its cause. His words are (28c2-3):

τῷ δ' αὖ γενομένῳ φάμεν ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἀνάγκην εἶναι  
γενέσθαι.

But again, that which becomes, we say, must necessarily become by the agency of some cause. (tr. Cornford)

In his next sentence Timaeus says:

τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὐρεῖν τε  
ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντα ἀδύνατον λέγειν.

The maker and father of this universe it is a hard task to find, and having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind. (tr. Cornford)

Thus we can see how he passes immediately from the notion of a cause of the world to the idea of a personified creator and tells how this creator cannot be 'discovered' by humans. My reading of the sentence understands the two infinitives, εὐρεῖν and λέγειν as both dependent on the phrase ἔργον...ἀδύνατον giving the sense that it is both impossible to discover and to speak of the creator. But what of the second part of the statement, that 'having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind'? Is there a suggestion here that one could understand the nature of this god, but yet be unable to speak of him to all men? Is there here a distinction between knowing something and being able to speak of it? It seems much more likely that when Timaeus says that it is impossible to find the god and even if one found him it would still be impossible to speak of him, he is simply stressing the sheer impossibility of comprehending the god in any way, regarding both knowing and speaking as intimately connected in understanding. There is no room here for a detailed discussion of the relationship between knowing and speaking in Plato, but the matter has been discussed at length by Jon Moline in his book *Plato's Theory*

of *Understanding*.<sup>2</sup> Solmsen in his excellent work *Plato's Theology* shares the view that this passage of the *Timaeus* treats thought and speech as intimately related aspects of comprehension. Solmsen sees the passage as confirmation of the idea that the divine nature is beyond human comprehension (pp.131-161). This view, however, is not accepted by everyone, and indeed H.A. Wolfson, in an article entitled 'The Knowability and Describability of God in Plato and Aristotle', actually reads this passage as a statement that the nature of god can be known. Wolfson, taking Plato's 'God' to be one of the forms (see p. 233), says of *Timaeus* 28c (p.238-9):

The meaning of the passage, we take it, is not that God cannot be declared, i.e. that He is indescribable, but rather that He cannot be declared to all men, because as he has said in the passages previously quoted (*Soph.* 248e, *Symp.* 211c, *Rep.* VI 505a, *Rep.* VII 517b) it requires certain specific preparation to arrive at a knowledge of the idea and that our knowledge of it is not quite complete and can be attained only by effort.

I do not accept this view as I do not believe that the Demiurge, or any other of the divine figures we shall examine in Chapter 4, was seen by Plato as one of the forms. Plato's theology is a vast topic which has been extensively written about and clearly we cannot deal with it in any great depth here. However, I must establish the view I accept about the relation of Plato's gods to the ideas and here it is enough to say that I accept Solmsen's arguments and his opinion that (p.92):

Plato's God is not an Idea nor are his Ideas Gods. We are likely to miss the peculiar character of his theology unless we realise that the place of his God is on the boundary between Being and Becoming. He is the principle through which the physical world of Becoming partakes of the qualities of Being.

Our final passage concerning knowledge of the gods also suggests, like *Timaeus* 28c, a close link between knowing and speaking. This passage is *Timaeus* 40d, where the view is expressed that man cannot know the origins of the gods. Timaeus has given his account of the nature of the created and visible gods, the stars, and then turns to the question of the origins of the other divinities, the Titans and Olympians. Here we find the comment (40d6-7):

Περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων δαιμόνων εἰπεῖν καὶ γνῶναι τὴν γένεσιν  
μεῖζον ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς,  
As concerning the other divinities, to know and to  
declare their generation is too high a task for us;  
(tr. Cornford)

Thus we see here how *εἰπεῖν* and *γνῶναι* are closely linked and how there is no question of a distinction between knowing about the birth of the gods and being able to speak of it. This passage also shows that human understanding is not only regarded as limited in respect of the single creator god, but also in respect of the lesser gods who are part of his creation.

To conclude this section, we may say that the view clearly emerges from these passages of the dialogues that human beings do not and cannot have knowledge of the gods. However, alongside this agnostic strain we also find sections of dialogues in which certain 'truths' about the gods are established or taken for granted.

In the *Apology* Socrates states that it would not be right (*θέμις*) for the god of the oracle to lie (21b) and that it is a truth (*ἀληθές*) that the fortunes of a good man are not a matter of indifference to the gods (41c). Throughout his speech Socrates maintains that in avoiding disobedience to the oracle he is avoiding something bad - a point which entails not only the knowledge that it is wrong to disobey

a superior (29b) but also the knowledge that the god of the oracle is a superior.<sup>3</sup>

In *Republic* II Socrates criticises the portrayal of the gods in poetry, arguing that most of the stories told to children misrepresent the gods and so ought to be discarded. In the course of this criticism Socrates establishes a number of points about the divine nature. First he elicits the response from Adeimantus that god is good (379b1-2):

Οὐκοῦν ἀγαθὸς ὁ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι τε καὶ λεκτέον οὔτω;  
Τί μῆν;  
And is not God of course good in reality and always to be  
spoken of as such?  
Certainly. (tr. Shorey)

From this premise he goes on to argue that, as goodness cannot be the cause of evil, god is the cause only of what is good. This point is then established at 380c as one of the laws to which speakers and poets will be required to conform.

Socrates' next argument in this book concerns the question of whether god changes his shape. After pointing out that god cannot change for the better, since he already is in the best possible state, and that as a perfect being he would not wish to change for the worse, he concludes that it is impossible for a god to wish to change himself and that each of the gods remains forever in his own form (381c).

Socrates' final criticism of the poets in this section of the *Republic* deals with the question of whether a god would wish to deceive. At 382c he states that 'essential falsehood' is hated by both gods and men and then considers whether falsehood could ever be serviceable to god. Would god lie because of ignorance, or fear of enemies, or because of the folly or madness of his friends? When

Adeimantus rejects each of these propositions, Socrates concludes (382e) that 'there is no motive for god to deceive' and that (382e6):

Πάντη ἄρα ἀψευδὲς τὸ δαιμόνιον τε καὶ τὸ θεῖον.  
Therefore the divine and the godlike do not lie at all.  
(tr. Grube)

From these passages of the *Apology* and *Republic* we see that particular information about god or the gods<sup>4</sup> is accepted or presented as true:

- a) god is good;
- b) god is the cause only of good;
- c) gods do not change shape and remain forever in their own form;
- d) gods are free from falsehood;
- e) the gods are not indifferent to the fortunes of a good man;
- f) Apollo is a superior being to Socrates.

The expression or tacit assumption of such views sits uneasily with the agnostic strain of thought witnessed earlier in the *Cratylus*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. Even if the evidence of the *Apology* is dismissed as representing the views of Socrates rather than Plato, we still must account for the conclusions reached in *Republic* II. It is difficult to reconcile assertions such as 'god is the cause only of good' with the statement that 'of the gods we know nothing' and it seems we are left with a very thorny question: did Plato consider the conclusions of dialectical argument as knowledge? If the answer is yes, then we must accept that Plato would have viewed the conclusions of *Republic* II as knowledge of the gods. But if the answer is 'not necessarily', then we can allow Plato to reach certain conclusions about the gods without claiming that these represented for him knowledge of the divine nature. It is, I think, very significant that the key point of the argument in Book II - that the gods are good - is not simply stated by

Socrates but is established dialectically; Socrates elicits Adeimantus' view and this becomes axiomatic for the rest of the argument.

In the light of the statements from the *Cratylus*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* I feel it is unwise to claim that Plato felt he had achieved knowledge of the gods. It seems more correct to say that Plato held certain opinions about the gods which he continued to examine in various arguments such as those in *Republic* II. Thus it seems to me that, as we seek to establish Plato's view of theological discourse, we must bear in mind not only the different arguments and assertions about the gods which appear in certain dialogues, but also the agnostic strain of thought which is present in others. Plato nowhere claims to have achieved knowledge of the gods and at times sets out the view that this is an impossible task for a human being. These two points suggest to me that Plato viewed his own propositions about the gods as opinions to be tested in various ways rather than as established knowledge. Indeed it seems that he was sceptical that such knowledge could ever be gained. In view of this attitude to knowledge of the gods, we might expect Plato to have avoided using divine images. For if he did not know the nature of the gods, how could he make images in their likeness? However, many images and metaphors for the gods appear in the dialogues and in the next section I will try to establish Plato's own attitude to these divine εἰκόνες.

## 2. 'A Dim and Deceptive Outline'

We know that Plato makes no statements about the nature of metaphors for the gods, as he does not use the term 'metaphor', but does he express any views about verbal images of them? In the

dialogues we find three passages which shed light on Plato's view of divine images: *Republic* 377d-79b, *Laws* 905e-906e and *Critias* 107a-d.

As we have seen above, at *Republic* 377b-c Socrates proposes a censorship on stories and fables about the gods, saying that many of those currently told to children would have to be rejected from an ideal state. The reason is that in his opinion many of these stories, including those told by the great poets, Hesiod and Homer, are false. When Adeimantus asks why Socrates objects to these stories, he replies (377d8-9):

“Οπερ, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, χρὴ καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα μέμφεσθαι,  
ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐάν τις μὴ καλῶς ψεύδῃται.  
Because of what one should object to first and most,  
especially if the fictitious is not well told.  
(tr. Grube)

Then, prompted again as to what exactly this fault is, Socrates says (377e1-3):

“Ὅταν εἰκάσῃ τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ  
ἡρώων οἷοί εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν εἰκότα γράφων οἷς  
ἂν ὅμοια βουλευθῆ γράψαι.  
Whenever any story gives a bad image of the nature of  
gods and heroes, like a painter drawing a bad picture,  
unlike the model he is wanting to portray. (tr. Grube)

Socrates presents the view that when the poet tells a story of the gods he is creating images (εἰκάσῃ) of them in his speech (τῷ λόγῳ). He believes that such images can be badly produced (κακῶς) just as a painter's images can sometimes bear no resemblance to his models. So then, the poet is likened to an artist who attempts to make his images true likenesses of their models. But how can the poet represent the gods in his images if he does not know the nature of the gods?

At 379a, as already shown above, Socrates asks Adeimantus whether god is good and whether he is always to be spoken of as such. Adeimantus replies 'Certainly' and this view is taken as true for the

rest of the discussion. This does not, of course, mean that it is true nor that Plato necessarily believed it to be true. However, in the dialogue this proposition is accepted and Socrates argues that images of the gods ought to reflect divine goodness. When Socrates says (*Rep.* 379a7-9):

οἶος τυγχάνει ὁ θεὸς ὧν, ἀεὶ δήπου ἀποδοτέον, ἕάντε τις αὐτὸν ἐν ἔπεσιν ποιῇ ἕάντε ἐν μέλεσιν ἕάντε ἐν τραγωδίᾳ.  
the god must always be represented as he is, whether in epic, lyric, or tragedy. (tr. Grube),

his remark is based on his belief that god is good.<sup>5</sup> Socrates' criticism of the poets rests on their portrayal of the gods as involved in wrongdoing. Since the gods are good, such images cannot be said to resemble their model and so the poets prove to be bad artists. Images of the gods, then, are to be judged as bad if they portray the gods as evil, and an image of a virtuous god is regarded as bearing a much greater resemblance to its model than an image of an evil god.

A passage from the *Laws* provides a second comment on verbal images of the gods and here again we find that the creation of images is based simply on beliefs about the divine nature. The Athenian and Clinias are discussing whether the gods can be bribed by the gifts of men. The Athenian asks how this could ever happen and what sort of beings the gods would have to be to accept bribes (905e). It is in this context that he makes the following remark about the gods (905e2-3):

ἄρχοντας μὲν ἀναγκαῖόν που γίνεσθαι τοὺς γε διοικήσοντας τὸν ἅπαντα ἐντελεχῶς οὐρανόν.  
Well, if they are going to run the entire universe for ever, presumably they'll have to be rulers.  
(tr. Saunders)

Thus we find that his reasoning is based upon the idea that the gods control the universe, an idea which is not discussed or proven but is simply accepted as a standard belief about the gods. It is this belief that leads to the conception of the gods as rulers - an idea which is further developed as the Athenian goes on (905e5):

Ἄλλ' ἄρα τίσιν προσφερεῖς τῶν ἀρχόντων; ἢ τίνες τούτοις,  
ὧν δυνατόν ἡμῖν ἀπεικάσουσι τυγχάνειν μείζουσιν ἐλάττονας;  
Now then, what sort of ruler do the gods in fact resemble? Or rather, what rulers resemble them? Let's compare small instances with great and see what rulers will serve our purpose. (tr. Saunders)

He next suggests a series of different types of rulers - charioteers, steersmen, army commanders, doctors, farmers and shepherds. These are considered as possible images of the gods and it is interesting to observe that three of the images presented here - governors, steersmen and shepherds - are developed in detail in various other dialogues, as Chapters 4 and 5 will show. We see, then, how metaphors of the gods as governors etc. arise from the belief that the gods control the universe.

As the passage progresses, the different images of the gods are tested for their appropriateness and in each case the standard is not simply whether they reflect the idea of governorship itself but whether they reflect *good* governorship (905e-906e). Accordingly, when it is suggested at 906e that the gods may be like corrupt charioteers, the image (εἰκόνα) is judged by Clinias to be a 'scandalous' (δεινὴν) one (906e8). In the language of the *Republic* the speaker here has created a bad image (κακῶς εἰκάσθη) which does not resemble its model in vital respects.

We have seen in these two passages the verbs εἰκάζω and ἀπεικάζω used for the creation of verbal images and the noun εἰκὼν used for the

created image of the gods. As we saw in Chapter 2, these terms are also used by Plato of artistic images, of painting and sculptures, and the link which emerges from this use of a common term for both is strengthened, it seems, through the comparison of verbal images to artistic ones. We have seen above how the poet producing images of the gods is likened to a painter making portraits and this comparison is further developed in a passage from the *Critias* where discourses about the gods are likened to painters' portraits of them. This passage is very interesting for our purposes as it offers a suggestion of how Plato might have expected an audience to respond to verbal images of the gods.

In the opening speech of the dialogue at 107a Critias congratulates Timaeus on his excellent account of the creation of the universe, but says that his own theme, an account of the struggle between Athens and Atlantis, will be more difficult to present and will require more allowances from the audience. Clearly there is a strong element of irony here, but the reasons Critias gives for this point of view are illuminating for our study. Critias makes his point thus (107a7-b4):

περὶ θεῶν γάρ, ὦ Τίμαιε, λέγοντά τι πρὸς ἀνθρώπους δοκεῖν ἱκανῶς λέγειν, ῥᾶον ἢ περὶ θνητῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς. ἡ γὰρ ἀπειρία καὶ σφόδρα ἄγνοια τῶν ἀκουόντων περὶ ὧν ἂν οὕτως ἔχωσιν πολλὴν εὐπορίαν παρέχουσιν τῷ μέλλοντι λέγειν τι περὶ αὐτῶν· περὶ δὲ δὴ θεῶν ἴσμεν ὡς ἔχομεν.

In fact, Timaeus, upon an audience of human beings it is easier to produce the impression of adequate treatment in speaking of gods than in discoursing of mortals like ourselves. The combination of unfamiliarity and sheer ignorance in an audience makes the task of one who is to treat a subject towards which they are in this state easy in the extreme, and in this matter of gods we know, of course, how the case stands with us. (tr. Taylor)

Critias thus claims that as a human audience is ignorant about the nature of the gods, it is far easier to produce the impression of an

adequate treatment of them than it is to do so of human subjects. We must note that Critias is concerned here with the impression (*δοκεῖν*) of a satisfactory treatment, not with the possibility of giving a truly satisfactory account, but clearly his remark that 'in this matter of the gods we know how the case stands with us', implies that giving any account other than an ignorant one is simply out of the question. Critias now goes on to present an illustration of his point (107b7). He introduces the idea of an artist who undertakes to depict both divine and human figures. Critias tells how the painter of divine figures is content if he can produce some faint resemblance of the gods and how his audience, because of their ignorance of the subject, accept this with no criticism (107c4-d2):

*πρῶτον μὲν ἀγαπῶμεν ἂν τίς τι καὶ βραχὺ πρὸς ὁμοιότητα αὐτῶν ἀπομιμεῖσθαι δυνατὸς ἦ, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις, ἅτε οὐδὲν εἰδότες ἀκριβὲς περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, οὔτε ἐξετάζομεν οὔτε ἐλέγχομεν τὰ γεγραμμένα, σκιαγραφία δὲ ἀσαφεῖ καὶ ἀπατηλῶ χρώμεθα περὶ αὐτά·*

for one thing, the artist is always well content if he can produce them with some faint degree of resemblance, and for another, that since our knowledge of such subjects is never exact, we submit his design to no criticism or scrutiny, but acquiesce, in these cases, in a dim and deceptive outline. (tr. Taylor)

On the other hand, as Critias points out, when it is the human form that the artist attempts to depict, we are familiar with the subject and this makes us quick to detect shortcomings. In this case, then, we criticise the artist who does not present us with 'full and perfect resemblance' (107d4) (*πάσας πάντως τὰς ὁμοιότητας*). Critias then goes on to draw out explicitly the significance of his illustration (107d5-8):

*ταῦτὸν δὴ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς λόγους ἰδεῖν δεῖ γιγνόμενον, ὅτι τὰ μὲν οὐράνια καὶ θεῖα ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα, τὰ δὲ θνητὰ καὶ ἀνθρώπινα ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζομεν.*

Well, we should recognise that the same is true of discourses. Where the subjects of them are celestial and divine, we are satisfied by mere faint verisimilitudes, where mortal and human we are exacting critics. (tr. Taylor)

Thus Critias is suggesting that as men are happy with 'a dim and deceptive outline' (107d1) (*σκιαγραφία δὲ ἀσαφεῖ καὶ ἀπατηλῆ*) of the divine nature in artists' images, so we are content with 'faint verisimilitudes' (107d7) (*σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα*) in discourses about the gods. This is an interesting point for our study as it leads to the question of whether Plato saw his own verbal images of the gods as simply 'faint verisimilitudes' with no more claim to representing the truth about the gods than that of painters' portraits or sculptors' statues of them. It does seem that Plato perceived a relationship between verbal and artistic images. For apart from using the term *εἰκῶν* for both, he also draws comparisons between image-making in speech and art. We have seen above how the poet is likened to a painter (*Rep.* 377e) and how discourses are likened to portraits (*Critias* 107c-d). Plato also compares verbal to artistic images at *Republic* 497e and 588b and at *Laws* 898b: at *Republic* 487e creating a comparison in speech is likened to painting a picture; at 588b speech is spoken of as the artist's material, the speaker becomes the 'skilful artist' and creating an image in speech is spoken of as modelling a particular physical image; and at *Laws* 898b the creators of a verbal comparison are spoken of as craftsmen, while the comparison itself becomes a physical representation.

Perhaps this link between the two types of images furnishes an indication of Plato's attitude to verbal images of the gods. For if we follow his own analogy, Plato himself can be seen as an artist who 'moulds' the god he has 'never seen nor fully conceived' (*Phdr.* 246c)

and who may be content, like Critias' painter, if his images of the gods possess 'some faint degree of resemblance'. Of course the problem remains that if an artist does not know the nature of his subjects, then it must be impossible for him to capture in his work even a faint likeness. In the case of images of the gods Plato does not address this problem but the passages at *Republic* 377e ff. and *Laws* 905e ff. indicate that the standard for judging likenesses of the gods was, in his view, the extent to which they reflected not knowledge but beliefs about them. It thus seems to me that Plato would have expected his audience, like the audience in the *Critias* illustration, to accept his images of god as mere 'faint verisimilitudes' (σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα), and not to expect to find therein the true nature of the gods.

### 3.4 Conclusions

Although Plato does not directly address the question of the role and significance of divine images, I believe that a particular attitude to this emerges from his work. First, a number of statements (from the *Cratylus*, *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*) suggest that it is impossible for human beings to attain knowledge of the gods, and second, passages from the *Republic*, *Laws* and *Critias* indicate that Plato regarded images as a means of expressing particular beliefs about the gods rather than as a means of attaining new knowledge.

To conclude this chapter I would like to consider how this view relates to the three modern perspectives outlined at the beginning. The emotive view regards theological metaphors as evoking moods and responses but not as carrying information. It holds that these metaphors cannot be assessed in terms of truth and reference but only

in terms of their emotive effect. When Clinias in *Laws X* is scandalised by the image of the gods as corrupt charioteers, clearly the image has provoked a significant response. But later in this passage and at *Republic 377e* it emerges that divine images are also regarded as conveying particular information, for some of them are judged to be more like the gods than others. Plato therefore seems to have viewed metaphors as having more than a purely emotive effect.

Does Plato's view have anything in common with the critical realist position? First, as Plato does seem to have considered the gods to be real, he must have regarded his metaphors as in some sense 'reality depicting'. Second, like Soskice and other theologians, he identifies god or a god as the cause of the universe (*Timaeus 28c*). However, Plato did not have the benefit of exposure to recent causal theories of reference and on Soskice's admission (p.148) critical realism depends on acceptance of these theories.

Of the three modern perspectives, then, we are left with the view of metaphors as fictions and so must consider whether there is any common ground between this and Plato's attitude. Under the heading 'metaphor as fiction' we identified two positions: the empiricist and idealist. For the empiricist metaphors are unhelpful while for the idealist they play a useful role in the development of ideas about god. First we must decide whether Plato regarded divine images as fictions and second whether or not he viewed them as useful.

We have examined a number of passages which suggest that Plato considered divine images as expressions of belief rather than knowledge. We have also seen how, given Plato's view of the ontological status of art, his comparison of verbal to artistic images further emphasises the gulf between metaphors and imagery on the one

hand and knowledge, truth and reality on the other. It would seem, then, that Plato's attitude to imagery is not too far removed from the view of metaphors as fictions which do not necessarily correspond to any reality. For Sallie McFague creating theological images is like painting pictures of god, and this approach, I believe, can also be found in the work of Plato, in passages such as *Rep.* 377e and *Critias* 107c-d.

On the second point, the fact that Plato used images for the gods throughout the dialogues makes it highly unlikely that he regarded them as unhelpful - and indeed he nowhere expresses such a view. It seems, then, that Plato did not share the empiricist view of metaphors as unhelpful fictions but, like the modern idealists, judged them as having a useful role. However, there is a crucial difference between Plato and modern idealists as regards their methods of using metaphors and their expectations of them. For whereas modern theologians spend time evaluating the insights offered by particular metaphors, Plato does not focus his attention on the images themselves, but rather uses them in the exposition of various views of the gods.

One of the major questions raised by contemporary critics working on theological metaphors is how far metaphors are indispensable in theological speculation. Soskice believes that in our talk of God 'we must speak for the most part metaphorically or not at all' and McFague considers theology as a whole to be 'the elaboration of a few key metaphors and models'. This aspect of theological imagery is not discussed in the dialogues and we have no indication that Plato ever considered how far his own 'theology' depended upon certain images. We cannot seek out Platonic answers to this question, but we can embark

on our own inquiry. Chapters 4 and 5, then, will consider the role of Plato's metaphors for the gods in the light of contemporary claims that metaphors are indispensable in theological discourse.

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 102, 123-6, 131, 133-4, 137, 149-50.

<sup>2</sup>See Moline's comments (p.7) on *Phaedo* 76b; *Laches* 190c; *Alcibiades I* 108e-109a and 117a; *Gorgias* 465a-510a; *Republic* 543c and 582a,d; *Symposium* 202a; *Phaedrus* 276a; *Ion* 532b-c and 541e-542a and *Laws* 966a-b; see also his second chapter, 'Dialectic and *Ἐπιστήμη*', pp. 32-51.

<sup>3</sup>See M.C. Stokes in *Socratic Questions* (forthcoming), B. Gower and M.C. Stokes (eds.), pp.70 ff.

<sup>4</sup>I follow Grube's view that there is no significant difference between Plato's references at certain times to a singular god and at other times to plural gods (1974, pp. 47-8, note 13):

It should be noted that throughout the *Republic*, as indeed elsewhere, Plato uses the singular *theos* and the plural *theoi* quite indifferently, a god, gods, or the gods. He even uses the singular with the article, the god. This, however, is the generic use of the article and does not refer to any particular god unless the context makes this obvious. It certainly does not imply any kind of monotheism, as a modern reader might think. All these expressions are equivalent, and refer to the gods or the divine nature generally.

<sup>5</sup>For the same point about the goodness of god see *Tim.* 29e, and on the justice of god, see *Theaet.* 176c.

## Chapter 4

### GODS AND UNIVERSE

Tell me what your God look like, Celie.

Aw naw, I say. I'm too shame. Nobody ever ast me this before, so I'm sort of took by surprise. Besides, when I think about it, it don't seem quite right. But it all I got. I decide to stick up for him, just to see what Shug say.

Okay, I say. He big and old and tall and graybearded and white. He wear white robes and go barefooted.

Blue eyes? she ast.

Sort of bluish-gray. Cool. Big though. White lashes, I say.

She laugh.

Why you laugh? I ast. I don't think it so funny. What you expect him to look like, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_?

That wouldn't be no improvement, she say. Then she tell me this old white man is the same God she used to see when she prayed.

Then she sigh. When I found out I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest.

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, 1983

#### 4.1 Introduction.

My aim in this chapter is to establish the cognitive significance of the different groups of metaphors which Plato uses to speak of the gods. Various critics have written on these metaphors and our study will take into account the views of Lloyd (1966), Solmsen (1963), Classen (1962), de Marignac (1951), and Louis (1945).<sup>1</sup> However, each of these is concerned with a different aspect of the metaphors and none of them provides a comprehensive view of them all. In *Polarity and Analogy* (Ch. IV) Lloyd discusses the role of metaphor and imagery in Greek cosmological theories and examines three dominant metaphors: the cosmos as a state, as a living being and as a technologically created artefact. Solmsen and Classen are concerned with the craftsman metaphor and have much to say that is useful, but neither of them

covers the other metaphors in any depth. De Marignac discusses Plato's metaphors for the Forms, the gods and the soul (les réalités spirituelles) and although his views are very interesting for our purposes,<sup>2</sup> he deals only selectively with the metaphors for the gods. Pierre Louis deals with a far greater range of divine metaphors but offers significantly less analysis.

As these five critics approach the metaphors in different ways, the passages quoted in their works vary a great deal. Since none of the critics provides a comprehensive list of references, I have set about creating my own and the result is to be found in a series of tables in Appendix 2. The great number of metaphors makes individual analysis impossible here and so I will deal only with key metaphors which give an indication of the trend within a group.

#### 4.2 Plato's Metaphors for the Gods

Plato represents the gods in numerous ways throughout the dialogues, but six major groups of metaphors emerge:

1. Craftsmen.
2. Fathers.
3. Rulers, Governors.
4. Owners, Masters.
5. Shepherds.
6. Helmsmen.

These metaphors present in different ways Plato's conception of a divine force that creates and controls the universe. Although there is a certain harmony between the metaphors, as god appears throughout as a human male and is portrayed as involved in either an act of creation or the exercise of control, still important differences remain. Lloyd

has observed both that the images 'interconnect' and that they offer different pictures of god (p.284-5):

Each of these descriptions evidently has its own part to play in conveying a slightly different picture of the role of the primary cause and of its relation to other, subsidiary causes. As King he exercises a benevolent control over all things, as Pilot, he is the intelligent directing agent in the world, as Father he is a benevolent creator. As the Good Craftsman he is a skilful and purposeful creator who achieves the best results that the nature of the material will allow. ...It is, then, by this remarkable series of interconnected and overlapping images that Plato conveys his conception of the primary cause which is at work in the universe.

I accept Lloyd's points but I want to take the matter further and argue that each image adds something to the representation of god but also that each fails on its own to offer a fully satisfying analogy. Plato therefore uses the different metaphors in conjunction with one another to make up for the deficiencies of each. As I examine the groups of metaphors I will explore in greater detail their common features and differences and will set out in each case the limits of the metaphor. Let us now turn to the major groups of metaphors to consider both their individual and general cognitive significance.

#### 4.3 Craftsmen.

The metaphor of a single god or plural gods<sup>3</sup> as craftsmen is the most developed of Plato's divine images and the one that appears most frequently in his work. Lloyd refers to a number of examples of the craftsman metaphor (p.276) and points out that in the *Timaeus* the metaphor is developed in its greatest detail. He observes (p.277) that there is an extraordinary variety of technological imagery in this dialogue, both in the use of general terms such as *μηχανόμαι* (devise) and *τεκταίνομαι* (construct) and in 'a whole series of images drawn

from specific arts or crafts'. A number of these images are mentioned - such as the gods working on lathes (τορνεύεσθαι), glueing or fastening things together (κολλᾶν, γόμφοι) and modelling (πλάττειν) (p.277) and a fuller list is to be found in tables 1-4 in my Appendix 2. Lloyd makes the important point that Plato's god is like a human craftsman in two significant respects (p.279):

The Craftsman in the *Timaeus* does not create the world *ex nihilo*, but like human artisans he works on material which already exists in an unformed or chaotic state. He is not omnipotent but achieves the best possible results within the limitations imposed by the nature of the material itself (e.g. *Ti.* 48a) and here too his situation (one might almost say his predicament) corresponds to that of his human counterparts.

The craftsman metaphor highlights two important features of the creation myth: first that the universe was not created out of nothing, and second that imperfections exist not as a result of divine negligence, but as a result of the limitations imposed by the material with which the divine craftsman must work. The metaphor, then, helps to explain how even with a divine creator, the universe is not perfect. As Lloyd observes (p.282, 284) the craftsman represents Plato's belief in an intelligent, beneficent cause, but this is a cause which has certain limiting influences working against its aim to achieve 'the good' in every sphere. Other features of the metaphor observed by Lloyd (p.291) are that it allows Plato to express his idea of a separate moving cause quite distinct from the material which he brings into order from disorder, and that it conveys the conception of 'the element of rational design or finality which is manifest in the universe'.

Friedrich Solmsen traces the history of the idea of nature as a craftsman in Greek thought and shows how the Divine Craftsman is

already present in Presocratic philosophy, notably in the work of Empedocles. However, in his view, this does not diminish the originality of Plato's craftsman god (p.480):

The Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* is a conception much too original to be explained as a synthesis of earlier thinkers' ideas. Plato's choice of this symbolism is best understood in the light of what he himself elsewhere says about the pattern of a craftsman's operation.

Solmsen (p.483) poses the question 'why does Plato employ the symbolism of a divine architect?' and finds the answer in his appreciation of the work of human craftsmen. It is Solmsen's view that (p.484):

The Demiurge whose very name is "craftsman" and who is a creator only *qua* craftsman, cannot be understood apart from Plato's conception of the crafts and their representatives.

Solmsen goes on to discuss what this conception of the crafts is and finds three passages from the dialogues particularly significant. He cites a passage from the *Gorgias* (503e) which emphasises the element of order and organisation in the craftsman's work, a passage from *Republic* X, where the human craftsman is said to look at the Forms while engaged in his work, and finally a section of the *Laws* where Plato insists that 'every skilled craftsman does all things for the sake of the whole'.<sup>4</sup> Solmsen sees these elements of order, intrinsic harmony and the good as the basis of Plato's concept of the divine Craftsman (p.485 ff.) and tells why for Plato this symbol is an appropriate one (p.485):

The craftsman who, coming from the outside, introduces into the physical world order and as much "good" as it can accept is an appropriate symbol because Plato would not credit nature (*physis*) itself with the capacity to produce anything valuable...Form and direction have to come *ab extra*. The passages adduced show that Plato has confidence in the crafts. He has retained and developed

Socrates' belief that the craftsman knows what he is doing; by and large, Plato thinks of him as proceeding consistently toward a pre-established end.

Classen takes a different approach and considers the status and role of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. He considers the way in which the Demiurge is introduced in the dialogue (at 28b-c) and observes that in its context Timaeus' conviction that anything created must be created by a cause leads on to the question of what the cause of the world is. He goes on (p.16):

This, however, is not asked but instead Timaeus says that the father and maker of all is difficult to find and describe, thus implying that the αἴτιον is a "πατήρ" and "ποιητής" or, in the next sentence, "τεκταινόμενος", a term which is obviously suggested by the comparison with the craftsman (28ACf).

The metaphor is indeed introduced in an oblique way, but I do not accept Classen's further claim that Plato takes his metaphor as 'factual' (p.16):

The demiurge first mentioned in an analogy is suddenly taken into the sphere of the actual subject of the description without any justification, or, to put it differently, a third assumption is made by implication, namely that the αἴτιον is to be conceived of as a demiurge. This is never proved nor even clearly stated, but gradually introduced: we conclude that Plato steps over the limit of the analogy and appears to take as factual what is true only on the level of the comparison.

The image of the creator god as craftsman certainly dominates the *Timaeus* but it is never claimed that the Demiurge is 'factual' in any way. Indeed it is made clear at 28c that it is impossible to discover the nature of the creator. Despite this claim I accept Classen's general view that the Demiurge is 'a mythological expression of a philosophical conception' (p.19), - that is, 'a personification of the ἀγαθὸν αἴτιον' (p.17). Classen sees the Demiurge as a representation

of two factors, causation and insight, which though 'essential to Plato's understanding of the cosmogony, cannot be accounted for in strictly scientific terms' and thus believes that the Demiurge has a very specific role in the dialogue (p.18):

He is a *deus ex machina*, a convenient device to make intelligible what cannot be explained otherwise, in a form reminiscent of traditional mythology; one might call him a product of philosophical mythology.

I agree with this analysis and also accept Classen's observation that the Demiurge provides a necessary link between the eternal and created world. Through his access to the model, the creator shapes the gods who in turn form the rest of the world and thus 'a kind of cosmogonical hierarchy' is built up (pp.18-19).

Classen's article offers, I believe, a number of valuable insights into Plato's use of the craftsman god and his conclusion provides useful comments for our understanding of the cognitive role of this metaphor (p.19):

the demiurge represents two factors in the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*, the force that starts the development towards order and the foresight and skill which guides it so that order or cosmos is achieved. His nature can only be explained in view of the whole account of the *Timaeus*: he is neither a creative god like the god of the Old Testament, nor the eternal ruler of the universe, but a philosophical abstraction - not worshipped nor designed to be worshipped. For Plato introduces the demiurge not because he wants to replace the traditional belief in Olympians by a philosophical religion, but because the demiurge proves to be the most convenient form of explanation, within the myth, for that which science cannot account for.

I agree with much of this analysis, but must point out that the Demiurge is not, as Classen seems to suggest, only to be explained by the context of the *Timaeus*. For he also appears in other dialogues such as the *Republic* and *Statesman* (see table 5 for full list of



references) and should be seen as presenting a view of the creator which is not just relevant in the *Timaeus*, but in Plato's philosophy as a whole. The figure of the divine craftsman, then, allows Plato to express certain features of his view of the creation of the universe:

i) that it was created through the agency and design of an intelligent, skillful and beneficent cause;

ii) that it was not created *ex nihilo*;

iii) that imperfections are the result not of the creator's lack of skill or of his negligence, but of the imperfect nature of his material;

iv) that the cause is separate from the universe;

v) that creation consisted in the bringing of harmony and order from disorder;

vi) that the creator sought to make the universe like the Forms.

These points have been observed by Lloyd, Solmsen and Classen, but there are a number of features of the craftsman image that they have not commented on.

First, since a craftsman often works alone, the metaphor offers a plausible view of creation as the act of a single agent. But second, there are aspects of the image which do not correspond with information given elsewhere in the dialogues about the relationship of god and the universe. In other passages (e.g. *Laws* 729e, 871c, 907a 927b), the gods are presented as concerned with and as ruling over human affairs - activities which the craftsman metaphor cannot explain. For although the image offers a vivid picture of god controlling his material as he fashions the universe, it cannot account for any subsequent control in the post-creative phase; once a table is manufactured, it is taken by the new owner and the craftsman

no longer decides its fate. Similarly, although the craftsman can perhaps be said to care for his handiwork as he labours over it, it is rather awkward to imagine him being concerned about the welfare of all the objects he has created in the past. There is a necessary distance between a craftsman and his work which does not reflect Plato's view of a force presiding over and involved in human affairs.

Our second group of images has certain features in common with the craftsman group but presents a closer relationship between god and his creation.

#### 4.4 Fathers

The metaphor of god or the gods as fathers is used mostly in the *Timaeus* (see table 6), but there is another occurrence of it in the *Politicus*, which we will discuss in detail in Chapter 5. Both the craftsman and father metaphors present models of creation and both convey the idea that the cause is essentially separate from the world. Classen observes that the idea of a father is used for the cause (p.18), but does not comment on the differences between this and the craftsman image. Louis opens his section on Plato's metaphors for the gods with some very brief remarks upon this metaphor (p.169):

Les métaphores qui servent à désigner la Divinité sont très nombreuses. La plus simple consiste à faire de Dieu le père de tous les êtres.<sup>6</sup>

He refers to passages in earlier Greek literature where Zeus is spoken of as the 'father of all'<sup>7</sup> and comments (p.169):

Ainsi la genèse du monde est-elle souvent décrite avec des mots qui évoquent une génération naturelle.<sup>8</sup>

At *Timaeus* 28c the cause of the universe is spoken of as its father and the metaphor is developed at 37c as the universe is spoken of as a living creature (37c6-7):

Ὡς δὲ κινηθὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησεν τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν  
γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ, ἠγάσθη  
When the father who had begotten it saw it set in motion  
and alive, a shrine brought into being for the  
everlasting gods, he was delighted with it  
(tr. Cornford, adapted)

The development of the metaphor is significant in a number of ways. First, the notion of the world as a living being has important consequences, as Lloyd has shown (pp. 254-71). The universe is now a rational being and as such can be regarded as having its own soul. Lloyd discusses how the image of a personified universe relates to the concept of world-soul in the dialogues and regards it as serving along with the craftsman image 'to convey Plato's belief in the prevailing element of design in the universe' (p.256).<sup>9</sup> Lloyd discusses this 'vitalist doctrine' in Plato and other Greek thought and points out how the conception of the world as a living creature (p.265):

not only conveyed an idea of the universe as a single whole (made up of interrelated parts), but also enabled an account to be given of its development in terms of a natural growth or evolution.

The second significant point about the development of the god-father/universe-child metaphor is that it presents a very close relationship between creator and created. We learn at *Timaeus* 37c of the creator's delight (ἠγάσθη) on seeing the universe 'moving and living' and the image conveys the emotion of a father as he looks upon the new born child to which he has given life. The closeness of the father-child relationship accounts for the creator's care for the universe and so, unlike the craftsman image, offers compelling reasons

why god is involved with the universe not only at its beginning but throughout its 'life'. The father metaphor also presents an image of authority and so explains why human beings, as part of creation, should be obedient and respectful to god. Because of its associations of procreation and paternal authority, the father metaphor functions as an effective image of both creation and control.

In the *Timaeus* the single creator god is spoken of not only as the father of the universe as a whole, but also as the father of the lesser gods, whom he creates and to whom he entrusts much of the work in the creation of the world and humankind. From this it follows that the lesser gods are his children (*παῖδες*) and are obedient to him (42a). Remembering Classen's observation that the craftsman god builds up 'a kind of cosmogonical hierarchy' between the eternal and created worlds, we can see that this holds true in the case of the father metaphor too. For not only are the lesser gods the children of the creator, but in the course of the dialogue they themselves become the 'begetters' of the mortal races, as their father instructs them to 'produce and beget mortals' (41d2) (*ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῶα καὶ γεννᾶτε*). In this way, then, a hierarchy is established between men and gods, as the mortal races become the children of the lesser gods and thus the grandchildren of the single creator god. The metaphor of the lesser gods as children also explains another point in the dialogue, as it provides the reason why the lesser gods are as concerned as their father to produce the good in creation. For at 71d we find these gods characterised as obedient children remembering their father's instructions (71d5-7):

μεμνημένοι γὰρ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπιστολῆς οἱ συστήσαντες  
ἡμᾶς, ὅτε τὸ θνητὸν ἐπέστελλεν γένος ὡς ἄριστον εἰς  
δύναμιν ποιεῖν,

For our makers remembered their father's injunction to  
make the mortal race as perfect as possible,  
(tr. Cornford)

Thus, their concern to produce good in the world stems ultimately from their father's wish that the world produced will be the best possible, a wish that is turned into a command which they must dutifully obey.<sup>10</sup>

At this point one of the limits of the father metaphor emerges. Unlike craftsmanship, fatherhood is not a τέχνη. A craftsman can set his mind to creating an excellent piece of work, but a father cannot improve the nature of his child by concentrating his will at the time of creation. So whereas the craftsman metaphor provides a very good image of the element of design in creation, this is not the case with the father metaphor. This explains, in my view, why the father metaphor is often used in conjunction with that of the craftsman: at 28c god is both πατήρ and ποιητής; at 41d2 the lesser gods are instructed to 'produce and beget mortals' (ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῶα καὶ γεννᾶτε) and at 42e7-8 god is both the father and creator of the lesser gods (πατρὸς, δημιουργόν).<sup>11</sup> Another problem with this metaphor is that while the craftsman metaphor provides a plausible model for the single creative force, the production of a child invariably requires both a father and a mother. The suppression of the female role might not have disturbed the Athenians, familiar as they were with the story of the birth of Athene and the myth of autochthony,<sup>12</sup> but logically there is a difficulty here, which Plato does not address.

However, despite the difficulty of single-parent generation and despite the absence of τέχνη in procreation, the father metaphor

presents a number of significant features of Plato's view of the relationship between god and the universe:

- i) the universe as a child of god is a rational, whole creature, whose development can be understood in terms of natural growth;
- ii) as father of the universe and of humankind, god is invested with paternal authority;
- iii) as a father, god is concerned for the welfare of his child throughout its life;
- iv) the lesser gods as children of the creator and parents of humankind, provide a link between divine and mortal nature;
- v) in their work the lesser gods obey their father's wish to create the best possible universe.

Of the six groups of metaphors, the father metaphor best combines the features of creative power, control and benevolent care that Plato attributes to his supreme god. The craftsman and father metaphors are Plato's only depictions of the creative power of god, while the next four groups of metaphors concentrate on god as a controlling force.

#### 4.5 Rulers, Governors and Guardians.

This group of metaphors presents the gods as active in the affairs of the world just as political rulers in the affairs of a state. As a passage in *Laws X* shows, the conception of the gods as rulers arises from the belief that they control the universe (905e2-3):

ἄρχοντας μὲν ἀναγκαῖόν που γίγνεσθαι τοὺς γε διοικήσοντας  
τὸν ἅπαντα ἐντελεχῶς οὐρανόν.

Well, if they are going to run the entire universe for ever, presumably they'll have to be rulers. (tr. Saunders)

Of our critics it is Lloyd that deals most extensively with this metaphor, as he is concerned with the use of social and political

images in cosmological theories (Ch.IV). He points out that both the Presocratics and Plato used very widely in their theories imagery from aspects of social organisation (p.211) and, after discussing the social and political metaphors used by earlier philosophers, comments (p.220):

But the most notable metaphors of this type are undoubtedly those found in Plato, who uses them repeatedly in expressing his conviction that a rational guiding principle is at work in the world.

Lloyd refers to some of the metaphors used by Plato: in the *Timaeus* (48a) reason is represented as 'controlling' (*ἀρχεῖν*) necessity, the Craftsman is said to 'issue ordinances' (*διαθεσμοθετήσας, διατάξας*, 42d2, e5); in the *Philebus* (28c) we are told that all wise men agree that 'reason is the king of heaven and earth'; in the *Laws* (896d,e) soul is said to 'administer' (*διοικεῖν*) the heaven, the 'best soul' 'takes care of the whole cosmos' (*ἐπιμελεῖσθαι* 897c), and later there is a further brief reference to 'our king' (*βασιλεὺς*), who cares for the whole universe (904a). A fuller list of references can be found in tables 8 and 9 in Appendix 2.

Lloyd raises the question of how far the cosmological images of the philosophers reflect their political views and in the case of Plato comments (p.222):

Plato's rejection of democracy of the Athenian type at least, is well known and his anti-democratic, authoritarian bias is evidently reflected in the image of a supreme (but benevolent) ruler which he uses to describe the role of Reason in the cosmos.

Thus Plato's images of a supreme ruler-god reflect his views on human political and social matters. The question of how far Plato was aware of the metaphorical nature of his socio-political images for the gods is also dealt with by Lloyd. He tells how Plato made a firm

distinction between figurative and non-figurative accounts (pp. 225-226) and expresses his view that (p.226):

there can be no doubt that he was aware of using εἰκόνες when he refers to the 'king' who 'takes care of' the whole world, just as he is when he speaks of the Craftsman or the Father of all things.

Although these metaphors are not to be taken as literal statements about the nature of the gods, they nevertheless convey Plato's deep conviction that a particular order exists in the universe - as Lloyd observes in his conclusion (p.226):

His language is 'metaphorical' in that he often consciously applies terms beyond their primary sphere of reference (human society), but for Plato clearly these metaphors are not empty figures of speech, for he believes that order or justice in the human sphere is a part of the wider, cosmic order.

De Marignac approaches these metaphors of social and political power from another angle, looking at the particular relationship they establish between gods and man, a relationship, that is, of authority and obedience. In his section on the ruler metaphors for the gods ('Chefs' p.64), he says:

Platon a toujours recommandé cet aspect essentiel de la piété, l'obéissance aux ordres des dieux. Toute l'*Apologie* est bâtie sur cette idée à l'examen de laquelle est consacré l'*Euthyphron* et dont le formulaire se trouve dans les *Lois*. Pour exprimer cette prééminence de Dieu qui lui confère le droit de nous commander et à nous l'obligation de lui obéir, Platon s'est servi d'images empruntées aux hiérarchies familiales (Dieu sera pour Alcibiade un meilleur tuteur que ne l'est son tuteur Périclès: ἐπίτροπος...βελτίων...καὶ σοφώτερος, *Alcibiade* I, 124c), militaires (Socrate n'a pas hésité, quels que fussent les dangers, à obéir aux chefs militaires qui l'emmenèrent à Potidée, à Amphipolis et à Délion; il n'hésitera donc pas à philosopher, si tel est l'ordre de Dieu, même au prix de sa vie, *Apologie*, 28e) et politiques (dans les *Lois*,<sup>13</sup> Dieu est appelé métaphoriquement "notre roi", 904a).

De Marignac thus classes together the domestic, military<sup>14</sup> and political images of the gods' rule over humankind, as they are all founded on the ideas of authority and obedience. By means of these metaphors Plato conveys both the pre-eminence of god, which gives him the right to rule over us, and the subordination of human beings, which gives us the obligation of obeying him.

As good government does seem to have been regarded by Plato as a *τέχνη*,<sup>15</sup> this group of metaphors, like the craftsman group, represents Plato's belief in an intelligent, guiding force at work in the universe. That this force is benevolent is axiomatic for Plato,<sup>16</sup> although the image of rulers and kings in itself does not necessarily entail this.

#### 4.6 Owners and Masters

This group of images presents the gods as masters of humankind and human beings as the property of the gods. At *Phaedo* 62b Socrates says:

All the same, Cebes, I believe that this much is true, that the gods are our keepers and we men are one of their possessions. (tr. Tredennick)

Again at *Laws* 902b we find the same idea, as the Athenian says:

And we regard all mortal creatures as possessions of gods, like the universe as a whole. (tr. Saunders)

This image is based on the idea of the power of the gods over human beings and in this respect it is similar to the metaphor of the gods as rulers. However, despite the parallels between political and domestic control, there are also significant differences. First, whereas ruling is a recognised *τέχνη* which the ruler must prove he can exercise competently, being master of a household is not recognised as a particular skill and the master is not required to prove his

competence. Second, while a good ruler is concerned for the welfare of his citizens, such concern is not a necessary feature of the master/slave relationship. Considered in this way the image of the gods as masters is rather less complimentary than that of rulers. Even if the gods are indeed 'the very best of masters' (*Phaedo* 62c-d, *Phaedrus* 273e-274a), still the role of the master necessarily requires less competence and skill than that of head of state. This is not to say, however, that the master image is a pale imitation of that of ruler, for this metaphor adds something very distinctive to the portrayal of the relationship between gods and human beings.

Although both citizen and slave must accept the command of a higher authority, the degree of autonomy in each case is quite different. Slaves have no rights and no freedom and take no part at all in decisions that affect every aspect of their lives and circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Thus the image of humankind as the slaves of the gods expresses in very strong terms the view that the gods wield enormous power over the lives of humans and that human autonomy is severely limited. This aspect of the human/divine relationship is also expressed in a quite different image in the *Laws* where humankind is spoken of as a 'plaything' (*παίγνιον*) of god (803c).<sup>18</sup> The metaphor of the gods as masters emphasises the distance between human and divine both in terms of power and status. Although they share the motif of authority, this metaphor offers a different picture both from that of the gods as rulers, as we have seen, and from that of the gods as fathers - for in this case there is no love, joy, care or common identity. Indeed without the belief that the gods are benevolent, the image of the master-gods presents something of a nightmarish vision.

In the next group of images, the key motif is again that of power and control, but of a quite different kind.

#### 4.7 Shepherds

De Marignac and Louis regard this metaphor as close to those of the gods as masters and guardians, and clearly the common features are control and subordination. After commenting on the master/slave image, Louis says (p.172): 'Une métaphore voisine de la précédente assimile l'humanité à un bétail dont les dieux sont les bergers.'<sup>19</sup> In a footnote (p.172) he observes that this image is known to the Hittites, that Plato seems to have derived it from Philolaos and that it can also be found in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* at 229-231. The list of references in Plato, quoted by Louis and de Marignac, is to be found in table 10 in Appendix 2. Although the gods are presented as shepherds in other dialogues, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the metaphor appears most frequently in the *Politicus*.

In this dialogue the Stranger tells a story of a great upheaval in the universe and describes how in one era daemons controlled the different regions. As he describes the government of these daemons, he speaks of them as shepherds (271d6):

καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ ζῶα κατὰ γένη καὶ ἀγέλας οἶον νομῆς θεῶι  
διειληφῆσαν δαίμονες, αὐτάρκης εἰς πάντα ἕκαστος ἑκάστοις  
ἂν οἷς αὐτὸς ἔνεμεν, ὥστε οὔτ' ἄγριον ἦν οὐδὲν οὔτε  
ἀλλήλων ἐδωδαί, πόλεμός τε οὐκ ἐνῆν οὐδὲ στάσις τὸ  
παραπαν·

moreover, the living beings were distributed by species and flocks among inferior deities as divine shepherds, each of whom was in all respects the independent guardian of the creatures under his own care, so that no creature was wild, nor did they eat one another, and there was no war among them, nor any strife whatsoever. (tr. Fowler, adapted)

We are thus presented with the golden age picture of divine forces taking care of all the needs of living beings. The shepherd image introduced by the simile (οἶον νομῆς) is continued with the use of the verb ἔνεμεν. The verb νέμω poses a problem in this dialogue as it can mean both 'sway, manage, wield, control' and 'pasture, drive to pasture', and thus in a context of shepherd-governors it is often impossible to say in which sense it is being used. This problem arises, for example, at 271e where we find νέμω used with both ἐπιστατέω (have charge of, preside over) and νομεύω (pasture, drive to pasture), to describe divine control over human lives (271e5):

θεὸς ἔνεμεν αὐτοὺς αὐτὸς ἐπιστατῶν, καθάπερ νῦν ἄνθρωποι,  
ζῶον ὃν ἕτερον θεϊότερον, ἄλλα γένη φαυλότερα αὐτῶν  
νομεύουσι.

God himself was their shepherd, watching over them, just as man, being an animal of different and more divine nature than the rest, now tends the lower species of animals. (tr. Fowler)

Here perhaps the force of the comparison with men pasturing their animals supports the reading of νέμω as the god 'pasturing' mankind, but in other passages where the verb occurs (see 271e8, 274b5), it is not at all clear which reading we should accept. When we consider that the *Politicus* as a whole is an examination of the art of government, it would seem that the metaphor of the gods as shepherds is used to highlight the sort of role that human rulers should adopt: they should not only command their subjects, but also care for their welfare. Thus it appears that Plato deliberately selects the verb νέμω with its dual associations of government and shepherding in order to draw together the ideas of control and pastoral care. The connection between the two images is actually traditional, as can be seen in the Homeric epithet for a king - ποιμήν λαῶν (shepherd of the people), an epithet often used of Agamemnon (cf. *Iliad* II, 243).

The gods in the *Politicus* myth have been given their authority by the supreme god. They have total control over their flocks and in this respect the metaphor is similar to that of the gods as rulers. However, as the myth also portrays the shepherd-gods catering to the needs of a defenceless and dependent humankind, clearly their role is going beyond that of a ruler - and, moreover, far beyond that of a master. The care of the shepherd for his flock is perhaps closer to that suggested by the father/child metaphor, where the idea of authority is present, but is tempered with that of kindly concern. There are, however, significant differences between the two. First, apart from the non-generative aspect, the shepherd/flock metaphor reduces human beings to the level of animals, which establishes a fixed hierarchical order (more akin to the master/slave model). Second, shepherding, unlike parenting, is a recognised τέχνη and thus can present the gods as exercising professional skill and judgement in their control over human affairs. Such notions of skill and judgement are the focus of our final group of metaphors, which moves away from the ideas of care and concern.

#### 4.8 Helmsmen

The helmsman metaphor is used for the gods on a number of occasions throughout the dialogues, in the *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Statesman* and *Symposium* (see table 11). There are two main ways that this metaphor is used: first when the verbs for steering (κυβερνάω/διακυβερνάω) are used for government and second when the whole concept of helmsman and ship is developed.

The verb 'to steer' is used of reason's control of the universe at *Philebus* 28d (διακυβερνᾶν), of the gods' control over mankind at

*Timaeus* 42e and again of the gods' influence in human affairs at *Laws* 709c. On these occasions *διακυβερνάω* would seem to be a simple metaphor of government; indeed in the *Philebus* passage it is used in conjunction with the verb *ἐπιτροπεύω* (to be in charge, to be guardian, trustee) and in the *Timaeus* it appears with the verb *ἄρχειν* (to rule). Louis observes (p.171) that this image occurs frequently in the works of Greek poets and says that *Symposium* 197b, where Zeus is referred to as the 'pilot of gods and men' (*Ζεὺς κυβερνᾶν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων*), is a reference to a verse of lost tragedy. Louis cites other passages in Greek literature where the same metaphor for the gods is used.<sup>20</sup> Lloyd also sets out some of the previous uses of this metaphor for the gods, concentrating on the works of the philosophers. Early in his section on technological imagery Lloyd comments (p.272):

One type of image which recurs frequently in the Presocratics is that of steering or piloting (*κυβερνᾶν*, *οὐακιζειν*) and although this conveys no notion of any process of manufacture, it may be taken to suggest not merely the idea of power, but more particularly one of intelligent direction.

He says that the image probably first occurred in cosmology in the work of Anaximander and that (p.273):

thereafter it is one of the favourite images of the Presocratics, occurring in Heraclitus (who uses both *κυβερνᾶν* in Fr.41 and *οὐακιζειν* in Fr.64), in Parmenides (Fr.12) and in Diogenes of Apollonia (Fr.5).

Thus the simple metaphor of steering for the gods' control of the universe is well-established before Plato. However, Plato does not merely adopt the metaphor, but develops it in different ways for his own purposes: in the *Politicus* we find god the helmsman steering the ship of the universe through various storms; in the *Critias* the metaphor presents the gods controlling and directing men as if they

were ships, and in the *Laws* the image is given a new twist when the idea of a drunken crew is used to support the argument that the gods cannot be bribed. We will look at these three passages in more detail in Chapter 5, but for the moment I want to concentrate on the general significance of this metaphor.

The helmsman metaphor offers an image of technical skill and guiding power and thus conveys very well the idea of a rational, controlling principle in the universe. However, it is a non-creative image whose primary associations are not those of benevolent care. For although the helmsman in the course of his duty seeks to preserve the good condition and safety of the ship, he does not exercise benevolence towards it in any other respect. The portrayal of the universe and human beings as ships steered by the gods offers a view of divine control which is similar in one respect to the master/slave model. For the inanimate ship, like the slave deprived of rights, has no autonomy. What happens to a ship is beyond its control; it exists as an instrument ready to be manipulated by the will of another. Thus the metaphor of the helmsman and ship offers a very different view of the relationship between god and the universe from the father/child or ruler/subject metaphors, where the universe and humankind have both life and will of their own and can experience separate development. This metaphor, then, in that it represents the universe as inanimate, is similar to the craftsman metaphor, whereby man and the universe exist as artefacts. The difference, however, is that in the craftsman metaphor, the universe is the product of god's work and its very nature tells us something of the skill and design of the creator.

#### 4.9 Conclusions.

This examination of the major groups of divine metaphors has shown that Plato presents the gods as craftsmen, fathers, governors, masters, shepherds and helmsmen, and the universe and humankind as artefacts, children, subjects, slaves, sheep and ships. These metaphors overlap in various ways and together convey Plato's conception of a benevolent, creative and controlling power. However, despite a certain coherence in that the gods are portrayed throughout as human males involved in creation or control, still there are significant differences between the metaphors, which leads to a number of conflicting ideas. For example, the craftsman and father metaphors offer very different versions of creation; the former suggests that the universe is a completed piece of work while the latter presents a child-universe which will grow and develop in various ways. Again, while the metaphors of father, ruler, master, shepherd and helmsmen all present models of control, still there are important differences between them which result in views of the divine/human relationship that are difficult to reconcile. For instance, whereas a father exercises control in the interests of his child's development, a master's control over his slaves is an utterly selfish matter directed towards his own gain.

However, although the use of various images for the gods can lead to difficulties, Plato is compelled to use a number of different metaphors since each on its own fails to offer a fully satisfying analogy. The craftsman metaphor conveys very well the notions of design, skill and the purposeful creation of harmony and order, but offers no account of god's continuing involvement in the universe. The father metaphor provides a pleasing synthesis of the ideas of

creation, care and control, but carries no associations of skill or design. Finally, while the metaphors of rulers, masters, shepherds and helmsmen offer various images of power and control, they cannot account for god's creation of the universe. The different metaphors, then, make their own individual contribution to Plato's portrayal of the gods.

Now that we have considered the individual roles of these metaphors, we can turn to the wider question of their general cognitive significance. Following our earlier discussions in Part I, we must now consider whether Plato's divine metaphors play an emotive, illustrative or epistemic role and must try to establish how far or in what sense these metaphors are indispensable to his discourse on the gods.

First, it seems that we can rule out the idea that these metaphors play a purely emotive role, for, as we have seen, they work to convey the information that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good. But the question of whether the metaphors play an illustrative or epistemic role is more difficult to decide. According to the illustrative thesis, metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things but do not provide new knowledge or information over and above that which can be expressed in literal terms. In contrast, the epistemic thesis maintains that some metaphors have a distinct and irreducible cognitive force which provides a special kind of epistemic access not provided by literal language. So which of these best accounts for the role of Plato's metaphors for the gods? To try to answer this I want to consider first what insights into the notion of a supreme god are offered by the images of the Demiurge etc., and

second whether the information conveyed can also be conveyed by literal terms.

As Chapter 3 has shown, we find in the dialogues the view that knowledge of the divine nature is beyond human grasp. Given this, what role can divine metaphors be expected to play? Lloyd suggests that Plato saw images as having a special power (p.300):

on such subjects as the nature of the Maker and Father of the universe and the nature of the movement of Reason, Plato explicitly disclaimed being able to give a non-figurative account (*Ti.* 28c, *Laws* 897de) and it is clear that he believed images are necessary for the expression of some of the highest truths.

While the passages cited do indeed say that it is impossible to give a full and precise demonstration of these subjects, nevertheless, on these occasions Plato does not claim that he is somehow conveying a truth which cannot be expressed in literal terms. For he simply switches from telling us what something *is* to what it is *like* and ignores the problem of how one can know what *x* is like without knowing what *x* is in the first place.<sup>21</sup> Further, in the case of the divine nature, the 'highest truths' that are being expressed are those things which Plato believes to be true.<sup>22</sup> Thus Lloyd's assessment that Plato believed that images are necessary for the expression of some of the 'highest truths' is, in my view, misleading. It is my opinion that the images do not express the nature of the gods in any way but simply tell us what Plato believed the gods were like. Thus, for example, the craftsman metaphor tells us that Plato believed that god has a creative power which in some respects is like that of a craftsman.

In all of these metaphors the gods are presented as human males; the divine nature is defined in terms of human powers and activities and the presentation of god as a male figure reflects the prevalent

attitude of the ancient world that the male is somehow superior to the female. Plato inherited this anthropomorphic view of the gods and, as Lloyd observes, (p.285) these images are 'largely traditional or at least pre-Platonic'. These metaphors do not offer new insights into the divine nature, for in essence they present the view, already familiar to the Greeks, that the gods create and control the universe. The metaphors are often vivid and memorable, giving life and depth to Plato's vision of the gods, but the key issue we must address is whether the information provided by them can be expressed in literal terms.

If one believes that the cognitive content of Plato's metaphors for the gods can be reduced to the three propositions mentioned above - that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good - and if one accepts that these are literal statements, then one must hold that the metaphors are performing an illustrative role. For while they are presenting information in a particularly striking fashion, nevertheless it is information which can also be expressed in literal terms. However, if one holds that all language is not only derived from but also bounded by our human experience of the world, then the application of the human notions of creation and control to the divine or cosmic level is itself metaphorical. Thus, to say that the gods create the universe is to portray them as undertaking an activity which we can only understand in human terms. The images of god the craftsman and god the father then become second-level metaphors presenting a particular version of the first-level metaphor of god's 'creation'. On this analysis Plato's divine metaphors cannot be reduced to literal terms and so play an epistemic role in conveying ideas which cannot be expressed without the use of metaphors.

Thus it seems to me that whether one accepts the view that these metaphors are illustrative or epistemic depends on one's attitude to the nature of language about god. My own view is that the statement 'god creates and controls the universe' can be regarded as a literal statement of belief and therefore that the metaphors of god the craftsman etc. play an illustrative role in presenting this idea in various ways. As far as the question of indispensability is concerned, for those who accept the epistemic view, these divine metaphors are indeed indispensable to Plato since they provide the only way of speaking about the gods. But for those who consider these metaphors illustrative the matter is not so straightforward. For on the one hand, the information provided by the metaphors can be stated in literal terms, but on the other hand those literal statements are very limited in their scope. It may be acceptable to say that one believes that god creates the world, but if one is pushed further on this and asked 'but how or why?', then it is very difficult to give any satisfactory answer without resorting to metaphors of one kind or another. Thus as Plato seeks to present a more detailed picture of the processes of creation in the *Timaeus*, we find a very heavy reliance on craft metaphors. It seems to me, then, that even if one accepts the illustrative view of divine metaphors, one must still admit that metaphors are indispensable to any extended or detailed discourse on the gods.

This chapter has considered the role of Plato's divine metaphors divorced from their contexts and this in many ways gives a distorted view. Chapter 5, in contrast, will examine how some of these metaphors

work in their dialogues and it will become clear that Plato uses metaphors not so much to gain insight into the divine nature but to present more effectively various ideas he already holds about the gods.

<sup>1</sup>G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*; F. Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought'; C.J. Classen, 'The Creator in Greek Thought from Homer to Plato'; A. de Marignac, *Imagination et Dialectique*; P. Louis, *Les Métaphores de Platon*.

<sup>2</sup>De Marignac's discussion of Plato's soul metaphors will be examined in chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 3, note 4 for Grube's remark on single and plural gods in Plato.

<sup>4</sup>*Republic* 596b; *Laws* 903c.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of the much debated question of whether Plato's craftsman is a mythical figure see Lloyd pp.279-81.

<sup>6</sup>'There are many metaphors which are used to suggest the divine. The simplest one makes God the father of all beings.'

<sup>7</sup>Homer *Iliad* II 412; Aesch. *Sept.* 412; Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 1442.

<sup>8</sup>'Thus the genesis of the world is often described in words which evoke a natural birth.'

<sup>9</sup>Lloyd notes (p.255) the use of the same metaphor at *Politicus* 269d1, where the universe is spoken of as 'a living creature endowed with reason by him who fitted it together in the beginning'.

<sup>10</sup>For references to the universe, lesser gods and men as children see Appendix 2 Table 7.

<sup>11</sup>See also *Politicus* 269d and 273b.

<sup>12</sup>See S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, pp.67-68.

<sup>13</sup>'Plato has always recommended this essential feature of piety, obedience to the command of the gods. The whole of the *Apology* is built upon this idea, the examination of which is the concern of the *Euthyphro* and the outline of which appears in the *Laws*. In order to express this pre-eminence of God which gives him the right to command us and us the obligation of obeying, Plato makes use of images borrowed from domestic hierarchies (God would be a better guardian for Alcibiades than his guardian, Pericles..), military (Socrates didn't hesitate whatever the dangers, to obey the army leaders who took him to Potidaea, to Amphipolis and to Delos, he will not hesitate to practise philosophy, if that is God's command, even if it costs his life, *Apology* 28e2), and political (in the *Laws* God is metaphorically designated "our king" 904a).'

<sup>14</sup>Although the political and domestic images occur throughout the dialogues, the image of the gods as military commanders only appears in two passages: i) *Apology* 28e, as noted by de Marignac (p.64), (see also *Apol.* 33c4 and c7); and ii) *Laws* 905e ff. in the list of rulers that are suggested as possible comparisons for the gods.

<sup>15</sup>See e.g. *Politicus* 301a.

<sup>16</sup>See e.g. *Laws* X (899b, 900d-e and 901e).

<sup>17</sup>For the view of slavery as a condition 'more fearful than death', see *Republic* 387b and 496b.

<sup>18</sup>De Marignac (p.68) sees the image of the draughtsplayer (ὁ πεττεύτης) at *Laws* 903d as conveying the idea that the liberty of human beings is extremely restricted. However, the whole point of the passage is that it is the actions of the souls themselves that determine whether they move up or down in the scale of lives and the 'mover of the pieces' actually ends up with a mere mechanical role:

the divine draughts-player has nothing else to do except promote a soul with a promising character to a better situation, and to relegate one that is deteriorating to an inferior,  
(tr. Saunders).

<sup>19</sup>'A metaphor close to the preceding one likens mankind to livestock and the gods are their shepherds.'

<sup>20</sup>*Iliad* VII 69 etc.; Pindar *Pyth.* IV, 274, V 122, (of Zeus) and Sophocles *Ajax* 35 (of Athena).

<sup>21</sup>See chapter 2, section 4 and chapter 3, section 3.

<sup>22</sup>See chapter 3, section 3.

## Chapter 5

### THREE STUDIES

#### 5.1 Introduction.

In Chapter 4 I argued that Plato uses his metaphors for the gods inconjunction with one another to achieve different cognitive and rhetorical effects. I will now demonstrate this technique at work in three passages from the *Critias* (109b-e), *Politicus* (269c-273e) and *Laws* (905e-907b). Lloyd, whose views were examined in the previous chapter, rightly stresses that we should accept the different images of the gods as complementary not as alternative accounts (p.30):

In each case a modern interpreter, honouring above all else the principle of consistency, might feel tempted to select one image (or group of images) as the philosopher's true and definitive conception, although such an attempt would surely be misguided. Rather, in each case, to understand the original thought in all its complexity, we should treat these images... not as alternative, but as cumulative and complementary accounts, each adding to, but none, as it were, restricting, the writer's conception.

De Marignac offers another useful insight into Plato's use of multiple metaphors as he comments on the image of god as helmsman of the universe. It is de Marignac's opinion that the image in the *Politicus* is incomplete and that it would have been appropriate for Plato to develop the image further than he actually does. However, he acknowledges that Plato often refrains from developing all the possibilities of a particular image and comments (p.67):

il ne faut jamais oublier que Platon ne veut pas être le prisonnier de son image. Il l'abandonne quand cela lui plaît, y revient plus tard librement, au gré de sa fantaisie de poète, voulant indiquer par cette manière de l'utiliser que l'image n'est qu'une image, c'est-à-dire que les termes imagés ne disent pas la réalité intelligible telle qu'elle est véritablement dans son essence.

A little later (p.68) he says that this reluctance to develop an image too far may be simply a matter of taste or may be the result of a didactic concern, namely, to avoid the situation where a metaphor, too richly developed, becomes a substitute for that which it illustrates. He cites as an example of this the Christian use of the metaphor 'God the Father', which many are simply unable to recognise as a metaphor at all. At this point he observes (p.68): 'Le tact littéraire de Platon est donc en même temps une précaution philosophique'.<sup>2</sup> Thus for de Marignac Plato's reluctance to develop his metaphors too far, with his free abandonment and resumption of them, has the effect of keeping us constantly aware that they are simply images and that they must not be mistaken for the reality.

I would like to add to these observations of Lloyd and de Marignac by pointing out that as well as forming 'cumulative and complementary' accounts of the gods in general, the metaphors also work with one another on a much smaller scale, in individual dialogues and passages. Plato, having established a multiplicity of images for the gods, can move freely between them, using one particular metaphor to achieve a certain effect and then switching easily to another to make a further point in his argument. Thus he can use the metaphor of god the father on a particular occasion until he requires a stronger image of control, whereupon he can introduce the helmsman metaphor, relying on the traditional acceptance of all these images and being careful not to let any of them become too dominant. This reluctance to develop an image too far not only reminds us that the image is only an image, as de Marignac observes, but it is also a device through which Plato allows himself a certain ease of movement between his metaphors for rhetorical purposes. Lloyd is correct in his point that all the images

add to, but none restrict the philosopher's conception, and to this we must add that the images all add to, but are not allowed to restrict the development of a particular argument. In the three passages we will examine in this chapter we will see how Plato skilfully handles his metaphors, using multiple images for the gods to make his points effectively and with apparent ease.

## 5.2 Critias 109b-c

In this short passage the gods are spoken of as both shepherds and helmsmen. De Marignac deals briefly with these two images, but it seems to me that he misses the main point concerning their use. He observes correctly that the 'pastoral and nautical' image here expresses the benign care which the gods exercise over man (p.66) and, after remarking briefly on the passage, says of the use of metaphor and simile (p.66):

Comme on le voit, dans cette image où le pilote et le gouvernail se substituent au berger et à son fouet, la comparaison<sup>3</sup> et la métaphore s'entrelacent très heureusement.

This is undoubtedly true and we will see how this pleasing effect is achieved when we examine the passage in more depth. However, when de Marignac leaves these images and turns to the helmsman metaphor of the *Politicus* myth, he makes the following remarks about the *Critias* passage which I do not accept (p.66):

Si, dans le passage précité, l'image nautique arrive d'une façon un peu inattendue et si, comme cela se produit souvent, elle se substitue à une autre image analogue - procédé qui a, semble-t-il, pour raison d'éviter, par la multiplication des images, que la représentation sensible ne s'impose trop fortement et ne recouvre complètement la notion intelligible - dans le mythe du *Politique* (272e et 273d), cette métaphore est seule utilisée pour dire l'action de Dieu sur l'univers sensible.<sup>4</sup>

First the helmsman metaphor in this passage does not simply replace an 'analogous image', as the two images of shepherds and helmsmen are very different in important respects. Second, Plato does not use both images to prevent either picture becoming too dominant but simply to make his point, for each image by itself is inadequate to express all the ideas he wishes to convey.

Near the beginning of his story of the ancient conflict between Athens and Atlantis, Critias tells how in this era the gods divided the earth and how they ruled their allotted regions with no conflict (109b1-5). He is establishing a golden age picture and goes on to say of the gods (109b5-7):

δίκης δὴ κλήροις τὸ φίλον λαγχάνοντες κατῴκιζον τὰς  
 χώρας, καὶ κατοικίσαντες, οἷον νομῆς ποιῦννια, κτήματα καὶ  
 θρέμματα ἑαυτῶν ἡμᾶς ἔτρεφον,  
 They apportioned to each his own by righteous allotment,  
 settled their territories, and, when they had settled  
 them, fell to feeding us, their bestial [possessions] and  
 flocks there, as herdsmen do their cattle. (tr. Taylor)<sup>5</sup>

So we see that the gods after settling their territories, concerned themselves with tending and feeding man, just as a shepherd tends his flocks, οἷον νομῆς ποιῦννια. Thus we find the idea of the gods as shepherds introduced by means of a simile οἷον νομῆς, an idea which develops out of the presentation of them as the governors of man. The ideas and the development here are very like those in the *Politicus* (271d5-276d5) where the gods are introduced as governors (ἀρχόντων 271d5) who rule over the portions of the earth and then are likened, by means of a simile, to shepherds tending their flocks (271d6 οἷον νομῆς etc.) In the *Politicus* men are among the living creatures tended by the gods (271d-72a) and here the same idea is conveyed as men are referred to as the κτήματα and θρέμματα (possessions, nursing creatures) of the gods. Also, as the gods in the *Politicus* 'feed and

pasture' men (νομεύουσι 271e), so here the gods are said to have 'fed and nurtured' them (ἐτρέφον). Thus in the *Critias* passage we have the same images of the benign care of the gods and the dependence of men as can be seen in the *Politicus* (see Chapter 4, section 7).

Critias, after telling how the gods at this time cared for and looked after mankind, goes on to relate how they controlled their subjects. The shepherd metaphor, already established, offers one model of control, but this is expressly rejected (109b7-8):

πλὴν οὐ σώμασι σώματα βιαζόμενοι, καθάπερ ποιμένες κτήνη  
πληγῆι νέμοντες,  
Only they would not coerce body with body in the fashion  
of shepherds who drive their flocks to pasture with  
blows; (tr. Taylor)

Thus Critias dismisses the idea that the gods' control over man is like that of shepherds driving their sheep. He does not give his reasons for rejecting the image, but they seem clear enough. For the image presents the gods as shepherds resorting to brute force against reluctant sheep who resist their commands, a picture which is unacceptable on two counts. First the image strikes a discordant note in the golden age scenario, presenting an unflattering picture of both gods and men, and second the task of controlling men, especially in this golden age, would have been viewed as a far easier one than that of a shepherd physically exerting his will against recalcitrant sheep.<sup>6</sup> This point is borne out as Critias' next image presents the gods' task of controlling man as a much less troublesome affair. It is here, then, that we find the helmsman metaphor, as Critias says (109c2-4):

ἀλλ' ἦ μάλιστα εὐστροφον ζῶον, ἐκ πρύμνης ἀπευθύνοντες,  
οἶον οἶακι πειθοῖ ψυχῆς ἐφαπτόμενοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν  
διάνοιαν, οὕτως ἄγοντες τὸ θνητὸν πᾶν ἐκυβέρνων.

they set the course of the living creature from that part by which it is most easily turned, its stern, controlling its soul after their own mind by persuasion as by a rudder and so moving and steering every mortal creature. (tr. Taylor, adapted)

In terms of this metaphor, then, the gods guide (ἀπευθύνω) the human creature by its stern (πρύμνη) (which for some reason Taylor has translated as 'prow', the Greek for which is πρῶρα), and the living creature becomes a ship sailing on a particular course. The stern of the ship, we are told, is the part by which it is 'most easily turned' (εὐστροφος) and the reason for this would seem to be simply that the rudder is situated there. A sense of ease of movement emerges here in contrast to the physical force of the previous image. The ship metaphor is then further developed as we find the gods directing the human soul by persuasion (πειθοῖ) which is likened to a helm οἶον οἴακι - an appropriate simile as persuasion is indeed a very effective means of control. The verb κυβερνάω (steer) then forms the final part of the image as the gods are said to 'steer the whole mortal fabric'.

The overall effect of this image is that of easy influence as the helmsman guides the ship on its way. Critias' point here is that the gods do not have to resort to brute force to impose their will, but that they control humans by the more sophisticated method of persuasion. The ship image is obviously more appropriate than that of the shepherd to express this, since the idea of the rudder provides an image of a gentler form of control than the whip or stick and since the picture of a ship in sail is able to convey a striking image of smooth movement, in contrast to the wayward steps of a flock of sheep.

In both the shepherd and helmsman images there is an underlying metaphor, namely that of physical movement for the life and decision-making of human beings. Both images represent control as

guidance along a particular route: the sheep move reluctantly forward in the direction in which the shepherd drives them and the helmsman steers the unresisting ship on a particular course. Thus human life is presented as movement and decisions become choices about the direction of this movement.

The helmsman metaphor, therefore, allows Plato to portray a different picture of movement and control from that of the shepherd simile. The differences between the two images in this passage highlight the difference between brute force and persuasion, between physical and psychological pressure. Although the picture of the helmsman holding the rudder and steering the vessel is no less physical in itself than that of the shepherd, Plato still achieves a contrast between the two so that the latter conveys the idea of psychological influence. Clearly there are some differences between the images themselves, but Plato creates further contrasts by emphasising the physical nature of the first image and by introducing psychological terms into the second. For we find in the first image a vivid picture of physical contact in the 'blows' (πληγῆ) dealt by the shepherds and in the idea of bodily contact (σώμασι σώματα), and we see in the second the introduction of the ideas of 'mind' (διάνοιαν) and soul (ψυχῆς) as well as the central idea of persuasion (πειθοῖ). Thus Plato stresses the physical aspects of the first image and brings non-physical ideas into the second in order to make two equally concrete images seem even more different than they actually are.

The change of metaphor in this passage plays a rhetorical role in helping Plato to avoid a potential problem in the passage concerning the idea of persuasion. For there is a crucial difference between the two images of sheep and ship in that unlike the creature, the ship has

no will of its own and so cannot resist the commands of its controller. Thus once the image shifts from that of a living creature to that of an inanimate object, the need for persuasion and indeed the very possibility of it is completely removed. Considered in this way, the ship image is totally inappropriate for illustrating how the gods control man by persuasion, which is of course supposed to be its very function here. However, this is far from immediately obvious in the text, as what is most striking is the contrast between ease of movement achieved through psychological pressure and reluctant progress won through brute force. Therefore, by using different metaphors, Plato is able to avoid the awkward problem of explaining what would happen if human beings were not won over by the persuasion of the gods.

I hope it has now become clear why I disagree with de Marignac's comments that the helmsman metaphor replaces an *analogous* one and that the two images are used to prevent either one becoming too dominant. For the two images of shepherd and helmsman are very different in important respects, with the shepherd simile expressing the ideas of benign care of the gods and the dependence and defencelessness of man, but offering an inappropriate model of control, and with the helmsman image successfully conveying the notion of easy influence, but being inadequate to express any full notion of care. Thus, in a passage where Critias wants to express both the care and control of the gods, either image used on its own would be simply inadequate or inappropriate for his purposes. Also, there is a fundamental difference between the images in that one portrays control over a living being and the other control over an inanimate object, a

difference which allows Plato to avoid deftly a question he does not wish to raise at this point, that of human free will.

I therefore do not accept de Marignac's remarks about this passage and also feel that he has overlooked an important feature of the next metaphor he considers, that of the helmsman of the universe in the myth of the *Politicus*.

### 5.3 Politicus 269c-273e

We have already seen how de Marignac contrasts the use of the nautical image in the *Critias*, where it is used together with the shepherd simile, to that in the *Politicus* myth, where, he says (p.66), 'cette métaphore est seule utilisée pour dire l'action de Dieu sur l'univers sensible.'<sup>7</sup> In this section I intend to show that the metaphor of the helmsman is not used on its own in the myth, that it works in conjunction with other metaphors, notably that of god as father, and that the vividness of the passage is the result of the effects of different images.

In the myth the Stranger tells of ancient legends about the era when Cronus was king of the universe, an era which, he says, precedes the present one under the kingship of Zeus (269b, 272b). He relates to the young Socrates the story of a great event in 'cosmic history' (269b) and begins this by telling how in one era, (269c4-5):

αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ,  
God himself assists the universe on its way and guides it  
by imparting its rotation to it (tr. Skemp)

and how in another, at an appointed time, he releases his control. As a result of this, we are told (269c7-d2):

τὸ δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τὰναντία περιάγεται, ζῶον ὄν  
καὶ φρόνησιν εἰληχὸς ἐκ τοῦ συναρμόσαντος αὐτὸ κατ'  
ἀρχάς.

it begins to revolve in the contrary sense under its own impulse - for it is a living creature and has been endowed with reason by him who framed it in the beginning. (tr. Skemp)

Thus we find god presented as the guide of the universe, as the force that imparts rotation to it and as the craftsman who fitted it together. The universe, in turn, is a person who travels a particular journey (objects do not have guides), an object that revolves and is fashioned by a craftsman, and a living, rational being. Even at the start of the myth, then, we find different images for the relationship between god and the universe; and indeed there is even conflict between the images, since the universe is presented both as an inanimate object and as a rational creature.<sup>8</sup> In the following passages of the myth this dual presentation of the universe as animate and inanimate is continued and both ideas are developed in various ways.

At 269d7-9 the relationship between god and the universe is presented as that of father and child, since god is spoken of as its begetter:

*ὄν δὲ οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον ἐπωνομάκαμεν, πολλῶν μὲν καὶ μακαρίων παρὰ τοῦ γεννήσαντος μετέιληφεν*  
Now the heaven, or the universe as we have chosen to call it, has received many blessed qualities from him who begat it. (tr. Skemp, adapted)

This view of god obviously entails the idea of the universe as a living being and this idea is continued at 270a3-4, when the universe is said to receive a 'renewal of life' and 'immortality' from god (*τὸ ζῆν πάλιν ἐπικτώμενον καὶ λαμβάνοντα ἀθανασίαν ἐπισκευαστήν*). However, in the same sentence (at 270a5), the universe must also be regarded as inanimate, since god the creator is referred to as a craftsman: *παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ*. In addition to metaphors for god as the creator of the

universe, we also find in the early parts of the myth metaphors for his role as controlling power. At 269e5-6 god is spoken of as 'leader': τῷ τῶν κινουμένων αὐτῶν πάντων ἡγουμένῳ (the leader of all things that move). The verb ἡγέσθαι means both 'to guide' and 'to command' and thus serves as a bridge term between the idea of god guiding the universe on its way (269c4, 270a3) and the later idea of god as supreme governor of the universe (271d3 ἡρχεν...ὁ θεός).

At this early stage of the myth, then, before the introduction of the helmsman metaphor, both god and the universe are presented in a number of ways. Most importantly, we have two conflicting views of the universe - as animate and inanimate - and these will both be developed by Plato as he makes the point that the universe is completely dependent upon god. Let us examine, then, how the helmsman metaphor is introduced into the myth and how it works with others to present a vivid picture of the universe's dependence.

After the Stranger has told how god at one time revolves the universe and then releases his control and how as a result the universe begins to revolve in the opposite direction, he goes on to describe how this reversal affected human beings (270c ff.). Socrates accepts his account and asks what the life of man was like in the first era under the reign of Cronus (271c). In response the Stranger tells how at this time god was 'supreme governor' of the universe (271d3), how he alone was responsible for its rotation, and how the different regions of the universe were apportioned out to be provinces under the government of other gods (271d). He then presents a picture of a golden age where the gods tended to the needs of man and where they maintained order in the universe as a whole. However, the Stranger also tells that there was a destined end for this era, an end

which resulted in universal change (272d). It is at this point in the story, when the first era comes to an end, that the helmsman metaphor is introduced, as the Stranger says (272e3-5):

τότε δὴ τοῦ παντὸς ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης, οἷον πηδαλίῳ οἶακος ἀφέμενος, εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη,  
And now the pilot of the ship of the universe let go as it were the handle of its rudder and retired to his look-out point.<sup>9</sup> (tr. Skemp adapted)

So we see that in the first era, when man is under the care of the gods, the supreme governor-god is not only to be seen as rotating and guiding the universe (269c), but also as acting as its helmsman, steering it on its way. Thus the end of this period, when he relinquishes his control, is presented in terms of his letting go of the rudder. After this the helmsman is said to retire to a 'look-out point', an idea which is dwelt upon by de Marignac (p.66-67) as he considers whether, in metaphorical terms, this means that he leaves the ship itself. Commenting on *περιωπή* he says (p.66):

Cette dernière expression n'est pas, à proprement parler, maritime,<sup>10</sup>

but points out that as a result of 'metaphoric suggestion', the reader can picture this 'observation post' on the ship itself. However, de Marignac also observes that the general content of the myth leads us to think of god as distanced from and outside of the universe, (p.67) 'comme si le pilote avait quitté le navire.'<sup>11</sup>

Which of these is the correct interpretation? Is the look-out point to be understood as on the ship or not? It seems to me that that there are four reasons for understanding that it is not on the ship: first, if a ship has an observation post, it is so that the crew can look out beyond the ship, not so that they can watch the progress of the ship itself, which is what god is presented as doing in this myth; second,

there is simply no reason why god should remain on board, as it is perfectly conceivable that he should be able to keep watch over the ship from elsewhere - from land if conceived in human terms, or from any point one likes, in divine terms; thirdly, as the myth continues and chaos begins to assert its sway over the ship of the universe, it is inappropriate for god to be still onboard somewhere, getting buffeted about like everything else; and lastly, as at a later point in the myth (273d), god is said to look down on the ship in its troubles, it becomes ridiculous to imagine that he is at that time on an observation point on board, looking down on the rest of the storm-tossed ship, but feeling none of the effects himself. For all these reasons, in addition to de Marignac's own points that *περιωπή* is not a nautical term and that the myth as a whole presents god as outside of the universe and separate from it, it seems clear to me that the *περιωπή* is to be understood as outside of the ship.

To return to the passage itself, the act of letting go of the rudder represents god's relinquishing of his control over the universe and thus it has profound effects. As the universe is now left to control itself, its own impulse causes the direction of its rotation to be reversed (273a). At this point a shudder is said to pass through the world and the shock of the reversal causes a 'great quaking', which leads to the destruction of creatures of all kinds. However, this chaos turns out to be only a temporary phase and in time, as the universe adjusts to the new direction of the rotation, order is regained. At this point the image of the universe as a ship is replaced by that of a living being, as the Stranger says (273a4-9):

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα προελθόντος ἰκανοῦ χρόνου, θορύβων τε καὶ  
 παραχῆς ἤδη παύομενος καὶ τῶν σεισμῶν γαλήνης  
 ἐπιλαβόμενος εἰς τε τὸν εἰωθότα δρόμον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ

κατακοσμούμενος ἦει, ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ κράτος ἔχων αὐτὸς τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τε καὶ ἑαυτοῦ, τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἀπομνημονεύων διδαχὴν εἰς δύναμιν.

Then, after the interval needed for its recovery, it gained relief at last from its clamours and confusion, and attaining quiet after great upheaval, it returned to its ordered course and continued in it, having control and government of itself and of all within it, and remembering, so far as it was able, the instruction it had received from god, its maker and father. (tr. Skemp)

The first part of this passage, it seems to me, is neutral enough to allow one to continue to visualise the universe as a ship; *θορύβων* and *ταραχῆς* could refer to the disturbance on board a ship as a result of a storm; shaking (*σεισμῶν*) is clearly relevant to this picture and *γαλήνη* literally means 'the calm of the sea'. However, when we come to the idea of the universe having *ἐπιμέλειαν* (care, control) and *κράτος* (power, rule) over itself, we can no longer imagine the universe as a ship. We return here to the notion of government, and now instead of god being supreme governor, helped by a host of other lesser deities in the 'provinces', the universe governs itself. Thus we are moving towards a more personalised image, a process which is completed when we find the universe, (273b1) 'remembering so far as it was able the instruction of its maker and father' (*τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἀπομνημονεύων διδαχὴν εἰς δύναμιν.*)<sup>12</sup>

With the reference to god as 'craftsman' and 'father' we find again the conflict between the ideas of the universe as an inanimate object and as a living being - the child of god. However, since the act of remembering and the notion of teaching entail rationality, the image of the universe as a living being is most dominant at the end of the passage. Why does Plato switch from the image of the universe as a ship to that of it as a rational creature? The answer, I believe, is that he requires an image which will convey the idea of order and chaos reasserting themselves from within. Essentially the myth tells us what

happens when god controls the universe and what happens when he relinquishes that control. Both the helmsman and father metaphors offer equally effective images of power and control and both offer striking versions of the effect of god's withdrawal: the ship cannot steer itself and so sails off-course and the child left to fend for itself becomes disorderly. So far both images suit Plato's purpose, but when he wants to present the universe regaining order and control of itself after an initial stage of confusion, the ship image is no longer appropriate. For once a ship runs adrift, it cannot steer itself back on-course. In contrast, the idea of father and child can provide a very satisfying image of the development of self-control, as the child reaches adulthood. Deprived of its father's authority the child-universe becomes disorderly but as time passes the child learns to control itself properly by remembering its father's teaching. If we understand this teaching as that of the ways of order and regularity, principles which were established when god first created the universe by bringing order from chaos (see 273d4), then it is perfectly appropriate that it should be this instruction that the universe remembers when it sets itself in order again after the cosmic crisis. A good parent teaches a child the things it will need to know in later life as it develops and becomes more independent, and thus in the image here it is the knowledge of order and regularity, taught by its father, that the universe remembers as it strives to manage on its own. Indeed, as the myth progresses, we find that it is only this memory of the father's instruction that secures order for the universe. For the metaphor occurs at both 273b2-3, where it is said:

κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν ἀκριβέστερον ἀπετέλει, τελευτῶν δὲ  
ἀμβλύτερον.

At first it remembered his instructions more clearly, but as time went on its recollection grew dim. (tr. Skemp)

and at 273c4-d1:

χωριζόμενος δὲ ἐκείνου τὸν ἐγγύτατα χρόνον ἀεὶ τῆς ἀφέσεως κάλλιστα πάντα διάγει, προιόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ λήθης ἐγγιγνομένης ἐν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον καὶ δυναστεύει τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος.

When it must travel on without God, things go well enough in the years immediately after he abandons control, but as time goes on and forgetfulness of God arises in it, the ancient condition of chaos begins to assert its sway. (tr. Skemp)

Thus the reassertion of chaos is directly linked with the universe's 'forgetfulness' (λήθη) of its father's instruction; the universe is shown as achieving order for itself when it remembers its father's words, but collapsing into disorder and chaos when it forgets them.

We can see, therefore, that the father metaphor at 273aff is used to achieve a different effect from that of the helmsman. For the helmsman and ship metaphor provides a very vivid idea of control, but is far less effective in conveying the universe's response to that control. In contrast, the father and child metaphor offers an excellent image of adherence to and then neglect of a particular type of authority and pattern of direction and so can account for the reassertion of order and chaos from within.

As the universe forgets god's teaching, chaos increasingly establishes itself, until the disorder finally comes to a head (273d). At this point of imminent disaster Plato switches metaphors and the universe is again presented as a ship. God the helmsman made a brief appearance at 273c3 (τοῦ κυβερνήτου) but now the image of helmsman and ship is developed in some detail and to striking effect. As the

universe 'hovers on the very brink of destruction' (Skemp), we are told (273d4-e1):

διὸ δὴ καὶ τότε ἤδη θεὸς ὁ κοσμήσας αὐτόν, καθορῶν ἐν ἀπορίαις ὄντα, κηδόμενος ἵνα μὴ χειμασθεῖς ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθεῖς εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἀπειρον ὄντα πόντον δύη, πάλιν ἔφεδρος αὐτοῦ τῶν πηδαλίων γιγνόμενος,  
Then God looks upon it again, he who first set it in order. Beholding it in its troubles and anxious for it lest it sink racked by storms and confusion, and be dissolved again in the bottomless abyss of unlikeness, he takes control of the helm once more. (tr. Skemp)

So we find the very graphic image of god looking down on the ship of the universe threatened by storms and then taking control of the helm once more, to ensure that all will be well. The phrase ἐν ἀπορίαις (in its troubles) could apply to both a ship and a person in difficulty and so the sea image is only firmly established when we come to the participle χειμασθεῖς (driven by a storm). The idea of a storm-tossed ship is then continued in the arresting phrase ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθεῖς (broken up by disorder), which conveys the notion of shipwreck in stormy seas, but which also keeps before us the tenor of the metaphor - that is the disorder which threatens the divine arrangement of the cosmos.<sup>13</sup> God's fear that the universe might 'sink' (δύη) into the bottomless 'sea' (πόντον) of unlikeness<sup>14</sup> provides the next development of the ship image in this passage and the final element comes as god is said to take control (ἔφεδρος...γιγνόμενος) once more of the 'rudder' (τῶν πηδαλίων).

In the next part of this sentence the ship image is still present but here rather than working alone it interacts with the metaphor of the universe as a living being. The Stranger, continuing his account of god's intervention, goes on (273e2-4):

τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα ἐν τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν προτέρᾳ περιόδῳ στρέψας, κοσμεῖ τε καὶ ἐπανορθῶν ἀθάνατον αὐτόν καὶ ἀγήρων ἀπεργάζεται.

Its former sickness he heals; what was disrupted in its former revolution, under its own impulse, he brings back into the way of regularity, and so, ordering and correcting it, he achieves for it agelessness and deathlessness. (tr. Skemp)

Thus, as god steps in to halt the growing chaos, he is spoken of as 'changing the parts that were sick and broken up' (τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα...στρεψας). λυθέντα (the parts that were broken-up, demolished) fits with the idea of shipwreck, but to understand νοσήσαντα (the parts that were sick) we must regard the universe as a living being. Thus we have in this single phrase 'τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα' a striking mixed metaphor,<sup>15</sup> as god tends the sickness and suffering of the universe and mends that which has been demolished in it. The ship image is still perhaps resonating in the participle ἐπανορθῶν, which as well as conveying the general notion of amending and improving, may also suggest, through its sense of 'setting upright' the idea of god setting upright again the storm-tossed ship.

The idea of the universe as a living being is continued further in the passage when we are told that god made it 'immortal' (ἀθάνατον, e3) and 'ageless' (ἀγήρων, e4). Without god's intervention, then, the universe would have grown old and died. In the beginning god begets the universe (269d8), then the universe matures and develops self-control (273a6-7), but later, as time goes on, it passes its prime (ἐξανθεῖ, 273d1), becomes ill (273e2) and faces old age and death. We are thus presented with the life-cycle of an organism, and given that the universe is not only alive but also rational (269d1), we can view the life-cycle as that of a human being. In terms of this metaphor, then, the first stage of confusion (273a) can perhaps be seen as an adolescent phase and the second stage of disorder (273c-d)

as that of old age, as the memory fails (273c5), illness sets in (273e2) and death looms.

We are reminded at the start of this passage that god is the force which first set the universe in order (*κοσμήσας*) and so as he sees the universe in disarray, it is natural that he should want to intervene, to stop the arrangement he has created being totally destroyed. His act of reparation, then, consists of establishing order once more (*κοσμεῖν*). The metaphors of the storm and sickness intensify the idea of chaos in this passage and are also used, together with others, to provide different reasons for god's intervention: not only is he the force which has ordered the universe preventing the collapse into chaos, but also the craftsman who does not want his work destroyed, the father who steps in to help his offspring, and the helmsman who rescues his ship facing wreckage.

There is a certain problem with the helmsman metaphor, however, in that it is rather strange for a helmsman to leave his ship in mid-journey. It is true that in the myth the helmsman has not abandoned the ship altogether but is keeping watch on it from an observation post (272e4), but in terms of this metaphor god cannot be surprised to see the universe run into difficulty, since a ship with no-one at the helm is hardly likely to stay on-course for very long. The other presentations of god, however, help to overcome this problem of god's absence, since a craftsman does not continue to work on a finished object and since a father must allow his child to develop on its own.

De Marignac raises another problem concerning the helmsman metaphor, but it is a problem easily solved if one takes account of

the fact that this metaphor is working together with others.

Commenting on this passage of the *Politicus*, de Marignac says (p.67):

Il faut noter qu'une fois revenu à la barre du navire-univers, le dieu entreprend une action de réparation, de mise<sup>16</sup> en ordre qui n'a rien de commun avec le travail du pilote.

This is indeed true, but the point is, of course, that god here is not just the pilot of the ship of the universe, but is the father of the universe-child and the force which has previously ordered and governed that which is now in chaos. The passage only makes sense if one bears all these images in mind, and indeed its extraordinary power depends upon the associations and suggestions of all these different ideas working at once. At 273d as well as in previous passages the helmsman metaphor is used in conjunction with others to achieve different effects. The image of the helmsman rescuing the ship of the universe in danger of wreckage by a storm is very powerful, but still it does not express all the aspects of the situation that Plato wishes, as he envisages chaos reasserting itself in the universe. For Plato also wants to convey here the ideas of the universe as a well-ordered arrangement that is being broken up, as a crafted object that is being destroyed and as the child of god who is suffering. Each of these images suggests a different view of god - as orderer, craftsman and father - and the power of the passage is the result of the interaction of all the images.

Plato thus uses his different metaphors to establish a graphic picture of the dependence of the universe on god and of god's care for the universe he has created, a picture which can be seen to derive its power both from the drama of the sea-rescue and from the emotive image of a human being who has passed through the different phases of life

and now faces death. In view of this, de Marignac's statement that the helmsman metaphor is used on its own in the *Politicus* myth is simply incorrect. This metaphor, if used on its own, would be inadequate to represent god as a creative and sustaining force and moreover, as a force that is concerned about the fate of the universe. The metaphor of the helmsman and ship is very useful for conveying the sense of god's power and control over the universe and it also gives us one reason for his actions as he intervenes to steer the universe out of danger, i.e. it is part of the helmsman's job to preserve his ship. However, the metaphor has no creative associations and does not carry the suggestions of benevolent care and concern that Plato requires here to make his picture fully effective. Thus Plato uses both the metaphors of god as craftsman and father to convey the idea of creation and to express the attributes of benevolence and concern. Further, as we have seen, the metaphor of helmsman and ship cannot account for the reassertion of order and chaos from within the universe itself. If the metaphor of the helmsman is viewed in isolation from the rest, one fails to grasp the importance of the other metaphors interwoven with it and one misses the particular role it plays in helping to present a tremendously powerful and complex image of the relationship between god and the universe.

Now that we have observed how Plato uses multiple metaphors in the *Politicus* myth to present striking pictures of the activity of god in the universe, we can turn to our final passage, *Laws* 905e-907b, where a number of different representations of the gods are used for primarily rhetorical purposes.

#### 5.4 Laws 905e-907b

In this passage the gods are not introduced as part of a story about something else, but are the actual subject under discussion. The representations of the gods here are all offered by way of explicit comparison and their purpose is ostensibly to allow different ideas about the gods to be highlighted and discussed. In fact, as we shall see, they are used as a rhetorical device to support a proposition that lies at the heart of the Athenian's argument. In this part of the *Laws* the Athenian has set out to prove three propositions about the gods:

- a) that they exist;
- b) that they care for mankind;
- c) that they cannot be persuaded by evil men.

After the Athenian has proved the first two of these propositions to his satisfaction, there follows the passage with which we are concerned, where he sets out his argument for the third.

At the beginning of this section, as he approaches the question of whether the gods can be persuaded by men, the Athenian poses the question (905e):

how would they be bought off, supposing they ever were?  
What would they have to be? What sort of being would do this? (tr. Saunders)

After deciding that the gods must be rulers, he asks what kind they are and suggests a series of comparisons with earthly rulers. It is here, then, that we find the gods compared to charioteers, helmsmen, shepherds and others and it will be the purpose of this section to show how the Athenian uses these different comparisons for, or presentations of, the gods to persuade Clinias to accept the view that the gods cannot be won over. Thus our aim will be to see how these

different images are used together to achieve a particular rhetorical effect.

Let us begin, then, by examining the series of comparisons for the gods suggested by the Athenian. After asking 'what sort of ruler do the gods in fact resemble? Or rather, what rulers resemble them?' he says (905e7-906a2):

πότερον ἡνίοχοί τινες ἂν εἶεν τοιοῦτοι ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων ἢ πλοίων κυβερνῆται; τάχα δὲ κἄν ἀπεικασθεῖεν στρατοπέδων ἀρχουσί τισιν· εἴη δ' ἂν καὶ νόσων πόλεμον εὐλαβούμενοις ἰατροῖς εἰκέναι περὶ σώματα, ἢ γεωργοῖς περὶ φυτῶν γένεσιν εἰωθυίας ὥρας χαλεπὰς διὰ φόβων προσδεχομένοις, ἢ καὶ ποιμνίων ἐπιστάταις.

What about drivers of competing teams of horses, or steersman of boats in a race? Would they be suitable parallels? Or we might compare the gods to commanders of armies. Again, it could be that they're analogous to doctors concerned to defend the body in the war against disease, or to farmers anxiously anticipating the seasons that usually discourage the growth of their crops, or to shepherds. (tr. Saunders)

Here we have quite an intricate passage, the workings of which require a certain amount of sorting out. The comparisons of charioteers, helmsmen, generals, doctors, farmers and shepherds are suggested as types of governors, but it is clear that the type of 'government' they are involved in in each case is very different. In addition there are a number of ideas which emerge from this list which seem to have nothing to do with government or ruling, namely, chariot races, the war against disease and the effect of the seasons on the growth of crops. What seems to be going on is a very subtle introduction of certain ideas which will be developed and exploited by the Athenian in the following passages. Let us examine in detail how this is done.

First of all the comparison is suggested with 'charioteers of competing teams of horses' (ἡνίοχοί...ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων). Now, if the

Athenian were only interested in the idea of government, then the image of the charioteers, suggesting power and control, would be sufficient on its own, without the additional idea of them driving 'competing teams'. Why then is this included? The answer, as we shall see shortly, is to lay the ground for a later point.

The next comparison is that with *πλοίων κυβερνῆται* (209e8) helmsmen of ships, an image which we have met in other dialogues where it indeed highlights the role of the gods as rulers of men and the universe. Saunders understands the participle *ἀμιλλωμένων* (competing) as agreeing with the charioteers' teams and the helmsmen's ships, since he translates the phrase as 'steersmen of boats in a race'. This is also how Taylor reads the phrase which he translates as 'captains of competing vessels'. However, when the helmsman image is taken up again later in the passage, no use is made, as it is in the charioteer image, of the idea of a race, which suggests that *ἀμιλλωμένων* is to be understood as agreeing only with *ζευγῶν*, the teams of horses - and this is, in fact, how it is understood by Bury in the Loeb translation.

Army generals are the next comparison suggested for the gods (e9) (*στρατοπέδων ἀρχουσί*) and so we have three different images of authority and control, with only one apparently unnecessary idea of competition, that is, in the charioteer comparison. So far the passage remains fairly simple, but in the next two comparisons matters become more intricate, as the idea of governorship and control is linked with other ideas.

The fourth comparison suggested for the gods is that of 'doctors concerned to defend the body in the war against disease' (e9, *νόσων πόλεμον εὐλαβουμένοις ἰατροῖς...περὶ σώματα*). One can see how a doctor

may be regarded as a ruler, since he gives instructions to patients who must follow them and since he takes decisions to preserve the well-being of the body, but with the use of πόλεμος (war) we seem to be moving away from the idea of governorship itself to the related idea of defence against an enemy. Clearly this is linked with the previous image of army generals, but interestingly war and defence against enemies were not mentioned explicitly there. Now war against the enemy is used as a metaphor for the work of the doctor against disease. If we had been following the idea of governorship, the picture becomes slightly clouded now as this new idea of war becomes more dominant. The gods by means of this comparison begin to appear as the defenders of human beings rather than simply their rulers, and this is no accident, for this very idea is taken up a little later. So in this passage the image of the general serves as a link between the previous images which suggested governorship and this latter image which suggests defence in war. Is the idea of war continued?

This next comparison is that with 'farmers anxiously anticipating the seasons that usually discourage the growth of their crops' (906a1) (γεωργοῖς περὶ φυτῶν γένεσιν εἰωθυίας ὥρας χαλεπὰς διὰ φόβων προσδεχομένοις). We find then, that the image shifts slightly again, this time back to the notion of care suggested earlier in 'εὐλαβουμένοις' (e10), since we find the farmers concerned about the welfare of their crops just as the doctors were concerned about their patients' bodies. However, the notion of war and defence is still present here, in a modified way, in the reference to the farmers 'anxiously' (διὰ φόβων) anticipating the 'harsh seasons' (ὥρας χαλεπὰς). Thus we have the suggestion that the seasons pose a threat

which the farmer fears and so we move from images of more confident governorship to that of anxious care.

In the final comparison the move away from the notions of war and enemies is completed as we are offered the simple idea that the gods may be like 'overseers of flocks' (ποιμνίων ἐπιστάταις). Although this idea is not developed at all in this passage, the image has already been used in other dialogues to suggest the gods' benevolent care for mankind. The shepherd metaphor is a traditional one for rulers<sup>17</sup> and thus the passage ends with a fairly straightforward image of government, the idea with which it began. However, it is far from the case that the Athenian has presented us with a simple list of earthly governors, for he has also introduced, in a rather casual way, other ideas - of competition and defence against enemies. The notion of the 'defence of the realm' is appropriate to governors, but nevertheless it is not a direct metaphor of government itself. Why then are these ideas of competition and war introduced? The answer would seem to be so that the Athenian can draw on them for different purposes as his argument progresses, and we shall see how he does this.

As regards the notion of war, this is immediately taken up after the series of comparisons for the gods, when the Athenian says (906a):

Now since we've agreed among ourselves that the universe is full of many good things and many bad as well, and that the latter outnumber the former, we maintain that the battle (μάχη) we have on our hands is never finished, and demands tremendous vigilance. (tr. Saunders)

We see therefore how the idea of war forms part of the Athenian's argument as he proposes that we are involved in an eternal battle

against evil. He then goes on to represent the gods as our 'allies' in this (906a6):

*σύμμαχοι δὲ ἡμῖν θεοὶ τε ἅμα καὶ δαίμονες.*  
however, gods and spirits are fighting on our side.  
(tr. Saunders)

This characterisation of the gods as our allies in war has been prepared for by the comparisons of the doctor waging war on disease and of the farmer fearing the seasons as his enemy. That the gods fight a war against evil rests upon the idea that the gods are good, a proposition established earlier in Book X: at 899b6 the souls that are the cause of the heavenly phenomena are described as 'perfectly virtuous' (*ἀγαθαὶ δὲ πᾶσαν ἀρετήν*) and are identified as gods; at 900d-e the 'perfect virtue' of the gods is mentioned again and the Athenian refers to the interlocutors' agreement (*ὁμολογοῦμεν*) that the gods are good; and finally at 901e the point is established still more explicitly as the Athenian says 'the five of us have already agreed that the gods are good - supremely so, in fact', and Clinias responds 'Emphatically'. However, in this later section of Book X the idea of the gods' goodness is not stated explicitly but remains implicit in various images.

As the passage progresses the war metaphor is left behind, as the Athenian next turns to consider people who have 'ill-gotten gains' (Saunders) and who attempt to bribe the gods with these. He says that these people 'in their brutish way' (*θηριώδεις*) (906b4) throw themselves before their guardians and try to persuade them that 'they have the right to feather their nest (*πλεονεκτοῦσιν*) (906c1) with impunity at mankind's expense' (tr. Saunders). The 'guardians' referred to are not the earthly guardians or masters of these men, but the guardians who watch over us all, i.e. the gods. For first, the

passage is concerned with how evil men try to win over the gods, not their earthly guardians, and second, two of the types of guardian suggested here are those of animals and it is absurd to imagine actual animals trying to persuade their masters that they have the right to gain at 'mankind's expense' (ἐν ἀνθρώποις) (c2).

Thus the gods are presented as man's 'guardians' (φυλάκες) and three different types of guardian are presented: 'watchdogs, shepherds or masters of the utmost grandeur' (906b5) (κυνῶν...τῶν νομέων...τῶν παντάπασιν ἀκροτάτων δεσποτῶν). The idea of the gods as shepherds has already been suggested at 905e, but here we have two new presentations of the gods as watchdogs and masters. We have met the metaphor of the gods as masters in the *Phaedo* (63c2) and in the various references throughout the dialogues to men as the κτημάτα (possessions) of the gods,<sup>18</sup> but the idea of them as watchdogs is certainly novel. This characterisation of the gods does not actually present their relationship to men in a new light, since in this image humans are still to be seen as flocks of sheep, as in the shepherd image, and the gods now are simply to be seen as sheepdogs rather than shepherds. At this stage the new image, although novel and fairly surprising, does not appear very significant. However, we must observe that in this short passage evil men have become 'brutish' (θηριώδεις) and the gods, hitherto presented as human guardians and rulers, have now also become animals. The significance of this will become clear a few lines later.

For the moment let us consider the Athenian's following remarks on the subject of 'acquisitiveness'. This, he says, is what is called 'disease' when it appears in the body, 'plague' when it is brought

about by the seasons and 'injustice' when it occurs in society.

Saunders' footnote is helpful here (p.441):

Disease, plague and injustice are all thought of as examples of excess, the encroachment of one element in the body etc. on the others. In society this vice appears as the desire to get more than others ('acquisitiveness').

It now appears that the doctor and farmer comparisons suggested earlier for the gods (at 905e) were not simply there to offer images of how the gods may exercise their governorship, but that they were also used to prepare for this idea of acquisitiveness as disease in the body and as plague amongst crops that are affected by the seasons. Thus, since the doctor and farmer were shown at 905e as protecting against, or being concerned to protect against, these ills, and since these figures were suggested as comparisons for the gods, the Athenian can suggest implicitly that the gods are involved in the struggle against acquisitiveness, which manifests itself in society as 'injustice'. These images are therefore used to strengthen the Athenian's point that the gods are our 'allies' in the war against vice, a point which is a crucial element in his argument that they cannot be won over by evil men.

In the next section the Athenian goes on to develop the animal image which he introduced obliquely a few lines earlier. He makes his point thus (906c8-d6):

Τοῦτον δὴ τὸν λόγον ἀναγκαῖον λέγειν τὸν λέγοντα ὡς εἰσὶν συγγνώμονες αἰεὶ θεοὶ τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκους καὶ ἀδικοῦσιν, ἂν αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀδικημάτων τις ἀπονεμη· καθάπερ κυσὶν λύκοι τῶν ἀρπασμάτων σμικρὰ ἀπονέμοιεν, οἱ δὲ ἡμερούμενοι τοῖς δάροισι συγχωροῦεν τὰ ποίμνια διαρπάζειν. ἄρ' οὐχ οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὁ τῶν φασκόντων παραιτητοῦς εἶναι θεούς;

Thus anyone who argues that the gods are always indulgent to the unjust man and the criminal, provided they're given a share in the loot, must in effect be prepared to say that if wolves, for instance, were to give watchdogs

a small part of their prey, the dogs would be appeased by the gift and turn a blind eye to the plundering of the flock. Isn't this what people are really suggesting when they say that the gods can be squared? (tr. Saunders)

So the simile here (*καθάπερ*) represents the gods as sheepdogs watching over their flock and represents evil men as wolves wanting to ravage the flock and trying to secure the sheepdog's compliance in this by promising a share of their spoil. This is a highly effective image first because it is so shocking, with its suggestion of wholesale slaughter, and second because it is internally coherent, with the sheepdogs, sheep and wolves representing the gods, innocent and wicked men in a scenario that makes sense on both levels. The question that naturally arises from the comparison of the guardians to watchdogs at 906c, that is, 'why introduce sheepdogs as well as shepherds?' is clearly answered since this analogy depends totally on the gods being seen as dogs and would simply not work if they were presented as shepherds. For it is only because of the fact that the wolves share a common canine nature with the sheepdogs that they can have any hope of them accepting their offer of part of their spoil, the ravaged sheep. Within the simile itself the relationship between wolves, dogs and sheep is entirely consistent, but also these relationships effectively represent what would happen if the gods were venal. For in this case the gods would allow evil men to harm the innocent on condition that they would receive some of the benefit themselves, for example, turning a blind eye to financial exploitation or robbery if they were to receive an offering from the proceeds. Thus the gods would share in the spoil of wicked men just as in the simile the dogs share in the spoil of the wolves. Also, just as this deal between wolves and dogs depends upon their having a common canine nature, so, if the gods were venal, the deal they make with evil men

would depend upon their having a common wicked and unscrupulous nature. The simile also brings out very effectively that this acceptance of bribery would not only mean that the gods were neglectful of their duty of protecting men, but would also mean that they were wholeheartedly joining forces with the wicked to harm the innocent and to profit thereby.

This simile, therefore, shows in very vivid terms how this view, that the gods can be bribed, stands in utter contradiction to their perceived role as kindly protectors and as *σύμμαχοι* (allies) in the battle against evil. Thus by translating the situation of evil men supplicating the gods into these very striking and extreme terms of the wholesale slaughter of innocent and defenceless creatures, the Athenian can make his point about the gods very forcefully and convincingly. After gaining Clinias' agreement that this is indeed what people are saying when they claim that the gods can be bribed, The Athenian then goes on to ask (906d8-e1):

Τίσιιν οὖν δὴ τῶν προρρηθέντων ἀπεικάζων ὁμοίους φύλακας εἶναι θεοῦς οὐκ ἂν καταγέλαστος γίγνοιτο ἀνθρώπων ὀστισοῦν;  
So consider all those guardians we instanced a moment ago. Can one compare gods to any of them without making oneself ridiculous? (tr. Saunders)

Before noting how he answers this, we must observe how the list of 'rulers' (*ἀρχόντων*) originally introduced at 905e has now become a list of 'guardians' (*φύλακας*). There is perhaps a subtle difference between these terms, namely that between control and care. For originally the Athenian came upon the idea of the gods as governors through the acceptance of the idea that they 'run, administer' (*διοικήσουσας*) the universe, but as the passage has progressed he has moved much further towards the idea of the gods as the defenders and

tenders of man, an idea which forms the basis of the watchdog simile. This move between the two ideas can be explained by the fact that the image of the gods as kindly protectors serves the Athenian's argument much better than that of them simply as rulers, whose goodness and goodwill, of course, is far from assured.

So now the gods are our guardians, and to answer whether they can be compared with any of the list of human 'guardians' the Athenian selects the steersman comparison and asks (906e1-3):

πότερον κυβερνήταις, λοιβῆ τε οἴνου κνίση τε  
 παρατρεπομένοις αὐτοῖς, ἀνατρέπουσι δὲ ναῦς τε καὶ  
 ναύτας;

What about steersmen who are turned from their course 'by libations and burnt offerings' and wreck both the ship and its crew? (tr. Saunders)

Plato is echoing a line from the *Iliad* (Book IX, line 500), as Saunders, Taylor and England all point out. But what they do not point out is how interesting the use of the quotation is here. In the Homeric passage, Phoenix urges Achilles to tame his anger and says that even the gods can be 'turned' (στρεπτοῖ). He then goes on (IX, 499):

καὶ μὲν τοὺς θυέεσσι καὶ εὐχολῆς ἀγανῆσι  
 λοιβῆ τε κνίση τε παρατρῶπῳ ἄνθρωποι  
 λισσομένοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῆῃ καὶ ἀμάρτην."

Their hearts by incense and reverent vows and libations  
 and the savour of sacrifice do men turn from wrath with  
 supplication, whenso any man transgresseth and doeth sin.  
 (tr. A.T. Murray)

The line in Homer tells how the gods can be won over and yet Plato uses it - with skilful adaptation - in an argument designed to show the opposite. Saunders and England observe that λοιβῆ τε κνίση is a quotation from Homer, but do not observe that Plato has introduced wine into the phrase: λοιβῆ τε οἴνου κνίση, and indeed ignore it in their translation and commentary respectively. Taylor, on the other

hand, is so taken with the idea of wine that he forgets all about the burnt offerings so that his translation reads:

seamen who are 'turned from their course by "flow and fragrance" of wine' and overturn vessel and crew.

What he has done, it seems, has been to take *οἴνου* with both *λοιβῆ* and *κνίση*, choosing to ignore that *κνίση*, as LSJ tells us, is the term for 'the steam and odour of fat which exhales from roasting meat' and thus cannot be used of the 'fragrance' of wine. Taylor has also included the phrase 'turned from their course' (*παρατρεπομένοις*) as part of the Homeric quotation, but this is not in Homer's text. If, on the other hand, he is only attributing to Homer the "flow and fragrance" part of his translation, then I am not at all sure why he uses single quotation marks from 'turned' to 'wine'.

At any rate, Taylor is no doubt right to see Plato's *παρατρεπομένοις* as an echo of Homer's *παρατρῶπως*. In Homer the verb is active and, with the accusative 'τους', means literally 'turning them aside' - a metaphor for influencing the gods' opinion in their favour. I would translate *παρατρεπομένοις* as 'turned aside' or 'won over' as a direct echo of Homer, but both Taylor and Saunders translate this as 'turned from their course'. This, I believe, is misleading since it suggests that the helmsmen have been bribed to change the direction of their ship, which is not the case at all. For as we see with the verb *ἀνατρεπουσι*, the aim of the bribe has been to get the helmsmen to overturn their ship and nothing is said about its direction.

Now why does Plato introduce wine into the Homeric phrase and what exactly is going on here? Well, as I said, Plato is skilfully adapting the phrase for his present purpose. He knows that the use of the

quotation will recall Homer's passage on the winning over of the gods, which is, of course, his own real concern here. However, the image he is using at this moment to speak about his primary subject is that of helmsmen. In terms of the image, then, what Plato or the Athenian actually asks here is 'can the gods be compared to helmsmen who are won over by libations and burnt offerings?'. This is clearly an odd idea, as there cannot be many sailors who would find this a very tempting bribe. Thus, to make his comparison a more realistic one, he introduces the idea of a gift in the form of wine, which is obviously far more appropriate. So in this passage we find the gods represented as helmsmen won over by the gift of wine and the manner of this bribery is likened to Homer's picture which deals with how the gods themselves are won over. We must conclude, I believe, that the Homeric quotation is there to remind Clinias of what is really under discussion and that the wine is introduced to make the image of bribing the helmsmen more realistic. Thus we find a very pleasing fusion of the tenor and vehicle of the image, as the gods in Plato are compared to helmsmen won over in the manner of Homer's gods.

What is the effect of this image? Clinias rejects it completely, but why? Is it because the image of suicidal helmsmen is simply ridiculous or because it represents the gods as evil? He does not give his reasons but I would venture that his rejection of the image is the result of both of these considerations.

In terms of the human scenario the action of the helmsmen in overturning the ship is extremely dangerous for themselves and their crew and so does seem to be rather absurd. But, more importantly, at the level of comparison with the gods the image represents the gods as involved in wrongdoing and so stands in direct conflict with the

proposition that the gods are good. Since Clinias has already firmly accepted this proposition, he is hardly likely at this point to accept a contradictory view. The Athenian at 906e seems to take the helmsman image as a random example of a comparison for the gods from the original list at 905e in order to show that all the comparisons are absurd. But the comparison in the original list was simply with *πλοίων κυβερνήται*, 'the helmsmen of vessels', which in itself is far from a 'ridiculous' comparison and indeed we can see that Plato uses it for quite serious purposes elsewhere (e.g. in the myth of the *Politicus*). But what makes the image ridiculous here is the idea that the gods can be seen as unscrupulous helmsmen who are willing to overturn their ship, if offered a tempting enough bribe. Thus by translating the idea of the gods being won over by gifts into these rather extreme terms, the Athenian not only weights the image itself to make it seem ridiculous, but also highlights the discrepancy between the wickedness of such an act and the goodness of the gods. Thus the Athenian (or Plato) can be assured that Clinias will reject the image. The Athenian's point, therefore, rests not on the image of the gods as helmsmen, but as *wicked* helmsmen, an idea which is guaranteed to seem unacceptable to Clinias.

The Athenian, having secured Clinias' agreement that the helmsman image is not an acceptable one for the gods, goes on to say (906e5-7):

Ἄλλ' οὐτι μὴν ἠνιόχοισί γε ἐν ἀμίλλῃ συντεταγμένοις,  
πειθεῖσιν ὑπὸ δωρεᾶς ἑτέροις τὴν νίκην ζεύγεσι  
προδοῦναι.

And presumably they are not to be compared to a charioteer lined up at the starting point who has been bribed by a gift to throw the race and let others win.  
(tr. Saunders)

The charioteer image is used to show the gods as unscrupulous as they accept the bribe and throw the race, and Clinias rejects this, calling

it a 'scandalous comparison' (Δεινὴν...εἰκόνα). Again this is not the image we were first presented with at 905e, as there the comparison was simply with ἡνίοχοί ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων (charioteers of competing teams) and thus this image, as the previous one, has been developed to present the gods as wicked, an idea certainly not present in its first appearance. We can see quite clearly now that the Athenian introduced the idea of 'competing teams' in the original list solely for the purpose of preparing the way for this later development. Also, as there was no such development of the idea of competition in the second occurrence of the helmsman image, this indicates, as said above, that ἀμιλλωμένων at 905e is to be understood as agreeing only with ζευγῶν and not also with πλοίων.

We have observed, then, how the Athenian introduces the ideas of unscrupulousness and wickedness into the comparisons of the helmsman and charioteer in order to convince Clinias that they are not suitable comparisons for the gods. He then goes on to discredit all the former comparisons, saying, 'Nor, of course, do they stand comparison with generals or doctors or farmers or herdsmen, or dogs beguiled by wolves.' A statement with which Clinias wholeheartedly agrees, exclaiming, 'What blasphemy! The very idea!' The comparison of the gods to dogs beguiled by wolves is of the sort to provoke such a reaction from Clinias, but the Athenian has not in any way shown that the comparisons with generals, doctors, farmers or herdsmen are at all inappropriate or blasphemous; indeed he has already himself used these images to convey the serious idea that the gods are our 'allies' in the 'war' against 'acquisitiveness'. Therefore for the passage to make sense, it seems we must understand the phrase πεισθεῖσιν ὑπὸ δωρεᾶς at 906e6 as agreeing not only with ἡνιόχοισί but also with the series of

datives as 906e10-11. The images of generals and doctors etc. only become 'blasphemous', then, when they are used to suggest that the gods can be persuaded by gifts.

After winning Clinias' unqualified agreement that the gods cannot be persuaded by the gifts of evil men, the Athenian concludes his argument by asking, 'Now aren't the gods the most supreme guardians of all and don't they look after our supreme interests?', and Clinias replies that they are indeed. Thus the argument ends and at 907b the Athenian asks whether all three theses about the gods - that they exist, that they are concerned for us and that they are 'absolutely above being corrupted into flouting justice' - have all been adequately proved (*ἱκανῶς ἀποδεδεῖχθαι*), to which Clinias responds: 'Certainly and we endorse these arguments of yours.'

The different images and comparisons for the gods in this passage are used very much for rhetorical purposes, to help the Athenian prove his point that the gods cannot be won over. The whole argument works on the basis that if the gods could be won over by gifts, then they would have to put other interests before those of looking after human beings and thus would be neglecting their duty. The images offered, especially those of the sheepdogs and helmsmen, translate this idea into scenarios where bribery leads to the neglect of duty with very serious consequences. The images are used to show in very vivid terms what the view that the gods are venal actually entails when taken to its logical conclusion. The results then obviously conflict with the idea that the gods are good, an idea which has already been established dialectically. Thus by using some images to support belief in the gods' goodness and by using others to highlight the conflict between this belief and the idea that the gods can be won over by evil

men, the Athenian leads Clinias to the conclusion that one of these views must be false. Thus, as the whole weight of the argument suggests that belief in the gods' goodness is justified, then it must be that the other view is wrong, and so the idea that the gods can be won over is firmly rejected.

However we judge the merits of this argument, it is clear that the comparisons and images are integral to it, and so we may conclude that verbal *εἰκόνες* play an extremely important and effective rhetorical role in this passage of the *Laws*.

### 5.5 Conclusions

My discussion of the three passages featured in this chapter has shown that Plato uses metaphors for the gods in conjunction with one another to establish certain points, to create extended pictures of divine activity and to achieve particular rhetorical effects. The shepherd and helmsman metaphors work together in the *Critias* passage to portray, in a golden age context, the care and control of the gods. The change from the shepherd to the helmsman image also works rhetorically, since it allows Plato to avoid an issue that would cause problems at this point, namely human free will. In the *Politicus* myth we find a range of metaphors for god. As well as being spoken of as the force that orders, revolves and guides the universe, he is also represented as its craftsman, father and helmsman. These different presentations work with one another to create a complex and emotive picture of god's power and the universe's dependence on him. The form of the *Laws* passage and its images is quite different from the other two. Here we have a dialectical exchange rather than a narrative and here the presentations of the gods - as charioteers, helmsmen,

generals, doctors, farmers and shepherds - are offered throughout as explicit comparisons. As I have shown, these comparisons are integral to the Athenian's argument and serve as highly effective rhetorical devices as he persuades Clinias that the gods cannot be bribed.

All of these passages reflect the views that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good. The metaphors and images at one level work to express these views and thus, as I argued at the end of Chapter 4, play an illustrative role. However, this does not mean that different metaphors and images simply restate Plato's beliefs in different ways. For, as we have seen in our three passages, Plato's metaphors work in their contexts to flesh out and enlarge upon ideas which emerge from the beliefs mentioned above: the *Critias* passage seeks a satisfactory model for the manner of god's control; the *Politicus* myth dramatises the creative and sustaining power of god; and the *Laws* passage sets out to refute a view that conflicts with belief in the gods' goodness. As we consider how far metaphors are indispensable to Plato's theological discourse, we must take into account that much of this discourse is concerned not with speculation about the divine nature, but with the exposition, amplification and defence of certain firmly-held beliefs. The passages examined in this chapter show that metaphors and images are integral to the exposition of Plato's views and to his rhetorical method, and so I conclude that even on the illustrative view metaphors must be regarded as indispensable to Plato's discourse on the gods.

In Part II of this thesis I have considered the role of Plato's metaphors for the gods. In Part III I will examine metaphors for another immortal and invisible element operating (in Plato's view) in

human life: the soul. Although there are occasions when the human soul is represented as a plant, animal, place or inanimate object (see Appendix 3, Groups C, D, E and F), mostly, like the gods, it is portrayed in anthropomorphic terms. Thus in Part III I will continue to examine 'images for persons unseen' and will continue to assess their cognitive and rhetorical significance. My treatment of the material in Part III will follow broadly the same lines as in Part II: in Chapter 6 I will consider Plato's own attitude to his soul metaphors and language for the soul; in Chapters 7 and 8 I will examine the cognitive role of various groups of soul metaphors throughout the dialogues and in Chapter 9 I will focus on a single speech, analysing the role and development of one particular soul metaphor.

<sup>1</sup>'one must never forget that Plato has no wish to be the prisoner of his image. He will abandon it when it suits him, return freely to it later, at the direction of his poetic imagination, wishing to suggest by this manner of dealing with it that the image is only an image, which means that metaphorical expressions do not articulate intelligible reality as indeed it truly is in its essence'.

<sup>2</sup>'Plato's literary tact, then, is at times a philosophic precaution'.

<sup>3</sup>'As we see in this image where the pilot and rudder replace the shepherd and his whip, the simile and the metaphor are very satisfactorily intertwined'.

<sup>4</sup>'If in the passage already referred to the nautical image comes up rather unexpectedly, and if, as often happens, it replaces another analogous image - a device which has, it seems, the purpose of ensuring that, by means of the multiplying of images, the picture conveyed does not impose itself too forcibly and does not wholly call up the idea behind it - in the myth of the *Politicus* (273e and 273d) this metaphor is used on its own to express god's action in the material world'.

<sup>5</sup>Taylor translates *νομῆς* as 'herdsman' and *ποίμνια* as 'cattle', but the words can also be used of a shepherd and flocks of sheep.

<sup>6</sup>On the idea that the gods were thought to do things easily, see M.L. West's comments on lines 5-7 of Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

<sup>7</sup>'this metaphor is used on its own to express God's action in the material world'.

<sup>8</sup>But perhaps the background of myth reduces the conflict here, since earlier Greek myths present the gods fashioning living creatures; see e.g. Hesiod, *Works and Days* lines 59-82.

<sup>9</sup>Skemp introduces the modern idea of a 'conning tower' in his translation of *περιωπή*, but the simple translation of 'look-out point' is much closer to the Greek itself, and as it serves the purposes of the passage just as well, would seem to be a more appropriate translation.

<sup>10</sup>'this last expression is not strictly speaking to do with the sea'.

<sup>11</sup>'as though the helmsman had left the ship'.

<sup>12</sup>Traditionally instruction and fatherhood were linked, see *Odyssey* XXIV 338-9.

<sup>13</sup>The sea itself is often used as a metaphor for confusion and the loss of order. See e.g. N. Austin's comments on the sea as an image of chaos in the *Odyssey*, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon*, pp. 140-142.

<sup>14</sup>What is the meaning of *ἀνομοιότητος* (unlikeness) here? It seems to me that it is used to suggest the situation where disruption and disorder would destroy the arrangement god has made, turning the universe once again into a chaotic mass where no order or harmony could be discerned. This seems to be an echo of Empedocles' cycle where at a certain point the force of Strife destroys the 'cosmos' formed by Love, so that all that was once alike and joined together is in time pulled apart and made different again (fr. 17).

<sup>15</sup>I read λυθέντα as an echo of διαλυθείς (273d6) and therefore as referring to the effects of the shipwreck. However, it can perhaps be taken as a bridge term between the images of a ship and a living being, since λύομαι is on occasion used of physical effects on the human body (see LSJ).

<sup>16</sup>We should take note that once returned to the helm of the ship of the universe, the god undertakes an act of reparation, to reassert order, an act which bears no relation to the labours of a pilot'.

<sup>17</sup>See Chapter 4 section 4.7 on the shepherd image.

<sup>18</sup>See *Phaedo* 62b8, 62d3, *Polit.* 274b5, *Crit.* 109b7 etc.

**PART III**

**SOUL**

## Chapter 6

### SOUL METAPHORS AND SOUL MYTHS

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will assess the cognitive status of Plato's language about the soul and try to establish Plato's own attitude to the significance of his own soul metaphors. The views of a number of critics, both on the metaphors themselves and on the myths which deal with the soul, will be examined and these will be tested against Plato's own remarks relating to his treatment of the soul.

The first part of this study will deal with Plato's statements about the soul itself and about how far human knowledge of it is limited.

#### 6.2 The Soul and Human Knowledge

Although the soul, like the gods, is presented as invisible and immortal, nevertheless, there is still a difference in their status for Plato, as the gods belong to a different order of things from human beings, whereas the soul is very much part of human life here in the phenomenal world. Although there are a number of passages in the dialogues that suggest that the nature of the gods is beyond human knowledge, this is not the case with the soul. Plato devotes a great deal of space to setting out his views on the soul and arguing for the truth of his claims. The soul is not presented as an entity which confounds rational discourse or inquiry and, reflecting this, a great deal is said about the soul in quite literal terms throughout the dialogues. As well as arguments about the effect of human actions on the soul, we also find that Plato argues and proves to his own

satisfaction that the soul is immortal. A brief glance over what is said about the soul in literal terms shows that Plato says of its functions:

- a) it is the immortal principle of life;
- b) it is that by which human beings reason and learn;
- c) it is the means by which we interpret our perceptions of the world;
- d) it is that part of us which desires and reacts emotionally to that which we perceive;
- e) it is that part of us that has right and wrong behaviour as its proper concern;
- f) it is that which moves itself.

Also, as to the value of the soul, we are told quite directly that:

- g) the soul is better and stronger than the body;
- h) it is the most precious and most divine thing a human being has;
- i) its nature is improved by just and good behaviour but harmed by injustice and evil actions.

In addition to this, Plato on some occasions sets out the view that the soul has three 'parts' (μέρη, *Rep.* 442b11, c5, 444b3 etc.): reason (λογιστικὸν) spirit (θυμοειδές) and appetite (ἐπιθυμητικὸν). There is no suggestion, however, that the soul is divisible into these 'parts' in the literal sense, and indeed Plato's use of different terms for these (εἶδη (forms), *Rep.* 435c5; εἶδη τε καὶ ἦθη (forms and characters), 435e2; γένη (kinds) 443d3) suggests that he was attempting to avoid language which would imply material existence.<sup>1</sup> However, despite this much being said of the soul, it is clear that Plato is not fully confident about certain aspects of it - such as what exactly happens to it after death, why and how it came into

being, how the soul is connected to the body and, most significantly, what kind of thing it is or what form it has.

That Plato is not sure of what exactly the soul will experience in the afterlife - although he is sure that it will experience something - is conveyed by certain remarks in the *Phaedo*. The first doubts about human knowledge of the afterlife are voiced by Simmias at 85c. Speaking about the soul's experience after death, he says (85c1-4):

ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἴσως ὥσπερ καὶ σοὶ τὸ μὲν σαφές εἰδέναι ἐν τῷ νῦν βίῳ ἢ ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἢ παγχάλεπόν τι,  
I think, just as you do, Socrates, that...it is very difficult if not impossible in this life to achieve certainty about these questions, (tr. Tredennick)

Socrates in this dialogue, however, is firmly committed to the doctrine of immortality and to the view that justice pays not only in this life but also in the world beyond. His opinions about the afterlife are rooted in this view and his myth of the soul's experiences in the other world, which appears later in the dialogue, is constructed around this. Nevertheless, he is not willing to claim that his story represents the whole truth on the matter (114d1-6):

Τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα διισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελέλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ· ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἅττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκῆσεις, ἐπεὶ περ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὔσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρέπει μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν - καλὸς ὁ κίνδυνος -...  
Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future habitations - since we have clear evidence that the soul is immortal - this, I think, is both a reasonable contention and a belief worth risking, for the risk is a noble one. (tr. Tredennick)

So Socrates qualifies his story; although he is certain of the soul's immortality, he will not insist that all the details of his account

are true. He does not know what exactly the soul will experience after the death of the body.

In the *Timaeus* we find other statements regarding the limits of knowledge about the soul - this time on the questions of how it came into being and of the nature of its parts. Early in the dialogue Timaeus stresses that his account of creation must necessarily be regarded as merely a 'likely story' (29c4-d3):

ἐὰν οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλὰ πολλῶν πέρι, θεῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός γενέσεως, μὴ δυνατοὶ γινώμεθα πάντη πάντως αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ὁμολογουμένους λόγους καὶ ἀπηκριβωμένους ἀποδοῦναι, μὴ θαυμάσης· ἀλλ' ἐὰν ἄρα μηδενὸς ἤττον παρεχώμεθα εἰκότας, ἀγαπᾶν χρὴ, μεμνημένους ὡς ὁ λέγων ἐγὼ ὑμεῖς τε οἱ κριταὶ φύσιν ἀνθρωπίνην ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ τούτων τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον ἀποδεχομένους πρέπει τούτου μηδὲν ἔτι πέρα ζητεῖν.

If then, Socrates, in many respects concerning many things - the gods and the generation of the universe - we prove unable to render an account at all points entirely consistent with itself and exact, you must not be surprised. If we can furnish accounts no less likely than any other, we must be content, remembering that I who speak and you my judges are only human, and consequently it is fitting that we should in these matters accept the likely story and look for nothing further. (tr. Cornford)

In line with this Timaeus tells how we should also accept the likely story or probable account of the generation of the soul (44c6-d2):

καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς, δι' ἃς τε αἰτίας καὶ προνοίας γέγονε θεῶν, τοῦ μάλιστα εἰκότος ἀντεχομένοις, οὕτω καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα πορευομένοις διεξιτέον.

and concerning soul, and the reasons and forethought of the gods in producing them - of all this we must go on to tell, on the principle of holding fast to the most likely account. (tr. Cornford)

Again at 72d he stresses the tentative nature of his account of certain aspects of the soul (72d4-8):

Τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ ψυχῆς, ὅσον θνητὸν ἔχει καὶ ὅσον θεῖον, καὶ ὅπη καὶ μεθ' ὧν καὶ δι' ἃ χωρὶς ὑκίσθη, τὸ μὲν ἀληθές ὡς εἴρηται, θεοῦ συμφήσαντος τότε ἂν οὕτως μόνως διισχυριζοίμεθα· τό γε μὴν εἰκὸς ἡμῖν εἰρῆσθαι, καὶ νῦν καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἀνασκοποῦσι διακινδυνευτέον τὸ φάναι καὶ πεφάσθω.

Concerning the soul, then, we have stated what part of it is mortal and what divine, and where, in what company, and for what reasons the two are housed apart. We could confidently assert that our account is the truth only if it were first confirmed by heaven; but that it is the probable account we may venture to say now, and still more on further consideration. Let that claim, then, be taken as made. (tr. Cornford)

Although we have a clear statement that the accounts of the soul's generation and composition are tentative ones, we must not leap from this to the conclusion that Plato is telling us here that knowledge of the soul is impossible since it is a matter that lies beyond our experience. For the remarks at 44c relate not only to the generation of the soul but also to the generation of the body (*περὶ σωμάτων κατὰ μέρη τῆς γενέσεως* 44c6), and at 72d Timaeus is concerned with the connection of the soul to the body rather than with the nature of the soul *per se*. An exposition of the nature of soul is given at 34b-37c and, significantly, this appears with no particular qualifying statement, although, of course, the whole of Timaeus' account is qualified by the statement at 29c. Although Timaeus' remarks on the status of his account of the soul are interesting, I do not think that they can be read as a blanket statement about the limitations of human knowledge of this partly divine entity. For the same kind of qualifying statements are also made about accounts of the body, which clearly is part of our mortal and sensible world. For a more revealing statement on human knowledge of the soul we must turn to the *Phaedrus*.

After presenting argument and proofs that the soul is immortal, Socrates tells us at *Phaedrus* 246a3-7:

Περὶ μὲν οὖν ἀθανασίας αὐτῆς ἱκανῶς· περὶ δὲ τῆς ιδέας αὐτῆς ᾧδε λεκτέον. οἷον μὲν ἔστι, πάντη πάντως, θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος· ταύτη οὖν λέγωμεν. ἔοικέτω δὴ συμφύτῳ δυνάμει ὑποπτέρου ζευγους τε καὶ ἡμιόχου.

About its immortality, enough has been said; about its form we must say the following. To say what kind of thing

it is would require a long exposition, and one calling for utterly superhuman powers; to say what it resembles requires a shorter one, and one within human capacities. So let us speak in the latter way. Let it then resemble the combined power of a winged team of horses and their charioteer. (tr. Rowe)

So we find that when it comes to describing exactly what the soul is, Socrates switches from a direct to an indirect account, comprised of the image of charioteer and horses. Thus Socrates will tell, not what the nature of the soul is, but only what it is like (ἔοικεν).

Do we have here a statement that it is impossible for human beings to tell the nature of the soul? If we dwell on the points that it would require a lengthy exposition (μακρᾶς διηγήσεως) to tell what it is but that what it is like can be conveyed in a shorter account (ἐλάττωτος), it may seem that telling the nature of the soul is simply a matter of time. Admittedly this is acknowledged to be a very long time, which could be why the task is described as 'divine' (θείας), but still there is no direct statement that the telling is impossible. The idea of the length of the account and the related idea of the time it takes to give it is reminiscent of Protagoras' remark concerning his knowledge of the natures of the gods, where he says (Diels-Kranz, B4 (περὶ θεῶν)):

περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναί, οὔθ' ὡς εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὁποῖοί τινες ἰδέαν· πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναί ἢ τ' ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχύς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.  
Concerning the gods, I am unable to discover whether they exist or not, or what they are like in form; for there are many hindrances to knowledge, the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human life.

Here, then, Protagoras points out that both the uncertainty of the matter and the shortness of human life prevent him from attaining knowledge of the gods. Within the Platonic corpus itself we also find another passage where something is spoken of as too long to tell. This

is *Phaedo* 114c where Socrates is speaking of the afterlife habitations of the souls purified by philosophy. Here again the length of the account is related to the difficulty of describing the subject: ἄς οὔτε ῥάδιον δηλῶσαι οὔτε ὁ χρόνος ἱκανὸς ἐν τῷ παρόντι, '[habitations] which it is not easy to portray - nor is there time to do so now' (tr. Tredennick). It may be then that Plato's point in the *Phaedrus* is similar to Protagoras' comment on the gods and to his own remarks in the *Phaedo*. Rather than claiming that it is impossible to tell of the soul's nature, he may simply be saying that the account would require more time and space than are available at present.

However, if, on the other hand, we dwell on the distinction made in the *Phaedrus* passage between the divine (θείας) and mortal (ἀνθρωπίνης), it does seem that Socrates is saying that human beings can tell what the soul is like, but that to say what it is is a task for a god - i.e. impossible for humans. This reading, stressing the gulf between divine and human knowledge, is supported, I think, by the other occasions in the dialogues when Plato uses the phrase 'only god knows' to indicate that a particular issue or question is simply beyond human knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Here we must note a very important point, namely that although Plato may suggest that giving an account of something is impossible at one time, this need not suggest that it would always be impossible. Throughout the dialogues we see Plato continually reworking and developing his ideas and thus he need not rule out the possibility that when his ideas have progressed further, he may be able to give the desired account of the soul's nature. However, for the moment here in the *Phaedrus* it seems that it is not possible, and so he will turn to what the soul is like. The myth that

follows, then, presents a view of the soul which we must accept as a likeness, not as an account of its actual nature.

There is, of course, a problem here in that if Plato does not know and cannot tell what the nature of the soul *is*, then how can he know or tell what it is *like*?<sup>4</sup> This is not addressed in the text and it seems that we are simply to accept that the picture of the soul offered in the myth is like its real nature although at the moment Socrates cannot tell what that is.

It is not perhaps surprising that critics have been dissatisfied with this approach to the soul's nature. If Plato tells us that the picture of the soul that is about to follow is simply a likeness, and given his own low opinion of likenesses (see section 2.4), why should any weight at all be attached to the many images and metaphors for the soul which follow in the myth? If Plato does not know and cannot tell what the soul is, then how can his metaphors or images for it have any significance?

The next section of this chapter will outline two very different responses to this question; the first representing the empiricist view, the second representing a particular version of the epistemic thesis of metaphors' cognitive role.

### 6.3 Parker and de Marignac on the Relation of Soul Metaphors to Knowledge about the Soul

Despite the fact that Parker's views are very old and very much of his time (1666), they are worth stating because they set out very clearly one particular response to the question before us. Having heard Parker's views on metaphors in general (1.1) and on the theological discourse of the Platonists (frontispiece to Part II), we come now to

his statements regarding the soul metaphors used by Plato and those who followed him. For Bishop Parker these metaphors are 'idle and insignificant Non-sense' because the Platonists are 'altogether ignorant of the nature and Substance of the Soul' and are unable to express their thoughts on the soul in 'proper' (we may read 'literal') terms:<sup>5</sup>

..they draw Metaphors from all the Senses, Members and Functions of the Body, from all the General Hypotheses of Nature; from all the Phaenomena of the Heavens and the Earth, from all the several Properties and Operations of the several species of Creatures and apply them to the Nature, Faculties and operations of the Soul; But because they are altogether ignorant of the nature and substance of the Soul and are not able to express the greatest part of these things by proper terms, all these Metaphors must pass for idle and insignificant Non-sense, because they signifie we know not what, and describe we know not how;

On the empiricist view, as expressed here by Parker, the soul metaphors have no cognitive value since Plato and the Platonists are completely ignorant about the soul itself. Although I do not accept this view, as I shall argue at the end of this chapter, I do agree that there is a problem in telling what something is like when one cannot, for whatever reason, tell what it is. For there is thus no obvious way for the likeness to be judged.

Our second critic, de Marignac (1951), would not accept this approach to the soul metaphors and in his book, *Imagination et Dialectique*, sets out a view that stands in direct contrast to that of Parker. For de Marignac argues that Plato's soul metaphors, far from being nonsense, actually serve to 'mitigate' Plato's ignorance about the soul. De Marignac believes that ignorance, or rather 'insufficient

knowledge' about the soul is one of the reasons why Plato uses images  
(p.137):

C'est dans l'imperfection de la connaissance des êtres réels, des essences intelligibles, Dieu, le Bien, et aussi de cet être dont la position est si particulière, l'âme, que nous pensons trouver l'une des raisons du recours à l'expression imagée...<sup>6</sup>

(p.138)

cette connaissance insuffisante<sup>7</sup> contraint Platon...à user d'une expression imagée.

On this point I would not disagree with de Marignac, as the passage at *Phaedrus* 246d suggests that Plato is turning to images of the soul because he cannot tell what he does not know - i.e. what exactly the soul is (οἶον ..ἐστι). But beyond this de Marignac and I part company as he also argues that images are the best, 'if not the only' way that Plato can express the true nature of the soul.

De Marignac makes a distinction between Plato's 'simple psychological analysis, based on observation of actions' and his attempts to express the 'real being' - 'l'être réel' - (p.138) of the soul. He believes that although Plato could express psychological observations without recourse to imagery, nevertheless the 'real being' of the soul was 'ineffable' (p.132) and could only be expressed by means of images (p.145):

il ne lui était pas possible d'exprimer l'être véritable, l'être métaphysique de l'âme en un langage qui ne fût pas imagé...

and (p.146):

L'image est donc plus et autre chose qu'un simple symbole; elle est, lorsqu'il faut dire l'essence, le moyen le meilleur, si ce n'est pas le seul<sup>9</sup>, qui permette à l'auteur de dire ce qui ne peut être dit,...

For de Marignac imagery derives its special expressive capacity from its 'incantatory power' - 'la force incantatoire' - and believes that this comes from its poetic and 'mystic' potential (p.149):

La vertu de l'image provient de ce qu'elle est chargée d'un potentiel poétique et 'mystique'.<sup>10</sup>

It is because of this potential that, in de Marignac's view, imagery has an important cognitive significance, as (p.135):

L'image sert à pallier une connaissance insuffisante du spirituel.<sup>11</sup>

This quotation appears as a title and although it is vague as to whose 'insufficient knowledge' the image affects, in the text that follows it becomes clear that it is not just that of the audience but also of Plato himself. For, speaking of the image offered for Reason itself at *Laws* 897d-e and going on to comment on the image of the Good in the *Republic*, de Marignac says (p.137-8):

Cette expression imagée est donc là pour pallier la difficulté qu'il y a à formuler ce qu'on connaît mal: c'était pour lever un coin du voile de ténèbres qui nous cache ce qu'est le Bien que le Socrate de la *République* recourait à l'image du soleil (506d-e);<sup>12</sup>

If one takes 'pallier' to mean that Plato 'mitigates' or 'alleviates' his own insufficient knowledge by simply giving up his attempt to describe the exact nature of the soul, then de Marignac's claim is not such a radical one. But the idea of 'lifting the corner of the veil' and the later development of his argument for the mystic potential of metaphor (pp.149-58) lead me to conclude that he does hold that imagery somehow allows one to overcome the limitations of one's knowledge of the spiritual. In view of this I think it is fair to judge that de Marignac's rather vague statements here are meant to convey the view that images 'mitigate' ignorance by offering new

knowledge or insight and this is achieved, it seems, by means of their special potential (la force incantatoire). Thus de Marignac, it appears, is proposing a particular version of the epistemic thesis set out in Chapter 1, which claims that metaphors provide a special cognitive access over and above that of literal discourse.

In the views of Parker and de Marignac we can see two very different responses to the question of the relationship between Plato's soul metaphors and knowledge of the soul: for Parker Plato's ignorance about the soul renders his metaphors 'idle nonsense', whereas for de Marignac the images 'serve to mitigate' Plato's 'insufficient knowledge' of the spiritual.

I find both of these views unacceptable and believe that the arguments of Eva Kittay offer a far more sensible and rational approach to the role and significance of Plato's soul metaphors. However, before I examine Kittay's claims, there is one other matter I want to clarify: the cognitive role of the soul myths in the dialogues. De Marignac has made two separate claims about the role of the soul metaphors - that they 'mitigate' insufficient knowledge and that they allow the writer to 'say what he cannot say'.<sup>13</sup> We have seen that even in the passage from the dialogues which is most explicit on the matter of the role of images for the soul (*Phaedrus* 246a), Plato does not suggest that the images will perform either of the roles de Marignac claims for them. However, de Marignac is not the only critic who has made this sort of claim about Plato providing 'mystical' insight into the soul. The difference is that whereas de Marignac has confined himself to images, others have focused on the role of the soul *myths* in the dialogues.

Many critics observe a close connection between the roles of metaphor and myth, both in respect of Plato's works and other literature.<sup>14</sup> As far as Plato's myths and metaphors for the soul are concerned, a connection between the two is readily apparent, as we find in the dialogues a number of myths which tell of the nature and fate of the soul - the myths of the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. Many of the metaphors for the soul are concentrated in and around these myths and indeed the myths themselves are constructed around certain root metaphors which become integral to their content. For example, in each of the myths that deal with the fate of the soul in the afterlife, we find that the story depends to a large extent on metaphors such as the journey of the soul and its physical appearance. Now if it were the case that the myths turned out to provide a special cognitive access, as has been claimed, this would leave a large question mark hanging over the role of the metaphors which are integral to their content. If it were proved that the myths do provide a special epistemic access to the concept of soul, then I would have to establish exactly what contribution the metaphors make in this process. As is probably clear from my remarks above on de Marignac, I do not favour a mystical approach to Plato's discourse on the soul. It is not therefore surprising that I do not accept the view that Plato's myths on the soul offer any kind of privileged epistemic access to the nature of the soul in this world or in the afterlife. However, the question seems to me of sufficient importance to merit more detailed discussion, and our analysis of the role of the soul metaphors will benefit from the clearing away of some of the more unhelpful claims that have been made about the cognitive role of Plato's mythic discourse on the soul. In the next section, then, I

will set out some of the different approaches to the cognitive role of Plato's myths, testing these against the evidence of the dialogues to determine which is the most satisfactory.

#### 6.4 The Cognitive Role of Plato's Soul Myths

In this section I shall present a number of different views on the role of Plato's myths. This subject has received a great deal of attention<sup>15</sup> and obviously it will be impossible to give a complete survey of all the different opinions which have been expressed on this large topic. I will therefore confine myself to presenting a selection of views which offer different approaches to the cognitive role of the myths. It is perhaps not surprising that we find the same trends of thought relating to myth as we found with metaphor, with some critics expressing the view that myth provides an insight into certain truths which cannot be gained in any other way, some arguing that the power of myth lies primarily in its emotive power, and finally others maintaining that the myths play an important rhetorical role in illustrating and supplementing the conclusions of dialectic. Let us begin with an approach to myth which claims for it a very special epistemic role.

##### 1. Gregory and the 'Romantic' View

In an article on 'Myth and Transcendence in Plato' Gregory presents a view of the role of myth which has been termed 'Romantic'<sup>16</sup>. The essence of this is that through poetic inspiration and myth human beings can achieve a revelation of a higher truth and experience a glimpse of the divine. Gregory terms the Forms, gods and soul 'transcendental' subjects (p.287), and believes that human beings come

to know such subjects 'ultimately only through some kind of revelation'. It is her view that myth is intimately connected with such revelation, as (p.284):

Myth is both a means of thinking about what is grasped in the transcendental experience and a method of expressing it.

and (p.285):

it is precisely by and in myth that one contemplates that which is not of this world.

For Gregory myth plays an irreplaceable cognitive role in enabling us to reach the 'Absolute' (p.285):

The content of myth, then, is seen to be a cognitive and mystical relation to the transcendent. The revelation of the Absolute is penetrated more and more profoundly by means of imaginative cognition or 'mythical thinking' and communicated in the myth form. The Absolute is reached mystically through myth-irradiated ritual or mythopoetic contemplation.

However one views such an approach to myth, it must be pointed out that there is nothing at all in the dialogues to suggest that Plato held anything like this view. Gregory, however, considers this Plato's view and presents as proof his remarks preceding the myth of the *Phaedrus* (246a).

We have seen that Socrates says here that it would be a long and divine task to tell the nature of the soul, but that human beings can tell what the soul resembles 'in a shorter exposition'. Gregory sees the idea that a 'god alone could tell' (p.292) the nature of the soul as saying that this is something that must be revealed (p.292):

The reason for this mythical treatment, as Plato himself says, is that the topics to be treated are beyond the scope of rational demonstration and actually require to be revealed.

Clearly Plato does not actually say this at all, but says simply that it would require a divine exposition to tell the soul's nature. Later in her article Gregory makes even more of the statement at 246a and ascribes to Plato the view that knowledge of the transcendent is attainable only through myth (p.295):

In short, the objective of the myth was knowledge of the transcendent for the purpose of participation. But such knowledge, as Plato says at the beginning of the myth, is not attainable except through the symbolic mode of the myth. Therefore myth is a necessary element of the *Phaedrus* in dealing with the transcendent and achieving the object that Plato had in mind.

Plato, however, makes no statement either here or anywhere else in the dialogues that knowledge of the transcendent is only attainable through myth. What he says here is that human beings cannot give an account of the nature of the soul and therefore he will say in mythical form what the soul is like. Thus he has shelved completely the question of the actual nature of the soul and is not therefore using myth to say (and still less to achieve knowledge of) what the soul's nature is. There is no claim that the myth can in any way go beyond what can be said in direct discourse.

In the course of her article Gregory refers to the work of J.A. Stewart, calling his thesis 'a very clear analysis of Plato's use of myth'. She quotes Stewart's ideas on 'transcendental feeling', which she sees as integral to her own argument, but she apparently overlooks a crucial difference between their two positions, a difference which I shall attempt to explain.

## 2. Stewart and the 'Kantian' approach.

Stewart sets out his view of the Platonic myths early in his book, expressing vividly the energy which he believes is present in the myths (p.2):

The Myth bursts in upon the Dialogue with a revelation of something new and strange; the narrow, matter-of-fact workaday experience, which the argumentative conversation puts in evidence, is suddenly flooded, as it were, and transfused by the inrush of a vast experience, as from another world.

One can see why such talk of 'revelation' and 'another world' appeals to Gregory, but we must note Stewart's qualifications: 'as it were' and 'as from another world'. Thus he does not actually claim that the myths provide a revelation of the world beyond, but simply points out that it *feels* like this is what is happening - a very different matter altogether. Stewart sees myths as having a fundamentally poetic nature and says of poetry (p.22):

The essential charm of all Poetry, for the sake of which in the last resort it exists, lies in its power of inducing, satisfying and regulating what may be called Transcendental Feeling, especially that form of Transcendental Feeling which manifests itself as solemn sense of Timeless Being - of 'That which was, and is, and ever shall be,' overshadowing us with its presence.

Stewart sees poetry's function as that of arousing emotion and believes that this is the basic role also of myth - a view which has been termed 'Kantian'.<sup>17</sup> It is his opinion that the Platonic myth is not illustrative, that 'it is not Allegory rendering pictorially results already obtained by argument' (p.2), and he argues against the view that myth has another 'meaning' behind its primary sense (p.244):

I hold that Myth has no *dogmatic* meaning behind its literal sense. Its 'meaning' is, first, its literal sense - the story which is told; and then, beyond this, the *feeling* which it calls up and regulates.

For Stewart Plato's myths are 'Dreams expressive of Transcendental Feeling' (p.42) and he expresses this clearly in his comments on the myth of the Politicus (p.300):

The goodness of the State must be written large in that of the Universe: written, not, indeed, in characters which the scientific faculty can at last be sure that it has deciphered, but in the hieroglyphics as it were, of a mysterious picture-writing which, although it does not further definite knowledge, inspires that Wonder which is the source of Philosophy, that Fear which is the beginning of Wisdom.

As Stewart states that the myth as a 'mysterious picture writing' does not further our knowledge but is there to inspire wonder, we can see the difference between this and the views of Gregory, who sees myth as a means of achieving knowledge that is unattainable by means of direct discourse.

Stewart observes a great distinction between sensible objects, which can be grasped by the scientific understanding, and 'Ideas of Reason', such as God or the soul, which are 'objects of faith' (pp.48-51). Such objects of faith cannot be properly understood by the scientific faculty and this, Stewart believes, is the reason why Plato employs myth 'rather than the language and method of science, when he wishes to set forth the *a priori* as it expresses itself in Ideals.' (p.50).

### 3. Dodds and Guthrie: Myths and Matters of Faith

Stewart's idea that myth in Plato is a means of expressing 'objects of faith' is echoed in the later work of Dodds (1945) and Guthrie (1957), but with a difference, as I will show. Dodds in his article 'Plato and the Irrational' argues (pp.23-4):

Mythical thinking is thinking in images, and its logic is wholly or partly the logic of feeling, like the coherence

of a dream or a work of art, not the logic of science or philosophy. Its conclusions are valid for those who share the feeling, but they cannot compel assent. In this Plato's myths resemble the intuitions of the poet or the seer. Plato knew this, and has warned us of it more than once: (*Gorg.* 527a, *Phdo.* 114d, *Tim.* 29c-d). It is our own fault if we insist on ignoring the distinction, and the result is likely to be confusion...Plato, then, if I am right, ...admits two types of belief or two levels of truth, which we may call respectively truths of religion and truths of reason. The truths of religion are, as such, indemonstrable and he does not claim for them more than a probability that 'this or something like it' is true (*Phdo.* 114d)...Plato preferred to convince readers by reasoning rather than emotive eloquence and so continually tried to transpose his religious beliefs from the mythical to the philosophical level, thus transforming them into truths of reason.

In his 1957 article, 'Plato's Views on the Nature of Soul', Guthrie fully accepts Dodds' views and reiterates them as follows (pp.230-31):

Plato admitted two levels of truth which may roughly be called truths of religion and truths of reason. There will always be some truths, and those the highest, which cannot be proved dialectically but must be conveyed in the form of myth, the details of which can claim only probability, not precise accuracy. At the same time he regarded it as the philosopher's duty to push back the frontiers of reason and win for it all possible ground from the domain of mythical imagery...(p.231)...As an example, we may say that immortality was for Plato a matter of rational proof, whereas what befell the immortal part of us after death could only be hinted at in a *ἱερὸς λόγος*.

The important difference between the approach of these critics and that of Stewart is that whereas they stress that Plato will constantly 'reclaim ground' from the realm of mythical imagery, that is, treat the subjects dealt with in myth also by rational means whenever he can, Stewart on the other hand places a much firmer and more enduring division between rational argument and myth and claims that some matters must, and can only ever, be dealt with in myth. Separating 'Categories of the Understanding', which can be objects of scientific

understanding, and 'Ideas of Reason', which must remain matters of faith, Stewart says (p.337):

The mythological treatment of Categories of the Understanding stands on a different footing from that of Ideas of Reason in this important respect, that it is not the only treatment of which the Categories are capable. The Ideas of Reason, Soul, Cosmos and God, if represented at all, must be represented in Myth;

and again, of the treatment of the soul specifically, he says (p.126):

It is only in vision - in Myth - and not scientifically, that the Idea of Soul, or Subject, can be represented, or held up to contemplation as an Object at all.

Thus for Stewart myth is the only way that Plato can express his thoughts on particular matters such as the soul or God. When we remember that in Stewart's view the myths are not illustrative, but function only as a means of arousing 'Transcendental Feeling', it emerges that for Stewart concepts such as the soul or God cannot be reasoned about or illustrated, but only experienced emotionally. The evidence from the dialogues, however, shows that Plato was continually bringing all the power of his reasoning to bear on these very subjects, and thus it seems clear that Stewart's analysis in this respect is unacceptable.

However, could it be that Stewart, although wrong in his claim that the soul and God cannot be reasoned about, is nevertheless right in his claim that in Plato the myths are completely divorced from scientific reasoning? There is clearly a difference between developing lines of argument and telling mythical stories, but is it true to say that Plato simply suspends 'scientific' or 'rational' thought when he begins to use the form of myth? Our next group of critics argue that it is not.

#### 4. Edelstein, Anton and Smith: Myths and Reason.

These critics have studied the role of Plato's myths in relation to the arguments of the dialogues in which they occur. All three hold that the myths are *not* to be regarded as 'irrational' or 'non-scientific' discourse but rather that they are a continuation of the analysis undertaken in the dialogues.

Edelstein, writing in 1949, acknowledges the 'captivating grace' of Plato's myths and sees them as 'instruments of the intellect' (p.466):

Plato composes his philosophical myth in accordance with that insight which he has gained through dialectical analysis. The myth to him is a story shaped at will. As such it is not the antithesis to reason...The myth, in his hands, is truly an instrument of the human intellect.

This is not to say, however, that Plato sees no difference between the cognitive status of ideas established by dialectic and those presented in the myths, as Edelstein explains (p.466):

Nevertheless, the myth is not presented with the certainty that inheres in dialectical knowledge. Of a myth one can only be persuaded (*Phdo.* 114d). The myth, 'taken as a whole, is false, but there is truth in it also,' affirms Socrates. (*Rep.* 377a). The same is valid of the Platonic myth...Whoever takes the Platonic myth as allegory is hardly right. Ancient and modern Neo-Platonists are refuted by Plato's own words...But whoever finds in the Platonic myths the revelation of a higher knowledge is not right either. Reason to Plato is supreme; myth is subservient to reason. For him, the myth has nothing solemn or mysterious, as the Romanticists are prone to imagine. Plato's philosophical fable is the fable of the philosopher.

The same approach is taken by J.P. Anton (1964), who argues that myth is a 'supplement to logical discourse' (p.165):

Plato's practice affords abundant evidence that he regarded myth as a dramatically necessary supplement to logical discourse, conjoined to the total work of grasping and following through with the possibilities of subject-matter...There seems to be no internal evidence to the effect that Plato ever meant myth to be a substitute for or perform functions beyond and above

those of philosophical reasoning. Nor did he see myth as something *a-logical* and irrational. To be sure, he sees myth as intelligent disclosure, its logic being that of drama, of imaginative language, of philosophical *mythologiein*.<sup>18</sup>

It is Anton's main thesis that Plato criticises the work of the poets but rehabilitates poetry itself by giving it a new role, 'namely to become the philosophic function of the mythical imagination' (p.164), and in line with this he argues that the myths are intended to give dramatic embodiment to the true 'realities' already revealed by dialectic (p.166). Developing the idea that the myths serve a dramatic purpose he argues that (p.165):

myth enters primarily as a plausible and suggestive way of talking about things as they are in their dramatic aspects. Hence mythical talking is not to be taken in the sense of offering the sort of thing we may call 'an alternative hypothesis'. Myth, in this respect, is meant as a likely story that illumines rather than explains a domain which rational discourse explores.

This emphasis on the myths as 'likely stories' written to supplement the arguments of the dialogues is also to be found in the work of Janet Smith. Smith's ideas on the cognitive role of the myths are presented in her article, 'Plato's Myths as "Likely Accounts", Worthy of Belief'. Two main lines of argument are developed here, both of which accord with the views of Edelstein and Anton: first that the myths express ideas and views which Plato elsewhere argues for dialectically, and second that although they are linked with dialectic, nevertheless the myths in themselves do not represent knowledge or proof of any matter.

In the introduction Smith sets out her basic thesis on Plato's view of the status of his myths (p.24):

he recognizes that his myths are fictions, a blend of what is true and what is imaginative; he intends that both the myths which are told as a part of the

educational program of the state and within his own dialogues be composed by the philosophers in accord with their best knowledge; and no matter how refined the myths are, and no matter how closely linked they are with dialectical argumentation, they are by their nature only in the realm of true opinion. Plato viewed myth (approved myth) as a kind of *logos* - one which was approximate and thus open to revision, but nonetheless one which is deserving of our belief, if only in a provisional way.

Like Anton, Smith regards the myths, and believes that Plato himself regarded his myths, as 'likely stories' (εἰκοτες λόγοι - a phrase taken from the *Timaeus*, 29c etc.) and she is careful to mark the difference between these and dialectical accounts (p.37):

Now although an *eikos logos* is *eikos* for the very reason that it does correspond with what one knows to be true, this does not suffice to convert an *eikos logos* into a "true logos" in the sense of a truth established by dialectic or a truth which could be the object of knowledge. ...In short, an *eikos logos* offers no proof for any of its contents, neither for that which is susceptible to proof nor for that for which no proof is possible. The *eikos logos* may be persuasive, but it is not a demonstration.

She argues that Plato is at pains to highlight the difference between the status of dialectical and mythical accounts,<sup>19</sup> and presents convincing evidence from the dialogues in support of the thesis that Plato considered his myths as tentative or provisional accounts, which are worthy of belief until better knowledge or proof about the matters in hand could be attained. This evidence comes from passages in the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*.

Smith quotes *Phaedo* 114d, *Timaeus* 72d and *Phaedrus* 246a, which have been discussed above in section 6.2, and adds to these *Gorgias* 527a5 and *Republic* 621b-c. The *Gorgias* passage stresses that the myth of the afterlife presents only a provisional account (527a5-8):

Τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθος σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὡσπερ γραὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐδέν γ' ἂν ἦν θαυμαστὸν καταφρονεῖν τούτων, εἴ πη ζητοῦντες εἴχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὐρεῖν.

Now perhaps you think these things I've said are a tale, like an old wife's, and you despise them. And certainly it wouldn't be at all surprising to despise them, if we could search and somehow manage to find something better and truer. (tr. Irwin)

The *Republic* passage, Socrates' concluding remarks after the myth of Er, claims not that the myth is true, but merely that belief in the story could 'save' them and help them to be purer in soul (621b-c):

καὶ οὕτως, ὦ Γλαύκων, μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπόλετο, καὶ ἡμᾶς ἂν σώσειεν, ἂν πειθώμεθα αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸν τῆς Λήθης ποταμὸν εὖ διαβησόμεθα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ μίανθησόμεθα.

And so, Glaucon, the story was preserved and not lost. It could save us if we believe it, and we shall safely cross the stream of Forgetfulness and not be defiled in our soul. (tr. Grube)

For Smith, then, Plato's myths are tentative, provisional accounts that do not represent actual knowledge or truth about the soul. They are, however, written in accordance with as much knowledge as Plato has on the subject, and correspond with the 'truths' argued for in dialectic.

This, I believe, is the view that accords with the evidence from the dialogues. I reject the 'Romantic' view of Plato's myths, as there is simply no evidence in the dialogues that the myths represent a special means of gaining knowledge about the soul which cannot be gained by other means. I also reject the 'Kantian' approach, voiced by Stewart, who argues that the myths function only as a means of arousing 'Transcendental Feeling'. For it is clear that the myths present a great deal of information about Plato's concept of soul. Although I accept the claim of Guthrie and Dodds that the myth for Plato is a means of expressing 'objects of faith', I am not happy to make such a hard and fast division between the myths and the 'rational' accounts of the body of the dialogues. For 'objects of faith' are also spoken of outside the myths and the myths, as

Edelstein, Anton and Smith have shown, are not to be seen as 'irrational' or 'non-scientific'. There is a valid distinction to be made in the dialogues between myth and dialectic, but not between myth and rational or logical discourse.

I do not accept, then, that the myths provide any special cognitive access to the soul and so, to return to an issue I raised earlier (at the end of section 6.3), there is no need to account for any special role of the soul metaphors in the myths. If Plato is unsure about certain aspects of the soul, his myths will not provide him or us with any new knowledge beyond what can be said in non-mythic discourse. Similarly, a metaphor in a myth will not have greater 'revelatory' powers than those in the dialogues at large. Thus our analysis of the soul metaphors will not be affected by concerns about whether a metaphor appears in a mythic or dialectical context.

#### 6.5 The Illustrative Thesis or Kittay's Version of the Epistemic View?

Earlier in this chapter (section 6.2) I set out two contrasting opinions on the problem of how Plato's metaphors relate to his knowledge of the soul. Samuel Parker's view was that as the Platonists are 'altogether ignorant' of the nature of the soul, their metaphors are 'idle and insignificant Non-sense', whereas for de Marignac the images serve to 'mitigate' insufficient knowledge of spiritual entities. I find both Parker's empiricist approach and de Marignac's version of the epistemic thesis unacceptable and must now explain why.

Parker asserts that since Plato and the Platonists are 'altogether ignorant' about the soul, their metaphors for the soul are 'idle and insignificant Non-sense'. This idea is fairly straightforward: since Plato does not know the nature of the soul, he cannot create

meaningful images of it. Leaving aside the issue of Parker's own standards of knowledge of the soul, the important question here for our debate is 'are metaphors cognitively significant only when they derive from true knowledge?'. My answer to this is 'No', for I believe that metaphors can play a significant cognitive role in the exposition and development of ideas which do not necessarily have the status of knowledge and which do not necessarily relate to truth and reality. This is, of course, to understand 'cognitive' in its wider sense, that is, pertaining to intellectual activity of any kind, covering the apprehension of new ideas, notions, intuitions etc. as well as the acquisition of knowledge in the objective sense of the term. On this view, even if one accepts that knowledge of the soul is impossible and that any statements about it must be treated as matters of belief or faith, one can still maintain that Plato's soul metaphors work cognitively in helping to establish and develop his ideas and theories about the soul. This is my position, and so I reject Parker's view that without true knowledge Plato's soul metaphors are 'Non-sense'.

Let us turn now to de Marignac and his thesis that Plato's metaphors 'palliate' his insufficient knowledge about spiritual matters (p.135ff.) and allow him to express what he could not otherwise express (p.145-6) - for example, (in the case of the *Phaedrus*) the 'real being' of the soul (p.146). I do not accept these points as I find nothing in the dialogues to suggest that the metaphors can work in this way. We have seen above (section 6.2) that the passage at *Phdr.* 246a does not claim that the myth/metaphors will succeed where literal discourse would fail, i.e. in telling the true nature of the soul, but says simply that the attempt to do this will be abandoned in favour of an account of what the soul is like. On the

surface de Marignac's claim that metaphors allow Plato to say what he could otherwise not say looks very similar to Kittay's claim (1.2 (5)) that some metaphors are irreducible and 'cognitively irreplaceable' since they allow the speaker to express an idea when she has 'no other linguistic resources to achieve these ends' (Kittay, p.301). However, this similarity is only superficial, since for de Marignac the 'inexpressible' is not an idea or concept which cannot be conveyed in literal terms, but is the 'ineffable world of real being', which Kittay's thesis is not at all concerned with (see 1.2 (5)). As I do not find any evidence that metaphors have, either in Plato's view or in practice in his dialogues, some remarkable power of 'lifting the corner of the veil', I will dismiss de Marignac's claims, but the views of Kittay on metaphor's power of 'expressing what cannot be otherwise expressed' are obviously far more interesting.

Of the different approaches to metaphor considered so far in this study it seems to me that the illustrative thesis and Kittay's version of the epistemic view offer accounts most likely to explain the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors. Before I set out again the competing claims of these two views I must first explain why I reject the non-informative thesis and second why I will focus on Kittay's arguments rather than those of the other critics who support the epistemic thesis.

First, I believe that the non-informative view is inadequate to account for the role of Plato's soul metaphors, for to claim that they work only or indeed even primarily to stimulate certain responses and to arouse particular feelings would be to ignore the mass of information about the soul that is conveyed in metaphorical terms in the dialogues. Consider, for example, the *Republic* and its extended

picture of the soul as a state with different people within it (*Rep.* IV, VIII and IX). It is abundantly clear that this picture offers important insights into how Plato conceived the relations between the different parts of the soul and that the metaphors are being used to illustrate what justice in the soul consists in. I am not arguing that the metaphors do not have significant emotive power; they do, and the following chapters will show how this contributes enormously to their rhetorical effectiveness. But rather I am arguing that the non-informative view must be rejected because these metaphors do state propositions and thus it would be wrong to say that they function only by evoking particular emotional responses. Also, as regards a weaker version of the thesis, it is not true to say that metaphors do have other functions but that their *primary* role is that of stirring emotion. For that would be to ignore the fact that the primary role of many of Plato's soul metaphors is to illuminate difficult ideas, such as the tripartite division of the soul or the effects of the sight of a beloved on the soul of a lover (see the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*).

Second, the reasons why I will focus on Kittay's views rather than those of the other critics who support the epistemic thesis are that her particular theoretical standpoint is the most relevant to our study and is, in my opinion, the most developed and most convincing. Since Lakoff and Johnson are not explicitly concerned with the question of metaphor's cognitive role (see 1.2 (2)), and since Petrie's views are not developed very far (see 1.2 (4)), Black, Boyd and Kittay (see 1.2 (1) (3) and (5)) present the strongest challenge to the illustrative thesis. These critics share a great deal of common ground; all accept the interaction theory and all maintain that metaphors by generating new knowledge and insight and by conveying

ideas which cannot be conveyed in literal terms, can be cognitively irreducible. The crucial difference between Kittay's view and those of the other two is that whereas Black and Boyd believe that metaphors can generate radically new information about the world or about 'how things are in reality' (see Boyd p.401 and Black (Ortony (ed.) 1979) p,41), Kittay's perspectival view is more modest in its claims. For Kittay maintains only that (p.39):

the cognitive force of metaphor comes, not from providing new information about the world, but rather from a (re)conceptualisation of information that is already available to us.

On this view the metaphor works cognitively not by 'positing new existents' (p.302), but by leading us to reconceptualise particular information or experience already known to us. Kittay's qualification of earlier views is important since it avoids the many problems involved in the claims that metaphors can 'make known the radically unknown' (Petrie, p.440) or that they can express new truths about reality. If we apply Kittay's thesis to Plato's soul metaphors, our concern becomes not, for example, whether the soul exists or whether it actually does journey through different lives, but how the metaphor of the journey of the soul structures, and so provides an understanding of, the experiences of life and death. This version of the epistemic thesis allows us to move away from the question of how metaphors relate to 'reality' - a point in dispute between the illustrative thesis and other versions of the epistemic view - and so focusses our attention on what is perhaps a more fundamental difference between these two theses, namely, their conflicting views on the relation between metaphors and literal language. On the illustrative thesis metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of

saying things that can be said in literal terms. Thus it holds that one can always remove metaphors and still express the same information literally. In this way a statement deprived of metaphor may lose much of its impact and persuasiveness but will still convey the same essential idea. Kittay and other critics, however, are firmly set against this view, maintaining that some metaphorical statements simply cannot be 'reduced' or 'translated' into literal terms and thus that such metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable.

As we seek to determine which of these views best accounts for the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors, the key question before us is whether any of the soul metaphors are irreducible and cognitively irreplaceable. To put the question another way: are there in the dialogues any theories or ideas about the soul which are *only*, and which *can* only be, expressed in metaphorical terms? The answer to this is by no means obvious and it will be the task of Chapters 7 and 8 to address this question in detail.

<sup>1</sup>In Chapter 8 I will discuss the status of these and other terms relating to the inner structure of the soul.

<sup>2</sup>The terms *δυσχυριζοίμεθα* and *διακινδυνευτέον* recall the passage at *Phaedo* 114d where the verb *δυσχυρίσασθαι* and the noun *κίνδυνος* appear in a similar context.

<sup>3</sup>See *Phaedrus* 266b8, *Republic* 517b8, *Timaeus* 53d6 and *Laws* 873d1 and 913d4.

<sup>4</sup>See section 3.3 (1) and (2) where the same problem is raised in connection with the use of god metaphors.

<sup>5</sup>Bishop Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, pp.76-77.

<sup>6</sup>'It is in the imperfection of knowledge of the real beings, of the intelligible essences, God, the Good, and also of this being whose position is so special, the soul, that I believe I have found one of the reasons for recourse to imagery.'

<sup>7</sup>'this insufficiency of knowledge constrains Plato to use an image.'

<sup>8</sup>'it was not possible for him to express the real being, the metaphysical being of the soul in a language which was not figurative...'

<sup>9</sup>'Therefore the image is more than and different from a simple symbol; it is the best way, if not the only way which allows the author, when he must speak of the essence, to say what cannot be said.'

<sup>10</sup>'The virtue of the image comes from the poetic and 'mystic' potential with which it is charged.'

<sup>11</sup>'The image serves to palliate insufficient knowledge of the spiritual.'

<sup>12</sup>'Thus this image is there to palliate the difficulty which there is to formulate what one hardly knows: it was to lift the corner of the veil of shadows which hides the Good from us that the Socrates of the *Republic* had recourse to the image of the sun (506d-e).'

<sup>13</sup>These claims form the first part of his thesis, which I do not accept, but he does have a second part, which I am in full agreement with, namely that images also serve as effective pedagogical aids. See pp. 146-9: 'D'autre part, l'image est un procédé pédagogique qui, sollicitant l'imagination, seconde l'intellection'.

<sup>14</sup>See e.g. Cooper (p.108); Burrell (pp.59-60); Berggren (1966); Annas (1982) and Steiner (pp.136-48).

<sup>15</sup>J. Adam, 'The Myth in Plato's *Politicus*'; J.A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato*; P. Frutiger, *Les Mythes de Platon*; A.E. Taylor, Review of *Les Mythes de Platon* by P. Frutiger, 'Socrates and the Myths'; J. Tate, 'Socrates and the Myths', 'Reply to Prof. A.E. Taylor'; W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, pp. 239-242; E.R. Dodds, 'Plato and the Irrational'; L. Edelstein, 'The Function of the Myth in Plato's Philosophy'; P. Friedlander, *Plato, An Introduction*, pp.171-210; J.P. Anton, 'Plato's Philosophical Use of Myth'; D. Berggren, 'From Myth to Metaphor'; M.J. Gregory, 'Myth and Transcendence in Plato'; L. Taran, 'The Creation Myth in Plato's *Timaeus*', *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, pp. 372-407; W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol.IV Plato*, pp. 294, 305-7, 335-8, 361-3, 365, 399, 432, 462-4, 486; J. Annas, 'Plato's Myths of Judgement'; A. Cook, 'Dialectic, Irony and Myth in Plato's *Phaedrus*'; J.E. Smith, 'Plato's Myths as Likely Accounts, Worthy of Belief', 'Plato's use of Myth in the Education of Philosophic Man'; J.-F. Mattei, 'The Theater of Myth in Plato'; M.M. Mackenzie, 'Myth, Allegory and Argument in Plato'.

<sup>16</sup>Edelstein, p.464.

<sup>17</sup>Edelstein, p.464.

<sup>18</sup>Anton supports this view with a quotation from P. Shorey (1938) (p.166):

P. Shorey remarks appropriately that 'Plato does use myths in supplementary expression of rational hopes. But never sets intuition above reason, in the fashion of modern mystics.' *Platonism: Ancient and Modern* (California, 1938), p.92.

<sup>19</sup>The same point is made earlier by P. Frutiger in *Les Mythes de Platon*, 1930. Frutiger's argument is summed up by A.E. Taylor in his review (1930, p. 493):

The 'myth' in Plato is characterised simply by a contrast not with truth, but with 'dialectic'. That is, its distinctive character is not that it is false - on the contrary, it is often the vehicle for expressing what Plato regards as supremely important truth - but that what it asserts cannot be completely demonstrated. This is why assertions about the structure and destiny of the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  have to be largely conveyed in myth; they are true, or as near the truth as Plato can make them, but he is aware that his positions, however true, are not capable of complete demonstration, and is conscientiously anxious to mark the point.

On this point see also Burrell, pp. 59-60.

## Chapter 7

### SOUL AND BODY

#### 7.1 Introduction

Discussion about the soul occupies a great deal of space in the dialogues; the interlocutors debate many different aspects and experiences of the soul - such as its nature and value, its rational activity and its fate in the afterlife. Because of the wealth of this material, I have limited my study to a few central concerns: in this chapter, metaphors for the relationship of soul and body, and in Chapter 8, metaphors for the inner nature of the soul. My task will be to assess the particular roles and significance of each group of metaphors and to examine how the metaphors relate to the literal statements concerning these matters. My study of metaphors for the soul/body relationship will concentrate on two main areas: first, the experiences of birth and death, as the soul is presented as that which gives life to the body; and second, the relationship of soul and body in human life. Major groups of metaphors for these areas include the journey of the soul, the imprisonment, binding and sowing of the soul in the body, the soul as ruler or master of the body, and the corruption and purification of the soul.

#### 7.2 Birth and Death

...it is the operation I was about to take part in one cold November night in the year 1902 when me and my genes were hanging about on the other side of Time, corporeally uncommitted and the whole world of Chance open to us.

Jack Common, *Kiddar's Luck* (1951)

For Plato soul is the immortal principle of life; soul gives life and movement to the body and on the death of the body continues to live in

independent form. In various dialogues the view is expressed that the soul experiences successive rebirths in mortal bodies.<sup>1</sup> At birth the soul is said to enter the human body and at death to leave it, and these processes are portrayed in a number of different ways: the soul travels from place to place, sometimes living in a human body, at other times journeying on to a new home; the perfect soul is winged and flies freely, but sometimes, through imperfection, loses its wings and is imprisoned or bound in a mortal frame; soul is sown as a seed in the human form which thus becomes the soil in which it grows. In this section I will examine these metaphors in more detail, tracing their development and commenting on the contribution of each different group.

#### 1. The Journey of the Soul

In the *Phaedo* Socrates discusses the nature of death and identifies it as the 'release' or 'departure' - ἀπαλλαγὴ - of the soul from the body (64c). Thus after the death of the body, the soul will be separate from the body and will exist independently of it (66e6-67a1, τότε γὰρ αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ ἔσται χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος). The idea that the soul exists with the body in life (συνόντος, *Phaedo* 68a3) and exists apart from it in the afterlife (χωρὶς, *Phaedo* 64c, 66e, 76c etc.) leads to the notion that at birth the soul enters the body (εἰς ἀνθρώπειον σῶμα ἀφικέσθαι, *Phaedo* 77b7) and at death goes away from it to another place. From general terms of motion (εἶμι, ἔρχομαι, οἴχομαι etc.) develop various detailed pictures of the soul as a human being undertaking a journey to another world. Plato is, of course, influenced here by traditional Greek religion, going back to Homer, with its deeply ingrained idea of the soul's departure to Hades.<sup>2</sup> Plato draws on Homeric ideas about the soul throughout the dialogues<sup>3</sup>

and thus it is entirely natural for him, following Greek tradition, to use personal language for the soul. But we must bear in mind that this is metaphorical, as Plato did not view the soul as a person with a body, but as an incorporeal being or essence.

From the basis of traditional ideas and from his own belief that the soul is with the body in life and separate from it in death, Plato, then, developed the notion of the soul journeying from place to place, moving into the body at birth, leaving it at its death and travelling on to different places in the afterlife. The metaphor of the soul's journey is developed quite extensively in the dialogues so that, amongst other images, the soul travels in boats (*Phaedo* 113d), is escorted by a guide along the many-forked path to the underworld (*Phaedo* 108a-b), travels in a great company (*Rep.* 614e) and encamps in a meadow (*Rep.* 614e) (See Appendix 3, Group A, table 1).

Closely connected to the metaphor of the soul as a traveller is the idea that the soul has different dwellings, at one time in the body, at another time elsewhere. In the *Timaeus* we are told how the parts of the soul are 'housed' - *κατόκισαν* (70a3, b2, e2 etc.) in the body and in the *Phaedrus* we find the soul 'settling' - *κατοικισθεῖσα* 246c3) into a body. In the *Apology* (40c8) and *Phaedo* (117c2) death is spoken of as a 'change in habitation', *μετοίκησις*, and in these dialogues when Socrates is speaking in what we might call 'lay-person's' terms, he talks of death as an *ἀποδημία*, a 'going or being abroad' or a 'going/being away from home' (*Apology* 41a5, *Phaedo* 61e2, 67c1). Thus the soul is presented as at home in the body and its separation at death becomes a journey to and a stay abroad. This clearly reflects the common fear of death as a journey from the familiar to an

unfamiliar world. But Plato turns this idea on its head, as he develops the notion of the soul's true home.

The idea of the soul's home or native dwelling place first emerges in the *Phaedo* (79d), as Socrates describes how the soul, when investigating things by itself, passes into the realm of the pure, everlasting, immortal and changeless. The soul is then described (79d) as 'of the same kin' as the beings of this realm - *συγγενῆς* (of the same kin, descent or family, akin to). Thus the soul, far from being at home in the body, is a close relation of beings native to a very different place.<sup>4</sup> In the *Timaeus* we again find the idea that the soul has an affinity with a world beyond human existence. At 41d the Demiurge creates souls equal in number to the stars and assigns each soul to a star. Here, before they are placed in human form, they are shown the nature of the universe and the laws of destiny (41d-e). Once in human form, if a man lives righteously, his soul returns after death to its assigned star (42b3-5):

καὶ ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούσ, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἔξει

And he who should live well for his due span of time should journey back to the habitation of his consort star and there live a happy and accustomed life;  
(tr. Cornford, adapted)

Thus the star is portrayed as a 'home' (*οἴκησιν*) for the soul, and the attainment of life in this home is the reward for virtue in human life. In contrast, those souls that live unrighteous lives in their first birth pass at the second birth into the form of a woman (a woman being cast as an inferior being to a man, see 42a). An unrighteous life in this birth would be followed by a further life as an animal (42c), and so, in terms of the journey metaphor, the soul would be condemned to journey through different lives until it won, through

virtue, a return to its first and true home in its appointed star. In the passage at 42b the reference to a βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη (a happy and accustomed life) creates an explicit link between the return home and the attainment of happiness, an idea which gives the metaphor rhetorical force as Plato sets out the benefits of living a virtuous human life.

So we find in the dialogues the idea that the soul is truly at home when it is separate from the body and that it is happy when it can live in a place with which it has a natural affinity. Thus the body becomes a temporary home which cannot offer the soul the same kind of familiarity or happiness. When viewed in this way, it is the soul's entry into the body that is its ἀποδημία, and death offers a chance to return home. In this way death can be seen as a joyous experience for the soul, a point which is made in the *Timaeus* when we are told that on the death of the body the soul, μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο (with pleasure flies away) (81d7-e1).

Now although death is a release or separation of the soul from its temporary home, this does not mean that it automatically returns to its natural home. For, as we are told in the *Timaeus*, it is only the soul of the man who lives righteously that can achieve this. The souls of the unrighteous have a very different experience, as is shown in the *Phaedo* and in the other myths of judgement. In terms of the journey and home metaphor, all souls are conveyed after the death of the body to new 'habitations' (οἰκήσεις, *Phaedo* 114d3 etc.). Each soul makes its way to an 'appropriate dwelling' (πρέπουσαν οἴκησιν, *Phaedo* 108c3): the righteous to beautiful and pure dwellings where they will be happy (καθαρὰν οἴκησιν, *Phdo.* 114c1; οἰκήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους, *Phdo.* 114c4-5; μακάρων νήσους...οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ, *Gorg.*

523b1-2), the unrighteous to dark and forbidding places such as Tartarus where they will be punished for their vices (*Phdo.* 113e-114b, *Gorg.* 523b).

While the myth of the *Phaedo* presents a contrast between good and evil souls departing to live in places of happiness or terror, an earlier passage of the dialogue draws a different contrast between departing souls. For at 81a-e Socrates tells how souls that have practised philosophy depart, after the death of the body, to the invisible, divine realm, whereas the non-philosophical souls are unable to detach themselves from the visible, corporeal world and so become involved in a very different kind of afterlife journey. The philosophical soul 'departs' (*ἀπέρχεται*, 81a5) to the unseen world where it will be happy (*εὐδαίμωνι*, 81a6) and will be released from *πλάνης καὶ ἀνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων* (wandering and folly and fears and uncontrolled desires). The noun *πλάνη* (wandering) in close conjunction with *ἀνοία* (folly) is probably best understood as referring to error and intellectual confusion. The idea of wandering is often used in this way in Plato<sup>5</sup> and this use of the term can be traced back to Parmenides.<sup>6</sup> However, when we learn of the fate of the non-philosophical souls, wandering takes on a new significance. These souls have been so involved with the body's concerns during life that at death they cannot detach themselves from the corporeal world. So, departed from the body, but unable to depart from earthly life, the non-philosophical soul 'is rolled around' (*κυλινδουμένη* 81d<sup>7</sup>) in graveyards, still partly visible as a shadowy apparition. Socrates is quick to point out that these are not the souls of the good (81d6) but of the wicked (*φαύλων*) and explains (81d7-9):

αἱ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀναγκάζονται πλανᾶσθαι δίκην τίνουσαι  
τῆς προτέρας τροφῆς κακῆς οὔσης. καὶ μέχρι γε τούτου

πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ  
σωματοειδοῦς, ἐπιθυμία πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα.  
they are compelled to wander about these places as a  
punishment for their bad conduct in the past. They  
continue wandering until at last, through craving for the  
corporeal, which unceasingly pursues them, they are bound  
once more into a body. (tr. Tredennick, adapted)

So we find that the non-philosophical souls wander around places which contain dead bodies - signifying their mere partial separation from the human bodies they once lived in. This is their punishment for wickedness and this state of separation from, but yearning for, the corporeal state will continue until they are reborn in another body. These souls will never escape from the visible realm until they detach themselves from physical concerns and so, until such time, will endure successive rebirths in mortal bodies. This idea of souls condemned to wander between different mortal lives recalls ideas expressed earlier by the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles. In his work *Purifications*, Empedocles tells of people who, through their sin and association with the force of strife, are condemned to pass through a series of births and deaths. This reincarnation as a form of punishment is presented in terms of separation from the gods and of wandering (Fragment 115, lines 6 and 13): 'he wanders from the blessed ones for thrice ten thousand years...I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer'. Plato adapts Empedocles' ideas to his own view of the effect of philosophy on the afterlife experience of souls. For at 81a the soul that has practised philosophy departs to the invisible, divine and immortal realm, where, freed from πλάνης (wandering/confusion) and other human ills, it will spend the rest of time μετὰ θεῶν (with gods). In contrast, the non-philosophical soul has no escape from the mortal world, but is forced to 'wander' (πλανᾶσθαι) as a punishment until it enters another body.

The idea of wandering, separated from one's home, is charged with emotive power for the Greeks, as we see from its central role in the *Odyssey*. Throughout the epic wandering is associated with hardship, suffering and isolation,<sup>8</sup> and at Book XV 340 ff. the disguised Odysseus proclaims: 'Than wandering (πλαγκτοσύνης) nothing else is more evil for mortals'. In using the idea of wandering in the depiction of 'lost' souls Plato is thus drawing on a well-established and evocative image to support his claim that the practice of philosophy has considerable benefits for the soul in the afterlife.

Plato uses the metaphor of wandering, together with the related metaphors of the soul's homes and various journeys, to convey the ideas that the soul has a separate existence from the body, that it does not cease to exist along with the body at the point of its death and that human life is but one stage of the soul's life. These metaphors also help Plato to recommend the philosophical life, since it is only through the attainment of virtue that one's soul can depart safely and return to its true home - whether that is understood as its appointed star or as the immortal invisible realm.

## 2. The Wings of the Soul

Another metaphor which offers an account of how the soul enters and leaves the body, and which can be seen as a development of the journey metaphor, is that of the winged soul. This idea occurs in an extended form in only one dialogue, the *Phaedrus*. Near the beginning of the *Phaedrus* myth, as Socrates begins to tell what the soul is like, he explains how soul and body are first united (246b7-c6):

[ψυχῆ] τελέα μὲν οὖν οὔσα καὶ ἔπτερωμένη μετεωροποιεῖ τε καὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον διοικεῖ, ἣ δὲ πτερορρυήσασα φέρεται ἕως ἂν στερεοῦ τινος ἀντιλάβηται, οὗ κατοικισθεῖσα, σῶμα γήινον λαβοῦσα, αὐτὸ αὐτὸ δοκοῦν κινεῖν διὰ τὴν ἐκείνης

δύναμιν, ζῶον τὸ σύμπαν ἐκλήθη, ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα παγόν,  
θνητόν τ' ἔσχεν ἔπωνυμίαν.

Thus when it is perfect and winged [soul] journeys on high and controls the whole world, but one that has shed its wings, sinks down until it can fasten on something solid, and settling there, it takes to itself an earthy body which seems by reason of the soul's power to move itself. This composite structure of soul and body is called a living being, and is further termed 'mortal'. (tr. Hackforth)

So we find that the soul in its perfect state is winged - ἐπτερωμένη - and 'travels through the air' - μετεωροπορεῖ, but that a soul that has lost its wings - πτερορρυήσασα<sup>9</sup> - is carried along until it 'takes hold' of something hard where it 'settles' (κατοικισθεῖσα). This is the point at which the soul 'takes' (λαβοῦσα) an 'earthy' body and, although not presented in these terms, this must represent the moment of birth for the living creature. For now it receives the power of movement from the soul (see 245e).

At this stage we do not know how or why the soul loses its wings and Socrates begins his explanation at 246d. In the passage that follows he tells how the souls in heaven are 'nourished' by the vision of the Forms (247d, 248c), and that, as long as a soul can discern something of this vision, it will remain 'unhurt' (ἀβλαβῆ, 248c5). However, when it cannot see the Forms, a radical change takes place (248c5-8):

ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπέσθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, καὶ τινα συντυχία  
χρησαμένη λήθης τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῆ,  
βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πτερορρυήσῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ,...

but when it is not able so to follow and does not see,  
but meeting with some mischance comes to be burdened with  
a load of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, and because of  
that burden sheds her wings and falls to earth,...(tr.  
Hackforth, adapted)

Thus, as a result of the failure to see the Forms, the winged soul is weighed down by forgetfulness and evil, loses its wings (πτερορρυήσῃ) and thus falls (πέσῃ) to earth.<sup>10</sup> This fall leads to its first birth

(πρώτη γενέσει, 248d1-2) in a human body, and so a human birth occurs when a once perfect soul becomes imperfect. This loss of perfection is portrayed as the loss of wings; the wings are the power which support the soul in the divine realm and represent the immortal and divine element in a soul (246d). The soul's entry into a human body is the consequence of a loss of perfection and the soul is thus separated in human life from the world where it lived with the gods. Now that the soul has entered the cycle of rebirths it can only regain its wings (πτερωθεῖσαι, 249a4; πτεροῦται, 249c4, ὑπόπτεροι, 256b4) and depart again to the divine sphere through the practice of philosophy and through recollection of the Forms (249c).

The wing metaphor is a development of the journey metaphor since it not only reiterates the idea that the soul moves between divine and mortal worlds but also gives to that movement a particular direction: up and down. The divine sphere is often spoken of as higher than the mortal world<sup>11</sup> and in accordance with this idea the soul descends into the life of the body and, if it achieves a more perfect state, returns upwards to the immortal realm. The wing image fits into this dichotomy of high and low, as the wing becomes the means whereby the soul can be elevated from the corporeal to the divine sphere. For, as we are told at *Phaedrus* (246d6):

Πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθὲς ἄγειν ἄνω  
μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ  
The natural property of a wing is to raise that which is  
heavy and carry it aloft to the region where the gods  
dwell, (tr. Hackforth)

The *Phaedrus* myth is the only place where Plato develops the idea of the winged soul and this, it seems, is partly due<sup>12</sup> to the particular definition of soul given before the myth (at 245e) – namely that of self-movement. For the wing metaphor, unlike the metaphor of the

traveller returning home, depicts the soul in its perfect state not at rest but in perpetual motion: journeying on high (μετεωροπορεῖ, 246c) and living a life of happiness travelling in the divine sphere (φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν μετ' ἀλλήλων πορευομένους, ... 256d8-e1). Although the winged soul does not appear elsewhere in Plato there is an echo of the idea at *Timaeus* 81e, as the soul is presented as flying away from the body at death (81d7-e1):

[ψυχῇ] ἥ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο.  
 and she [the soul], when thus set free in the course of nature finds pleasure in taking wing to fly away. (tr. Cornford)

There are precedents for this idea in earlier Greek thought, for in the Homeric tradition one of the ways that the soul leaves the body at death is by flying away,<sup>13</sup> and once in the underworld, the souls 'flit' (ἀίσσουσι) and 'fly' (πταμένη, ποτέονται) as 'bats'.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the metaphor of the wings of the soul provides an account of how soul and body are first joined together, as the perfect soul loses its wings and falls to earth, and how the presence of soul, as that which moves itself, gives life and motion to the otherwise inert mortal body. The image also 'explains' why good souls which regain their wings can leave the body at death and fly upwards to the heavenly sphere, while inferior souls, still wingless, are unable to make this journey and so remain in the cycle of births and deaths.

### 3. The Soul as a Seed

Another metaphor used in the dialogues for the coming together of soul and body is that of the soul as a seed sown into the soil of the body. In the *Phaedo* the soul is said to be 'implanted' (ἐμφύεσθαι, 83e1) and 'as it were sown' (ὥσπερ σπειρομένη, 83e1) in the body, and we find

this idea again in the *Phaedrus* at 248d1 as Socrates speaks of the 'planting' (*φυτεῦσαι*) of a soul into an animal. The metaphor is not, however, developed any further until the *Timaeus* where it plays a significant role in the explanation of how the Demiurge creates humankind and how the body can create further life through procreation. The metaphor is introduced at 41c8 as the Demiurge speaks of 'sowing the seed' (*σπείρας*) of the immortal part of the soul, and is continued at 41e4 when it is said that the souls, or rather parts of souls, created by the Demiurge are to be 'sown' (*σπαρείσας*) into the 'instruments of time' adapted to them. These are human bodies and these become places in which the seed can grow - *φῦναι* (42a1). At 42a3 the idea of 'implanting' (*ἐμφυτευθεῖεν*) is used of the placing of souls in bodies, and at 42d4 we are told that the creator 'sowed' (*ἔσπειρεν*) some souls in the earth, some in the moon and some in the other 'instruments of time'. The metaphor is continued at 42d6 when it is said that *μετὰ τὸν σπόρον* (after the sowing) the creator committed to the younger gods the task of fashioning mortal bodies. During this sowing we are presumably meant to envisage the soul-seeds being scattered into unformed matter which will only later be worked into bodily form.

The plant metaphor is continued at 73b-c as the creator places the different forms of the soul into the marrow of the human body. First the 'bonds of life' which unite soul and body are said to be 'rooted' or 'planted firmly' (*κατερρίζουν*, 73b4) in the marrow, and second the creator is shown 'planting' (*φυτεύων*, 73c3) in the marrow the different kinds of soul. Next the metaphor is developed a little

further as we are told how the rational part of the soul is to be assigned to a particular portion of the marrow (73c6-d1):

καὶ τὴν μὲν τὸ θεῖον σπέρμα οἶον ἄρουραν μέλλουσαν ἕξειν  
ἐν αὐτῇ περιφερῇ πανταχῇ πλάσας ἐπωνόμασεν τοῦ μυελοῦ  
ταύτην τὴν μοῖραν ἐγκέφαλον,  
And he moulded into spherical shape the ploughland, as it  
were, that was to contain the divine seed; and this part  
of the marrow he named 'brain'. (tr. Cornford)

Thus the marrow becomes ἄρουρα (tilled, arable land; soil) for the divine seed, that is, the rational part of the soul. It seems appropriate to me that this part of the soul, the reason, which was 'sown' by the Demiurge at 41c8, should now be 'planted' in the marrow that will form the brain. However, Cornford understands this as a reference to semen (p.295 note 1):

That 'the divine seed' here means the semen is explicitly stated at 91B,1. It is 'divine' as being part of the marrow which contains the immortal part of the soul, and also as being the vehicle and means of the immortality of the species.

However, it is not explicitly stated at 91b that 'divine seed' at 73c7 means semen, for 91b1 states: μυελὸν...ὄν δὴ σπέρμα ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν λόγοις εἵπομεν. Thus what is said is that marrow has been called 'seed' earlier in the dialogue - and so it has, at 74a4 and 74b3 (σπέρμα). I am not arguing that σπέρμα at 91b does not indirectly refer to semen, it does, as it is the semen as part of the marrow that becomes the life-carrier. However, at 91b1 it is the μυελὸς which is directly spoken of as σπέρμα and it is μυελὸς which is said at 91b2 to 'have life' and to become 'endowed with respiration': ὁ δὲ, ἅτ' ἔμψυχος ὢν καὶ λαβὼν ἀναπνοήν. The forms here are masculine, not neuter, and thus refer directly to μυελὸς not σπέρμα. Thus it is the marrow which is explicitly said to create in us the love of procreation (91b4). The semen, then, is not directly referred to as

σπέρμα and still less as θεῖον σπέρμα, and these terms refer rather to the rational part of the soul. Cornford himself points out (p.353) that τὸ θεῖον is used at 76b, 90a and 90c4 to mean simply 'the brain'; and clearly this stems from the fact that it contains the rational and immortal part of the soul.

The confusion here arises from Plato's use of the term σπέρμα (seed) for both the rational part of the soul and for the marrow into which it is placed. Why does Plato use the same term for both? First, the metaphor of the soul as seed is used in the dialogue to express how the soul is introduced into the body. The metaphor appears earlier in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, as we have seen, and, with its connotations of life and growth, effectively conveys how the soul animates the body. This accounts for the use of σπέρμα for the soul but why is the term also used for the marrow? σπέρμα was the ordinary Greek term for semen and when Plato identifies marrow with semen at 91b it is natural that he should use the same term for both. This explains how σπέρμα comes to be used for soul and marrow, but this double use of the term is surely not accidental, since it produces a very neat effect. The idea of marrow as both soil for the soul-seed and as seed itself presents the marrow as a mediator between the first act of creation and all subsequent acts. For when the marrow receives the soul, it is simply acting as soil, but through receiving the soul the marrow itself becomes 'instinct with life' (91b), and thus becomes the seed from which further human life will develop. So we have an illustration of how the Demiurge and lesser gods create humankind and of how the human body can create further life, through procreation. The marrow thus becomes the male body's own seed (semen) which will be sown into a woman's body, which in turn becomes the new ἄρουρα

(91d2-3): εἰς ἄρουραν τὴν μήτραν...κατασπείραντες. Further, by using the same term for the rational part of the soul and for the semen - both of which are associated with the marrow - Plato can suggest a very close connection between life and rationality.

The final occurrence of the metaphor of seeds and plants in the *Timaeus* comes at 90a6-8 where human beings are spoken of as a plant of a heavenly nature (φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον) and where the head is referred to as the 'root' of human beings (τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ῥίζαν ἡμῶν). Both of these ideas clearly develop from the metaphor of the rational part of the soul as a divine seed.

I have shown, then, that the idea of planting the soul in the body is another Platonic metaphor for the moment of birth, as the soul is joined with body. Thus the metaphor of planting or sowing a seed plays a similar role to the metaphors of the journey and the wings of the soul. However, unlike these metaphors, the idea of the soul as a seed planted in the body offers no account of the departure of the soul at the death of the body. For apart from the notion of uprooting the plant and removing the root for replanting (an idea which is not used by Plato), it is difficult to imagine how the human 'plant' can cease to exist, leaving the original seed still intact. On the more positive side, however, the metaphor of soul-seed is far more effective than the others in offering an account of the generation of new life through procreation, since the soul-seed animates the marrow which, as semen, becomes itself the carrier of life.

#### 4. The Bonds of the Soul

Our final group of metaphors in this section illustrates both the coming together at birth and the separation at death of soul and body.

For the idea of the bonds of the soul presents birth as the process whereby the soul is bound to or imprisoned in the body, and presents death as the process whereby all bonds are loosened and the soul is freed. This metaphor appears (in different forms) in three dialogues: the *Phaedo*, *Cratylus* and *Timaeus*. In the *Phaedo* the metaphor of imprisonment and bonds develops, like the journey metaphor, from the idea that death is the ἀπαλλαγὴ (64c5) of the soul from the body. We have seen that ἀπαλλαγὴ can mean 'departure', but it can also mean 'release' - an idea which leads easily to more elaborate metaphors of the unloosening of bonds and shackles. At 67d4-5 Socrates sets out the view that death is:

λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος  
the freeing and separation of soul from body.

If death is the λύσις (the freeing or unloosening) of soul from body, then birth is conversely the tying or binding of soul in body, - an idea which is presented at both 81e2 and 92a1: at 81e2 the souls which are unable to depart after death to the invisible realm are said to wander until πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα (they are bound once more into a body); at 92a1 Socrates speaks of the theory of recollection and how this entails the view that the soul must have existed somewhere else πρὶν ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδεθῆναι (before it was bound in the body). Thus the coming together of soul and body at the birth of a human being is presented as the physical binding of the soul in or into the body, and the soul is spoken of as bound, tied or fastened to the body in life: διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι, 82e2; δεδέσθαι, 83a1; καταδεῖται... ὑπὸ σώματος, 83d1.

The metaphor of binding suggests that the soul is fastened to the body in the manner of an inanimate object and in the *Phaedo* the notion

of the soul's bondage is developed into a picture of the soul as a human prisoner only when Socrates speaks of philosophy as the liberator of the soul. This metaphor of the soul as a prisoner will be examined in our next section on the effect of body on soul, but for the moment we can observe that the idea of the incarceration of the soul is also used in a more general context in the *Cratylus*. Here Socrates tells how the Orphic poets believed that life in the body is inflicted on the soul as a punishment and that the body during this time acts as the soul's prison-house, confining it until the penalty is paid (400c5-9):

ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σώζηται, δεσμοτερίου εἰκόνα· εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὡς περ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, [τὸ] 'σῶμα',  
 that the soul is suffering the punishment of sin and that the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated, kept safe, as the name 'σῶμα' implies, until the penalty is paid. (tr. Jowett)

As far as the processes of birth and death are concerned, Plato does not develop this idea of the soul's imprisonment and we find no detailed pictures of how soul is first 'chained' or 'shackled' to the body. Instead, when he considers the actual processes of birth and death, Plato chooses to work with the much less emotive metaphor of the binding and connecting of physical objects. This apparently simple idea is used to great effect in the *Timaeus*, where it helps to explain how soul is joined to body and how it leaves the body at death. In the *Timaeus* the metaphor of the binding of the soul into the body fits very well with the dominant metaphor of the whole dialogue - that of the creation of the universe as the work of craftsman-gods. Among their various labours as they fashion the universe, the Demiurge and lesser gods work at binding the different parts of the soul into the

human body: ἐνδεθῆ, 44b1; ἐνέδουν, 69e3-4; κατέδησαν, 70e3-4; κατέδει, 73c3-4. At 73b the soul is said to be bound specifically to the marrow and the bonds which hold it are referred to as 'the bonds of life' (73b3-4):

οἱ γὰρ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί, τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ σώματι συνδουμένης,  
ἐν τούτῳ διαδούμενοι  
for the bonds of life, so long as the soul is bound up  
with the body, were made fast in it (tr. Cornford)

The metaphor of the binding of the soul to the marrow is given a new development at 73d as the idea of anchors is introduced. After speaking of the primary triangles which make up the marrow, Timaeus goes on (73d5-7):

καὶ καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν βαλλόμενος ἐκ τούτων πάσης ψυχῆς  
δεσμούς περι τούτο σύμπαν ἤδη τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν  
ἀπηργάζετο  
From these, as if from anchors, he put forth bonds to  
fasten all the soul; and now began to fashion our whole  
body round this thing, (tr. Cornford)

Thus the triangles of the marrow become the anchors around which the bonds of the soul are tied so as to secure the soul to the body. Thus the δεσμοί are fastenings which are tied at one end to the soul and at the other to the marrow. The simile καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν suggests that the soul is attached to the body like a ship at anchor - an idea which is made explicit later at 85e. The relationship between the triangles of the marrow and the fastenings of the soul is portrayed in further detail at 81b-d, as we learn how the bonds of the soul come to be loosened.

At 81b Timaeus tells how the triangles of the marrow are themselves linked together and how, when a creature is young, the links between the triangles are firm and strong (81b7-8):

ἰσχυρὰν μὲν τὴν σύγκλεισιν αὐτῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα κέκτηται  
their joints are firmly locked together (tr. Cornford)

The processes of eating and drinking are then portrayed in terms of the triangles of the marrow 'cutting up' (τέμνουσα, 81c5), 'overpowering' (ἐπικρατεῖ, 81c5) and so absorbing the triangles of the food and drink that enter the body. In this way the creature is nourished and grows strong. This contact between the body and food is presented as a struggle and at 81c7-d1 such contacts are referred to as the 'fighting of contests' (τὸ...ἀγῶνας...ἡγωνίσθαι). Here Timaeus tells how the 'root' of the triangles (i.e. that which links them together) 'slackens' or 'loosens' (χαλαῖ, 81c7) as a result of the many conflicts fought over a lifetime, and how the triangles are now easily divided (διαίρεῖται, d3) by the matter entering from outside. Timaeus explains that in this way every creature is 'overcome' and that this experience is called 'old age' (81d4).

We find, then, that over time the links between the triangles of the marrow become slack and that this has a significant effect on their efficiency as the 'anchors' of the bonds of the soul. The natural conclusion of this image of slackening and loosening follows at 81d4-e1:

τέλος δέ, ἐπειδὴν τῶν περὶ τὸν μυελὸν τριγῶνων οἱ συναρμοσθέντες μηκέτι ἀντέχουσιν δεσμοὶ τῷ πόνῳ διστάμενοι, μεθίσουσιν τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς δεσμούς, ἢ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο.

And at last when the conjoined bonds of the triangles in the marrow no longer hold out under the stress, but part asunder, they let go in their turn the bonds of the soul; and she, when thus set free in the course of nature, finds pleasure in taking wing to fly away. (tr. Cornford)

Thus in the course of life the bonds fastening together the triangles of the marrow gradually wear out and, once the triangles part, this action releases the bonds by which the gods first fastened soul to body. As a result the soul once 'bound' is now 'loosened' or 'released' (λυθεῖσα), and so the *Phaedo's* presentation of death as the

λύσις of the soul takes on new significance. Plato therefore uses the metaphor of the binding and unloosening of the soul to tell how the soul is joined to the body in life and how it comes apart from it at death. But the metaphor is further used to convey how certain illnesses can cause death. A passage at 85e tells how excessive bile in the body can penetrate to the marrow and thus (85e6-7):

κάουσα ἔλυσεν τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτόθεν οἶον νεὼς πείσματα  
μεθῆκεν τε ἐλευθέραν.

in consuming it unlooses the soul from her moorings there  
as a ship and sets her free. (tr. Cornford, adapted)

In this sentence we find the comparison of the soul to a ship (οἶον νεὼς) which makes explicit the idea suggested by the reference to anchors at 73d, namely that the soul is fastened to the body or the marrow just as a ship is anchored to land. The image of the ship leads to the depiction of the bonds of the soul as πείσματα - ship's cables. It is interesting to see how the idea of freedom ἐλευθέραν is introduced into the context of loosening bonds or unmooring a ship. For the concept of freedom is strictly out of place here but through this Plato evokes, with one deft touch, the idea that the soul is a prisoner in the body during life, thus achieving a harmony of what may be termed biological and moral views on the departure of the soul.

The metaphor of binding is also used in a slightly different way in the *Timaeus* as Plato describes how the soul has bonds or links in its own structure (35a ff., 36a7, 37a). Although this idea is different from the metaphor of its being bound in the body, it is nevertheless relevant to the matters of life and death, as it is used to convey the effect on the soul of the entry into the body, and as it offers an account of the immortality of the soul. At 43dff. as the Demiurge sets

the soul inside the body, the inner structure of the soul is violently affected (43d6-e2):

συνδέσεις ἐπειδὴ παντελῶς λυταὶ οὐκ ἦσαν πλὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ  
συνδήσαντος, πάσας μὲν στρέψαι στροφάς, πάσας δὲ κλάσεις  
καὶ διαφθοράς τῶν κύκλων ἐμποιεῖν..

and the connecting means of the ratios,...since they could not be completely dissolved save by him who bound them together, were twisted by them in all manner of ways, and all possible infractions and deformations of the circles were caused; (tr. Cornford)

Thus the inner bonds (συνδέσεις) of the soul are severely strained and twisted as a result of the soul's entry into the body, but still this violent effect is not enough to break or undo the bonds, which can only be undone by the Demiurge himself. Although we are not told explicitly, the continued existence of the soul must depend upon these bonds remaining fast, and here it is confirmed that nothing else but the creator can untie them. So we see the essential difference between soul and body; as the bonds of the body (the triangles of the marrow) are loosened by old age or illness, which sets the soul free thus causing death, whereas the bonds of the soul can only be unloosened by the creator himself. So while it is natural for the body to die after a certain time, the soul will live forever, unless the Demiurge wills otherwise - a point which accords with the Demiurge's own proclamation at 41a7: δι' ἐμοῦ γεινόμενα ἅλυστα ἐμοῦ γε μὴ ἐθέλοντος (those [creations] which are my own handiwork are indissoluble, save with my consent, tr. Cornford) and which recalls a passage in the *Phaedo* (80b9-10), where the soul is agreed to be 'quite or very nearly indissoluble' (τὸ παράπαν ἀδιαλύτω... ἢ ἐγγύς τι τούτου).

So then, the complex of images involving different types of bonds, links and connections offers accounts of:

i) how the soul is attached to the body at birth;

ii) how the life of the body depends on the presence of soul;

and

iii) why the body is subject to death in the natural course of events while the soul is not.

In this section I have set out various metaphors for the coming together and separation of soul and body at human birth and death: the journey of the soul, the soul's wings, the soul as a seed and the bonds of the soul. In the next section I will examine metaphors for the relationship of body and soul during human life, considering both the superiority of the soul and the powerful effects of body on soul.

### 7.3 Soul and Body in Human Life

#### 1. The Superiority of the Soul

In the *Phaedo* Socrates contrasts the natures of soul and body and at 80b draws the conclusion that:

The soul is most like that which is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and ever self-consistent and invariable, whereas body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, dissoluble and never self-consistent. (tr. Tredennick).

From its close relation to what is immortal and changeless the soul is regarded as like the divine and as inhabiting the same realm as the gods when in its perfect state.<sup>15</sup> It follows, then, that the soul is superior and more honourable than the body, which shares in all the imperfections and unstable qualities of the corporeal world. This view of the soul is expressed in a number of passages (e.g. *Laws* 731c, 959a; *Timaeus* 34c) and the soul's excellence is linked with its seniority (*Timaeus* 34b-35a and *Laws* 896b and 967c). Metaphors used for

the superiority of soul over body are those of the soul as mistress, master and ruler, while the body thus becomes its slave or subject:

(*Phaedo* 79e8-80a2)

ἐπειδὴν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὧσι ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, τῷ μὲν δουλεύειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι ἢ φύσις προστάττει, τῇ δὲ ἄρχειν καὶ δεσπόζειν.

when soul and body are both in the same place, nature commands the one to serve and be subject, the other to rule and govern. (tr. Tredennick, adapted)

(*Timaeus* 34b10-35a1)

Τὴν δὲ δὴ ψυχὴν οὐχ ὡς νῦν ὑστέραν ἐπιχειροῦμεν λέγειν, οὕτως ἐμηχανήσατο καὶ ὁ θεὸς νεωτέραν- οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἄρχεσθαι πρεσβύτερον ὑπὸ νεωτέρου συνέρξας εἴασεν...ὁ δὲ καὶ γενέσει καὶ ἀρετῇ προτέραν καὶ πρεσβυτέραν ψυχὴν σώματος ὡς δεσπότιν καὶ ἀρξουσάν ἀρξομένου συνεστήσατο

Now this soul, though it comes later in the account we are now attempting was not made by the god younger than the body; for when he joined them together, he would not have suffered the elder to be ruled by the younger...but the god made soul prior to body and more venerable in birth and excellence, to be the body's mistress and governor. (tr. Cornford)

(*Laws* 896b10-c3)

Ὅρθῶς ἄρα καὶ κυρίως ἀληθέστατά τε καὶ τελεώτατα εἰρηκότες ἂν εἶμεν ψυχὴν μὲν προτέραν γεγονέναι σώματος ἡμῖν, σῶμα δὲ δευτέρον τε καὶ ὑστέρον, ψυχῆς ἀρχούσης, ἀρχόμενον κατὰ φύσιν.

So it was an equally correct, final and complete statement of the truth, when we said that soul is prior to matter, and that matter came later and takes second place. Soul is the master, and matter its natural subject. (tr. Saunders)

There is, then, a 'natural' (ἢ φύσις προστάττει, *Phdo*; κατὰ φύσιν, *Laws*) dominance of soul over body, and this might lead one to expect that in human life the soul exercises an effortless control over the body and all its affairs. However, this is not the picture painted in the dialogues, since, although the soul is indisputably superior in nature to the body and although it is responsible for life, movement and rationality, still the body and its concerns challenge the rule of

the soul in various ways, and at times apparently even threaten the very nature of the soul.

When we examined the metaphor of the soul's wings, we saw that being joined to the body was a consequence, and a manifestation, of the soul's loss of perfection and separation from the divine realm (*Phaedrus* 246c, 248c-d). But once the soul is united with the body, further problems are in store for it, as its association with the body corrupts its nature still further. In the next section I will examine some of the various metaphors for the effects of body on soul, and will show how Plato uses these metaphors as a means to persuade his readers to devote themselves to philosophy.

## 2. The Effects of the Body and Response of the Soul

For Plato the soul, as well as being the immortal principle of life, is also the rational element in human beings - the means whereby we reason, think and know. Knowing and reasoning are natural activities of the soul and in Plato's view earthly life is detrimental to the soul because the body, with its attendant needs and desires, is an impediment to pure thought. For Plato the Forms are the only things which can truly be known, since they are the only invariable realities. Thus he argues at *Republic* 476e-480a that all knowledge must be knowledge of the Forms and at *Republic* 508e3 designates the Form of the Good as the 'cause of knowledge' (*αἰτίαν...ἐπιστήμης*). This means that the soul must derive its knowledge from the Forms and so we are led to conceive of a very close relationship between that which knows (the soul) and that which can be known (the Forms).<sup>16</sup>

When the soul is in its perfect state it is able fully to contemplate the Forms, a contemplation which in turn nourishes the

soul's excellence (*Phaedrus* 247d). But when the soul loses the ability to discern true reality, its perfect state is marred (*Phaedrus* 248c-d). As a result the soul enters a body, and thus life in the body is presented as a separation of the soul from its natural or perfect state and from contact with the Forms (see *Phaedo* 80c). By being joined with the body soul passes from the invisible, changeless world into the corporeal realm where everything is in flux and therefore where nothing can be known. Without contact with the Forms the soul cannot have knowledge and so cannot reason properly, for it has lost its standard of what is real or true. Further the soul's powers of reasoning are impaired by the body itself, since the senses of sight, hearing and touching etc., rooted as they are in physical nature, convey only inaccurate information to the soul (see *Phaedo* 65b). When we add to this the point that both physical pleasures (eating, drinking, sex etc.) and diseases distract the soul from pure thought (see *Phaedo* 66a, 66b-c), it becomes clear why the body has a detrimental effect on the soul and its powers of knowing and reasoning.

To counteract the effect of the body, the soul is shown as having only one course of action: to resist the body's influence by becoming as independent as possible. This process is represented in the *Phaedo* as the separating of soul from body, an idea which leads in turn to two further groups of metaphors: the purification and the liberation of the soul.

#### i) Communion and Separation

In the *Phaedo* Socrates develops the view that it is only in the course of reflection (65c2, ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι) that the soul is able to attain

knowledge of reality (65b-c) and that the soul can best reflect when it becomes independent of the body (65c5-10):

Λογίζεται δέ γέ που τότε κάλλιστα, ὅταν αὐτὴν τούτων μηδὲν παραλυπῆ, μήτε ἀκοή μήτε ὄψις μήτε ἀλγηδῶν μηδέ τις ἡδονή, ἀλλ' ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν γίγνηται ἐῶσα χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ καθ' ὅσον δύναται μὴ κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ μηδ' ἀππομένη ὀρέγεται τοῦ ὄντος.

Ἔστι ταῦτα.

Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind - that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent, avoiding all physical contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality.

That is so. (tr. Tredennick)

This independent reflection of the soul is presented as philosophical contemplation and thus the practice of philosophy is identified as the detachment of the soul from the influence and concerns of the body. Also, philosophical contemplation effects the 'detachment' of soul from body since, as Dorter says (p.28), this detachment 'comes about by means of our perceiving the permanent within the transitory.' The idea of the soul 'dismissing from its mind' (ἐῶσα χαίρειν)<sup>17</sup> the body is developed in the dialogue into a picture of physical separation, as the soul 'avoids association with the body' (μὴ κοινωνοῦσα, 65c8, οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα, 80e) and 'flees away' from it (φεύγει ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, 65d1, φεύγουσα, 80e4), and as philosophy becomes the act of 'separating' soul from body (τὸ χωρίζειν...ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν). In contrast, when the soul is affected by physical concerns, this is presented as 'association' with the body (συννοῦσα, 81b; ὁμιλία τε καὶ συνουσία 81c5). At such times (switching to metaphors of emotional closeness or distance) the soul no longer 'despises' (ἀτιμάζει, 65d1) the body but 'tends it, loves it and is bewitched by it' (θεραπεύουσα καὶ ἐρῶσα καὶ γοητευομένη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, 81b2-3). The physical separation metaphor is continued at 79c-d as the soul that contemplates without

the body is said to 'pass' - οἴχεται (d1) - into the pure, immortal realm, whereas the soul that relies on sense-perception is described as being 'dragged by the body' - ἔλκεται ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος (c6) - into the phenomenal world. The notion of philosophical contemplation effecting a separation of soul and body is further developed in the metaphors of purification and imprisonment, both of which offer compelling reasons why the soul should be removed from the influence of the body.

## ii) Corruption and Purification

The metaphor of purification and contamination is introduced in the *Phaedo* with the striking idea that through association with the body the soul is 'mixed together' (συμπεφυρμένη, 66b5) with evil. The body is presented as an evil substance which we must take care not to become 'infected' with (ἀναπιμπλώμεθα, 67a5) and which, once infected with, we must purify ourselves of (καθαρεύωμεν, 67a5). At 67c5 κάθαρσις (purification) is said to consist in separating the soul as much as possible from the body, and at 67d9 this process is identified as the practice of philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Philosophy purifies the soul of the taint of the body and at 80e-81c Socrates tells of the afterlife experiences of both the 'purified' and 'tainted' souls. If a soul is 'pure' (καθαρά, 80e2) and not 'dragging along' (συνεφέλκουσα) anything of the body, it departs (ἀπέρχεται, 81a5) to the invisible and immortal realm. But if at the time of death a soul is 'tainted and impure' (μεμιασμένη καὶ ἀκάθαρτος, 81b1) it suffers a terrible fate. Through constant association with the body the non-philosophical soul is said to be (81c4):

διειλημμένην... ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς  
interspersed..by the corporeal (tr. Tredennick)

an idea echoed at 83d10 with the description of the soul as 'full of' or 'saturated with' the body (τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα). As the corporeal is then described as 'heavy, oppressive, earthly and visible' (ἐμβριθές, βαρὺ, γεῶδες, ὀρατόν, 81c8-9), we see how this represents a marked change in the soul's character, for in its natural state the soul is divine and invisible (see 79b, 80a). This contamination by the body is a very serious threat to the soul's existence as soul and prevents the soul departing to its home in the invisible realm (81c9-d1):

ὃ δὴ καὶ ἔχουσα ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεται τε καὶ ἔλκεται  
 πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὀρατὸν τόπον...περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς  
 τάφους κυλινδουμένη,

So the soul which is tainted by its presence is weighed down and dragged back into the visible world...and hovers around tombs and graveyards (tr. Tredennick)

Such a soul in its impure state is forced to wander about these places as a punishment until it is once more attached to a body, which, of course, will infect it with further impurity. Thus the impure soul becomes lost in the cycle of rebirths and the only escape is to turn to philosophy with her offer of 'liberation and purification' (λύσει τε καὶ καθαρμῶ, 82d6).

In the passage at *Phaedo* 81c-d we find that since the corporeal nature is 'weighty' (ἐμβριθές) and 'heavy' (βαρὺ) its contamination of the soul results in the soul being 'weighed down' (ψυχὴ βαρύνεται, 81c10).<sup>19</sup> This metaphor also appears in the *Republic* (519b1) when the soul is spoken of as having 'leaden weights' (τὰς μολυβδίδας) attached to it as a result of birth and life in the body - weights which are the result of the desires, occasioned by the body, for 'food' 'pleasures' and 'gluttonies' (ἐδωδαῖς, ἡδοναῖς, λιχνείαις). The same

idea occurs in the *Phaedrus* in a slightly different context, when the soul that is not able to see the vision of the Forms, (248c7-8):

λήθης τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῆ, βαρυνθείσα δὲ  
πτερορρυήση τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ  
comes to be burdened with a load of forgetfulness and  
wrongdoing, and because of that burden sheds her wings  
and falls to the earth (tr. Hackforth)

Once again the weight attached to the soul is a weight of evil and again this is associated with life in the body, for the soul's fall to earth results in its birth in human form.

The idea that contact with the body taints and infects the soul is found in many passages throughout the dialogues (see Appendix 3, Group B, Table 4), but one of the most memorable visions of the impure soul is that given at *Republic* 611c-612a. Here Socrates tells how it is impossible to discern the true nature of soul while it is joined with the body and describes soul as 'maimed' or 'mutilated' (λελωβημένον) by its association with the body. He tells how the 'pure' (καθαρόν) soul is far more beautiful than the impure and likens the soul in its bodily frame to the sea-god Glaucus whose original appearance is spoiled by his life in the sea. The limbs of this god are 'broken off', 'crushed' and 'altogether maimed' (ἐκκεκλάσθαι, συντετριφθαι, πάντως λελωβῆσθαι) by the waves, and his appearance is obscured by the shells and seaweed that have attached themselves to him. Socrates then continues the sea-image, asking Glaucon to imagine how the soul might be, if its love of wisdom raises it from its present 'depths'. Philosophy is thus imagined as offering the soul a chance to be (611e5-12a2):

περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῆ, ἅτε γῆν  
ἔστιωμένη, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλά καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν

if the many stones and shells, the many stony and wild things which have been encrusted all over it by those so-called happy feasts as it feeds on earth,<sup>20</sup> were scraped off. (tr. Grube)

We are thus presented with a picture where the soul is spoiled and disfigured by its life in the body and where only philosophy has the power to restore it to its former purity.

### iii) Imprisonment and Liberation

The idea that life in the body is detrimental to the soul is also expressed in the metaphor of imprisonment, as the soul is portrayed as a prisoner chained in the body and so separated from the outside world. In the *Phaedo* the notions of imprisonment and freedom are closely related to the more general idea of the binding of the soul in or to the body and often it is impossible to say which type of freeing or binding is being suggested - the binding and loosening of a physical object or the shackling and freeing of a person. This is the case at 65a1 where the philosopher is spoken of as 'freeing' or 'releasing' the soul from association with the body (ἀπολύων...τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας) and at 67d1 as purification is said to separate the soul from the body so that it is ἐκλυομένην ὥσπερ [ἐκ] δεσμῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος (freed as it were from the bonds of the body). Similarly at 67d4 and d9 the general term λύσις (loosing, releasing) is used as both death and philosophy are said to release soul from body. It is only in the passage at 82e-83d that the general idea of philosophy as the λύσις of the soul is developed into the more striking metaphor of imprisonment, but even here it is used alongside metaphors for the attachment of physical objects.

At 82e Socrates explains how philosophy frees the soul from the influence of the body and begins by saying (82d9-e5):

γιγνώσκουσι γάρ, ἧ δ' ὄς, οἱ φιλομαθεῖς ὅτι παραβοῦσα αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ φιλοσοφία ἀτεχνῶς διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ προσκεκολλημένην, ἀναγκαζομένην δὲ ὥσπερ διὰ εἶργμοῦ διὰ τούτου σκοπεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην,  
Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner chained hand and foot in the body and forced to view reality not directly but only through its prison bars and wallowing in utter ignorance. (tr. Tredennick)

The metaphor of bonds is first introduced with the participle *διαδεδεμένη* (bound on either side, bound fast). The verb *διαδέω* can refer both to the binding of objects and to the chaining of prisoners (see LSJ) and so there is at this stage a certain ambiguity about the nature of the soul's bondage. However, when we reach the participle *προσκεκολλημένην* it seems we are to imagine the soul as an inanimate object. The verb *προσκολλάω* means 'to glue on or to' and thus Tredennick's translation, 'chained hand and foot' is incorrect and obscures Plato's depiction of the soul as an object. Indeed it is only when we come to the simile *ὥσπερ διὰ εἶργμοῦ* that we have an unambiguous presentation of the soul as a human prisoner. The idea that the soul is 'glued' to the body is an unusual one and it prepares the way for the equally striking images of pinning and rivetting at 83d. These three images clash with the idea of a personified soul and indeed seem designed to do so. The dominant image of the soul in the *Phaedo* is that of an inner person and for an audience accustomed to this image the idea of the soul being 'glued' or 'nailed' to the body is a very uncomfortable one. Since Plato has made it clear that the soul is the natural master of the body (*Phaedo* 80a), then, for him, the body's influence on the soul is unnatural. These inanimate images,

then, throw into relief the unnaturalness of the situation when the body influences the soul and convey Plato's view that this is an undesirable experience for the soul.

But after introducing the image of the soul as an inanimate object fastened to the body, why does Plato then switch again to a personified soul in the simile of imprisonment ὥσπερ διὰ εἶργμοῦ? The reason for this would seem to be that he is about to speak of the soul as 'inquiring' (σκοπεῖσθαι) and this sits rather uneasily with the depiction of the soul as inanimate.

The imprisonment metaphor presents the soul as separate from reality and forced to view the Forms not directly but through the body, its prison. Thus the soul must be seen as a person shut away from the real world and only able to see it by looking out through the prison windows or bars. However, Plato does not actually mention windows or bars and says only that the soul is forced to view reality διὰ εἶργμοῦ - 'through the prison'. Obviously one cannot actually view anything through a prison, but since the soul is portrayed as in the body looking out through it, it seems that the vehicle of the metaphor (prison) has been adapted to the tenor (body), and this accounts for the slightly odd idea here. This metaphor, therefore, illustrates the view that the body is a hindrance to thought, as we see that just as the walls or bars of a prison separate the prisoner from the outside world and impair his view of it, so the body separates the soul from the Forms and impairs its view of true reality. Thus the soul in the body 'is rolled around' (κυλινδουμένην) in ignorance, and the images of the soul bound to the body and wallowing around recall the picture of the lost souls at 81d-e who 'are rolled around' (κυλινδουμένη) in graveyards, waiting to be bound (ἐνδεθῶσιν) again into mortal bodies.

Plato's point here is that the experience of a soul in the afterlife mirrors its experience of life in the body, for if a soul associates closely with the body in life, it will not be able to leave it at death. Similarly, although the soul is bound to the body at birth through the agency of an external force, its own behaviour in life can reinforce those bonds (82e5-83a1):

καὶ τοῦ εἰργμοῦ τὴν δεινότητα κατιδοῦσα ὅτι δι' ἐπιθυμίας ἐστίν, ὡς ἂν μάλιστα αὐτὸς ὁ δεδεμένος συλλήπτωρ εἴη τοῦ δεδέσθαι,

and philosophy can see that the imprisonment is ingeniously effected by the prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement. (tr. Tredennick)<sup>21</sup>

This idea that the soul's behaviour in life strengthens the bonds which fasten it to the body is expressed in slightly different terms at 83d4. Here Socrates explains that the force of physical sensations can cause the soul to believe that the body's experience of reality in the phenomenal world is actually the true one (83d4-5):

ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερονᾷ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ, δοξάζουσιν αὐτὰ ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φη.

every pleasure or pain has a sort of rivet with which it fastens the soul to the body and pins it down and makes it corporeal, accepting as true whatever the body certifies. (tr. Tredennick)

Thus the image of physical sensations as having a rivet (ἦλον) with which they 'nail' (προσηλοῖ) and 'pin' (προσπερονᾷ) soul to body effectively conveys how the soul can become ever more closely attached to the body during human life and so ever more separate from the Forms. For, as Kenneth Dorter observes (p.80), the idea of the soul having corporeal form means that:

the soul's conception of reality is determined by corporeal factors so that it is the visible realm that is chiefly taken to be real.

Dorter observes that the metaphor of the soul's imprisonment is to a large extent developed in response to the context of Socrates' imprisonment and that the theme of liberation, an undercurrent throughout the *Phaedo*, is deeply relevant to this situation.<sup>22</sup>

In this section I have discussed a number of metaphors which illustrate the detrimental effect of body on soul and have shown how the body: 'drags' the soul into the phenomenal world; makes it dizzy as if drunk (see note 17); infects it with evil and taints its natural purity; intersperses and saturates it with corporeal nature thus weighing it down; attaches lead weights to it; imprisons it and even maims, disfigures and mutilates it. So far from soul exercising power over the body, images such as these present the body as having a very strong corrupting influence on soul. Indeed the soul's only defence against these onslaughts is withdrawal and detachment from the body and its concerns. Philosophical contemplation is presented as the only way that the soul can separate itself from the body in human life. For this contemplation not only enables a soul to discern what is permanent amidst the fluctuations of the phenomenal world but also enables the rational power of the soul to assert its natural dominance over the body and the passions.orter observes a connection between the ideas of philosophical detachment and self-control and comments (p.32):

Because the detachment of soul from body in the practising of death is not a physical separation but a detachment from undue bodily influence, it can be achieved only by self-control, that is, by the bringing of the body under the governance of soul (reason) rather than allowing it to enslave the soul (cf. 69b7, 82e).

Dorter thus shows how detachment and self-control consist in the assertion of the rule of soul over body and so, returning to the idea

of the soul's natural dominance over body (discussed at 7.3 (1)), we see how soul is only truly soul, that is, invested with power and natural dominance over the body, when it practises philosophy. It is clear, then, that the many metaphors portraying the harmful and even violent effects of the body on the soul perform an important function, since they add considerable weight to Plato's argument that the soul should be kept as separate as possible from the body. Further, since this separation can only be achieved through the exercise of pure reason, these metaphors also support Plato's advocacy of the philosophical life.

#### 7.4 Conclusions

Now that we have examined various groups of metaphors for the soul, we can return to the question raised at the end of Chapter 6, that is, do any of these metaphors convey information about the soul which cannot be conveyed in literal terms?

To try to answer this, let us first compare Plato's metaphors for the processes of birth and death with his literal statements on these matters, assessing the information conveyed in each case. The metaphor of the journey of the soul tells that the soul does not die along with the body but travels on to new places - an idea also conveyed by the metaphor of the soul's wings. The metaphor of the soul as a seed tells that the soul is placed in the body at birth and that it is the source of life and growth. Finally, the metaphor of the bonds of the soul represents how soul is attached to or imprisoned in the body at birth and released at its death, to live a separate existence in the afterlife. How do these metaphors relate to Plato's literal statements about the soul? First, the idea that the soul exists independently

after the death of the body is obviously based on the belief that the soul is immortal - a belief which can be stated quite literally, as we see at *Republic* 608d3 and *Phaedrus* 245c5:

(*Rep.* 608d3)

ἀθάνατος ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται<sup>23</sup>  
our soul is immortal and never perishes (tr. Grube)

(*Phdr.* 245c5)

Ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος  
all soul is immortal

Second, regarding the metaphors of the soul's entrance into or attachment to the body at birth and its departure or release from it at death, these clearly represent the belief that the soul is with or in the body in life and separate from it after death. The idea that the soul is in the body during human life is expressed in different terms when Socrates describes life as, *Phaedo* (79e8-80a):

ἐπειδὴν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὧσι ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα  
when soul and body are in the same place.

The spatial metaphor is still in evidence here but a rather more abstract formulation is used when Socrates, discussing the soul's former existence, speaks of the time (*Phaedo* 76c11-12):

πρὶν εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώπου εἴδει  
before it was in human form

It seems to me that the description of the soul as 'in human form' can be taken as a literal statement of the metaphor of the soul's presence in the body. Of course, one may argue that the idea of the soul's presence in the body is not a metaphor at all, in which case my reduction can stop at this point. But some would perhaps object that there is here a spatial relation which is difficult to reconcile with

a non-corporeal essence. However we may view the matter today, it does seem that the idea of the presence of soul in body was understood by the Greeks as a literal concept, as is perhaps evidenced by their term *ἔμψυχος* (having life in one, animate). The view that life is the situation arising from soul's presence in a body appears in two Platonic passages - in the *Phaedo* and *Cratylus*. At *Phaedo* 105c9-d2 we find the following exchange between Socrates and Cebes:

Ἀποκρίνου δὴ, . . . ὅτι ἂν τί ἐγγένηται σώματι ζῶν ἔσται;

Ὅτι ἂν ψυχῇ, ἔφη.

Οὐκοῦν ἀεὶ τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει;

Πῶς γὰρ οὐχί;

Then tell me, what must be present in a body to make it alive?

Soul.

Is this always so?

Of course. (tr. Tredennick)

In the *Cratylus* we also find a direct statement of this view as Socrates says that soul (399d12):

ὅταν παρῆ τῷ σώματι, αἰτιόν ἐστι τοῦ ζῆν αὐτῷ

when in the body is the source of life

(tr. Jowett)

It does seem fair to say, then, that in Greek terms the metaphors of the soul's entrance into or attachment to the body can be reduced to the literal statement that soul is present in the body in this life or that it is 'in human form'. Further, in our own terms, the metaphor of life as the presence of soul 'in' a body can perhaps be reduced to a literal statement such as "'soul" is the name given to the essence or energy that is the source of human beings' life, movement and rationality'.

Our second set of metaphors presented the soul as the master/mistress or ruler of the body. These metaphors convey the information that the soul is more powerful and of a higher status than

the body, - information which can be expressed in literal terms, as we see at *Laws* 959a5:

ψυχὴν σώματος εἶναι τὸ πᾶν διαφέρουσαν  
the soul has an absolute superiority over the body (tr. Saunders).

and 731c5:

ψυχὴ δ', ὡς εἶπομεν, ἀληθεία γέ ἐστιν πᾶσιν τιμιώτατον  
as we said, the truth is that a most precious thing of every man is his soul. (tr. Saunders, adapted)

Finally, I examined Plato's many metaphors for the effects of the body on the soul and the soul's response. The question of whether these metaphors can be replaced by literal terms is not so straightforward, but it does seem to me that the information conveyed by these metaphors can also be conveyed in literal terms. However, I must explain my position very carefully here.

There are two ways of interpreting Plato's metaphors for the negative effects of body on soul: they can be taken as expressing the idea *that* the body harms the soul or as expressing *how* the body harms the soul. On the view that these metaphors simply convey the notion *that* the body harms the soul, the metaphors can be replaced by literal terms. For the idea of harming the soul can be expressed literally, as for example at *Crito* 47d, where Socrates uses the verb διαφθείρω (ruin) to tell that our behaviour can damage our souls.<sup>24</sup> But on the view that these metaphors express *how* the body affects the soul, can the metaphors still be replaced by literal terms? It seems to me that there are two possible answers to this question, answers which depend on different views of what the harming of the soul actually consists in.

If one believes that for Plato the body causes harm to the soul *in that* it prevents it from reasoning properly, then one can accept that the metaphors of physical corruption and imprisonment are reducible to literal terms. For these metaphors depict the experience of soul when its ability to reason and its judgment are affected by the body, and this effect can be spoken of in literal terms, as we see at *Phaedo* 65a9-b8:

Τί δὲ δὴ περὶ αὐτὴν τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως κτῆσιν; πότερον ἐμπόδιον τὸ σῶμα ἢ οὐ, εἴαν τις αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ ζητήσῃ κοινωνὸν συμπαραλαμβάνῃ; ...  
 Πάνυ μὲν οὖν ἔφη.

Now take the acquisition of knowledge. Is the body a hindrance or not, if one takes it into partnership to share an investigation..? Certainly. (tr. Tredennick)

Essentially, the body is an ἐμπόδιον to the soul for two reasons: first, because the effect of pain and the desire for pleasure make uninterrupted contemplation difficult; and second, because, if the soul accepts the evidence of the senses, it becomes convinced of the reality of the phenomenal world and thus ignores or forgets the Forms. Since for Plato the soul is the rational principle in human beings, language which presents the soul as reasoning, thinking or making judgements is to be accepted as literal. Thus in the light of Plato's theory of Forms, statements telling how the body hinders the soul's rational activity can be taken as literal, so long as they do not involve any presentation of the soul as corporeal. But the metaphors of communion, corruption and imprisonment become cognitively irreplaceable if one maintains that, when the body hinders the soul's rational activity, the soul is *consequently* harmed in some way. For on this interpretation, when the soul is unable to reason, its condition deteriorates and the metaphors of corruption and defilement convey a deterioration which is not *itself* the inability to reason properly,

but is the *result* of the inability to reason properly. At this level, we are touching on the very difficult questions of how a material body can affect an immaterial soul and how exactly the soul's nature changes when it cannot reason properly. Thus, if one considers the body's hindering of pure thought as the *cause* of harm rather than the harm *itself*, then it does seem that these metaphors are cognitively irreducible and irreplaceable. For when Plato tells us that the soul is weighed down or tainted by the body, these metaphors present a process for which no literal terms exist: the process whereby the soul's nature is actually affected and changed by the body.

However, if one accepts the former view that Plato's metaphors dramatise the situation where the body prevents the soul reasoning, then the metaphors can be judged as conveying the same information as literal statements such as 'the body is a hindrance to thought'. This is the view I take and so I maintain that the metaphors of communion, corruption and imprisonment convey information which can be conveyed in literal terms.

As regards the response of the soul to the effects of the body, we saw that Plato expressed the soul's resistance in metaphors of separation, purification and liberation. Are these metaphors cognitively irreducible? Following the view that the soul is harmed when the body interferes with its powers of reasoning, the soul's response to the body, in my opinion, can also be seen as taking place at the level of rational activity, and so the metaphors can be reduced to literal terms. At *Phaedo* 66d-e Socrates asserts that 'if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything...we must contemplate things by themselves with the soul itself' (αὐτῆ τῆ ψυχῆ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ

πράγματα), and later at 83b describes how philosophy encourages the soul to reject the evidence of the senses and (83a8-b1):

πιστεύειν δὲ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἢ αὐτὴν αὐτῇ, ὅτι ἂν νοήσῃ  
αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τῶν ὄντων.  
to trust nothing but its own independent judgement upon  
objects considered in themselves, (tr. Tredennick)

Thus, although the soul cannot literally separate itself from the body in human life, it can, according to Plato, reason independently of it, and this independent activity is represented in the metaphors of the soul being separate from the body, purified of its taint and freed from its bonds.

In this conclusion I have been engaged in a process which many would perhaps consider fundamentally flawed or, at best, clumsy; namely, the process of 'reducing' metaphorical statements to literal terms, seeking to forge a separation between the metaphorical form and its literal 'content'. Although I am aware of the minefield of problems surrounding such a process, I feel that it is necessary to treat my material in this way in order to highlight an important difference between certain types of metaphors. I am not claiming that there are no differences between the metaphors so far discussed and the literal statements which (I have argued) convey the same information. Metaphors challenge our interpretative faculties in a substantially different way from literal language, they are able to present in a compact form various networks of suggestions and they can have considerably more rhetorical impact than literal speech. However, with respect to 'content', I believe that many metaphors convey information which can also be expressed in literal terms, and I believe this is true of the soul metaphors examined in this chapter. Nevertheless, I also think that certain metaphors express ideas for

which no literal terms exist, and in Chapter 8 we will discuss soul metaphors which, I will argue, cannot be reduced to or replaced by literal terms. It is to distinguish these two types of metaphor that I have engaged in the process of 'reducing' Plato's soul metaphors to literal statements, and I hope that by the end of the next chapter the value of this method will have become clear.

<sup>1</sup>For discussions of Plato's views on the immortality of the soul, see: C.J. Rowe, *Plato*, pp.163-78; Solmsen, 'Plato and the concept of the soul', 358-60 and 365-7; Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo*, pp.179-91, and 'Plato's image of immortality'; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp.321-5; T.M. Robinson *Plato's Psychology*, pp. 125-31; McGibbon, 'The Fall of the Soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*'; Hackforth, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*'; Luce, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*: A Reply'; Nilsson, 'The Immortality of the Soul in Greek Religion', (esp. 13-16); Rohde, *Psyche*, pp.463-76.

<sup>2</sup>See J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, pp.74-88, and M. Nilsson, *The Immortality of the Soul in Greek Religion* p.3, on Homeric belief.

<sup>3</sup>See e.g. *Cratylus* 403c-e, *Gorgias* 523a-b, *Republic* 386d-387b.

<sup>4</sup>See also *Phaedo* 81a and 84b.

<sup>5</sup>*Sophist* 230b, 245d; *Phaedrus* 263b; *Republic*. 505c; *Hippias Major* 304c; *Hippias Minor* 372e, 376c; *Alcibiades* 117a-118b.

<sup>6</sup>Parmenides, Fragment 6, lines 4-6:

βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν  
πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν  
στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον·

<sup>7</sup>Compare *Phaedrus* 257a2, where this verb is again used of the afterlife experience of the non-virtuous soul, as it is condemned to be 'rolled around and beneath the earth for nine thousand years with no understanding' (ἐννέα χιλιάδας ἐτῶν περὶ γῆν κυλινδουμένην αὐτὴν καὶ ὑπὸ γῆς ἄνου).

<sup>8</sup>See I 2, 75; III 95, 252; IV 325; VI 278; XIII 204; XIV 43; XV 312; XVI 64, 151; XVII 511; XX 195; XXI 363; XXIV 307. See also *Iliad* X 9.

<sup>9</sup>De Vries in his commentary on the *Phaedrus* makes what is in my view a very puzzling comment on the wing image here. He says of the term *περορρυήσασα* (p.128):

After *περορρυήσασα* the pap. inserts (probably) *πως*. The reading is accepted by Buchw., and defended by Alline 283 and Vinz 110. Alline thinks that, as *περορρυεῖν* is 'properly' said of birds Plato may have wished to attenuate the metaphor. But is it a metaphor?

Clearly *περορρυεῖν* (to shed feathers) is 'properly' or literally used of birds or other winged creatures and it is difficult to understand De Vries' doubt as to whether it is a metaphor here. It cannot be maintained that Plato seriously viewed the soul as capable of growing or losing feathers, and De Vries offers no suggestions of how it would be possible to understand the verb in a literal sense in this passage.

<sup>10</sup>On the role of chance in this fall (*τινι συντυχίᾳ*), see Ferrari (1987), pp. 133-5, who concludes (p.135):

We are not to feel guilt over our embodiment, since after all Plato's point is that we should view it as a contingency, an accident; yet we are not therefore simply to exonerate ourselves from all sense of responsibility as human agents in this matter, for if we do, we shall perpetuate the very ignorance which the myth asks us to acknowledge as a factor in the fall.

<sup>11</sup>In Plato see e.g. *Tim.* 90a and *Laws* 905a. Plato also often uses the idea that the world of the Forms is above the mortal realm: *Rep.* 517b5, c9, 518b4, 525d5, 527b10, 529b4 etc.

<sup>12</sup>For another interpretation of the use of the winged soul see Friedlander (p.193), who views the winged Eros as a possible model for Plato's winged Psyche.

<sup>13</sup>See Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, p.17 and p.73.

<sup>14</sup>See *Iliad* XVI 856, XXII 362, *Odyssey* X 495 and XXIV 6, and *Republic* 386d-387a. Although there is no direct reference in these passages to the soul as winged, nevertheless the association between flying and wings is clear enough.

<sup>15</sup>*Phaedo* 79d, 80d, 81a; *Republic* 611e; *Phaedrus* 246e, 248a, 248c, 249c.

<sup>16</sup>*Republic* 611e etc.

<sup>17</sup>The anthropomorphism of terms such as *ἔῶσα χείρειν* or *παρλυπη* is accentuated in other passages such as *Phaedo* 79c7-8, where the effect of the body causes the soul to 'wander (*πλανᾶται*) and become confused (*ταράττεται*) and dizzy (*εἰλιγγιᾶ*) as if drunk (*ὡσπερ μεθύουσα*)'.

<sup>18</sup>Plato took the idea of purification from earlier religious beliefs and adapted it to his own views, as Erwin Rohde points out (p.471):

Plato often speaks of the *κάθαρσις*, the purification, after which man must strive...He takes both the word and the idea from the theologians, but he gives it a higher meaning, while yet preserving unmistakably the analogy with the *κάθαρσις* of the theologi and mystery-priests. It is no longer the pollution from the *δαίμονες* that is to be avoided, but rather the dulling of the power of knowledge...due to the world of the senses. Man's effort must be directed not so much to ritual purity, as to the preservation of his knowledge of the eternal from eclipse through the deceptive illusions of the senses; its withdrawal from contact with the ephemeral as the source of pollution and debasement.

Thus even in this philosophical reinterpretation of ritual abstinence in terms of spiritual release and emancipation, the effort after 'purity' retains its religious sense. The world of the Ideas, the world of pure Being, to which only the pure soul can attain, is a world of divinity.

On the significance of purification in Plato see also Robinson (p.24) and Dorter (pp. 14, 32, 64-9, 79-82, 173-5, 177-8).

<sup>19</sup>Dorter rightly observes (p.80) that in this passage the 'corporeal stain' is an image of the 'fear of the invisible'.

<sup>20</sup>The idea that the soul 'feasts' on certain kinds of food is used in a number of passages. See e.g. *Phaedrus* 247e, 248b-c; *Republic* 401b-c. For a fuller list see Appendix 3, Group B, Table 2. The metaphor of the soul's food is perhaps linked with the metaphor of the purification of the soul as a purging of unwanted substances, see *Sophist* 227c-230c.

<sup>21</sup>Dorter comments on this passage (p.80):

This prison represents not merely a confinement in the body (life)...but the additional *devotion* to the corporeal at the expense of the spiritual. Our imprisonment is thus a function of our responding to corporeal pleasures and pains, of our nurturing in ourselves corresponding desires and fears, and of our becoming increasingly attached to the visible realm.

<sup>22</sup>See pp. 10; 17-32; 79-82; 91; 177-8; 213-14 n4

<sup>23</sup>This point is actually phrased as a question, but is proved to the interlocutors' satisfaction in the subsequent discussion (see 611a).

<sup>24</sup>Although the soul is not mentioned explicitly here, it is clear that this is what the neuter *ἐκεῖνο* refers to.

## Chapter 8

### THE INNER SOUL

#### 8.1 Introduction

Metaphors for the inner nature of the soul and the relationships between its parts will be the focus of this chapter, and, as before, my aim will be to assess whether these metaphors can be replaced by literal terms. This study will comprise two sections: first, an examination of the metaphor of the soul's 'health', and second, a discussion of the various metaphors for the interaction of the soul's parts - metaphors at work in Plato's models of the soul as a state, as a mythological monster and as a charioteer and two horses. All the metaphors in this chapter arise from Plato's theory of the tripartite soul. For the 'health' of the soul is presented as deriving from the proper arrangement of the three parts, and the three models mentioned above turn upon the idea that the soul has distinct parts which behave in fundamentally different ways. In order to understand these metaphors we must first establish some basic points about the theory of tripartition.

I mentioned in Chapter 6 (section 6.2) that on some occasions Plato sets out the view that the soul has three 'parts' or 'kinds': reason, spirit and appetite. It is now time to consider what exactly these are. Many critics have understood these parts as simple 'faculties', a view on which Moline (1978) comments (p.8):

A faculty, by definition, is a capacity for the one thing its name would suggest. 'Appetite' on a facultist view would be a capacity for a certain sort of desire and nothing else; 'Reason' would be simply and solely a capacity for reasoning. Thus a faculty's 'specialization of function' would be the automatic and trivial result of its incapacity to do anything its name did not suggest.

Moline argues against this view, pointing out that this will not fit Plato's text, since in both the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* we find talk of one part usurping the function of another, which, on the facultist view, would be absurd (p.8). Moline shows how the part which is called λογιστικόν (reason) is also called τὸ φιλομαθές (lover of learning) and το φιλόσοφον (lover of wisdom, 581b7), how the 'spirited' element (τὸ θυμοειδές) is also called τὸ φιλόνηκον (lover of victory) and τὸ φιλότιμον (lover of honour, 581b1-2), and, finally, how the 'appetitive' part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) is also called τὸ φιλοχρήματων (lover of money or possessions, 580e7) and τὸ φιλοκερδές (lover of gain, 581a7). Each part, then, has its own 'loves', but, Moline maintains, this does not prevent each part placing some value on other pursuits or objects (p.10):

plainly there is nothing to prevent what is loved for its own sake by one part from being valued weakly as a means by another.

Thus it is possible for the appetitive part to value the exercise of reason as a means of securing its own ends - and this is what we find in passages such as *Phaedrus* 254a-d where the lower element of the soul (here the bad horse) employs persuasion in an attempt to achieve the satisfaction of its desire.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be claimed, then, that the appetite only desires and has no reasoning ability. Such passages have led critics to accept that each of the soul's parts has its own complex behaviour and that, in Ferrari's words (p.200):

Plato was never aiming at a theory in which (to put it baldly) reason simply reasons and desire desires.

However, although the parts are not simple in the sense of having only one faculty, still each part has a particular devotion to one area of activity, and, as Ferrari observes (p.201), the labels of 'reason',

'spirit' and 'appetite' 'apply ..to what the characters represent not exclusively but *par excellence*'.

Moline and Ferrari therefore consider each part of the soul not as a faculty but as an agent devoted to particular objects or pursuits. Julia Annas, in her introduction to the *Republic* (1981), tackles an issue which has been seen as undermining this view. She calls this issue the 'Homunculus Problem' and sets it out as follows (p.142):

[the parts of the soul] are freely described in terms that are normally used of the person as a whole...The parts are explanatory entities, parts needed to explain the behaviour of the whole. If they themselves, however, can be described in the way the whole person is, have we not reproduced the problems that led to the need for the theory in the first place?...is the theory not worthless if it explains the behaviour of a person by introducing in the person homunculi, little people to bring about the behaviour?

Annas believes that the theory is not worthless and that there is no need to be worried by the Homunculus Problem (pp. 144-5), for in each case the homunculi are themselves simpler entities than the person and thus do not 'reproduce the features that were found puzzling about the whole person' (p.144). Thus in Annas' view the use of such explanatory entities is not necessarily objectionable (p.144):

as long as one is clear that the item in question is meant to be something that is both simpler than the whole person with all their other functions, and also something that shares features with the whole person.

Annas concludes that the parts of the soul (p.146) 'have some, but not all, of the features of the whole person whose behaviour they are introduced to explain'.<sup>2</sup> Later in this chapter I will return to the matter of Plato's anthropomorphic language about the soul and will consider whether it is to be judged as metaphorical or literal.

I accept the argument that the three parts of the soul are better viewed as agents rather than faculties and that they share, to a limited extent, one another's capacities. With this working view of the tripartite soul I will now move on to my examination of Plato's metaphors for the relation of the three parts and the resulting condition of the soul. Let us begin, then, with the metaphor of the soul's 'health'.

## 8.2 The Health of the Soul

The idea that the soul can be in a healthy or diseased state occurs in a number of dialogues (see Appendix 3, Group B, Table 3). Plato argues that virtuous actions cause a soul to be healthy whereas evil actions cause disease in the soul. At *Sophist* 228b8 and d7 vice itself is called a 'disease' (νόσος) and in the *Gorgias* this idea is given more detail as Plato strives to impress on his audience just how harmful evil behaviour is. At 480b we are told that the unjust man ought to endure punishment (480b1-2):

ὅπως μὴ ἐγχνρονισθὲν τὸ νόσημα τῆς ἀδικίας ἕπουλον τὴν  
 ψυχὴν ποιήσει καὶ ἀνίατον.  
 to prevent the disease of injustice from being chronic  
 and making his soul festering and incurable. (tr. Irwin)

We see here the medical terms νόσημα (sickness, disease), ἀνίατος (incurable) and the very graphic adjective ἕπουλος which is used of 'wounds festering under the scar only skinned over' (LSJ). At 524e4 in the myth of the *Gorgias* Plato uses another very striking image of health. Here Socrates, speaking of the underworld judges passing judgement on the souls of the dead, tells how Rhadamanthus has seized the soul of an evil man and (524e4-25a2):

κατεῖδεν οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς ὄν τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ διαμεμαστιγμένην  
 καὶ οὐλῶν μεστήν ὑπὸ ἐπιρκιῶν καὶ ἀδικίας, ἃ ἑκάστη ἦ

πρᾶξις αὐτοῦ ἐξωμόρξατο εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν

noticed that nothing in the soul was healthy, but it was thoroughly whip-marked and full of scars from false oaths and injustice. (tr. Irwin)

So a slightly different, but no less effective, image is used, as Plato tells how every time someone commits a wicked act they are whipping their soul and leaving it badly scarred.

The metaphor of health and disease is highly emotive and thus plays an important role in reinforcing Plato's recommendations of the benefits of virtue and the just life. But the metaphor displays more than simply a persuasive force. For in the *Republic* it performs the didactic function of showing how the proper arrangement of parts can be beneficial to an organism as a whole (444d). In this passage Socrates uses the illustration of health to argue that just as health in the body arises from the natural order of its different parts, so justice in the soul depends upon the natural order of its three parts.

If the health metaphor worked only as a persuasive and didactic device, then the illustrative thesis would account for its role in the dialogues. However, it has been argued that the idea of the health of the soul has further significance, as an integral component of Plato's theory-building. If this view is correct, then the metaphor is fulfilling not only an illustrative but also an epistemic role, and so we must give careful scrutiny to the arguments concerning this issue which is of central importance to this thesis.

Anthony Kenny in his essay 'Mental Health in Plato's *Republic*' has argued that Plato develops the idea of the health of the soul so that it becomes no longer simply a metaphor, but a philosophical concept. He sees this development taking place between the *Gorgias* and the

*Republic* and says of Plato's use of the already familiar health metaphor (p.2):

It was Plato who in the *Gorgias* developed the metaphor in unprecedented detail and in the *Republic* crossed the boundary between metaphor and philosophical theory.

Kenny comments on the use of the comparison between body and soul in the *Gorgias* (p.1-2) and says 'but all this is no more than an allegory', which 'need not imply that there is literally such a thing as mental health'. He then contrasts this with the development of the metaphor in the *Republic* (p.2):

In the *Republic* allegory gives way to theory building. The difference is made by the doctrine of the tripartite soul. The *Republic* is dominated by two quasi-medical ideas: the idea of an organism and the idea of a function or characteristic activity (*ἔργον*). The theme of the dialogue is the nature of justice in the state and in the soul; and both state and soul are portrayed as organisms, as complexes of parts with characteristic functions. Justice in the state is what health is in the body, namely, the right functioning of the elements of the organisms.

The idea that the health of the soul is part of Plato's theory-building apparatus has been accepted by Jon Moline (1978) who comments (p.17):

Yvon Brès and Anthony Kenny have recognised and documented Plato's pioneering role<sup>3</sup> in developing beyond metaphor a concept of mental health.

If this view is correct, then the metaphor of health would have to be seen as a 'theory-constitutive metaphor', to use Boyd's term (see 1.2. (3)), and thus as irreplaceable.

I do not accept this view and will argue that Plato's theory regarding the effects of justice on the soul can be presented without any notion of health. I believe that the idea of the soul's 'health'

is a metaphor for its best condition and that in the *Republic* Plato is able to speak of this condition in literal terms.

The abstract terms used for the condition of the soul are ἔξις (a being in a certain state; a condition, state or habit of mind) and φύσις (the natural form or constitution of a person or thing; nature, constitution). At *Republic* 443e as Socrates speaks of the parts of the soul as 'in harmony' with one another, he says that it is just action that preserves ταύτην τὴν ἔξιν (this condition) of the soul. At 591b3 we find that the soul has a 'best nature' βελτίστην φύσιν - and earlier in the dialogue we have been told what this consists of. At 444d it is said that the soul has parts which can be organised in relation to 'ruling' and 'being ruled' 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν) or 'contrary to nature' (παρὰ φύσιν) (444d8):

Οὐκοῦν αὖ, ἔφην, τὸ δικαιοσύνην ἐμποιεῖν τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ  
κατὰ φύσιν καθιστάναι κρατεῖν τε καὶ κρατεῖσθαι ὑπ'  
ἀλλήλων, τὸ δὲ ἀδικίαν παρὰ φύσιν ἄρχειν τε καὶ ἄρχεσθαι  
ἄλλο ὑπ' ἄλλου;  
Κομιδῆ, ἔφη.

Therefore to produce justice is to establish the parts of the soul as ruler and ruled according to nature, while injustice means they rule and are ruled contrary to nature. Most certainly. (tr. Grube).

Following the idea that what is in accordance with nature is good and what is contrary to nature is bad, the soul's best condition must be achieved when its parts are arranged in accordance with nature and its worst condition when they are arranged contrary to nature. At 444b we learnt that 'by nature' (φύσει) one part of the soul is fit to 'serve' and another to 'rule', a point which supports an earlier passage (431a) where the expression 'self-control' is interpreted as indicating that there is a better and a worse part of the soul 'by nature' (φύσει) and that 'self-control' consists in the better part controlling the worse. Since reason is for Plato the 'best' part of

the soul (τὸ βέλτιστον, 589d7), it is 'fitting' (προσῆκει) for this to 'rule' (ἄρχειν, 441e). At 441a3 spirit is marked out as 'by nature' (φύσει) the 'ally' of reason, and so in the natural order of things this will support the rule of reason. At 442b we are told of the attempts of the appetitive part to 'usurp' the functions of the other parts and so ἄρχειν... ὧν οὐ προσήκον αὐτῷ γένει (to rule over those whom it is not fitted to rule, tr. Grube). So because of its 'stock', 'race' or 'class' (γένει) it is not 'fitting' for the appetitive part to exercise authority over the other two. Although Plato does not use the term 'nature' here, and although the use of γένει may be related to the model of the classes in the state, he is suggesting that this part of the soul, like the others, has its own innate capacities which are intrinsically different from those of the other two.<sup>4</sup> What emerges from this is that the soul has a natural condition which consists of its parts being established in relation to one another according to a natural hierarchy. When this natural hierarchy is in place, the soul is in its best condition, and, when this is overturned, in its worst. For Plato reason's superiority over the other parts of the soul is as 'natural' as the soul's superiority over the body (see *Phaedo* 79e9 and *Laws* 896c3). In the *Republic* Plato identifies 'justice' as the natural order of the soul and 'injustice' as the subversion of this order. Kenny acknowledges this point in his comments on 444d (p.8):

Injustice is a sort of civil strife among the elements, usurping each other's functions. Justice is produced in the soul, like health in the body, by establishing the elements concerned in their natural relations of control and subordination, whereas injustice is like disease and means that the natural order is subverted.

In my view it is clear from Plato's text - and indeed from Kenny's own interpretation here - that the bedrock of the theory of justice in the

soul is the idea of control and subordination of parts and that the comparison with health is used as an illustration of a desirable state resulting from the natural balance or arrangement of parts. Perhaps more importantly, the health metaphor also serves the rhetorical function of working to persuade the reader that the control of reason has a beneficial effect on the whole soul and that the natural condition of the soul is to be desired as a good in itself. Aside from rhetorical or illustrative concerns, the central idea of the passage at 444d are those of the natural order of the soul and the exercise of control. I believe that the health metaphor is based on these ideas and thus is to be seen as a secondary feature of the account rather than as an integral, irreplaceable component. I therefore do not accept Kenny's thesis that the 'health' of the soul in the *Republic* is no longer simply a metaphor but a philosophical concept in its own right. Further I believe that misleading translations and interpretations of passages in Kenny's article result in the health metaphor seeming more integral to Plato's theory than it actually is.

Commenting on the passage at 445b Kenny says (p.8):

when Glaucon agrees that since virtue is the health of the soul, it is absurd to ask whether it is more profitable to live justly or to do wrong...

However, in this section the concepts of health and disease make no appearance and Plato writes simply of the nature or natural state of the soul being disturbed (445a9-b1): τούτου ᾧ ζῶμεν φύσεως παραττομένης καὶ διαφθειρομένης. Kenny again ignores the force of φύσις in his translation of a phrase at 591b4. The phrase (591b3-4): ὅλη ἡ ψυχὴ εἰς τὴν βελτίστην φύσιν καθισταμένη is translated (p.10) as 'the entire soul, restored to its native soundness'. The idea of 'soundness' implies health, but there is no suggestion of health or

soundness in the Greek which simply says: 'restored to its best nature'. Thus there is no claim or implication here that the soul's natural state is one of health.

Another misleading translation appears later in the article (p.22) where Kenny comments on the passage at *Republic* 609a-d, saying:

The notion of mental health makes its final appearance in the proof of immortality which concludes Book Ten. Each thing is destroyed by its characteristic disease (*κακία*): eyes by ophthalmia, and iron by rust. Now vice is the characteristic disease of the soul; but vice does not destroy the soul in the way disease destroys the body (609d).

Kenny translates *κακία* as 'disease', when it simply means 'badness (in quality), defect, vice'. There is indeed a very close relationship established in the passage between injustice or evil in the soul and disease in the body, but it is not said that the soul has a characteristic 'disease'. At 609a we are told that all things have their own 'evil and sickness', *κακόν τε καὶ νόσημα*. Here 'sickness' is either a literal description referring only to *ὀφθαλμία* and *νόσος*, or, if taken together with *κακόν* as referring to everything mentioned in the passage, a metaphor not only of the soul but also of grain, wood, iron and bronze. Clearly Kenny would not claim that Plato developed a serious concept of the health of grain, wood etc., but no more can this passage be held to support the view that the health of the soul was more than a metaphor for Plato. The comparison with health is used here to illustrate the point about things being destroyed by their 'appropriate evil' (*τῆς οἰκείας κακίας*, 609d1), which in the case of soul is shown quite clearly to be injustice, *ἀδικία*. Thus this passage cannot be seen as positing any philosophical concept of mental health. Kenny argues that Plato defines justice as the health of the soul (p.23), but this is putting the case too strongly. For as we can see

at 444d, Plato's definition of justice is the proper or natural relationship between the parts of the soul. This condition is compared to health in the body, but it is not claimed that this condition actually is health. In the same way this condition is compared to beauty or fineness (*κάλλος*) at 444e, but it would be wrong to claim that Plato developed a philosophical concept with overtones of physical beauty.

Although I do not accept Kenny's claim that in the *Republic* the allegory of the health of the soul 'gives way to theory building', I nevertheless fully agree with his observations on the rhetorical effects of the health metaphor. At the end of his article Kenny notes that Plato achieved three things by means of the idea of the health of the soul (p.23): first that,

he provided himself with an easy answer to the question 'why be just?' Everyone wants to be healthy, so if justice is health, everyone must really want to be just;

second that the idea of injustice as a disease suggests that it should be possible to eradicate it by the application of medical science, which thus paves the way for the *Republic's* strict training and educational programme; and thirdly that,

if every vicious man is really a sick man, then the virtuous philosopher can claim over him the type of control which a doctor has over his patients.

I accept these three points and would like to add a fourth, namely, that the health metaphor is also used to make Plato's views on the death penalty more convincing. Having introduced the idea of vice as a disease, Plato can make a distinction between curable and incurable vice and can thus ease the way into recommending that certain criminals should be put to death. The Athenian asks at *Laws* 862e1 what

a judge's sentence should be for 'one whose disease is past such cure' and answers that he should sentence him to death. Three justifications for this are then given: first, in such a case longer life is of no advantage to the sinner himself; second, his death will be a warning to other potential wrongdoers, and thirdly it will rid society of evil men. The death sentence is by no means regarded here as a corrective or cure for the evil man himself, but is seen as a benefit for the rest of society. However, at 958a, as the Athenian returns again to the subject of capital punishment, we find a different view. Here he says that judges who sentence 'incurable' criminals to death deserve the praise of the community, and refers to the death sentence as (958a1): ἴαμα ταῖς οὕτω διατεθείσασιν ψυχαῖς (a cure for souls in that state). However, it has nowhere been argued (and, I believe, cannot be argued) that death can be a 'cure' for an evil soul. Here we see how a metaphor, once established, can be used to justify ideas which would be far more difficult to prove in argument. By likening vice to disease Plato finds an excellent model for the idea that certain kinds of vice simply cannot be remedied. We see, then, how the metaphor of health and disease offers Plato a persuasive model for his view that there is such a thing as irremediable vice which has to be dealt with by extreme methods.

The health metaphor performs a number of significant rhetorical functions and also on occasion has an illustrative or didactic role. However, I do not accept the claim that Plato developed the metaphor of health into a philosophical concept. In the *Republic* Plato's theory of justice in the soul rests on the notions of natural and unnatural conditions and the establishment of a natural hierarchy between the parts of the soul. In this theory the idea of 'health' can be reduced

to the proper functioning of parts and thus the health metaphor, although playing a significant expository role, cannot be regarded as an integral component in Plato's theory-building.

However, in the course of this study we have encountered another group of metaphors which perhaps can lay claim to being an integral component in Plato's theory of soul: metaphors expressing power relations. In the next section I will examine these metaphors of rule and control in the soul and will consider whether they can be replaced by literal terms.

### 8.3 Interaction and the Exercise of Power

Plato's discourse on the interaction between the three parts of the soul centres principally on the struggle to achieve dominance. As Plato seeks to explain intentional human behaviour, especially the conflict of motives, we find the parts of the soul locked in a perpetual contest for supremacy, with the winner exerting a direct influence on the actions of the whole person. When Leontius (*Republic* 439e) is confronted by the sight of human corpses, he feels at once a strong desire to look at them and a disgust which makes him turn away. A struggle is going on in his soul. Plato presents three major models for this struggle in the soul - the soul as a state, as a mythological monster and as a charioteer and horses. These models involve various metaphors for interaction between the three parts of the soul and for the exercise of power. I will follow the development of these metaphors and will then raise the question of their cognitive significance, arguing that some of the metaphors cannot be replaced by literal terms.

## 1. The Soul as a State

In the *Republic* when Socrates first speaks of the interaction between the parts of a soul, the verb he uses for the prevailing effect of one part on another is *κρατέω* (be strong, powerful; rule; conquer, prevail; master; control, command) (439c5-7):

οὐκ ἐνεῖναι μὲν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτῶν τὸ κελεῦον ἐνεῖναι δὲ τὸ  
κωλύον πειεῖν ἄλλο ὄν καὶ κρατοῦν τοῦ κελεύοντος;  
Should one not say that there is in their soul that which  
bids them drink, and also that which prevents them, that  
the latter is different and overrules the other part?  
(tr. Grube)

The idea of prevailing and conquering is then developed by further language of civil and political strife, as the spirited part is presented as the 'ally' of reason (440b2-3):

καὶ ὥσπερ δυοῖν στασιαζόντων σύμμαχον τῷ λόγῳ γιγνόμενον  
τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ τοιούτου  
of the two civic factions at odds, as it were, the  
spirited part becomes the ally of reason. (tr. Grube)

and (440e4-5):

πολὺ μᾶλλον αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς στάσει τίθεσθαι τὰ ὅπλα  
πρὸς τὸ λογιστικόν.  
in the civil war of the soul it fights far more on the  
side of reason. (tr Grube, adapted)

The political/military metaphors are continued in the passages that follow, when Plato speaks of the parts of the soul as rulers, subjects and allies and of their relations in terms of ruling, being subjects or slaves, fighting wars, guarding and engaging in civil strife or revolt.<sup>5</sup> The political and military language for the tripartite soul is conditioned to a large extent by the context of the dialogue and by the analogy - or even isomorphism<sup>6</sup> - posited by Plato between state and soul.<sup>7</sup> This political/military language becomes in books IV, VIII and IX the dominant way of speaking about interaction between the

soul's parts - and indeed continues to reverberate both in book X (605b, 608b) and in the *Timaeus* (70a-c).<sup>8</sup>

As Plato develops his argument that just as there are five forms of government, so there are five forms of soul, and, as he describes the relationship between the parts of the soul in its different forms, political and military metaphors proliferate. The number of metaphors makes individual examination impossible here, but a full list of references is given in Appendix 3, Group F, Table 1. I will confine myself, then, to setting out examples that offer key depictions of the exercise of control within the soul and of the interaction of its parts.

The essential elements of the metaphor of the soul as a state, are that there are three parts of the soul - reason, spirit, appetites - which correspond to the three classes in Plato's state - guardians, soldiers and workers. Plato believes that just as there is a natural hierarchy in society, so there is in the soul, and that the best condition of soul is where reason with spirit as its ally rules over the appetites. For Plato this constitutes 'justice' in the soul and injustice is civil strife or revolt in which the lower elements usurp reason's rightful position as ruler. At a simple level, then, the three parts of the soul are presented as people or groups of people with different interests, but as Plato develops his state model, he also depicts the soul as a place and introduces other groups of people into its borders.

At 553b-c we meet the idea of the 'throne' of the soul. Socrates is speaking of the son of the timocratic man (this is a male universe) and tells how the youth (553b8-c1) 'casts out from the throne in his soul' (ὠθεῖ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆ) the love of honour

and the spirited element. From the mention of a throne as the seat of power, it follows that the part of the soul which occupies this at any time will be a 'king' - the metaphor we find at 553c6, as Socrates develops his image (553c4-7):

ἄρ' οὐκ οἶει τὸν τοιοῦτον τότε εἰς μὲν τὸν θρόνον ἐκεῖνον  
τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν τε καὶ φιλοχρήματον ἐγκαθίξειν καὶ μέγαν  
βασιλέα ποιεῖν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, τιάρας τε καὶ στρεπτούς καὶ  
ἀκινάκας παραζωννύντα;

Do you not think that this man would establish his appetitive and money-loving part on that inner throne and make this a great king within himself, adorning him with golden tiaras and collars and girding him with Persian swords? (tr. Grube, adapted)

This splendid picture of the usurper-king, enthroned and surrounded by the visible symbols of power, not only portrays the rule of the ἐπιθυμητικόν in the soul but also expresses Plato's contempt for the extravagant excesses of this part of the soul. The idea of the soul as a place with a seat of power is developed further at 559d-560e, as Socrates speaks of the 'citadel' (ἀκρόπολιν, 560b8) of the soul with its 'royal wall' (βασιλικοῦ τείχους, 560c8) and 'gates' (πύλας), and as new groups of people enter the picture.

At 559d ff. Socrates describes the transformation from 'oligarchy' to 'democracy' in the soul and we hear how a young man 'undergoes a change just like a city' when (559e6-7): 'help comes from the same type of desires outside to one of the factions within himself' (tr. Grube). Thus Plato envisages some kind of alliance between desires or appetites within the soul and others outside. Since desires can surely only operate inside a soul it is not at first clear what these external 'desires' can be. However, their nature is revealed at 559e9 when we are told of 'counter-help' (ἀντιβοσηθήση) that may come to the rescue of the oligarchic element in the young man's soul. This 'counter-alliance' takes the form of admonishments and reproaches from

the young man's family, that is, words and speeches encouraging the oligarchic element to maintain control. If the 'counter-help' is a particular type of counsel, reflecting the desires of the advisors, then we may assume that this was also the nature of the initial 'help'. Thus the external 'desires' must be the words of evil men who desire and encourage the youth to succumb to vice. In this passage the young man's soul is divided as two elements in his soul, both supported by external groups, vie for supremacy. In terms of the state metaphor, we have the situation where (560a1-2):

στάσις δὴ καὶ ἀντίστασις καὶ μάχη ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸς αὐτὸν τότε  
γίνεται

there is faction and counterfaction within him and he  
battles against himself (tr. Grube)

This factional strife is dramatized further at 560b-e with the activities of the ἀλαζόνες λόγοι (braggart discourses).

In this passage Socrates speaks of the 'citadel' (ἀκρόπολιν) of the young man's soul and tell how studies, honourable pursuits and true discourses (λόγων ἀληθῶν) are the 'best guards and sentinels' (ἄριστοι φρουροί τε καὶ φύλακες) of this place. In a degenerate soul no such guards have been posted, which leaves the citadel empty and undefended, offering easy access for other forces. At 560b, then, a crowd of desires which have grown up in the soul take over the citadel: κατέλαβον τὴν τοῦ νέου τῆς ψυχῆς ἀκρόπολιν. At 560c1 the 'braggart discourses' are identified with these desires, as it is said:

Ψευδεῖς δὴ καὶ ἀλαζόνες οἶμαι λόγοι τε καὶ  
δόξαι... ἀναδραμόντες κατέσχον τὸν αὐτὸν τόπον τοῦ  
τοιούτου.

False and boastful discourses and beliefs, I suppose,  
rush up and occupy this same part of such a youth. (tr.  
Grube, adapted)

The personification of these discourses continues at 560c as they are said to prevent an 'auxiliary force' coming to the aid of the beleaguered king (560c7-d1):

κλήσαντες οἱ ἀλαζόνες λόγοι ἐκεῖνοι τὰς τοῦ βασιλικοῦ  
τειχοῦς ἐν αὐτῷ πύλας οὔτε αὐτὴν τὴν συμμαχίαν παριᾶσιν,  
οὔτε πρέσβεις πρεσβυτέρων λόγους ἰδιωτῶν εἰσδέχονται,  
those boastful discourses close the gates of the royal  
wall within him and will not allow those allies to enter,  
nor will they admit as envoys the wiser discourses which  
are ambassadors of older persons, (tr. Grube, adapted)

Thus one group of words is depicted as barring the way of other groups of words; a graphic portrayal of how one part of the soul influences the judgement of another. This metaphor of physical repulse is developed into a picture of expulsions and banishments, as Plato introduces a very clever twist into his portrayal of the influence of personified speeches on the soul.

The braggart discourses, then, successfully keep out the opposing auxiliary force and they prevail in the conflict with other parts of the soul (κρατοῦσι μαχόμενοι, 560d1). Thus established, they proceed to banish their enemies from the state (560d2-6):

καὶ τὴν μὲν αἰδῶ ἡλιθιότητα ὀνομάζοντες ὠθοῦσιν ἔξω  
ἀτίμως φυγάδα σωφροσύνην δὲ ἀνανδρίαν καλοῦντες τε καὶ  
προπηλακίζοντες ἐκβάλλουσι. μετριότητα δὲ καὶ κοσμίαν  
δαπάνην ὡς ἀγροικίαν καὶ ἀνελευθερίαν οὔσαν πείθοντες  
ὑπερορίζουσι μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ ἀνωφελῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν;  
reverence they call foolishness and cast it out beyond  
the frontiers as a disenfranchised exile; moderation they  
call cowardice; they abuse it and throw it out; they  
persuade him that measured and orderly expenditure is  
boorish and mean; and with the help of many useless  
desires they expel it over the border. (tr. Grube)

So the braggart discourses drive the virtues 'over the border' (ὑπερορίζουσι) of the soul and each virtue, once a citizen with civic rights, is now a disenfranchised exile (ἀτίμως φυγάδα). The image of banishment and exile is quite in keeping with the metaphors of the

state and the guards, but the method of banishment is cleverly adapted to the powers of λόγοι. At one level, the guards physically expel the citizens, but at another level the false discourses verbally abuse the virtues and give them different names (προπηλακίζοντες, abusing foully, reproaching; ὀνομάζοντες, naming; καλοῦντες, calling). In labelling each virtue a vice, the logoi are engaging in sophistic rhetoric, persuading (πείθοντες) the ruler and populace in the soul to change their moral judgements. Engaging in rhetoric is, of course, an entirely appropriate activity for personified logoi, and thus Plato fuses together the idea of the guards of the citadel driving citizens into exile and words exerting a persuasive influence. The change of names effected by the logoi represents the change in how the virtues are perceived, and this is dramatized in terms of the state metaphor as the change in status of exiled citizens.

The same principle works in reverse as the logoi welcome back into the soul-state vices which once were exiled. Here Plato gives a striking picture of the stately procession which leads the vices home (560e2-61a1):

τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἤδη ὕβριν καὶ ἀναρχίαν καὶ ἀσωτίαν καὶ ἀναίδειαν λαμπρὰς μετὰ πολλοῦ χοροῦ κατάγουσιν ἐστεφανωμένας, ἐγκωμιάζοντες καὶ ὑποκοριζόμενοι,  
 after this they immediately introduce into it [the soul] insolence and anarchy and extravagance and shamelessness wreathed and radiant among many followers, eulogizing them and calling them by fair names, (tr. Grube, adapted)

The descent into anarchy in the soul is made complete in book IX where Socrates describes the tyranny of Eros (575a1-2):

ἀλλὰ τυραννικῶς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἔρως ἐν πάσῃ ἀναρχίᾳ καὶ ἀνομίᾳ ζῶν, ἅτε αὐτὸς ὢν μόναρχος,  
 Lust lives like a tyrant within him in complete anarchy and lawlessness since he is himself sole monarch,  
 (tr. Grube, adapted)

The dominant part of the soul is portrayed as exercising political power: it 'rules over' and 'enslaves' the other parts of the soul, enthroned as a great king. Acceptance of this dominance thus becomes subjection or slavery, while rejection becomes revolt or insurrection. As in a political context, control is often assured by virtue of position but a weak ruler can lose power through insufficient defences, as we see in the exploits of the ἀλαζόνες λόγοι. Power is maintained or won through two features familiar from the political/military arena: physical force and verbal persuasion. These two are the means by which the parts of the soul seek to dominate one another. First, civil war rages in the soul, as the parts are depicted as battling for power. Second, different groups of people try to influence affairs by means of the spoken word: ambassadors seek to deliver counsel to a weak king; guards usurp the king's role and persuade the state that wrong is right. In all this the depiction of the soul alternates between that of a group of people interacting in various ways and that of a place in which people move around amidst familiar features of civic topography - citadel, palace-wall and state-boundary.

In this model the reason, spirit and appetites are all presented as people, or groups of people, who relate to one another in human ways, both physical and verbal. In the next two models, however, we find the introduction of animals into the soul, which leads to new forms of control and interaction.

## 2. The Soul as a Mythological Monster

Book IX of the *Republic* ends with an image of the soul that has been described as 'bizarre' and as having 'a visually incoherent, slightly

nightmarish quality'.<sup>9</sup> This is the image of the soul as a creature similar to those of ancient legend - the Chimera, Scylla, Cerberus. Like them, the creature Socrates presents is single in form but made up of different parts, which clearly represent reason, spirit and the appetites in the soul. Socrates instructs Glaucon in the 'moulding' of this 'image' (εἰκόνα) and thus the creature takes shape (588c7-d5):

Πλάττε τοίνυν μίαν μὲν ιδέαν θηρίου ποικίλου καὶ πολυκεφάλου, ἡμέρων δὲ θηρίων ἔχοντος κεφαλὰς κύκλω καὶ ἀγρίων, καὶ δυνατοῦ μεταβάλλειν καὶ φύειν ἔξ αὐτοῦ πάντα ταῦτα... Μίαν δὲ τοίνυν ἄλλην ιδέαν λέοντος, μίαν δὲ ἀνθρώπου· πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον ἔστω τὸ πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον τὸ δεύτερον.

Fashion me then one kind of multiform beast with many heads, a ring of heads of both tame and wild animals, who is able to change these and grow them all out of himself...Then one other form, that of a lion, and another of a man, but the first form of all is much the largest, and the second the second. (tr. Grube).

Socrates next instructs Glaucon to model around these parts the appearance of being one, so that from the outside the creature seems to be uniform - a man.

Thus the appetites in the soul are presented as a huge multiform beast with both wild and tame heads; the spirit becomes a lion and reason an inner man. So of the three parts of the soul, two are animal and only one human. For Plato human beings have a superior nature to animals<sup>10</sup> and so the use of human and animal forms for the parts of the soul clearly symbolises the 'natural' hierarchy that exists between them. Also, it is of course appropriate that the part of the soul which loves reasoning is portrayed as a human being whose ability to reason marks him off from the animals.<sup>11</sup> In this model of the soul reason is depicted as the smallest part, with spirit larger and with the appetite largest of all.<sup>12</sup> Plato thus conveys that reason's task of

ruling the other two parts is not easy, and, in developing the model, he further exploits the unequal power relations between the soul's parts.

At 588e the image of the soul as a mythological creature is used to reinforce the message of book IX that injustice does not benefit a person. At 588e Socrates interprets the advocacy of injustice in terms of the relations between the man, lion and many-headed beast. He tells Glaucon that the words of one who claims that injustice benefits a person, simply mean (588e5-89a4):

λυσιτελεῖν αὐτῷ τὸ παντοδαπὸν θηρίον εὐωχοῦντι ποιεῖν  
ἰσχυρὸν καὶ τὸν λέοντα καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν λέοντα τὸν δὲ  
ἄνθρωπον λιμοκτονεῖν καὶ ποιεῖν ἀσθενῆ, ὥστε ἔλκεσθαι ὅπη  
ἂν ἐκείνων ὁπότερον ἄγῃ, καὶ μηδὲν ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ  
συνεθίζειν μηδὲ φίλον ποιεῖν, ἀλλ' ἕαν αὐτὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς  
δάκνεσθαι τε καὶ μαχόμενα ἐσθίειν ἄλληλα.

that it benefits the man to feed the multiform beast well and make it strong, as well as the lion and all that pertains to him, but to starve and weaken the man within, so that he is dragged along whithersoever one of the other two leads, and does not accustom one part to the other nor make them friendly, but leaves them alone to bite and fight and devour each other. (tr. Grube adapted)

The rhetorical force of this vivid image derives from the macabre predicament of the human being in the soul, outnumbered and overwhelmed by wild animals who would drag him around at their will. In any event the odds are against the man being able to control the other two creatures,<sup>13</sup> and Socrates maintains that the effect of injustice is to further reduce the human being's chances, since it not only makes him physically weaker, but also makes the beasts stronger. The argument at work in this passage is that, since it can hardly benefit someone to have a soul in such a chaotic state, and since injustice is the direct cause of this chaos, injustice cannot be a benefit to a person - an argument Glaucon accepts. As in the state model, the three parts of the soul are envisaged as in conflict, each

trying to achieve superiority over the others. But now the nature of the conflict is different, as is the way that superiority can be won.

The first metaphor is that of physical strength and weakness deriving from diet. The person is spoken of as able to 'feed well' (εὖωχοῦντι) or 'starve' (λιμοκτονεῖν) the different parts of his soul and thereby to make them 'strong' (ἰσχυρόν) or 'weak' (ἀσθενῆ). The strength of the animal and human parts is then portrayed in appropriate ways. Since the multiform beast and lion are the stronger parts in this scenario, they are imagined as wielding their power over the man by 'leading' (ἄγειν) and 'dragging' (ἐλκεσθαι) him along. In contrast, the exercise of the animals' superiority over each other is presented in far more gruesome terms. In their struggle they are imagined as 'biting' (δάκνεσθαι) and 'fighting' (μαχόμενα) each other, and it seems that the winner of such a struggle would be whichever beast succeeded in 'devouring' (ἐσθίειν) the other. The inner man's control over the animals is presented in quite a different way, for his power is that of 'accustoming' (συνεθίζειν) one to the other and 'making them friendly' (φίλον ποιεῖν). When Socrates turns to the competing claim that justice is to our advantage (589a), he depicts the control of reason in more detail. He tells how the person who maintains that justice is beneficial, would say that we ought to do and say things (589a7-b6):

ὅθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος ἔσται ἐγκρατέστατος, καὶ τοῦ πολυκεφάλου θρέμματος ἐπιμελήσεται ὡσπερ γεωργός, τὰ μὲν ἡμέρα τρέφων καὶ τιθασεύων, τὰ δὲ ἄγρια ἀποκωλύων φύεσθαι, σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος τὴν τοῦ λέοντος φύσιν, καὶ κοινῇ πάντων κηδόμενος, φίλα ποιησάμενος ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ αὐτῷ, οὕτω θρέψει

whereby the man within the man will be the strongest, and will look after the many-headed beast as a farmer, fostering and cultivating the tame and checking the growth of the wild, making the lion's nature his ally,

and, caring for all of them in common, by making them friendly with one another and with himself, so he will rear them. (tr. Grube, adapted.)

Thus justice will lead to a situation where the inner man will be the 'strongest' (ἐγκρατέστατος) element in the soul, which will allow him to impose his own particular form of authority on the other two. We find that the inner man 'cares for' (κηδόμενος) the others and that his victory does not consist in rendering the beasts helpless, or even killing them, but in nurturing (τρέφω, θρέψει) and making them 'friendly' (φίλα) with one another and with him. The idea of friendship between the parts of the soul also appears in an earlier passage of the *Republic* (442c) in the context of the state model, as Socrates posits the view of 'moderation' as 'friendship and harmony' (τῆ φιλία καὶ συμφωνία) in the soul.

In his fostering of the two beasts at 589a-b the inner man responds to their individual natures and treats each one differently. In his care for the many-headed beast, the inner man nurtures the tame parts of its nature and suppresses the wild. The beast, we remember, has a ring of animal heads, some of which are tame (ἡμέρων), others wild (ἀγρίων) and he is able to grow these out of himself seemingly at will (588c). These heads represent various desires, the wild ones those which are more harmful, the tame ones those less so. Thus, as he seeks to make the beast friendly, the inner man 'domesticates' (τιθασεύων) the tame heads and 'prevents the growth' (ἀποκωλύων φύεσθαι) of the wild heads. The simile of the farmer (ὡσπερ γεωργός) suggests, I think, the tending of plants or crops rather than animals, and while Grube in his translation maintains the idea of animals ('as a farmer looks after his animals'), Shorey develops the plant image: 'like a farmer who cherishes and trains the cultivated plants but checks the

growth of the wild'. Plato's terms - ἡμερα (tame; cultivated), ἄγρια (wild) and τιθασεύων (tame, domesticate; cultivate) - seem carefully chosen to allow both images to resonate. As Adam observes (p.364), this plant image is similar to that at *Euthyphro* 2d where the training of the young is likened to a farmer's care for tender shoots. The opposition between wild and tame is used again at 589d1-3 as Socrates suggests that 'beautiful traditions' are those which 'enslave' (δουλούμενα) the 'beastlike' (τὰ θηριώδη) parts of our nature to the human, while the 'ugly traditions' are those which enslave the 'tame' (ἡμερον) part to the 'wild' (ἄγρίῳ). The metaphor of enslavement is an echo of the state model of earlier books,<sup>14</sup> and also appears at various other points in the mythological creature model.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to the inner man's treatment of the lion, as in the case of the many-headed beast, he once again takes account of the creature's nature as he seeks to make it friendly. The lion symbolises the θυμοειδές, the spirited part of the soul. Courage is the virtue of this part and so the lion, with its proverbially courageous nature, is an appropriate symbol for it. In the state model the θυμοειδές is represented by the class of soldiers, the class displaying bravery, and now the two images of the lion and soldiers are fused as the inner man is said, in a clear echo of 441e (συμμάχῳ), to 'make an ally' (σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος) of the lion. In view of the lion's courage, then, it is appropriate that the inner man should not 'tame' it but rather use its strength in his own cause. Further, given the parallel between the courage of the lion and that of the soldierly class, it is appropriate that the notion of 'friendship' in this case should be portrayed as a military alliance.

At 590a-c Socrates gives an account of various vices in terms of the mythological creature model and uses a number of new metaphors for the nature of the soul's parts and for the ways they interact. The first vice is licentiousness and this is identified as the situation where (590a6-7):

ἀνίεται... τὸ δεινόν, τὸ μέγα ἐκεῖνο καὶ πολυειδὲς θρέμμα,  
 πέρα τοῦ δέοντος  
 that terrible, that big, that multiform beast is let  
 loose more than it should be. (tr. Grube)

The verb ἀνίημι has several meanings: 'let go, set free; let loose; slacken, relax'. Taken with θρέμμα (creature) it is natural for the translator to choose the sense of 'let loose' and thus to allow the image to emerge of an untethered beast. However, the image changes considerably when the idea of 'loosening' is set in opposition to that of 'tightening', as we find in the account of the other vices at 590b. At 590a9-b1 Socrates speaks of 'obstinacy' and 'irritability' as the vices arising whenever:

τὸ λεοντῶδες τε καὶ ὄφειδες αὔξεται καὶ συντείνηται  
 ἀναρμόστως  
 the lion and snakelike<sup>16</sup> part is increased and stretched  
 disproportionately (tr. Grube)

The metaphor of growth and enlargement in the verb αὔξεται (increased) fits with the earlier metaphor of the size of different parts of the soul (588d) and those of feeding (588e) and fostering (589b). But Grube evidently has allowed this idea of growth to colour his reading of συντείνηται which he translates as 'is stretched', denoting an increase in size. Although 'stretched' captures the idea of tension inherent in συντείνω, it is not quite what the verb means and, I think, obscures the image at work here. The verb συντείνω means 'strain, draw tight', the opposite of χαλάω, 'slacken, loosen'. 'Is

tightened' would be a better translation of the verb and this appearing with the adverb ἀναρμόστως (discordantly) would seem to be a musical metaphor of the tuning of strings, a metaphor for the parts of the soul already established in book IV (ἐπιτείνουσα 441e8, ἀνιείσα 442a1) in the context of the metaphor of the harmony of the soul.<sup>17</sup> The idea of the parts of the soul being 'tightened' or 'slackened' continues at 590b3-4, as Socrates present cowardice as the 'slackening' (τῇ χαλάσει) and 'relaxing' (ἀνέσει) of the θυμοειδές. The noun ἄνεσις is the technical term for the tuning of strings (see e.g. *Republic* 349e2.) This metaphor of the tuning of strings would seem to make the best sense of the notions of the 'tightening' and 'slackening' of the parts of the soul at 590a-b. However, it is perhaps also possible for these terms to be understood in their senses of mental tension and relaxation,<sup>18</sup> if taken as part of the imagery at work at 591b2-3 where the animal element of the soul is spoken of as 'put to sleep' (κοιμίζεται) and 'pacified' (ἡμεροῦται).

At 590b6, as Socrates speaks of the vices of flattery and meanness, he uses further metaphors for power relations in the soul, as a person (τις) is imagined as subordinating his spirited element to 'the mob-like beast' (τῷ ὀχλώδει θηρίῳ)<sup>19</sup> and as accustoming it to be an ape instead of a lion (ἀντὶ λέοντος πίθηκον). The ape adds to the family of animals in the soul (which is presumably meant to be humorous) and would seem to be an image of buffoonery and ridiculous behaviour.<sup>20</sup> As in other passages, then, the person as a whole is presented as able to exert a direct influence on the situation in his soul, as he transforms the character of his spirited part and subordinates it to the appetites.

In the next section, Socrates focuses again on the interaction between the parts of the soul in his explanation of why manual labour is reproached. Such work - and therefore the person who lives by such work - is only criticised when (500c3-6):

τις ἀσθενὲς φύσει ἔχη τὸ τοῦ βελτίστου εἶδος, ὥστε μὴ ἂν δύνασθαι ἄρχειν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ θρεμμάτων, ἀλλὰ θεραπεύειν ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τὰ θωπεύματα αὐτῶν μόνον δύνηται μαθάνειν;  
the best part of a person's soul is naturally weak and cannot rule the animals within but pampers them and can learn nothing except ways to flatter them. (tr. Grube, adapted)

As Socrates makes his (unconvincing) connection between manual labour and a weak reason, there appear again, then, the metaphors of physical strength/weakness and of 'ruling' for the exercise of power in the soul. New metaphors here are those of the weak inner man 'conciliating' (θεραπεύειν) and 'learning to flatter' (θωπεύματα...μαθάνειν) the beasts within. We are not told how exactly this is accomplished, but since the verb θωπεύω (flatter) can also be used of caressing an animal (see LSJ), perhaps the 'flattery' here is to be understood both as the utterance of complimentary words and as physical petting.

In the model of the soul as a mythological creature a number of different metaphors are used for interaction and the exercise of power in the soul. These metaphors are of two types: those relating to the whole person's influence on the soul, and those detailing the inner struggles and contact between the soul's parts. The whole person is spoken of as feeding and starving the different parts, as tuning them as strings to the correct pitch, as subordinating or enslaving one part to another and accustoming it to behave in a certain way. Fine or base traditions also exert a direct influence (enslaving or liberating the different parts) and punishment is spoken of as calming down the

wild beast and freeing the tame aspect of the soul. As to inner relations, the parts of the soul are depicted as of different sizes and strengths. When the animals are stronger than the inner man, they drag him around, and their struggle with one another is that of wild animals - biting, fighting and devouring one another. When the man is the strongest part, however, he exercises a civilising influence, nurturing the beasts and making them friendly. As well as the idea of slavery and liberation in the inner soul, the language of ruling and making alliances also echoes the state model. We find also the new metaphor of the weak ruler resorting to conciliation and flattery to keep control. So in this model Plato uses metaphors of physical and political power, of the taming and training of animals, of the cultivating of plants and the tuning of strings in a musical instrument. The mixture of human and animal forms in the mythological creature gives rise to different metaphors of human and animal behaviour and relations, and in the next model a number of the same metaphors are used as the charioteer attempts to control his team of horses.

### 3 The Soul as a Charioteer and Horses

G.R.F. Ferrari, in his excellent treatment of the *Phaedrus*, *Listening to the Cicadas*, devotes two sections to an analysis of the 'struggle in the soul' (pp.185-203). He has dealt with many of the salient points regarding Plato's portrayal of the relationship between the parts of the soul, and it remains for me to sketch the model of the charioteer and horses and to highlight its different metaphors for interaction and power relations. Most critics agree that the figures of the charioteer and good and bad horses in the *Phaedrus* myth

correspond at least approximately to the reasoning, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul, as set out in the *Republic*.<sup>21</sup> However, whereas in the *Republic* Plato considers conflict in the soul in a general way, in the *Phaedrus* he analyses the struggle in the soul in the particular context of love and sexual desire.

The *Phaedrus* model - perhaps arising from charioteer and horse imagery in the erotic poetry of Anacreon<sup>22</sup> - portrays the response of different parts of the soul to the impulse of love. Through this model we are allowed into the soul of the lover to see how the three parts react to the sight of the beloved. The struggle here is mainly between reason and appetites, and for the most part the spirited element is on the side of reason.<sup>23</sup> The appetites, symbolised by the bad horse, want simply to enjoy sexual intercourse with the boy (throughout this model the parts of the soul are spoken of as relating directly to the boy). The charioteer-reason, however, desires a sustained love affair where beauty and love awaken the soul's memory of the Forms and so spur the lovers on to philosophical lives - which brings rewards both in this life and in the afterlife (see 256a-57a). In the story of how the charioteer (in the soul of the philosophic lover) finally subdues the bad horse and its lustful desires, Plato uses various metaphors for the interaction between the soul's parts and for the exercise of power. Essentially there are two groups of metaphors in this model: those which portray the struggle strictly in terms of a charioteer's attempt to control his horses, and those which present both charioteer and horses acting, and reacting to one another, in human ways. I will deal with each of these groups in turn.

Socrates begins his account of the conflict in the soul with a detailed description of both horses (253d-e).<sup>24</sup> As Ferrari observes,

these descriptions are heavily caricatured (p.185) and 'rather vaudevillian' (p.200). As far as obedience to the charioteer is concerned, the good horse is said to 'need no whip' (ἄπληκτος) and to 'respond to the spoken command alone' (κελεύσασθαι μόνον καὶ λόγῳ ἠνυχοεῖται), whereas the bad horse is described as (tr. Rowe) 'hardly yielding to the whip and goad together' (μάστιγι μετὰ κέντρων μόγις ὑπέικων). The bad horse is also described as πολὺς (large, gross), which accords with the portrayal of the appetites in the *Republic* as the largest part of the soul.<sup>25</sup>

When the charioteer first catches sight of the beloved, the unruly nature of the bad horse asserts itself. Unlike the good horse which holds itself back, the bad horse (254a3-4):

οὔτε κέντρων ἠνυχοικῶν οὔτε μάστιγος ἔτι ἐντρέπεται  
 σκιρτῶν δὲ βία φέρεται,  
 no longer takes notice of goading or the whip from the  
 charioteer, but springs powerfully forward, (tr. Rowe)

He desires contact with the boy and so 'forces' (ἀναγκάζει) the other two 'to move towards the beloved' (ἰέναι τε πρὸς τὰ παιδικὰ). The bad horse's control, then, consists in forcing the others to move in the direction he wants to go. At first the charioteer and good horse 'resist' (ἀντιτείνετον, lit: strain back, strive against, resist), that is, they pull against the force of the bad horse. However, eventually they give in and 'follow its lead' (πορεύσθον ἀγομένῳ). The idea of the parts of the soul being 'led' in a particular direction recalls *Republic* 589a2 (ἄπη... ἄγη).

When the three come close to the beloved, events take another turn. The charioteer at the sight of beauty remembers his vision of the Forms (see 248a) and becomes frightened and awestruck (254b). He rears

backwards and in that same motion<sup>26</sup> exerts tremendous force against the horses (254b8-c2):

ἄμα ἠναγκάσθη εἰς τοῦπίσω ἐλκύσαι τὰς ἡνίας οὕτω σφόδρα,  
ὥστ' ἐπὶ τὰ ἰσχία ἄμφω καθίσαι τῷ ἵππῳ,  
[he] is forced at the same time to pull back the reins so  
violently as to bring both horses down on their haunches,  
(tr. Rowe)

Thus the charioteer's control is that of pulling back the reins and so dictating the movement of the horses. This action causes pain to the horses (254c, τῆς ὀδύνης ... ὑπὸ τοῦ χαλινοῦ τε... καὶ... τοῦ πτώματος), but despite this the unruly horse will not obey and tries once more to force them to approach the boy (264d). This time his efforts are more concerted and he 'struggles, neighs and pulls' (d4, βιαζόμενος, χρεμετίζων, ἔλκων<sup>27</sup>), but this increase in effort is matched by the intensity of the charioteer's reaction (254d6-e5):

ἐγκύψας καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν κέρκον, ἔνδακῶν τὸν χαλινόν,  
μετ' ἀναιδεΐας ἔλκει· ὁ δ' ἡνίοχος ἔτι μᾶλλον ταῦτόν  
πάθος παθών, ὡπερ ἀπὸ ὑσπληγος ἀναπείων, ἔτι μᾶλλον τοῦ  
ὑβριστοῦ ἵππου ἐκ τῶν ὀδόντων βία ὀπίσω σπᾶσας τὸν  
χαλινόν, τὴν τε κακηγόρον γλῶτταν καὶ τὰς γνάθους  
καθήμαξεν καὶ τὰ σκέλη τε καὶ τὰ ἰσχία πρὸς τὴν γῆν  
ἐρείσας ὀδύνας ἔδωκεν.

head down and tail outstretched, teeth clamped on its bit  
[the bad horse] pulls shamelessly; but the same happens  
to the charioteer as before, only still more violently,  
as he falls back as if from a *husplex* [a race  
starting-device]; still more violently he wrenches the  
bit back, and forces it from the teeth of the unruly  
horse, spattering its evil speaking tongue and its jaws  
with blood, and, thrusting its legs and haunches to the  
ground delivers it over to pains. (tr. Rowe)

By subduing the evil horse in this way many times (πολλάκις) the charioteer succeeds in 'humbling' (ταπεινωθεὶς, 254e7) it and so can be said to have tamed or trained it.<sup>28</sup> The communication and control in this passage is very much physical, and indeed violent, in nature (and so appropriate to human/equine interaction), but the adjective *κακηγόρον* (evil-speaking) used of the horse's tongue brings into the

picture the second group of metaphors which portray the three figures relating to one another in more human and verbal ways. Let us now examine again the struggle between charioteer and horses, this time noting the verbal and anthropomorphic metaphors for interaction and control.

At 254a, as the bad horse responds lustfully to the sight of the beloved, he is described as 'causing all kinds of trouble' (*πάντα πράγματα παρέχων*) to his companion, a phrase which can be understood in both human and animal terms. But Plato employs an unequivocally human metaphor when the bad horse is said to force the team 'to mention' (*μνείαν ποιεῖσθαι*, 254a6) to the beloved 'the delights of sex'. As Ferrari points out (p.186 ff.), the bad horse 'adopts persuasive language and the methods of reason' (p.186) and his intentions 'are described in gentle euphemisms and given overt expression primarily in his persuasive use of words' (p.187). At 254b, despite their displeasure (*ἀγανακτοῦντε*), the good horse and charioteer are swayed by the bad horse and are described as (254b3), *εἴξαντε καὶ ὁμολογήσαντε ποιήσειν τὸ κελευόμενον* (giving in and agreeing to do what he tells them). The bad horse is thus able to issue orders and his verbal skill is revealed still further at 254c in his angry response to the charioteer's flight from the beloved. After recovering its breath, the horse (254c7-d1):

*ἐλοιδόρησεν ὀργῇ, πολλὰ κακίζων τὸν τε ἡνίοχον καὶ τὸν ὁμόζυγα ὡς δειλία τε καὶ ἀνανδρία λιπόντε τὴν τάξιν καὶ ὁμολογίαν.*

breaks into angry abuse, repeatedly reviling the charioteer and its companion for cowardly and unmanly desertion of their agreed position; (tr. Rowe)

Thus the evil horse rebukes the other parts of the soul using the language of a military commander,<sup>29</sup> which, I suggest, is inspired by

the state model of the *Republic*. This outburst of the love-sick horse is clearly intended to be humorous (as are certain features of the mythological monster), for Plato is presenting pictures of the soul that are not only illustrative but also entertaining. His outburst prompts the other parts of the soul to 'beg' (δεομένων, d2) him to postpone his advance and to arrange a verbal contract, which they hope he will forget. However, being determined he does not forget, and (254d2-4) 'when the agreed time comes and they pretend not to remember, he reminds them'. This rather playful picture portrays the parts of the soul engaging in negotiation and tactical ploys - a sharp contrast to the following sentence where the evil horse reverts to thoroughly equine behaviour and brute force (254d4). Towards the end of the myth when both horses are tamed, the anthropomorphic metaphor is continued in an echo of the state model, as the parts of the soul are spoken of as 'enslaved' and 'freed' (256b).<sup>30</sup>

In this model, then, Plato uses both physical and verbal metaphors for interaction and control between the three parts of the soul. At the physical level the charioteer uses the apparatus of reins, bit, whip and goad to control the movement of the horses. The good horse mostly allows itself to be guided in this way, while the bad horse pulls and strains against the force of the charioteer, trying to move in a different direction. At the verbal level, the human/animal imagery is sustained as the charioteer gives spoken commands to the horses, but the imagery moves beyond this to a fully anthropomorphic picture as the bad horse issues his own commands and engages in rhetoric, and as the three figures negotiate and make verbal contracts. So the parts of the soul interact in human and animal ways, and control each other by the use of words and physical force.

#### 8.4 Conclusions

We have now examined Plato's three major metaphors for the struggle in the soul and have encountered many different metaphors for interaction and the exercise of power: metaphors of civil and political faction; physical size and strength; a charioteer's skill; the training of animals; fighting between animals; the tuning of musical strings and of a whole range of verbal communication from flattery and persuasion to anger and abuse. It is time, then, to consider the cognitive significance of these metaphors and to decide whether they can be reduced to literal terms.

These different metaphors present various images for the same process: the good ruler's attempts to create a peaceful state, the inner man's efforts to make the beasts friendly, the charioteer's endeavours to control his horses and the tuning of musical strings all convey a process whereby order is achieved among the parts of the soul. This order is the situation where the 'best' part of the soul (reason) 'controls' the other two (spirit and appetites). But what kind of control is this and how is it achieved? Since the soul is an incorporeal essence, all language of size, movement and physical force must be labelled metaphorical. But what of language of verbal influence and persuasion? Since the soul is that part of us which reacts emotionally and rationally to the world around us, it seems that language portraying the soul as desiring, reasoning and responding to words can be accepted as literal. But to say that the parts of the soul respond to words is quite different from saying that they themselves use words. So then, is language metaphorical which presents the parts of the soul speaking, persuading and influencing the judgement of the others? To use such language is to portray the

parts of the soul not only as having their own desires and wishes but also as able to assert them over those of the other parts. Thus the dominant part of the soul at any time will be the one whose will is strongest and who is able to impose this most successfully. If we ask how exactly each part imposes its will, Plato's only answer is 'by means of physical or verbal force'. The picture that remains, then, (discounting the animal imagery) is deeply anthropomorphic, with the parts of the soul behaving as 'little people' or 'homunculi'. Julia Annas has discussed the merits of such language (p.144) and has concluded:

there is nothing wrong with talking of the explanatory parts of a whole person as though they were themselves people of a very simple kind. Talking of them as homunculi is very natural and unavoidable.

She also supports the view of D. Dennet that (p.144):

if one can get a team or committee of relatively ignorant...homunculi to produce the intelligent behaviour of the whole, this is progress.

This may indeed be progress, but is it progress in which metaphor plays an integral, irreducible role?

T.M. Robinson believes that Plato's anthropomorphic language for the soul is metaphorical but that it stems from a view of the soul as a 'counter-person'.<sup>31</sup> On the use of such language in the *Phaedo* he comments (p.26):

That much of this language would be classed by Plato himself as metaphorical is hardly in doubt; frequently he tones down similar remarks with a cautionary 'as if' or 'as though' (*ὡσπερ*). But if all the language is metaphorical, it is remarkable how internally coherent it all is, how methodically it conspires to lead the reader to imagine the soul under one and only one guise - that of a person.

Again on anthropomorphic language in the *Republic* he observes (p.47):

No doubt verbs like 'to be at a loss' (*ἀπορεῖν*), 'to supplicate the aid of' (*παρακαλεῖν*) and 'to hand down word' (*παραγγέλλειν*) are to be taken metaphorically,...but it is noticeable how they all tend to be of a particular pattern, stemming from a notion of soul as an inner person, or, to use a now famous phrase, 'ghost in the machine'...

Perhaps Plato is indeed working with the view that the soul is a counter-person - this would explain the anthropomorphic language and show that it is intended to be taken seriously, but it would not make it any the less metaphorical. This does not seem to be the opinion of Jon Moline, however, who, I believe, creates a false opposition between 'straightforward' and 'metaphorical' language.

Moline believes, as I have said (see note 6), that there is not merely an analogy between soul and state in the *Republic*, but 'a structural and functional isomorphism' (p.3), and he goes on to discuss the language that results from this (p.6):

An individual is one of these three sorts and leads the life he or she does because of the part of the psyche which *rules* the others, in that individual's psyche. Talk of "rule" is plainly causal and explanatory in force, and given the isomorphism of *polis* and psyche that Plato posits and requires for his arguments, we are to take it as straightforward, not metaphorical.

I agree with Moline that talk of 'rule' in the soul is causal and explanatory in force. I believe that Plato is using such terms to set out and explain a seriously-held view that whenever a person makes a choice between satisfying different desires, one part of his or her soul is actually 'ruling' the others. Such language conveys a serious view and is to be taken as 'straightforward', but this does not mean it is not metaphorical. For talk of 'rule' involves viewing the parts of the soul as homunculi, and while the parts of the soul may be *like*

little people, they are not people. The term 'person' refers to what is or has been (to use Platonic terms) a complex of body and soul, and since the parts of the soul are without body (and moreover since they do not experience the same conflict of motives as people), they are not people. They may share some features of a human person, but, as Annas says, to use the language of homunculi is to talk of explanatory parts 'as though they were themselves people'. The 'as though' here is crucial, for it points to the 'is and is not' aspect of metaphor - the aspect which makes metaphor so cognitively useful. Although I dispute Moline's claim that Plato's anthropomorphic language is not metaphorical, I accept his observations on its centrality in Plato's theory of soul. He rightly points out that the parts of the soul 'correspond...to people' (p.13) and that 'they are being likened to persuadable agents' (p.13). He then poses and answers an important question (p.13):

These parts hold opinions, and one opinion can be exchanged for another in the process of persuasion. We know that Plato's goal was unanimity between the parts (442D2). But does Plato go so far in his isomorphism of *polis* and psyche that he posits an internal, psychic counterpart to the process of persuasion?

He does. In the *Republic* itself Plato's model of a person's internal thought processes is unabashedly discursive.

Moline shows that the view of thought as internal discourse appears in both the *Theaetetus* (189e) and *Sophist* (227e ff.). As I mentioned above (section 8.2), Moline accepts the arguments of Brès and Kenny that Plato developed 'beyond metaphor' a concept of psychic health. He also believes the same is true of the soul's discourse (p.17):

Plato played a comparable role in developing, if not devising, a concept of psychotherapy by verbal means.

Moline shows how such 'psychotherapy' in the dialogues can be administered not only by external agents (people talking to their own or to other people's souls), but also internally by the parts of the soul themselves (p.22). As we have seen above, the parts of the soul are often presented as speaking and as persuading one another to act in certain ways and this is indeed a 'psychic counterpart to the process of persuasion'. But here we reach a crucial question for our debate: without the human notions of 'speech' and 'persuasion', could Plato speak of this concept of 'psychotherapy' at all? Such a concept may be 'beyond metaphor' in the sense of being the seriously-held view that these events actually take place in the soul, but it is not 'beyond metaphor' in the sense that it requires metaphor if it is to be expressed at all.

Since no-one had addressed the subjects of interaction and power relations in the soul, no terms existed for them. Plato therefore turned to language of human relations and dominance (as well as to further metaphors of size, strength and physical force) in order to express his new ideas in a comprehensible fashion. In his exposition of the theory of tripartition, Plato was able, when he wished, to 'reduce' metaphors of physical strength to more abstract notions of influence, and to portray this influence in personal terms suited to the soul's nature as rational principle and centre of emotions. But he could not replace with literal terms the metaphors of verbal persuasion and command. For no such terms existed.

Ferrari offers a view of Plato's language for the inner soul which I do not accept. He observes (p.202-3):

Plato resolutely refuses to give an 'atomic' account of the philosophic lover's experience - an account of the phenomena in terms of elements different in kind... And I

think the reason for Plato's avoidance of atomic explanation in psychology is this: that he thereby sharpens in himself the perspective of the charioteer.

Against this, I contend that Plato does not so much *refuse* but rather is *unable* to give an 'atomic account', because the terms necessary for such an account simply did not exist. And it is because of this gap in language, occasioned by the novelty of his theory, that Plato relied on anthropomorphic metaphors for the tripartite soul. I therefore conclude that, when Plato presents the parts of the soul asserting their wills by means of command and persuasion, this language is as metaphorical as that of physical force, and that these metaphors are irreplaceable components of his theory-building. We have, therefore, reached a group of metaphors which are irreducible and which have the cognitive force described by Kittay and Boyd in their versions of the epistemic thesis.

I have now concluded my general examination of the significance of Plato's soul metaphors, but, as in the case of the god metaphors (Chapter 5), I want to show that individual metaphors in their immediate contexts can also play very important cognitive and rhetorical roles. In my final chapter, then, I will analyse the development and contribution of the metaphor of spiritual pregnancy in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*.

<sup>1</sup> On this passage, see Ferrari (1987), pp.187-8.

<sup>2</sup> Moline draws the same conclusion (p.25): 'The parts of the psyche Plato posits, then, cannot mirror the exact sort of factions and confusions about priorities to which people are prone...for the political agents in the psyche are from the beginning elevated into formlike stereotypes unwavering in their disparate aims.'

<sup>3</sup> Yvon Brès, *La Psychologie de Platon*, (Paris 1968), pp. 288-308.

<sup>4</sup> See also 444b, as injustice is defined as the situation where the part of the soul 'fitted by nature to serve' (ὄντος φύσει οἴου πρόπειν αὐτῷ δουλεύειν) tries to rule over the other part which is 'of the ruling kind' (ἄρχικοῦ γένους).

<sup>5</sup> 441a2 ἐπίκουρον; e4 ἄρχειν, ὑπηκόω, συμμάχῳ; 442b1 καταδουλώσασθαι καὶ ἄρχειν; b5-8 πολεμίους, φυλαττοίτην, προπολεμοῦν, τῷ ἄρχοντι; c11-d1 ἄρχον, ἀρχομένῳ, ἄρχειν, στασιάζωσιν; 443b2 ἀρχῆς, ἄρχεσθαι; 441b1 στάσιν τινὰ; b3 ἐπανάστασιν, ἄρχῃ; b5 δουλεύειν, δουλεύειν ἀρχικοῦ; d10 ἄρχειν, ἄρχεσθαι.

<sup>6</sup> See Moline (1978), pp.2, 6, 8 etc.

<sup>7</sup> There is a wide literature on the relationship of state and soul in the *Republic*. See e.g. T.M. Robinson (1970), pp.42, 46, 120; Moline (1981), pp.2-15; Annas (1981), pp.146 ff.; B. Williams (1973) 'The analogy of city and soul in Plato's *Republic*'; Neu (1971) 'Plato's analogy of state and individual'; Adkins (1960), p.312, n.1; Joseph (1935) 'Plato's *Republic*: the comparison between soul and state'; Cornford (1912) 'Psychology and social structure in the *Republic* of Plato.

<sup>8</sup> On the *Timaeus* passage, see Cornford (1937) pp.282-4 and T.M. Robinson, pp. 120-2.

<sup>9</sup> Annas (1981), p.319.

<sup>10</sup> *Polit.* 271e.

<sup>11</sup> Also, by presenting reason as 'a little man within the big one' Plato reinforces a point he makes elsewhere, namely (Annas, p.319):

that reasons interests are those of the whole, that developing one's whole self with all its capacities is identifying with one's rational desires.

<sup>12</sup> This accords with *Rep.* 442a where the ἐπιθυμητικόν is said to be the largest (πλεῖστον) part of the soul.

<sup>13</sup> See Moline, p.13: 'He tells us that it is the task of this tiny human being to tame and rule the other two beasts with which it is caged. But having depicted them as powerful beasts he makes one wonder how on his view one might tame and rule them. Indeed, he makes one wonder whether justice in the psyche, so conceived, is possible at all.'

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. 442b, 444b, 553d, 561c, 574d, 577c-d.

<sup>15</sup> 589d7, e2, e5; 590c9, d2, e3; 591a2, b3.

<sup>16</sup> On the introduction of the 'snakelike' part, Adam comments (pp.365-6):

The serpentine element has not hitherto been mentioned, but...may well be included in τὰ περὶ τὸν λέοντα 588E. It symbolizes some meaner forms of the θυμοειδές which cannot well be attributed to the king of the beasts, e.g. δυσκολία..., perfidiousness etc.

<sup>17</sup> συνάδοντας 432a; συμφωνίαν 432a; συμφωνία 442a1; συναρμόσαντα, ἀρμονίας 443d5, etc. For references for harmony and music metaphors see Appendix 3, Group G.

<sup>18</sup> συντέινω is used of the rousing of the soul at Laws 800d3.

<sup>19</sup> 590b7-9 seems to me to contain a number of verbal echoes of other passages on the soul: ὀχλώδει (moblike) clearly recalls the state model and its comparison of the ἐπιθυμητικόν to the lower classes; ἀπληστίας echoes ἀπληστίαν in the sieve comparison of the Gorgias (493b3) and ἀπληστότατον used of the ἐπιθυμητικόν of Republic 442a, and προπηλακιζόμενον recalls the abusive behaviour of the 'braggart discourses' at Rep. 560d (προπηλακίζοντες).

<sup>20</sup> See Republic 620c.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Ferrari (1987), p.185; Hackforth (1952), p.72; Guthrie (1957), p.234; Linforth, p.299; McGibbon, p.56. See also T.M. Robinson (1970), pp.117 and 123.

<sup>22</sup> Ferrari, pp.107-8 and 265 n.1.

<sup>23</sup> On the role of the 'good horse', see T.M. Robinson (1970), p.117 and Ferrari, p.192.

<sup>24</sup> 'the first of the two, which is on the nobler side, is erect in form and clean-limbed, high-necked, nose somewhat hooked, white in colour, with black eyes, a lover of honour when joined with restraint and a sense of shame, and a companion of true glory, needing no whip, responding to the spoken command alone; the other is crooked in shape, gross, a random collection of parts, with a short, powerful neck, flat-nosed, black-skinned, grey-eyed, bloodshot, companion of excess and boastfulness, shaggy around the ears, deaf, hardly yielding to whip and goad together.' (tr. Rowe)

<sup>25</sup> See Rep. 442a and 588d4.

<sup>26</sup> See Ferrari's interpretation of this action (p.189-90): 'The gesture of mastery seems more like a compulsive reaction of aversion'.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Rep. 589e1, ἔλκεσθαι.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Rep. 589b2-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ferrari, p.188: 'The sentiment is lofty, and expressed not violently but through persuasion - the rhetorical pose seems to be that of a commander in the field exhorting his faint-hearted troops'.

<sup>30</sup> This metaphor also appears in the mythological creature model, see note 11 above.

<sup>31</sup> See pp. 20, 22-3, 26, 128, 158-9 and 161-2.

## Chapter 9

### SPIRITUAL PREGNANCY

#### 9.1 Introduction

Although Plato's notion of spiritual pregnancy has received a great deal of critical attention in recent years,<sup>1</sup> the development of the metaphor in the *Symposium* has not been fully analysed. I will therefore follow the metaphor closely and will show how it serves both a persuasive and illustrative function in the dialogue. In this analysis I will offer a new interpretation and will argue that commentators have overlooked two important features of the image:

1. There are two quite different types of spiritual pregnancy in the *Symposium*: a 'male' type, which is analogous to the build-up to physical ejaculation, and a 'female' type, which is analogous to the physical experience of pregnancy as normally understood.

2. It is the Form of Beauty, rather than the lover of beauty, that is pregnant at 212a, which means that in the course of Diotima's speech the role of 'beauty' changes from that of presiding deity in childbirth to that of sexual partner and mother.

I further maintain that these points have escaped notice precisely because they have been effectively obscured - for very good reasons - by Plato himself.

In 1964 J.S. Morrison offered a new approach to the idea of spiritual pregnancy in the *Symposium* when he connected spiritual with physical 'male pregnancy', as outlined in the *Timaeus* (73b ff., 86c and 91c f.), and concluded (pp.53-4) that:

it appears that Plato took the view that the divine seed derives from the brain and marrow of the man and that both the male and female sexual organs have a similar function as receptacle and in due course outlet for this seed... If Plato subscribed to this view of the process of human generation, it is not surprising that he could

describe the bringing forth of the child by male and female in similar terms. Both are births and both are accompanied (though in varying degrees) by pangs.

On this analysis male 'pregnancy' is the condition whereby a man is ready to ejaculate his seed, and the subsequent 'childbirth' is the ejaculation itself.

Plass (1978) rejects this thesis (p.48), preferring to view 'male pregnancy' as a term arising from 'the confusion of sexual roles in a homosexual relationship'. He suggests that the term may have been part of a 'homosexual argot': 'a distinctive vocabulary which...would naturally consist in large measure of words ordinarily used of heterosexual relationships transferred to pederasty' (p.50). The main problem with Plass' account is that he does not explain what the term may have been used to refer to. He ignores the actual use and development of the idea in the *Symposium* and so fails to grasp its basic message. Plass believes that the *Symposium* is 'a sophisticated plea for pederasty' (p.48); but a careful assessment of the spiritual childbirth metaphor in Diotima's speech shows that the dialogue cannot be read in this way.

Dover (1980, p.147) and Stokes (1986, pp.161-3) accept Morrison's thesis and, I believe, are right to do so. But all three critics fail to see the significance of the fact that a male pregnancy of the type outlined in the *Timaeus* would not, on its own, result in the birth of a child. To use Plato's terms, childbirth requires both a male and female type of pregnancy. Therefore, if the metaphor of spiritual childbirth is to be consistent, a female type of spiritual pregnancy must follow the male type. Commentators have not acknowledged the 'female' contribution to spiritual childbirth, but it is as logically necessary in the creation of spiritual children as it is physically

necessary in the creation of human ones. A close examination reveals that, although Plato does not mention it specifically, a female type of pregnancy is present in the *Symposium*, that physical intercourse, ejaculation, pregnancy and childbirth are mirrored at the spiritual level, and that, despite a certain awkwardness arising from the desire to obscure the female role in childbirth, the metaphor of spiritual pregnancy is developed in a logical way. My reading of Diotima's comments on spiritual pregnancy will focus on the different types of pregnancy that are spoken of and will attempt to establish exactly who or what is presented as being 'pregnant' at each stage.

### 9.2 Seed Pregnancy (206b-e)

In the *Symposium* the metaphor of spiritual pregnancy is introduced by Diotima, the woman from Mantinea who, Socrates claims, taught him all he knows about τὰ ἐρωτικά (201d1-5). The innuendo and humour here are obvious, as is the fact that Diotima is used as a mouthpiece for Socrates.<sup>2</sup> The metaphor first appears at 206b when, after posing the question: 'What is the function of Love?', Diotima gives the puzzling reply (206b7):

ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν.

It is a childbirth in something beautiful, both in respect of body and of soul.

When Socrates says he does not understand, Diotima replies that she will explain more clearly and makes the rather startling announcement (206c1):

κυοῦσιν γάρ... ὦ Σώκρατες, πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἔν τινι ἡλικίᾳ γένωνται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ φύσις.

All humans, Socrates, are pregnant both in body and soul, and when they come to maturity, our nature desires to give birth.

As Dover observes (ad loc.), the verb *τίκτειν* can be used both of the male 'begetting' of a child and the female 'bearing', whereas the verb *κυεῖν*, which means 'to be pregnant', is normally used only of the female. Since *πάντες ἄνθρωποι* must include men, we find the first reference to the type of male pregnancy identified by Morrison, i.e. the condition whereby man is ready to ejaculate his seed. It is of course true that women are here included in this experience, but after this initial generalisation Diotima focuses on male arousal before intercourse. I therefore follow Morrison<sup>3</sup> in defining the first type of pregnancy as the male desire for sexual intercourse and procreation.

These are difficult ideas, and Diotima tries to clarify her statement about male 'pregnancy' (206c5):

*ἡ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν.*  
For intercourse of man and woman is a childbirth.

This sentence has been viewed as problematic by many critics. Bury<sup>4</sup> comments: 'Most editors (except Hommel and Stallbaum) agree in excising this clause as a meaningless intrusion.' The sentence is also omitted by Groden and Hamilton in their respective translations. In contrast, Dover and Stokes recognise it as crucial to the sense of the passage. Here Diotima explains that intercourse is a childbirth, i.e. that during sex a child is born. What does she mean? Burnyeat<sup>5</sup> has spoken of a 'strange reversal' of pregnancy and birth in this section of the speech (206c-e) and has concluded that: 'pregnancy precedes intercourse because birth and intercourse are imaginatively equated. So striking a reversal could only be contrived in a realm of imagination and metaphor...'

The judgement that 'birth and intercourse are imaginatively equated' must be based on Diotima's statement *συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν*, but in my view Burnyeat has misunderstood Plato's use of the ideas of 'pregnancy' and 'birth' at 206b-c. First, 'pregnancy' at 206c1 (*κυοῦσιν*) refers to a state of arousal which logically precedes intercourse. Second, the term 'birth' (*τόκος*) at 206c5 would seem to be a reference to male ejaculation, since it is the 'birth' of the seed with which the male had been pregnant. There is an obvious sense in which intercourse and ejaculation can be equated, and so again there is no reversal. Even if *τόκος* is regarded also as a reference to female emission of semen at the moment of orgasm,<sup>6</sup> then again there is a natural progression from arousal to orgasm, and no reversal. Although the female experience is not explicitly excluded, Plato is concerned here with male ejaculation. His idea of intercourse as a childbirth follows a view widely attested in Greek literature, namely that male ejaculation represents the actual birth of a child and the father is therefore the true parent. Stokes (p.162) points out that:

in some Greek thinking the female was merely the receptacle for the child, which grew from the father's seed

and Willink,<sup>7</sup> commenting on Euripides *Orestes* 551-6, observes:

The genetic argument for the primacy of the father is offensive to present-day ideas, but it was traditional...and in accordance with a widely-held view of procreation (e.g. Anaxagoras A107 *ap.* Arist. *gen. anim.* 4. 1. 763b. and the Egyptians according to Diod. I. 80;...)...in tragedy, cf. A. *Sept.* 754..., S. *OT* 1211, 1257, E. *Ph.* 18, but above all the direct precedent in A. *Eum.* 658-9, where the same argument had been put forward by Apollo.

This view is also expressed elsewhere in Plato (see Morrison). A final point against Burnyeat is that when Plato uses metaphors, he is at

pains to keep them logical and consistent, so far as his own use of them allows. Close attention to metaphorical passages in the dialogues often reveals that the images employed are far more consistent than a casual reading first suggests. While the image of spiritual procreation in the *Symposium* can often seem obscure, it does follow the same sequence as physical procreation, as I will attempt to show. I am not claiming that spiritual pregnancy is a precise mirror-image of its physical counterpart; since the soul has a very different nature from that of the body, point to point correspondence is impossible. But I do maintain that spiritual procreation broadly corresponds to the physical experience - as indeed it must if we are to make any sense of the metaphor.

At 206c5, then, Diotima, following a standard view of procreation, uses the term *τόκος* to speak of male ejaculation. This is a very important point, as it lays the foundation for the subsequent account of spiritual pregnancy and procreation.

In the passages that follow Diotima argues that human beings achieve immortality through procreation which produces children to continue the family line. The link between childbirth and immortality is important for Plato's argument and will be developed later in the speech.

The next section of Diotima's account deals with the role of beauty in this seed-birth. At 206c4 it was stated plainly that 'our nature':

τίκτειν δὲ ἐν μὲν αἰσχρῷ οὐ δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ καλῷ.  
cannot give birth in something ugly, only in something  
beautiful.

The use of *ἐν* in this sentence confirms that Diotima is focusing on the *male* sexual experience, since the idea of 'giving birth' or ejaculating *in* something can only apply to men.<sup>8</sup> This 'something' is

usually the female, and so it is rather curious that Plato uses the neuter forms of the adjectives 'ugly' and 'beautiful'. For Stokes, Plato's use of the neuter results from (p.163) 'a desire to appear to be talking about all sexual love without actually talking about the female's love of the male.' However, it also has another function, that is, by giving the discussion an abstract quality, to prepare for the switch from human sexual relations to intercourse of a quite different order.<sup>9</sup>

The idea that male ejaculation is only possible in something beautiful is continued at 206c8, where Diotima says that childbirth cannot take place 'in the disharmonious'. The role of beauty in the act of ejaculation is then summed up by Diotima at 206d1: 'Beauty is therefore Fate and Eileithyia at the birth.' The birth of the male seed requires sexual stimulation which in turn requires attraction to something beautiful. Diotima therefore personifies beauty as the goddess Kallone, who can be seen as the deity presiding over the male seed-birth, just as Eileithyia and one of the Moirai preside over female childbirth.<sup>10</sup> We are witnessing a male pregnancy, and Diotima is not here concerned with the female type of pregnancy which results from intercourse.

In the next section of the speech Diotima, continuing her argument about the role of beauty, describes what happens when the pregnant person approaches beauty and ugliness. In the first case we are told (206d3-5):

*ὅταν μὲν καλῶ προσπελάζη τὸ κυοῦν, ἰλεών τε γίγνεται καὶ εὐφραινόμενον διαχεῖται καὶ τίκτει τε καὶ γεννᾷ.*  
When whatever is pregnant approaches beauty, it becomes gracious and, feeling happy, it melts, gives birth and begets.

At the level of male physical pregnancy, this passage tells how the male is aroused by contact with beauty and as a result ejaculates. In contrast, when 'whatever is pregnant' approaches ugliness, we find a quite different reaction (206d5-7):

σκυθρωπόν τε καὶ λυπούμενον συσπειράται καὶ ἀποτρέπεται  
καὶ ἀνείλλεται καὶ οὐ γεννᾷ, ἀλλὰ ἴσχον τὸ κύημα χαλεπῶς  
φέρει.

...because it is sad and grieved, it contracts, turns away, shrinks up and does not give birth, but holding back what it has conceived, it bears it with difficulty.

Ejaculation is now impossible. The male is no longer aroused, he shrinks up (literally) and must bear inside himself the seed to which he wanted to give birth. From these different reactions to beauty and ugliness Diotima concludes that beauty attracts the pregnant man since this alone can 'release the man who has it from his great birthpangs' (μεγάλης ὠδίνος ἀπολύειν τὸν ἔχοντα, 206e1). The use of ὠδίνος, while maintaining the language of childbirth, graphically suggests the discomfort of sexual tension as the male seeks to be delivered of his burden.<sup>11</sup> The participle ἔχοντα, as well as meaning simply 'having', also contributes to the sexual imagery through the senses of 'have as wife, husband, lover' and 'be pregnant'.

In this first section pregnancy and childbirth refer to the male production and ejaculation of seed in intercourse. At this stage Diotima is speaking in general terms about all seed pregnancies, but in the next section she will distinguish between seed pregnancies at the physical and at the spiritual level.

### 9.3 Spiritual Sex (208e-209e)

The distinction between physical and spiritual pregnancy is drawn at 208e1. Linking physical procreation with the desire for immortality, Diotima says (208e1):

So those who are pregnant in their bodies [ἐγκύμονες...κατὰ τὰ σώματα] turn rather to women [γυναῖκας] and are lovers in this way, believing that by means of the begetting of children [παιδογονίας] they can secure for themselves immortality and memory and happiness hereafter for ever.

As in the previous section, 'those who are pregnant in their bodies' are the people who have conceived seed inside themselves and are ready to give birth to it via intercourse. With the reference to γυναῖκας we see that Diotima is specifically concerned with pregnant men. Similarly, παιδογονία refers to the male experience of begetting children rather than the female experience of bearing them. Diotima's assumption of an exclusively male perspective is more evident here than at 206c-d.

We now turn to the analogous situation at the spiritual level (208e5):

οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν- εἰσὶ γὰρ οὖν, ...οἱ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κυοῦσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν, ἃ ψυχῇ προσήκει καὶ κυῆσαι καὶ τεκεῖν.

But other men are pregnant in their soul - for there are men who conceive in their souls even more than in their bodies - with the things which it is fitting for soul both to conceive and to give birth to.

These men are spiritually pregnant just as the men at 208e1 ff. were physically pregnant: that is, pregnant with seed. We are still at the stage of production and ejaculation of seed and have not yet approached the birth of soul-children, which, just as on the physical level, requires intercourse. Thus the 'things which it is fitting for soul to conceive and give birth to' are to be understood as soul-seed.

But what exactly is this seed? Diotima spells it out (209a3-5): 'Intelligence and the rest of virtue.' She goes on to say that all poets and inventors are 'begetters' (γεννήτορες) of these (209a4-5).

As poets and inventors have produced and ejaculated seed, it seems we are to think of them both as pregnant in their soul and as fathering their offspring by ejaculating. Although the poets and inventors are not directly spoken of as 'pregnant', Diotima's image of pregnancy and birth does apply to them, as we see from 209a2-3 and the use of τούτων at 209a8 (see below). There now follows a key passage in which Diotima develops the images of pregnancy and intercourse in some detail. This begins with the description of spiritual puberty (209a8-b2):

τούτων δ' αὖ ὅταν τις ἐκ νέου ἐγκύμων ᾖ τὴν ψυχὴν, ἥθεός ὢν καὶ ἡκούσης τῆς ἡλικίας τίκτειν τε καὶ γεννᾶν ἤδη ἐπιθυμεῖ.

Whenever one of these people is pregnant in his soul from his youth onwards, then, when he is an eligible bachelor<sup>12</sup> and has come of age, he desires to give birth and procreate.

So we are presented with a picture of the young man experiencing a spiritual puberty and reaching the age at which he is ready to procreate. At this point he desires to give birth to the soul-seed he has long been pregnant with, i.e. he desires to ejaculate.

Following her earlier argument about the role of beauty in ejaculation (206d1-2), Diotima now tells us (209b2-4):

ζητεῖ δὴ οἶμαι καὶ οὗτος περιλὼν τὸ καλὸν ἐν ᾧ ἂν γεννήσειεν· ἐν τῷ γὰρ αἰσχρῷ οὐδέποτε γεννήσει.

This man too goes around, I suppose, in search of the beautiful in which to beget. For he will never beget in what is ugly.

So we again find the man pregnant in soul mirroring the action of the man pregnant in body. The latter on reaching maturity searches for a

desirable or beautiful woman in whom to ejaculate his physical seed. But what is 'the beautiful' in which the spiritually pregnant man desires to ejaculate? We might expect it to be a beautiful soul, but, as the passage continues, we find Diotima still talking about bodies (209b4-c2):

*τά τε οὖν σώματα τὰ καλὰ μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ αἰσχρὰ ἀσπάζεται ἅτε κυῶν, καὶ ἂν ἐντύχῃ ψυχῇ καλῇ καὶ γενναίᾳ καὶ εὐφρεῖ, πάνυ δὴ ἀσπάζεται τὸ συναμφότερον.*

So since he is pregnant he embraces beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones and if he finds a beautiful and noble soul of good disposition, he especially embraces the combination of both...

The pregnant man embraces beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones, because, as Diotima has continually told us, without beauty there can be no birth, i.e. without arousal there can be no ejaculation. Therefore since our pregnant male wants to 'give birth', he is very pleased to find beauty which will help him to do so.

This may be Diotima's argument, but the real reasons for the emphasis on beauty and the desire for beauty lie elsewhere. First, beauty is included at every stage of Diotima's speech on love because Plato is paving the way for his final revelation of the Form of Beauty. Beauty thus provides a much needed link between human experience and emotion on the one hand and the distant realm of the Forms on the other.<sup>13</sup> Second, at a more mundane level, Socrates/Diotima (and hence Plato) dwells on the attractions of beauty for rhetorical purposes. If all the conception, pregnancy and desire for ejaculation are happening at a spiritual level, then there is no need at all for our pregnant man to go in search of a physically beautiful partner. If another man or boy has a beautiful soul, then surely this will be all the beauty required for a spiritual ejaculation and childbirth. But beautiful bodies are still present because Socrates (through Diotima)

is trying to speak to his audience in terms which they will understand and which will appeal to them. Earlier in the dialogue we have heard the speech of Pausanias, the lover of Agathon, and it is clear that although he praises the beauty of a boy's soul, it is still the boy's physical beauty that holds the greatest attraction for him. Socrates, it seems, is directing his argument towards men such as Pausanias who pay lip-service to 'spiritual beauty', but in fact are far more attracted by physical attributes. So then, using language of sexual desire and intercourse and playing on fantasies of beautiful partners, Socrates seeks to draw Agathon's guests (and Plato to draw his readers) more deeply into his discourse on the soul. In this section of the dialogue Plato is attempting to wean the lover from physical and onto spiritual pleasures, and the metaphors of sex and ejaculation, by highlighting the attractions of spiritual intercourse, play a central role in this enterprise.

To return to the text: having found a partner, our friend, pregnant with virtue and intelligence, engages in speeches about virtue (*λόγων περὶ ἀρετῆς*, 209b8) and sets about educating his partner (*ἐπιχειρεῖ παιδεύειν*).<sup>14</sup> This is an interesting passage, as, although it can be read as part of the soul-courtship which will lead to intercourse and the birth of soul-children, it is also exactly what goes on at the literal level. For it is by means of such conversations that homosexuals such as Pausanias and Eryximachus set about wooing their beloveds. The role of the lover as educator of his *παιδικά* is well known.<sup>15</sup> Plato is thus skilfully presenting his soul-courtship in terms which accord with the conventions of homosexual relations at Athens.

After the courtship we come, as is natural, to the spiritual intercourse (209c2-4):

ἀπτόμενος γὰρ οἶμαι τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ὁμιλῶν αὐτῷ, ἃ πάλαι ἐκύει τίκτει καὶ γεννᾷ, καὶ παρῶν καὶ ἀπῶν μεμνημένος touching/having sexual intercourse with the beautiful young man, I imagine, and being in company with/talking with/having sexual intercourse with him, he gives birth and begets those things which he has long been pregnant with, both in his presence and remembering him in absence

The male has spiritual sex with his partner, that is, he has conversations with him, and finally ejaculates the seed (intelligence and the rest of virtue) with which he has been pregnant for so long. It is a nice touch that, in contrast to the physical level, the spiritually pregnant man can have sex with his partner both in his presence (live discussion) and in his absence (remembering discussions, mulling over ideas etc.).

This passage works very neatly on different levels. The verb ὁμιλῶν suggests physical intercourse (attractive to the audience) and can also simply refer to being in company and having conversations with another. The homosexuals among the audience (both Socrates' and Plato's) at this point may be pleasantly surprised to learn that all the time they were courting their beloveds with a view to physical intercourse at a later stage, their souls during these conversations were already having sexual intercourse!<sup>16</sup> The giving birth here (τίκτει καὶ γεννᾷ) is the ejaculation of seed, not the birth of a child, which, as on the physical level, comes later.

But in this case not much later. In fact, almost at once. There is no break in the sentence and Diotima continues (209c4-7):

καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν συνεκτρέφει κοινῇ μετ' ἐκείνου, ὥστε πολὺ μείζω κοινωνίαν τῆς τῶν παίδων πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἴσχουσι καὶ φιλίαν βεβαιότεραν, ἅτε καλλιόνων καὶ ἀθανατωτέρων παίδων κεκοινωνηκότες.

He rears the child/that which has been produced in common with him, so that such men enjoy a much greater shared intimacy than that which comes from (human) children and maintain a stronger friendship, since the children they share are more beautiful and more immortal (than human ones).

This is the first occurrence in Diotima's speech of a 'female' type of spiritual pregnancy. But female pregnancy is an 'absent presence' here - absent, as there is no direct mention of it but a presence, nevertheless, as it must be understood for the phrase τὸ γεινηθῆν συνεκτρέφει to make sense. In the previous clause the lovers were enjoying intercourse and now they are rearing the child that has been born. There is an obvious ellipsis here, as the whole of the 'female' experience of pregnancy and giving birth to a child has been suppressed. After spending a great deal of time on the so-called 'pregnancy' of the lover, Diotima has nothing to say about the pregnancy of the beloved, his partner. It is this second spiritual pregnancy that is analogous to female pregnancy at the physical level. For this results in the birth of a child rather than the birth of seed, which, as we have seen, is simply a metaphor for ejaculation.

This second type of soul pregnancy - the female type - is presented at great length in the *Theaetetus*. When we meet the young Theaetetus he is already pregnant with soul-child and we are told in some detail of his labour pains and of the whole process of birth. The metaphor is even extended to include a notorious 'midwife' and a ceremony of parading the newly-born child around a hearth. But in the *Symposium* Plato makes no explicit reference to the female experience of childbirth, even though this process is of crucial importance in bringing the soul-child into the light and although it is clearly implicit in the imagery itself. Why?

I believe that the answer lies in the interests of the audience for whom he is writing. Plato's audience comprised well-educated, upper class men, who were likely to have only a limited interest in the subject of female childbearing. But further, the *Symposium* addresses a very particular aspect of this male audience's experience, their experience of love and erotic desire. As Dover has pointed out,<sup>17</sup> 'there can be little doubt that homosexual response was the most powerful emotional experience known to most of the people for whom [Plato] was writing' and so it is natural that in his dialogue on love Plato concentrates largely on homosexual relations; apart from Aristophanes all the speakers at the *Symposium* are involved (to differing extents) in homosexual affairs and in the speeches far more is said of homosexual than of heterosexual *eros*. Female pregnancy is out of place in the homosexual ambience of the dialogue, and it is therefore not surprising that when Diotima speaks of the male lovers procreating spiritual children, all reference to the female role is avoided. Plato is seeking to impress on his readers the pleasures of spiritual procreation and so concentrates on those aspects most familiar and most appealing to them, i.e. desire, sexual arousal and union with a beautiful partner. What happens after intercourse - pregnancy and labour - is suppressed and thus at 209c we move from ejaculation to childbirth in the space of one line. In terms of the spiritual procreation metaphor it is the beloved who assumes the female role and the suppression of his experience suggests that this part of Diotima's speech is addressed to those men who are or have been the older, active partners in homosexual affairs. So Plato manipulates the female image of pregnancy to fit the requirements of his male audience. His success is shown by the fact that, centuries

later, critics continue to overlook the presence of the female type of pregnancy in Diotima's speech.

The soul-child, then, has been born and the proud fathers now 'share its upbringing' (συνεκτρέφει). We are not told the actual nature of the soul-child, but we learn that it is more beautiful and more immortal than a human child. The reference to immortality picks up Diotima's earlier argument that human desire to procreate stems from the desire for immortality. The reason why soul-children are more immortal than human ones is presumably that ideas, poetry etc. can outlive people. The reason why soul-children are more beautiful, however, is less clear. But this is an appropriate idea, given that these praises of soul-children are undoubtedly addressed to Agathon, the unmarried poet, and are intended to flatter him by extolling the offspring of his art.<sup>18</sup>

In the next section (209c7-e4) we hear that poets, such as Homer and Hesiod, and lawgivers, such as Lycurgus and Solon, have all fathered spiritual children. The logic of the metaphor would suggest that these men father their soul-children (poems and laws) in the way that men usually father children, i.e. by ejaculating in another person (cf. 209a8-209c7). Here, however, Diotima does not talk of spiritual intercourse and says nothing explicit about the spiritual partners of the poets and lawgivers.<sup>19</sup> There can be no doubt that Plato is playing down the idea of spiritual intercourse at this stage. For this idea would lead to very awkward questions about creativity, e.g. 'who was Homer's partner when he fathered the *Iliad*?' or 'could a change of partner account for the differences between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?'

Instead of confronting the problem, Plato prefers to fudge a little here and uses terms which are normally used of male 'begetting' and 'fathering': γεννήτορες (209a4), ἔκγονα ...καταλείπουσιν (209d2-3), παῖδας κατελίπετο (209d5), γέννησιν (209d7) and γεννήσαντες (209e2). When speaking of particular poets and lawgivers, then, Plato avoids the images of spiritual pregnancy and ejaculation and instead focuses attention on a much more straightforward idea: namely that a man, as well as fathering real children, can also beget children of the spirit or intellect. The idea of poetry and discourse as children is also used in a number of passages in the *Phaedrus* (242b, 257b, 261a, 275e, 276a, 278a-b), and appears earlier in the *Symposium* itself at 177d5, where Phaedrus is referred to as πατήρ τοῦ λόγου.

In the account of spiritual sex between lovers and the subsequent birth of their soul-child Plato emphasises the father's contribution of ejaculating seed and ignores the mother's role of receiving the seed and bringing the child to birth. Turning now to the third and final section of the metaphor's development in the *Symposium*, we shall see that Plato continues to obscure the female contribution to childbirth - this time for even better reasons.

#### 9.4 From Phantoms to the Form (210a,d, 211e-212a)

Before we examine the main passage (at 212a) we must set out briefly what our pregnant lover has been experiencing since 209e.

In this section of her speech Diotima explains to Socrates what a spiritually pregnant man must do, if he is to attain the final revelation in the love mysteries: that is, to achieve a vision of the Form of Beauty. First our man should fall in love with one body and should there 'beget' fine speeches or arguments (γεννᾶν λόγους καλοῦς,

210a7-8). Next he should recognise that the physical beauty of different bodies is 'one and the same' (ἐν τε καὶ ταῦτόν, 210b3) and should become a lover not of individuals but of all beautiful bodies. The next stage is to value spiritual beauty more highly than physical. Moving then through the beauty of activities, institutions, morals and sciences, he should ultimately become a lover of beauty in the widest or most abstract sense.

At 210d we come to a significant and rather surprising development of the metaphor. As the lover gazes on the 'vast sea of beauty' we are told that he (210d4-6):

πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς λόγους καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τίκτῃ καὶ  
 διανοήματα ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνῳ  
 gives birth to/begets many beautiful and magnificent  
 speeches and thoughts in bounteous philosophy.

The phrase ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ has been understood by translators as referring to the man's own love of wisdom or philosophical theories:

Lamb<sup>20</sup>: '[he] may... bring forth in all their splendour many fair fruits of discourse and meditation in a plenteous crop of philosophy';

Hamilton<sup>21</sup>: '[he] may bring forth in the abundance of his love of wisdom many beautiful and magnificent sentiments and ideas';

Groden<sup>22</sup>: 'one brings forth many beautiful and magnificent theories and thoughts in a fruitful philosophy'.

However, if we consider the phrase τίκτῃ...ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ in the light of the preceding passages, it must be taken to mean, I believe, that the lover is giving birth to his soul-seed in philosophy, which takes the place of the beloved in intercourse and assumes the female role. The image of a person having intercourse with philosophy may seem strange, but it is similar both to an idea in the *Gorgias* (481d-482a) where Socrates speaks of philosophy as his παιδικά and to a very vivid

metaphorical passage in the *Republic* (495e-496b),<sup>23</sup> where philosophy is likened to a woman forced by hard times to marry an inferior suitor. Once the marriage has taken place, the matter of children arises and we find the following exchange between Socrates and Adeimantus (496a2):

What kind of children, then, are such parents likely to produce [γεννᾶν]? Will they not be bastards [νόθα] and of inferior nature [φαῦλα]? - Quite unavoidably. So when those unfit for education approach [πλησιάζοντες] philosophy and consort [ὁμιλῶσι] with her unworthily, what kind of thoughts and opinions are we to say they produce [γεννᾶν]? Will they not be such as truly to deserve to be called sophistry, that is, nothing legitimate [γνήσιον] or partaking in wisdom? - That is altogether certain.

This is very similar to our passage at *Symposium* 210d, although the offspring of the union with philosophy is quite different. In contrast to the *Republic*, the intercourse between the lover and philosophy in the *Symposium* produces 'fine speech and thought' (which in the terms of the *Republic* must mean that our lover is a man 'fit for education'). In both passages the nature of the parents determines the nature of the children, an idea with obvious parallels in physical union and a consideration of the utmost importance for a philosopher concerned with the principles of eugenics (see e.g. *Republic* 459a ff.). This idea will appear again at 212a ff.

Now that the lover has discovered the pleasures of philosophy, he is ready to experience the greatest delight of all. As he philosophises and contemplates beauty in its most abstract sense, he suddenly achieves a vision of the Form of Beauty. After describing this Form and praising its perfection, Diotima says at 211e4-212a2:

Do you think... that the life of a man who could look in that direction, who could contemplate that entity with the appropriate faculty and be in union with it [συνόντος αὐτῷ], would be of an inferior nature [φαῦλον]?<sup>24</sup>

The lover here is contemplating the Form of Beauty (which is spoken of as neuter throughout).<sup>25</sup> He is, it seems, somehow 'in union' (συνόντος) with it as a result of his contemplation. What kind of union is this? On a literal level, Plato has no answer for us in this passage. However, we are given a metaphor which offers a vivid picture of what kind of contact this is. For, as the passage progresses, the union of the lover and the Form is presented as sexual union leading to procreation. In the preceding sections of the speech (210e-211e) the themes of love and sex are ever-present and the metaphor of spiritual sex is still at work (see 211b5 and 211d6). Now the metaphor is given its final development as the lover has spiritual intercourse with the Form. The participle συνόντος means simply 'be with', 'be in contact with' but it also sustains the sexual imagery through its sense of 'having intercourse with' (compare the use of συνουσία at 206c6).

Are we really to understand that the lover of beauty is having sex (albeit metaphorically) with the Form of Beauty? Stokes (p.178) comments on the idea of 'contact' in this passage: 'one is tempted to suppose this a sexual metaphor for spiritual intercourse' and observes in a footnote (p.471, n.98):

Diotima's ἐφάπτεσθαι is not, so far as I can discover, used elsewhere for the sexual act; but (1) the simple verb ἄπτεσθαι is so used, and (2) so are other words for 'touch' such as θιγγάνω, and (3) the closely related compound ἐπαφάω is connected by Aeschylus (?), *Prometheus*, 849-51, with Zeus' begetting of Ἴεραφός on Io...

Yet ἐφάπτεσθαι is used elsewhere in Plato in a sexual context and moreover it appears in a passage which provides an important parallel with *Symposium* 212a2-7, as Taylor observes.<sup>26</sup> This is *Republic* 490b,

where the lover of knowledge is presented as having intercourse with reality or true being:

As he goes his way, his passion [τοῦ ἔρωτος] will not be blunted nor will he cease from it before he touches [ἄψασθαι] the nature of true reality in each case with that part of his soul which is fitted to touch it [ἐφάπτεσθαι] because of its kinship with it; approaching [πλησιιάσας] it with this and having intercourse [μιγείς] with true reality, he begets [γεννήσας] intelligence and truth. He would then, but not before, have knowledge, truly live, be nourished and so delivered from his birthpangs [λήγοι ὠδίνος].

This passage clearly presents an image of the lover of knowledge having sexual intercourse with true reality - a point observed by Taylor (see above) and Burnyeat (p.13). However, Burnyeat overlooks the fact that *Republic* 490b offers the same image as *Symposium* 212a.<sup>27</sup> Stokes is surely right, then, to detect a sexual metaphor here, for how else are we to understand the lover's progression from loving his παιδικά to loving souls and finally to loving the Form of Beauty itself?

In the *Republic* childbirth results from intercourse with Being and this is also the case in the *Symposium*, as we discover at 212a2-5:

ἢ οὐκ ἐνθυμῆ... ὅτι ἐνταῦθα αὐτῷ μοναχοῦ γενήσεται, ὁρῶντι ᾧ ὄρατόν τὸ καλόν, τίκτειν οὐκ εἶδωλα ἀρετῆς, ἅτε οὐκ εἰδώλου ἐφαπτομένῳ, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῆ, ἅτε τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ.

Don't you realise... that only there, seeing in the way that the Beautiful can be seen, can one stop begetting images of virtue, since one no longer touches an image, but truth, because one now touches the truth?<sup>28</sup>

Here we learn that, as a result of being in contact with the Form, the lover is able to τίκτειν true virtue rather than an image of it. What precisely does τίκτειν refer to here? Up to this point of Diotima's speech this verb has denoted male ejaculation - the 'bringing forth' or 'giving birth' to seed during intercourse. However, it cannot mean

this here. For it makes no sense to say that a man, by having intercourse with an image, ejaculates images, whereas a man, by having intercourse with the truth, ejaculates truth. There is no logical connection between the kind of partner a man has and the kind of seed he produces.

But there is a connection between the kind of partner a man has and the kind of *child* their union produces, a point I noted above in my discussion on *Republic* 496a. The nature of the parents determines the nature of the child that is created, and thus, when our lover has intercourse with images, he produces images of virtue, whereas when he has intercourse with truth, he produces true virtue.<sup>29</sup> Images and true virtue, then, are soul-*children*, not merely soul-*seed*, and so the verb *τίκτειν* is used here in the sense of 'begetting children'. We must remember Dover's point above that *τίκτειν*, as well as being used to refer to ejaculation, can be used in Greek both of the female 'bearing' and the male 'begetting' of a child.

Plato presents, then, the male lover as having intercourse with the Form of Beauty and fathering true virtue. As at 209c a child has been procreated by means of intercourse between two partners and so, following the analogy of physical procreation, we expect both a male and female type of pregnancy to have taken place. The lover experiences a 'male' pregnancy leading to ejaculation as he 'has intercourse with the truth' (*τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐφαπτομένῳ*) and so 'fathers' (*τίκτειν*) the spiritual children. After intercourse a mother must nurture and bring to birth the male seed and in this passage the Form of Beauty, the lover's sexual partner, clearly must perform the mother's role. Thus it is the Form that experiences the pregnancy, labour and birth of the soul-child, with the lover taking the role of

proud father. However, as at 209c there is an ellipsis as Plato carefully avoids mentioning this 'female' type of pregnancy. Why? Apart from catering to the interests of his male audience, Plato now has even more pressing reasons for not wanting to dwell on the female contribution to the birth. For the idea of a pregnant Form leads to all sorts of very uncomfortable questions, e.g. 'How can a Form be pregnant at one time, but not at another?' - a Form which is supposed to be fixed in its nature, free from change and, as Diotima herself has just told us (at 211b), 'does not experience anything' (*μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν*).

Even within the realm of spiritual pregnancy, it is logically impossible for a Form to be pregnant and so the metaphor completely breaks down at this point. A further awkward problem arises in that, whereas earlier in the speech Beauty was cast as a goddess presiding over male-childbirth, now perfect Beauty has become involved in the act of procreation itself and so can no longer be a third party. For these very good reasons Plato avoids all mention of the Form as pregnant and focuses attention instead on the experience of the lover and his triumph of finally fathering real instead of phantom children.

The mention of these phantoms, *εἴδωλα*, obviously introduces a new element into the metaphor, and it is an element which is used to make an important philosophical point. In the earlier passages, when the lover and his beloved had spiritual intercourse they gave birth to virtue (see 209a and e) as their spiritual children. Now we learn from Diotima that in fact these children are not real, but phantoms, mere images of virtue. The only true spiritual children are those procreated by contact with the Form of Beauty. Thus, although they are 'more beautiful' and 'more immortal' than human ones, these earlier

spiritual children (poems and laws) cannot match the products of union with the Form of Beauty.

We see here a progression from the physical to the spiritual and a further progression from spiritual contact between two souls in the realm of Becoming to spiritual contact between a human soul and true reality in the realm of Being. On the physical level the result of union is human children. On the first spiritual level phantom soul-children are produced and it is only on the second spiritual level that the lover begets true or real soul-children. This is a subtle way of saying that all poetry is inferior to the products of the philosopher's contemplation, a point which Plato makes in different ways on a number of occasions, but has to make very tactfully in an account of Agathon's party.

The idea of phantoms of virtue is introduced, then, to raise us to a higher plane where we learn that all the things of this world, even spiritual children, are in fact phantoms when compared to what is truly real, i.e. the Forms.

Now that our lover has enjoyed union with the Form of Beauty, what happens to him next? The happy ending of this love affair comes at 212a5-7:

τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ  
γενέσθαι, καὶ εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ.  
He is able to beget true virtue and to nourish it, and  
hence to be a divine favourite, so that if any man can be  
immortal, it will be him.

As I said earlier, Plato in this passage focuses attention on the experience of the lover and avoids describing the Form as pregnant. Thus he speaks only of the lover 'begetting' (τεκόντι) true virtue, using the verb (as at 212a3) to refer to the masculine act of fathering, and tells us nothing of the female role in this birth.

As the lover nourishes (θρεψαμένω) the child, we find the same progression of union, childbirth and rearing as at 209c. But whereas earlier the verb used for rearing was συνεκτρέφει, as the two lovers shared the task, now, of course, Plato wants the role of the Form to drop out of sight, so he removes the prefix συν- and presents the lover as bringing up the child on his own.

My final point on this passage concerns the matter of immortality. After begetting a true soul-child, the lover will become a divine favourite (θεοφιλεῖ) and, if any man will become immortal, he will. Why is this? The answer, it seems, works on two levels.

First, within the metaphor, he has consorted with a Form and with it has fathered a child, which he now takes care of. Since the Form is divine (211e), the lover is now the father of a semi-divine child. Through this special relationship with the Form, which, I argue, has to be regarded as the soul-child's mother, the lover has a closer link with the realm of divine beings. Also, as Diotima has suggested earlier (206c), there is a sense in which the production of any child immortalises and so, according to Platonic thought, the production of a true soul-child must surely immortalise most of all!<sup>30</sup>

Second, outside of the metaphor, the lover of beauty becomes immortal because he achieves a vision of true reality which leads him to an understanding of true virtue. This understanding will help him (in the language of the *Phaedo*) to free his soul and (in the *Republic's* terms) to achieve his escape from the realm of becoming to the eternal realm of Being.

The way that the lover achieves immortality through spiritual children is clearly different from the way in which parents achieve immortality through their human offspring. In the latter case the

parents 'live on' through the children they leave behind. But in the case of the lover of Beauty, the 'children' he begets - intelligence and the rest of virtue - cannot exist independently of him, for they are new virtues present in his soul. Thus he cannot be said to 'leave behind' these children after death.<sup>31</sup> Both the physically and spiritually pregnant men achieve immortality by means of procreation, but the relationship between parent and child and the type of immortality in each case are quite different. Here the metaphor has reached another of its limits.

### 9.5 Conclusions

My conclusions on the metaphor of spiritual pregnancy will take two forms: first a summing-up of my interpretation of the metaphor's development and second a review of its various cognitive and rhetorical roles.

On the metaphor's development I maintain that to understand Diotima's speech the reader must grasp that Plato employs four different types of pregnancy, two physical and two spiritual. First, although it is never spoken of directly, the whole image is obviously based on the literal, physical state of pregnancy experienced by the female after intercourse. Second, as Morrison, Dover and Stokes have shown, Plato uses the idea of a male type of 'pregnancy and childbirth' to refer to the act of ejaculation during physical intercourse. Next we find these male and female types of physical pregnancy mirrored at the spiritual level. Thus the third type of pregnancy and birth is the male pregnancy with seed, which the male lover ejaculates during spiritual sexual intercourse; and finally the fourth type - which has eluded critics - is that experienced by his

partner who, taking the female role, becomes pregnant and gives birth to the soul-child. Although the image is often difficult to follow, I think that it does have a logical progression. I reject Burnyeat's view (above 9.2) that there is a strange reversal in the sequence of intercourse and birth, since at each level the different births are the result of the corresponding type of pregnancy.

I therefore conclude that there are two types of spiritual pregnancy in the *Symposium*, a 'male' type, as has been observed by Morrison, Dover and Stokes, and a 'female' type, which has been overlooked.

Further, I argue that at the end of the section on spiritual pregnancy the lover of beauty has a pregnancy of the 'male' type and that this requires a 'female' type if children are to be produced. As spiritual children are procreated in this passage, then someone or something must have given birth to them. If we follow the analogy of physical pregnancy and birth, as I feel we must, then this someone or something must be their father's sexual partner, which at this stage is nothing other than the Form of Beauty. As a Form cannot be 'pregnant', Plato has steered himself into an awkward corner. He manages, however, to manoeuvre himself out of this difficulty by directing all attention to the experience of the lover. This ploy has remained undetected, as critics have allowed their attention to be diverted from the female contribution to childbirth. That Plato has used the overtly female image of pregnancy and at the same time has obscured the female role in procreation is no small achievement.

This interpretation of spiritual pregnancy leads me to believe that the metaphor plays a number of significant cognitive and rhetorical

roles in Diotima's speech. Regarding its various cognitive roles, I conclude that:

i) the metaphors of sexual desire and intercourse structure the spiritual experience of creative inspiration;

ii) the metaphors of pregnancy and birth structure the processes of spiritual *creation*, - both those of writing poetry etc. and of attaining philosophic virtue;

iii) the model of sexual desire illustrates how the Form of Beauty, like physical beauty, can stimulate the procreative urge (which at the highest spiritual level is the urge to philosophise);

iv) the analogy with sexual puberty explains why the philosophical urge is only felt at maturity;

v) the model of physical procreation illustrates how the type of partner affects the nature of the 'child' produced;

and

vi) the analogy with human children shows how immortality can be won through the creation of offspring. But at the spiritual level the kind of immortality that is achieved is quite different, for a) it is a personal immortality rather than immortality derived from the continuance of one's family line, and b) it is not only continued existence in the afterlife but also the transcendence of the human and phenomenal world in this life too.

Second, as to the rhetorical roles of the metaphors of pregnancy and procreation, I conclude that:

i) the metaphors of desire, arousal and ejaculation work to make spiritual communion more attractive to the audience;

ii) spiritual sex is further recommended to the audience since it can be enjoyed both in the presence and absence of a partner;

- iii) the portrayal of philosophic contemplation as sexual intercourse with the most perfect and most beautiful partner provides a powerful incentive to philosophise; the subtext being that the experience will be even more thrilling than human sex with a flawed partner;
- iv) the metaphor of procreation also supports Plato's advocacy of the philosophic life by showing how the products of union with the Forms ('real' spiritual children: virtue and truth) are superior not only to human children but also to those children produced through spiritual union between two human souls ('phantom' children: poetry and laws etc.);
- v) the metaphor of spiritual procreation also recommends the practise of philosophy by showing how union with the Forms causes a man to become a divine favourite and to achieve personal immortality.

I hope I have shown that the study of Plato's soul metaphors in an individual context, as well as at a general level, has much to reveal of the philosopher's thought. Further I hope I have demonstrated that close attention to metaphors can shed considerable light upon Plato's skills as an artist, teacher and passionate advocate of the philosophical life.

<sup>1</sup>J.S. Morrison, 'Four Notes on Plato's *Symposium*', pp.51-55 on κνεῖν; Burnyeat, 'Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration'; Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 153-65, *Plato, Symposium*, pp.146-59; Plass 'Plato's "Pregnant" Lover'; Lambert, 'Plato's Household Topos: A Formative Influence on Ancient Educational and Social Theory'; Stokes, *Plato's Socratic Conversations*, pp.146-82; Tomin, 'Socratic Midwifery'; Kittay, *Metaphor - Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure*, pp.278-87; H. Tarrant, 'Midwifery and the Clouds'.

<sup>2</sup>See Dover (1980), pp.137-8, and Stokes (1986), pp.146-7. As well as the humour inherent (for Plato) in the idea of a female teacher, a number of other reasons have been suggested as to why Plato introduces Diotima at this point (see Dover, 1980, pp.137-8); one that has not been mentioned, so far as I know, is that by bringing in a woman he can raise the subject of pregnancy in a more plausible way. At a gathering of Athenian men the matter of pregnancy was hardly likely to crop up spontaneously, and the subject is even more out of place at Agathon's party where most of the guests are involved in homosexual affairs.

<sup>3</sup>Morrison, pp.52-5. See also Stokes, pp.162-4.

<sup>4</sup>Bury, *The Symposium of Plato*, p.111.

<sup>5</sup>Art. cit., p.8.

<sup>6</sup>See Dover (1980), p.147.

<sup>7</sup>Willink, *Euripides - Orestes*, pp. 174-5.

<sup>8</sup>See Stokes, p.163.

<sup>9</sup>The neuter form is used on occasion by Plato for the soul (e.g. *Crito* 47d) and is used for the Form of Beauty later in the speech (211e ff.).

<sup>10</sup>See Dover (1980), p.148.

<sup>11</sup>See Stokes, p.162.

<sup>12</sup>See Dover (1980), p.153. The use of ἡθεις (unmarried youth) again underlines that Plato is interested in male rather than female arousal before intercourse.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Dover's comment on *Phaedrus* 250d (1978, p.164): 'beauty is the only one of those things which are erastos ("attracting eros") which can be directly perceived by the senses, so that the sight of something beautiful affords by far the most powerful and immediate access we have to the world of Being.'

<sup>14</sup>The verb παιδεύειν is presumably to be understood as having a double sense here: first referring to intellectual advancement and second to sexual initiation.

<sup>15</sup>See Pausanias' speech 184d-e and Dover (1978), pp. 212 ff.

<sup>16</sup>The use of ἀπτόμενος earlier in the dialogue at 175c8 foreshadows the use of the verb here.

<sup>17</sup>Dover (1986), p.5.

<sup>18</sup>Stokes (1986), p.172.

<sup>19</sup>Dover suggests (1980, p.152) that 'the beautiful medium' 'in' which Homer and Solon created their offspring 'can only be the virtuous character of the societies for which Homer sang and Solon legislated', but nothing is said in the text of the virtuous (or otherwise) character of the societies in which these men lived and it is clear from 209b4-c7 that Diotima at this stage is speaking of the lover who is inspired by a beautiful human being (see also 209e5-210a6).

<sup>20</sup>Lamb, *Plato - Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, pp.203-5.

<sup>21</sup>Hamilton, *Plato, The Symposium*, p.93.

<sup>22</sup>Groden, *The Symposium of Plato*, p.92.

<sup>23</sup>Taylor, *Plato*, p.231, note 1.

<sup>24</sup>The man who lives a φαύλον βίον can be identified with the man who produces mere phantoms - the φαῦλα of *Republic* 496a.

<sup>25</sup>This, as I have already suggested, goes some way to explain the use of the neuter forms at 206c and d.

<sup>26</sup>Taylor (1926), p.231 note 1.

<sup>27</sup>See Burnyeat p.13. The comment 'The *Republic* comes closer to what we are seeking when it describes an intercourse with the Forms which begets understanding and truth' gives the impression that this image does not appear in the *Symposium*, which, I argue, is not the case.

<sup>28</sup>Taylor comments on this passage (p.230, note 1): 'The allusion is to the tale of Ixion and the cloud which was imposed on him in the place of Hera, and from which the Centaurs sprang.' (The idea was actually Zeller's (1857), see Bury (1973) p.132 ad loc.). But surely a more appropriate parallel is to be found in the story of the εἶδωλον of Helen, see Euripides *Helen* 27-36.

*Republic* 586b7-c5, a passage in which Socrates is speaking of real and unreal pleasures, shows that the story of Helen's εἶδωλον provided Plato with a useful mythical parallel for the contrast between illusion and reality. In this passage we also find references to 'desires' and 'begetting in souls':

Ἄρ' οὖν οὐκ ἀνάγκη καὶ ἡδοναῖς συνεῖναι μεμειγμέναις  
λύπαις, εἰδώλοις τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἡδονῆς καὶ ἔσκιαγραφημέναις,  
ὑπὸ τῆς παρ' ἀλλήλας θέσεως ἀποχραϊνομέναις, ὥστε  
σφοδρούς ἑκατέρας φαίνεσθαι, καὶ ἔρωτας ἑαυτῶν λυττῶντας  
τοῖς ἄφροσιν ἐντίκτειν καὶ περιμαχῆτους εἶναι, ὥσπερ τὸ  
τῆς Ἑλένης εἶδωλον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Τροίᾳ Στησίχορος φησι  
γενέσθαι περιμάχητον ἀγνοία τοῦ ἀληθοῦς;

<sup>29</sup>I support Stokes' suggestion (p.179) that at 212a2-5 'the necessary argument is concealed in the metaphor' and am convinced of a point he makes rather tentatively (p.179): 'Perhaps Diotima means, even if she does not say, that intercourse with a mere image cannot produce real progeny, and it needs a real union with a real partner to procreate real offspring.'

<sup>30</sup>See Stokes, pp.180-1: 'By means of *this* offspring a man will enjoy a higher degree of immortality than by any other. No ordinary child, and no ordinary intellectual masterpiece, will confer such immortality as the production of true goodness.'

<sup>31</sup>Stokes (p.181) comments that 'it is left vague in what sense one leaves behind one the true goodness to which one has given birth.' I would argue that the metaphor ends here and that the lover of Beauty cannot be regarded as leaving behind his 'children' in any sense. For these 'children' must be seen as aspects of his own soul.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ταῦτα μὲν ἄρα... μόγλις διανενεύκαμεν  
Republic 441c

Now our sea of argument is crossed, it remains for me to review the major points and to summarise my conclusions on the philosophical significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the soul.

In Chapter 1, under the headings of 'epistemic', 'non-informative' and 'illustrative' theses, I set out various modern views on the cognitive role of metaphor. In essence, the epistemic thesis argues that through the process of interaction metaphors have a distinct and irreducible force, which provides a special kind of epistemic access not provided by literal language. The non-informative thesis rejects the interactive view of metaphor and argues that the primary role of metaphor is not to convey information, but to evoke moods and stimulate lines of imaginative thought. Finally, the illustrative thesis acknowledges the usefulness of metaphor in providing a vivid, memorable and persuasive means of expression and in developing new ideas but rejects the claim that metaphors are able to convey information which cannot be conveyed by literal terms. These contemporary views established a framework for my discussion of Plato's metaphors, but before examining the metaphors themselves I explored the question of Plato's own attitude to and expectations of metaphor.

Aristotle's account of metaphor, still respected by critics, provided a bridge between ancient and modern approaches, and it was established that Plato shares with Aristotle a rather ambivalent view of metaphors/images. Both express the negative opinion that

metaphors/images are unhelpful in inquiry or argument but also recognise their potential as a means of conveying or achieving insight. Further, both acknowledge the rhetorical force of metaphors/images, and indeed make full use of it in their own work. However, the significant difference between the two philosophers, as far as metaphor is concerned, lies in the fact that for Plato verbal images are part of a much wider class of likenesses, copies and representations, and as such, his view of them is coloured by his concern to differentiate image and reality and by his unremitting preference for what is real or primary over what is a mere likeness.

In Part II I presented my analysis of Plato's metaphors for the gods, beginning with a discussion of the role of metaphor in theology. I briefly reviewed a number of modern perspectives on this question and compared these to Plato's own attitude to the role of figurative language in theological discourse. I argued that for Plato the standard for judging images of the gods was the extent to which they reflected not knowledge of the gods (which on certain occasions he suggests is impossible to attain) but beliefs about them. I concluded that his approach shares most common ground with the modern 'idealist' view, which regards metaphors as 'fictions' that are useful in the development and articulation of ideas about god. However, I stressed that there is an important difference between Plato and modern idealists in that whereas critics today spend time evaluating the images themselves, Plato does not dwell on the 'meaning' of particular metaphors but simply puts them to use in the exposition of various views and arguments.

At the end of Chapter 3 I focussed on a question often raised by critics working on theological metaphors: how far metaphors are

indispensable to discourse on the gods. In Chapter 4 I set about answering this with regard to Platonic metaphors and examined the major groups of divine metaphors presented in the dialogues. I showed how these groups (craftsmen, fathers, shepherds etc.) overlap in various ways and together convey Plato's conception of a benevolent, creative and controlling power. However, I also showed how each group makes its own individual contribution to Plato's portrayal of the gods. I then assessed the cognitive significance of these metaphors in terms of the modern debate.

On the grounds that these metaphors work to convey the information that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good, I dismissed the idea that they play a merely emotive role. The question of whether they play an illustrative or epistemic role, however, was not so easy to determine. The key issue here was whether the information provided by these metaphors could also be conveyed by literal terms, and I concluded that one's response to this is governed by one's attitude to the nature of language about god. If one believes that the cognitive content of Plato's divine metaphors can be reduced to the literal statements that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good, then one can hold that these metaphors are performing an illustrative role. However, if one maintains that the application of human notions of creation and control to the divine or cosmic level is itself metaphorical, then these metaphors cannot be reduced to literal terms and so play an epistemic role. My own view on this issue is that the statement 'god creates and controls the universe' can be regarded as a literal statement of belief and that Plato's metaphors for god illustrate this idea in various ways. On the question of the indispensability of

metaphors to theological debate, I argued that even on the illustrative view, since literal statements on the gods are very limited in their scope, metaphors are still indispensable to any extended or detailed discourse.

In Chapter 5 I examined some of Plato's metaphors for the gods at work in their contexts and showed how Plato uses them not so much to gain insight into the divine nature but to present his beliefs more effectively. I demonstrated how various metaphors are used in conjunction with one another to achieve different cognitive and rhetorical effects: in the *Critias*, to provide a satisfactory model for the manner of the gods' control over human beings (while avoiding the issue of free will); in the *Politicus* myth, to dramatise the creative and sustaining power of god; and in the *Laws*, to refute the idea that the gods can be won over by evil men. The three studies revealed how metaphors and images are integral both to the exposition of Plato's views and to his rhetorical method, and so supported the conclusions of Chapter 4.

In Part III the debate moved on to the significance of Plato's soul metaphors. In Chapter 6 I assessed the cognitive status of Plato's language about the soul and explored Plato's own attitude to the significance of his soul metaphors. We saw how, although Plato presents a number of propositions about the soul, there are statements in the dialogues which indicate that his views on certain aspects remained tentative; aspects such as what exactly happens to the soul after death, how the soul is connected to the body and, most significantly, what kind of thing the soul is or what form it has. I raised the question of how Plato's metaphors and images for the soul can have any significance, given that Plato himself suggests that he

does not know and cannot tell what the soul *is*, and moved on to examine the claim that through metaphors and myths Plato can somehow provide 'mystical' insight into the soul. I acknowledged the close relationship between soul metaphors and soul myths in Plato and discussed in some detail various views on the cognitive role of the myths, from the 'Romantic' to a more rationalist view. I concluded that Plato's myths are tentative, provisional accounts that do not offer any special insight into the nature of soul, but are written in accordance with as much knowledge as Plato has on the subject and correspond with the 'truths' argued for in dialectic. Having dispensed with the idea that the soul metaphors in the myths have a special cognitive force over and above that of metaphors in dialectical contexts, I returned to the question of how Plato's metaphors relate to his knowledge of the soul. I rejected the idea that metaphors are cognitively significant only when they derive from true knowledge, and argued that metaphors play a significant role in the exposition and development of ideas which do not necessarily have the status of knowledge and which do not necessarily relate to truth and reality. I also rejected the claim that Plato's metaphors in any way 'palliate' his ignorance on certain spiritual matters or allow him to express the 'real being' of the soul in a way which is impossible in literal speech.

The three theses set out in Chapter 1 were then applied to the soul metaphors. I argued that the non-informative view did not account for the role of the soul metaphors, since these metaphors do state propositions and since their primary role is often that of illuminating difficult ideas. This left the illustrative and epistemic views and I further narrowed down my debate by singling out Eva

Kittay's version of the epistemic view as the strongest challenger to the illustrative thesis. Although other critics, notably Max Black and Richard Boyd, also expound the interaction theory which forms the basis of Kittay's view, her account is unique in that it maintains that metaphors can generate not radically new information about reality, but merely radically new *perspectives* on information or experience that is already known to us. This version of the epistemic view, I argued, allows us to move away from the question of how metaphors relate to 'reality' (a point in dispute between the illustrative thesis and other versions of the epistemic view) and so focusses our attention on a more fundamental difference between the two theses: their conflicting views on the relation between metaphors and literal language.

The important difference between the illustrative thesis and Kittay's views comes with Kittay's claim that metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable 'to the extent that the speaker has no other linguistic resources to achieve these ends'. Although Kittay speaks in general terms of 'other linguistic resources', we must specify what these could be in the case of Plato. We are obviously dealing here with the written word and in the context of the dialogues the forms this can take are twofold: literal language and myth. Since (as I showed in Chapter 6) Plato's soul myths are based around certain root metaphors, the myths cannot be regarded as an alternative linguistic resource that could replace metaphor. Thus in our debate 'other linguistic resources' can only be literal terms and so the key question for Part III emerged: do Plato's soul metaphors communicate information about the soul which cannot be communicated by means of literal language?

In Chapter 7 I examined Plato's metaphors for the soul's relationship to the body: the processes of birth and death; the superiority of the soul; the effects of the body on the soul and the ways that the soul can respond. As far as the metaphors of birth and death are concerned, I argued that in Greek terms the metaphors of the soul's entrance into the body can be reduced to the literal statement that the soul is present in the body in this life or that it is 'in human form'. Further, in our own terms, I suggested that the metaphor of life as the presence of soul 'in' a body can be reduced to literal statements such as "soul" is the name given to the essence or energy that is the source of human beings' life, movement and rationality'. The information conveyed by the metaphors of the soul as a master or ruler of the body was easily converted into literal statements such as that the soul is more powerful and of a higher status than the body. Finally I considered the role of Plato's many metaphors for the effects of the body on the soul and the soul's response, and maintained that, although the issue was a difficult one, these metaphors could be replaced by literal terms.

I interpreted the metaphors of the body's negative influence on the soul (metaphors of corruption, defilement, imprisonment etc.) as communicating the same information as literal statements that the body harms the soul by hindering its ability to reason properly. In my view these metaphors dramatise the situation where physical pleasures or pains interrupt the soul's contemplation or when the evidence of the senses convinces the soul of the reality of the phenomenal world. Following this it seemed to me that the metaphors of the soul's response could also be reduced to literal terms, for the metaphors of the soul separating, purifying and liberating itself in this life

represent the situation where the soul contemplates reality by itself and trusts only its own independent judgement.

I thus conclude that the illustrative thesis accounts for the cognitive role of Plato's metaphors for the relationship of soul and body, but I must stress that this does not mean that I see no difference between the soul metaphors of Chapter 7 and the literal statements which, I argue, convey the same information. The illustrative thesis recognises that metaphor has its own distinctive expressive capacities: that, if used effectively, it can lead a reader on to new insights; can have a very great emotive impact and can be highly persuasive. It acknowledges that by creating or highlighting similarities between two different concepts or areas of experience, metaphors can stimulate new ways of thinking. Further it recognises that the compactness of metaphorical expression, the way a great deal of information can be expressed in a single moment, further adds to metaphor's effectiveness as a means of communicating new or difficult ideas. The illustrative thesis acknowledges the great advantages of using metaphors in developing ideas, in teaching and in the exposition of theories and arguments. However, it stops short at the idea that metaphors can communicate information which literal language simply cannot. The point here is not effectiveness or impact but the cognitive *content* of a metaphor, and the illustrative thesis maintains that anything that can be said by means of metaphor can also be said by means of literal terms. Although I believe that the illustrative thesis accounts for the cognitive significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods and for the soul metaphors examined in Chapter 7, the metaphors in Chapter 8 seemed to me to break new ground.

In the first part of Chapter 8 I argued against the view that the metaphor of the soul's 'health' is cognitively irreducible. I acknowledged this metaphor's rhetorical force and its significant expository role but maintained that on Plato's theory the health metaphor can be reduced to literal statements on the proper functioning and natural arrangement of the soul's three parts. However, in the course of our study of the health metaphor, we encountered a group of metaphors which seemed to have a better claim to being an integral component in Plato's theory-building: metaphors expressing the interaction between the parts of the soul and the exercise of power in the soul.

Plato's three major models for the struggle in the soul were analysed in detail and I concluded that each model presents various images of the process whereby order is achieved among the parts of the soul, an order which consists in the control of reason over the spirited element and appetites. I then asked what kind of control this is and how exactly it is achieved, a question which led me to the following conclusions:

- i) since the soul is an incorporeal essence, all language of size, movement and physical force must be labelled metaphorical;
- ii) since the soul is that part of us which reacts emotionally and rationally to the world around us, language portraying the soul as desiring, reasoning and responding to words can be accepted as literal;
- iii) but language which portrays the parts of the soul as imposing their will and desires by means of physical or verbal force must be classed as metaphorical, since it involves the depiction of the parts of the soul as homunculi;

iv) since no-one had addressed the subjects of interaction and power relations in the soul, no terms existed for them, and so Plato turned to metaphors of human relations and dominance in order to express his new ideas in a comprehensible fashion;

and

v) the metaphors of verbal persuasion and command in the soul are theory-constitutive metaphors which cannot be replaced by literal terms.

Thus in Chapter 8 we reached a group of metaphors for the inner soul which displayed the cognitive force described by Kittay and Boyd. For Boyd argued that metaphors can 'introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed' and Kittay maintained that some metaphors are cognitively irreducible and cannot be replaced by literal terms. Although I accept Boyd's point about theory-constitutive metaphors, I am reluctant to accept other features of his account, in particular the claim that metaphors can generate radically new information about the world (see 1.2 (3)). Thus I prefer to support Kittay's version of the epistemic thesis, which claims that metaphors provide new insights not by 'positing new existents' but by forcing a 'reconceptualisation' of information or experience already available to us. On this view the metaphors for interaction and the struggle in the soul can be said to lead to a reconceptualisation of the familiar experience of a conflict of motives.

The question posed at the end of Chapter 6 ('The illustrative thesis or Kittay's version of the epistemic view?') is now answered. I have argued that the illustrative thesis accounts for the cognitive force of many of Plato's soul metaphors but that other metaphors convey information which cannot be conveyed in literal terms, and so

uphold the further claims of Kittay's epistemic view. It is important to remember that the epistemic view does not deny the claims of the illustrative thesis about the force of metaphor, but simply adds the further point that on some occasions metaphors can be cognitively irreplaceable.

In the final chapter of Part III I analysed the development and significance of one soul metaphor: spiritual pregnancy in the *Symposium*. This study showed that, as well as at the general level, Plato's soul metaphors can play important cognitive and rhetorical roles in their immediate contexts.

Plato's 'images of persons unseen' have stimulated and challenged me for some years now. The subject of Plato's use of metaphor for the gods and the soul is complex and has far-reaching implications for our understanding of the dialogues. Clearly, much remains to be said on this and on related issues, such as the role of metaphor in the theory of Forms. However, I hope that this thesis has made some contribution to the study of Plato's dialogues and to the growing body of work on metaphor's philosophical significance.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY ON METAPHOR



Works are given in chronological rather than alphabetical order so that the development of interest in metaphor and of certain approaches to metaphor can be more easily traced. Abbreviations of journal titles are listed at the start of the main bibliography (page b2).

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**APPENDIX 2**

**REFERENCE TABLES FOR METAPHORS FOR THE GODS**

## Tables:

1.	Gods as craftsmen in the <i>Timaeus</i>	a10
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The tables in Appendices 2 and 3 provide a comprehensive list of dialogue line references for individual metaphors. Asterisks indicate which metaphors have been listed and/or discussed in previous studies. The works referred to are: (Classen) C.J. Classen, 'The Creator in Greek Thought from Homer to Plato'; (Lloyd) G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*; (Louis) P. Louis, *Les Métaphores de Platon*; (Solmsen) F. Solmsen, 'Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought'; and (Marignac) A de Marignac, *Imagination et Dialectique*. The final column of each table ('Add.') lists additional references not noted by other critics.

Table 1. Gods as Craftsmen in the Timaeus  
(Use of demiourgos/demiourgein)

	Classen	Lloyd	Louis	Solmsen
29a3	*	*	*	
29a7	*	*	*	
31a4		*	*	
41a7			*	
41c5			*	
42e8			*	
47e4			*	
68e2			*	
69c4		*	*	
75b8			*	*

Table 2. General Terms for construction in the Timaeus

Greek terms	Ref.	Classen	Lloyd	Louis	Solmsen	Add.
apergazomai	29a1	*				
	30b6	*	*			
	32b5	*				
	34a5	*				
	37d1	*				
	38e4	*				
	39e1	*		*		
	39e6	*				
	40a3	*				*
	41d2					*
	42e1					*
	43a4					*
	73c2					*
	73d7					*
	73e5					*
75c1					*	
76c5	*					
poieo/empoieo	28c3	*		*		
	31b2	*				
	34a4	*				
	35b1	*				
	37d6	*				
	38c7	*				
	40a4	*				
	69b4					*
	74a5					*
	76c6	*				
91a4					*	
tektainomai/ suntektainomai	28c6	*	*	*		
	30b5			*	*	
	33b1			*	*	
	36e1			*		
	43a3			*		
	45b5			*	*	
	68e5	*			*	
	70e2			*	*	
	91a2					*

(Table 2 cont.)

mechanaomai	34c1		*			
	40c2			*		
	44e4					*
	45b6			*		
	45d8			*		
	70c4			*		
	71b3			*		
	73c2			*		
	74b4			*		
	75e1			*		
77a3			*			
sunistemi	30b5					*
	30c3					*
	30d1					*
	31b7					*
	31b8					*
	32b7					*
	32c7					*
	35a1					*
	35a5					*
	36d8					*
	41d8					*
	53b6					*
	69c1					*
	71b1					*
	71d5					*
	73e1					*
	75a6					*
76e1					*	
78c1					*	
91a3					*	

Table 3. Particular skills exercised by the Craftsmen-gods in the Timaeus

Skill	Ref.	Classen	Lloyd	Louis	Solmsen	Add.
weaving	36e2 41d2 72c7 77e1 78b5 78b7 78c1 78d5		* *  * * * * *	*		
modelling	39e7 42d6 53b4 74a2 73c8 74a2 74c6 78c3 92b3		* * * *  * * * *	   * * * *	   *  *	
carpentry	33b5 69c6 73e7 76b1 91a6		* * * * *	* * *	* * *	
welding/ glueing	43a2 43a3 75d2		* * *	* *	* *	
(painting)	(53c6)		*			

Table 3 (cont.)

building/ allocating houses	69c8 69e2 69e6 70a1 70a3 70b2 70e2 70e7 71b1 71d2				*	*	*		*	*	*
planting/ sowing	41c8 41e4 42a3 42d4 42d6 70c5 73c1 73c3 73c7 77a5 77c6 80e1 90a6	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
irrigation	70d2 77c7 77c8 77c9 77d1 77d6 77e7 79a2 79a3 80d7 81a1 81b4 81c5		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Table 4. Craft-related activities in the Timaeus

Activity	Ref.	Lloyd	Solmsen	Add.
fastening	32b1			*
	32c4			*
	37a4			*
	43a5			*
	43d2			*
	43d6			*
	43d7			*
	44d5		*	
	45a7			*
	45b4		*	
	69e4		*	
	70e2			*
	73c3		*	
74b5		*		
mixing	35a3			*
	35a7			*
	37a3			*
	41d5			*
	69d5			*
	73c1		*	
	74c7		*	
	74d3		*	
77a5			*	
joining	35a8			*
	36c1			*
	36e1			*
	56c7			*
cutting/ dividing	36a2			*
	36b6			*
	36b7			*
	36d2			*
	77d2			*
	78c6			*
stuffing	74a5		*	
	74e2		*	
filling	36a1			*
	36b1			*
fermenting	74c-d	*		
felting	45b8		*	
winding	73a3		*	
bending	36b8			*
pouring	41d6			*
spreading	78c2			*
twisting	43e1			*
kneading	73e1	*		



Table 6. God as father

Reference	Classen	Lloyd	Louis
Polit. 273b2	*	*	*
Tim. 28c2	*		*
37c7	*	*	*
41a7	*		*
42e7	*		*
71d5	*		*

Table 7. The creation of god as his child

creation	Reference	Classen	Lloyd	Louis	Add.
universe	Polit. 269d9		*	*	
	273b2	*	*	*	
	Tim. 32c1	*		*	
	34a7	*		*	
	34b9			*	
	37a2	*		*	
	37c7	*	*	*	
	37d4	*			
	38b6	*			
	38c4	*			
38e5	*				
39d7	*	*	*		
68e4	*		*		
lesser gods	(Rep. 391d)			*	
	Tim. 41a5	*		*	
	41a6	*		*	
	42e6			*	
	69c4	*			
man	Tim. 24d5			*	
	41d2				*

Table 8. Gods as kings

Reference.	Classen	Marignac	Lloyd	Louis	Add.
Polit.276a6					*
Phil. 28c7 30d1 30d2	* * *		* * *	* * *	
Crit. 121b8				*	
Laws 904a6		*	*		

Table 9. gods as rulers, governors, guardians, masters

Reference	Classen	Marignac	Lloyd	Louis	Add.
Phdo. 62b4 62b7 62b8 62d2 62d3 62d4 62d6 63a9 63c2 85b5		* * * * * * * *		* * * * * * * *	
Phdr. 273e- 274a				*	
Polit. 269c5 269e6 271d3 271d4 272e7 273a1 274b6	*   * *		* *	* *	*
Alc. 124c		*			
Tim. 42d1 42e2			* *		
Crit. 109c6					*
Laws 902b8 903b5 903e3 904a4 905e1 905e2 905e5		* * *		* *	* *

Table 10. Gods as shepherds

Reference	Marignac	Louis
Phdo. 62b-d 62d-63a	*	*
Polit. 271d6 271e1 271e3 271e5 274b5 275a1 275c1 276d5		*
Crit. 109b6 b7 c1	*	*
Laws 906a2 906b5 906d2 906d3 906e11	*	*

Table 11. Gods as helmsmen

Reference	Marignac	Lloyd	Louis
Symp. 197b2 187a1 197e1			*
Polit. 272e4 273c3 273e1	*	*	*
Phil. 28d9			*
Tim. 42e3			*
Crit. 109c1 109c3	*		*
Laws 709b8 709c2 905e8 906e1	*		*

**APPENDIX 3**

**REFERENCE TABLES FOR METAPHORS FOR THE SOUL**

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Table 1 (cont.). The Soul as a Traveller

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
Journeying	Rep. 331b3; 386d9; 387a2; 519c6; 540b7; 614b9, c1 c5 c7, d5 d6 d7, e1 e2 e3 e5 615a2; 616a7, b2 b6 b7; 617d2; 619a1, c6, e4; 620d7, e2 e5; 621a1 a2, b2	*  * *	* *  * * * * *
	Symp. 179c7;		*
	Phdr. 246b7, c1; 247b1 b2 b7, c1, e3 248a3 a8, b5, c3, e6 249a4 a7 a8, b2 b4, c2; 256d6 d7 d8, e1; 257a2;	*	* * * * *
	Crat. 403b6, c6; 412a2 a7;	* *	
	Menex. 236d5	*	
	Tim. 42b4; 44c4;	*	*
	Laws 904c10, d1, e1 e7; 905b1; 923b7; 959b4, c6	* *  *	*  *

Table 1 (cont.). The Soul as a Traveller

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
Wandering	Hipp.I 304c2		*	
	Hipp.II 372d8; 376c2 c3 c4 c6;		* *	
	Alc. 112d8; 117a10 a11, b3, c3 c7, d1 d4; 118a13 a15;		* * *	*
	Prot. 356d			*
	Phdo. 79c7, d5; 81a6, d8 d9; 108c1	* *	*	*
	Rep. 444b7; (479d9;) 484b6; (485b2;) 505c7; 586a3;		* * *	* * *
	(Phdr.) (263b5 b9;)		*	
	Soph. 230b5; 245e5		* *	
	Tim. 47c3 c4; 91c4;			* *
	(Laws) (655c2, d3;)		*	

Table 1 (cont.). The Soul as a Traveller

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
In Temporary/ Permanent Home	Apol. 40c8, e4; 41a5;	*	
	Crito 54a9;		*
	Gorg. 523b1	*	
	Phdo. 61e1 e2; 67c1 c9; 69c7; 108c3 c5; 114c1 c2 c4; 117c2;	*	*
	Rep. 519c6		*
	Phdr. 246c3		*
	Tim. 42b4; 69c8, d7, e1 e2 e6; 70a3, b2, e2 e7; 71b1, d2; 90a4, c5;		*
			*
			*
Laws 904e2		*	

Table 2: The Soul as a Prisoner/Bound in the Body

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
Prisoner/ Bound in the body	Gorg. 523b3; 524b3 b4; 525a7, c7;		* * *
	Phdo. 64c5 c6 c7; 65a1; 67a7, d1 d4 d9; 68a3; 70a2; 81e2; 82d6, e2 e3 e5 e6; 83a1 a3, b5 d1 d4 d5; 84a3 a4, a5, b6; 92a1; 107c6 c8; 114b8;	* *  * * * * * *	*  * *
	Crat. 400c5 c6 c7; 404a3 a6; 415c3 c4	* * *	
	Phdr. 250c6	*	
	(Polit. 309c2;)		*
	Tim. 37a5; 44b1; 69e4; 70e2; 73b3 b4; c2, d5 d6; 81d6 d7; 85e6 e7;	*   * * *	* * *
Internal Bonds	Tim. 36a7; 37a4; 43a2 a3, d6 d7;		* * *

Table 3. The Soul as a Lover

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Add.
Lover	Phdo. 108b1	*
	Rep. 490b2 b3 b4 b5; 611e1 e2;	* *
	Symp. 209c1; 212a4 a5;	* *
	(Phdr. 249a2)	*

Table 4. The Soul as a Pregnant Woman/Parent

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.	
midwifery	Theaet. 149a2 a4, b4 b6 b7 b10, c1 c2 c6 c9, d1 d2 d3 d6 d7 d8 e1 e6; 150a2 a5 a8 a9; b1 b2 b3 b6 b7 b8 c4 c7, d8, e5; 151a8, b1 b3, c1; 157c9; 160e3; 184b1; 210b8, c4 c6;		*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
childbirth	Rep. 490b5 b7	*		
		Symp. 206b7, c1 c3 c4 c6 c7 c8, d3 d4 d5 d6 d7 d8, e1 e5 e7 e8; 208e2; 209a1 a2 a3 a4, b1 b2 b3 b4 b5, c2 c3, e2; 210a7; 212a3 a5 a6	*	*
			*	*
			*	*
			*	*
			*	*

Table 4 (cont.). The Soul as a Pregnant Woman/Parent

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
childbirth	Theaet. 148e6 e7;	*	
	150b8, c2 c4 c8, d8,	*	
	e4;	*	
	151a6 a8, b2 b8, c4	*	
	c7, e6;	*	
	157c8, d1;	*	
	160e5 e6;	*	
	161a1 a4;	*	
	184b1;	*	
	210b4 b5 b9 b11, c1	*	
c2;	*		
offspring	Rep. 603b4;		*
	Symp. 209c4 c8, d2 d5, e4;	*	
	Phdr. 257a1, d5;		*
	Theaet. 150d2, e5;	*	
	151c5 c7;	*	
160e3 e6 e8;	*		
161a2 a3 a4;	*		
164e2 e3	*		
Soph. 259d			*
discourse as child	Symp. 177d5;	*	
	210a7, c1, d5;	*	
	Phdr. 242b1 b4;	*	
257b2, d6, e3;	*		
261a3;	*		
275e4;	*		
276a1 a3;	*		
278a6 a7, b1 b2;	*		
Theaet. 164e2 e3	*		

Table 5. Soul as a Ruler/Master

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
ruler	Rep. 353d5, e4;	*	
ruler of the body	Clit. 407e7		*
	Alc. I 130a3		*
	Gorg. 465d1		*
	Phdo. 80a1 a2 a4 a5; 94b5;	*	*
	Tim. 34c1 c5;	*	
	Laws 896c2;		*
ruler of the universe	Phdr. 246b6, c2;		*
	Crat. 400a9		*
	Phil. 30c5		*
	Laws 896d10, e2; 897b7, c7 c8;		* *
master of the body	Phdo. 80a1 a2 a5;	*	
	Tim. 34c5	*	
	Laws 726a4 a5 a6; 727a1	*	*

Table 6. Soul as Other Human Beings

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
weaver	Phdo. 87b6 b7 b8, c2 c8 c9, d1 d2 d8, e1 e2;	*	*	
child with toothache	Phdr. 251c1 c2 c3 c4 c5;			*
(sea-god Glaucus	Rep. (611d1 d2 d3 d4 d5 d6, e5; 612a1 a2)	*	*	*

Table 7. Soul with human behaviour/experiences etc.

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
talking to self	Theaet. 189e6 e7 e8; 190a1 a2 a3 a4 a5 a6; 196a5, b5;			*
drunk	Phdo. 79c8;	*		
with human character	Rep. 410d7 d8, e10; 411a3, b4 b7 b8; 535b7;			*
	Phdr. 251d8;			*
	Tim. 86d1;			*
human emotions: anguish	Phdr. 251c8, d5 d6 d7, e1 e4 e5; 252b1		*	*

Table 7 (cont.). Soul with human behaviour/experiences etc.

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
joy	Rep. 614e2; 616a7;		* *
	Phdr. 251d1 d7, e5; 252a1		* *
	Tim. 81d7		*
naked/ clothed by body	Charm. 154e5		*
	Gorg. 524d5	*	
	Crat. 403b5	*	
	Laws 899a2	*	
carried by body	Tim. 44e2; 69c7	* *	
burdened by body	Phdo. 81c10	*	
	Rep. 519b1	*	
	Phdr. 248c7; 256b4	* *	
entombed by body	Gorg. 493a3	*	
	Crat. 400c1	*	
numb	Meno 80b1	*	
dizzy	Phdo. 79c7	*	

Group B : The Soul as a Human Body

Table 1. Vision

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
faculty of sight	Gorg. 524e3			*
	Meno 81c6		*	
	Phdo. 82e3; 83b4; 99e2 e3;		*	* *
	Rep. 411d4; 508d4 d8; 511a1; 518a4 a8, c1 c4 c5 c6 c7 c8 c9 c10, d5 d6; 519a2 a4 a5, b3; 526e4; 527e1; 529a2 a7, b4, c2; 533d2; 540a7 a8; 614d3; 615a2, a4; d3 d4 d6; 616b4 b7;	*  * *	*  * * * * * * *	*  *       * * * *
	Symp. 219a3		*	
	Phdr. 247c1 c7, d3 d4 d5 d6 e3; 248a4 a6, b6, c3 c6, d2; 249b6, c3, d5 d7, e5; 250a2 a4 a6, b5 b6 b8,d2 d3; 251a2, c6, e2 e3; 253e5; 254b4	* *	*  * * *    *	       * * * *
	Parm. 132a7		*	
	Theaet. 185e2 e7			*
	Soph. 254a10		*	*

Table 1 (cont.). Vision

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
sight/thought theoreo	Gorg. 523e3 e4;			*
	Phdo. 66e1; 84b1;			* *
	Rep. 525a1; 526e6;		* *	
kathorao	Phdo. 66d7			*
	Rep. 518a5; 616b4;	*	*	*
skopeco	Phdo. 83b2			*
	Theaet. 185e2, e7			*

Table 2. Nourishment

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
Nourishment	Prot. 313c5 c6 (c9, d1 d2); 314a2 a3 a4 a5 a7); 314b1 b2 b3;	* * * *		
	Phdo. 84b1			*
	Rep. 401b8 c1 c2 c3, e5; 411d2 d5; 585b3 b6 b9; 588e5; 589a1; 605b4; 612a1	* * * * *	*	* *
	Phdr. 246e2; 247d2 d4, e3 e5 e6; 248b5 b7, c1 c2; 251b5	* * * *		
	Soph. 223e2 e5; 224a2 a5 a6 a7, b4, d1; 231d5			* * * *
	Laws 832a5	*	*	
trophe etc.	Prot. (351b2)		*	
	Gorg. 525a3			*
	Phdo. 84b4; 107d4;			* *
	Rep. 401e1 e3 e5; 402a4 a6; 410d7, e3; 441a3; 442a1 a4; 491e5; 589b6;		* * * * * *	
	Laws 788a, c7; 874d2		* *	





Table 4. Purification

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
Purification	Phdo. (67a5 a7, b1 b2, c3); (69c1 c2 c6); 80d6, e2; 81b1, c1; 82c1, d6; 83d9; 108b4, c3; 113d7; 114c1 c3;	* * * * * * *	*   * * *
	Rep. 527d8; 560d8; 611c3; 614d6 d7, e1; 621c2		* * * * *
	Phdr. 250c4 c5		*
	Crat. 404a1; 405a7, b1 b2 b3 b6 b7 b9, c1		* * *
	Soph. 227a3 c8, d10; 230c4, d3 d7, e1 e2; 231b2, e6;	*	* * *
	Tim. 92b4		*
	Laws 716e2 e3; (735b3 b4, c2 c3); 735c7, d1 d2 d5 d7, e5; 736a6, b2		* * * * *

Table 5. Beauty/Ugliness

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
beauty	Rep. 444e1; 611c4;			* *
	Laws 788c7			*
adornment	Gorg. (523e)			*
	Phdo. 114e4 e5;	*	*	
ugliness	Gorg. 525a5			*
	Rep. 444e1			*
	Soph. 228d4; 229a1; 230e2;			* * *
	Laws (646b10)	*		

Table 6. Other Human Body Metaphors

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis
sinews	Rep. 411b3		*
(heart)	(Theaet. 194e1)	*	



Group C (cont ) : The Soul as an Animal etc.

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
oyster	Phdr. 250c6	*	*	
pig	Rep. 535e4-5		*	
mythological monster (man/lion/ many-headed beast)	Rep. 588c2 c3 c7	*	*	
	c8 c9, d3 d4	*	*	
	d7 d8 d10,	*	*	
	d11, e5 e6;	*	*	
	589a1 a2 a3 a4	*	*	
	a7, b1 b2 b3	*	*	
	b4 b5 b6, c8,	*	*	
	d1 d3;	*	*	
	590a6 a7 a9, b1	*	*	
	b6 b7 b8 b9,	*	*	
c4 c5;	*	*		
591b2 b3	*	*		
	(Phdr. 230a3)			*
wild beast	Rep. 571c5; (611d5)		*	*
	Tim. 70e2 e3 e4 e6	*	*	
	Laws 935a6		*	

Group D : The Soul as a Plant

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
planted in the body	Phdo. 83e1		*	
	Phdr. 248d1	*	*	
	Tim. 41c8, e4; 42a1 a3, d4 d6; 73b4, c1 c3 c7; 74a4, b3; 90a6 a8; 91b1;		*	*
nurtured as a plant	(Euthyd. 2d)		*	
	Rep. (492a4;) 550b1 b2; 606d4 d5;		*	
	Phdr. 251b3 b5 b6, c8, d1 d2; 255d1;			*
	Polit. 272e2			*
	(Tim. 87b5)			*

Group E : Soul as an Inanimate Object

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
sieve/ leaky jar	Gorg. 493a7, b3 b6 b7, c1 c2 d8, e1 e2 e4 e8; 494a1 a6, b1;		*	
book	Phdr. 276a5; 278a3;			*
	Phil. 38e12; 39a3 a6 a7, b6; 39d7; 40b2;		*	*
artists' canvas	Phil. 39b3 b6 b7, c1 c4, d7;			*
wax tablet (in soul)	Theaet. 191c8 c9 c10, d1 d6 d7 d8 d9, e1; 192a4 a6, b3 b4; 193b10, c1 c3 c6; 194a2 a6, b5, c5 c6 c7 c8, d1 d4 d5 d6, e1 e2 e3 e4 e5 e6 e7; 195a1 a2a3 a4; 196a3 b5; 197d4; 200c1;	*	*	
craftsman's material	Rep. 377c2; 411a10, b1; 519a9;		*	*
	Polit. 308d6 d7 e2 e7; 309b3 b5 b7, c2, e10; 310a4 a7, b3, e5 e6 e9; 311a, b7, c2 c4 c5;			*
	Tim. 35a1 a3 a5 a6 a7 a8 b1 b2 b3; 36a1 a2, b1 b5 b6 b7 b8, c1 c2 c4 c6 d2 d8 d9 e2; 41d1-2 d4 d5 d6 d7 d8;	*		*
	Laws 671b9, c2		*	

Group E (cont.) : Soul as an Inanimate Object

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Louis	Add.
vessel	Rep. 411a6		*
	Tim. 44a6		*
ship	Phdr. 247c7	*	
	Tim. 73d5; 85e6		* *
vehicle for body	Crat. 400a6	*	
	Laws 898e10	*	



Table 1 (cont.). The Soul as a State

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
slaves/ subject	Rep. 441a2, e6; 442b1; 444b5; 553d2; 561c3; 574d7; 577d2 d3 d4 d9 d10; 586e4 589d3 d7, e5; 590a6, c5 c9, d2, e3; 591b3;	* * *	* * * * *	* *
	Phdr. 238e3; 256b2 b3;		* *	
civil war	Rep. 440 a5 b3, e5; 441e6; 442d1; 444b1 b3; 559e4 e5 e6 e9 e10; 560a1 a2 a4 a5 a6 a9, b7 b8, c2 c3 c6 c7 c8 c9, d1 d2 d3 d4 d6 d8, e1 e3 e4; 561b1 b2; 586e5; 589b1;	* * * * * * * * * * * *	* * * * * * * * * *	* *
	Phdr. 237e1		*	
city	Rep. 560b8, d8; 575a3; 577d1; 580d3; 590e4; 605b5 b6;	* * *	* *	* * *
	Tim. 70a6		*	*
political con- stitution in soul	Rep. 561b3; 574e1 e2; 575a1; 590e4; 591a1, e1; 605b5 b6 b7 b8; 608b1	* * *	* * *	* * *

Table 2. The Soul as an Aviary

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
aviary	Theaet. 197c2 c3 c4 c5 c7 c8 c9 d1 d2 d6 d7 d8 e3 e4; 198a2 a7, b6, d1 d2; d4, d7; 199b2 b3 b5 b7, e1 e3 e4; 200a1 a8, c1 c2	*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	*

Group G : Others

Metaphor	Dialogue Reference	Marignac	Louis	Add.
soil	Phdr. 276b2 b3 b4 b5 b6 b7 b8, c4 c5 c8, d1 d4 d5; 277a1;		*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
stream	Rep. 485 d8 d10		*	
fire in soul	Rep. 411c1		*	
	Laws 666a5; 671b9;		*	
			*	
harmony	Phdo. 85e3 e4 e5; 86a1 a2 a4 a6 a7 a8, b3 b4 b9, c3 c6; 91d9; 92a7 a8, b1 b7 b8, c1 c2 c6 c10, e3 e4; 93a6 a8 a11 a12 a14, b1, c3 c5 c6 c7, d4 d6 d7 d9 d10, e2 e4 e5 e8 e9; 94a2 a3, b1, c4, e2 e6; 95a1 a8;	*	*	
		*	*	
		*	*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
			*	
musical notes	Rep. 443d5 d6 d7;		*	
circles/ circuits in soul	Tim. 36c1 c3 c4 c6, d2; 37a5, b7, c1; 43a5, d1, e2 e9; 44a4, b2 b5, d3; 47b8, d3 d5; 76a7; 90d2			*
				*
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Abbreviations:

AGP	<i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AP	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
APA	<i>American Philological Association</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CW	<i>Classical Weekly</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
JHI	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JHP	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
PPR	<i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i>
PQ	<i>Philosophical Quarterly</i>
PR	<i>Philosophical Review</i>
RM	<i>Review of Metaphysics</i>

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