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A Lively Afterlife and Beyond: The Soul in Plato, Homer, and the Orphica

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παρωδεῖ γὰρ πανταχοῦ τὰ Ὀρφέως. Plato borrows everywhere from Orpheus.
(Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phd.* 7.10.10)

- 1 So claims the sixth century NeoPlatonist, Olympiodorus, attributing Plato's ideas of the soul and its nature in the *Phaedo* to the mysterious ancient singer Orpheus. Later scholars have been inclined to follow Olympiodorus in attributing many of Plato's ideas about the soul to Orpheus, or rather to 'the Orphics' or 'Orphism', a variously defined religious current linked to the poems of the mythic poet Orpheus. Too often, Plato's philosophic innovations are explained away by tracing the ideas back to 'Orphism', but this search for sources, which served Olympiodorus and the other NeoPlatonists to bolster the authority of Plato and the ancient pagan tradition against the advancing tide of Christianity, obscures the subtle work of Plato in manipulating the mythological and philosophic tradition of which he was a part.
- 2 Here I want to argue that many of the ideas which Plato is supposed to have drawn from Orphism come not from the Orphica, but from the broader mythological tradition. Even those elements which Plato did draw from the Orphica or similar sources, however, he transformed in significant ways to suit his philosophical purposes in the particular dialogue. I shall first examine the idea of a lively afterlife, arguing that, while this vision differs from that of Homer, a differentiated afterlife with judgement, complex geography, and rewards and punishments was nevertheless a widespread and generally accepted idea, which Plato manipulates in various ways in different dialogues. By contrast, other ideas of the relation of the soul to the body, such as the soul entombed in the body or the process of reincarnation, appear marked, in the evidence of Plato and others, as extra-ordinary and unfamiliar ideas, which Plato again transposes to fit his arguments in the dialogue.

The Lively Afterlife

- 3 To assess the idea that Plato borrows from Orpheus, we must understand what was Orphic in antiquity. The category of Orphism is often defined in modern scholarship precisely by the presence of certain kinds of ideas about the afterlife, the nature and fate of the soul. Orphic ideas of the soul and afterlife are most often defined by explicit contrast with the Homeric view of the afterlife, which is taken as the standard view for ancient Greek culture. As Parker puts it, "Orphic poetry can almost be defined as eschatological poetry, and it was in such poems perhaps that 'persuasive' accounts of the afterlife – accounts designed, unlike that in *Odyssey* xi, to influence the hearer's

behaviour in the here and now – were powerfully presented for the first time.”¹ I argue that such an approach provides a misleading picture not only of Orphic ideas of afterlife, but even of the normative ideas in ancient Greek culture about the nature and fate of the soul, in life and afterwards. We cannot understand what Plato is doing with the mythological tradition unless we properly understand the place of those ideas within it. The ideas in Homeric poetry that are usually taken to be standard in fact represent a special perspective that stresses the power of poetry to provide immortality, while the range of ideas that are actually marked in the ancient evidence as extraordinary or linked with Orpheus and his ilk is much smaller. The persistence of the soul and the lively afterlife are not the exclusive province of Orphism but rather the normal and most widely accepted ideas in the tradition. Only a limited range of ideas about the relation of the soul to the body seem consistently to be labeled, in some way or other, as Orphic in the evidence.

Redefining Ancient Orphism

- 4 In my current work, I am seeking to redefine ancient Orphism, that is, to come up with a way of defining the category of things the ancient Greeks would have labeled Orphic.² In my process of re-definition, I start with Linforth’s single criterion of the name of Orpheus to delineate evidence labeled as Orphic by the ancient witnesses, but I derive from this class of explicitly labeled evidence a set of criteria that characterize the material in different ways as extra-ordinary religious phenomena. I suggest that Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘family resemblances’ permits us to construct a polythetic definition in which evidence characterized by any of several criteria may be labeled Orphic. In this polythetic definition, there is no single feature, be it the name of Orpheus or some particular doctrine of the soul, that makes something Orphic. Rather, if something - person, text, or ritual - boasted of extra-ordinary purity or sanctity, made a claim to special divine connection or extreme antiquity, or was marked by extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature, then that thing *might* be labeled Orphic, classified with other Orphic things, and perhaps even sealed with the name of Orpheus. This polythetic definition permits us to include even material that is not sealed with the name of Orpheus but is classified as extra-ordinary in the same ways that other evidence that does bear Orpheus’ name.
- 5 Whereas modern scholars have tended to make such attributions on the basis of supposed Orphic doctrines, the ancients made no such doctrinal classifications. Rather, the ancient label “Orphic” was more like the contemporary term “new age”, which is associated, not specifically with particular religious ideas or organizations, but more vaguely with a set of ideas loosely defined by their distance from mainstream religious activity. Like “new age”, the association with Orpheus can be positive, indicating special inspiration that goes beyond the ordinary, but often is negative, implying a holier-than-thou attitude that is either ludicrous or hypocritical. Whether something is

¹ Parker 1995, p. 500. Not only does such a claim ignore the mass of Orphic material on other subjects (which indeed Parker mentions elsewhere in his discussion), but it suggests that the Homeric nekyia had no effect on the behavior of its audiences. Any traditional tale, particularly so influential a myth as the Odyssey nekyia, provides for its audience a model of the world and for behavior within it. See Edmonds 2004, pp. 4-13.

² See especially Edmonds 2008a, 2008b, and 2013 (from which some of the foregoing is drawn).

labeled as Orphic depends, in the ancient evidence, not on the presence of particular mythic motifs or religious doctrines, but upon the act of classification by a particular classifier in a specific context ; it is, therefore, always a polemical definition, not a disinterested one.

- 6 By contrast, scholars over the past century and a half have put forth various lists of Orphic doctrines in their attempts to define Orphism by its doctrines. Bernabé has recently listed the central points of Orphic doctrine that have met with (more or less) general agreement : a belief in a soul-body dualism, an idea of an original sin (or *peché antécédent*) from which purification can be sought to attain salvation, and the idea of a cycle of reincarnations over which this process occurs.³ I argue, to the contrary, that the dualism of the soul and body is an idea found throughout the tradition, whereas reincarnation is only found occasionally in texts labeled Orphic (even in its broadest sense) and cannot be read back into other texts. While a number of Orphic texts do emphasize the idea of purification, the idea of an Orphic doctrine of an inherited original sin is a modern fabrication, and the idea of obtaining a favorable afterlife (salvation) is not in itself an idea restricted to Orphism. The attempt to define Orphism by these doctrines includes in the category evidence that was never regarded as Orphic by the ancients themselves, as well as attributing all of these doctrines to evidence that displays only some or none of these ideas.
- 7 The supposed centrality of these doctrines concerning the soul to Orphism accounts in large part for the interest that Orphism has aroused over the last century and a half, since scholars regarded Orphism as the channel through which the idea of the immortality of the soul, as well as the idea of sin and salvation, entered Western philosophic and religious tradition – primarily through the works of Plato.⁴ The contrast between the idea of mere persistence of souls beyond physical death and a true and authentic idea of immortality of the soul, has been seen as the contrast between the dreary Homeric afterlife, where everyone shares the same bleak fate, and the other

3 “El creyente órfico busca la salvación individual, dentro de un marco de referencia en que son puntos centrales : el dualismo alma-cuerpo, la existencia de un pecado antecedente, y el ciclo de transmigraciones, hasta que el alma consigue unirse con la divinidad.” Bernabé 1998a, p. 172 ; cp. Bernabé 1997, p. 39 ; Bernabé 2002b, pp. 208-9 ; Bernabé 2011, pp. 11-14, 254-256. In his important edition of the fragments (Bernabé 2004 *Poetae Epici Graecae II.2* : 224), he claims, “Orphici agebant vitam religiosam, quem initiati in ritu privato adipiscebantur ; habebant libros tradentes et servantes doctrinam Orpheo adscriptos ; credebant animam immortalem esse, sed culpam vetustam quae hereditas a Titanibus devenit, sibi expiandam esse ritus certos celebrando, praecepta instituta quaedam observando ; credebant quoque animas suas in nova corpora transituras esse antequam corpore liberatae aeternam vitam beatam ad inferos consequi possent.” Guthrie 1952, p. 73, puts the same ideas in less guarded terms : “The Orphic doctrines included a belief in original sin, based on a legend about the origin of mankind, in the emphatic separation of soul from body, and in a life hereafter.”

4 “It was the Orphic Mysteries,” proclaims Smyth, “that gave birth to the most profound ideas of Greek religion - the divine origin of the soul, its eternal nature, and personal immortality.” Smyth 1912, p. 274. Cp., Moore 1912, pp. 113-114, “Whatever extravagances Orphism fell to, it must be kept in mind that it had introduced into the European world certain doctrines pregnant with spiritual fruit. ... It remained for Plato to bring the Orphic seed to fruit by giving an intellectual basis to the doctrine of the divine nature of the soul, which he thus raised out of the plane of mere emotional belief.” Dieterich’s influential *Nekyia* seeks to trace the Christian imagery of Hell back to Orphic sources, while Macchiore’s *Orpheus to Paul* derives the theology of St. Paul from Orphic beliefs. Dieterich 1893 ; Macchiore 1930.

visions of a more lively afterlife, with different fates for different folks.⁵ In his fundamental study of the issue, Rohde argues for the evolution of a real idea of the immortality of the soul coming from new ideas of the soul and of afterlife that arise out of the Dionysiac invasion and the Orphic reform.⁶ Hence, by this argument, the Orphics are responsible for the entry into Greek religion of a real concept of the immortality of the soul, and the appearance of such ideas in other texts can be attributed to the influence of the Orphics.⁷

- 8 Even though the historical premises of Rohde's argument have long since been rejected, the relation of the Homeric ideas of afterlife to the Orphic is still relentlessly depicted in terms of a chronological development.⁸ Other views are presented as later developments, starting with the Archaic period - or rather with the elements in Homer (and Hesiod) that seem to clash with the ideas that are presumed to be "earliest".⁹ Despite the notorious problems of dating the Homeric epics or even various elements within them, scholars have put forth a circular argument : the earliest material can be identified as the truly Homeric idea of afterlife, while the later material can be identified as such because it conflicts with the truly Homeric version, which is the earlier. The problem, I suggest, lies in the confusion of the world *in* the Homeric poems with the world *of* the Homeric poems, that is, the world of their audience. The ideology of death and afterlife expressed in the Homeric poems does not necessarily correspond to the ideas that were generally accepted by the audiences of the Homeric poems over the

5 Rohde 1925, p. 9, complains, "To speak of an 'immortal life' of these souls, as scholars both ancient and modern have done, is incorrect. They can hardly be said to *live* even, any more than the image does that is reflected in the mirror ; and that they prolong to eternity their shadowy image-existence - where in Homer do we ever find this said ?"

6 For Rohde, drawing upon the ideas of his friend Nietzsche, Dionysiac ecstasy provided the worshipper with a mystic identification with the deity, a feeling of immortal life, but it was only the rationalizing (Apolline) ideas of the Orphics that shaped this primitive feeling into a real doctrine. "Reflexion upon the nature of the world and of God, the changing and deceptive flow of appearance with the indestructible One Reality behind it ; the conception of a divinity that is One, a single light that, divided into a thousand rays and reflected from everything that is, achieves its unity again in the soul of man : such thoughts as these, allied to the dim half-conscious impulse of an enthusiastic dance-worship, might allow the pure waters of the stream of mysticism to run clear at last, freed from the turbid and unsatisfying enthusiasm of popular religious practices." (Rohde 1925, p. 266)

7 Cp. Lucas 1946, p. 67. "The modern reader, baffled and dismayed by the apparent crudity of much of conventional Greek religion, is inclined to look everywhere for signs of Orphism, because it gives more of what he has come to expect from religion, and he is loath to believe that the Greeks did not demand it too."

8 Thus, for example, despite her caveats, Johnston's recent survey of Greek beliefs of death and afterlife takes the lifeless afterlife in Homer as primary in both time and importance. "In earliest times, the Greeks apparently believed that everyone got the same deal after death... The souls existed in a state that was not unpleasant but not particularly enjoyable." (Johnston 2004, p. 486.)

9 Cp. Albinus 2000, p. 16. "The Archaic attitude towards death was confined to remembrance and adoration of the dead through hero-cult and epic song. Under the sway of Homeric discourse, the fate of mortals was regarded, with only a few exceptions, as a departure for the House of Hades, inhabited by the ghost-like images of former lives. However, a specific interest in the *hereafter*, representing a continuation of individual existence in its own right, developed from the Archaic to Classical times, much under the influence of Orphic discourse, and accompanied by extensive changes in social life." Likewise, Bernabé 2011, p. 157. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 links the shift in attitudes to death and afterlife to the rise of the city-state and sees the role of Orphic sectaries merely as developing the most extreme form of the ideas.

years in which the poems were being composed and performed.¹⁰ Rather, the poems articulate their own ideology of death and afterlife that resonates with the ideas of heroic glory and the poetic celebration thereof within the poems. Scholars have mistaken the special ideology within the poems for the ideas of death and afterlife of the audience outside the poems, thus misunderstanding both the way the ideas and images of afterlife are used both in Homer and in later authors such as Plato.

The Homeric Afterlife

- 9 The Homeric epics present a mixed picture of what happens to an individual after death, but scholars have focused on one element in that picture as the standard view of the afterlife, not just in Homer but in Greek religion more broadly. This supposedly standard view is that the souls of the dead lack all mind or force ; once a hero leaves the light of the sun, only a grim, joyless and tedious existence awaits, with no particular suffering but no pleasure either. Such a view is supported by a few key passages in the epics : the meeting of Achilles with the shade of Patroklos in the *Iliad*, the meeting of Odysseus with his mother in the Underworld in the *Odyssey*.¹¹ This bleak vision of death and afterlife is fundamental to the Homeric idea of the hero's choice - only in life is there any meaningful existence, so the hero is the one who, like Achilles, chooses to do glorious deeds. Since death is inevitable, Sarpedon points out, the hero should not try to avoid it but go out into the front of battle and win honor and glory.¹² Such glory

¹⁰ *pace* Rohde 1925, p. 26. "If the Homeric creed had not been so constructed in essentials that it corresponded to the beliefs of the time, or, at least, could be made to correspond, then it is impossible to account (even allowing for the poetic tradition of a school) for the uniformity that marks the work of the many poets that had a hand in the composition of the two poems. In this narrow sense it can be truly said that Homer's poems represent the popular belief of the time." Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 has a far more nuanced model, but she still assumes that the Homeric poems represent the earliest stage of a development of ideas.

¹¹ The shade of Patroklos refers to the other ghosts as ψυχαὶ εἴδωλα καμόντων - souls, phantoms of the worn out (*Iliad* 23.72), and Achilles encapsulates this view after his dream vision of Patroklos (*Iliad* 23.103-4) : "Ah me ! So even in the house of Hades there is something, a soul and a phantom, but the wits are not there at all." ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι ψυχὴ καὶ εἴδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἐνὶ πάμπαν. Whatever it is (τις) that survives lacks φρένες, the force of mind or emotion that is an essential element of the living individual. Achilles' lament at the condition of the soul of the deceased comes after he has attempted to embrace the shade of his dearly departed companion, and the same pathetic scene produces the same idea when Odysseus tries to embrace the shade of his mother in the underworld. She tells him that she is not a trick or false image, but this is the appointed way with mortals when one dies. For the sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these, as soon as the life leaves the white bones, and the spirit, like a dream, flits away, and hovers to and fro." *Odyssey* 11.218-222. ἀλλ' αὕτη δίκη ἐστὶ βροτῶν, ὅτε τίς κε θάνησιν. | οὐ γὰρ ἔτι σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα ἴνες ἔχουσιν, | ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τε πυρὸς κρατερὸν μένος αἰθομένοιο | δαμνᾷ, ἐπεὶ κε πρῶτα λίπη λεύκ' ὀστέα θυμός, | ψυχὴ δ' ἠΰτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται. Rohde and others have taken this statement to imply that it is the process of cremation that removes the φρένες and θυμός from the soul that goes to Hades, but see below. (For differing approaches to the components of the Homeric self, see for example Claus 1981 or Clarke 1999, p. 42-47.) This idea is reinforced in the *Odyssey* when Circe describes Tiresias as the only shade in the underworld who has retained his mind (νόον) ; all the rest are mere gibbering ghosts. τοῦ τε φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι· τῶ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνηα, οἶω πεπνῦσθαι, τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ αἰσσοῦσιν. (*Odyssey* 10. 493-5)

¹² Homer *Iliad* 12.322-8. ὦ πέπον εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε| αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε| ἔσσεσθ', οὐτέ κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην| οὐτέ κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·| νῦν δ' ἔμπηξ γὰρ κῆρες ἐφροσάσιν θανάτοιο| μυρίαί, ἅς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι,| ἴομεν ἢ ἐφ' εὐχος ὀρέξομεν ἢ τις ἡμῖν. O my friend, if only we two having escaped from this

(κλέος) is the only thing that really is imperishable (ἄφθιτον), the only meaningful form of immortality, since the persistence of the soul after death is so unappealing.¹³

- 10 As powerful as this grim vision of the afterlife is in the Homeric epics, commentators since antiquity have noticed that this uniformly dreary life for the senseless, strengthless dead is not the only vision of afterlife presented in the Homeric poems.¹⁴ For example, Achilles worries in the *Iliad* lest the soul of Patroklos get angry at learning that he has given Hektor's corpse back to his father, and the soul of Ajax can recall the past quarrel and remain angry at Odysseus while sulking at a distance, never drinking the blood that is supposed to be necessary to restore awareness to the shades.¹⁵ Odysseus, while he is performing libations and sacrifices to the dead at the entrance to the Underworld, even makes an elaborate promise to perform further rituals upon his return to Ithaca for the satisfaction of the dead.¹⁶ The scenes with Achilles and Patroklos or Odysseus and his mother are notable for their pathos, but, while these few passages clearly articulate the idea that the shades of the dead live mindless and meaningless existences,¹⁷ the other references to the life after death are much less marked, suggesting that audience needs less grounding to accept the ideas of lively afterlife introduced in them. It is the ideas of mindless shades and lifeless afterlife that need careful handling - put in the mouths of authoritative speakers like Achilles, Circe and Odysseus as explanations of strange

war here might forever continue to be unaging and immortal, neither would I myself fight in the forefront nor would I urge you into the battle where men win glory. But now, since ten thousand dooms of death hang over us, which it is not possible for any mortal to elude, let us then go forth, so that either we seize glory from someone or someone from us.

13 Thus, even Achilles, who chose to die young and glorious would rather be alive again, although he does not repudiate his earlier choice and is delighted to hear that his son, Neoptolemos, is also securing himself immortality through his glorious deeds.

14 “The vividness of the Homeric image of the senseless ghosts is so strong and striking in its starkness that it has coloured modern scholars’ visions of this Hades ; without doubt it is partly responsible for the monolithic interpretations put on it.” (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, p. 84, n. 210)

15 Homer *Odyssey* 11.541-546 ; Homer *Iliad* 24.591-595. Patroklos is now safely cremated and celebrated in funeral games and thus fully integrated into Hades ; if the “rule” of the standard version is that the deceased loses all consciousness once cremated, Patroklos should have no way of knowing what Achilles has done nor any emotions to feel if he did learn. Rohde championed the view, based on *Odyssey* 11.221-2, that cremation is the point at which the soul loses the φρένες and θύμος, and that a shift from cremation to inhumation in the post-Homeric period brought new ideas of the survival of consciousness for the soul (or brought them back from previous periods of inhumation. Sourvinou-Inwood, however, relying on more recent archaeology that tracks the variation between practices at different times and in different regions, points out : “The choice between cremation and inhumation can be shown to be a matter of fashion, with no significance.” (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1981, p. 33 ; cp. Snodgrass, pp. 143-7)

16 Homer *Odyssey* 11. 29-33. I swore many times to the strengthless heads of the dead that, when I returned to Ithaka, I would slaughter in my halls a barren cow, whichever one was the best, and heap up the pyre with treasures, and to Teiresias alone, apart from the rest, I would dedicate an all-black ram, the one which stood out from all in our flocks. πολλὰ δὲ γουνοῦμην νεκῶν ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, | ἐλθὼν εἰς Ἰθάκην στεῖραν βοῦν, ἢ τις ἀρίστη, | ῥέξειν ἐν μεγάροισι πυρὴν τ’ ἐμπλησέμεν ἐσθλῶν, | Τειρεσίη δ’ ἀπάνευθεν οἶν ἱερουσέμεν οἶψ | παμμέλαν’, ὃς μήλοισι μεταπρέπει ἡμετέροισι. Cp. *Odyssey* 10.521-6.

17 As Claus 1981 notes of *Iliad* 23.103-4, “What is impressive about these lines is not that they explain the particular nature of the shade but that they show a need to explain and define.” (p. 98)

visions, these ideas are marked as special, in contrast to the expected and accepted ideas of a lively afterlife.¹⁸

- 11 Outside the few passages that emphasize the helplessness of the shades, the Homeric references to life after death provide a much more lively picture of the afterlife, a picture that corresponds with the evidence found outside the Homeric epics. The dead have feelings and emotions, memories of their lives in the sun, and the ability to know of and even interfere in the world of the living. They appreciate the attentions paid to them by the living, not simply the burial and funeral rituals, but the offerings made subsequently at the tomb. Moreover, the world of the dead itself is not so dreary, nor are all the shades merely flitting about, gibbering mindlessly. The pursuits of the dead mirror the world of the living, and the social hierarchies of the living world persist in some form after death. Orion continues his hunting, while Minos continues giving judgement and resolving conflicts, suggesting that, in the world of the dead, the shades carry on with the characteristically Greek pursuit of lawsuits.¹⁹ Minos' position among the dead, not to mention Achilles', suggests that the social hierarchies from the world of the living are reproduced in the land of the dead - the gods' favorites remain favored. Likewise, those who won favor from the gods by their deeds in life continue to reap the benefits, while those who incurred the wrath of the gods continue to suffer their displeasure.²⁰ This afterlife is not uniform for all ; those who have angered the gods continue their punishments in the afterlife, while those who have won their favor continue to enjoy its benefits. This differentiated afterlife is in direct conflict with the uniformly dreary one that underscores the importance of the heroic glory.

Differentiated Afterlives

- 12 While this basic idea of a differentiated afterlife seems both traditional and widespread, the precise way in which the differentiations were made varies in the evidence, from the idea of a judgement of the dead, to differentiated places to which they go, and the kinds of rewards and punishments they receive. The idea of judgement and punishment in the afterlife is common enough for Plato to depict the old man Cephalos as starting to think

18 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, p. 79, referring to *Odyssey* 11, *Odyssey* 10.493-5, *Iliad* 23.103-7. "But if, as I suggest, the filters of both poet and audience were shaped by a belief in a Hades which (whether or not it was explicitly hierarchically articulated) involved inhabitants with faculties, values, and behaviour-patterns at least minimally comparable to those they had in life, Achilles' superior status in Hades would have appeared 'only common sense', and so accepted unexamined." (p. 80)

19 Homer *Odyssey* 11.568-575. As Sourvinou-Inwood notes, "Outside this context he [Homer] does not stick to the constraints of the belief in witless shades ; for to him (and to his audience), by whom the belief in the lively shades was taken for granted, the articulation of behaviour or belief involving the shades as lively did not register as other than 'natural'." Vase paintings depict the dead engaged in a variety of pleasant pursuits - games like *pepsi* or dice - and Pindar fr. 130 has the dead engaging in horsemanship, gymnastics, and lyre-playing as well. Cp. Garland 1985, pp. 68-72.

20 Much ingenuity has been needlessly exercised in the attempt to explain away the punishments of Tantalos, Tityos, and Sisyphos in the Homeric *nekyia* so that their suffering does not contradict the mindlessness of the dead, but those three simply represent notable figures who are suffering in the afterlife, just as Odysseus also meets other notables with different fates. There is no reason to imagine they didn't really die or that they are "cosmic" sinners (as Sourvinou-Inwood 1986 suggests) or otherwise representative of special kinds of crimes. The Erinyes appear in oaths (*Iliad* 3.276-80 ; 19.259-60) as figures who punish beneath the earth those who have transgressed oaths, but the Homeric poems do not elaborate, as other sources do, on the range of crimes and punishments, as well as punishers.

that perhaps he might have something to worry about after death. Cephalos refers to myths he has heard - not special 'Orphic' doctrines but familiar traditional tales - that assign punishment in the afterlife for injustices committed in life.²¹ While he had not taken them seriously while younger, he says that the approach of death causes people to examine their lives to see if they will have any penalties to pay.²² Those who discover crimes they have not paid for get anxious, while those who can't think of any wrongs they have done are buoyed up by hope.²³ Indeed, those who have won the favor of the gods during their lives can expect that the gods will care specially for them after death as well.²⁴

Judgement

- 13 Cephalos describes the process that every person might go through of self-judgement as death approaches, but Plato elsewhere makes use of judges who decide the fate of the deceased to illustrate the process of self-examination that is crucial to living the philosophic life. The idea of judges, be it the gods in a vague and unspecific sense or particular entities who carried out a detailed process of examination, seems to derive from the common mythic tradition, although Plato's *bricolage* with the bits of tradition produce far more complex and detailed scenarios than anything else extant. Plato himself refers in the *Laws* to the idea that the soul must give an account of its life to the gods as an ancestral belief, and the Platonic *Seventh Letter* urges belief in the ancient

21 Plato *Republic* 330d-331a. The 5th century BCE painting of Odysseus in the underworld by Polygnotus, which Pausanias saw at Delphi, provides a wider selection of punishers and punished. In addition to the ones mentioned in the *Odyssey*, Polygnotus depicts a man who maltreated his father being abused in turn by the father, while someone who committed sacrilege is left to the attentions of a pharmakeutria. (10.27-31) Further torments are provided by a horrible monster named Eurynomos - a demon unknown, Pausanias notes, to the nekyliai of the *Odyssey*, the Minyas, and the Nostoi. A Demosthenic speech attests to other such paintings depicting the afterlife torments of the impious. [Dem.] 25.53. The speaker condemns his opponent: "But he is implacable, unsettled, unsociable; he has no kindness, no friendliness, none of the feelings which an ordinary person knows; all those things with which the painters depict the impious in Hades - Curses, Blasphemy, Envy, Faction, Strife, with those will he be surrounded. This man, then, who is not likely to propitiate the gods in Hades, but to be cast among the impious because of the depravity of his life ... will you not punish him?" ἄλλ' ἄσπειτος, ἀνίδρυτος, ἄμεικτος, οὐ χάριν, οὐ φίλιαν, οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲν ὧν ἄνθρωπος μέτριος γινώσκων: μεθ' ὧν δ' οἱ ζωγράφοι τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς ἐν Ἄιδου γράφουσιν, μετ' ἀρᾶς καὶ βλασφημίας καὶ φθόνου καὶ στάσεως καὶ νείκους, περιέρχεται εἶθ' ὧν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου θεῶν εἰκὸς ἐστὶν τυχεῖν ἴλεων, ἀλλ' εἰς τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς ὠσθῆναι διὰ τὴν πονηρίαν τοῦ βίου... οὐ τιμωρήσεσθε;

22 Plato, *Republic* 330d-331a. Cephalos is a good representative of the common tendency not to believe that any such justice or retribution will concern one personally until faced with the imminent prospect. Cp. Plato *Gorgias* 523a and 527a. The Derveni author too rebukes those who refuse to believe in the terrors of Hades. Ἄιδου δεινὰ τί ἀπιστοῦσι; (col. V.6 = OF 473)

23 Of course, most people tend to assume that nothing they have done is really all that bad. As Garland notes, "There is little evidence for the claim that the majority of Greeks spent their declining years consumed with guilty foreboding at the prospect of making a reckoning in the hereafter. Fear, combined with a healthy fatalism, seems to be the worst that the average Greek moribund had to cope with." (Garland 1985, p. 17)

24 Hypereides 6.43. But if in Hades there is still some consciousness and care from some divinity, as we believe, then it is likely that those who defended the honors of the gods, when they were being destroyed, would meet with the greatest solicitude from the divinity. εἰ δ' ἐστὶν αἰσθησις ἐν Ἄιδου καὶ ἐπιμέλεια παρὰ τοῦ δαιμονίου, ὥσπερ ὑπολαμβάνομεν, εἰκὸς τοὺς ταῖς τιμαῖς τῶν θεῶν καταλλομέναις βοηθήσαντας πλείστης κηδεμονίας ὑπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου τυγχάνειν ...

and holy accounts that tell of judges that provide punishment for wrongdoing committed in life.²⁵ Perhaps the earliest extant reference to the process of judgement comes in Pindar's *Second Olympian*, where an unspecified judge assigns recompense for the deeds of life, a blissful existence without toil for the good, unbearable toil for the bad.²⁶ While sources such as Aeschylus specify the judges as underworld divinities – Hades or a Zeus below the earth – Plato is the first attestation for particular semi-divine figures as judges, Minos, Rhadamanthys, Aiakos, and even Triptolemos.²⁷ Plato's assignment of Minos as the judge of newly dead souls at *Gorgias* 524a is a clever bit of creative misprision of *Od.* 11.568-71, while the choice of Rhadamanthys may likewise adapt the reference in *Od.* 4.564.²⁸

- 14 In the *Gorgias*, Plato crafts Socrates' description of the process of afterlife judgement to reflect the process of elenctic examination that is so thematized in this dialogue, where Socrates explicitly discusses his elenctic methods in contrast with those of his rhetorical interlocutors.²⁹ The myth provides an illustration of this contrast, and the vivid picture of the soul stripped naked and revealing all its deformities and scars to the expert eye of the judge is an image of the Socratic elenchos. Three elements in particular correspond

25 Plato *Laws* 959b4. It is well said that the bodies of the dead are just images of those who have died, but that of each of us which is truly real, the soul which we say is immortal, departs to the presence of other gods, there (just as our ancestral tradition says) to render its account. For the good this is a thing to inspire courage, but for the evil great dread. καὶ τελευτησάντων λέγεσθαι καλῶς εἶδωλα εἶναι τὰ τῶν νεκρῶν σώματα, τὸν δὲ ὄντα ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ὄντως, ἀθάνατον εἶναι ψυχὴν ἐπονομαζόμενον, παρὰ θεοῦς ἄλλους ἀπιέναι δῶσοντα λόγον, καθάπερ ὁ νόμος ὁ πάτριος λέγει—τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀγαθῷ θαρραλέον, τῷ δὲ κακῷ μάλα φοβερόν. Pl. *Seventh Letter* 335a3-5. But truly it is necessary always to believe the ancient and holy accounts which reveal to us that the soul is immortal and that it has judges and pays the greatest penalties, whenever someone is released from his body. πείθεσθαι δὲ ὄντως ἀεὶ χρὴ τοῖς παλαιοῖς τε καὶ ἱεροῖς λόγοις, οἳ δὴ μηνύουσιν ἡμῖν ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν εἶναι δικαστὰς τε ἴσχειν καὶ τίνειν τὰς μεγίστας τιμωρίας, ὅταν τις ἀπαλλαχθῆ τοῦ σώματος. Pace Bernabé, not all references to ancient tradition in Plato (and elsewhere) refer to Orphic sources. At times, such references refer, not to esoteric formulations from extraordinary sources, but on the contrary to the best known and most widely accepted traditions.

26 Pindar, *Olympian* II.56-67. But if one has it and knows what is to come, that the helpless souls of those who have died here immediately receive recompense. And all the wicked deeds in realm of Zeus here someone beneath the earth judges, passing his sentence with hateful compulsion. But having the sun always in equal nights and equal days, the good receive a life most free of toil, not disturbing with the strength of their arms the earth, nor the water of the sea, for the sake of a paltry sustenance. But in the presence of those gods they honored, those who rejoiced in faithful oaths dwell forever without tears, while the others suffer toil that is unbearable to look at. εἰ δὲ νῦν ἔχων τις οἶδεν τὸ μέλλον, | ὅτι θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ' αὐτίκ' ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες | ποινὰς ἔτεισαν—τὰ δ' ἐν τῷδε Διὸς ἀρχῇ | ἀλιτρά κατα γὰρ δικάζει τις ἐχθρῇ | λόγον φράσαις ἀνάγκη· | ἴσαις δὲ νύκτεσσιν αἰεὶ, | ἴσαις δ' ἀμέραις ἄλιον ἔχοντες, ἀπονέστερον | ἐσλοὶ δέκονται βίοντον, οὐ χθόνα ταράσσοντες ἐν χερὸς ἀκμῇ οὐδὲ πόντιον ὕδωρ | κεινὰν παρὰ δίαιταν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ μὲν τιμίαις | θεῶν οἵτινες ἔχαιρον εὐορκίας ἄδακρυν νέμονται | αἰῶνα, τοὶ δ' ἀπροσόρατον ὀκχέοντι πόνον.

27 Aeschylus *Eumenides* 273-274. Great Hades is the auditor for mortals there under the ground. μέγας γὰρ Ἄϊδης ἐστὶν εὐθυνοῦ βροτῶν ἔνερθε χθονός. Cp. *Suppliants* 230-231. As the story goes, another Zeus among the dead devises their final punishment. κάκει δικάζει τὰμπλακῆμαθ', ὡς λόγος, Ζεὺς ἄλλος ἐν καμοῦσιν ὑστάτας δίκας.

28 Aiakos is a more difficult question ; see Dover 1993, pp. 54-55, and my discussion in Edmonds 2004, pp. 148-9. For Plato's manipulations of the myths, see also Edmonds 2004, pp. 159-220. Socrates includes Triptolemos among the judges at *Apology* 41a, which may suggest that the idea was connected, for the Athenians, with the Eleusinian Mysteries. cp. Graf 1974, pp. 121-126.

29 I discuss this in greater detail in my article, "Whipscars on the naked soul" (Edmonds 2012), from which this section is adapted.

to the description of the Socratic elenchos. The lack of witnesses corresponds to the elenctic examination of a single person's ideas, without the recourse to the opinions of others or to long oratorical speeches. The examination of the naked soul by the judge corresponds to the analysis of the person's ideas and the pointing out of the inconsistencies. The suffering in the afterlife corresponds to the shame of the elenchos, the effect of the defeat in this philosophic contest which provokes the one who has undergone the elenchos to change his life. Although Plato illustrates the process of elenchos in many of his dialogues by depicting the interlocutors engaged in elenchos, the myth in the *Gorgias* separates out these different aspects of the elenchos from one another, giving the reader a better understanding of the different effects of the Socratic elenchos.

- 15 To link the elenchos with the scars on the soul in the myth, Plato uses a medical metaphor. The tyrant's soul bears the marks of disease, the festering wounds of injustices committed and never corrected, while the philosopher's soul is in good health. Although the tyrant may appear to flourish, the expert examination of the judge reveals his true state and prescribes the appropriate treatment. This afterlife punishment (*kolasis*) may be painful, but only such correction (*kolasis*) can heal the wounded soul. The elenchos too is a painful treatment, and Socrates' interlocutors squirm like little children when they are forced to take their medicine. Socrates warns Callicles that if he does not accept the treatment of the elenchos, he will go through life out of harmony with himself, without the proper balance and order that constitutes health, not just for the individual but for the cosmos. If he does not take the medicine his elenctic examination has prescribed, the errors of his life will fester and scar. The final myth in the *Gorgias*, therefore, is not, as it has often been understood, an appeal to retribution in the next life that supplies the deficiencies of justice in this life, but an illustration of the effects of living an unexamined life. When the souls of his interlocutors are exposed to the judgement of the Socratic elenchos, the festering wounds caused by their ways of life are laid bare.
- 16 Plato also uses traditional myths of a judgement of the soul to highlight the critical role of self-examination in the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*, where the peculiar double process of determining one's lot after death reflects the distinction, made throughout the dialogue, between the extrinsic recompense for justice and its intrinsic worth. The first judgement, which sends the deceased to a thousand years of bliss or torment, is compensatory for the life lived, precisely the kind of extrinsic reward or punishment for justice that Socrates and his interlocutors dismissed at the start of the discussion as an insufficient defense of the true value of philosophic justice. After the thousand years, however, the souls return to the place of judgement for the selection of the next life. Here, despite the lottery that determines the order of choosing, the new fate of the soul depends entirely on its ability to examine itself and make the appropriate judgement. Newly come from a thousand years of bliss, the soul with the first choice, having lived a basically good life in a good city, never developed the ability to correct itself and so chooses tragically wrong, taking the life of a tyrant with unlimited power. By contrast, the soul of Odysseus, having learned from his long sufferings how to curb his impulses, makes a good choice of a just and philosophic life.³⁰ Here only the

30 Cp., Plato *Republic* 614cd ; 615ab ; and 619bd. Montiglio 2011, pp. 48-52 analyzes Plato's treatment of Odysseus in this myth, concluding that, "As the exact opposite of the tyrant, the new Odysseus can only be a philosopher."

inherently just soul, philosophically trained to examine and govern its impulses and appetites, can make the right kind of choice when a really important crisis comes.³¹ Again, by transposing the judgement of an external judge into a personal choice, the myth provides an illustration of the choices the soul faces in life and how to make them, rather than a promise of some external consequence that rewards or punishes in compensation for the troubles of life. Plato uses the traditional mythic elements to illustrate the processes of philosophic self-examination and judgement discussed in the dialogues, both the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*.

Geography of the Afterlife

- 17 Plato also manipulates another element of the differentiated afterlife that appears in various places in the mythic tradition, the division of the deceased among various places for the afterlife. Although in the *Odyssey's* vision that levels all distinctions of the afterlife except those created by epic song, the punished dead suffer in the same region as the rest of the shades Odysseus sees, in other texts Tartarus appears as the place of punishment.³² Pindar promises that those who have thrice lived a good life will go to the Isles of the Blessed, and these islands are the destination of the blessed dead in a number of sources, starting with Hesiod.³³ Such geographical distinctions appear elsewhere in the evidence, from the marginal gold tablets to the Athenian drinking song that puts Harmodios in the Isles of the Blessed.³⁴ In his dialogues, Plato creates vivid images of the otherworldly crossroads to dramatize the split between the good and the evil and their lots after death. Depending on Plato's purposes in the dialogue, the crossroads may lead to Tartaros and the Isles of the Blessed (*Gorgias*), up to the realm of the gods and down to the places of punishment (*Republic*), or simply in a bewildering variety of directions that compel the soul to follow the guidance of its appointed daimon (*Phaedo*).
- 18 Although in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, the emphasis is more on the process of determining which path the soul will take, in the *Phaedo* Plato uses this traditional idea to create a vision of a hierarchically arranged cosmos in which the superior regions provide an afterlife analogous to the life of the philosophic, while the inferior regions mirror the turmoil and confusion of the unphilosophic life. Plato identifies the realms beyond the mortal life, traditionally called Hades (εἰς Ἅιδου) with the realities

31 Plato, *Republic* 600b.

32 While Tartarus seems to become the standard name for the underworld place of punishment, in Homer and Hesiod, it is just a place of confinement for gods who defy Zeus, including the Titans from whom Zeus wrested control of the cosmos. *Iliad*, VIII.10-16, XIV.274-9, VIII.478-91, V.898. cp. Hesiod, *Theog.* 713-45, *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 335-6. The only reference before the *Gorgias* to a mortal being punished in Tartarus is a papyrus fragment from the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women (fr. 30 MW) that refers to Salmoneus being punished in Tartarus.

33 Homer refers rather to the Elysian Field as the destination where Menelaus will receive his reward, but this particular destination does not appear again in the texts until the self-consciously Homerizing Apollonius Rhodius.

34 The gold tablets (A2 and A3) from Thurii refer to the seats of the blessed (ἔδρας εὐαγέων), whereas the longer B tablets mention a split in the road between the first spring and the second. See Edmonds 2004, pp. 29-110 for further analysis.

perceptible not by the senses (τὸ αἰδέξ) but by thought (εἰδέναι).³⁵ The pun on Hades and the unseen goes back to Homer (and no doubt further), but Plato extends the word play to include knowing to provide a way to talk about the intellectual perceptions of the philosophic soul in contrast to the sensible impressions of the soul too closely chained to the body. Through this word play and the argument from Affinities, Plato identifies the soul, which traditionally pertains to the unseen world of the afterlife, as essentially connected with knowing in mortal life.³⁶

Reward and Punishment Hereafter

- 19 The afterlife in the Blessed Isles in the aether in the *Phaedo* myth is an existence pure of any of the mildews, rusts, or sicknesses that afflict mortal life ; the stones are pure gems and precious metals, the plants and animals are somehow purer, and the gods actually dwell in their groves and temples, enabling direct access to (and conversation with) the divine.³⁷ Such a blessed existence not only picks up on descriptions in the mythic tradition of the paradise for the worthy, but it also reflects the description at the beginning of the dialogue of the process of intellectual perception of reality, purified of all the distractions of sensual perceptions.

That man would do this [achieve pure knowledge] most purely whoever should go to each object with his intellect alone as far as possible, neither applying sight in his thinking, nor dragging in any other sense to accompany his reasoning ; rather, making use of his intellect alone by itself and unsullied, he would undertake the hunt for each of the things that are, each alone by itself and unsullied.³⁸

- 20 The soul using its intellect alone to understand life appears as the soul in the blessed pure realms of the afterlife, pure enough to dwell in the purer atmosphere of the superior realms and to be in direct contact with the divine realities.³⁹ Ritual purity was

35 Plato *Phaedo* 80d. Ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἄρα, τὸ αἰδέξ, τὸ εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον ἕτερον οἰχόμενον γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ αἰδῆ, εἰς Ἄιδου ὡς ἀληθῶς, παρὰ τὸν ἀγαθὸν καὶ φρόνιμον θεόν, οἷ, ἂν θεὸς θέλη, αὐτίκα καὶ τῆ ἐμῆ ψυχῆ ἰτέον, αὕτη δὲ δὴ ἡμῖν ἢ τοιαύτη καὶ οὕτω πεφυκυῖα ἀπαλλαττομένη τοῦ σώματος εὐθὺς διαπεφύσεται καὶ ἀπόλωλεν, ὡς φασιν οἱ πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι ; But the soul, the invisible, which going off into another such noble and pure and invisible place, to the realm of Hades in truth, to the good and wise god, to which place, if the god be willing, my soul also shortly must go,—is this soul, being such a thing and having grown by nature thus, when it departs from the body, is it immediately scattered and destroyed as most men say ? cp. Plato *Cratylus* 404a. And the name ‘Hades’, Hermogenes, is not in the least derived from the invisible, but rather by far from the knowing of all beautiful things, and from this he was called ‘Hades’ by the lawgiver. Καὶ τό γε ὄνομα ὁ “Ἄιδης,” ὃ Ἑρμόγενης, πολλοῦ δεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰδοῦς ἐπωνομάσθαι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι, ἀπὸ τούτου ὑπὸ τοῦ νομοθέτου “Ἄιδης” ἐκλήθη.

36 *Phaedo* 78b4-84b8.

37 *Phaedo* 109b-111b.

38 *Phaedo* 65e-66a. Ἄρ’ οὖν ἐκεῖνος ἂν τοῦτο ποιήσειεν καθαρῶτατα ὅστις ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτῇ τῇ διανοίᾳ ἴοι ἐφ’ ἕκαστον, μήτε τιν’ ὄψιν παρατιθέμενος ἐν τῷ διανοεῖσθαι μήτε [τινὰ] ἄλλην αἴσθησιν ἐφέλκων μηδεμίαν μετὰ τοῦ λογισμοῦ, ἀλλ’ αὐτῇ καθ’ αὐτὴν εἰλικρινεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ χρώμενος αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ εἰλικρινῆς ἕκαστον ἐπιχειροῖ θηρεῦειν τῶν ὄντων.

39 Those who have purified themselves even further may go beyond embodiment in the aetherial world to a disembodied existence amongst the ultimate realities (*Phaedo* 114c), but such a possibility is not really elaborated in the *Phaedo* (but cp. *Symposium* 211e-212a and *Phaedrus* 248, where such contact with true reality can only be transitory for mortals).

traditionally a precondition for approaching the gods, both going into sacred spaces through normal purifications and, by the more extra-ordinary measures of rituals often called *teletai*, of establishing closer relations with the gods to win their favor and protection. Plato transforms these ideas, which were part of the normal Greek religious tradition (even if the more extreme forms were at times marked with the name of Orpheus), into an illustration of the life of philosophic soul, making philosophical inquiry into the highest form of purification.

- 21 The soul's afterlife in the inferior regions of the cosmos likewise illustrates the mortal life of the unphilosophic, bewildered by the multiplicity of sense impressions or tormented by the desires and fears of the appetites. Rather than seeing the gods face to face, the unpurified lie wretchedly in the mud, unable to perceive anything clearly in the murky depths that surround them. Some who were guided by their passions to acts of murder or even parricide are further tormented by the flames of Pyriphlegethon or the ice of Cocytus, while the worst whirl endlessly in the vortex of Tartarus. The ceaseless turbulence of Tartarus mirrors the lives of those who, mistrusting all reasoning, rely on the impressions of their senses, since these misologists are forever tossed up and down in the contradictory currents of sense impressions as if in the channel of the Euripus.⁴⁰ Plato manipulates these images from the mythic tradition of afterlife to provide a vivid illustration of the different options for the soul in life ; either, by trusting to reason and philosophic self-examination, one can go through life in direct contact with true reality, or, by relying on the bewildering and contradictory impressions of the senses, one can suffer through the confusing turmoil of mortal life.
- 22 The *Phaedo* is not the only dialogue in which Plato manipulates traditional ideas of afterlife punishments to make a philosophic point. In the *Gorgias*, Plato uses the familiar myth of the water-carriers to illustrate the sort of perpetual suffering that Callicles inflicts upon himself by refusing to change his way of life, to show how Callicles' choice of life, far from being a life of action without restraint, is actually a life of suffering, both on a personal and political level. While, on the literal level, the story conveys the familiar traditional idea that those who are not initiated 'carry water to this leaky jar with another leaky thing, a sieve', Socrates builds an interpretation into the tale.⁴¹ According to the clever man from whom he heard the tale, the uninitiate (*amuetoi*) are the unintelligent (*anoetoi*), and the jar (*pithos*) is the persuadable (*pithanon*) and impressionable (*peistikon*) soul, which is leaky like the sieve.⁴² In the

40 *Phaedo* 112ad ; cp. 90c5.

41 *Gorgias* 493a1-b3. For I once heard some one of the wise say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb, and that of the soul in which there are desires is liable to be over-persuaded and to sway up and down, and so some clever man among the myth-makers, perhaps a Sicilian or Italian, playing on the words, named this part, on account of its being impressionable and persuadable, a jar, and the mindless he named the uninitiate : in these mindless ones that part of the soul where the desires are, the unrestrained and not water-tight part, he likened to a leaky jar, because it is so insatiate. ἤδη γάρ του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμά ἐστιν ἡμῖν σῆμα, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσὶ τυγχάνει ὄν οἷον ἀναπέιθεσθαι καὶ μεταπίπτειν ἄνω κάτω, καὶ τοῦτο ἄρα τις μυθολογῶν κομψῶς ἀνὴρ, ἴσως Σικελὸς τις ἢ Ἰταλικός, παράγων τῷ ὀνόματι διὰ τὸ πιθανόν τε καὶ πειστικὸν ὀνόμασε πίθον, τοὺς δὲ ἀνοήτους ἀμύητους, τῶν δ' ἀνοήτων τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς οὗ αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσὶ, τὸ ἀκόλαστον αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ στεγανόν, ὡς τετρημένος εἶη πίθος, διὰ τὴν ἀπληστίαν ἀπεικάσας.

42 Irwin translates πιθανόν as 'persuadable' and πειστικὸν as 'impressionable', but, as Dodds points out, both adjectives should have an active sense. If both are derived from πειθω, the meaning would be some sense of 'persuasive'. A similar phrase occurs just above, attributed to some 'wise man', τῆς δὲ

mindless ones that part of the soul where desires are, the unrestrained and not water-tight part, he likened to a leaky jar, because it is so insatiate.⁴³ Socrates goes on to develop this idea of the soul as a jar which the intemperate man spends his whole life trying to fill in vain, deriving pleasure from the process of filling but pain from the endless emptying. On this level, the image obviously applies to Callicles' ideal of suffering no restraints on one's appetite, but Plato also uses the image to describe the life of the orator trying to gratify the ever-changing and unsatisfiable appetites of the persuadable masses, a task as vain and tormenting as the labors of the water carriers.⁴⁴ Once again, Plato uses a familiar myth about the soul in the afterlife to make an unfamiliar, even radical, point about the nature of the soul in life – a soul mindless (*anoetos*) enough to attend to the persuasion of the appetites suffers in its endless and futile labor just like the mythic water-carriers.

Conclusions

- 23 In the *Gorgias*, Socrates signals the application of the myth of afterlife to life in this world by his quotation of the famous Euripides' tag: 'Who knows if being alive is really being dead, and being dead being alive?'⁴⁵ In his various myths of the afterlife, Plato uses the familiar pattern of the afterlife as a mirror that reflects or refracts the differentiated statuses of people in this life, but he manipulates the traditional mythic

ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμῖαι εἰσι τυγχάνει ὄν οἷον ἀναπειθεσθαι καὶ μεταπίπτειν ἄνω κάτω. 'That of our soul with appetites is liable to be persuaded and to sway up and down'. ἀναπειθεσθαι, however, is unequivocally passive in sense. Blank points out that the confusion between the active and passive senses, persuadable and persuasive, reflects the confusion of Callicles about the role of the orator, whether he is the persuader of the masses or is constantly persuaded by the masses to different things. (Blank 1991, pp. 26-27.) One might speculate whether the words in question also carried the sense of πείσεσθαι derived from πάσχω, to suffer, playing on the pun between πίθος, πείθω, and πάθος. If the words carried the resonance of suffering, as well as persuadable and persuasive, the connection between Callicles' confusion and the fate he will suffer, both in life and in the myth, would be neatly drawn. But perhaps this word play would be too much, even for a κομψὸς ἀνὴρ.

43 *Gorgias* 493a6-b3. παράγων τῷ ὀνόματι διὰ τὸ πιθανόν τε καὶ πειστικὸν ὠνόμασε πίθον, τοὺς δὲ ἀνοήτους ἀμυήτους, τῶν δ' ἀνοήτων τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς οὐ αἰ ἐπιθυμῖαι εἰσί, τὸ ἀκόλαστον αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ στεγανόν, ὡς τετρημένος εἶη πίθος, διὰ τὴν ἀπληστίαν ἀπεικάσας.

44 Socrates opens his attack on both the personal and political position of Callicles with his observation that Callicles is in love with two beloveds, Demos, son of Pylampes and the Athenian demos. (481c ff.) The choice of the homoerotic metaphor allows Socrates to point out the confusion of the active and passive, ruler and ruled in Callicles' ideal. Although the adult male *erastes* like Callicles is the active pursuer, and the younger *eromenos* or *paidika* like Demos is the more passive, pursued person in the ideology of this kind of Athenian aristocratic homoerotic relationship, the beloved was also able to exercise a fair amount of control over the lover, who would go to great lengths to win his beloved's favor. Socrates notes that however absurd the things their beloveds say may be, both he and Callicles are helpless to contradict them (481d-482b). Although they are, in theory, the active partners in the relationships, guiding the youths into manhood, they are both, in fact, helplessly subject to their beloveds, the ruled instead of the rulers. The familiar paradox of the homoerotic romance allows Plato to bring out the ambiguity of Callicles' relation to the masses he desires to dominate.

45 *Gorgias* 492e10-11. τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ κατθανεῖν, τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν; cp. Euripides' *Phrixus* fr. 833. The tag is attributed either to the *Phrixus* or the *Polyidos*. Sextus Empiricus attributes the same idea to Heraclitus (*Pyrrh. Hyp.* 3.230, cp. Heraclitus fr. 62, 88). cp. Dodds' treatment of the passage in the *Gorgias*, *ad loc.* Aristophanes repeatedly uses the line to great effect in the *Frogs* (1082, 1477), finally turning it against Euripides when Dionysos abandons him in the underworld and brings up Aeschylus instead.

elements of judgement, superior and inferior regions, and even the rewards and punishments found therein to illustrate his ideas about the nature and activities of the human soul in life. Each myth is tailored to the dialogue in which it is set, and the inconsistencies in the way Plato depicts the soul in the afterlife stem from the varying uses to which he puts the myths.

Orphic Ideas of the Soul

- 24 In addition to transposing for his own purposes the idea that the existence of the soul in the afterlife mirrors the present life, Plato also makes use of certain ideas about the relation of the soul to the body. While the lively afterlife of the soul is a popular notion that is not exclusively associated with Orphica or even the erudite speculations of the philosophers, certain ways of characterizing the soul's relation with the body do appear to be marked as unusual, extra-ordinary, or limited to a few esoteric thinkers - in a word, Orphic. In this evidence, the body can be the tomb of the soul, its prison, or its guardpost, while the soul appears as a living or even divine entity, passing time within the body and passing into and out of the body or even from body to body. Plato plays with some of these ideas in his dialogues, twisting the memorable images to his own devices, using them, as he uses the more familiar ideas of a lively afterlife, to reinforce his own arguments about the superiority of the intellect over the senses, the importance of leading a life of reasoned judgement and self-control, and the responsibility of the philosopher within society.
- 25 Most of the discussions of Orphic ideas of the relation of soul to body start with the passage in Plato's *Cratylus*, in which Socrates provides a number of etymologies for the word *σῶμα*, each of which depicts the relation in a different way in this sophistic etymological game.

I think this admits of many explanations, if a little, even very little, change is made ; for some say it is the tomb (*σημα*) of the soul, their notion being that the soul is buried in the present life ; and again, because by its means the soul gives any signs (*σημαίνει*) which it gives, it is for this reason also properly called "sign" (*σημα*). But I think it most likely that those connected with Orpheus (*οἱ ἄμφι Ὀρφέα*) gave this name, with the idea that the soul is undergoing punishment for something ; they think it has the body as an enclosure to keep it safe (*σώζηται*), like a prison, and this is, as the name itself denotes, the safe (*σῶμα*) for the soul, until the penalty is paid, and not even a letter needs to be changed.⁴⁶

- 26 The passage includes several different images of the relation of the body to the soul : a tomb, a marker, a prison, a protective covering. Controversy has raged over the origins of each of these ideas and which of them come from the same source, because this is one of the very few early pieces of evidence in which an idea of the soul is explicitly

46 Plato *Cratylus* 400bc = OF430i. Πολλαχῆ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτό γε· ἂν μὲν καὶ σμικρόν τις παρακλίνῃ, καὶ πάνυ. καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι· καὶ διότι αὐτὸ τούτῳ σημαίνει ἃ ἂν σημαίνῃ ἡ ψυχή, καὶ ταύτη "σημα" ὀρθῶς καλεῖσθαι. δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἄμφι Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὡς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σώζηται, δεσμοτηρίου εἰκόνα· εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, [τὸ] "σῶμα," καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖν παράγειν οὐδ' ἐν γράμματι.

attributed to people connected in some way to Orpheus (οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα).⁴⁷ Plato's circumlocution shows that those who made use of the poems of Orpheus did not label themselves as and were not thought of as "Orphics", but it also shows that the defining feature of such people, for Plato's purposes here, was indeed their connection with Orphic texts.⁴⁸ The idea that Socrates attributes to them is specifically the idea that the soul is in the body for punishment, like a prison, but it is unclear how many of the etymologies in the passage may have come from an Orphic text. The adversative μέντοι does suggest that the τινες who give the σῶμα-σῆμα etymology may be different people from οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα, but it is entirely possible that, in a text such as the Derveni papyrus, the author (who is certainly someone who might be described as ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα) might have provided the whole series of etymologies in the exegesis of a verse of Orpheus. The verse of Orpheus itself might or might not have anything to do with the imprisonment of the soul in the body; indeed, it is entirely plausible to imagine someone like the Derveni author providing an explanation of the body as a tomb, a sign, and a prison, in a verse that referred to some other kind of body entirely.⁴⁹ Of course, the idea of the body as the tomb (σῆμα) of the soul has different ramifications than the idea of the body as the indicator (σῆμα) or even as the prison (δεσμοτηρίον) or safeguard (ἵνα σώζηται), but, in the context of an exegetical exercise, those ramifications would not be pursued. The consequences of each interpretation are less important, in this context, than the fact that the exegete can devise them, that the exegete can demonstrate his acumen to his audience to bolster his own religious authority. Such a display is persuasive not because it expounds dogma in which the audience fervently believes but rather because it shows the exegete as a wise person whose expertise can be relied upon.⁵⁰ This process is, of course, precisely what Socrates is mocking with his display in the *Cratylus*, so efforts to uncover serious dogmas and their origins here are doubly problematic, since even if Plato is simply borrowing Socrates' etymologies from another text, there is little reason to suppose that the ramifications of any or all of them were seriously explored in such a (hypothetical) source.

The tomb of the soul

- 27 In other dialogues, however, Plato does tease out the ramifications of these images. The basic idea that soul is entombed in the body introduces the Heraclitean paradox of living in death and dying in life, creating the image of a life lived in death – or, as we might say, in afterlife, thus setting up the descriptions of a lively afterlife as a way of talking about the present life.⁵¹ However, the relation of the living soul to the dead body as one

47 Bernabé 1995 provides an excellent analysis of the debates, with important attention to the role of Platonic transposition. See also Bernabé 2011, pp. 115-144.

48 Linforth 1941, p. 148; cp. Bernabé 1995, pp. 217-8.

49 e.g., σῶμα δέ οἱ περιφεγγές, ἀπειρίτων, ἀστυφέλικτον (OF 243.22 = Proclus *in Tim.* 29a I.324.14).

50 I develop the exegetical context of the Derveni author and its importance further in Edmonds 2013, pp. 124-135.

51 Cp. Heraclitus fr. 62 DK. ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others' death and dying the others' life.

buried in a tomb can be further elaborated for rhetorical effect, comparing the body not just to a tomb but a torture and a prison.

- 28 Clement of Alexandria quotes the Pythagorean Philolaus, who attributes to ancient wisdom the idea that the soul is buried in the body : “The ancient theologians and seers testify that the soul is conjoined to the body to suffer certain punishments, and is, as it were, buried in this tomb.”⁵² Another Pythagorean, Euxitheos, appears in Athenaeus as the source of the idea that the soul is yoked to the body for punishment.⁵³ A related image of torture, that combines the ideas of tomb and prison, is associated with the idea of the soul in the body for the payment of penalties. In his exhortation to live a philosophic life, Aristotle uses the image of a torture apparently practiced by certain Tyrrhenian pirates, who tied their living captives to dead bodies, to describe the soul placed in the body for punishment.⁵⁴ Aristotle too links the idea that the soul is attached to the body for purposes of torment, in expiation for unspecified crimes, to the authority of ancient wisdom and to the practice of rituals.⁵⁵ None of these sources specifies the crimes for which the soul is being punished ; the reference is always

52 Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 3.17.1 = Philolaus fr. 14 = OF 430iii. μαρτυρέονται δὲ καὶ οἱ παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι τε καὶ μάντιες, ὡς διὰ τινος τιμωρίας ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι συνέζευκται καὶ καθάπερ ἐν σήματι τοῦτω τέθαιπται. Various doubts have been expressed about whether Philolaus or the Pythagoreans in general believed this idea, but Clement’s quotation does not reveal whether Philolaus accepted this idea himself.

53 Athenaeus 4.157c = OF 430vi. The fragment of Anaximander, despite Nietzsche (*Werke* X, 22 *Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*), probably refers not the creation of the material cosmos by an injustice for which it must atone by destruction (in analogy to a certain understanding of the soul in the Orphica, but rather to the interplay of opposing elements. See Kahn 1985, pp. 193-6.

54 Iamblichus *Protrepticus* 43.21-44.9 = Aristotle fr. 60 Rose = OF 430v. Who indeed looking at these things could think himself happy and blessed, since we are set up straightaway by nature, just as they recount in the rites, all of us, as if for punishment ? For this idea the ancients spoke divinely the saying that the soul pays a penalty and that we are living for the correction of some great wrongdoings. For the conjunction of the soul to the body is very much like to the following sort of thing : just as they say that those in Tyrrhenia often torture their captives, binding corpses right up against the living, face to face, fastening each limb against each limb, so too the soul seems to be stretched out through and attached onto the sensitive members of the body. τίς ἂν οὖν εἰς ταῦτα βλέπων οἴοιτο εὐδαίμων εἶναι καὶ μακάριος, οἱ πρῶτον εὐθὺς φύσει συνέσταμεν, καθάπερ φασὶν οἱ τὰς τελετὰς λέγοντες, ὥσπερ ἂν ἐπὶ τιμωρία πάντες ; τοῦτο γὰρ θείως οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι λέγουσι τὸ φάναι διδόναι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμωρίαν καὶ ζῆν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ κολάσει μεγάλων τινῶν ἀμαρτημάτων. πάνυ γὰρ ἡ σύζευξις τοιούτω τινὶ ἔοικε πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς. ὥσπερ γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τῇ Τυρρηνίᾳ φασὶ βασανίζειν πολλάκις τοὺς ἀλισκομένους προσδεσμεύοντας κατ’ ἀντικρὺ τοῖς ζῶσι νεκροὺς ἀντιπροσώπους ἕκαστον πρὸς ἕκαστον μέρος προσαρμόττοντας, οὕτως ἔοικεν ἡ ψυχὴ διατετάσθαι καὶ προσκεκολληθῆσθαι πᾶσι τοῖς αἰσθητικοῖς τοῦ σώματος μέλεσιν. Hutchinson and Johnson 2005 convincingly argue that this section of Iamblichus’ *Protrepticus* comes directly from Aristotle’s own lost *Protrepticus*. The argument is supported by Augustine’s use of the same image, which he derives from a Ciceronian quotation of Aristotle (Augustine *contra Iul. Pelag.* 4(15) 78 = OF 430iv).

55 Like Philolaus, Aristotle attributes the idea that the soul is in the body for punishment (ἐπὶ τιμωρία) to extraordinary sources, both the *teletai* and the divinely inspired ancients, but it is not clear whether the gruesome image of pirate torture actually stems from his sources or is his own rhetorical flourish. Since the ramifications of such an anti-somatic view are hardly in keeping with Aristotle’s ideas for living a good life elsewhere in his works, it is tempting to suspect that it is a rhetorical flourish, a vivid image that is merely intended to stick in the memory - which it certainly did, turning up in Augustine even though both Aristotle’s work and the work of Cicero who quoted it have been lost.

indefinite - certain crimes, the things for which the soul pays the penalty, etc.⁵⁶ The soul is placed in the body to suffer the torments of life as a way of paying the penalty, like a prisoner in a torture chamber, and the life of the body is consequently imagined as the source of all these woes. Plato, it is interesting to note, generally avoids such language of compensatory punishment; the body may be an inferior location for the soul, a burden and a trouble, but it is not actively designed by the gods to torment us. Just as he moves in the *Cratylus* from the idea he attributes to those around Orpheus that the soul is imprisoned in the body to pay a penalty to the idea that the soul is being safeguarded in the enclosure of the body, so too in the *Phaedo* he introduces the idea of the φρουρά, taking advantage of its polyvalence to blur the lines of the argument.

- 29 The prohibition of suicide is the context for this famous and problematic image of the φρουρά. Socrates responds to the amazement of his interlocutors that he welcomes the approaching hour of his death with the argument that, just as he refuses Crito's offer to help him escape because of his respect for the laws, he believes that suicide, as a premature and unauthorized escape from the body, is forbidden. "Now the tale that is told in the secret rites (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις) about this matter, that we men are in a kind of custody (φρουρά) and must not set ourselves free or run away, seems to me to be weighty and not easy to understand."⁵⁷ Socrates presents this image as an expression that comes from rites of the kind which cannot be spoken openly (ἀπορρήτα), and his respect for the cult prohibitions is reinforced by his evaluation of the image as impressive and profound. The scholiast on the passage identifies the idea as coming from Orpheus, but Socrates' characterization of his source as both special and profound again already marks the idea as Orphic in the broadest sense.
- 30 The term φρουρά itself has been the subject of much debate, since it more often means some sort of garrison outpost than the sense of prison that it seems to have in the passage.⁵⁸ At issue is whether the soul's relation to the body is negative, an imprisonment for crimes committed previously, or whether it is more positive, a kind of protective custody or dangerous garrison service overseen by the gods. The controversy over the meaning raged even in the ancient Academy.⁵⁹ Some of these interpretations are extremely puzzling, and it is hard to see what φρουρά would mean in the *Phaedo* if it were identified with, e.g., the Good or the Demiurge.

⁵⁶ The indefinite nature of such references suggests that no single original sin is imagined for which all need to pay the penalty. Rather, it reflects the assumption that, somewhere in everyone's ancestry, there must have been something done that would anger the gods - human, and divine, nature is like that. Pace Bernabé 2011, p. 154, who argues that these philosophical sources make the definite Orphic idea of Titanic sin indefinite by deliberate transposition.

⁵⁷ Plato *Phaedo* 62b = OF 429i. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἐν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ ταύτης λύειν οὐδ' ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τις μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥᾶδιος διιδεῖν· Scholiast ad loc. (10 Green) = OF 429ii.

⁵⁸ Cp. Bernabé 2004, p. 357; Edmonds 2004, pp. 176-178. Cicero glosses it as *praesidium et statio* (*de senectute* 73).

⁵⁹ Damascius preserves a list of the different interpretations. "Ὅτι τούτοις χρώμενοι τοῖς κανόσι ῥαδίως διελέγξομεν, ὡς οὔτε τάγαθόν ἐστιν ἢ φρουρά, ὡς τινες, οὔτε ἢ ἡδονή, ὡς Νουμήνιος, οὔτε ὁ δημιουργός, ὡς Πατέριος, ἀλλ', ὡς Ξενοκράτης, Τιτανική ἐστὶν καὶ εἰς Διόνυσον ἀποκορυφοῦται. "Using these principles, we shall easily prove that 'the custody' is not the Good, as some say, nor pleasure, as Noumenios would have it, nor the Demiurge, as Paterios says, but rather, as Xenokrates has it, that it is Titanic and culminates in Dionysos." Xenokrates fr. 20 = Damascius *In Phaed.* I. 2 = OF ?)

- 31 Regardless of the later interpretations, in the *Phaedo* Socrates clearly links the life of the philosopher as a practice for dying (μελέτη θανάτου) with this image of the soul in the body, whether as a prisoner like Socrates awaiting release or as an Athenian sent out for dangerous service at a garrison outpost. In Plato, as in the Pythagorean Euxitheos cited in Athenaeus, the argument against suicide hinges on the idea that the gods have placed the soul in the body for their own purposes and, however painful life might be, humans have no right to remove the soul from the body before the gods decide the time of service is over.⁶⁰
- 32 A far more positive image comes from the other possible sense of φρουρά, the idea that the body is somehow a protective guard for the soul, a fortification in perhaps a hostile world, but something set up by gods who are not simply maliciously trying to torment mortals. In the *Phaedo*, the philosophic life is a kind of heroic venture, from which it would be shameful to desert like a soldier slipping away from the fortified frontier φρουρά to return to his comfortable home in Athens.⁶¹ While the sense of φρουρά as prison is certainly dominant in the dialogue, given the prison setting, Plato manages to add in a more positive sense of the word, which may indeed be why he uses φρουρά, a word which, as Burkert has noted, cannot have come from a hexameter text.⁶² A similar type of transposition, as Bernabé calls it, may be at work in the *Cratylus*. Socrates refers to the body as a prison for the purpose of paying a penalty, but he extends the idea to make this δεσμωτήριον into a protective περίβολος and derives the word σῶμα from σώζω, softening the harshness of the tomb imagery and putting a more positive spin on the incarceration. A comparison with the image in the *Phaedrus* of the soul emerging from the body as from an oyster shell reinforces this image of a tough, protective covering, rather than simply a restrictive prison.⁶³
- 33 As Ferwerda notes, this idea that the soul needs to be protected by the body is developed at length in the *Timaeus*' account of the formation of the body. "For life's

60 In the Platonic *Axiochus*, by contrast, the image of the φρουρά is used, not as an argument against suicide, but rather as a consolation for an old man fearing death - unlike Socrates in the *Phaedo*, who was an old man so unafraid of death that he needed to explain to his friends why suicide was not a good shortcut. "For each of us is a soul, an immortal being shut up in a mortal fortress (ἐν θνητῷ φρουρίῳ) ; and Nature has put this hut together for evil ... the aching soul yearns for the heavenly and kindred ether, and even thirsts for it, striving upwards for the feasting and dancing there." ἡμεῖς μὲν γάρ ἐσμεν ψυχῆ, ζῶον ἀθάνατον ἐν θνητῷ καθειργμένον φρουρίῳ· τὸ δὲ σκῆνος τουτὶ πρὸς κακοῦ περιήρμωσεν ἢ φύσις... ἡ ψυχὴ συναλγοῦσα τὸν οὐράνιον ποθεῖ καὶ σύμφυλον αἰθέρα, καὶ διψᾷ, τῆς ἐκεῖσε διαίτης καὶ χορείας ὀριγνωμένη. [Plato] *Axiochus* 365e-366a.

61 Cp. the image of trimming one's hair in mourning for abandoning the argument in *Phaedo*, as well as Socrates' refusal to leave Athens.

62 Burkert 1972, p. 126, n. 33. While φρουρά may not come from dactylic hexameter, Plato may have borrowed the word from Aristophanes. In the *Clouds*, Strepsiades complains that, while sitting around trying to think deep, philosophical thoughts, he has not only lost material things (money and shoes), but he has also become pale and lacking his vital force (ψυχῆ). He compares his situation to a frontier guardsman reduced to singing guardpost songs (φρουρᾶς ἄδων) as he wastes away at his lonely post Ar. Nub., 718-721. ὅτε μου φροῦδα τὰ χρήματα, φρούδη χροιά, φρούδη ψυχῆ, φρούδη δ' ἐμβάς· καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἔτι τοῖσι κακοῖς φρουρᾶς ἄδων ὀλίγου φροῦδος γεγένημαι. That he uses the word φρουρά is no doubt a word play on φροῦδα, lost, but Plato may well have had this passage in mind when choosing the word for the *Phaedo*.

63 *Phaedrus* 250c. Bernabé 1995, pp. 233-4, notes similar word play with σῶμα and σῆμα (in the form of ἀσήμαντοι) in the passage.

chains, as long as the soul remains bound to the body, are bound within the marrow, giving roots for the mortal race. ... So, to preserve (διασώζων) all of the seed, he [the Demiurge] fenced it in with a stony enclosure (περίβολον).”⁶⁴ Later, in discussing how the soul departs from the body when it dies of old age, he uses the image of the soul slipping through the interlocking triangles that hold the soul in. “Eventually the interlocking triangles around the marrow can no longer hold on, and come apart under stress, and when this happens they let the bonds of the soul go. The soul then is released in a natural way, and finds it pleasant to take its flight.”⁶⁵ The image of prison, recalled in the *Timaeus* by περίβολον and διασώζων that echo the *Cratylus*, makes way here for a woven fabric that holds the soul in the body until it wears out or is prematurely broken.

- 34 The image in the *Timaeus* is closer to an image that appears in Aristotle, which he attributes to the verses of Orpheus, that an entity comes into being like the weaving of a net.⁶⁶ Other sources attest to the existence of an Orphic poem with the title of the *Net* (Δίκτυον), which is attributed in the *Suda* to a Pythagorean author, either Zopyrus or Brontinus.⁶⁷ While the image is not entirely clear, West suggests that the soul is imagined as air occupying the interstices of the physical elements that make up the net.⁶⁸ In any case, the image of the body as a net that holds the soul together within the body, like the *Timaeus*’ image, suggests a much more positive interaction of soul and body - the body protects and maintains the soul. However, the image of the body as a net woven together to hold the soul until it deteriorates emphasizes the temporary nature of the body’s hold on the soul. Rather than a heavy tomb (or even an oyster shell), a net is a lighter and briefer thing, less burdensome in its binding and easier to unravel and remove. This idea of the body as temporary and easily removable is even more notable in a related image, the body as the garment of the soul. The *Suda* mentions a *Robe*

64 *Timaeus* 73b, 74a. οἱ γὰρ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί, τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ σώματι συνδουμένης, ἐν τούτῳ διαδοῦμενοι κατερρίζουν τὸ θνητὸν γένος· ... καὶ τὸ πᾶν δὴ σπέρμα διασώζων οὕτως λιθοειδεῖ περιβόλῳ συνέφραξεν. Ferwerda 1985, p. 275, compares this account to the etymology from σώζω in the *Cratylus*, “At the end of our passage Plato has Socrates say that he likes the Orphic interpretation of σῶμα even better than the Pythagorean one, because not even a letter need to be changed. He is, methinks, also happy with it because it harmonizes perfectly with his own view which, later on, he propounded in his *Timaeus*.” I would suggest rather that Plato modifies the Orphic interpretation to suit his own ideas.

65 *Timaeus* 81d.

66 Aristotle *de gen. anim.* 734a16 = OF 404. How, then, does it make the other parts? For either all the parts, such as the heart, lung, liver, eye, and each of the others, come into being all together or they come into being in succession, as in the so-called verses of Orpheus, for there he says that an animal comes into being in the same way as the weaving of a net. That it is not all at once is apparent even by perception, for some of the parts are clearly visible as already existing while others are not yet. Τὰ οὖν ἄλλα πῶς; ἢ γὰρ τοὶ ἅμα πάντα γίνεταί τὰ μόρια οἷον καρδία πνεύμων ἦπαρ ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον, ἢ ἐφεξῆς ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς καλουμένοις Ὀρφείως ἔπεσιν· ἐκεῖ γὰρ ὁμοίως φησὶ γίνεσθαι τὸ ζῶον τῆ τοῦ δικτύου πλοκῆ. ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐχ ἅμα καὶ τῆ αἰσθήσει ἐστὶ φανερόν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ φαίνεται ἐνόντα ἤδη τῶν μορίων τὰ δ’ οὐ.

67 *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς (Adler III 564.27) = OF 403. Cp. *Suda* s.v. ἵππος Νισαῖος = OF 405, where Orpheus is said to have mentioned the Nisaian horses in his Δίκτυον; the *Suda* entry derives from Pausanias Atticus, Ἀττικῶν ὀνομάτων συναγωγὴ s.v. ι 8.

68 West 1983, p. 10. He compares the idea to Philolaus’ number cosmogony in which the world is built up element by element like the loops in a net. Lobeck 1829, pp. 380-1, sarcastically dismisses Eschenbach’s suggestion that it refers to a cosmogonic interpretation of Hephaistos’ capture of Ares and Aphrodite, like that found in Proclus *in Remp.* 143.

(Πέπλος) in the same list of Pythagorean Orphica as the *Net*, and, like a net, a robe or tunic may be woven together to bind and cover the soul.⁶⁹ In his allegorical explanation of the Cave of the Nymphs in Homer, Porphyry depicts the nymphs, weaving together on their looms of stone the sea-purple substance of bodies for the souls descending into birth. He compares the work of these nymphs to the weaving of Kore in a poem by Orpheus, noting also that the ancients described the heavens as a robe.⁷⁰

The Garment of the Soul

- 35 The image of the body as the garment of the soul is thus fairly widespread, appearing first in Empedokles, continuing through the whole Platonic tradition, and turning up in funerary inscriptions and even in Epictetus. Only in certain sources is this garment thought of as one of a succession of garments which the soul may put on as it passes through the cycle of reincarnations ; more often, even in authors who talk about reincarnation in other passages, only a single wearing of the garment is envisaged. The image of the body as a protective covering also provides an explanation of the incarnation of the soul (and its exit), but nothing in the theory as it is explained, e.g., in the *Timaeus*, necessitates a cycle of reincarnations, endless or terminal. The same is true of the body as a prison and place of punishment for the soul.⁷¹ The image of the body as the tomb of the soul primarily serves to flip the expectations of life and death - life is death and therefore death may be (an even better) life. The focus on the contrast between the two terms makes the σῶμα-σῆμα image less likely to be associated with a series of reincarnations than the idea of the body as a prison.

69 In *Phaedo* 87, Cebes suggests that the body may be like a cloak for a soul that uses up many such garments before perishing itself, but this argument is directed at the claim that, because the soul outlasts the body, it must be imperishable. Plato characteristically picks up and transforms this traditional image for his own purposes in the dialogue.

70 Porphyry *de antro nymph.* 14 = OF 286i. Orpheus' poem describing the weaving of Kore, which is more likely to be the Πέπλος (cp. Lobeck 1829, p. 381), mentioned in the same Suda testimony as the Net, or perhaps another poem regarding the abduction of Kore. Bernabé suggests that the Pythagorean Πέπλος was later incorporated into the *Rhapsodies*, so he puts this passage of Porphyry among the Rhapsodic fragments. I would suggest that Porphyry's allegorical understanding of the weaving of Kore as signifying the oversight of Persephone over the process of genesis may result from the exegesis of a scene of Kore's weaving before her rape by Zeus in terms of an earlier (or later) *Peplos* poem that discussed the formation of material bodies (and perhaps the cosmos itself) in terms of the weaving of a garment, perhaps something like Pherecydes' image fr. 2, of the robe that Zas gives to Chthonie as a wedding gift that makes her the physical manifestation of Earth. Cp. West 1983 p. 97.

71 While Casadio 1991 is quite right to note that often one lifetime seemed insufficient for theodicy, such concerns did not always entail the idea of reincarnation. Dio's pessimist rules out reincarnation by allowing for the possibility that a man may beget a son to take over his spot in the gods' prison camp and receive his share of the gods' torments. Dio 30.17. By so many tortures and of such a kind, then, do men remain surrounded in this outpost and dungeon, each for his appointed time ; and most do not get out until they produce another person from their own selves and leave him as heir to the punishment in place of themselves, some leaving only one and others even more. τοιαῖσδε μὲν δὴ καὶ τοσαῖσδε βασάνοις ζυνεχομένους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν τῆδε τῇ φρουρᾷ καὶ τῶδε τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ μένειν τὸν τεταγμένον ἕκαστον χρόνον, καὶ μὴ πρὶν ἀπιέναι τοὺς πολλοὺς πρὶν ἂν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ποιησάμενος ἄλλον ἀνθ' ἑαυτοῦ καταλίπη διάδοχον τῆς κολάσεως, οἱ μὲν ἕνα, οἱ δὲ καὶ πλείους.

Reincarnation

- 36 Modern scholars have often debated whether the idea of reincarnation should be classified as Orphic, Pythagorean, or in some other way, but the ancient evidence shows that, while the idea was certainly attributed to Orpheus in some evidence, as well as to the Pythagoreans, it is not characteristic of all evidence connected with Orpheus. Reincarnation is thus Orphic in the sense that it is the sort of marginal idea that could be attributed to Orpheus, not in the sense that all evidence for Orphic ideas of the soul must incorporate an idea of reincarnation. Just as certain images of the soul's relation to the body are marked as extraordinary in some way, associated either with the wise and mysterious ancients or certain crazy crackpots, the notion of reincarnation is always marked as exceptional and is often attributed to figures like Orpheus or Pythagoras.⁷² The cycle of reincarnations is thus Orphic in the sense I have defined it here, in that it is applied to phenomena that bear the stamp of strangeness.⁷³ Plato himself refers reincarnation in the *Phaedo* to some ancient story (παλαιὸς τις λόγος) with the idea, although the Neoplatonic commentators Damascius and Olympiodorus identify the story as Orphic and Pythagorean.⁷⁴ In the *Meno*, Plato refers to wise priests and poets who put forth the idea, quoting a poet who is surely Pindar for the idea that Persephone sends mortals back into life, rewarding the good with the lot of kings.⁷⁵
- 37 In post-Platonic evidence, the idea of reincarnation is often introduced in the context of a moral argument, where the next life becomes a recompense for the deeds of the previous one, either for good or for ill. Such an argument can explain the apparent injustice of bad things happening to good people as well as serve as an exhortation to good behavior, even if divine justice does not seem immediately forthcoming.⁷⁶ In the myths of Plutarch, for instance visions of judgement and recompense in the underworld for the previous life are combined with an assignment of a new incarnation that serves as further recompense (for good or ill) of the prior life.⁷⁷ In the earlier evidence,

72 I use the Latin word 'reincarnation', rather than 'metempsychosis', because of the objections of certain ancient Platonists such as Proclus, who argued that metempsychosis should imply a body having a series of souls, rather than a soul having a series of bodies, the term for which would be metensomatosis (cp. Procl. *In R.* 2.322.28). While Pythagoras is usually credited with the origination of the idea of reincarnation, some sources make Pherecydes the one who gave Pythagoras the idea.

73 Often the notion is attributed to a foreign source. Herodotus claims that the idea of reincarnation is Egyptian, but, since the Egyptians did not, in fact, have any such notion for the fate of the deceased, Herodotus is presumably attributing Egyptian origin to something he knows from a Greek source. (Hdt. 2.123.1 = OF423.) Since he elsewhere (2.81) claims that practices thought to be Orphic and Bacchic are really Egyptian and Pythagorean, it seems plausible that he associates the idea of reincarnation with certain Orphica with which he was familiar. Diogenes Laertius, in his excursus on the sources of philosophy among the barbarians, says that Theopompus attributes the idea to the Persian magoi, another type of alien wisdom (Diogenes Laertius 1.1.9 = OF427ii).

74 Plato *Phaedo* 70c = OF428i. Cp. Olympiodorus in *Plat. Phaed.* 10.6 = OF428ii and Damascius in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.203 = OF428iii. The fragment of Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 40 Smith = OF 427i) is too heavily restored to help identify the source of the idea as Orphic, rather than Pythagorean, and even the nature of the idea at issue in the fragment depends heavily upon the speculations of the editors.

75 Plato *Meno* 81 = OF424, quoting Pindar fr. 133 = OF 443.

76 Cp. Obeyesekere 2002 on ethicization of the afterlife as a process of rationalizing and universalizing.

77 Cp. Plut. fr. 200.48-59 and *de Sera Num.* 565de for Plutarchan adaptations of these Platonic ideas.

however, the idea of reincarnation as recompense, familiar to modern scholars in the Indian system of *karma*, does not always seem to underlie the movement of the soul from one body to the next. Empedokles' list of incarnations – male, female, bird, plant, fish – baffles any attempt to find the reasons behind his change of lives.⁷⁸ Aristotle likewise complains that the Pythagoreans imagine transmigration of any soul to any body, regardless of the suitability of the soul for the body, and the earliest testimony to Pythagoras' belief in reincarnation comes from the mockery of Xenophanes, who portrays him as recognizing an old friend's voice in the howling of a puppy.⁷⁹ Such notions of reincarnation seem grounded in the idea of the mutability of physical elements that transform into different combinations, and the new incarnation may be taken as random instead of dependent on past behavior.

- 38 Although Aristotle does not explicitly connect the two, he also mentions the idea, which appears in the so-called verses of Orpheus (ὁ ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς ἔπεσι καλουμένοις λόγος), that bodies breathe in the soul as it is carried about by the winds. Aristotle's commentators add little that could not be derived from this notice, but Iamblichus attributes the idea to a specific work, the *Physika*.⁸⁰ Iamblichus suggests that the individual souls are parcelled out from the One soul in these individual acts of breathing, and the idea that the soul is breathed in is also attributed to Orpheus by Vettius Valens, who quotes several verses that link the soul with air : “for humans, the soul derives its roots from the aither” and “it is by drawing in the air that we acquire a divine soul”.⁸¹ The blowing of the winds could produce the random incarnations

78 Empedokles fr. 117 = Hippolytus *Ref. Omn. Haer.* 1.3.2.3-4 = Diogenes Laertius 8.77. For in the past I have already been a boy and a girl, a shrub and a bird and the fish that leaps from the sea as it travels. ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμεν κούρως τε κόρη τε θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς. Empedokles' vegetable incarnations do not seem to have created the same problem for eating vegetable food, which should caution us against taking this fragment too literally and out of the context of Empedokles' ideas about the elements reforming into different types of matter. Proclus of course does take it literally and worries about the issue (*in Remp.* II.333).

79 Aristotle *de anima* 407b20 ; Xenophanes fr.7 = Diogenes Laertius 8.36.

80 Aristotle *de anima* 410b27 = OF 421i. Neither Aristotle nor his commentators explicitly refer this process of incarnation to a theory of reincarnations. Iamblichus *de anima* ap. Stob. *Flor.* 1.49.32 = I, 366.7 Wachsmuth = I.8 Dillon = OF 421vi. Gaisford emended the MSS reading of φυσικοῖς to match Aristotle's Ὀρφικοῖς, but Iamblichus provides more information than is contained in Aristotle's passage, and Gagné 2007 suggests that Iamblichus may have known the Orphic text as the *Physika*. This title, as Gagné points out, is likely a later name for a poem that was perceived to set out ideas relating to the composition of the physical cosmos, but he suggests that we can identify a particular work, extant in the fourth century, to which Aristotle is alluding. Gagné speculates that this Orphic text may have portrayed the Tritopatores, the personifications of the ancestral spirits who watch over the health and fertility of the family or community, as winds that bring the souls into bodies.

81 ψυχὴ δ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἀπ' αἰθέρος ἐρρίζωται ... ἀέρα δ' ἔλκοντες ψυχὴν θεῖαν δρεπόμεσθα. Vettius Valens 9.1.42-44 = OF 422 + 436. The notion of drawing in a divine soul by breathing is reminiscent of imagery from the Chaldaean Oracles (and also the Mithras Liturgy ; cp. Edmonds 2000) Valens, however, does not link the idea with reincarnation, but rather uses Orpheus' authority to bolster his claims about the immortality and divine nature of the soul. ψυχὴ δ' ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν. ... ψυχὴ δ' ἀθάνατος πάντων, τὰ δὲ σώματα θνητά. Vettius Valens ix.1.44-45 = OF 426, 425. It is a pity, but characteristic of the harm done by previous scholarship, that Komorowska 2004, p. 324, concludes that Valens could have had no real knowledge of the Orphica but must have found the text from some other source, simply because these lines quoted from Orpheus fail to match the supposed doctrines of “the necessity to recover the Dionysiac element” and other corollaries of the Zagreus myth (see Edmonds 1999, 2008b, and 2013).

implied by the Pythagorean theory, and the image of the soul borne upon the winds until breathed in may well be an image from an early Orphic poem, perhaps one composed by a Pythagorean.⁸²

- 39 Rather than having souls randomly blowing in the wind, Plato depicts a systematic process where the nature of the soul in one life determines the incarnation in the next. The most elaborate descriptions of the process of reincarnations come in the myths, where a vision of the cycle of life and afterlife is manipulated for philosophical purposes.⁸³ The complicated details of the process of reincarnation differ among the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, and these differences meticulously correspond to the details of the arguments in the respective dialogues. In the *Phaedo*, the soul that is too attached to the body will slip into another body, one that most closely resembles its nature. Those who indulged their appetites for food and sex become donkeys, while those who unjustly and tyrannically preyed upon others become wolves or other predators. Those who led decent but mindless lives end up as bees or ants or perhaps even humans again; the next life represents a continuation of the previous, the animal forms vividly illustrating its nature just as the afterlife fates in traditional myths reflect and continue the lives of the deceased.⁸⁴ The same sort of mirroring appears in the *Republic*, where some souls choose incarnations that suit the character of their previous lives, like Thersites as an ape or Orpheus as a swan. However, Plato here introduces the element of choice, so that some souls choose to compensate for the defects of their previous lives; the choices can be rational and philosophic, like Odysseus, or thoughtless and greedy, like the first soul that chooses tyranny.⁸⁵ The element of choice is further modified in the *Phaedrus*, where the hierarchy of incarnations (philosopher, king, doctor, etc. down to tyrant) correlates to how much of true reality the soul has seen on its latest rotation through the heavens.

A human soul enters into the life of a beast, and, from a beast, someone who was once human back into a human. But a soul that never saw the truth will never come to this human form, for it is necessary for a human to understand speech according to the general form, going from many perceptions to a single one, collecting them together by reasoning. This is recollection of those things which once upon a time our soul saw as it was traveling

82 Proclus (*in Remp.* II.339.20-26 = OF 339) quotes a later Orphic poem that has made the systematic distinction between the souls of humans and animals, moralizing human reincarnations but leaving animal ones random. “When the souls of beasts or winged birds flit forth, and the sacred life leaves them, for them there is no one to lead the soul to the house of Hades, but rather it flutters vainly about itself until, mingled with the breath of the wind, another body snatches it in. But when a human being leaves the light of the sun, Kyllenian Hermes leads the immortal souls to the enormous depths of the earth.” αἱ μὲν δὴ θηρῶν τε καὶ οἰωνῶν πτεροέντων| ψυχαὶ ὄτ’ αἰξῶσι, λίπη δέ μιν ἱερὸς αἰὼν,| τῶν οὐ τις ψυχὴν παράγει δόμον εἰς Αἴδαο,| ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ πεπότηται ἐτώσιον, εἰς ὃ κεν αὐτὴν| ἄλλο ἀφαρπάξῃ μίγδην ἀνέμοιο πνοῆσιν·| ὀπότε δ’ ἄνθρωπος προλίπη φάος ἡελίοιο,| ψυχὰς ἀθανάτας κατὰγει Κυλλήνιος Ἑρμῆς| γαίης ἐς κευθμῶνα πελώριον·

83 See my treatment of the *Phaedo* myth in Edmonds 2004, ch. 4. The myths in the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* have even more elaborate systems of reincarnation, but Plato does not try to maintain a consistent system between the dialogues. Indeed, it is debatable whether the myth in the *Gorgias* even involves a process of reincarnation, since the focus is entirely upon judgement and recompense.

84 *Phaedo* 81b5-82b9.

85 *Republic* 620ac.

together with the god, disregarding the things which we now say are real and lifting up its head to the truly real.⁸⁶

- 40 In the *Phaedrus*, the process of reasoning from particular perceptions to a unity (*synhairesis*) that is crucial to proper rhetoric and which guides proper eros becomes the fundamental principle of the system of reincarnations, making the right choice of new life dependent on a kind of proper philosophical reasoning inaccessible to beasts and exercised by only a few humans.
- 41 Plato makes use of the extra-ordinary idea of reincarnation, found in some Orphic poems and attributed to certain Pythagoreans, to reinforce some of the central ideas of his dialogues, transforming a random process of movements of a soul into new bodies into systems that mesh with his ideas of a rationally ordered cosmos. The details of the system in each dialogue, however, correspond to the important issues in that dialogue and so are not precisely consistent with one another, suggesting that Plato makes use of these ideas without resting too much weight on their precise details. In each dialogue, Socrates attributes the ideas of the myth to some unspecified but special source, hedging, in characteristically Platonic fashion, the authority of the source. For example, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates insists on the fundamental truth of the ideas, even while he simultaneously marks their strangeness and opens them up to (philosophical) questioning: “No sensible man would insist that these things are exactly as I have described them, but I think that it is fitting for a man to risk the belief - for the risk is a noble one - that this, or something like this is true about our souls and their dwelling places.”⁸⁷

Conclusions

- 42 The idea that the soul survives death is not an unfamiliar idea to the interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues, and the mythic tradition provided a wealth of images and ideas that Plato could refashion for his own purposes, using the familiarity of the myths to increase both the authoritative power and the expressive capacity of his reworkings. The idea, however, that the soul is somehow immortal, imperishable like the gods, *is* an extra-ordinary and unfamiliar idea. Towards the end of the *Republic*, Socrates asks his interlocutor, “Have you not realized that our soul is immortal and never perishes?” And he looked at me in amazement and said: ‘By Zeus, I have not. Can you really say that?’⁸⁸ The arguments in the *Phaedo* are designed to convince some of Socrates’ closest and most philosophical interlocutors of this strange proposition and to explore its consequences. Here Plato draws on less familiar sources, the speculations of

86 *Phaedrus* 249bc. ἔνθα καὶ εἰς θηρίου βίον ἀνθρωπίνη ψυχὴ ἀφικνεῖται, καὶ ἐκ θηρίου ὅς ποτε ἄνθρωπος ἦν πάλιν εἰς ἄνθρωπον. οὐ γὰρ ἦ γε μήποτε ἰδοῦσα τὴν ἀλήθειαν εἰς τόδε ἦξει τὸ σχῆμα. δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ’ εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὸν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῶ συναιρούμενον· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν ἀνάμνησις ἐκείνων ἃ ποτ’ εἶδεν ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχὴ συμπορευθεῖσα θεῶ καὶ ὑπεριδοῦσα ἃ νῦν εἶναι φαμεν, καὶ ἀνακύψασα εἰς τὸ ὄν ὄντως.

87 *Phaedo* 81e-82a. Τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελέλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρί· ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ’ ἅττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκίσεις, ἐπεὶ περ ἀθάνατόν γε ἢ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὔσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρέπει μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν—καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος.

88 *Republic* 608d2-6. Οὐκ ἦσθησαι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ὅτι ἀθάνατος ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται; Καὶ ὅς ἐμβλέσας μοι καὶ θαυμάσας εἶπε· Μὰ Δί’, οὐκ ἔγωγε· σὺ δὲ τοῦτ’ ἔχεις λέγειν;

Pythagoras and Empedokles and the poems attributed to Orpheus, to build up his images of the soul and its nature, but still he plays with them, transposing them for his own purposes.⁸⁹

- 43 The image of the soul imprisoned in the body for punishment becomes instead the image of the soul protected from the turmoil of the material world within the covering of the body like an oyster in its shell or the soul nobly serving its tour of duty in the garrison outpost of the mortal world, like a philosopher in the *Republic* who has returned to the cave. The body may be like a woven garment the soul puts on – once or many different times, but, as Socrates chides Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, the soul itself cannot be so easily worn out, nor will it scatter when blown on the winds : “You seem afraid, like children, that as the soul goes out from the body, the wind may literally blow it apart and disperse it.”⁹⁰ Plato takes the idea, found by Aristotle in Orphic poems, of the soul blowing on the wind, and transforms it, creating a rational system by which the soul moves from incarnation to incarnation according to its ethical behavior and its ability to make philosophic choices rather than the random motions of the wind. Above all, Plato uses the traditional association of this soul with the unseen realm of Hades to assimilate it with the objects of knowledge that are seen not by the eye of the body but only by the mental perceptions of the soul.
- 44 Not all of the images and ideas that Plato transposes in his dialogues come from sources labeled, for one reason or another, as Orphic ; many indeed derive from the common mythological tradition of the lively afterlife that mirrors life, a tradition that served as a counterpoint to the epic vision of Homer where poetic glory provides the only meaningful form of life after death. So artfully does Plato weave together his ideas and so scanty is the evidence for visions of the afterlife before Plato that scholars have had difficulty determining the sources of his ideas. The problem is compounded by the tendency in the NeoPlatonists to link to the Orphica any Platonic idea that they wanted to ground in the authority of the most ancient tradition. So too, Plato’s own success works against the recognition of his own innovations, since post-Platonic Orphicists made sure to incorporate the influential ideas of Plato into the Orphic poems which they forged, creating a vicious circle and further reinforcing the claims of NeoPlatonists such as Olympiodorus that “Plato borrows everywhere from Orpheus.”⁹¹

89 Empedokles proclaims himself to be one of the special ones (fr. 112 = Diogenes Laertius 8.62) , while two of the 4th century gold tablets from Thurii announce that the deceased has become a god from a mortal (A1 θεός δ’ ἔσῃ ἀντὶ βροτοῦ ; A4.θεός ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου), but this still remains an exceptional reward for an exceptional person.

90 *Phaedo* 77d7-e1. δεδιέναι τὸ τῶν παίδων, μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ ἄνεμος αὐτὴν ἐκβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος διαφυσᾶ καὶ διασκεδάννυσιν.

91 Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 7.10.10.

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Résumés

The NeoPlatonist Olympiodorus claims that “Plato borrows everywhere from Orpheus”, but many of the afterlife ideas which Plato is supposed to have drawn from “Orphism” come not from the Orphica, but from the broader mythological tradition. Even those elements which Plato did draw from the Orphica or similar sources, however, he transformed in significant ways to suit his philosophical purposes in the particular dialogue. I first examine the idea, which appears in many different sources from the earliest evidence, of a lively afterlife, an idea that differs from the epic vision of Homer where poetic glory provides the only meaningful form of life after death. Nevertheless, a differentiated afterlife with judgement, complex geography, and rewards and punishments was a widespread and generally accepted idea, which Plato manipulates in various ways in different dialogues. By contrast, other ideas of the relation of the soul to the body, such as the soul entombed in the body or the process of reincarnation, appear marked, in the evidence of Plato and others, as extra-ordinary and unfamiliar ideas, which Plato again transposes to fit his arguments in the dialogue.

Mots-clefs

lively afterlife, Plato, Orphica, reincarnation, transpositions, epic glory