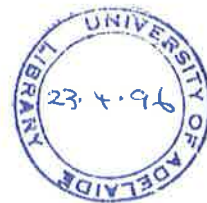


Errata

- p.26 after “Certainly, Empedocles fr.129 bears witness to Pythagoras’ extraordinary memory;” add:
ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς,
ὅς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον.
παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν ἐπιήρανος ἔργων·
ὀππότε γὰρ πάσησιν ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεσσιν,
ῥεῖά γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον,
καὶ τε δέκ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ τ’ εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν.
- p.26 after the above text add note “43a”; in the notes add “43a: See pp.89-91 for further discussion of this fragment and the association of Empedocles with Pythagoras.”
- p.44, line 7 for “have” read “has”
- p.98-103 for “Annas (1982a)” read “Annas (1986a)”; for “Annas (1982b)” read “Annas (1986b)”
- p.105, line 7 after “dialogues” add “as my argument will demonstrate”
- p.107 for “ἀκήκοα...πραγματα” read “ἀκήκοα γὰρ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα”
- p.139 for “and in the central Asian area (close to the Black Sea)” read “and in the area around the Black Sea”
- p.153, line 1 delete “are”
- p.179, line 10 for “à la” read “as in”
- p.181, line 2 for “in a specific ‘place of punishment’ (δικαιωτήριον)” read “in ‘places of punishment’ (τὰ δικαιωτήρια: 249a6)”.
- p.245 under Suda, s.v. Φερεκύδης (DK7A2) (2 Schibli): in line 4, for “πεζῶ” read “πεζῶ”
- p.245 under Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, I.16.38 (DK7A5) (7 Schibli): in line 3, for “etiam” read “etiam”
- p.252 for “works of...in this regard;” read “works of the Neoplatonic allegorist Porphyry, and Numenius, Celsius and Origen, in this regard;”
- p.252 for “all of which post-date Pherecydes by at least 800 years” read “all of which considerably post-date Pherecydes”
- p.256 for “(b)...” read “But, (b)...”
- p.266 for “rather, he is using ‘Orphic things’...as part of the nebulous notion of ‘Orphic things’” read “rather, he is using Ὀρφεία as a generic and pejorative term, a part of all the odd ideas which Hippolytus follows...as part of the nebulous mass of ideas relating to Orpheus (including, the term ‘Orphic’).”
- p.291 for “dissatisfactory” read “unsatisfactory”
- p.294,n.4 for “See also Keuls,E. *Water-carriers in Hades* ??” read “See also Keuls,E. (1974) *The Water-carriers in Hades* Hakkert,Amsterdam [not seen]?”
- p.294 and p.294,n.5 after “The evil of pleasure” add note “5a”; in the notes add “5a: it is clear from 500d that “the pleasant is other than the good” (εἶναι μὲν τι ἀγαθόν, εἶναι δέ τι ἡδύ, ἕτερον δὲ τὸ ἡδὺ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ). The example of medicine (art) v. cookery (habitude) bears this out: it is these latter types of pleasures that are evils. This is far more subtle than, for example, Iamblichus *VP* 85: ‘Pleasure is in all circumstances bad; for we came here to be punished and we ought to be punished’ - cf. p.30.”
- p.311, line 8 delete “the”
- p.335 under Edwards,A.T. (1985), for “*GRBS* 26, 215-137” read “*GRBS* 26, 215-237”
- p.342 for “Kirk,G.S. & Raven, J.E. (1975)” read “Kirk,G.S. & Raven, J.E. (1957)”



Reincarnation in Early Greek Thought

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the appearance of reincarnation (often termed metempsychosis or palingenesis) in early Greek thought, and traces the idea from its first appearance in the religious and mystic movements of Greece and Magna Graecia, to its fullest expansion and expression in Plato's philosophical discourses.

Primarily an examination of literary sources, this thesis does not focus on unrealizable questions such as the origins and entry of the concept of reincarnation into Greek thought/belief. Rather, it is a chronological survey of the movements and authors for whom there is extant evidence of reincarnation doctrine/s, and also an attempt to elucidate whether metempsychotic thought in Greece can be described in terms of development and continuity.

The main text of the thesis focuses on an assessment of Pythagoras and the Pythagorean movement, Pindar (*Olympian 2* and fragment 133), Empedocles, and Plato. This final, and largest, section investigates Plato's use of the "baggage" of reincarnation (immortality, Seelenwanderungslehre, *anamnesis* etc.). By analysing the circumstances and intentions which herald the introduction of seemingly disreputable metaphysical speculation into the philosophical dialogues of *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*, this thesis tenders a number of opinions as to what motivated Plato's use of reincarnation.

This section points to the conclusion of this thesis - that in no two sources on reincarnation in early Greek thought can a single cohesive doctrine be found. Reincarnation was adapted and indeed exploited to its fullest potential by all of the religious, speculative, and, finally, philosophical movements that adopted it. Far from being a static or orthodox belief (as in Buddhism, for example), throughout the study of early Greek thought on reincarnation, we can trace bold, creative and independent developments of the concept far beyond doctrinal or heretical limits.

This thesis concludes with five appendices relating to other aspects of reincarnation in the Greek world. Appendices A, B and C investigate three sources traditionally linked with reincarnation, but for which this writer cannot find sufficient illustration of this phenomenon: viz, Pherecydes of Syros, the "Orphic" movement/s, and Plato's *Gorgias*. Appendix D is an analysis and criticism of the theory linking shamanism and transmigration; and Appendix E assesses macro-/microcosmic reincarnation and eternal recurrence.

The various thinkers or movements discussed in this thesis are not visualized as existing in a vacuum separate from one another: indeed, throughout this work a number of recurring elements suggest common bonds, even if direct influence cannot be assumed. The preponderance of evidential links with Magna Graecia, for example, is one of those many threads which build up the rich, albeit fragmentary, tapestry of reincarnation in early Greek thought.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Acknowledgments

This thesis was supervised by Dr. R. Newbold and Dr. A. Geddes of the Department of Classics, University of Adelaide. To both I owe many thanks for their practical knowledge, helpfulness and forbearance.

I received valuable criticism of a preliminary draft of Part II (Plato) from Mr. D. Hester, of the same department. Dr. Elizabeth Pender, a visiting scholar from King's College, University of London, provided practical help with current methodologies in Platonic studies.

My research was aided by an Australian Postgraduate Research Award (APRA) which I held from 1993-1995.

Last, but far from least, this thesis was proof-read, and a number of stylistic points were improved upon, by Andrea Katsaros.

This work is dedicated to my friends Andrea, Jeni, Paula and Sue:

*Our two soules therefore, which are one,
Though I must goe, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,*

...

*Thy firmnes makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.*

(John Donne *A Valediction forbidding mourning*)



INTRODUCTION

Λεωτυχίδου τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος πρὸς Φίλιππον τὸν Ὀρφεοτελεστὴν
παντελῶς πτωχὸν ὄντα, λέγοντα δ' ὅτι οἱ παρ' αὐτῷ μνηθέντες
μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτὴν εὐδαιμονοῦσι, 'τί οὖν, ᾧ ἀνόητε'
εἶπεν 'οὐ τὴν ταχίστην ἀποθνήσκεις, ἴν' ἀναπαύσῃ
κακοδαιμονίαν καὶ πενίαν κλαίων;'
Plutarch *Apophthegm. Laconic.* 224e

“Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where's it going to end?”
T. Stoppard *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*

*

What is reincarnation?

As a descriptive term, “reincarnation” is deliberately vague: it is an adequately all-embracing designation for a number of phenomena that are, in the Greek examples, so similar as to be almost one. Thus μετεμψύχωσις, μετενσωμάτωσις, and παλιγγενεσία - while strictly different in meaning - in practice refer to the one circumstance,¹ and that is the transmigration of the soul from one body to another, with the implication that this movement occurs after the “death” of the first body.² Reincarnation implies more than one incarnation of the

¹ For example, Servius A. iii,68 writes “Pythagoras non μετεμψύχωσιν sed παλιγγενεσίαν esse dicit.” Rohde (1925) p.361,n.84 gives a brief history of the vocabulary: παλιγγενεσία is the earliest attestation (Plato *Phaedo* 70c); μετενσωμάτωσις is frequent but late; and, “The word most commonly used among ourselves, μετεμψύχωσις, is among the Greeks precisely the least usual.” Cf. H.S.Long’s 1948 thesis “A Study of the Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Greece from Pythagoras to Plato”. As Philip (1966) p.165,n.4 notes, “‘metempsychosis’ has only pretensions to correctness”.

² If the movement occurs from a living body to another, or as a journey away and return to the same body, this is an entirely different phenomenon, although one often confused with reincarnation. See Appendix D for a discussion of shamanism and related ideas. Cf. Pindar fr. 131 on the “dream soul”.

soul, generally into different bodies, often including animals, and sometimes plants.³ As a system, reincarnation can be described as a “cycle”.

The transmigration of the soul depends on the ability of this entity to survive the death of the body.⁴ In all of the examples discussed in this thesis, the soul is “non-mortal” or “deathless” (ἀθάνατος) - it has eternal or, as in Empedocles, long-term temporal immortality. The most important aspect of the continued existence of the soul is its potential function as a carrier of individuality, character, and memory.⁵

A theory of reincarnation presupposes one of two post-mortem scenarios: first, incarnation is *random* and not connected with any system of ethics or concept of moral progression. For example, the “primitive”⁶ idea that the soul enters a body, carried on the winds, is more often connected with the creation and first incarnation of human-beings in cosmogonical/anthropogonical literature. Aristotle *De anima* 410b19, for example, refers this theory to the Orphics and, by implication, to reincarnation.⁷

³ See Chapter 3 (Empedocles).

⁴ In the Greek context, reincarnation is incompatible with the Homeric description of the soul, because it does not exist as a separate and separable entity.

⁵ It is simple to think of this carrier as akin to a computer “floppy disk”, which can hold information and be transferred from computer to computer, accessible to each.

⁶ Nilsson (1935) p.213 refers this to an “old and popular belief”.

⁷ See Appendix B.

The random system is *morally* purposeless. Lacking systematization, reincarnation would seem to incline the adherent to fatalism or belief in the inevitability of events: and if this were not limited by a [post-mortem] monitoring of behaviour (for example, a doctrine of retributive justice), it would be useless as a practicable religio-social system⁸ and therefore be no stimulus to live a life of virtue (in Platonic terms). Of course, moral dissatisfaction within this system cannot exist if there is no retention of memory: however, this does not in any way make for an attractive belief, and would have little to recommend it to those promulgating soteriology.

The second form that a theory of reincarnation can take is illustrated in the evidence of the early Greek thinkers,⁹ and is by far the more logical conception. That is, reincarnation is connected with an eschatology developed on ethical principles, where justice is served by post-mortem judgement, punishment/reward, and/or future incarnation. Thus, *one's behaviour in this world determines one's incarnation in the next.*

This theory of reincarnation comes with heavy moral baggage: in its most developed form, reincarnation can become the *raison d'être* for the ills and

⁸ A simplistic example: to lead a life of outstanding moral rectitude, yet be incarnated as a cockroach in the next life would, *if a continuity of memory is assumed*, be no stimulus to live a life of virtue (in Platonic terms). Cf. Churchill's statement: "It is conceivable that I might well be reborn as a Chinese coolie. In such a case I should lodge a protest" - quoted by Fisher (1993) p.xii.

⁹ It is also the one best known in modern times, for example, in Indian beliefs.

injustices of society, explaining the inexplicable - cripples, birth defects, deformities, social disadvantages, and even bad luck. It can also, to a certain extent, reduce attribution of these seemingly unjust handicaps and/or boons to the whims of gods, and therefore shift responsibility to the actions of the individual.¹⁰ Thus reincarnation can become a legalistic, yet personally reassuring, foundation for a society's moral code.

As for the other “baggage” of reincarnation, intimately connected with moral and ethical metempsychotic thinking, one finds proscriptions intended to limit the ways that a believer can unintentionally offend in life (and thus be punished in the afterlife or next lifetime). Some are logical: vegetarianism, for example, is usually grounded in a prohibition on killing, not from respect or pity for animals, but because of the damage that killing an ensouled creature (perhaps a relative)¹¹ does to one's own moral record.¹² Cf. the terms of Theseus' criticism of Hippolytus:

ἤδη νῦν αὖχει καὶ δι' ἀψύχων βορᾶς
 σίτοις καπήλευ', Ὀρφέα τ' ἄνακτ' ἔχων
 βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς'
 (*Hippolytus* 952-4)

¹⁰ Beyond this, it can link with predetermination, although this is another morally ambiguous area.

¹¹ e.g. Empedocles fr.137; cf. *Laws of Manu* 5.55

¹² Plutarch, in his survey of abstinences, gives a number of reasons for vegetarianism: (1) based on religion/mysticism (do not eat *ensouled* creatures); (2) do not eat animals because they possess reason just as we do (i.e. extend human justice to animals); (3) animal products are not wholesome or not hygienic (i.e. health reasons). Of these reasons, Plutarch ranks reincarnation and religious reasons quite low: Tsekourakis (1986) provides a full discussion of this, citing *De esu carniū*, etc.

Ensoulement may also include plants and vegetables, and the devotees of extreme forms of reincarnation belief do not plough the land, or cut vegetables etc.¹³

An idea of great significance to the Greek thinkers is the implication that - because of the dichotomy between the soul that survives (carrier of memory etc.), and the body that perishes - it is the soul which is all-important. Further to this is the judgement that the body is a burden on the soul, leading the soul astray: thus its influence must be minimized. Therefore reincarnation is often linked with an ascetic lifestyle - a neglect of the bodily and material.¹⁴ In many cases this implies a rejection of traditional social mores, particularly if reincarnation is an esoteric belief, or, as in Greece, not intimately connected with the traditional beliefs of the community. For this reason, esoteric reincarnation teaching, generally poorly

¹³ This is not seen in the Greek world, although Empedocles warns his followers to stay away from beans and laurel. Adherents of Jainism, for example, also find souls in earth, water (fog, clouds, rain, seas, dew, snow etc.) and fire, and adopt a cautious policy of prevention. Cf. the stories associated with Mani (fl. AD 220-240, founder of the Manichaeans) which illustrate the concept of the "Living Soul" or "animism": Henrichs (1979). Stories in the *Cologne Mani Codex* tell of vegetables bleeding and crying out when cut. Those who injure vegetables and trees are destined to be reincarnated as the same, but it is the task of the highest level of Manichaeans (the "elect") to eat as *many* plant souls as possible, to free these souls without fear of harm to themselves. The other Manichaeans reap the benefits of giving melons and cucumbers to the elect by becoming melons and cucumbers or an elect in the next life. The Indian parallels with Manichaeism have been detailed by West (1971) p.66,n.4 and Henrichs (1979). The idea of rebirth according to one's offence is present both in the *Laws of Manu* and in Greece (cf. Plato *Laws* 870d; q.v.), although the idea of reincarnation into *exactly the same form* is not expressed with such definition. There are few grounds for close comparison with the Greek examples (despite evidence for Mani's occasional following of the Neoplatonists) in Indian and other systems, primarily, no doubt, because the Greek systems are always set into a background of traditional religion.

¹⁴ A belief in reincarnation is very hard to prove by any means other than literary records. For example, I could suggest that an absence of grave goods might indicate a belief in the superiority of the soul to the body - that is, a belief in reincarnation - because nothing had been provided for the *body* in the traditional afterlife. Unfortunately, this is hardly a balanced argument, because a lack of grave goods can have many other significances. But, if we look at the problem from a literary perspective, in *Laws* 959a ff there is a ruling forbidding extravagant burial rites because the body means nothing - it is merely the semblance of the soul.

understood by non-adherents, is often mocked, despised or violently opposed - reactions which are found in the Greek examples.¹⁵

This is a brief summary of the concept of reincarnation, and also an introduction to ideas which appear in greater detail in the following chapters.

The origins of reincarnation in Greece

Reincarnation first appears in the Greek world in the sixth century BC, and is rarely absent throughout the Classical period. It is found explicitly in the corpus of material associated with Pythagoras, Empedocles, Pindar, and ⁸⁷is at its fullest development in Plato. Denied by Aristotle (*De anima* 407b20ff.), it did not resurface again until the time of Plutarch.¹⁶

The appearance of beliefs or theories of reincarnation could have occurred in Greece in two ways:

(a) *as an import*: This is, in many ways, the simplest solution. Although the field of contact was not very wide, the evidence is non-existent. India is usually the first suggestion; for example, the Hindu *Laws of Manu* are reminiscent of

¹⁵ Cf. Xenophanes' ridicule of Pythagoras (D.L. 8.36).

¹⁶ See Tsekourakis (1986).

statements made by Empedocles.¹⁷ Moreover, Buddhism was in its formative stages at approximately the same time as Pythagoras was teaching; nevertheless, evidence for cultural links with India cannot be substantiated before the Hellenistic Age.¹⁸

Herodotus 2.123 suggests that reincarnation had its origin in Egypt, whence it was borrowed by the Greeks. Yet, there is no attestation of reincarnation in Egypt, despite our extensive knowledge of Egyptian religion, and we should always bear in mind Herodotus' passion for attributing Greek ideas to the Egyptians - it is proverbial, but unlikely.¹⁹ Eastern origins²⁰ (Mesopotamia etc.) are postulated by M.L. West,²¹ and Northern (particularly Thracian and shamanic) origins by Dodds and others. The former seem to be too far removed in the area of religion *per se* (although one cannot doubt that *mythology*, cosmology and astronomy have many comparative links), and the latter, particularly the shamanic connection, are far from promising.²²

However, I would not deny that the Greeks *were* great borrowers of ideas (not only in religious fields), and were open to the introduction of new religious

¹⁷ Cf. Empedocles fragments DK 31 B 139, 136, 137 (although the concept of a *lex talionis* is absent) and *Laws of Manu* 5.55: "Me he will devour in the next (life), whose flesh I eat in this." Cited by West (1971) p.61 & n.4.

¹⁸ Almond (1987). For example, D.L. 9.61-3 on Pyrrho (4th century BC). The evidence for Buddhist influence on later Alexandrian and Roman writers is far from certain, despite our knowledge of cultural connections.

¹⁹ Richardson (1987) p.61

²⁰ Even Far Eastern, for example, a Taoist origin in China: Hussey (1972) p.73.

²¹ West (1971)

²² See Appendix D for a full discussion of shamanism and reincarnation.

cults and deities.²³ However, on this issue one can conclude little from such limited evidence.

The other option is that, (b) *reincarnation has a "home grown" origin.*²⁴ Reincarnation could have been, for example,

(i) a "logical" step from primitive analogies between crop regeneration (agricultural *rebirth*, as it were) to spiritual rebirth. That is, the notion that the eternal ploughing-sowing-reaping cycle of nature was analogous to a human cycle of birth-death-[rebirth]. The origin of the Eleusinian Mysteries is sometimes thought to reflect this idea.²⁵

(ii) a development from resurrection stories, such as that told about the phoenix.²⁶ The link between reincarnation and resurrection is not, however, as close as it may seem; indeed it is based on antithetical ideas²⁷ - the former relates to the soul, the latter specifically to the rebirth of the *body*.

²³ For example, that of Cybele which does not appear to be connected with the afterlife or soteriology: Sfameni Gasparro (1985) pp.18,89-103.

²⁴ As Burkert notes, arising from *transformation* not *invention*: Burkert (1993) p.260; cf. Burkert (1983) p.119

²⁵ Meyer (1986) p.7

²⁶ Herodotus 2.73; Minor Latin Poets II, p.648ff.

²⁷ As Origen (*De principiis*) found out when he attempted to combine the two into Christian doctrine. Reincarnation eventually became a heretical belief, and was affirmed as an anathema in AD 553: Refoulé (1963); Solmsen (1982f) pp.481-486.

(iii) a development from the notion of metamorphosis of gods to humans, and humans to animals or plants:²⁸ “survival and transmogrification add up to metempsychosis”.²⁹ Moreover, theriomorphism is a so-called “primitive” idea, traceable to the pre-Hellenic world.³⁰

(iv) as an independent explanation of the appearance of evil or injustice in this world, an idea which I have discussed above.³¹

(v) part of a cosmic phenomenon whereby similar ideas surface in completely different and unconnected parts of the world at the same time. This could certainly be true of reincarnation in Greece and India; it is, nevertheless, unprovable.

More productively, one might ask what had occurred in the seventh and sixth centuries to produce such a plethora of popular new religious phenomena - Dionysiac/Bacchic, Eleusinian, Pythagorean, “Orphic”? A lot of very general ideas have been postulated about this period: it has been seen as a time of upheaval, and a time of increasing social anxiety about life and death, with perceptions of death becoming increasingly more angst-ridden, and death itself more fearful.

²⁸ Richardson (1987) p.61

²⁹ Barnes (1979) I, p.105

³⁰ Bacigalupo (1965) pp.267ff. Cf. Snell (1960) p.36

³¹ I will deal with this further in the sections on Plato.

All of these new religious phenomena have a common element - they offered positive promises and reassurance about this life and/or the afterlife to people as individuals, rather than as a community or polis. This common motif is, more often than not, soteriological: that is, the post-mortem salvation of the individual from oblivion. Linked with the awareness of individuality may be a dissatisfaction with the traditional gods because of their perceived lack of interest in individuals, or their hostility towards human welfare,³² or the remoteness of Olympian religion, which engendered a desire for personal relationship with a deity.³³ This does not imply a rejection of traditional religion - initiation into a cult did not forbid the adoption of other beliefs, or regard this practice as heresy.³⁴

The Eleusinian Mysteries stand somewhat apart from the other examples in that they remained firmly rooted in traditional eschatology, and had an aura of respectability which other movements lacked, just as they lacked the patronage of the state which Eleusis enjoyed.³⁵ Other groups, particularly those linked with reincarnation beliefs, acquired neither the respectability nor the central nature of the Eleusinian Mysteries - they tended not only to be geographically marginal, but also attractive to the marginalized.³⁶ The fact that most evidence for reincarnation

³² Dodds (1951) p.29-31: the "shame-culture".

³³ Moore (1916) p.116

³⁴ cf. Hippolytus who, at the start of the play, has just returned from the Eleusinian Mysteries, but is also pursuing some sort of ascetic (perhaps Orphic) way of life: Euripides *Hippolytus* 952-954, quoted above.

³⁵ *Contra* Graf (1974), I doubt that Orpheus/Orphics had a large role in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Moreover, the Mysteries do not seem to grant immortality, the power of reincarnation, or life after death: e.g. Clay (1989) p.263.

³⁶ Women, for example. See Appendix B on the attraction of women to Bacchic/Dionysiac cults.

beliefs comes from the boundaries of the Greek world (rather than Athens and Attica) must be significant.³⁷

New (non-Homeric³⁸) ideas about death entered Greek thought in the seventh and sixth centuries. It is impossible to know whether the new movements brought these beliefs with them,³⁹ or whether the groups - as seems more likely - were reacting to a need or mood within the community. The rise of the individual is thought to be the catalyst for this desire for more than post-mortem existence as a powerless shade in Hades. This grim view of death (cf. Achilles' bitter tirade at *Odyssey* 11.488ff.) made the Eleusinian mysteries and like cults popular because they promised something different and reassuring after death.⁴⁰

³⁷ Pythagoreans in Magna Graecia; Orphic/Bacchic groups at Olbia on the Black Sea; unusual burial prescriptions at Cumae; the Derveni papyrus found north of Thessalonike; gold plates from Southern Italy, Thessaly and Crete etc. See the relevant chapters.

³⁸ For Homeric views of death and the soul see: Claus (1981); Solmsen (1982a); Warden (1971); Sourvinou-Inwood (1981); Bremmer (1987).

³⁹ It is often assumed that the belief in punishments in the underworld is an Orphic innovation, despite the fact that we know so little about the Orphic movement: see Appendix B. The biggest problem is that Greek beliefs about death were never fixed or systematized.

⁴⁰ Isocrates *Panegyrikos* 4.28: "...those who partake of the rite have fairer hopes concerning the end of life."

Aristophanes *Frogs* 448-455: "To us alone is there a sun and joyous light after death, who have been initiated.."

Pindar fr. 137: "Blessed is one who goes under the earth after seeing these things. That person knows the end of life, and knows its Zeus-given beginning."

Homeric Hymn to Demeter 480-483: "Blessed is the mortal on earth who has seen these rites, but the uninitiate who has no share in them never has the same lot once dead in the dreary darkness." The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (364-369) appears to be the first example of the different post-mortem fates of initiates and uninitiated. The idea of punishment *per se* in Hades, including eternal punishment, is present in Homer (e.g. *Iliad* 3.278f.). As a general (and comparative) feature of afterlife descriptions, punishments, and the fate of those not initiated, are more significant than rewards: Foley (1994) pp.55,63; cf. Pausanias 10.31.9-11 for Polygnotus' famous painting of the Underworld and its punishments, including the *retributive punishment* of the son, who mistreated his father, being throttled by the father: Nilsson (1935) p.211. This is the *lex talionis*.

Moreover, it was a promise to the ordinary person: the breaking down of the boundaries of Elysium by mysteries and initiations which allowed the initiate to go where only heroes formally trod, is indicative of the spirit of these movements.⁴¹

Of course, modern scholarship must see things in quite a different light to the ancient perspective, and these are ideas unlikely to be clearly articulated, or conscious in the minds of the community. But certainly the age of the mystery cults, and the origins of this “quick-fix” ideology seem rooted in an anxiety which did not previously exist. Ideas such as inherited guilt, the randomness of divine justice, and the increased possibility (and publicity) of post-mortem punishment,⁴² seem to lead not only to the “quick-fix” ideology of the Eleusinian Mysteries,⁴³ but beyond this to an increasing purification anxiety and regulation of purification.⁴⁴

If anything, it is indicative of a mood or spirit rather than a conscious recognition of anxiety: as the world becomes larger, the place of the individual becomes more insignificant, and as the world becomes larger, so too do the influences which geographical spread (through colonization) bring to bear. One

⁴¹ Specifically, see Chapter 2 on Pindar’s *Second Olympian*.

⁴² All aspects of what Dodds (1951) terms the “guilt culture” See also Parker (1983) p.201. It is noticeable that episodes such as war, plague and famine can also influence these desires.

⁴³ For example, Diogenes the Cynic (D.L. 6.39) asked why an evil man should get better treatment than an honest man after death just because he had been initiated.

⁴⁴ I would not term this “Puritanism”, as Dodds (1951) and Richardson (1987) pp.50-60 do: the term should not be used out of context, particularly since it has connotations inconsistent with the Greek example. Cf. Appendix B, for “Orphic” “Puritanism”.

might conclude therefore that the introduction of innovative (religious) thought is a consequence of internal and external influences and pressures.

Deflection of guilt and anxiety also lies in purifications and sacrifices. This makes people responsive to the services of quick-fix cults (such as Eleusis), and to the itinerant mendicant priests, initiators and charlatans whom Plato despises and ~~the~~ Theophrastus' "Superstitious Man" visits.⁴⁵ The latter example illustrates a paranoid (and presumably exaggerated) concern for purity which was part of the mood in Greek religion from the sixth century. 87

Further connected to the changes in thinking of this period is the new priority given to the soul. The Homeric $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ was equivalent to life - it vanished into nothing on death.⁴⁶ A fragment of Pindar (fr. 131) reveals the first consciousness of the soul as something other than the seat of the emotions: the body dies, but an image of life survives; this image sleeps when the body is conscious, but wakes when the body sleeps and has prophetic dreams.⁴⁷ This is possible because the soul is from the gods, and its divine reality is perceived only when isolated from the body. Further to this is the idea (suggested by the Pythagoreans and/or "Orphics"?) that the soul survives because it is immortal: if the soul survives death, then it also existed before birth.

⁴⁵ *Republic* 364c ff. (q.v.); *Characters* XVI.12 (see Appendix B).

⁴⁶ Warden (1971); Claus (1981)

⁴⁷ Cf. Donnay (1983); Vegleris (1982).

It is not a great step from the concept of the perishing body and surviving soul to a dualistic perception of body and soul⁴⁸ which is part of reincarnation in Greece; cf. Empedocles' σαρκῶν ἀλλογνῶτι περιστέλλουσα [*sc.* the daimon?] χιτῶνι.⁴⁹

One wonders what benefits or attraction reincarnation beliefs offered that other beliefs did not. The most obvious would relate to the desire not simply to have a happy afterlife, but *to live again* - to maintain the link with the body. It seems, in popular thought, that we only think of a person in terms of the body.⁵⁰ This is illustrated by the corporeal nature of soul descriptions (as Homeric shades, for example), and by our perception of ghosts etc., as images of the body.⁵¹

Yet reincarnation is not resurrection, nor are the two beliefs compatible, and the majority of Greek opinions on reincarnation would imply that the incarnate life is not the best life.

In this sense, reincarnation belief is its own worst enemy in terms of attracting disciples, and it is not difficult to see why it was never a large and popular belief in Greece. It certainly does seem to be that “drop of alien blood” (Rohde). The Eleusinian mysteries, on the other hand, remained the most popular

⁴⁸ Taken up by Plato, for example, at *Cratylus* 400c and *Phaedo* 62a-e.

⁴⁹ DK 31 B 126

⁵⁰ Cf. Kahn (1971) p.9: reunion with the body as a blot on the soul's condition.

⁵¹ Part of the problem is an inability to describe the incorporeal, which I will discuss in the main text. On ghosts: Nilsson (1949) pp.87ff.

initiation ceremonies in the ancient world, and survived. Movements founded and reinforced by fear, but which offer a simple release from this fear, are more likely to survive than movements which engender continuous anxiety amongst their members.⁵² The same is true of movements which do not shun or offend against conventional mores. We see the dangers engendered by seclusionist (or sectarian) practices in the Greek world not only in the bloody reaction against the Pythagorean movement (q.v.), but also in the very marginalized nature and influence of the alternate thinkers.

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Methodology

For modern scholars, the arrival of reincarnation in Greece can only be set against an unfortunately vague and theoretical background. For the Greek doxographers, reincarnation traced its origins to the Orphics and/or the Pythagoreans, and this attribution has been adhered to by later scholars, because, regardless of whether these movements did initiate reincarnation belief, they are also our earliest sources. In this thesis I have attempted a consistent and chronological account of the appearance of reincarnation doctrine or belief in Greece. I have posited a number of questions, and reached fewer absolute conclusions. It is inevitable that restoring doctrines of personal religious belief from fragmentary, diffuse, late or second-hand sources will be nigh impossible.

⁵² Through, for example, a strict and anxiety-filled *bios*.

In terms of defining the administrative processes of reincarnation, I have found Walter Burkert's questions to be a useful and adaptable measure:⁵³

Does every living creature have an immortal soul that migrates from one incarnation to another? Do plants have such souls? Do they only enter certain species of animals? Do only certain special individuals, even among men..undergo this wondrous experience?...Is the soul newly incarnated immediately after the death of the old body, in which case Hades becomes unnecessary, or is there an intermediate phase, which would have Hades there, as a way station? Is the process of palingenesis the work of blind natural forces..? - or is it the execution of a penalty assessed in a judgement of the dead? Is there an endless, cyclic movement, or is there a fall at the beginning and a salvation at the end which is permanent - or perhaps has as its alternative an eternal damnation in which case the concepts of Elysium and Tartarus again become relevant?⁵⁴

I have established the following foci for my investigation:

- (a) can we restore a coherent doctrine of reincarnation among the early Greek thinkers?
- (b) if so, is it possible to postulate a chronological or ideological development of this idea; and,
- (c) can this be expressed as a development of thought from "belief" to "philosophy";⁵⁵ related to this,
- (d) is there any evidence for development from a common source of belief, for example, (the traditional suggestions) "Orphism" or Pythagoreanism?

⁵³ Burkert (1972) pp.133-134

⁵⁴ Burkert attempted to apply these to the Pythagoreans, with limited success due to the problematic evidence (which tends to mention few of these features!).

⁵⁵ For example, for many years it was taken for granted that rational thinking grew from (or as a reaction to) irrational belief by way of theology, with Empedocles as a sort of liminal Janus figure, illustrating both sides (the religious *Katharmoi* and the rational *Physics*)

(e) to what extent was reincarnation (metempsychosis/transmigration) part of practical eschatological belief in the ancient Greek world? For example, is it legitimate to talk of reincarnation “*cults*”, in the sense of metempsychotic beliefs expressed through ritual, as in, for instance, a mystery religion or group movement, with an established liturgy or mythic foundation?⁵⁶

Or, (f) should theories of reincarnation be considered esoteric and *personal* belief, or expressions of hypothetical conceptions of the Presocratic and Platonic ideologists? That is, can we differentiate between *belief* and *use*⁵⁷? In this context, are there any remnants of material culture from the sixth to fourth centuries BC that are indicative of a realized or practised belief in reincarnation?⁵⁸

Other related questions will appear as recurring motifs throughout this work:

(g) were Greek theories of reincarnation grounded in ethical or moral considerations or aims?

(h) were thoughts on reincarnation particularly prominent in any specific localities in the ancient Greek world, and what significances, if any, can be drawn from these manifestations?

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⁵⁶ Cf. Buddhism, by way of an example.

⁵⁷ In the sense of *exploitation* of an idea for reasons not connected with personal convictions regarding reincarnation?

⁵⁸ This can be connected with question (e): for example, liturgy, mortuary finds, burial practices etc. I have commented on the problematic nature of this category of “evidence”, above.

Thus, this thesis traces the movement of what is essentially a religious conceit from its problematic beginnings in “belief”, to its greatest prominence (yet also its greatest ambiguity) in ancient Western tradition in the dialogues of Plato.

Addendum: Appendices

This thesis concludes with five appendices relating to various other aspects of reincarnation in ancient Greek thought, but which cannot be considered as part of the chronological study of reincarnation, because they offer arguments or discussions of five areas that are popularly or traditionally associated with reincarnation in Greece, but which, in reality, have dubious connections to this concept. First, the “Orphic” movement, Pherecydes of Syros, and Plato’s *Gorgias* are often thought to be reincarnationist, or to provide evidence for the beginnings of reincarnation theory. Second, Appendices D and E provide analyses and criticisms of the scholarly, rather than (ancient) traditional, links between shamanism and transmigration, and macro-/microcosmic reincarnation and eternal recurrence.

CHAPTER 1: PYTHAGORAS AND THE PYTHAGOREANS

Transmigration/reincarnation is first held with any degree of definition to be a belief of Pythagoras of Samos, who moved to Magna Graecia in approximately 530BC.¹ Pythagoras has the distinction of being one of most mysterious characters of antiquity, despite a rich doxography.² Lack of early (let

¹The point of whether transmigration is equivalent to reincarnation has been discussed: cf. Philip (1966) p.165,n.4. Pherecydes has been thought to be the first to introduce reincarnation to the Greek world; I have considerable doubts about the reliability of this tradition and have discussed the problem in Appendix A.; cf. also the Orphic tradition (Appendix B).

²Two *Vita Pythagorica* exist, by Porphyry and Iamblichus; the late dates and external influences give little hope of reliability. On Iamblichus see Clark's (1989) clear discussion of his aims (pp.ix-x), with the particular note that Iamblichus preserves none of his sources (p.x). Porphyry is a Neoplatonic allegorist; on allegorizing of the Pythagorean *symbola* (the "tradition of exegesis"), see Grant (1980) pp.300-302. I have discussed particular problems of Neoplatonic sources for the Presocratics in Appendix A. Guthrie (1962) p.156 notes, for example, the Neopythagorean love of the marvellous which resulted in such re-growth (and re-interpretation) of primitive superstitions; this combined disastrously (for doxography) with their credulity and lack of critical faculty. In terms of sources, they rely on a doxography traceable to Aristotle; yet even in Aristotle's time Pythagoras was a semi-legendary figure: Raven (1948) p.16, but particularly Philip (1963) p.264, who traces Aristotle's sources to the (contemporary) school at Tarentum headed by Archytas. Dodds (1951) p.145 would see Pythagoras as the manufacturer of his own legend, in the Empedoclean tradition. However, it is possible that Aristotle knew of several different Pythagorean schools - cf. Guthrie (1962) pp.147,180; Philip (1963) pp.253ff. Barnes (1979) comments on the rich doxography: "Pythagoras had the wisdom to write nothing" (I, p.100). Doxography backs this up to a certain extent; tradition has it that Pythagoras wrote nothing, and his followers observed silence on his oral teachings; on silence/secretcy cf. Isocrates *Busiris* 29; Aristoxenus *apud* D.L. 8.15; Porphyry *VP* 19 (thought to be from Dicaearchus); Iamblichus *VP* 199; in comedy, Alexis fr.197 Kock. Guthrie (1962) p.152 tries to work out what was secret - i.e. religious "arcana" or scientific thought? On the lack of writings: e.g. Plutarch *Alex.fort.* 1,4,328 (= KR no. 267); Iamblichus *VP* 199 writes that there were no writings until the time of Philolaus. Apart from these two problems (silence and lack of reliable contemporary writings) there is the problem of *ipse dixit*, and with it the wholesale ascription of later Pythagorean writings to the master - including poetry under the name of Orpheus (Ion of Chios - DK 36B2); also, cf. the "speeches" of Pythagoras in Iamblichus *VP* 54-57 (to the women of Croton): Clark (1989) pp.xvii-xviii; and the Pythagorean *Hieros Logos* (Iamblichus *VP* 28): Blank (1982) p.172. There is, for example, a collection of third century *pseudepigrapha* and later *anonyma*: Clark (1989) p.xix; Armstrong (1977) p.84ff. gives a summary of these, but concentrates on later material. A fourth difficulty is the legendary status given to Pythagoras by later generations, and the tradition of miracle-working which arose from this reputation: even in Aristotle (the fragments of his lost work on the Pythagoreans, cited mainly in Aelian *VH* 2.26 and Apollonius *Historia mirabilium* 6: DK 14,7 = fragments 191, 192 Rose) such miracles exist. Burkert (1972) pp.141-146 gives a complete list and discussion. However, the majority of miraculous ascriptions are late. As Bolton (1962) pp.164-165 has seen, there is a succession of mysterious figures from the seventh to the fifth centuries, all of whom are categorized as

alone reliable or contemporary) evidence has led to comparison with every conceivable type of religious and secular “leader” from *magus*³ to Rotarian,⁴ Newton⁵ to Freemason,⁶ *daimon*⁷ to monk⁸, social revolutionary⁹ to the Neopythagorean answer to Jesus.¹⁰

miracle-mongers - indeed they have all performed the same sort of miracles. Cf. Burkert (1985) p.303 and Burkert (1972) pp.147-155. The similarities of these figures (Epimenides, Abaris, Zoroaster, Aristeas and Pythagoras) in such miracles as bilocation, near-death experiences and etc. are the primary reason for the appearance of shamanism in Greek scholarship. See my discussion in Appendix D. Bolton (1962) pp.165,183 traces the miraculous tradition from Heraclides of Pontus - cf. Guthrie (1962) pp.163-165 - and notes that H.P. has made all of the figures conform to a pattern centering on Pythagoras.

³ Usually with the Eastern connotations of the word: Détienne (1972) p.44; Maddalena (1964) p.103 cites Burkert (1972).

⁴ Morrison (1955) p.152

⁵ Barnes (1979) I, p.100f.

⁶ “Joseph Smith”: *id.* (p.102); von Fritz (1940) p.96. Both Freemasonry and Rotary are an attempt to explain the fact that Pythagorean life is to Pythagorean politics as oil is to water. von Fritz shows the flaws in this view even as he attempts to explain that it allows people with different backgrounds and convictions to share one common belief.

⁷ Détienne (1959) pp.28-29; this idea perhaps comes from Aristotle fr.192 Rose - cited by Morrison (1955) p.138 - where it is claimed that there are three sorts of beings - gods, men and beings like Pythagoras. The obvious parallel is in Empedocles fr.112 and fr.146.

⁸ Bremmer (1992) p.206 on comparisons between the Βίος Πυθαγόρειος and the *vita monastica*. Also, Cornford (1922) p.139; KR p.219; Burkert (1985) p.303.

⁹ Détienne (1981) p.221 on the “deviance” (is this perhaps a bad translation of the French? cf. Burkert (1982) p.2 on Détienne’s “*chemins de la deviance*”) of Pythagoreanism. The structuralists (particularly Détienne) have had a field-day with the supposed rejection of traditional polis values inherent in abstention; not to mention the inversion of the relationship between gods and men in denial of sacrifice, and the significance of the resurrected Golden Age. They have singular difficulty in reconciling (1) the antithetically prominent role of Pythagoreans in polis politics, and (2) the Pythagoreans’ acceptance in such a role, for all their lack of conformation otherwise. For structuralist views: Détienne (1981), (1972) and (1959); Détienne & Vernant (1989); Vernant (1991); Gordon (1981); Berthiaume (1982) offers a slightly more practical assessment. Cf. Burkert (1979) p.11: “I do not think Lévi-Strauss has proved anything”. Also Dowden (1992). Bremmer (1992) p.206 seems correct - *contra* Détienne (1981) p.217 - on the different protest against society offered by the Cynics: viz., Pythagoreans exist within the community system, but Cynics deny the community; Christian hermits etc.. leave the community. On Pythagorean politics: Minar (1942); von Fritz (1963) col.210ff., and von Fritz (1940).

¹⁰ Navia (1990) p.viii. And as the opposite - a Faust figure (*ibid*). Not to mention: Christian Scientist (Mary Baker Eddy) - (*ibid*); hierophant undergoing katabatic journeys - cited by Burkert (1985) p.299; moral reformer - there is at least some evidence of this: von Fritz (1940) p.95; Morrison (1955) p.135; Einstein - Navia (1990) p.viii; sage - Herodotus 4.95; Vlastos (1970) p.111; Aimee Semple Macpherson - Dunbabin (1948) p.373; religious reformer - Cornford (1922) p.138; charlatan (cf. Heraclitus fr.40 and fr.129); leader of a political club along the Athenian lines (i.e. conservative, oligarchic) - Minar (1942) pp.25,26 and Dunbabin (1948) p.360 who points out that most of the evidence for Pythagorean clubs dates after the two revolts; and, of course, shaman.

I tend to think (if anything can be made of so little evidence) that Pythagoras/Pythagoreanism¹¹ was the prototype for Empedocles and his beliefs;¹² the parallels between the early Pythagoreans and Empedocles (about whom we have the most complete knowledge of metempsychotic beliefs in early Greek thought) seem to make this connection clearer.¹³ The dual beliefs of reincarnation and abstinence in early Pythagoreanism are found fully realized in Empedocles, although set in a wider cosmological picture.

It is a problematic decision: Magna Graecia was a “hot-house culture”¹⁴ of religious beliefs which may have influenced Empedocles;¹⁵ the most cited source is “Orphism” (see Appendix B) - a fairly safe option considering how little we know about it. If the Orphic movement is based around some sort of *bios*¹⁶ (as seems certain), then it does bear more resemblance to Pythagoreanism than other circles

¹¹I do not see a semantical problem in the interchangeability of “Pythagoras” and “Pythagoreanism”: I use the terms to refer only to the earliest years of the movement, from Pythagoras’ arrival in Croton (c.530BC), until the first revolt in the early fifth century when Pythagoras left Magna Graecia.

¹² And, as such, hardly “a unique experiment that failed”: Burkert (1982) p.21.

¹³ I am aware of the danger of this “*a priori*” method - as Guthrie (1962) pp.171f. calls it: viz., circumstantial evidence. There is a tradition for Empedocles’ being a pupil of Pythagoras expelled from the Pythagorean school for revealing Pythagorean secrets (D.L. 8.54-56). In Empedocles fr.129 he is an admirer of Pythagoras (see my discussion of this in the relevant chapter). As admirer of the Pythagoreans: Theophrastus *apud* Simplic. *in Phys.* 25,19. Both Parker (1983) p.291 and Barnes (1979) I, p.323,n.17 use Empedocles to restore Pythagorean doctrine, as does Claus (1981) p.114 - with *caveat*.

¹⁴ Woodbury (1966) p.598; cf. Burkert (1972) p.112.

¹⁵ Empedocles lived c.494-434; cf. the probable doctrines followed by Pindar in *Oly.*2 and fr.133 (q.v.).

¹⁶ On the idea of the *bios*: Burkert (1985) pp.301f.

such as the Dionysiac mystery cults.¹⁷ On a number of points one can separate Pythagoreanism from these movements (for example, Eleusis *et al*):

(1) Pythagoreanism is founded on the words of a human;¹⁸ Bacchic cults on a god; Orphic cult on a mythic figure.¹⁹ On this point Pythagoreanism resembles Empedocles' beliefs: no god appears to predominate as a figure of worship.²⁰ The movement appears to be based less on worship than on promulgating a way of life (*bios*).²¹ This does not imply rejection of the gods in any way; in Empedocles' cosmic system the traditional names for the various deities are retained even though he is moving towards a grasp of immateriality.²² To continue the Empedoclean parallel, it was possible for a human to assume god-head, as Empedocles does at fragment 112. Despite this, there is little evidence of Pythagorean worship as such, apart from the leader's obvious charismatic force.²³

¹⁷ Cf. Burkert (1982) pp.125-133.

¹⁸ The Pythagorean mythology is late. For example, I cannot agree with Koller (1971) about "Die Jenseitsreise, ein pythagoreischer Ritus" of the third century BC: Pythagorean groups *do not appear to exist after the fourth century BC* - Guthrie (1962) p.180. However, Pythagoras is connected with a katabatic journey (in Parmenides): Burkert (1972) p.163; Burkert (1969) pp.25,27. For Raven (1948) p.22, Parmenides is a dissident Pythagorean; cf. Blank (1982) pp.168,174.

¹⁹ Burkert (1985) p.300.

²⁰ There is a tradition linking Pythagoras with Apollo in the contexts of (a) Hyperborean Apollo: Aristotle fr.191 Rose; cf. Marcovitch (1976) pp.334ff.; (b) Apollo Genitor with an altar for bloodless sacrifice: numerous references in Burkert (1972) pp.180,n.108; cf. pp.113,119-120; also cf. Détiene (1972) p.46 on offerings - he makes Apollo Genitor into the patron of the universal health food store; (c) Delphic Apollo: by means of etymology - Skutsch (1968) p.151. I would hardly call this evidence of a tendency to monotheism *contra* Gomperz (1901) p.139, who bases his discussion on very late evidence. Of course, the ascetic tradition would be in keeping with Apolline moderation: cf. Cornford (1922) p.145 and Minar (1942) p.130.

²¹ Of course, in Christian tradition the two do come together in the monastic life.

²² This is not fully realised until Plato: cf. R.Renehan "On the Greek Origins of the Concept of Incorporeality and Immateriality" *GRBS* 21 (1980) 105-138.

²³ Again tradition makes Pythagoras a god or a *daimon*; his near contemporaries seem to regard him as all too human: cf. Heraclitus fragments 40 and 129. On Pythagoras' charisma: Kahn (1979) p.114.

(2) Although there is little to suggest that Pythagoreans lived in communes together (a “way of life” does not necessarily imply a life together),²⁴ there seems to have been a spirit of community involvement, founded on the tradition of Pythagoras as a moral reformer, pulling Croton together into a strong unit.²⁵ It does seem as though these points fit well with the supposedly aristocratic position of the Pythagoreans (viz. in political clubs and power; as reformers, but independent).²⁶ Burkert may be closest when he sees Pythagoreanism as a “sect”.²⁷ *Republic* 600b (where Plato makes his only reference to Pythagoras by name) may be significant in this respect.²⁸

(3) Nor was Pythagoreanism akin to the “quick fix” cults such as the Eleusinian mysteries or cathartic Dionysiac revels; admittance may have been by degrees (cf. the monastic novitiate),²⁹ and the fact that it had a *bios* stresses the

²⁴ de Vogel (1966) p.187; Burkert (1982) pp.15ff. on communal property. It is easy to picture Pythagoreans as hippies, especially in the light of the Middle Comedy evidence: see Bremmer (1992) p.205; Détiene (1981) pp.227ff. lists examples; a fuller listing is in DK 58 E (pp.478-480).

²⁵ Dunbabin (1948) p.361.

²⁶ Debate rages over the aristocratic tendencies of the Pythagoreans. Tradition holds that the Pythagorean movement was one of the aristocracy - D.L. 8.3 - while the Orphics were from a lower class.

²⁷ Also Guthrie (1962) p.148. “Sect” has unfortunate connotations, but Burkert’s definition - Burkert (1982) p.3 (quoted in Appendix B) - does fit the movement well.

²⁸ ἀλλὰ δὴ εἰ μὴ δημοσίαι, ἰδίαι τισὶν ἡγεμῶν παιδείας αὐτὸς ζῶν λέγεται Ὅμηρος γενέσθαι, οἱ ἐκεῖνον ἡγάπων ἐπὶ συνουσίαι καὶ τοῖς ὑστέροις ὁδὸν τινα παρέδοσαν βίου Ὀμηρικῆν, ὡσπερ Πυθαγόρας αὐτὸς τε διαφερόντως ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἡγαπήθη, καὶ οἱ ὕστεροι ἔτι καὶ νῦν Πυθαγόρειον τρόπον ἐπονομάζοντες τοῦ βίου διαφανεῖς πη δοκοῦσιν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις; Long (1948) p.28 believes that Pythagoras is being held up as a moral teacher; cf. Raven (1948) p.1. I wonder whether this passage is not also making the point that Pythagoras left none of the mimetic writings which Plato criticises at *Republic* 364b-365a (*contra* D.L. 8.6-8).

²⁹ Timaeus *apud* Iamblichus *VP* 72 suggests a five year silence; this implies communal life and is no doubt a reflection of the late date of the sources. Minar (1942) p.28 gives a convenient summary of Iamblichus’ (*VP* 71-74) stages of induction into the Pythagorean movement.

permanence of its followers. As Burkert has noted,³⁰ the Pythagoreans use the “tools” of these movements - catharsis, abstinence, ritual - but in an entirely different and permanent context. Instead of a few days of abstinence and ritual lustration (as at Eleusis), life becomes a permanent search for that formerly temporary state of purity.³¹ Obviously this is not a state of affairs which would be welcome to everyone; it involves a complete change of lifestyle - a point which may help to explain the revolts against the Pythagoreans. A blend of political power³² and promulgation of unusual life-style might well produce an explosive situation.³³ Moreover, at Eleusis there seems to have been little stress on an initiate’s moral obligations during life (apart from the exclusion of murderers, for example).³⁴ Compare the Orphic movement with its burden of guilt to work through, or the crime of the *daimon* in Empedocles. More differences will become apparent as I discuss aspects of doctrine.

The majority of commentators accept that transmigration is the only belief/doctrine that can be attributed to Pythagoras on certain grounds.³⁵ This is confirmed by fragment 7 of Xenophanes of Colophon (*apud* D.L. 8.36):³⁶

³⁰ Burkert (1985) p.303

³¹ Parker (1983) p.299; cf. Burkert (1985) p.302: “the *bios* has discarded cult”.

³² Especially if it was anti-democratic, oligarchic, aristocratic in a time of tyranny: Burkert (1985) p.303 terms it “elitism”; cf. Minar (1942) p.127 on the lower class tastes of the tyrant Miccythus of Rhegium (and the Peisistratids) who favoured Orphism. Cf. Appendix B.

³³ Cf. the tradition that beans were forbidden because of their link with democratic voting: Morrison (1955) p.148; Grant (1980) p.301 cites Ps.-Plutarch and (p.302) Hippolytus *Ref.* 6.27.5. Also Guthrie (1962) p.185.

³⁴ Parke (1986) pp.59-72 on the routine of the Eleusinian mysteries.

³⁵ Lack of evidence denies Pythagoras a role - despite the huge tradition - in the mathematical discoveries which bear his name: Burkert (1972) - cited by Kahn (1974) p.162; cf. p.169 - would see no scientific side to Pythagoreanism before Hippasus; Barnes (1979) I, p.101 agrees that

ὁ δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ φησιν οὕτως ἔχει·

καὶ ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα
 φασὶν ἐποικτῖραι καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος·
 “Παῦσαι μηδὲ ῥάπιζ”, ἐπεὶ ἦ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶ
 ψυχὴ, τὴν ἔγνω φθεγξαμένης αἴων.”

This passage illustrates three important points: the idea of continuity of *self* - shown by the “recognition” of the puppy by Pythagoras; the fact that the human soul can transmigrate into dogs (and by assumption, into other animals, although this is not shown);³⁷ and the popular recognition of transmigration in a period

Pythagoras was not *mathematicus*. *Contra* - cf. the review of Burkert (1972) in de Vogel (1970); also Guthrie (1962); and Long (1948) p.15 who wavers on the opinion that Pythagoras might have made *some* discoveries. As for Pythagoras’ polymathy (in Heraclitus fr.129), it does not necessarily imply learning/knowledge specifically in mathematics or science: cf. Kahn (1979) pp.113-114.

³⁶ The ascription is D.L.’s own; however, there is little doubt that it refers to Pythagoras. Maddalena (1964) - in a review of Burkert (1962) *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon* (Verlag Hans Carl, Nürnberg = *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 1972) - is one of the few who believe that the fragment does not refer to transmigration or to Pythagoras (pp.111 & 113). This is part of an attempt (mainly successful) to contradict Burkert’s theory of Pythagoras as mystic/shaman (p.103). For Maddalena, Pythagoras (if it is Pythagoras) recognises “..non di un suo defunto amico, ma soltanto d’un suo amico” (cf. p.112,n.1). He relates this to the theory that all animals and humans are composed of particles of the same (p.115; not a contemporary view). I find this rather implausible, as did Burkert in the English edition of *Weisheit* [= Burkert (1972) p.120,n.1]. For example, Maddalena - who suggests that Plato projected metempsychosis back onto the Pythagoreans, and that it did not really appear as a doctrine until the fifth century (p.116,n.2) - cites (p.116) *Phaedo* where Socrates has to explain the Pythagorean theory of transmigration to Simmias and Cebes (themselves Pythagoreans).

³⁷ Cf. KR p.224 for this point. One could, of course, restore the doctrine to include transmigration only from humans to dogs and *vice versa*, or even postulate that dogs are a higher incarnation, based on the scanty evidence, but it seems very unlikely. As Gomperz (1901) p.126 notes, the Greeks had a reputation for cruelty to animals (*contra* Egypt, where some animals were worshipped as gods). It would thus seem to be considerably worse to be incarnated as an animal than as a human - as this fragment shows.

contemporary with Pythagoras' lifetime.³⁸ For Xenophanes could not successfully satirize beliefs which were not recognizable to his audience.³⁹

The first of these points is very important in the history of reincarnation. It is indeed a *sine qua non* of any intelligible system of reincarnation that there is some continuity of self (usually through memory⁴⁰ - cf. Platonic anamnesis). This is especially so if reincarnation occurs within a moral framework of reward and punishment, viz., when the soul has to remove itself from the reincarnation cycle/ladder by living "good" lives. Without some sort of continuity, a soul is blind to the path which it should best pursue. It is the precepts of Pythagoreanism which should act as a necessary *aide-mémoire* in this case.

On the subject of memory, one of the Pythagorean rules stated that a Pythagorean could not get out of bed in the morning until he/she had recalled to mind all the events of the previous day, in order.⁴¹ It has been assumed that such cultivation of memory can be of assistance in recalling not only recent events, but, if enough care is taken, previous lives.⁴² Certainly, Empedocles fr.129 bears witness to Pythagoras' extraordinary memory;⁴³

³⁸ Long (1948) only mentions the first two points; he alludes to general knowledge of the doctrine only in the fifth century (p.21) with reference to Herodotus 2.123.

³⁹ Claus (1981) p.115. On the intended audiences of the Presocratics, *vide* Thesleff (1990) p.113; he believes that Xenophanes was one of the first of the Presocratics who intended his work to reach a wider audience.

⁴⁰ Long (1948) makes this connection with personal identity (p.26f.).

⁴¹ Iamblichus VP 165; Frankel (1975) p.274.

⁴² Vernant (1991) p.330. Barnes (1979) I, p.108 on "experiential memory".

⁴³ As Morrison (1955) p.136 comments, one of the few early pieces of evidence which are not hostile or ironic. A note of caution - if it were not for Empedocles' own claim to remember his

To return to fr. 7, the continuity of self (personal survival)⁴⁴ is given primitive expression through Pythagoras' recognition of the soul's "voice" (bark).⁴⁵ As Frankel comments, "...the soul is reborn *as* a dog, not *is* a dog."⁴⁶ The soul's identity (ego?)⁴⁷ is seen as a separate (and separable) entity, giving personality to the body, and transferring that personality to the next body that it ensouls.⁴⁸

As to the actual mechanics of transmigration, we have very little early evidence. Herodotus' overview of reincarnation (2.123) links with Aristotle's criticism of the Pythagorean view of the soul at *De anima* 407b12-26: that is, the

past lives, one could take the passage to mean simply that Pythagoras was a good historian of past events; one can do the same with Ion fragment 4 (D.L.1.120), as I have demonstrated in Appendix A.; cf. Parker (1983) p.291 and Maddalena (1964) p.116,n.2. Long (1948) p.21 - in what I believe to be a mandatory and incorrect judgement - thinks that the passage shows that Pythagoras could only remember the past 1000 years. I do agree, however, that we cannot assume great accuracy in this passage: for example, we cannot say that Pythagoras was in his 31st incarnation - as Long (*ibid*) agrees. D.L. 8.4-5 lists Pythagoras' past incarnations, on the doubtful authority of Heraclides Ponticus. Cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15.158-164. Rohde (1925) Appendix X, p.598ff., discusses the significance of the incarnations, as does Skutsch (1968) p.151, based on etymology. There is a modern work (1925) which lists Pythagoras' reincarnations back to 600,000BC when his heavenly soul was incarnated in the body of a Tlavatli chief!: cited by Navia (1990).

⁴⁴ Barnes (1979) I, p.105, who contrasts this with psychic survival (p.115).

⁴⁵ Bremmer (1987) p.85 notes that in the underworld souls make squeaking or humming noises - they do not speak. Gerber (1970) p.251 cites Bowra's comment that the word used of the dog's voice in fr. 7 is usually used of humans, and *vice-versa*.

⁴⁶ Frankel (1975) p.273; cf. Vernant (1991) pp.190 & 330: "It is *the* soul in me and not *my* soul." As Barnes expresses it (1979) I, p.106, "Metempsychosis is the doctrine of the transcorporation of the self; and the *psyche* is the self."

⁴⁷ Burkert (1985) p.300.

⁴⁸ Claus (1981) p.115; cf. Long (1948) p.27. It is the primitive prototype of the Platonic soul of *Phaedo*. However, it is not seen as the life-force or seat of consciousness of the body: Leshner (1992) p.74,n.1. On the question of the immortality of the soul in Pythagorean thought there are no statements comparable to Empedocles fragments 11 and 112: cf. Guthrie (1962) pp.181 & 196.

idea of the random nature of the soul's journey from body to body. Zuntz would argue that aimless wandering from incarnation to incarnation was a feature of early Pythagorean belief - an illustration of the lack of coherent thought on the soul in the sixth and early fifth centuries.⁴⁹ What one would look for is some sort of reasoning behind "good" and "bad" incarnations (for example, a moral "ladder" of "bad" → "good" incarnations).⁵⁰ However, as Long has remarked, Herodotus is merely providing a summary of what he sees to be happening but knows little about; he is not defining a comprehensive doctrine.⁵¹ There would appear to be little ethical or moral significance in such a cycle of incarnation.

Is it relevant that the dog is being punished? That is, is life as a dog a *punishment* for the once-human soul? If punishment is required (and this is assuming more than the evidence can convey), why would Pythagoras stop the (necessary) blows? The link of kinship may be the reason; preservation of the beater's own soul might also be relevant. The problem with this kind of reasoning is that it ignores Xenophanes' satiric intent.⁵² The fact that the soul in the dog was

⁴⁹ Zuntz (1971) pp.264 & 264,n.5); Philip (1966) p.152 agrees. Burkert (1982) p.19 believes that belief in transmigration took no "dogmatic form"; it is dangerous to presume this because of the lack of evidence. Claus (1981) pp.115,118 discusses the problem of continuity of more than one view of psyche in the same period (and the inherent contradictions); for example, the Homeric view of psyche at death, and the view expressed in Xenophanes. Cf. Guthrie (1962) p.318.

⁵⁰ Long (1948) p.27 protests against a "mechanical and non-moral process", an objection with which I would agree.

⁵¹ Long (1948) p.27, who also believes that Herodotus is referring accurately to the Pythagoreans (e.g., p.23).

⁵² Leshner (1992) pp.79f. summarises the views of the majority of commentators who believe that Xenophanes is satirising transmigration. Leshner believes that it is the ridiculous idea that Pythagoras can recognise souls that is being attacked; i.e., it is an attack of much the same sort as Heraclitus fr.129. Long (1948) p.17 accepts the passage, but asks - with good reason - whether it may be "satirical exaggeration".

a friend of Pythagoras' suggests that it once inhabited the body of a Pythagorean: thus the fragment makes a mockery of the intent of the Pythagorean *bios* by presenting a Pythagorean (who - presumably - followed Pythagoras' dictums) incarnated in a lower rather than higher life.⁵³

The other option is that there is only one incarnation and it is a punishment life - and for this there is no Pythagorean or comparative evidence.⁵⁴

One must assume that incarnation back into human form (at least) is eventually possible.⁵⁵ It would be a very depressing outlook for the future if it were not.

The next question is whether one can restore an ultimate aim to the system.⁵⁶ There is no evidence for the number of incarnations or the length of time required to complete the cycle.⁵⁷ Long believes that Herodotus 2.123 is based on Pythagorean beliefs,⁵⁸ and that the details given are correct (viz., the length of the

⁵³ It was not being held up as an example of Pythagoras' illustration of the consequences of *not* listening to his precepts.

⁵⁴ But cf. Pindar fr.133.

⁵⁵ As in all systems of reincarnation in this early period.

⁵⁶ For example, Empedocles uses transmigration (founded on a basis of a "fall" of mankind) as part of a wider cosmic system. Jaeger (1947) p.64 restores a Pythagorean cosmology, as does van der Waerden (1952) pp.129ff. also, including a doctrine of eternal recurrence - see Appendix E.

⁵⁷ cf. Zeller (1881) p.485. There is no idea of the body as prison/tomb of soul which one sees in *Phaedo* or *Cratylus*.

⁵⁸ Rather than a lost account of metempsychosis - Long (1948) p.23. Tomin (1988) p.30 would agree that the 3,000 years is a Pythagorean feature.

cycle is 3000 years and this involves incarnation in all measure of creatures). The passage seems to me to be much closer to Empedocles fragments 117 and 115.⁵⁹

As for the end of the cycle (if there is an end?), there is no evidence to assume either an Empedoclean aim for divinity (apart from the report in Aristotle fr.192 Rose that Pythagoras was - presumably - a *daimonic* figure) or a Pindaric heroification.⁶⁰ Likewise there is no hint of re-absorption into a common soul mass.⁶¹ Indeed it is impossible to find a likely end to the cycle if one knows nothing about the beginnings. There is no hint of any original sin requiring atonement (as in Orphism; cf. Pindar fr.133) through reincarnation, although discharge of some sort of burden of guilt is a common denominator in Southern Italian religion.⁶²

Obviously, questions on post-mortem judgement, reward and punishment and the mechanics of the next incarnation, cannot be answered with any degree of certainty.⁶³ however, parallels will be drawn in the chapters on Empedocles and Pindar.

⁵⁹ I do not see the absence of plants or the time difference (cf. fr.115) as significant if - on Long's (1948) p.27 theory - Herodotus is merely making a short summary.

⁶⁰ As Bolton (1962) p.129, Guthrie (1962) pp.202f. and others assume.

⁶¹ KR p.224; Maddalena (1964) p.115 would see this as a possibility.

⁶² That is, salvation religion - Cornford (1922) p.141. Parker (1983) pp.291,300: it recurs in Empedocles and Pindar and is certainly present in the Orphic evidence. Iamblichus *VP* 85 fits Pythagoras into this guilt culture: "Pleasure is in all circumstances bad; for we came here to be punished and we ought to be punished." Cf. Dodds (1951) p.152; Minar (1942) p.105.

⁶³ Philip (1966) pp.152-153, Burkert (1972) pp.133-134, and Barnes (1979) I, p.104 offer a comprehensive list of questions which cannot be answered about the Pythagoreans without reference to a very wide and varied field of sources, as Burkert's responses show: "Each of these questions is answered in more than one way in the ancient tradition, and there would be small

The only links which do bind Pythagorean transmigration to some sort of doctrine are the taboos and abstinences, which, I think, supply part of the ethical background.⁶⁴ It is a logical step to postulate - in the presence of a large number of rules and taboos (*symbola*; *acousmata*) placed on certain forms of behaviour and custom within the movement - that lifestyle was relevant to Pythagoreanism and (by the nature of the precepts) to the soul's ethical/moral well-being.

Abstention from beans is the most famous injunction in the Pythagorean/Orphic tradition, a result of Empedocles fr.141,⁶⁵ and one which is rich, symbol-laden and contradictory.⁶⁶ It seems likely that the abstinence from

prospect of success in an undertaking to crystallise out a sharply defined 'doctrine of Pythagoras'." (p.135). Note that the gold leaves have no validity as examples of Pythagorean eschatology - *contra* Zuntz (1972) pp.321,343,381,383,392f. who uses them to give an ethical dimension to Pythagoreanism; cf. Seaford (1986) p.9 & n.34.

⁶⁴ Transmigration can be the *sine qua non* of the abstinences; but this does not necessarily mean that transmigration precedes the taboos, for it provides a plausible reason *for* the taboos - a very cyclic and possibly contradictory argument. Cf. Kahn's comment - (1974) p.165 - that reincarnation provides for a mystical view of life and destiny, *and* a cult society with vegetarianism as a form of pollution. See Douglas (1975) p.55: "Pollution rites in essence prohibit physical contact..It seems that physiological pollutions become important as symbolic expressions of other undesirable contacts which would have repercussions on the structure of social or cosmological ideas."

⁶⁵ δειλοί, πάνδειλοι, κυάμων ἄπο χειρας ἔχεσθαι.

⁶⁶ Cf. Aristoxenus' comment that in fact beans were Pythagoras' favourite food because of their purgative value: *apud* Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* IV.11.4-6, cited by Grant (1980) p.300, who believes that the contradictions in the tradition led to allegorizing of the *symbola*; thus a prohibition against eating heart is interpreted as "do not harm your soul by eating it with worries" (p.301); cf. D.L. 8.18. Vlastos (1970) p.111,n.62 associates Aristoxenus' view with his rationalising of magical elements; Guthrie (1962) pp.169,191 with his friendship with the last of the Pythagoreans.

Cf. Parker's (1983) p.361 comment that Iamblichus *VP* 106, "...sums up the ambiguities of the tradition when he states explicitly that Pythagoras banned such foods as were indigestible, or alien to the gods, or on the contrary, sacred to the gods or so worthy of honour, or, finally, liable to interfere with the purity, moderation, or mantic powers of the soul." (!) Parker - *sq.* R.S.Brumbaugh & J.Schwartz (1980) "Pythagoras and beans: a medical explanation" *Classical World* 73, 421f. - interprets the taboo as resulting from an "easily observable causal connection", viz. from favism: *fabia vicia* are deadly to those Mediterranean dwellers suffering from a certain

beans is more of a primitive taboo than a meaningful injunction.⁶⁷ Other *symbola* (mostly cited from Aristotle's fragmentary work on the Pythagoreans) give prohibitions on similarly superstitious grounds.⁶⁸

Other alimentary taboos/injunctions can be linked more specifically with reincarnation (especially on the testimony of Empedocles).⁶⁹ Evidence points to the Pythagoreans' being vegetarian, or semi-vegetarian. That they were known for their vegetarianism was well enough recognized for it to be parodied in Middle Comedy at Athens in the fourth century.⁷⁰

inherited enzyme deficiency (p.365). For other "meanings" of the taboo (particularly associated with eschatology), cf. Burkert (1972) pp.183-184 and Guthrie (1962) pp.184-5: e.g. beans resembling testicles, the gates of Hades, the universe; their appearance when buried; their lack of nodes, and etc... *Vide* Parker (1983) p.365: "Ancient explanations certainly present the bean as a bizarre, polluted, and structurally ambiguous product, associated with sex, the cycle of birth and death, and Hades". I have already mentioned the link with democratic voting: Minar (1942) p.64. Bremmer (1992) p.212 associates the ban with the Pythagorean desire to control life, including emotions and, in this case, bodily functions. This is a quite persuasive point of view; cf. the explanation of Cicero *apud* Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* IV.2, that flatulence (from beans) upset the Pythagorean's mental tranquillity.

⁶⁷ Cf. Minar (1942) p.64; Philip (1966) pp.155f. Détienne (1972) p.40 disagrees. Guthrie (1962) p.167 notes that although the traditions antedate the sixth century, nevertheless we only have evidence for their appearance in Pythagorean belief in the fifth century.

⁶⁸ For example: spitting on one's nail-clippings; stirring the fire with a knife. For examples: Burkert (1972) pp.171-173; KR pp.226f. on the list from Iamblichus *Protrepticus* 21 (= DK 58C6). There is no case for saying that these prohibitions first arose among the Pythagoreans, because similar precepts are found in Hesiod *Works and Days* 727, 742-3, 729: cf. West (1971) p.217; Burkert (1972) pp.173,n.57 & 178; Parker (1983) pp.292f. Moreover, there appears to be a common root to these prescriptions, which also appear in similar forms in other societies: Guthrie (1962) p.185,n.2; West (1971) p.66 on Upanishad parallels; Long (1948) p.26; Parker (1983) p.292 notes that despite their prevalence in comparative anthropological discussion, there is little Greek evidence.

⁶⁹ The links could also be made on comparative evidence such as the *Laws of Manu* (5.48,55) - West (1971) p.61 - or from Buddhist beliefs. However, the fact that a close Greek contemporary exists with a similar doctrine makes the assumptions more plausible.

⁷⁰ For example, Détienne (1981) p.228 discusses fr.219 Kock from Alexis' *Tarentines* where vegetarians fight over pieces of dog meat; I wonder whether this is an analogy with Xenophanes fr.7; more likely it is a mark of social degradation. Détienne p.227f. gives a short list of examples from the fragments of New Comedy. He notes - along with Guthrie (1962) (p.187) - that the comments may also refer to the Cynics; certainly there was a traditional way of referring to "wise" men and philosophers with unusual life-styles, viz. dirty, smelly, ragged and barefoot,

The nature of the abstention from meat (i.e. vegetarianism) is problematic. One side of the tradition reports that not only eating meat, but killing animals, sacrificing animals to the gods at the altar, and - most radically - associating with butchers and hunters were activities to be avoided.⁷¹ Another opinion is that there were degrees within the movement, and certain Pythagoreans placed firmer restrictions on meat-eating than others.⁷² The less radical tradition is expressed by Iamblichus who reports that the group ate only foods (including animals) into which souls did not enter.⁷³ Another point of view is that animals not beneficial to mankind could be eaten (for example, goats and pigs which interfere with agriculture) but more domesticated animals (living close to man - for example, sheep and cattle) could not, and the working ox was strictly forbidden.⁷⁴ This would seem to be an indication of the degree of distance of domestic relations between humans and animals, which was expressed in terms of their ensoulment;⁷⁵

eating herbs and drinking water. von Fritz (1940) p.76 makes the point that these Pythagoreans may be the survivors from the *acousmatici* who fled from Magna Graecia after the second revolt in the fifth century.

⁷¹ Eudoxus *apud* Porphyry VP 7 (DK 14B9). Berthiaume (1982) offers a concise discussion of butchers. His sources for the Pythagoreans are late (e.g. Philostratus: p.81-2).

⁷² Iamblichus VP 81, 87: the *acousmatici* and the *mathematici*. Porphyry VP 37 defines the two groups: the former do not know all the secrets of the movement (and only partially abstain); the latter have full, deep knowledge (and fully abstain): Guthrie (1962) pp.192ff.; Burkert (1982) pp.20f. However, in any movement like this there will always be adherents going to further extremes than others: cf. self-inflicted penances among Christian ascetics (scourging etc.).

⁷³ D.L. 8.19

⁷⁴ Aristoxenus fr.25,29a Wehrli (see DK 58D; D.L. 8.20 on the ox); cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15.110-115 and 120-145. The large section on Pythagoras at *Metamorphoses* 15.60-478 may reflect the influence of Empedocles - Burkert (1972) p.180,n108; as Little (1970) pp.355,343-4 has perceived, however, for all that it purports to discuss Pythagoras' ethics and reincarnation beliefs, it is really concerned with the concept of renewal in terms of transformation/evolution. Cf. van der Waerden (1965) col. 853, 854.

⁷⁵ cf. Vernant (1991) pp.298f.

thus it is a matter of which animals a human soul can enter in.⁷⁶ As well as this, there were other forbidden animals which must surely fit into the “taboo” category - the abstinences appearing to have no rational grounds.⁷⁷ A restriction on eating the heart and womb is obvious as these are representative of life.⁷⁸

As the structuralists (Détienne, Vernant *et al*) have noted, a consequence of the Pythagorean rejection of animal sacrifice would be a position beyond the pale of Promethean religion, and, as such, apart from the polis. It implied destruction of the proper ordered relationship and traditional channels of communication between men and gods and, if the aim was to return to a Golden Age,⁷⁹ a rejection of the Olympian gods and/or descent into chaos.⁸⁰

My major objection to this point of view is the lack of evidence. Surely such a rejection of gods and institutions, and an assumption of the divine, could

⁷⁶ That the psyche is seen as human regardless of whether it is ensouled in a human or animal body is expressed in Xenophanes fr.7.

⁷⁷ The ban on white cocks is likewise mysterious, although Marcovitch (1976) - based on Lucian's *Gallus* - gives numerous associations, including that with Apollo and prophesy (pp.332-335). Guthrie (1962) p.190 gives comparative examples. Cf. Levy (1965) pp.55-56. Other unusual bans are on mullet and blacktail (D.L. 8.33): the red mullet evidently ate corpses and dead fish as well as being blood-coloured and sacred to Hecate - cf. Parker (1983) p.362, who also (p.261-3) discusses the fish banned at Eleusis, and the reasons for the bans.

⁷⁸ A ban on eating eggs and oviparous animals is also understandable in these terms: Parker (1983) pp.261-3; cf. Guthrie (1962) p.188 for other testimonia. To the heart and womb can be added the loin, testicles, marrow, feet and head - Porphyry VP 43.

⁷⁹ Beans are the opposite of spices, and spices are the food *par excellence* of the Golden Age: Détienne (1981) p.222.

⁸⁰ This area is treated by Détienne (1981) pp.217-222, (1972) pp.44ff., and (1959); Détienne & Vernant (1989); Vernant (1991) p.280 on the correct place of men between beasts and gods; Gordon (1981) *in toto*. Parker (1983) embraces a lesser form of these concepts, when he stresses that taboos are expressions of partition (p.295).

not have passed without some backlash.⁸¹ The structuralists would argue, though, that the intentions of the Pythagoreans' actions were secret even to themselves.⁸²

But there does not appear to have been a conservative reaction on religious grounds,⁸³ nor is there any evidence for Détienne's "anti-system...counter-polis".⁸⁴ After the revolts, the Pythagoreans were depicted in fourth century comedy as crazy, but hardly a danger to the stability of the polis. At Croton, the Pythagoreans were prominent in the life of the polis, and tradition makes Pythagoras moral reformer to the beleaguered city.⁸⁵ Politically prominent Pythagoreans could not exist on the margins of society.⁸⁶ For example, (after the revolts) Archytas was

⁸¹ Unfortunately there is no record of the reaction to Empedocles' claim to divinity - fr.112 - to compare. *Vide* Vernant (1991) p.296 on the removal of sacrifice equating with the removal of the boundary which prevents men from achieving divine status.

⁸² Or, as Détienne (1981) p.222 argues, reforming the city from within is the milder form of this rejection, practiced by those Pythagoreans who ate some meat. The radicals practised total rejection.

⁸³ The two revolts in Croton - c.510 and c.450BC - seem to have been politically motivated: von Fritz (1940) p.92; Minar (1942) p.64. *Contra* Apollonius of Tyana *apud* Iamblichus VP 254-64, who states that the uprising was a result of the Pythagoreans' irritating habits which their opponents found insulting - cited by Morrison (1955) p.148.

⁸⁴ Détienne (1981) (p.222).

⁸⁵ Iamblichus VP 37 - late evidence, of course; Dunbabin (1948) p.361; von Fritz (1940) pp.95f. Morrison (1955) pp.149-150 makes the comparison with the role of Epimenides at Athens.

⁸⁶ Cf. Bremmer (1992) pp.205-214, esp. p.212: Bremmer would see the Pythagoreans as an aristocratic group struggling to keep their place in a *nouveau riche* (mercantile) society through the aid of self-regulating props (the *symbola*), rather than as a marginal group shunning the polis. However, Athenian political clubs, facing similar problems in the democratic transition do not have religious precepts. *Contra* Bremmer's concept of the rules, I would argue that (a) the *symbola* existed before Pythagoras founded his group; (b) they are more likely to be peasant beliefs - Parker (1983) p.292: it is unlikely that even land-based aristocrats would revert to such primitive superstitions; (c) the political situation in Magna Graecia was heading towards tyrant dynasties rather than democracy (cf. Theron of Acragas; Dion of Syracuse). The threat of rule of an individual to this group cannot be totally rejected, of course. Cf. von Fritz (1963) col.244. Berthiaume (1982) p.120,n.43 on Détienne and marginalization.

democratically elected to rule in Tarentum even though he was a strong Pythagorean follower.⁸⁷

The rationale behind vegetarianism in these movements (Orphic, Pythagorean and Empedoclean alike) is that the soul transmigrates into animal (and sometimes vegetal) bodies; to kill an animal is to destroy the receptacle which holds the soul.

Barnes has questioned the connection between reincarnation and the killing of animals:

If death marks not the cessation of life but rather the transformation to a different vital form, death will often be a boon for the victim; and a metempsychotic killer might well reason that the slaughter of a sheep was a deed of moral worth, in that it removed a person from the tedium of ovine existence and accelerated his return to the divine from which his psychic peregrinations began.⁸⁸

This point of view neglects (a) the effect that the killing has on the slayer's own soul when he/she becomes a murderer (for example, a worse life for the murderer in the next incarnation); (b) the possibility that it may have been necessary for that soul to live out its full life span before passing to the next life (in requital/penance, for example); and (c) that - as in Empedocles fr.137 - one may be doing the ill deed to a relative.⁸⁹ I concede that there is no evidence in Pythagoreanism to

⁸⁷ von Fritz (1940) p.97. If anything, there seems to have been a heightened tolerance towards unusual religious beliefs in Magna Graecia (cf. Theron of Acragas in Chapter 2).

⁸⁸ Barnes (1979) I, pp.124f. referring mainly to Empedocles.

⁸⁹ cf. Porphyry *De abst.* III,26

suggest any scenario in particular; however, (a) seems explicit in the prohibition against killing, although it implies a judgement for which there is, again, no evidence (apart from comparative).⁹⁰ I will discuss this ethical dilemma in Chapter 3 (Empedocles).

It does seem that if anything was strictly banned, it would be the actual act of killing - rather than eating - because, after death, the soul no longer inhabits the body,⁹¹ and so it would not particularly matter what happened to the body.

However, if one sees all animals as akin - attested as a Pythagorean belief⁹² - then it seems that eating an animal's carcass can be likened to cannibalism:⁹³ the departed soul has tainted the body with its identity. Kinship may be implied in Xenophanes fr. 7: unfortunately this is our only early evidence.⁹⁴ The fraternal nature of the Pythagorean movement (including the supposed equality of women) may hint at the links of kinship.⁹⁵ The Pythagorean⁹⁶ ban on

⁹⁰ Just as there is little evidence to support the notion of return to the divine in Pythagoreanism *contra* Empedocles *et al.*

⁹¹ Not merely in Homeric death descriptions; Claus (1981) p.112 notes that the popular view of death is still that the psyche leaves the body; this is the use of psyche even in Empedocles (fr.138).

⁹² Particularly by Porphyry *De abst.* III,26. Guthrie (1962) p.200 & cf. p.186 comments that this notion of kinship presupposes transmigration. I would hesitate to call this a *sine qua non*: as I mentioned, above, one could have a doctrine of reincarnation where the fate of the *body* was of no concern.

⁹³ Cf. the horrific example given in Empedocles fr.137 (and fragments 128, 139 and 136); Détiéne (1981) pp.218 & 270,n.8 would cite Hesiod *Works and Days* 176-9.

⁹⁴ And it only applies to dogs, as KR p.224 note!

⁹⁵ Women: Iamblichus *VP* 54-57 on Pythagoras' speech to the women of Croton; at *VP* 267 he lists seventeen prominent female members of the Pythagoreans - *vide* Clark (1989) pp.xvii f. for a brief discussion of this. Détiéne (1972) pp.124f. sees the inclusion of women as a way of controlling women's disruptive influence; for example the belief that women were most sexually aroused (and thus at their most alluring) in summer when men were at their weakest - Hesiod

burial in wool - Herodotus 2.81 - is obscure: perhaps it too can be explained as an example of abuse of kinship (for it is not necessary to kill a sheep for its wool).

Bans on killing, along with other taboos, are concerned with individual purity, and it is no surprise to find testimony to other forms of asceticism among the Pythagoreans. There is testimony to customs such as wearing simple white clothes, avoiding contact with impurity (for example, by not washing in water used by other people), eating and drinking in moderation, controlling reactions such as laughter, and physical desires, observing periods of silence etc. It is an Apolline life of moderation;⁹⁷ the connection seems to be that a life of greatest control and moderation brings greater rewards to the soul after death.

*

Works and Days 586 - and that there was to be no sex in summer: D.L. 8.9, cf. West (1971) p.160. Of course - apart from the admission of women - the same bonds of kinship could be applied to the Athenian clubs: cf. Minar (1942) pp.22-26, using G.M.Calhoun *Athenian clubs in politics and litigation* (Burt Franklin; N.Y.; 1970 [facsimile]) to make his analogies with Athens. Also, Burkert (1982) p.14.

⁹⁶ Perhaps Orphic?

⁹⁷ Guthrie (1962) p.203 on Apollo as the god most closely linked with the Pythagoreans. Cf. Cornford (1991[fac.] p.194. I have discussed this, above, n.19. There is another form of purification which has been connected with Pythagoras' own thought; this is mental catharsis: purity achieved through philosophy - Guthrie (1962) pp.204ff.; Cornford (1922) p.143 on *theoria*; cf. de Vogel (1966) p.16. KR p.228 suggest that purification is achieved by observance of the orderliness of the universe. The link is the "partition" - Parker (1983) p.295 - and orderliness of the Pythagoreans' own lives which rely on the set rules: Long (1948) p.27. There is certainly no parallel for this in Empedocles; indeed, it is a Platonic doctrine present in the "Pythagorean" *Phaedo*, which may account for its appearance in early Pythagoreanism: Parker (1983) p.298. The stumbling block is proving that Pythagoras involved himself in philosophy: Kahn (1974) p.169. That catharsis could be achieved through activities other than lustration is shown in the Bacchic tradition. Purification through music has also been suggested as a Pythagorean precept - cf. the Corybantic rites: Burnet (1952) p.97; Cornford (1922) p.145 (who calls it "psychotherapy"). It is less anachronistic than philosophical catharsis, but as Parker (1983) p.298 suggests it may have been viewed as curative; cf. Cornford (1922) p.143.

I have attempted to illustrate how the traditions of transmigration/reincarnation and the Pythagorean lifestyle interconnect to form a picture of an unfortunately opaque *bios* - a picture lacking any deeper meaning because of the paucity of evidence.⁹⁸ It is unfortunate that the early evidence is so sparse and the late evidence so influenced by subsequent forms of ascetic behaviour. Certainly it is impossible to restore to the Pythagoreans anything near a complete doctrine of reincarnation without drawing too heavily on comparative data. In my opinion, Empedocles' system (minus the cosmic implications) rests on a basic framework of Pythagorean ideas, a point which I will discuss in the relevant chapter. What does emerge, though, is that the motivations of the Orphic movement (*vide* Appendix B) and the Pythagorean movement rest on very different foundations, and that even in early thought there is no signs of a coherent development of a reincarnation "doctrine" from one to the other or from religion to philosophy⁹⁹ - a feature which I find recurring throughout early metempsychotic thought in Greece and the western colonies.

⁹⁸ As Guthrie (1962) p.166 notes, Pythagoras' teaching *must* have offered something great, or he would not have become a legend by the 5th century.

⁹⁹ As Gomperz (1901) p.123 - for example - would see when he makes Orphism and Pythagoreanism the male and female sides of the same entity. Cf. Appendix B for a discussion of this perception.

CHAPTER 2: RECONSTRUCTING A DOCTRINE OF REINCARNATION:
PINDAR *OLYMPIAN* 2 AND FRAGMENT 133

Pindar *Olympian Ode* 2.56-80:

...εἰ δέ νιν ἔχων τις οἶδεν τὸ μέλλον,
 ὅτι θανόντων μὲν ἐνθάδ' αὐτίκ' ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες
 ποινὰς ἔτισαν,- τὰ δ' ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ
 ἀλιτρά κατὰ γὰρ δικάζει τις ἐχθρᾷ
 λόγον φράσαις ἀνάγκη· 60
 ἴσαις δὲ νύκτεσσιν αἰεῖ,
 ἴσαις δ' ἐν ἀμέραις ἄλιον ἔχοντες, ἀπονέστερον
 ἐσλοὶ δέκονται βίοντον, οὐ χθόνα ταράσσοντες ἐν χερὸς ἀκμᾷ
 οὐδὲ πόντιον ὕδωρ
 κεινὰν παρὰ δίαϊταν· ἀλλὰ παρὰ μὲν τιμίους 65
 θεῶν, οἵτινες ἔχαιρον εὐορκίαις, ἄδακρυν νέμονται
 αἰῶνα· τοῖ δ' ἀπροσόρατον ὀκχέοντι πόνον-
 ὅσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρὶς
 ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν
 ψυχάν, ἔτειλαν Διὸς ὁδὸν παρὰ Κρόνου τύρσιν· ἔνθα μακάρων 70
 νᾶσος ὠκεανίδες
 αὔραι περιπνέουσιν, ἄνθεμα δὲ χρυσοῦ φλέγει,
 τὰ μὲν χερσόθεν ἀπ' ἀγλαῶν δενδρέων, ὕδωρ δ' ἄλλα φέρβει,
 ὄρμοισι τῶν χέρας ἀναπλέκοντι καὶ στεφάνοις
 βουλαῖς ἐν ὀρθαῖσι Ῥαδαμάνθου, 75
 ὄν πατήρ ἔχει <μέ>γας ἐτοῖμον αὐτῷ πάρεδρον,
 πόσις ὁ πάντων Ῥέας ὑπέρτατον ἐχοίσας θρόνον.
 Πηλεὺς τε καὶ Κάδμος ἐν τοῖσιν ἀλέγονται·
 Ἄχιλλέα τ' ἔνεικ', ἐπεὶ Ζηνὸς ἦτορ
 λιταῖς ἔπεισε, μάτηρ. 80

Pindar Fragment 133 (Bergk):¹

οἷσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποιναὶν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
 δέξεται, ἐς τὸν ὑπερθεὶν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτω ἔτει
 ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν·
 ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοὶ καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι
 ἄνδρες αὖξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἦρωες
 ἀγνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται.

*

¹The numbering of the fragment is that of Bergk; the fragment is sometimes referred to as 137 (Turyn) or 127 (Bowra).

Olympian 2 is dated to 476 BC, the year that Pindar arrived in Akragas (Sicily). At Akragas he composed two Olympian Odes for its ruler, Theron (*Olympian 2* and *3*), epinicians to celebrate Theron's victories at the Olympic Games of that year, as well as other works which have survived in fragments, but which give no information about Theron's, or Pindar's, religious beliefs. *Olympian 3* is a strict epinician or victory ode, incorporating a traditional Olympian or, one might say, Pindaric, theology. *Olympian 2*, on the other hand, differs radically from the typical Pindaric formula, and although it remains laudatory, it is an eschatological poem, dealing with reincarnation. It is also pitched at a more personal level than the *Olympian 3*.²

Briefly, *Olympian 2* says that when a man (presumably Theron) obtains a certain wealth of knowledge, he is able to see the future.³ He sees that when he dies his soul is judged (by a nameless judge). Those with a good record from their stay on earth go to a place full of sunshine, a place where there is little toil or hardship of any sort, but only a happiness with the gods; the bad undergo harsh punishment. After a certain period in this existence (the poem does not specifically state this, but it is the obvious conclusion to draw; one presumes - especially with lines 68ff. as a guide - that it is a period equivalent to a life-time) the soul is

² See Robbins (1984), who suggests that *Oly.2* deals with personal issues, while *Oly.3* is shorter, and was intended for a great civic occasion. He finds "intimations of immortality" in both poems, but disguised: in *Oly.3*, Theron has *reached* the next world, as predicted in *Oly.2*.

³ Cf. Empedocles fr.129 - an example of this knowledge acquired through many incarnations. Rohde (1925) p.443 xii 41 would interpret this knowledge to mean that a person in the top rank of human society would obviously think he was going to become a hero in the afterlife.

incarnated back to an earthly existence, and the cycle begins again. If the soul keeps itself pure for three lives on each side of the grave (i.e. six in total), it passes (no judgement is mentioned, but there must be some means of judging whether the lives have satisfactorily fulfilled the conditions) along the sacred way of Zeus, past the Tower of Kronos to the Islands of the Blessed in Oceanus. This is a paradise ruled by Rhadamanthys, Kronos and Rhea, and the home to heroes such as Peleus, Cadmus and Achilles.⁴ But it is also a paradise open to *any* soul who can fulfil the requisite number of good lives.

Fr.133 (cited in Plato *Meno* 81b-c), is thought to be a fragment of a *threnos* (dirge).⁵ It has long been associated with *Olympian 2* because of the metempsychosis in both poems. It cannot be dated with any certainty, nor is it known where, or for whom it was written. The attribution to Pindar is almost certain, because of the preceding lines in the *Meno*:

⁴ There is considerable debate about how Achilles got to this happy paradise, since we last saw him supremely discontented in a very different place in *Odyssey* 11.477ff. Koniaris (1988) p.258 suggests that Pindar has given Achilles the only thing he lacked in the *Odyssey* - happiness, and he points out that *Olympian 2* is much concerned with happiness; he also suggests (pp.263ff.) that Achilles is the best known hero in the ancient world, and to put him in this paradise is a way of showing that translation it is the best that one can hope to achieve. Solmsen (1982) p.20 points out that, in the poem, Thetis pleaded for Achilles to be removed there, and that Pindar had invented this to explain his presence (for whatever purpose it might serve). Vernant (1981) pp.289ff. discusses the two faces of death in ancient Greece: viz, death as glorious and death as unbearable. He comments that the view of Achilles in the Underworld in *Odyssey* 11 is a radical denial of the *Iliad's* concept of heroic death. Achilles is not able to rejoice in his heroism in Hades; he is extremely unhappy. Koniaris' (1988) argument does not seem quite so trite in this context.

⁵ The argument about whether the fr. comes from a dirge is hardly relevant here, and extremely difficult to answer. What is a dirge? - *Olympian 2* discusses death and it is not a dirge. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1922) p.252 was the first to advise caution about considering fr.133 to be part of a dirge; Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.266 agrees; the view is opposed by Sandys (1915) p.586; Farnell (1930) p.333; Woodbury (1966) p.599, mainly, it seems, on the grounds of tradition.

Οἱ μὲν λέγοντές εἰσι τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ ἱερειῶν ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἷσις τ' εἶναι διδόναι· λέγει δὲ καὶ Πίνδαρος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν, ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰσιν. ἃ δὲ λέγουσι, ταυτὶ ἐστίν· ἀλλὰ σκόπει, εἴ σοι δοκοῦσιν ἀληθῆ λέγειν. φασὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἀθάνατον, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν τελευτᾶν, ὃ δὲ ἀποθνήσκειν καλοῦσι, τοτὲ δὲ πάλιν γίνεσθαι, ἀπόλλυσθαι δ' οὐδέποτε· δεῖν δὲ διὰ ταῦτα ὡς ὀσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον οἷσιν γὰρ ἄν -

[= Pindar fr.133]

Ἄτε οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός τε οὔσα καὶ πολλάκις γεγонуῖα, καὶ ἐωρακυῖα καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου καὶ πάντα χρήματα, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτι οὐ μεμάθηκεν.⁶

Persephone is the controlling deity of fr.133: mankind pays to her the penalty which is their punishment for her grief.⁷ This penalty is exacted “below”: that is, somewhere in the Underworld, and after eight years of this punishment (the form of which we do not know) the souls are restored to earth in the ninth year and incarnated into the bodies of kings, wise men and so on. At the end of this

⁶The similarities with Empedocles' frs. 8, 11, and 129 are striking; however, the concepts are earlier (pre-Parmenidean), so the similarities may be coincidental. One presumes that Plato includes Empedocles among his “divinely inspired” poets: he was certainly the foremost pre-Platonic thinker on reincarnation. See Rose (1936) pp.79-80 on attribution of the fragment; also McGibbon (1964b) p.7,n.8.

⁷Sandys (1915) would appear to be in the minority here, in interpreting the woe/grief as belonging to those paying the penalty; for the different viewpoints on the causes of Persephone's grief see: McGibbon (1964b) pp.7ff.; Rohde (1925) p.442 xii 34; Dodds (1951) p.155; Rose (1936) p.85; Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.260. With regard to Persephone, we have two separate religious cults - that of Eleusis (where she is Kore in the cult of Demeter) and that of the “Orphics” (see Appendix B). There is considerable distinction made between Kore, daughter of Demeter, and Persephone, Queen of the Dead - she is almost another person. The so-called Eudemian theogony details the destruction of Dionysus-Zagreus by the Titans and the subsequent revenge of Zeus which produced the human race. This Dionysus was the son of Persephone; her grief is understandable, and also her hatred of the human race (part-Titanic) from whom she exacts her *ποινὰ*. West has reconstructed the Eudemian theogony from the Rhapsodic theogony via what he sees as the “Cyclic theogony” and parallels with Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*. He dates the Eudemian theogony to c.500BC, claiming that it was the poem of Orpheus known to Plato and Aristotle. See the review of West in *CPh* LXXXI (1986) 154-159 for a summary and discussion of these arguments.

single life, the souls become heroes. One can presume that these heroes go to an Elysium/Islands of the Blessed.

At this point, I would like to address what one might call the different “administrative processes” of reincarnation in each of the two poems, instead of regarding them as two aspects of one doctrine. Certainly, conflating the poems appears to make possible the restoration of a much more of a coherent doctrine of reincarnation. This is what the majority of scholars have done.⁸ I am very sceptical about the value of this.⁹ The Ode and the fragment appear, to me, to

⁸ Conflating *Olympian 2* and fr.133: Sandys (1915) p.590,n.1; von Fritz (1957) p.85; Bluck (1958b) pp.405-406; Rohde (1925) p.445 xii 42; Farnell (1930) p.15; Lloyd-Jones (1984) pp.259ff.; Zuntz (1971) p.85; Des Places (1949) p.175. Viewing as inconsistent: McGibbon (1964b) p.8; Solmsen (1968) p.505; Rose (1936) pp.80 & 93. Rose (1936) even suggests that the fragment was written for a Greek from the mainland!

I want to point out a major anomaly in the traditional interpretation of these two passages. If I can sum up what scholars think about these passages, it would go like this (it is almost a syllogism): first, both passages are by Pindar. Second, both passages refer to a doctrine or belief in reincarnation. Therefore, third, both passages refer to the *same* doctrine of reincarnation, and, four, both passages combine to restore for us not only the religious beliefs of Pindar’s patron, Theron of Akragas, but also the more general beliefs of Sicily and Southern Italy as a whole. I am not overly exaggerating the influence of these two passages; scholars have leapt on them as providing our only solid evidence for Akragantine religion. It is hard to blame them: a big problem when dealing with the eschatological beliefs of Southern Italy is not the *paucity* of evidence *per se*, but the fact that every bit of it appears to contradict the next. To find even two vaguely similar doctrines in a “reputable” author like Pindar is equivalent to winning X-Lotto. So, what results? - basically, an amalgam of the two passages, with any difficulties or *lacunae* being filled from the corpus of eschatological evidence from Magna Graecia.

⁹ Fr.137 is a salutary lesson to those commentators convinced that Pindar had certain religious beliefs (viz, reincarnation, Orphism, etc.). Fr.137 is quoted by Clement of Alexandria with reference to the Eleusinian mysteries. This mystery cult is a long way removed from the reincarnation debate, its purpose being to guarantee a happy afterlife;

ἄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν ἐκεῖνα
κοίλαν εἴσιν ὑπὸ χθόνα·
οἶδεν μὲν βιοτου τελευτᾶν
οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀρχάν.

The text *per se* is not relevant to my argument; merely, the point should be made that by these examples one can see that Pindar could adapt himself to the particular religious beliefs of his patron/subject. It is also a warning not to conflate all of the eschatological fragments into one all-embracing doctrine. As Rohde (1925) writes, Pindar “owes nothing to the Eleusinia” (p.447 xii 48).

refer not to a common doctrine of reincarnation, but to two doctrines.¹⁰ It is only literary tradition which links the poems. My first objection is the fact that the divine protagonists are different (radically so); this should indicate that the poems are not to be considered as parts of a whole system.

As well as the different divine figures, the ideas behind the incarnation process are different; in *Olympian 2* there is a judgement based on the soul's behaviour in its previous incarnation; in fr.133, Persephone is punishing all the souls, regardless of their behaviour; it is punishment for bringing her grief. In *Olympian 2*, those judged fit go to a temporary paradise while the bad endure terrible labours. In this poem the soul has a choice - it can act well or it can act badly; it is self-determined. In fr.133 Persephone acts like Empedocles' Necessity: all the souls suffer the same fate, good or bad. Endeavouring to fit fr.133 with the ideas expressed in *Olympian 2*, it has been suggested that Persephone is the (nameless) judge in lines 59-60;¹¹ she is, therefore, also the judge at the final incarnation (i.e. after the three good lives in each world - l.68-89). At this final judgement (fr.133) she makes all the souls, regardless of their past record of good lives, suffer a final period of punishment (termed an *ennaeteris*) to make up for (unspecified) grief caused to her. This, in turn is followed by a final life on earth in the highest human role - kings, wise men, etc.. An alternative is that Persephone

¹⁰ One might question the chances of two differing doctrines of reincarnation occurring in one poet. However, all it would require would be two patrons with different beliefs - *vide* fr.137 by way of example (previous note).

¹¹ Zuntz (1971) p.86.

inflicted the eight year punishment after every incarnation, but this does not fit with *Olympian 2* and the judgement which separates good and bad.

The major stumbling blocks to this conflation were mentioned above, the primary objection being that Persephone is not mentioned in *Olympian 2*. Instead, there is simply the mysterious “One” (τὸς :l.59). Pindar had no objection to naming her in fr.133 as a judge-like figure. Moreover, his use of other Homeric gods in his *Islands of the Blessed* shows that he was not inventing a new theology.¹² There must have been a reason for not specifying the name of the god. Obviously, the available judges did not fit in here (though he could use Rhadamanthys as a controlling figure in the *Islands of the Blessed*; l.75). The other alternative is that he deliberately did not wish to name the judge. This might be the case if the judge were Hades; H.J.Rose points out that Hades has a reputation for severe punishment of wrong-doing, and was named (even euphemistically) with the greatest of reluctance because of his ill-omened role as ruler of the Underworld.¹³ Hades appears in *Olympian 9* (l.33) in Hermes’ psychopompic role, leading mortals down to the dead. He may have had a judicial role in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* (l.270ff); and in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*: “it is said, another Zeus makes final judgement on wrong-doing among the dead” (230ff.).¹⁴ However,

¹² Koniaris (1988) p.247 comments that there is no reason to suppose that Pindar saw the Underworld as a different place *post Troiam captam*.

¹³ *OCD*² s.v. Hades, p.484; Rohde (1925) p.238 writes that the “One” is borrowed from the teaching of “mystic separatists”. He does, however, cite Plato on the judges of the Underworld: Hades, Rhadamanthys and Minos (p.239). Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.254 very tentatively suggests that the judge might be the “subterranean Zeus”: by this I presume he means Hades. He does not believe this Zeus is the judge.

¹⁴ References and translation from Garland (1985) pp.52,53.

there are few references to Hades as a judge, and, to my knowledge, no scholars have suggested Hades as the “One” in *Olympian 2*. The other alternative is that Theron’s religious beliefs included a judging figure who did not appear in the traditional religion, and Pindar wished to gloss over this. I will discuss Pindar’s strong traditional stance, below.

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To begin with *Olympian 2*, lines 56-83 give quite a clear description of a reincarnation process.¹⁵ It is a process involving a judgement, and “sentencing” to temporary paradise or a life of toil. A certain amount of conjecture is needed to realise the system fully. My fairly conservative interpretation of the system is as follows; for the good soul, judgement brings a stay (a lifetime - whether in human

¹⁵ The debate over the meaning of ἐστρίς ἑκατέρωθι was resolved satisfactorily when the Greek was examined. Other commentators had looked to what possible *views* the phrase could have expressed, or, for example, the link of the number three with other beliefs. For example, Demand (1975) p.355,n.38 tenuously links Pindar and Empedocles on the basis of their use of the number three. These discussions are abstruse; cf. Long (1948) who argues that in a doctrine of reincarnation the souls (which have “fallen”) can only pass from *this* world to their final dwelling place, *not* from the judgement place in the Underworld (which *Olympian 2* implies). This illustrates all too well my point about conflating the fragment and the Ode: in doing so, Long has lost sight of what the Ode actually says - *vide* von Fritz (1957) pp.85ff. and McGibbon (1964b) pp.5ff. For an unsound interpretation of the Ode’s purpose see Segal (1985) p.211. Nisetich (1988) pp.7ff. thinks that Theron saw poetry as the means to salvation and immortality. One is reminded of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 19 and Spenser’s LXXV. As Koniaris (1988) p.246 comments, immortality achieved through poetry is a “truism”. *id.* (p.269) on the Ode as a “quasi-revelation”; also Bowra (1964) pp.121-122. Sandys (1915); Gildersleeve (1907) pp.150-151 see 3 lives in total. Against this, von Fritz (1957) pp.85ff.; McGibbon (1964b) pp.5ff.; Bluck (1958b) pp.405ff.; Rohde (1925) p.445 xii 42; Woodbury (1966) p.616; Rose (p.93) see 6 lives in total (three in each world). Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.267,n.37 cannot decide! Three lives in each world must be the minimum requirement to qualify for the Islands of the Blessed. There has also been a minor scholarly skirmish over lines 62-62, about whether the lines mean that this temporary paradise is in permanent equinox, or if it means that earthly night and day are reversed in this paradise (as fr.129 suggests for Elysium; Rohde (1925) agrees: p.443 xii 37). It is hardly relevant to reincarnation. For the arguments see, especially, Woodbury (1966) pp.600ff: the equinox as a mean between mortality and immortality; the equinox as a metaphor for political equality); Gildersleeve (1907) p.150; Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.255 suggests that days and nights may be of equal length in the underworld, but points also to the evidence of fr.129.

or cosmic time) in a paradise that is similar to, but not the same place as, the Islands of the Blessed where the heroes dwell.¹⁶ Because it is necessary to live well three times in the upper and lower worlds (*l.*68-69),¹⁷ at some stage the soul must be incarnated into our world after its judgement. This creates considerable difficulty; is incarnation in our world a punishment for the errant soul which spoiled its paradise-lifetime? If so, the life in paradise would not be counted among the lives lived satisfactorily. Therefore, to get three satisfactory lives on earth, a soul would have to sacrifice deliberately three lives in paradise so that it could actually get to earth. This would imply a minimum of nine lifetimes before translation to the Islands of the Blessed.¹⁸ This is based on the assumption (which the Ode implies) that the soul is capable of making moral choices about what sort of life it will lead.¹⁹ This makes the concept of deliberately sabotaging one's lives implausible.

The most logical way for this to happen is for the incarnations to alternate: the soul has one lifetime in our world, then the paradise or punishment life, then a

¹⁶ Solmsen (1968) pp.503ff. on the problem of two paradises; see also note 46.

¹⁷ See, also, Nilsson (1935) pp.214ff.

¹⁸ The number nine has some interesting parallels: Guthrie (1962) pp.252-253 makes the analogy with the nine years in fr.133; Plato's 9000 years in the *Phaedrus*; Empedocles' 9000 year cycle (if there are three seasons to a year). Did nine perhaps fit the poem better than any other number? Cf. Marcovich (1964) who compares the evidence for *eight* years.

¹⁹ The conclusion of Lloyd-Jones (1984) is that after death the souls are all punished by being made feeble-witted, his translation of ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες (*l.*57). There is no indication of this in any doctrine of reincarnation, nor would it make sense. As Koniaris (1988) pp.249ff. has rightly argued, the removal of rational choice through feeble-wittedness makes the system irrelevant (and amoral). Moreover, the regular translation of ἀπάλαμνος is lawless or wicked, not feeble-minded. The argument is not even logical. Lloyd-Jones (1984) reached his conclusion on the basis of the "ancient grief" of fr.133; making men feeble-minded is how Persephone exacts her punishment for the murder of her son Dionysus-Zagreus.

lifetime in our world and so on.²⁰ This fits with other comparable Greek doctrines of reincarnation, although it is unusual for the life of reward or punishment to be considered as an assessable part of the system, because it is generally a life over which the soul has little self-determination. One wonders how much souls learn or remember of their punishment or reward? It is a *sine qua non* of any intelligible system of reincarnation that there is some continuity of self (usually through memory). Yet there is no mention of the souls losing their memory by drinking of the River of Forgetfulness (Lethe), as in Plato's *Republic* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The judgement itself creates problems, primarily because Pindar glosses over the fate of the wicked (for obvious reasons - Theron is only interested in his own fate, and would not like the alternative that he could also go the way of the wicked). All we learn about the wicked is that they endure labour which cannot be looked upon (l.67). This would appear to be a sort of Hell or purgatory. Fr.129 perhaps offers a glimpse of this world: after describing an Elysium, Pindar continues,

²⁰ Von Fritz (1957) p.86 believes in a strict alternation of earth/Hades. He thinks that the soul is unable to earn merit in Hades, but stays there to be purified by punishments (this is the influence of fr.133 on his argument). He admits (p.87) that he intends to establish a closer relationship between Pindar, Empedocles and Phaedrus. McGibbon (1964b) p.5 points out that, for Pindar, paradise in *Olympian 2* is not the place of recompense; rather it is what the soul desires to attain. I would add that in fr.133 the place to which Persephone sends the souls obviously is a place of recompense; there is no evidence that it is an Elysium, and indeed, it seems unlikely. With regard to von Fritz's (1957) theory about merit in Hades, McGibbon (1964b) comments that for the souls this first paradise is, in a sense, a purgatory, because it is not their final destination. He believes that paradise was a test of how one responded to one's reward or punishment (i.e. favourable or unfavourable circumstances), and denies passivity of the souls in paradise: i.e. it is possible for the good to deteriorate and the bad to improve in paradise (*ibid*).

ἔνθεν τὸν ἄπειρον ἐρεύγονται σκότον
βληχροὶ δνοφερᾶς νυκτὸς ποταμοί..²¹

Can the wicked also be incarnated on earth after a life of this sort? It does not seem that Pindar is using the Empedoclean idea that our world is Hell; of course, our world is obviously inferior to a life in paradise, however temporary.²²

There is another possibility; that although the soul can choose what sort of life it will lead, it cannot choose the place where it will lead this life. That is, it is a random placement (i.e. in this world or in the Underworld). This does not imply the removal of judgement altogether. I am suggesting that one must imagine a duality of worlds: a definite division into a “good world” and a “bad world”, both in our world and in the Underworld; that is, the good are randomly incarnated only on the “good side” of the two worlds, and the wicked are randomly incarnated only on the “bad side”. This is a highly complex idea!

And what of the distinction between good and bad? It is hardly clear-cut; it seems that only an exemplary life will be counted towards one’s quota of six lives. Does that mean that anything less than perfection is sent, as a matter of course, to this purgatory? If there is to be a scale of incarnations (as in other systems of belief), this is where it would occur. What I am suggesting is that earth (because it is inferior to paradise) is where the mediocre (rather than the truly wicked) are

²¹ On Pindar’s gloss of the wicked, see Bowra (1964) p.121.

²² This would indicate that the soul had not suffered a “fall”, as some commentators would like to see.

sent. This does not seem to create as many problems as the above suggestions. In this system, one could live three good lives on earth, then three good lives in paradise, in that order; or alternate good lives. It does, in fact, seem to imply a certain randomness, but one that is really controlled by the judge. Of course, a good life in paradise (where one does not have to do anything by the way of work) would perhaps be easier to achieve than a good life on earth, surrounded by moral temptations. In this sense, earthly life would be a greater test of the soul than paradise.²³ This is an idea that has caused interpreters of fr.133 considerable difficulty: is the life on earth to which Persephone sends the souls a reward or a final test? I will discuss this, below.

The point which must be made is that there appears to be no maximum time limit in which to achieve one's six lives. That is, it is possible to get to the Islands of the Blessed after six straight good lives, but, presumably, one could waste an untold amount of time in mediocre and bad lives along the way. There is no indication that the good lives can only occur in the top echelon of human incarnations (as Empedocles and Plato *Phaedrus* 249a would have it). That would seem to remove the necessity to work one's way up a scale of lives, achieving a morally perfect score in each. Moreover, *Olympian 2* does not specify the necessity for the six lives to be lived one after each other. In addition, it seems

²³ McGibbon (1964b) p.6 wonders what there is to do in paradise? One suggestion is that the time is used simply for purification - an analogy might be made to Keul's thesis on the water-carriers in Hades: Garland (1985) p.63. Fr.129-130 describe a paradise where the dead ride horses, wrestle, and play draughts and lyres.

perfectly possible to live, for example, four good lives on earth and three in paradise, as long as one fulfils the minimum requirement.²⁴ One's ability to recollect past lives would affect the length of time it took to pass through the system to the Islands of the Blessed; morally speaking, reincarnation is a way of learning from one's mistakes and being rewarded for this.²⁵

There are a number of other questions which can be posed about this Ode.²⁶ firstly, where does the judgement occur? Lines 56-57 state that it occurs immediately after death. The judgement either occurs in the world of the dead, or in some sort of transitional place between our world and the underworld: a sort of waiting-room or "way-station" for the souls. Although judgement occurs immediately, there is no indication how long the soul must wait between incarnations. That there is a judgement between each life seems certain.

Secondly, what happens to those who never achieve any good lives? Do they keep getting another chance, or are they eventually made to live in eternal damnation?²⁷ This is linked to the question, above, about a maximum limit on incarnations. There is no limit given in the Ode, because the fate of the wicked is not of paramount importance to the poet or his patron. There might be a moral

²⁴ Bluck (1958b) p.408 on number of lives. He cites *Phaedrus* as an example of giving only the shortest way of getting out of the cycle.

²⁵ Although, the "time out" ought to be more important than extra lives as a time for reflection. This is an idea found in other systems of reincarnation, but not the Greek.

²⁶ Questions based on those posed by Burkert (1972) pp.133-134.

²⁷ Rohde (1925) gives the alternatives: p.446 xii 45.

rather than a temporal limit.²⁸ For example, Empedocles had a temporal limit - his cosmic cycle was fixed at 10,000 seasons.²⁹ And, how low is it possible to sink in incarnations (if incarnations are linked to morality)? Are incarnations limited to human bodies, or can one - as Empedocles believed - become κοῦρός τε κόρη τε θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς (Empedocles' fr.117)? Finally, is it possible to by-pass the incarnations completely?³⁰ Achilles, for example, has obviously entered the Islands of the Blessed by the back door.³¹ Was this because he was the most famous heroic figure of antiquity? One might cite the example of Menelaus who circumvented death by immediate translation to Elysium (*Odyssey* 4.561-69).³² Menelaus received preferential treatment because he was the son-in-law of Zeus.

Thirdly, how or why did the system begin? Either the system had always occurred since the cosmos was created, or else it was the result of something the soul did. That is, the soul "fell", and is being punished for its fall. This is the basis of the Empedoclean and Platonic systems of reincarnation. In both of these writers the soul was divine, and was attempting to regain its divinity.³³ In *Olympian 2*, this is certainly not occurring. There is no suggestion that the soul originally

²⁸ With regard to fr.133, McGibbon (1964b) notes (if I am interpreting him correctly) that if a soul reaches the highest human position of virtue before the expiration of a time limit, then it might be a moral impossibility for it (to not gain immediate release. expir
not to gain

²⁹ Empedocles' fr.115.

³⁰ McGibbon (1964b) p.8 believes that the virtuous lives are the only means of release.

³¹ See note 3.

³² Reference from Koniaris (1988) p.254. Pindar could have lifted his description of the Islands of the Blessed straight from this passage in the *Odyssey*.

³³ In fr.131 the soul is "from the gods"; cf. Empedocles fr.115 - his *daimons* are also from the gods, i.e. divine.

Pindar?

dwelled in the Islands of the Blessed and was thrown out.³⁴ Indeed, there is not even the semi-immateriality of the soul that one finds in Empedocles (Plato has realised immateriality with his winged souls: *Phaedrus* 249a). Pindar's souls seem to be the "images" that we see in the Underworld in the Homeric *Nekyia* in *Odyssey* 11. Indeed, the system, as Pindar describes it, appears to have begun after the Homeric period!

These last questions have highlighted how traditional and Homeric is the background to Pindar's system, despite the reincarnation. This is equally relevant to fr.133, so I will discuss the two together, below. What is most strongly indicated from my discussion is how little is realizable about this particular belief in reincarnation. Ethical and moral problems which are raised and answered in other doctrines are not even *present* in Pindar. Morally speaking, reincarnation is a way of learning from one's mistakes and being rewarded for this, but this is not tackled here. The idea is, I think, that we are to view Theron as having passed through the system already, and now just finishing his last life, and *about* to be transferred to the final destination or the paradise. Thus there is no need to tackle the implications of memory on *future* lives. But why the poem is so non-committal on the specifics of this remains to be seen.

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There seems to be two alternatives for interpreting fragment 133. Firstly, it may be a doctrine in itself; that is, the fragment may describe the system of

³⁴ Bluck (1958b) p.409,n.2

reincarnation *in toto*. This would mean that after someone dies, Persephone exacts a penalty of eight years spent in the Underworld; in the ninth year the soul is incarnated into the highest mortal ranks and then, is heroified. As a hero, one presumes, the soul joins the other heroes in their traditional home in Elysium. This implies a single incarnation, then translation to Elysium. The obvious question is, what happens if Persephone is not satisfied with the soul's performance in the eight year punishment?³⁵ Does the soul repeat this period, or do all souls pass on the Elysium, regardless? That is, it is a token punishment; this makes the scheme morally pointless.

The second alternative is that fr.133 describes the last stage in a doctrine of reincarnation. That this is more promising can be seen by the conflation of ideas expressed in *Olympian 2* with this fragment. I have discussed the problems with this, above. The only point on which the two even vaguely agree (and this is conjecture) is that the final stage in both is attainment of heroic status in the Islands of the Blessed. A point of (negative) evidence is that in both doctrines it appears that the souls do not reach divine status - that is, they never become gods.³⁶

³⁵Rose (1936) p.91 uses this problem to argue for fr.133 as the last stage of a cycle of reincarnations: for failing the eight year punishment, the soul is sent down the scale again. McGibbon (1964b) pp.9-10 on Persephone's power in this matter.

³⁶Unlike in Empedocles' and Plato's systems.

Indeed, fr.133 appears to have more in common with Empedocles' fr.146 than with *Olympian 2*:

εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ ὑμνόπολοι καὶ ἰητροὶ
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται·

Common sense supplies one reply to this parallel: in a scale of incarnations, kings, and so forth are obviously the highest on the human scale.³⁷ Moreover, it is tempting to see Theron as one of these “leaders” (destined to become a god after his final life, in Empedocles' system). It is quite possible that Pindar and Empedocles were following a common source.³⁸ Empedocles, after all, was an Akragantine, and would have been about twenty years old when Pindar visited. This (presumably) rules out the possibility of Pindar's using the work of Empedocles, but could indicate a common source in Akragas.³⁹ The Sicilian city, and indeed Magna Graecia as a whole, seem to have had what L.Woodbury calls a “hot-house culture”⁴⁰ of religious, semi-mystical cults, the details of which have not survived sufficiently to aid us: the “..flowers..from this short-lived but gorgeous garden.”⁴¹ One only has to think of the whole Orphic-Pythagorean problem in relation to the South of Italy, to understand the complexity of the

³⁷ What happens to women? No female incarnations are mentioned. But cf. *Timaeus* (q.v.) for women as the second incarnation of degenerate men.

³⁸ Griffith (1991) compares the *Katharmoi* and *Oly.2*, concluding that there are many similarities: viz, metempsychosis; Necessity; the number three; oath-taking; good works; crowns of wreaths; praise of Akragas. He would conclude that, “Theron and his fellow citizens, therefore, (whatever Pindar's view) seem to have believed in the transmigration of souls, for which reason Pindar seems to have portrayed it in this ode.” That is, it is an Akragantine belief. (p.54)

³⁹ On the possible common source in Akragas: Duchemin (1955) pp.326 & 327; Demand (1975) pp.347,354,357.

⁴⁰ Woodbury (1966) p.598.

⁴¹ *ibid*

issue.⁴² Moreover, it is ludicrous to write, as Zuntz has, that, “.I cannot visualize Pindar, or Theron, indulging in theological abstrusities of this kind” [viz, Persephone; Dionysus-Zagreus; the “Orphic” theogony, etc.].⁴³ We know nothing except what *Olympian 2* tells us about Theron’s beliefs. He may well have devoted many hours to the “abstrusities” of his particular beliefs.⁴⁴

To return to Empedocles’ fr.146, there is a greater anomaly with fr.133 of Pindar (and with *Olympian 2*). In Empedocles’ system, the daimon becomes a god after its final human incarnation; in *Olympian 2* and fr.133, the soul does not advance to divine status, but becomes a hero. In effect, therefore, Empedocles’ daimon is divine, and Pindar’s soul is immortal in the Homeric sense (but compare fr.131 - note 41). This is a considerable ideological difference; it is unlikely that a common source would vary so much in its fundamental details.

There are, however, two ways in which the emendation from god to hero could have happened. Achieving divine status might have formed (with regard to *Olympian 2*) part of Theron’s belief, and so Pindar’s elevation of him to merely

⁴²I think it is now possible to shed a little more light on the Orphic question. Zuntz’s (1971) argument that Orphism cannot exist without a Dionysian cult (and therefore there was no Orphism in Sicily) has been overruled by new evidence: see Cole (1980) pp.223-232. Lloyd-Jones (1984), by violently swinging towards an almost pre-Wilamowitz (*Glaube*) acceptance of many dubious aspects of the “Orphic” movement, has reopened a debate that has been creeping along in the middle-ground since Linforth (1941). I will come back to my impressions of “Orphism” later: see Appendix B. Lloyd-Jones (1984) pp.248ff.,264ff.,esp.269-277 discusses the new discoveries (the c.465BC gold leaves from Hipponion; the bone tablets from Olbia).

⁴³Zuntz (1971) p.86,n.3; against this see Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.263. Pindar gives no details of any regulations of life-style etc., but this would presumably not be appropriate to the context?

⁴⁴Cf. Griffith (1991): “When Theron purchased this ode, he gave to the poet various specifications..” (p.53)

hero status could have been a disapproving gloss on his patron's ambition.⁴⁵ This is not such wild speculation as it may seem, and would seem to point to something which very few commentators have grasped: Pindar's refusal to commit *hubris*.

If anything can be said about Pindar's own religious beliefs, it is that they are traditional.⁴⁶ This comes across not only in *Olympian 2*, but in his other eschatological fragments.⁴⁷ At *Pythian 3.61*, for example, he writes μή, φίλα ψυχά, βίον ἀθάνατον σπεύδε. In *Olympian 2*, reincarnation (which is, as

⁴⁵ A modern analogy is the recently released "politically correct" (i.e. censored) editions of the "Biggles" series.

⁴⁶ McGibbon (1964b) p.5; Woodbury (1966) p.598; Duchemin (1966) p.324,116 on Hesiod. One notes that Pindar's nomenclature for the soul varies; at l.57 he uses φρένες (spirits), at l.90 φρενός (to mean "heart"); at l.70, he uses ψυχή; in fr.133 he uses ψυχή; Rohde (1925) p.442 xii 35. Also, Zuntz (1971) p.85. Cf. Dodds (1951) p.138 on the ill-defined vocabulary of the 5th century.

⁴⁷ One might argue that fr.131 is an exception:

καὶ σῶμα μὲν πάντων ἔπεται θανάτῳ περισθενεῖ,
ζῶν δ' ἔτι λείπεται αἰῶνος εἶδωλον· τὸ γάρ ἐστι μόνον
ἐκ θεῶν· εὐδαι δὲ πρασσόντων μελέων, ἀτὰρ
εὐδόντεσσιν ἐν πολλοῖς ὄνειροις
δείκνυσι τερπνῶν ἐφέρποισαν χαλεπῶν τε κρίσιν·

It is, however, the traditional, Homeric view of the soul as a shade or image taken one step further into the realm of dream-consciousness: Rohde (1925) p.7. It is the first extant description of such: Lloyd-Jones (1984) p.268; Sandys (1915) p.589,n.2. See Dodds (1951) pp.102-134 on dreams. Our Empedoclean and Platonic views of the soul make us search for evidence of the soul's divinity in Pindar, and also for a fall whereby the soul lost its divinity and was cast into the cycle of incarnations. Pindar's traditional view of the soul belies this. It is useless to search for the later idea that the soul returns to the place from which it came (before a fall, for example). Neither *Olympian 2* and fr.133, nor any of the other eschatological fragments mention this. See von Fritz (1957) pp.87ff. on the Platonic idea of the soul. He does not make clear the analogy with Empedocles' *daimon* which also returns from whence it came. Also - esp. *Phaedrus* and the view of the soul as a fallen divinity - McGibbon (1964b) pp.5,7; Bluck (1958b) arguing against von Fritz (1957): pp.407ff,407n.8.,413). Zuntz (1971) cannot find a fall, but invents one (p.86): there must be, he postulates, an "obscure myth" to account for Persephone's grief at the soul's fall. This is a dangerously Christian idea; viz, that the sinner grieves Persephone by his behaviour, in the same way that the Christian sinner crucifies Christ once more by his behaviour: Rose (1936) p.85. This is not a part of traditional Greek belief. As Rose (*ibid*) points out, the only real grief the gods feel is when a favourite is killed. Persephone's grief could be due to her kidnapping by Hades (however, it is Demeter's grief which is the focus of the myth: see the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*; moreover, she would have no reason to punish the human race for this). The only other source of Persephone's grief is in the myth of the slaying of her son, Dionysus-Zagreus: Rose (1936) pp.85-86.

F.Solmsen has pointed out, what one considers to be the most well-known belief of Magna Graecia⁴⁸) is only given two lines sandwiched between two nearly standard (i.e. Homeric/Hesiodic) accounts of the happy fate awaiting “heroes” in the Islands of the Blessed (see also fr.129 and 130). It seems, as Koniaris has pointed out, that Pindar considers a happy life after death of more importance than the achievement of immortality (Empedocles’ priority). Koniaris also notes that a doctrine of metempsychosis should minimize the importance of the body;⁴⁹ I would suggest that *Olympian 2*, at least, does not do so. Rather, the emphasis is on the body keeping the soul pure (lines 69-70), and the concept of the soul as the more permanent and important entity is not prominent. Fragment 133, on the other hand, does deal with the soul in a less corporeal manner.

One might argue, therefore, that Pindar may have slotted Theron’s beliefs into a traditional background. This seems quite possible.⁵⁰ In the canonical Hesiodic/Homeric scheme, only the exceptional went to Elysium after death. The majority of the dead stayed in the Homeric house of Hades. There was no room for reincarnation (or even promotion) in this system. When Pindar is faced with

⁴⁸ Solmsen (1982) p.19

⁴⁹ Koniaris (1988) p.254

⁵⁰ Farnell (1930) pp.335 & 338 on Pindar as “double-minded” and making up an “appropriate conglomerate” for Theron. Rohde (1925) is alone in claiming that Pindar is giving his own beliefs in *Olympian 2*; see Woodbury (1966) p.598 on Pindar and patronage. Lefkowitz (1985) p.271 on the problem of taking Pindar at his word (in the scholia). Des Places (1949) p.60 on the impossibility of retrieving any of Pindar’s real thoughts on religion! Wilamowitz (1922) pp.248ff. remarks that Pindar’s views are derived from sources about various beliefs, and so the conclusions are not consistent with other views of, e.g. the Underworld.

fitting reincarnation into the system, the Islands of the Blessed become the final resting place for all the (heroified) souls. This is exceptional.⁵¹

This brings me back to the point about heroes (Pindar) vs. gods (Empedocles). One could argue that Pindar's traditional (Apolline⁵²) religious beliefs would not allow him to commit *hubris* by making humans into gods.⁵³ That is, Theron believed in an Akragantine metempsychotic eschatology (with similarities to Empedocles' doctrine of becoming a god),⁵⁴ but in *Olympian 2* Pindar modified Theron's grandiose future, so that he was heroified, rather than deified, upon death. Unfortunately for this argument, Diodorus Siculus (II.53.2) recounts that Theron was granted the rank of hero upon his death.⁵⁵ There were no grandiloquent Empedoclean claims of divinity for Theron.⁵⁶ This would belie a powerful pseudo-Empedoclean cult operating in Akragas, and prove the Pindaric

⁵¹ von Fritz (1957) p.88; Solmsen (1968) pp.504ff. *Olympian 2* could only be described as "syncretistic": Solmsen (1982) p.19; Koniaris (1988) p.247. That is, it integrates beliefs which do not usually appear in conjunction. The idea of two paradises is without parallel. Certainly it has created problems for Pindar in differentiating between the two (i.e. making the first less attractive than the second, but still a paradise): Solmsen (1968) pp.503ff. McGibbon (1964b) p.6 sees a parallel to the two paradises in *Aeneid 6*: the Elysium where we see Anchises' soul does not seem to be its final resting place. McGibbon sees this as "reproducing a genuine tradition of Orphic-Pythagorean eschatology" (*ibid*).

⁵² Woodbury (1966) p.598; Rose (1936) p.92; Duchemin (1955) p.327.

⁵³ *hubris*: Rose (1936) p.92; Bowra (1964) p.189.

⁵⁴ See note 34.

⁵⁵ Diodorus is, of course, notorious for confusing sources, chronologies, traditions etc.

⁵⁶ Empedocles' fr.112.

promise of heroification.⁵⁷ It is certainly an impossible situation to resolve without knowing what Theron really believed.⁵⁸

The presence of Persephone in fr.133 seems to me quite irreconcilable with *Olympian 2*. It is also irreconcilable with Empedocles' beliefs, for she is not

⁵⁷ Theron as a posthumous hero: Diodorus Siculus II.53.2 cited by Bowra (1964) p.123. Bowra (p.189) believes that denying men translation to gods was integral to Pindar's religious beliefs. I would agree. Pindar is "remarkably cautious" (*ibid*).

⁵⁸ It seems unlikely that Pindar - for literary reasons - is simply conflating various religious elements out of the "gorgeous garden" of South Italian cults. To build on my suggestion further: fragment 133 cannot be specifically dated or given a reliable provenance. There was never a single doctrine of reincarnation which was held unchanged by a great majority of Greeks for any length of time. Reincarnation in Greece was a hotchpotch of strange cult practices generally looked at askance by contemporary authorities. Thus it should be no surprise to find different beliefs in reincarnation existing in pockets throughout the Greek world. To take this even further, we should not be surprised to find that Pindar, a widely travelled and widely employed poet, might have written on two different religious doctrines which both featured reincarnation. It seems to be assumed that because Pindar wrote both passages, and because both are based on a similar eschatology, that the two passages must be linked to the same doctrine.

It is well known that Pindar also produced at least one poem on the Eleusinian Mysteries - a different cult again. It seems to me that Pindar's genius lay more than a little in his flexibility and eclecticism - his ability to produce what was appropriate for the context, and for his patron. Is this too large jump on the part of poet *and* patron? Of course, if Theron did hold a *personal* belief that he would be deified after death, then his *actual* fate in civic religion would be irrelevant.

If my tentative suggestion that Pindar glossed over and "Homerized" the specifics of Theron's belief is viable, it raises a question which I am not sure can be answered - to what extent in the ancient world could a powerful political ruler and patron of the arts make his poet assimilate religious views which were foreign and perhaps anathematical to his own religious beliefs? And could a clever poet or artist get away with twisting these religious views to his own more conservative stance, yet still continue to be employed?

Somewhere in these two passages there must be a kernel of truth, but the poet is not obliged to give us the whole truth. As Pindar himself says, (*Olympian 2.83-88*):

Full many a swift arrow have I beneath mine arm, within my quiver, many an arrow that is vocal to the wise; but for the crowd they need interpreters. The true poet is he who knoweth much by gift of nature, but they that have only learnt the lore of song and are turbulent and intemperate of tongue, like a pair of crows, chatter in vain against the god-like bird of Zeus. (tr. Sandys)

Some commentators see this as a reference to a mystery religion which must remain secret. I would suggest that it is deliberately mysterious for another reason: it refers to the many things that Pindar knows about Theron's belief but is not going to repeat, perhaps because it is indeed "chatter in vain against the god-like bird of Zeus" - that is, heresy against his traditional religion. Is this the poet's way out? - to skim over the details of his patron's rather odd beliefs, to hint of what is revealed to those in the know, and thus to get neatly out of the problem of having to reconcile his beliefs with those of his patron?

mentioned in his fragments.⁵⁹ Fr.133 has traditionally been seen as the last stage to the doctrine of reincarnation of *Olympian 2*. That is, after the six good lives, the soul comes up before Persephone who condemns it to eight years of punishment, then releases it in the ninth year to a final life on earth in the highest ranks of mortals. The soul is heroified after this final life, and translated to the Islands of the Blessed.

The eight years of subservience to Persephone has been difficult for scholars to explain. It is, in the context of *Olympian 2*, a second period of atonement, if we consider the pursuit of six pure lives as the first atonement. This is without parallel in other theories of reincarnation.⁶⁰ It has been suggested that the nine years (in total) imitate the traditional period of banishment for the gods. This *ennaeteris* - the nine year period for the expiation of blood-guilt - acts as a final period of atonement in Hades. The crime is completely paid for after this sojourn.⁶¹

The question, of course, is why it is necessary? If it were not for the definite reference to punishment, one could assume - although it is without parallel - that the eight years was simply a waiting period before the final translation. If the

⁵⁹ Rose (1936) p.92

⁶⁰ McGibbon (1964b) p.9

⁶¹ Rohde (1925) pp.442 xii, 34, 444 xii 40. He cites Apollo (who slays Python) as serving Hades for an *ennaeteris*, and defines it as 99 months (8 years and 3 months). Also Rose (1936) p.89: questioning this, but at a loss for any other explanation. McGibbon (1964b) p.9 reminds us that the punishment is paid specifically to Persephone, not to Hades.

fragment does describe the final stage in a cycle of reincarnations, one might assume that there was an eight year wait between each incarnation. If fr.133 is linked with *Olympian 2*, this is impossible.⁶² The irony is that if fr.133 is the final stage in another doctrine of reincarnation, one has to ask the same unanswerable question - why? As McGibbon has argued, the only viable solution is if the second atonement covers a crime that the first atonement (i.e. the cycle of reincarnation) did not.⁶³ If one is to link the fragment with *Olympian 2*, then the second punishment can only cover a crime committed against its exactor, Persephone; the first punishment was, therefore, by analogy, paid to someone else. I can think of no parallel to this; indeed, the duality seems artificial. Identifying the crime against Persephone must, therefore, be fundamental to understanding the fragment.

In this regard, Bluck cites two of the gold plates from Thurii:⁶⁴

And I have paid the penalty for deeds unrighteous...I have sunk below the bosom of the Mistress, the Queen of the underworld. And now I come a suppliant to holy Persephoneia, that of her grace she send me to the seats of the hallowed.⁶⁵

He associates this plate with another (χαίρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα· τὸ δ' οὐπω πρόσθε ἐπεπόνθεις; Kern *OF* 32f3) to illustrate that there has been a special *ennaeteris* in Hades (“never suffered before”), followed by an appeal to

⁶² Bluck (1958b) p.407

⁶³ McGibbon (1964b) p.8; Bluck (1958b) p.411 sees the cycle of incarnations as included in an overall punishment - the ποινά of fr.133.

⁶⁴ Bluck (1958b) p.411

⁶⁵ This is a reconstruction of a possible archetype based on *OF* 32d4, e4, d6-7, e6-7. Cf. Guthrie (1935) p.173, for a full summary.

Persephone. On the face of it, the similarity is striking. The following line (*OF* 32f4) is θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου.

OF 32d4ff. is ambiguous, though. The penalty was certainly paid to Persephone, but the form it took is not discernible. As McGibbon suggests, the penalty could have been a cycle of reincarnations. Other gold plates do mention a cycle. He further points out that *OF* 32d4ff. allows the possibility that Persephone refuses the suppliant. The punishment has been in the nature of a test.⁶⁶ Pindar's fr.133 seems to imply that translation to Elysium is immediate and standard (without further judgement), not after the *ennaeteris*, but after the final life on earth. This firmly contradicts the gold leaves which are set so permanently in the world of the dead.

Is this final life on earth a reward or a final test of the soul's purity?⁶⁷ McGibbon notes that the only reward which the soul desires is to be translated to the Islands of the Blessed, so therefore life on earth is not a reward.⁶⁸ That the final life on earth is a test is perhaps more plausible except - and few commentators

⁶⁶ McGibbon (1964b) pp.9ff.

⁶⁷ Another suggestion (by von Fritz) is that it is only possible for the soul to be translated to the Islands of the Blessed from our world. There is no evidence for this necessity. von Fritz (1957) pp.85 & 86; against this: McGibbon (1964b) p.5 and Bluck (1958b) p.410 citing *Phaedrus* where translation occurs from the place of recompense. In *Olympian 2* one would think that translation occurred from the place of judgement.

⁶⁸ McGibbon (1964b) p.7 arguing against von Fritz (1957) p.86 (a test) and Bluck (1958b) p.408 (a reward); he also emphasises that the purpose of each incarnation is to purify and punish the soul. A high human incarnation would be desirable for the soul in the cycle of incarnations. Cf. Empedocles - all earthly lives are hell when one is striving to reach heaven. Rohde (1925) p.442 xii 35 thinks that the final earthly life is a recompense for the soul's suffering, i.e. a reward.

have grasped this - it is belied by the confident nature of the fragment: there is no indication in fr.133 that men who have reached these august heights do not at once become heroes upon their deaths.⁶⁹ It is an impossible situation to resolve, particularly because the context of the fragment is unknown.⁷⁰ Commentators merely assume its connection with *Olympian 2*, regardless of the fact that we cannot make this connection, and indeed cannot even prove it was written in Sicily.⁷¹ McGibbon, who seems to me the most rational of these commentators, is forced to emend the traditional reading of the fragment; this, he admits, is “less natural”, but makes the fragment correspond to Empedocles’ and Plato’s similar views on the final incarnation. As I hope that I have demonstrated above, this is possible, but only if one can show that Pindar deliberately adapted beliefs which were closer to the Empedoclean/Platonic norm.⁷²

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There is a final issue that should be raised in regard to fragment 133 (and, in some respects, *Olympian 2*): what religious beliefs are being described? Many scholars see fr.133 as part of an Orphic doctrine of reincarnation. This is not only because it has become almost a tradition to regard all doctrines of reincarnation as

⁶⁹ Because we do not know what comes next in the poem, we cannot be completely certain about this conclusion.

⁷⁰ McGibbon (1964b) pp.7 & 11 asks why Plato cited this passage on reincarnation if it was problematic? The answer is twofold: to support his view that the soul lived many times (but does fr.133 show this?); to justify living righteously. Plato, therefore, considers this the final stage for the righteous in a cycle involving many lives. One can only hope that it *is* a passage from Pindar!

⁷¹ Zuntz (1971) p.87,n.1

⁷² There is another even less palatable solution: Pindar has poorly grasped the details of Theron’s beliefs, and has made these *mistakes* through ignorance. Cf. Defradas (1971) who discusses the poem as a conglomerate, that, as Bowra (1964) p.121 notes, must have made sense to a Sicilian initiate.

being linked with Orphism at some stage of their development (rather like Herodotus ascribing Greek inventions to Egypt). Indeed it is positively easy to make fr.133 “Orphic”. This is because of Persephone’s unexplained presence in the fragment. Persephone can be linked to Orphism by the Eudemian Theogony, which tells of the murder and devouring of her son Dionysus(-Zagreus) by the Titans, and Zeus’ destruction of the Titans with his thunderbolt; the human race was formed from the ashes of the Titans. Therefore, humans are part-Titanic, and share the Titanic guilt. The eight year punishment (in Hades where she is Queen?) is accounted for by this explanation.

If fr.133 was part of an impersonal poem, in purely mythic form (i.e. like a theogony or cosmogony), the presence of Persephone could be explained. It is a problem, however, if the fragment comes from a practical personal poem (like *Olympian 2*) where the events apply to a real religious belief. It does not appear to fit into any known religious doctrine. The bugbear of the supporters of Orphism has always been that it has been impossible to prove anything definite about the movement.⁷³ If fr.133 relates to beliefs held in Magna Graecia, the field is even wider; according to Zuntz, Persephone was “outstandingly the goddess of Akragas”.⁷⁴

⁷³ See Appendix B. On Orphism in Pindar see: Rose (1936) pp.80-96 (supporter); Lloyd-Jones (1984) pp.246-282 (adamant supporter); McGibbon (1964b) pp.7ff (denying it); Bluck (1958b) p.410,n.10; Rohde (1925) p.417 (emphatic denial based on Wilamowitz’s *Glaube*); Dodds (1951) p.155; Farnell (1930) pp.15;336-338; KR p.348; Des Places (1949) p.60; Duchemin (1955) p.323; Zuntz (1971) pp.86,n.3;87;318ff. (on gold leaves; emphatic denial).

⁷⁴ Zuntz (1971) p.88 also thinks that Persephone was the goddess of Theron’s cult in *Olympian 2*. It seems doubtful: surely Pindar would not have hesitated to name her? Rohde (1925) is inclined to this view also (p.447 xii 47). He cites the following: in *Pythian 12.2*, Pindar calls Akragas

A similar problem exists with attributing the poems to the Pythagorean movement. That is, reincarnation is commonly ascribed to Pythagoras simply on the basis that he had a doctrine of reincarnation (not necessarily this one). This is presumably what has happened in the scholia (*Schol.Ol.ii.123*: Drachmann I 92), and in Clement (*Strom.I.103*), where one finds the comment that “Pindar is here following Pythagoras”.⁷⁵

There is a third attribution of the beliefs - to some sort of mystery cult. *Olympian 2*, lines 56ff (on knowledge) have been partly responsible for this, but more so the enigmatic lines 83ff. Some commentators see a reference to secret doctrines learned by initiation. That is, the arrows which Pindar does not shoot are analogous to secret doctrines which will only be understood by the initiated. This is a very tenuous association of ideas, and obviously owes not a little to Pindar fr.137 on the Eleusinian mysteries.⁷⁶

Φερσεφόνας ἕδος; *Olympian 6.94ff.*: ..φοινικόπεζαν ἀμφέπει Δάματρα, λευκίππου τε θυγατρὸς ἑορτάν..

⁷⁵ On the Pythagorean movement in Pindar: Demand (1975) pp.347-348 (denying it); Solmsen (1968) p.505; von Fritz (1963) col.189 (on possible parallels for restoring Pythagoras' *Seelenwanderungslehre*).

⁷⁶ Farnell (1930) pp.15,335 (an Orphic mystery cult); Demand (1975) pp.350ff. (a Cretan mystery cult); Nisetich (1988) p.18 (mystical doctrines of some sort). On the interpretation of lines 83ff.: Most (1986) pp.311-315; Race (1979) pp.251-256; Koniaris (1988) pp.247ff. (emphatic denial). Debate of this sort on *Olympian 2* and fr.133 is, as we have seen, dogged by a series of contradictions: gods/heroes; divinity of soul/immortality of soul; mystery cult/revelations; reward/punishment, and etc. I am convinced that the only way of solving these contradictions is by somehow finding out the extent of Pindar's adoption of these beliefs - an impossibility.

CHAPTER 3: EMPEDOCLES: REINCARNATION IN THE COSMOS

Empedocles lived approximately 494-434 BC, and was a citizen of Akragas in Sicily.¹ Diogenes Laertius VIII supplies most of the details about Empedocles' life, much of it apocryphal, which has led some commentators to see Empedocles as a "medicine man"², a "divine magician"³ and/or a shaman. He has also been regarded, on very doubtful evidence, as a great democrat and statesman (by Timaeus), the inventor of rhetoric (by Aristotle), and the founder of an Italian school of medicine (by Galen).⁴ This confusion is, in no small way, the fault of Empedocles himself: he was, as Dodds comments, "the creator of his own legend".⁵ This is evident, for example, in fragment 111:

φάρμακα δ' ὅσσα γεγάσι κακῶν καὶ γήραος ἄλκαρ
 πεύση, ἐπεὶ μούνη σοι ἐγὼ κρανέω τάδε πάντα.
 παύσεις δ' ἀκαμάτων ἀνέμων μένος οἷ τ' ἐπὶ γαίαν
 ὀρνύμενοι πνοιαῖσι καταφθινύθουσιν ἀρούρας·
 καὶ πάλιν, ἣν ἐθέλησθα, παλίντιτα πνεύματ' ἐπάξεις·
 θήσεις δ' ἐξ ὄμβροιο κελαινοῦ καίριον ἀύχμον
 ἀνθρώποις, θήσεις δέ καὶ ἐξ ἀύχμοιο θερείου
 ῥεύματα δενδρεόθρεπτα, ἴτάτ' αἰθέρι ναιήσονται·
 ἄξεις δ' ἐξ Ἀίδαο καταφθιμένου μένος ἀνδρός.

And also in fragment 112:

ὦ φίλοι, οἱ μέγα ἄστυ κατά ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος

¹ This is more than relevant when one considers the great tradition of reincarnation and related beliefs in Southern Italy: Pindar and Theron at Akragas; Pythagoras at Croton; the gold leaves; the "Orphics" etc. See the relevant chapters and appendices. Seaford (1986) pp.10-12 suggests that Empedocles was influenced by the mystic doctrines of this area.

² Burnet (1959) p.199

³ Dodds (1951) p.145; Wright (1981) p.9 on his alleged medical knowledge.

⁴ D.L. 8.54ff; as a result of this confusion, Jaeger (1965) p.295 - for example - can see Empedocles as a "philosophical centaur" blending Ionian physics and Orphic religion.

⁵ Dodds (1951) p.145

ναίετ' ἄν' ἄκρα πόλεος, ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων,
 (ξείνων αἰδοῖοι λιμένες κακότητος ἄπειροι,)
 χαίρετ'· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητός
 πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικεν,
 ταινίαις τε περίστεπτος στέφεσιν τε θαλείοις·
 ἴτοῖσιν ἄμ' ἀντ' ἵκωμαι ἐς ἄστεα τηλεθάοντα
 ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξὶ σεβίζομαι· οἱ δ' ἄμ' ἔπονται
 μυρίοι ἐξερέοντες ὄπη πρὸς κέρδος ἀταρπός,
 οἱ μὲν μαντοσυνέων κεχρημένοι, οἱ δ' ἐπὶ νούσων
 παντοίων ἐπύθοντο κλύειν εὐηκέα βάξιν,
 δηρὸν δὴ χαλεπήσι πεπαρμένοι <ἀμφ' ὀδύνησιν>.

The tradition is too confusing to be definite about Empedocles' life and beliefs, and although it links him to Pythagoras (see below), it is impossible to tie him to any one existing system of religious/cosmological belief.⁶

With regard to his philosophy, it has been argued that he was writing in answer to the Eleatic school. He is certainly not a believer in Parmenides' monism, but he does take some Parmenidean concepts (the Sphere; the impossibility of coming-into-being from nothing - fr.12), and incorporate them in a limited pluralistic system of six elements.⁷ As Inwood points out, no direct answer was propounded to the Eleatic problem until Plato's *Sophist*, and Empedocles does not appear to be answering Parmenides intentionally. He does not (in the extant fragments) state why he has chosen to start from a pluralistic basis.⁸

⁶ Wright (1981) p.57

⁷ For a discussion of Empedocles' philosophical influences, see: Wright (1981) pp.4,9); KR p.324; Inwood (1992) pp.22-27.

⁸ Inwood (1992) p.23

Debate continues to rage about the fragments of Empedocles. It has always been presumed that the extant fragments came from the two poems *Physics* (ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ or ΤΑ ΦΥΣΙΚΑ) and *Purifications* (ΟΙ ΚΑΘΑΡΜΟΙ); and evidence from Diogenes Laertius (8.77) and the *Suda* attests to this. However, the exact structure of these poems is not known, nor their order of composition: it is impossible to prove which poem/s the fragments come from. However, it is generally conceded that the physical fragments (dealing with physiology, embryology, botany etc..) make up the *Physics* (written first), and the more metaphysical speculations belong to the *Purifications*. This is a hazy division: the unique cosmic cycle appears to be common to both.⁹ Concerning the relationship of the two poems, the orthodox view is that although at first sight they seem diametrically opposed, there are, in fact, very close links between the two, and, indeed, the *Purifications* can be seen to depend in many respects upon the cosmology and ideas of the *Physics*.¹⁰

There are a large number of fragments, mainly from the *Purifications*, dealing with the workings of Empedocles' doctrine of reincarnation. I have also

⁹ For this debate see: Inwood (1992) pp.8-19; Wright (1981) pp.20,77-86; Zuntz (1971) pp.239-244. Predictably, they have all reached different conclusions: Inwood has the fragments belonging to one poem; Wright has two; Zuntz attaches more of the fragments to a large and idiosyncratic *Purifications*. Wright (p.20) calculates that 16-20% of the poems have survived in fragments.

¹⁰ There is a great deal of literature on this problem of the unity, or otherwise, of the two books. See: A.A.Long (1966); H.S.Long (1949); but especially Kahn (1971) for a summary of the debate.

included fragments which clarify certain cosmic processes important to the doctrine.¹¹

These first fragments are thought to have formed part of the *Physics*, and deal with the mechanisms of creation. Their relevance to reincarnation, and the place of reincarnation in the cosmic cycle, will be made clear, below;

Fr. 8

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἔρέω φύσις οὐδενὸς ἐστὶν ἀπάντων
θηητῶν, οὐδέ τις οὐλομένου θανάτοιο τελευτή,
ἀλλὰ μόνον μίξις τε διάλλαξις τε μιγέντων
ἐστί, φύσις δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνομάζεται ἀνθρώποισιν.

Fr. 9

οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν κατὰ φῶτα μιγέντ' εἰς αἰθέρ' ἵκωνται
ἢ κατὰ θηρῶν ἀγροτέρων γένος ἢ κατὰ θάμνων
ἢ κατ' οἰωνῶν, τότε μὲν τό <γέ φασι> γενέσθαι,
εὔτε δ' ἀποκρινθῶσι, τὸ δ' αὖ δυσδαίμονα πότμον
†ἢ θέμις† καλέουσι, νόμῳ δ' ἐπίφημι καὶ αὐτός.

*Fr. 129*¹²

ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς,
ὃς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτίσατο πλοῦτον.
παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν ἐπιήρανος ἔργων
ὀππότε γὰρ πάσησιν ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεσσιν,
ρεῖά γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον,
καὶ τε δέκ' ἀνθρώπων καὶ τ' εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν.

Fr. 110

εἰ γὰρ καὶ σφ' ἀδινῆσιν ὑπὸ πραπίδεσσιν ἐρείσας

¹¹The numbering of the fragments is taken from Diels-Kranz (DK). Inwood (1992), Wright (1981), and Zuntz (1971) all provide a different order, and re-number the fragments. I have followed the text and prose translation of Wright; Inwood's poetic translation is quite meaningless in places, but one which he defends as an attempt to reflect the ambiguity of the Greek. The order of the fragments is based on Wright also; Inwood's order is almost identical, but his belief in only one poem confuses the issue.

¹²See *Addendum* at the end of this chapter for a discussion of this fragment and its presumed reference to Pythagoras.

εὐμένεως καθαρῆσιν ἐποπτεύσεις μελέτησιν,
 ταῦτά τέ σοι μάλα πάντα δι' αἰῶνος παρέσσονται,
 ἄλλα τε πόλλ' ἀπὸ τῶνδε κτήσεαι· αὐτὰ γὰρ αὔξει
 ταῦτ' εἰς ἦθος ἕκαστον, ὅπη φύσις ἐστὶν ἕκαστω.
 εἰ δὲ σύ γ' ἀλλοίων ἐπορέξεαι οἷα κατ' ἄνδρας
 μυρία δειλὰ πέλονται ἅ τ' ἀμβλύνουσι μερίμνας
 ἢ σ' ἄφαρ ἐκλείψουσι περιπλομένοιο χρόνοιο
 σφῶν αὐτῶν ποθέοντα φίλην ἐπὶ γένναν ἰκέσθαι·
 πάντα γὰρ ἴσθι φρόνησιν ἔχειν καὶ νόματος αἴσαν.

The following fragments are from the *Purifications*:

Fr.11

νήπιοι· οὐ γὰρ σφιν δολιχόφρονές εἰσι μερίμναι,
 οἷ δὴ γίγνεσθαι πάρος οὐκ ἔδον ἐλπίζουσιν,
 ἢ τι καταθνήσκειν τε καὶ ἐξόλλυσθαι ἀπάντη.

*Fr.113*¹³

ἀλλὰ τί τοῖσδ' ἐπὶ κειμ' ὥσει μέγα χρῆμά τι πράσσων,
 εἰ θνητῶν περίειμι πολυφθερέων ἀνθρώπων;

Fr.15

οὐκ ἂν ἀνήρ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς φρεσὶ μαντεύσαιτο,
 ὡς ὄφρα μὲν τε βιώσι, τὸ δὴ βίοτον καλέουσι,
 τόφρα μὲν οὖν εἰσίν, καὶ σφιν πάρα δειλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά,
 πρὶν δὲ πάγεν τε βροτοὶ καὶ <ἐπεὶ> λύθεν, οὐδὲν ἄρ' εἰσίν.

Fr.115

ἔστιν ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
 αἴδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·
 εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόβῳ φίλα γυῖα τμιντ
 τδς καὶ τ' ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσση,
 δαίμονες οἷτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
 τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
 φύομενον παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν
 ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
 αἰθέριον μὲν γὰρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
 πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγάς
 ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·

¹³ πολυφθερέων is unfortunately vague: does it mean “many dying” (referring to the number of people), or “much-dying” (dying many times)? The latter would fit the context of reincarnation better.

ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
νεῖκει μαινομένῳ πίσυρος.

Fr.117

ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ γενόμεν κοῦρός τε κόρη τε
θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς.

Fr.126

σαρκῶν ἀλλογνῶτι περιστέλλουσα [*sc. the daimon?*] χιτῶνι

Fr.118

κλαῦσά τε καὶ κώκυσα ἰδὼν ἀσυνήθεα χῶρον.

Fr.121

...ἀτερπέα χῶρον...

ἔνθα φόνος τε κότος τε καὶ ἄλλων ἔθνεα κηρῶν,
(αὐχμηραὶ τε νόσοι καὶ σήψιες ἔργα τε ρευστά)
..."Ἄτης ἂν λειμῶνα κατὰ σκότος ἠλάσκουσιν.

Fr.124

ὦ πόποι, ὦ δειλὸν θνητῶν γένος, ὦ δυσάνολβον,
οἶων ἐξ ἐρίδων ἔκ τε στοναχῶν ἐγένεσθε.

Fr.128

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμός
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν,
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια,
τὴν οἱ γ' εὐσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἰλάσκοντο
γραπτοῖς τε ζῴοισι μύροισι τε δαιδαλεόδοις
σμύρνης τ' ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυώδους,
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελίτων ρίπτοντες ἐς οὐδᾶς,
ταύρων δ' ἱάκρῖτοισι τ' φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμός,
ἀλλὰ μύσος τοῦτ' ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἠέα γυῖα.

Fr.139

οἶμοι ὄτ' οὐ πρόσθεν με διώλεσε νηλεὲς ἦμαρ
πρὶν σχέτλι ἔργα βορᾶς περὶ χεῖλεσι μητίσασθαι.

Fr.136

οὐ παύσεσθε φόνοιο δυσηχέος; οὐκ ἔσορᾶτε
ἀλλήλους δάπτοντες ἀκηδείησι νόοιο;

Fr.145

τοιγάρτοι χαλεπήσιν ἀλύοντες κακότησιν
οὔποτε δειλαίων ἀχέων λωφήσετε θυμόν.

Fr.137

μορφήν δ' ἀλλάξαντα πατήρ φίλον υἷον ἀείρας
σφάξει ἐπευχόμενος μέγα νήπιος τοῖ δὲ πορευῆνται
λίσσόμενον θύοντες· τοῖ δ' ἀνήκουστος ὁμοκλέων
σφάξας ἐν μεγάροισι κακὴν ἀλεγύνατο δαῖτα.
ὡς δ' αὐτως πατέρ' υἷος ἐλὼν καὶ μητέρα παῖδες
θυμόν ἀπορραΐσαντε φίλας κατὰ σάρκας ἔδουσιν.

Fr.140

δάφνης [τῶν] φύλλων ἄπο πάμπαν ἔχεσθαι

Fr.141

δειλοί, πάνδειλοι, κυάμων ἄπο χεῖρας ἔχεσθαι.

Fr.127

ἐν θήρεσσι λέοντες ὀρειλεχέες χαμαιεῦναι
γίγνονται, δάθναι δ' ἐνὶ δένδρεσιν ἠυκόμοισιν.

Fr.146

εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντις τε καὶ ὑμνόπολοι καὶ ἰητροί
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται·
ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆσι φέριστοι.

Fr.147

ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισιν ὁμέστιοι αὐτοτράπεζοι
τέοντες ἄνδρείων ἀχέων ἀπόκληροι, ἀτειρεῖς.

The Cosmic Cycle

The importance of the cosmic cycle to Empedocles' doctrine of reincarnation should not be over-emphasized. Until the work of Wright and Inwood it had been virtually ignored, and only tenuous connections had been made between the scientific *Physics* and the metaphysical *Purifications*. And yet, not only are there quite definite structural similarities between the cosmic cycle and the series of events in which the *daimon* is involved, but it is possible to see, without over-reaching the contents of the fragments, that Empedocles' doctrine of reincarnation forms part of his cosmic cycle. Moreover, it is the events in the cosmic cycle that enable reincarnation to take place.

The *Physics*' fragments give a picture of Empedocles' cosmos.¹⁴ Its creation is reasonably simple; the cosmos and everything in it, including mortals, are composed of only four elements or "roots" - earth, water, air and fire. These exist, at the beginning, in the Sphere.¹⁵ They take up the whole Sphere: there is no void. Scientifically speaking, they could move themselves; however, Empedocles

¹⁴ Fragment 35: "But I shall turn back to the path of song I traced before, leading off from one argument this argument: when strife had reached the lowest depth of the whirl and love comes into the center of the eddy, in her then all these things unite to be one only; not immediately, but coming together from different directions at will. And, as they were being mixed, countless types of mortal things poured forth, but many, which strife still restrained from above, stayed unmixed, alternating with those which were combining, for it had not yet perfectly and completely stood out as far as the furthest limits of the circle, but part remained within and part had gone out of the frame. And, in proportion as it continually ran on ahead, a mild, immortal onrush of perfect love was continually pursuing it. Immediately what were formerly accustomed to be immortal became mortal, and formerly unmixed things were in a mixed state, owing to the exchanging of their ways. And, as they were being mixed, countless types of mortal things poured forth, fitted with all kinds of forms, a wonder to see." (tr. Wright)

¹⁵ Solmsen (1982b) provides a discussion of the "Sphairos" and its cycle, and the problem temporal or eternal immortality.

has chosen to have two forces - Love and Strife - to act upon the four pure substances. Following tradition - and through inability to express incorporeality¹⁶ - he calls Love by the Olympian name Aphrodite or, more often, Kypris. Love is the governing principle at the beginning of the universe, and Strife has no power. Love has unified all of the elements as one, and it is a perfect world in the Sphere. It is a Golden Age of the gods, where the gods *are* the four elements as well as Love and Strife. There is another aspect to the Sphere, and that is its identification with "holy mind", which is the perfection of thought achieved by the four roots being perfectly blended in the Sphere.¹⁷

Our cosmogony starts when Strife begins to grow in power and Love correspondingly wanes. Strife takes over at a time that has been ratified by oaths upheld by a stronger force - Necessity. The place of Necessity in the cosmology is not explained, but it is an important force. The growth of Strife in power brings in separation (Love unites, Strife separates) among the elements. This causes the Sphere to break down, the *daimons* are released or created, and compounds are formed by the mixing of the elements. This is the moment when the human race, animals, plants, and etc. are formed.¹⁸ Strife gains momentum and at a fixed time becomes all powerful (the moment of Total Strife). There is no description of this moment, but it is the opposite of what occurs at the moment of Total Love (the

¹⁶ See Renehan (1980)

¹⁷ Wright (1981) pp.70-72

¹⁸ This poses an interesting question: Love is inevitably seen as a good force, Strife as a bad; however, it is only through the action of Strife that human beings are formed. It is a striking paradox that has unexpected ramifications later in the cycle.

Sphere). Now, in the cycle, Strife wanes and Love grows. This is evidently the period when monsters grow (fr.57), for it reveals the reverse effects of Love acting on Strife.¹⁹ Love increases to the moment of Total Love and the Sphere. At this point the cycle begins again (in the sense, however, that it does not have a formal beginning, nor does it ever truly end²⁰).

In human terms, the consequences of this cycle are devastating. There is no true birth or death, because nothing comes from nothing, and something cannot pass away into nothing - there is no void. Birth is a mingling of the elements, and death is a separation back into the elements. Love holds the *daimons* in her perfect unified world, but these are *daimons* without identity. It is necessary for Strife to release the *daimons* and let them mix with the elements to gain identity. However, Strife is also a bad and dangerous force; it gives the *daimon* individuality, but as it does this, it forces the *daimon* into the cycle of incarnations.

Fragment 115 clarifies the system; at the breakup of the Sphere, Strife acts on the *daimons*. The *daimons* (presumably made up of the elements, as no independent existence is possible in the cycle) must obey the dictates of Strife *by Necessity*: this is a cosmic law.²¹ However, Strife brings violence, murder, and bloodshed - the *daimon* falls prey to Strife, is thrown out of its perfect world, and

¹⁹ Another paradox?

²⁰ Because there can be no "coming-into-being".

²¹ It also explains how a sin can be committed in a theoretically sin-free area, among the gods: see Solmsen (1982f) p.470.

into the newly created cosmos where Strife is growing. This is our world. The *daimon* has to wander in our world, being incarnated for 30,000 seasons (a vague term), until it has gone through the whole ladder of incarnations of plant, animal and human. Eventually it reaches a position where, having attained the wisdom of all its incarnations, and knowing how to avoid further sin and therefore further incarnations, it is accepted back as a god, and lives in bliss for the rest of eternity. But, of course, there is no eternity for the *daimon*, for the cycle is temporal and at the moment of Total Love, everything reunites in the pure elements, all individuality is lost, and the cycle begins anew. There is no eternal recurrence, for this implies immutable combinations of elements, and the cycle does not allow this (see Appendix E). For the same reason, the same individual is unlikely to occur again in the next cycle (except by chance).²² This, in brief, is the cosmic cycle with which the doctrine of reincarnation is closely associated.²³

The issue of whether reincarnation requires an immortal soul can be seen in a different way in Empedocles' theory. The *daimon* is temporarily immutable in the period of Love → Strife, but immutability is not immortality. To maintain the limited pluralism of the cosmic cycle, immortality cannot be possible. As Inwood has rightly commented,

²² The cycle can be considered as a linear progression, as Barnes (1979) II, p.8 has illustrated.

²³ It is not relevant here for me to discuss all the interpretations of the various parts of the cycle. The best summaries are provided as follows: Wright (1981) pp.60-74; Barnes (1979) II, pp.7-8,197; Rohde (1925) p.384; KR p.324-45. I have found Inwood (1992) to have the most comprehensive and cohesive arguments, especially with regard to reincarnation and the cosmic cycle, and it is his ideas upon which I have based my discussion.

Nothing in the doctrine of reincarnation requires a strictly immortal being; one which lasts long enough to be born in several different incarnations will suffice.²⁴

The *daimon*

An understanding of Empedocles' use of the term *daimon* is essential for understanding his concept of reincarnation. The term *daimon* is thought to be equivalent to *psyche*, and to equate with the soul.²⁵ Strictly speaking, if there is no *psyche* then there cannot be *metempsychosis*.²⁶ The term *psyche* is used only once in the fragments (fr.138), where it seems to be equivalent to "life".²⁷ One wonders why Empedocles did not use *psyche*: the majority of commentators on his work substitute *psyche*.²⁸ The most logical answer is that the word *psyche* could not express what Empedocles wanted it of it,²⁹ and therefore he turned to the word *daimon*; to see the *daimon* simply as the *psyche* may be ignoring the broader cosmic picture.

Daimon was an unfortunate choice in many ways; it has even more shades of meaning than *psyche*. It can be interchangeable with θεός (god), and in authors from Hesiod to Plato it refers to a race of "intermediate beings" who dwell between heaven and earth. It can also replace the term *psyche*, which itself could

²⁴ Inwood (1992) p.52; he is only referring to Empedocles here, and the peculiar circumstances that his cosmic cycle allows. As he points out, our view of the soul as immortal is heavily influenced by Plato.

²⁵ See Claus (1981) p.118

²⁶ Barnes (1979) II, pp.199,186; see Rohde (1925) p.361,n.84 for a discussion of terminology.

²⁷ Claus (1981) p.112

²⁸ Rohde (1925) p.404,n.81

²⁹ Or was loaded with other connotations.

have the connotation of an entity *disappearing* at death.³⁰ The *daimon* is usually immortal, and divine.³¹ Empedocles does not describe or adequately define what he means by *daimon*. It is usually presumed that his *daimon* was immortal, because immortality of the soul has always been a *sine qua non* of reincarnation. The point of metempsychosis is that the soul does not die with the body, but is transferred to another body.

What do the fragments tell us of the *daimon*?³² Nothing about its physical constituency. It is evident (fr. 115, 126) that the *daimon* functions in the same way as the *psyche* in other doctrines of reincarnation - that is, it is transferred from one body to the next. It seems merely a question of different terminology. One presumes from the creation myth that every mortal has a *daimon* assigned to him/her. Because Empedocles mentions being incarnated in a bird and a fish, as well as into other human bodies, it is apparent that animals were also carriers of the soul.

He also mentions having been a bush. The evidence is quite clear: fr.127 gives the top of the scale for bushes/trees as the laurel. Some scholars have wondered if vegetables and the like were included in the list of carriers. There is no

³⁰ Bremmer (1987) discusses the problems inherent in using "existing anthropological terminology to describe the 'psyche'..", but also the greater difficulty of inventing new terminology: pp.4-5

³¹ Guthrie (1962) pp.318ff.

³² The following discussion attempts to reconcile dichotomies and invalidities in the arguments in Dodds (1951) pp.153,154,166); Burnet (1952) p.249; Wright (1981) pp.59,64-65,71); Barnes (1979) II, pp.197-200,186,188); Rohde (1925) pp.379,381ff.; KR pp.359,348; Zuntz (1971) p.271; and Inwood (1992) pp.33ff,50-59.

mention of this in the fragments (apart from fr.141 which is suspect and controversial, and could have other associations).³³ Because of the restrictions on eating anything that could harbour a soul, if vegetables were included there would be very little else left to eat; even philosophers have to be practical?

To return to the question of immortality, as discussed above, in Empedocles' particular cosmic cycle, nothing is truly immortal except the six elements. All compounds are destroyed at the moment of total Strife and total Love, and there is no mention in the fragments that anything survives.

We presume that the soul is also a compound of the elements. In this case, the *daimon* must have been created in the Golden Age, have fallen as Strife took hold (when mortals were created), and have been incarnated back to a level where it achieved the status of the gods over 30,000 seasons (fr.115). Then, at the moment of total Strife, all compounds are destroyed and the elements completely separated. This system would have worked much better if the *daimon* had existed eternally, throughout the cycle: that is, if the *daimons* all existed blissfully in the Sphere with the gods (the elements). Fragment 115 seems to suggest that the *daimons* existed before Strife broke up the Sphere. This suggests pre-existence which does not answer the question of how the *daimons* could exist in the Sphere, when one would presume that - as the cycle tries to show - only the six immortal

³³For some of the significances of beans see Burkert (1972) p.183. Cf. Chapter 1 for a full discussion of this issue.

elements should exist. Evidently, the ideal condition of the Sphere (the unifying of all the elements) produced these *daimons*, and, as I have discussed above, Strife gave them their individuality. Thus, by saying that Strife “created” the *daimons*, one could provide a satisfactory solution.

The function of the *daimon* as it passes from one body to the next seems clear: it must function as a carrier of the *daimon*'s identity and retain the memory of the *daimon*'s incarnation until the *daimon* has reached a position of such wisdom (as Empedocles believed he had reached - fr. 146) that it could be transported to a place among the “immortals”. This is what Dodds calls the “occult self” (p.153). *Daimons* must have some means of perception, and it is widely agreed that their thought functions are a result of their initial assimilation into the “holy mind” of the Sphere. The importance of “mind” in a cosmos created by a philosopher is obvious.

If it were not for the destruction of everything at the terminal points of the cosmic cycle - and the completely new beginning - one could accept Kirk and Raven's suggestion that the *daimon* is a portion of pure Love which is contaminated by Strife, but remains immutable. This does not explain what happens to this portion in the period of total Strife, and, unfortunately, Empedocles left no description of the consequences of total Strife, apart from the complete separation of the elements. It is metaphysically and physically impossible

to explain what happens to Love, but surely it cannot remain immutable except during Total Love.

The “fall” and the punishment

The *daimons* were forced into the cycle of incarnations by the very force that created them. This can be seen in terms of a fall or “primal sin” (although these terms should not be interpreted according to Christian dogma). The sin was bloodshed, and, as the cycle shows, there was no choice involved in the fall: it was caused by Strife, but controlled by Necessity. It had the appearance of a voluntary act (fr.139) but was part of the cosmic plan.

The punishment for the fall is to endure a series of incarnations into “corporeal envelopes”³⁴ for 30,000 seasons. Presumably, this means that the *daimon* has 30,000 seasons to redeem himself and bring himself up to a godlike level on the scale of incarnations (fr.146).³⁵ As Barnes describes it, it is a life of woe for the “journeying *homunculus*, condemned to lodge in a succession of dirty doss-houses”.³⁶

³⁴ (Rohde, p.379)

³⁵ Do we restore a ladder of incarnations to be ascended to the divine? Or can a *daimon* literally go from a boy to a girl to a bush, a fish etc.?

³⁶ Barnes (1979) p.197

The road back to final happiness

The title of Empedocles' poem gives the vital message on how to move up the scale of incarnations: by *purifications*. The fall was caused by bloodshed: therefore the purification is by cleansing of all blood crimes. This is all the more important in the world of incarnations because the animal you kill may contain another *daimon*, which will make your crime all the worse (akin to cannibalism).³⁷ This is the explanation of fragments 136, 137, 140 (and 141?). They are prohibitions designed to inform those not as wise as Empedocles how to remove all traces of carnality from their persons and so move up the scale.³⁸

The specific methods of purification are not known, apart from not killing or eating flesh. This is the most important restriction in the doctrine, and Empedocles emphasises the horror of what might happen if the warnings are not heeded in fragment 137.³⁹ It is probable that Empedocles also believed in a strict ascetic lifestyle.⁴⁰

Fragment 117, with fr.115, illustrates that the *daimon* must pass through a succession of lives in all of the four elements (earth, water, air and fire).

³⁷ On killing and/or eating animals: Barnes (1979) I, p.124f.

³⁸ A denial of corporeality *per se* does not seem to be implied.

³⁹ The idea of the father eating the son is illogical, in that one might expect the father to die before the son. However, the example must have been chosen for its horror, and the exaggeration is very effective.

⁴⁰ Possibly following the Pythagorean model - certainly his doctrine seems to be one stream of those views which flourished in Southern Italy from the sixth century. See Chapter 1 for details of the Pythagorean ascetic lifestyle. However, Empedocles does not seem to mention any sexual prohibitions.

Presumably, fire refers to living under the sun. It has been argued, quite reasonably, that Empedocles did not really remember being *κοῦρός τε κόρη τε θάμνος τ' οἰωνός τε καὶ ἔξαλος ἔλλοπος ἰχθύς*. Wright and Inwood, for example, both point out that Empedocles *knew* that to have reached his high position he must have passed through the four elements in a variety of forms; therefore, he was plucking these from the air simply as illustrations for others not so fortunate to have grasped the overall picture.⁴¹ It is an interesting hypothesis, but of little practical purpose: Empedocles would hardly admit to having made up his evidence.

Burkert has raised some interesting questions about the mechanisms of reincarnation in the Pythagorean system of beliefs, which are equally relevant to Empedocles, and equally frustrating to answer, due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence, and Empedocles' deliberate impenetrability or uncertainty as to the details.⁴² If we apply the same questions to Empedocles' theory, it appears that every living creature is a potential receptacle for a *daimon*, and plants (trees,

⁴¹ Inwood (1992) p.56

⁴² Burkert (1972) pp.133-134. I have discussed these questions in the Introduction:

Does every living creature have an immortal soul that migrates from one incarnation to another? Do plants have such souls? Do they only enter certain species of animals? Do only certain special individuals, even among men..undergo this wondrous experience?...Is the soul newly incarnated immediately after the death of the old body, in which case Hades becomes unnecessary, or is there an intermediate phase, which would have Hades there, as a way station? Is the process of palingenesis the work of blind natural forces..? - or is it the execution of a penalty assessed in a judgement of the dead? Is there an endless, cyclic movement, or is there a fall at the beginning and a salvation at the end which is permanent - or perhaps has as its alternative an eternal damnation in which case the concepts of Elysium and Tartarus again become relevant?

bushes), but presumably not vegetables, are included in this; all individuals can be inhabited by a *daimon*, but it appears that only the very wise can remember any of their incarnations. Empedocles mentions no way-stations where the *daimons* wait for incarnations. He does mention a Hades; in his theory it is life on earth that equates to Hades: the *daimon* has dropped to *earth* for punishment.

Regarding the apparently supervised placement of the *daimon* in its particular “clothing”, a tantalising fragment (fr.126) suggests that a female agent was in charge of controlling the *daimons*’ incarnations. However, we know nothing else about this, and another source gives the fragment with a masculine agent. If it *is* a female agent, the only candidate is Necessity, who seems to control the whole exercise, but about whom Empedocles is particularly vague.⁴³

There is fairly strong evidence that the choice of incarnations is not blind-luck. Chance would render a moral system without point. One would presume that before rising up to the next incarnation the *daimon* would have to have satisfactorily “passed” his previous incarnation, through following Empedocles’ precepts on purity. There is no evidence of how this “judgement” might have been managed (although cf. fragment 126, above). No eternal damnation appears, and it could not be eternal, given that “eternity” does not exist in the cosmic cycle.; however, if the *daimon* did not learn from its experiences - and there would not be much point to the system if recollection was not possible - it might spend its

⁴³ Wright (1981) p.277

allotted portion of incarnations in lowly (and impure) lives, and never achieve “immortality”.

And what is the final step for the redeemed *daimon*? After reaching the highest mortal incarnation, he becomes a long-lived god. This is not as an *immortal*, for only the elements are immortal (fr.147). It seems that Empedocles was jumping the gun a bit in describing himself as a god:⁴⁴ he may have been referring to his next incarnation? His divinity was assured at that point, so he could confidently call himself a god.⁴⁵ It could also have been, one might think, a carrot held out to his audience to encourage them to emulate his purity and wisdom, and thus reach divine status also.

These gods are described in fragments 133 and 134; they are not anthropomorphic, and the problems inherent in describing anything in terms other than purely corporeal⁴⁶ has resulted in their having a most odd appearance:

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέη κεφαλῇ κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,
 [οὐ μὲν ἀπὸ νότοιο δύο κλάδοι αἴσσουσι,]
 οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν', οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,
 ἀλλὰ φρὴν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μῶνον,
 φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταΐσσουσα θοῆσιν. (fr.134)

⁴⁴ Although tradition records that he jumped into the volcanic crater of Mt. Etna to prove his divinity. This first appears in Heraclides Ponticus (*apud* D.L. 8.67-68 & ff.). D.L. 8.70ff. gives other similar accounts. Wright (1981) p.16 casts doubts on this on the grounds of the impossibility of Empedocles' overcoming the geographical obstacles!

⁴⁵ This is suggested by Wright (1981) p.73.

⁴⁶ Fragment 133: “It is not possible to bring (the divine) close within reach of our eyes or to grasp him with the hands, by which the broadest path of persuasion for men leads to the mind.” (tr. Wright)

One wonders how more prosaic minds (interested in the material rewards of the “afterlife”) would enjoy this; this may explain why, in fragment 147, Empedocles promises that the final place of the *daimon* is at the “hearth and table” of the gods, and omits the fact that his gods are borderline-incorporeal. But it does seem a quite fitting end for a philosopher to achieve: a union with mind and blissful thought, until that final paradoxical destruction which brings immortality through union with the pure elements.

*

In sum, one could very easily put - as so many scholars have - Empedocles into the “mad-scientist” category. This is a great pity as he is the best-preserved of all the Presocratic philosophers, and a close examination of his fragments reveals an original thinker fighting an uphill battle to express original concepts (such as incorporeality) for which there existed no regular terminology, in a period when philosophy was struggling against religious and poetic barriers to become a subject in its own right;⁴⁷

ὦ φίλοι, οἶδα μὲν οὐνεκ' ἀληθείη πάρα μύθοις
οὓς ἐγὼ ἐξερέω· μάλα δ' ἀργαλέη γε τέτυκται
ἀνδράσι καὶ δύσζηλος ἐπὶ φρένα πίστιος ὀρμή. (fr.114)

*

⁴⁷ Empedocles is also our only primary source for reincarnation ideas before Plato: Claus (1981) p.112

Addendum: Empedocles and Pythagoras

Fragment 129 (quoted above) is thought to express Empedocles' admiration for either Pythagoras or Parmenides.⁴⁸ D.L. 8.54 summarizes the ancient debate, which decided in favour of Pythagoras. The passage contains an explicit reference to reincarnation,⁴⁹ and the ability to recollect one's past lives. Empedocles is illustrating that true wisdom is achieved only by *remembering* everything from the past as well as the present, and *learning* from it, so that eventually one can undergo *homoiosis* with the "Universal Mind". The recollection of past lives appears as a common theme through the fragments (139, 136, 145, 146), and also appears in his advice to Pausanias (fr. 110) not to get side-tracked by trivialities. The ability to recollect was ascribed to Pythagoras in antiquity, based almost entirely on this fragment, and modern scholars have tended to agree that Empedocles was referring to Pythagoras. Certainly nothing of this nature is ascribed to Parmenides, but Pythagoras' wisdom was proverbial.⁵⁰

There is a tradition - based on Timaeus, the Sicilian historian - that makes Empedocles a pupil of Pythagoras (or, as their lifetimes do not coincide, another

⁴⁸ However, cf. Zuntz (1971) p.265f. who believes that Empedocles is stating his debt to *both* Pythagoras and Parmenides (i.e. sitting on the fence.)

⁴⁹ *Contra* Barnes (1979) I,p.104, who thinks that it does not suggest transmigration *or* Pythagoras. It *could*, however, refer to a writer of history, in the sense that an historian should have the ability to see accurately for generations?

⁵⁰ Burnet (1952) pp.199-200; Rohde (1925) p.395 x 34; Wright (1981) p.256; KR p.335 note that Empedocles' use of proportion in the composition of his universe is similar to the Pythagorean use of proportion; for example, in fr.96 Empedocles believes that bone is made up of 2 parts water, 2 parts earth and 4 parts fire. Barnes (1979) II, p.9 comments that Empedocles is "a poor intellectual cook" who "never tested his own recipe"!

source makes Empedocles' teacher an unknown Pythagorean). According to this tradition, Empedocles was expelled from the Pythagorean school for stealing Pythagoras' discourses and making them public.⁵¹ A similar story has Empedocles as a pupil of Parmenides, and yet another makes his teacher Anaxagoras (D.L. 8.54-56).

As I have noted, the philosophical links between Empedocles and Parmenides are slight.⁵² Regarding Anaxagoras, there are no positive grounds for suspecting anything other than an acquaintance with his works. It is the Pythagorean connection which is the strongest, and this is no doubt because of the obvious similarity between the Empedoclean and Pythagorean doctrines of reincarnation. The ascetic lifestyle is an immediate similarity, as is the reasoning for it. There is also the "fact" that Pythagoras was renowned for his memory of past lives and could, according to Heraclides, list them. (D.L. 8.4).⁵³

These are similarities obvious to any casual observer of the two doctrines. The fact is, however, that close examination shows that the two doctrines are, ideologically, quite different. The reincarnation doctrine of Empedocles is integral to his cosmology: it is all part of a greater pseudo-scientific world system. The Pythagorean doctrine is the basis, in itself, for a *religious* cult with no greater

⁵¹ Note Minar (1971) on Empedocles and Pythagoras, viewed in terms of Empedocles "un-Pythagoreanism" (p.50ff.).

⁵² See von Fritz (1963) cols.189-191 for the few similarities.

⁵³ Guthrie (1962) p.164

cosmological significance.⁵⁴ It is Pythagoras rather than Empedocles (as Jaeger believes) whom one would class as the “centaur” blending primitive philosophy and religion. Empedocles, on the other hand, has moved that important step towards pure philosophy: one might say that Empedocles has grasped - tentatively - at the “big picture”.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ On the question of influences, von Fritz (1963) cols.190-191 would see a common link between Empedocles, Pindar and *Phaedrus*.

⁵⁵ I am not entering into a debate on the *scientific* achievements of Pythagoras. It is unlikely that he himself made any, and the lack of evidence confuses the issue (see Chapter 1). Empedocles, on the other hand, stated his ideas on many physiological, botanical, and embryological matters, although he left few explanations that one could classify as “scientific” in the modern sense. This is the basis of Aristotle’s famous gripe (*Physics* 252a22-5) that “anyone who says this should not simply state it - he should also give the explanation of it, and lay down some unreasoned axiom but bring either an induction or a demonstration.” For example, he does seem to have rejected monism although he never writes why (perhaps out of common sense?). Certainly the pluralist notion was in line with the developments that the atomists would make, and which Anaxagoras pioneered. See Barnes (1979) II, p.9 for a discussion of this aspect of Empedocles.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION: PLATO, MYTH & REINCARNATION

μετὰ δὲ τὸν θεόν, ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δέοι, εἶπερ μέλλοι ποιητῆς εἶναι, ποιεῖν μύθους, ἀλλ' οὐ λόγους, καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ οὐς προχείρους εἶχον καὶ ἠπιστάμην μύθους τοὺς Αἰσώπου, τούτους ἐποίησα, οἷς πρώτοις ἐνέτυχον.
(*Phaedo* 61b3-7)

*

Reincarnation appears in two literary forms in the Platonic dialogues: (1) myths, usually eschatological; (2) tales, primarily heard from anonymous priests (*Meno*), mystic groups, subtle people (*Gorgias*), ancient account (παλαιός λόγος: *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*), etc.¹

There is considerable common ground between the two, primarily because their origin is deliberately indefinite: Socrates/Plato is pointing out that the myths/stories are not his own, and by this method he is thus able to put forward ideas without committing himself to their truth.² Moreover, although we can make reasoned guesses, we can never find out with any degree of certainty whose myths/stories they are. I will discuss this elsewhere; however, Stewart raises an interesting point: it is possible that the very anonymity of the myths masks the subjectivity of the source. Perhaps the myths can be traced back to a common source with which Socrates may not have wished to be associated; for example, if

¹ See the relevant chapters for a more detailed discussion. I have accepted Guthrie's (1975) order of the dialogues, viz, (early) *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Minor*, *Hippias Major* (?), *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Ion* (order uncertain); (middle) *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Euthydemus*, *Menexenus*, *Cratylus*; (late) *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, *Laws*.

² Crombie (1962) p.154. Moreover, myths are inherently flexible: as Bremmer (1994) p.65 notes, "The plasticity, multifunctionality, and polysemy of myth always makes its analysis a hazardous undertaking."

that source were “Orphic”, this would make a mockery of Socrates’ criticism of the moral influence of the priests of that movement (*Republic* 364e).³

A “theory” of reincarnation is never offered as a complete and reasoned whole in any Platonic dialogue, nor does reincarnation appear separate from myths or stories. Moreover, the details of the reincarnation process differ from dialogue to dialogue, and indeed from myth to myth within the *same* dialogue (cf. *Phaedo*). It might be possible, as some commentators have attempted, to coalesce the details of the various myths and force a doctrine. However, this is fraught with problems because of the numerous ways that myth can be seen to function in the doctrines;⁴ this is particularly so since there is no one accepted explanation for the motives behind Plato’s use of myth.

Part of the problem is that Plato deals in concepts which are inevitably mythopoeic,⁵ being either (a) not “sensible” (for example, the soul is invisible), or

³ Stewart’s suggestion: (1960) p.96. I do not think that this attributes a mean motive to Socrates/Plato; rather, as I will discuss in the following chapters, Plato uses myth with a great deal of flexibility. This flexibility is (no doubt deliberately), facilitated by his preference for the myths/stories which we term Orphic-Pythagorean. These are a mass of poorly differentiated and generally anonymous or pseudonymous writings which do not form a coherent picture of commonly held or widely recognized beliefs, but which are convenient for setting the seal of tradition and antiquity (= veracity) on to similarly vague ideas. It is not my intention to belittle Plato’s own personal beliefs in these chapters. When I argue that these *type of beliefs* (i.e. “Orphic” etc.) are *convenient* for Plato, I am not casting a slur on Plato’s own religious convictions - I am, however, pointing out that we are unlikely to be able to restore his own convictions from his deliberately ambiguous references to esoteric beliefs, used to reinforce often equally ambiguous arguments: see *Meno* (q.v.), for example. I will take up this idea again, below.

⁴ “We must not press too far the statements of a myth”, according to Bluck (1958a) p.157, who does just that, producing an unworkable conglomerate of the *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*; cf. Bluck (1958b) p.414.

⁵ Halliwell (1988) p.18

(b) beyond the realm of thought of the living (that is, post-mortem life).⁶ Both of these categories affect reincarnation, to the extent that one might ask that, if reincarnation only appears in myth, does this show that it is *not* a true doctrine/belief, but a fiction, or representation of something quite different?⁷ Even relatively simple opinions on the afterlife are provided with a warning: at *Apology* 40a ff., after Socrates has told the Athenian judges his view that death is one of two things, he concludes, εἰ ταῦτ' ἔστιν ἀληθῆ. Post-mortem myths are, thus, “inevitably elusive and opaque.”⁸

Even before thought on the soul entered the realm of incorporeality,⁹ description of ψυχή was problematic. For example, in the central myth in *Phaedrus*, it is clear that the soul does not *really* grow feathers and take flight. However, the myth provides the best *analogy* for what *seems* to occur (cf. “butterflies in the stomach”).¹⁰ We know that souls exist because we know that we are ensouled: that is, empirical proof is impossible, especially as the soul is invisible. “It is both a tacit acknowledgment of, and an attempted solution to, the problem of conceiving the ‘true nature’ of the soul, that Plato should leave rational

⁶ Friedländer (1969) p.182; cf. also the numerous variations on the topography of Hades, and the changing details of the journey/judgement, which illustrate the difficulty of furnishing a coherent vision of an unknown world.

⁷ If one views the myths literally, could one then consider the eschatological myths as handbooks to aid one’s post-mortem survival?

⁸ Halliwell (1988) p.18. In the same passage in *Apology*, Socrates refers to an equally vague source: ..ἢ κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὐσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον. (40c7-9). The point about post-mortem beliefs, is that they are only *beliefs*. Is it permissible to be vague and general about things - such as post-mortem existence and the soul - which are impossible to prove?

⁹ In the thought of Plato: for a discussion of this see Renehan (1980).

¹⁰ That is, *literally* false, but *symbolically* true?

argument behind and turn to myth.”¹¹ However, not even myth can solve certain problems about the taxonomy of the soul: for example, what gender is something which does not have a gender?¹² Or, how does one relate the *incorporeal* ideal of the soul if the only vocabulary available is strictly *corporeal*?¹³ Thus, myth often describes the soul in terms that openly contradict those of dialectic.

Myth seems incompatible with philosophical discourse - even primitive, by comparison:¹⁴

Οὐ μανθάνεις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ. (*Republic* 377a4-6)¹⁵

Socrates sometimes expresses a (moral) objection to myths (*Euthyphro* 6a; *Phaedrus* 229c-230a; *Republic* 376e-380c).¹⁶ Other philosophers - Prodicus, Anaxagoras, Antisthenes - justified myths by finding a deeper meaning or

¹¹ Halliwell (1988) p.17

¹² It gets its gender characteristics from the body.

¹³ Cf. Renehan (1980); also, Halliwell (1988) p.173 on this as an unavoidable problem.

¹⁴ Plato's myths have long been held as stories, "mythopoetic" - McCumber (1982) p.34 - and irrelevant to philosophy. Annas (1982b) has pointed out, however, that the subjects of the three eschatological myths of *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* mirror the arguments preceding (and have similar themes). See also Friedländer (1969) p.182 on the myths as a trilogy; and Guthrie (1975) p.338. Moreover, commentators have generally been thrown off the scent by the problems with the *genre* of philosophical myth: that is, its debts to both the literary and philosophical genres. The result is that myths are often interpreted as purely aesthetic, or, worse still, they are seen as a lapse from rational thinking on Plato's part (and to be despised). It is made more confusing by Plato's attacks on myths and allegorizing (references below). Another problem is that Plato sometimes uses both *mythos* and *logos* almost interchangeably, particularly when the other term would be more appropriate! Annas cites *Republic* (the growth of the state is termed a *mythos*) as one example of this. See Annas (1982b) pp.119-121 on this. Also, cf. Annas (1982a) p.349 on the jarring "childishness" of the Myth of Er. On *mythos/logos* cf. Papadis (1989) p.27.

¹⁵ Dowden (1992) pp.47ff. discusses this. As he notes, Plato does not object to myths as fiction *per se*, but to the idea of wrong knowledge.

¹⁶ At *Republic* 414b-15d, false myth is countenanced in a good cause.

underlying sense in them (ὑπόνοια¹⁷), but Socrates also rejects this (*Republic* 378d).¹⁸ Subsequent philosophers, particularly the Neoplatonists and Neopythagoreans, used allegory to find this “hidden sense”.¹⁹ However, despite his ambivalence towards myth, Socrates makes extensive use of it, even inventing myths which Aristotle was hasty to dismiss as “sophisms”, “not worthy of serious consideration.” (*Metaphysics* 1000a18).²⁰

Because myth is so important in the reincarnation argument, I shall discuss the ways it can be (and has been) seen to function:

(1) as literally true; that is, what Socrates/Plato *truly* believed would happen in the afterlife.²¹ Considering the absence of a coherent doctrine, this is not only unlikely, but also unprovable. Guthrie notes, however, that the second incarnation in the *Timaeus* (q.v.) is referred to as the “probable story” (..κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα...: 90e8), which he would see as a “*jeu d’esprit*”.²²

¹⁷ For the various senses *vide* LSJ.

¹⁸ ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἶος τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μή, ἀλλ’ ἂν τηλικούτος ὦν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκνιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι (*Republic* 378d7-e1)

¹⁹ Peters (1967) p.120 on *mythos*.

²⁰ Reference given by Guthrie (1975) p.365

²¹ This is not a contradiction of my previous point (that myth is used of the unknowable: cf. *Apology* 40a ff.) - it is merely one expression of how myth *can* be interpreted.

²² Guthrie (1978) p.307. A brief search in LSJ produces a number of similar references for “probable” stories/myths: e.g. *Timaeus* 48d, 59c. Rather than simply a *jeu d’esprit*, one might see Socrates/Plato’s use of εἰκώς as indicative of deliberate ambiguity. In other cases, this sort of general statement quickly supplies an answer, and enables the dialogue to move on. In this particular example from *Timaeus* 90e8, however, I would agree that there is an element of playfulness. See Stewart (1960) pp.304-5,85), citing other authorities’ views on dogma vs. myth.

(2) allegory/fable, including re-interpretation of older myths. For example, the Cave in *Republic* is a simple allegory;²³ a more complex allegory (if it is intended as such) is the tripartite soul/state (*Republic* and *Laws*).²⁴ The invention of writing (*Phaedrus* 274-5) is a *fable*: “..designed to express pictorially in a story what could equally well have been said without it” (Crombie).²⁵ Early in *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that he has no time for the fashionable pursuit of allegorizing myths, but prefers to accept them and get on with learning to know himself.²⁶ Against this, however, compare the allegory at *Gorgias* 493b (q.v.): the first σοφὸς [άνήρ] told the myth; the second κομψὸς άνήρ made an allegory of it.²⁷

If we cannot determine whether a myth is meant to be interpreted allegorically, then we can only draw speculative conclusions. For example, the theory of recollection in *Meno* has been regarded as an allegory: when demythologized, this denies the theory any literal meaning, regarding άνάμνησις as a metaphor.²⁸ Compare the use of what Morgan terms *eikones* (among which he

²³Zaslavsky (1981) p.154 sees it as, “an attempt to give in imagistic shorthand, as it were, a matrix for understanding types of human behaviour”. On the Cave, see Crombie (1962) pp.114ff.; Stewart (1960) pp.14ff,245; Guthrie (1975) p.518; Annas (1982a) pp.253ff.,262. On the Cave and analogy: Strang (1986).

²⁴Saunders (1962)

²⁵Crombie (1962) p.153

²⁶Guthrie (1975) p.399

²⁷Blank (1991) p.28

²⁸I have doubts about the *intended* function of recollection in Plato’s thought, seeing it as intended more to prove the immortality of the soul than form a working doctrine. άνάμνησις can be translated as “remembering”, “recalling” or “recollecting”, so in itself it is ambiguous. The point which I am attempting to make is that if we cannot determine whether a myth is intended as an allegory, the conclusions drawn will vary considerably.

includes the Cave) as accurate representations of their model: “they are other than but like what they imitate”.²⁹

(3) Myth as story/philosophical poetry. Linked with the concept of allegorical/analogous creativity is the idea that Plato is playing an intellectual game with the reader;³⁰ the obvious case of this is the one hundred or so inventive (“playful”) etymologies in *Cratylus*.³¹ Cf. *Phaedrus* 276d-e. Also, for example, *Republic* would seem to be on the boundary between “literally true” (that is, as a practical plan with serious *intent*) and make-believe or story (as a far from ideal utopia).³² Yet, Socrates describes himself at *Phaedo* 61b5 (surely ironically?) as αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός. Beyond the literal sense of a myth one is also aware of the metaphorical.³³ A final sense is that of myth as a charm or spell (*Laws* 903b; *Phaedo* 114d7).

(4) a tool for making analogies; or for pointing the way to where truth can be found by a process of “drawing the moral”.³⁴ This can be combined with (2), above.

²⁹ Morgan (1990) pp.150ff. bases this on *Sophist* 235d. This seems to be a fair definition of allegory: cf. *Oxford Literary Terms* s.v. allegory.

³⁰ Guthrie (1975) p.555; Crombie (1962) p.154 sees some myths designed simply to be impressive.

³¹ Ferwerda (1985) (p.268). According to Krell (1988) p.166, *Cratylus* is Plato’s “opera buffa”.

³² On utopias in general: Ferguson (1975).

³³ Stewart (1960) p.236

³⁴ Crombie (1962) p.153; cf. Guthrie (1935) p.239.

(5) Explaining things that cannot otherwise be explained in dialectic/rational terms;³⁵ myth is used at the point where an argument reaches its limits:³⁶ it is a continuation of philosophy by other means³⁷ - "a prolongation into the unknown of lines established by the philosophical argument".³⁸ Myth as the "purportedly true picture of a religious-moral-epistemological goal that is beyond finite powers to describe even with the use of Orphic-Pythagorean and mythic devices" (Morgan).³⁹ The *Seventh Letter* makes this point: the highest subjects (viz., the Forms) are in principle incapable of being expressed in language.⁴⁰ A similar point is made at *Timaeus* 29d and 68d. Abstract ideas such as free will and divine justice can also be impossible to "describe": we *know* that they exist, but cannot prove it.⁴¹ The problem with this type of myth is that it is easy to interpret mere

³⁵ This is, I believe, the use of myth most often found with reincarnation. As Dowden (1992) p.48 notes, however, the danger is that "...the approach of some modern scholars to the traditional mythology supposes it to be nearer Plato's heart than he thought." That is, we must not assume that Plato literally believed all that he wrote, in *mythos* or in *logos*.

³⁶ Ophir (1991) p.13 who analyzes the *Republic* in structuralist terms sees that "the logic of myth...following the general structuralists' claim, consists of certain regularities of oppositions and homologues of discursive units. These regularities...create a structure for an indefinite number of variations that exemplify the same logic, the same relations between key categories of thought, the same way to categorize the world and to impose order on human experience..They provide Greek discourse with a grid that serves *logos* as a point of departure in its search for truth, a map of the terrain.." I will discuss Ophir's interpretation of the *Republic* myth, below. Crombie believes that the function of eschatological myths was to explain ideas that go beyond rational inquiry: they "...convey a principle by describing one way in which that principle might be implemented." He notes that the problem is that, in searching for the moral in this sort of myth, you can never be sure *which* details can be discounted. *For example, is reincarnation functioning as an insignificant detail in the myth, or as an important part of the moral itself?* Crombie (1962) p.154; Halliwell (1988) p.18 makes a similar point: the temptation is to select out the features which can be recognised as part of (other) identifiable doctrines, and to regard the rest as decorative. If they are "quasi-poetic expressions of some of the philosopher's deepest convictions..", this view hardly does them justice.

³⁷ Cf. Dodds (1959) p.384 for another conscious adaptation of Clausewitz.

³⁸ Dodds (1959) cited by Gallop (1975) p.224.

³⁹ Morgan (1990) p.73; he describes the *Phaedo* myth as "a fabulous attempt to push thinking where reason should not tread": an epilogue to rational inquiry, rather than a surrogate (p.57).

⁴⁰ Rowe (1986a) p.52; Rankin (1964) p.25.

⁴¹ Guthrie (1935) p.239

strangeness and surrealism as the disguise of a “deep”⁴² message (so deep it often cannot be found: for example, the *Politicus* myth and to a lesser extent, that in *Phaedrus*).⁴³ Is it the distinguishing mark of a myth that to answer unanswerable questions one has to enter into myth oneself?⁴⁴

(6) backing up dialectic, as “proof”;⁴⁵ this sort of myth is usually introduced or concluded with tempering words:

Τὸ μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν, ὡς ἐγὼ
διελήλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ· ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ'
ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα.. (*Phaedo* 114d1-3)

The myth at *Laws* 903d (q.v.) in particular can be seen to back up the preceding discussion. It is also “designed to charm” (903b1-2).⁴⁶ The most recent view, put forward by Annas, views myth as an extension of this: it is a “proof” but, more subtly, it is an illustration in concrete terms of the usually abstract argument of dialectic.

Halliwel would see *Republic's* Myth of Er functioning in this way: the dialogue, he believes, presents an argument for psychic immortality which the myth

⁴² That is, ὑπόνοια.

⁴³ Annas (1986a) makes this point (p.350).

⁴⁴ It is obviously dangerous to generalize about *all* myths on the same terms: that is, the *Politicus* myth may be nonsensical, but it does not mean that all myths are nonsensical. It is important to realize that in the majority of the Platonic dialogues, myths are present for a reason, and usually that reason is to back up an argument. They are rarely present for their own sake and, although they can function purely on the creative literary level, to see them as *only* such is to belittle Plato's cleverness - a cleverness that we are intended to see, in *Meno* (q.v.), for example.

⁴⁵ The “body of peltasts behind the hoplites”: Jaeger cited by Guthrie (1935) p.239.

⁴⁶ ἑπωδῶν γε μὴν προσδεῖσθαι μοι δοκεῖ μύθων ἔτι τινῶν. Cf. Saunders (1962) p.233.

reinforces - it gives psychic immortality "place and meaning".⁴⁷ Moreover, it crosses into category (5): "...the beliefs or convictions which concern Plato at this point outrun the scope of cogently rational dialectic."⁴⁸ Moreover, because the great eschatological myths of *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* occur at the end of the arguments to which they relate, this makes their function as proofs seem logical.⁴⁹

(7) providing a quick answer to questions that the philosopher is unwilling to state in dialectic/doctrine. *Meno* (q.v.) has been seen to illustrate this.

*

The greatest problem with the appearance of reincarnation in myth is whether it is intended as a believable doctrine, or whether it is a fancy (and used for any of the above purposes). As Annas comments, "This view encourages us to read the myths on an aesthetic level, and, like Walter Pater, enjoy the description of coloured light rather than trying to extract a message."⁵⁰ She is making the point that there is a second level beyond mere fantasy or "childishness". Zaslavsky (wrongly) tends towards this second assumption with almost nihilistic determination.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Morgan (1990) p.171 feels the same way about the central myth of *Phaedrus*.

⁴⁸ Halliwell (1988) p.17

⁴⁹ And they will have a greater emotive influence in this position. However, if they are *too* fantastic will they counteract the strength of the argument? *Politicus* may illustrate this: see Appendix E.

⁵⁰ Annas (1986a) p.350

⁵¹ I am certainly not in agreement with the Euhemerist approach, which has been well and truly discredited. It is, however, an approach found in both ancient and modern commentators. See Dowden (1992) p.5: "History is what myth isn't"! Also, *id.* pp.23ff. for other approaches to myth.

..if someone asserts that a human has the look (*idea*) of a snake, he does not mean that the human is literally a snake, but that he acts like a snake. Similarly, if someone asserts that the soul of a human leaves a human body and enters the body of a beast, that is not to be taken at face value as a belief in transmigration of souls, but rather as a way of describing an alteration in his patterns of behaviour...whenever in a Platonic dialogue there is an ostensible transformation from a human into a beast or from a beast into a human or even from a beast into a beast, this must not be taken literally, but rather it must be taken as an imagistic way of delineating an internal transformation within a human from one type of behaviour to another.⁵²

This may work in some myths (most obviously *Timaeus*) but I fail to see how it can be applied to every situation. Zaslavsky would see it as the intention of the *Republic* myth, based on the fact that the next life is *chosen* by the soul;⁵³ an illogical analogy, I believe. Is acting like a snake/beast a self-professed internal transformation?

And what happens when the demythologized myth does not agree with the preceding dialectic, as appears to happen (according to Annas) in the Myth of Er?⁵⁴ What if the demythologized details do not agree with one's view of their exponent?⁵⁵ Not knowing how Plato expected the myths to be read is the source of endless problems such as these,⁵⁶ which I will attempt to deal with in the discussions on specific dialogues;

⁵² Zaslavsky (1981) pp.156-157

⁵³ Zaslavsky (1981) p.158; on the other hand, Zaslavsky sees the idea of recollection not as myth or "genetic account" but descriptive of the learning process as it occurs (p.15).

⁵⁴ Annas (1986a) p.352; Halliwell (1988) pp.22ff. disagrees, as does Morgan (1990) p.150 who sees it as the "natural ending".

⁵⁵ cf. *Timaeus* (q.v.), regarded as wholly a myth. Does the myth vaunt a hitherto hidden misogyny on Plato's part?

⁵⁶ Annas (1986a) p.352

..the frequent appearance in the myths of reincarnation is explained by Plato's having picked up the idea from some Pythagoreans. Whatever the value of this as a historical explanation - relevant pre-Platonic evidence being hard to come by - it leaves all the important questions still open: for why did Plato choose to pick up *this* idea from the Pythagoreans? If myths have no rational interpretation, we can only say that the idea had some personal appeal. But surely we should be asking what Plato uses this notion to *do*: what idea is of importance to him for which reincarnation would seem to be the right symbolic expression?⁵⁷

This is the idea that I will follow through in the following chapters: that Plato is *using* reincarnation (in myth) for a certain purpose, and that that purpose differs according to the particular subject of each dialogue.

As a general point, reincarnation does not appear in every dialogue, nor even in sequential dialogues. Its appearance obviously depends to a large extent on the subject and ultimate purpose of each dialogue, and also on the speaker and audience. I am convinced that reincarnation does not appear in the dialogues as a workable ideology, but rather as a functional tool, used with a definite purpose. For example, in *Phaedo*, it "proves" the immortality of the soul; in *Meno* it forms the basis for a discussion of true knowledge.

There is certainly no canonical Platonic theory of reincarnation. Reincarnation appears in different forms, and is associated with a multiplicity of theories on the soul, its composition and appearance. It is a flexible theory, with

⁵⁷ Annas (1986b) p.120. It is these questions which I will be discussing in the following chapters. See also Chapter 1, and Appendix B for Pythagoreans and Orphics.

suitably vague origins, lacking any formal ratification in theology or cult. It is flexible to the extent that, in *Republic*, the soul chooses its next life, while in *Laws*, the next life is awarded through an automatic justice system.

Is reincarnation a *pia fraus*?⁵⁸ I would not go so far as to deny any belief in reincarnation to Plato or Socrates (although it would be equally presumptuous to *attribute* it as a personal belief), however, I do think that we ought not to equate *use* with *belief*.⁵⁹ I do not intend to belittle Plato's beliefs when I say that they are irrelevant to my discussions: rather, there is no way of ascertaining from the dialogues what beliefs he did hold.⁶⁰ My intention is to discuss the *contexts* within which reincarnation "beliefs" appear, and the details of any reincarnation processes which are given, and to attempt to ascertain what function reincarnation has in the dialogues.⁶¹

To summarize my conclusions in advance, I believe that, (a) it is impossible to see any development of one coherent doctrine of reincarnation in the

⁵⁸ See Armstrong (1977) p.29, on Ps.Timaeus Locrus 104de, who believes that Plato's doctrine (made up of theories of immortality, incarnation and anamnesis) is a *pia fraus*, designed for those who could pursue perfection (*arete*) without it.

⁵⁹ That is, *reincarnation* is not a myth, but is used *in* myth: Vlastos (1970) p.119,n.89. I am not denying the *reality* of belief. As Vlastos has recognized, transmigration is often the keystone of Plato's doctrines. I would (unlike Dodds) be wary of questioning Plato's *belief* in transmigration and religion, although it does seem to be more often used as a tool in Plato's epistemological investigations.

⁶⁰ Cf. the sweeping statement of "approved" doctrines of Plato in D.L. 3.67: τὰ δὲ ἀρέσκοντα αὐτῷ ταῦτα ἦν. ἀθάνατον ἔλεγε τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ πολλὰ μεταμφιεσμένην σώματα..

⁶¹ In sum, I intend to investigate whether reincarnation is a *pia fraus*.

dialogues,⁶² and that (b) reincarnation is used by Plato as part of a collection of mythico-religious props which function as convenient explanations and/or testimonia, and act - always in myth - primarily in the manner of categories (5), (6) and (7), above, without necessarily implying that they are Plato's or Socrates' personal beliefs.⁶³ Plato has elevated reincarnation from the realm of mysticism and religion, into the world of philosophy, but paradoxically, reincarnation always remains *mythical* in the dialogues.

⁶² Indeed, Plato's views on the soul itself are far from consistent. Cf. Vernant (1991) p.190 and Philip (1966) p.163,n.3.

⁶³ That is, *use* does not necessarily equate with *belief*. Cf. Leshner (1992) p.80 for a similar opinion on the Platonic use of reincarnation and myth. As Leshner notes, "We need not suppose that Plato was committed to the truth of these stories in all their details in order to grant to them some degree of respectability."

CHAPTER 5: MENO

Reincarnation is introduced into this dialogue through the medium of “certain priests and priestesses” (81a), and reinforced with a quotation from Pindar (fr.133). It is introduced at a critical point in the dialogue, when Meno has just put forward an (unanswerable?) eristic paradox on knowledge,¹ and for this reason, it seems that Socrates reverts to a story (not a myth) that he does not wish to credit to his own devising or belief (note his warning to Meno at 81b2-3 - ἀλλὰ σκόπει, εἴ σοι δοκοῦσιν ἀληθῆ λέγειν. φασί..), but one which forces a new middle line into the argument.²

It seems that the function of the reincarnation “doctrine” in this context is fourfold: (1) it quickly (and simply) supplies an answer to Meno’s paradox, and therefore, (2) it enables Socrates to return to his previous discussion. Most importantly, (3) it provides a (semi-mythic) proof of the immortality of the soul (a base for the most important argument in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*) and for the debate on knowledge from recollection which is to follow (learning *is* recollection: 81d4-5); it is thus, (4) almost a thematic marker for the change of direction of the argument - the argument is about to veer sharply away from dialectic towards more transcendental pursuits.

¹ The paradox is: ..ὡς οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπων οὔτε ὁ οἶδεν οὔτε ὁ μὴ οἶδεν; οὔτε γὰρ ἂν ὁ γε οἶδε ζητοῖ· οἶδε γάρ, καὶ οὐδὲν δεῖ τῷ γε τοιούτῳ ζητήσεως· οὔτε ὁ μὴ οἶδεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ οἶδεν ὅ τι ζητήσει. (80e1-5) On eristic: G.B.Kerford (1981) *The Sophistic Movement* C.U.P., pp.63ff. Also, Kenny (1969) p.242; Anderson (1971) p.227. All translations are from Lamb (1924).

² Allen (1959) p.165; Cornford (1971) p.52.

As Anderson has pointed out, the introduction of reincarnation into the dialogue should be viewed with suspicion. First, there is Plato's warning (81b2-3);³ second, the fact that Socrates "heard" (ἀκήκοα γὰρ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα...: 81a5-6) the doctrine - he did not "recollect" it;⁴ third, the use of poetic proof to back it up, and obscure "proof" at that - the references are intentionally obscure.⁵ Finally, there is the character of Meno himself - he is "benumbed" (80a8-b1)⁶ by Socrates. Meno is a student of Gorgias, and thus of eristic, but he has no great understanding of what he argues, nor does he understand Socrates' far from subtle allusions to his vanity (76a9-c2; 80c3-5) and his comparison to the slave.⁷ Moreover, when Meno does not know something (for example, the answer to "What is virtue?") he says that he has "forgotten". It seems that the concept of recollection is tempered with heavy irony.⁸

³ There are several parallels to this in other dialogues, particularly with reference to myth: for example, *Timaeus* 72d.

⁴ Cf. the reiteration of forms of ἀνάμνησις/ἀναμνήσκεσθαι at, for example, 81c8, d2, d5, e4, 82a2, b7, (esp.) e12-13, 84a4 etc. Meno's type of learning is based on remembering (and repeating) what others have told him: Anderson (1971) p.228.

⁵ Cf. my discussion of this in Chapter II: Pindar.

⁶ Socrates, like the νάρκη (flat torpedo sea-fish or electric ray: *vide* LSJ), ποιεῖ ναρκᾶν. The result is the Socratic phenomenon of *aporia*: cf. 80a1-2; 80c8-d1. Socrates' reply at 80c6-d1 is a masterpiece of sophistic repetition of both ναρκ- and ἀπορ- compounds, and serves to confuse Meno even further. On *aporia*: Blank (1993) p.428ff.; also, S.Kofman "Beyond *Aporia*?" pp.7-44 in Benjamin, A. (ed.) (1988) *Post-structuralist classics* Routledge, London.

⁷ Anderson (1971) p.232

⁸ Cf. the pun on Meno's name at 71c9: Cobb (p.606-7)

The doctrine of reincarnation which introduces recollection is (a) derived from unspecified popular tradition, and (b) of little importance in itself. Its importance lies in what it supplies to the dialogue - viz, a "proof" of the immortality of the soul, based on an old traditional belief.

The details of the metempsychotic process are sketchy:

Οἱ μὲν λέγοντές εἰσι τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ ἱερείων ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἷοις τ' εἶναι διδόναι· λέγει δὲ καὶ Πίνδαρος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν, ὅσοι θεῖοι εἰσιν. ἃ δὲ λέγουσι, ταυτί ἐστίν· ἀλλὰ σκόπει, εἴ σοι δοκοῦσιν ἀληθῆ λέγειν. φασὶ γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἀθάνατον, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν τελευτᾶν, ὃ δὴ ἀποθνήσκειν καλοῦσι, τοτὲ δὲ πάλιν γίνεσθαι, ἀπόλλυσθαι δ' οὐδέποτε· δεῖν δὴ διὰ ταῦτα ὡς ὀσιώτατα διαβιῶναι τὸν βίον· οἷσι γὰρ ἄν -

Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὑπερθεὺν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτω ἔτει
ἀντιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν,
ἐκ τῶν βασιλῆες ἀγανοὶ
καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι
ἄνδρες αὔξοντ'. ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἦρωες
ἀγνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται. [= Pindar fr.133]

"Ἄτε οὖν ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατός τε οὔσα καὶ πολλάκις γεγонуῖα, καὶ ἔωρακυῖα καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου καὶ πάντα χρήματα, οὐκ ἔστιν ὃ τι οὐ μεμάθηκεν· ὥστε οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ ἄλλων οἷόν τε εἶναι αὐτὴν ἀναμνησθῆναι, ἃ γε καὶ πρότερον ἠπίστατο. ἄτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης, καὶ μεμαθηκυῖας τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαντα, οὐδὲν κωλύει ἐν μόνον ἀναμνησθέντα, ὃ δὴ μάθησιν καλοῦσιν ἄνθρωποι, τᾶλλα πάντα αὐτὸν ἀνευρεῖν, ἐάν τις ἀνδρεῖος ἦ καὶ μὴ ἀποκάμνη ζητῶν· τὸ γὰρ ζητεῖν ἄρα καὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἀνάμνησις ὅλον ἐστίν. (81a10-d5)

The secondary role of reincarnation is quite clear: it is a stepping stone to recollection, providing the proof of immortality necessary to the soul to make

recollection plausible (and thus solve the eristic paradox). I have discussed the details of the reincarnation process elsewhere.⁹

The problem with the mythical proof is that it makes the doctrine of recollection rest upon a shaky foundation, and the outrageous “demonstration” of recollection merely adds to this. For example, while it aims to deny the role of sense-experience in knowledge, it nevertheless relies on the said sense-experience for the demonstration.¹⁰ Moreover, it is intended to show that “learning” (μάθησις) as such (according to the paradox) *does not occur*, yet the demonstration is a clear example of the learning process - indeed, it presupposes learning:¹¹ the slave is fed the necessary information, and he does *not* recollect it, but rather reflects upon it. In most instances he merely has to answer “Ναί” to Socrates’ pointed questions. The correct answers do not come blindingly from space - rather, they are inferred.¹² The process of inference is based on the idea of all things being akin (81d1).¹³ The demonstration is also, as Gulley has pointed out,¹⁴ based more than a little on the idea that the correct question elicits the

⁹ Day (1994) p.23 in her introduction to Vlastos’ article [Vlastos (1991)], reverses Vlastos’ reincarnation → recollection → immortality argument, which certainly goes against the text. Yet Vlastos is thinking more in terms of the theory of Forms, which does not appear in *Meno*. Day, however, has missed the point that Socrates’ argument is *circular* - what it aims to prove is already presupposed in its proof (see below). Cf. also Guthrie (1975) p.389.

¹⁰ On sense-experience: Bedu-Addo (1983) pp.228,240ff.; Morgan (1984) pp.237,240. Sense-experience “reminds” the soul of what it has forgotten.

¹¹ Cobb (1973) p.608; Cobb also suggests (p.627) that anamnesis is “a mythical picture of the process of dialectic”.

¹² Allen (1959) pp.167-168,174: opinion becomes knowledge by reflection; cf. 97a-c.

¹³ Anderson (1971) p.231; Tigner (1970) pp.1,4 points out that kinship is recognised because of the prenatal view of the ontological families. However, Crombie (1962) p.140 suggests that anamnesis would work more efficiently if all nature were akin to the *soul* itself: that is, as in *Timaeus* where there is a World Soul.

¹⁴ Gulley (1954) p.197 - cf. *Phaedo* 73a for the same process.

correct answer.¹⁵ What the demonstration really shows is that learning *does* take place! Recollection is thus used (although the unwitting Meno does not realise it, and cannot defend its weak points adequately, and so is exposed as a sophist, unworthy of dialectic)¹⁶ to provide a solution to Meno's paradox. Moreover, Socrates had said at 81c9-e2 that Meno's paradox would make us lazy rather than inquiring - however, recollection does absolutely the same. It is the *process of learning*, all along, which is important: only this makes us energetic and inquiring.¹⁷

The real answer (not so much directly to the paradox, but rather for Socrates/Plato himself) has always been present, but is finally made obvious after the "demonstration" of recollection (and the *reductio ad absurdum* of Meno's sophistic views):¹⁸

καὶ τὰ μὲν γε ἄλλα οὐκ ἂν πάνυ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λόγου
 δισχυρισαίμην· ὅτι δ' οἰόμενοι δεῖν ζητεῖν, ἃ μὴ τις οἶδε,
 βελτίους ἂν εἴμεν καὶ ἀνδρικώτεροι καὶ ἥττον ἀργοὶ ἢ εἰ
 οἰοίμεθα, ἃ μὴ ἐπιστάμεθα, μηδὲ δυνατόν εἶναι εὔρεῖν μηδὲ
 δεῖν ζητεῖν, περὶ τούτου πάνυ ἂν διαμαχοίμην, εἰ οἷός τε εἶην,
 καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ...Βούλει οὖν, ἐπειδὴ ὁμονοοῦμεν, ὅτι
 ζητητέον περὶ οὗ μὴ τις οἶδεν, ἐπιχειρήσωμεν κοινῇ ζητεῖν τί
 ποτ' ἔστιν ἀρετή; (86b6-c6)

¹⁵ Allen (1959) p.167 would seem incorrect to view the use of mathematics as non-empirical, although geometry is similar to the Forms in that it deals with *perfect* examples. Cf. Cornford (1971), p.48.

¹⁶ Anderson (1971) p.227

¹⁷ Cobb (1973) p.609.

¹⁸ Cobb (1973) pp.605,627

Yet even after this clear statement, Meno is still pressing the point, without understanding that it has been answered to the best of Socrates' ability - and, non-mythically. *It is truth that is most important* (81e1-2).

I do not intend to argue about the seriousness of recollection in Plato's doctrines.¹⁹ Recollection only appears *explicitly* in *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. It does not, for example, appear in *Republic*, which is all the more surprising as *Republic* VI is about modes of cognition (knowledge analogous to vision, etc.).²⁰ Yet it was not abandoned (*Phaedrus* post-dates *Republic*).²¹ However, and this must be the telling point, in *Phaedrus* (where it plays a very important role) it appears in myth.²² There appears to be little consistent ground between the three anamnestic dialogues.²³

¹⁹ Commentators are split over this, between those who see anamnesis as a serious doctrine - Allen (1959), Cornford (1971) - and those who see it as weak or absurd: Cobb (1973), Anderson (1971).

²⁰ Cf. *Theaetetus* 149a1-151d4, 157c8-d3, 160e2-161a4, 161b1-6, 184a9-b2 and 210b4-c9, where Socrates is presented as a midwife to pupils who produce knowledge from within themselves. This does not necessarily refer to recollection, but rather to the learner's own initiative: Cobb (1973) pp.626-7. Allen (1959) p.166 and Cornford (1971) p.60 argue against this, but implausibly. *Theaetetus* 196-9 also compared the process of learning to capturing birds and putting them in a (previously empty) aviary - this is not compatible with recollection: Crombie (1962) p.146. On "cage" metaphors - Courcelle (1965a).

²¹ Mohr (1984) p.34 discusses what replaces recollection in the *Republic*, and manages to fit recollection to the doctrine of the divided line (p.39).

²² As Scott (1987) p.365 points out, "...recollection emerged from a myth in the *Meno* and disappeared into one in the *Phaedrus*."

²³ Morgan (1984) p.250; *id.* p.248 and Allen (1959) p.170 do, however, agree on the Kantian (transcendental, *a priori* structures) nature of Socrates' discourse! Scott (1987) p.349 argues an anti-Kantian thesis. For a complete (perhaps too complete?) account of recollection see C.E.Huber (1964) *Anamnesis bei Plato* Pullacher Philosophische Forschungen IV: Max Hueber, Munchen.

Thus, the connection of recollection and reincarnation is not the obvious one - recollection of past lives (what one might call Pythagorean,²⁴ or empirical, personal recollection)²⁵ - but a unique phenomenon: recollection of the (non-empirical, impersonal) prenatally acquired knowledge (later known as the Forms).²⁶ In Plato's dialogues, anamnesis is limited to this second type of recollection, and there is no intimation of any other kind of recollection, although *Republic* allows for a sort of limited temporal remembrance of the previous *life* when making one's choice for the next life. All memory is then removed by drinking of Lethe (the "amnesic draught"²⁷).

Therefore, the link between the two doctrines is functional: reincarnation and recollection provide the "proof" for the immortality of the soul. The fact that the immortality of the soul is *presupposed* by reincarnation (and thus the argument is circular) does not appear to trouble Socrates/Plato at all, so long as Meno does not realise this *Socratic* paradox.²⁸

²⁴ Empedocles fr.129; D.L.8,4

²⁵ Allen (1959) p.167; Cornford (1971) p.55 - facts, dates, etc.

²⁶ Vlastos (1994) p.101 makes the essential point that the link between reincarnation and Platonic recollection is so tenuous that one could easily believe in one without even considering the relevance of the other, unlike Pythagorean (or Empedoclean) reincarnation where promotion is a result of empirical recollection.

²⁷ Halliwell (1988) (p.21)

²⁸ In fact, immortality is never proved to everyone's complete satisfaction in the dialogues; it always remains "a pious hope, and an ethical postulate, rather than a demonstrable certainty": Shorey (1903) p.40. As Socrates points out, the final proof of immortality can be obtained only after death: *Phaedo* 69d4-6 - εἰ δ' ὀρθῶς προουθυμήθην καὶ τι ἠγνόσαμεν, ἐκεῖσε ἐλθόντες τὸ σαφὲς εἰσόμεθα, ἂν θεὸς ἐθέλῃ, ὀλίγον ὕστερον, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ.

CHAPTER 6: PHAEDO

Reincarnation appears twice in *Phaedo*, but in different contexts. The first instance (70c4-d5) is as a reply to Cebes' question as to whether the soul disappears completely at death (i.e. that the soul is not immortal).¹ Socrates replies,

σκεψόμεθα δὲ αὐτὸ τῆδέ πη, εἴτ' ἄρα ἐν Ἄιδου εἰσὶν αἱ ψυχαὶ τελευτησάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἴτε καὶ οὐ. παλαιὸς μὲν οὖν ἔστι τις λόγος, οὗ μεμνήμεθα, ὡς εἰσὶν ἐνθένδε ἀφικόμεναι ἐκεῖ, καὶ πάλιν γε δεῦρο ἀφικνοῦνται καὶ γίνονται ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων· καὶ εἰ τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, πάλιν γίγνεσθαι ἐκ τῶν ἀποθανόντων τοὺς ζῶντας, ἄλλο τι ἢ εἶεν ἂν αἱ ψυχαὶ ἡμῶν ἐκεῖ; οὐ γὰρ ἂν που πάλιν ἐγίγοντο μὴ οὔσαι, καὶ τοῦτο ἰκανὸν τεκμήριον τοῦ ταῦτ' εἶναι, εἰ τῶ ὄντι φανερόν γίνοιτο, ὅτι οὐδαμῶθεν ἄλλοθεν γίνονται οἱ ζῶντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἔστι τοῦτο, ἄλλου ἂν του δέοι λόγου.

Cebes agrees with this; Socrates then launches into his proof of immortality from this already sound² ground - for Cebes and Simmias are particularly open to "old" evidence, presumably because of their training as Pythagoreans under Philolaus (Pythagoreanism being founded on a series of ancient tenets ascribed to the master, Pythagoras, which must be accepted without question). As Parker notes,

¹For a fuller discussion of the arguments for immortality: Festugiere (1950) pp.90-94; Crombie (1962) pp.302-324; Gottschalk (1971); Guthrie (1957a); Gallop (1975) pp.103ff.; Dorter (1972) pp.210-212. All translations are from Gallop (1975).

²This is ironic, in that Plato/Socrates *assume* that it is proved - there is, therefore, no need to argue about it.

abnormal doctrine is presented, half-playfully, in familiar guise,³ and this use of mystery/mystic terminology and references continues throughout the dialogue.⁴

Socrates proceeds to demonstrate that opposites come from opposites (based on the idea of the processes of coming-to-be).⁵ The opposite of sleeping is being awake; thus the opposite of living is being dead; and because things come from their opposites, therefore the dead come from the living, and in turn, the living come from the dead:⁶ εἰσὶν ἄρα..αἱ ψυχὰι ἡμῶν ἐν Ἄιδου. (71e2)⁷

³ Parker (1983) pp.281-2: "Purification becomes the separation of the soul from the body, and, in place of water, eggs, and the blood of pigs, its agents are self-restraint, justice, courage, and intellectual activity itself."

⁴ Cf. 63c4-7: ὥστε διὰ ταῦτα οὐχ ὁμοίως ἀγανακτῶ, ἀλλ' εὐελπίς εἰμι εἶναι τι τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι, καί, ὥσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται, πολὺ ἄμεινον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς. The debate, of course, is about where the various mystic elements came from. *Phaedo* has been considered the most "Orphic" (or Pythagorean?) of Plato's dialogues. *Vide* Guthrie (1975) pp.339-342; Gallop (1975) p.75; Festugiere (1950) p.124. Cf., for example, the debate of the body as tomb/prison/sign of the soul: *Cratylus* 400c; Bluck (1958a) p.163; Courcelle (1966); Courcelle (1965); Ferwerda (1985); Loraux (1982) p.44: "une stèle commémorative"; Gallop (1975) pp.83ff.; Strachan (1970), esp. on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. Did Plato get the body-prison (φρουρά) idea from a Pythagorean source? A passage in Cicero's *De Senectute* (20) cites the Pythagorean prohibition 'de praesidio et statione vitae decedere'. Compare also *Somnium Scipionis* (3.10 = *De Re Publica* 6.15: 'piis omnibus retinendus est animus in custodia corporis, nec iniussu eius a quo ille est vobis datus ex hominum vita migrandum est' - ambiguous, as Strachan (1970) p.216 has seen); *De Re Publica* 6.14, *De Amicitia* 14, and *Tusc.Disp.* 1.74 also make use of the body-prison (with the more definite 'custodia') idea. Apart from inference, however, one cannot assume that Plato took the idea from Pythagorean thought (or any other - *pace* the continuing "Orphic" question! See Appendix B.). 78a1-9 seems reminiscent of Empedocles fr. 112 and the role of the despised mendicant priests. Certain types of priests are treated with scepticism in *Apology* and *Euthyphro* - Anderson (1971) p.228 - and at *Laws* 908d (where they are ranked with tyrants and sophists); they (especially "Musaeus and his son" and those using the books of Musaeus and Orpheus) are openly criticised by Adeimantus at *Republic* 363c-365a.

⁵ Guthrie (1975) p.341 terms the process "antapodosis".

⁶ The workings of "logical truth" - Williams (1969) pp.218-221

⁷ The soul is thus the essential animating agent. Note that "dead", with reference to the soul, means "no longer animating a body": Crombie (1962) p.307; Gallop (1975) p.89; see Williams (1969) pp.218ff. for the illogical nature of the idea of animation (he prefers embodiment, p.221).

To back this up, Socrates offers the (illogical)⁸ idea (which, in another form, has proved such a problem in reincarnation doctrine):⁹ if there were no reciprocal process to “coming-to-be”, then everything would eventually be dead (72a12-e1; cf. *Republic* 611a). This argument, in fact, implicitly places reincarnation in the realm of accepted doctrine - that is, souls are neither created nor destroyed, but remain fixed in number, yet people are born, and die, and population never increases nor decreases: this is a ‘natural’ explanation for metempsychosis. It is an ‘only solution’ argument, and thus reincarnation becomes concrete doctrine and can be used implicitly, without need to prove its occurrence.

At this point Cebes introduces the theory of anamnesis:

καὶ μὴν, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης ὑπολαβὼν, καὶ κατ’ ἐκείνόν γε τὸν λόγον ὦ Σώκρατες, εἰ ἀληθὴς ἐστίν, ὃν σὺ εἴωθας θαμὰ λέγειν, ὅτι ἡμῖν ἢ μάθησις οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ἀνάμνησις τυγχάνει οὔσα, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον ἀνάγκη που ἡμᾶς ἐν προτέρῳ τινὶ χρόνῳ μεμαθηκέναι ἃ νῦν ἀναμιμνησκόμεθα. τοῦτο δὲ ἀδύνατον, εἰ μὴ ἦν που ἡμῖν ἢ ψυχὴ πρὶν ἐν τῷδε τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ εἶδει γενέσθαι· ὥστε καὶ ταύτη ἀθάνατον ἢ ψυχὴ τι ἔοικεν εἶναι. Ἄλλὰ, ὦ Κέβης, ἔφ’ ὁ Σιμμίας ὑπολαβὼν, ποῖαι τούτων αἰ ἀποδείξεις; ὑπόμνησόν με· οὐ γὰρ σφόδρα ἐν τῷ παρόντι μέμνημαι. (72e4-73a3)

⁸ Guthrie (1975) p.555

⁹ viz., if all souls can escape permanently from the human reincarnation cycle, eventually there is no-one left on earth and the cycle has to finish; the cosmological repercussion of this is that everything becomes homogeneous (as if returning to a World Soul?): Crombie (1962) pp.306-7 points out the weakness of the argument (it is another *reductio ad absurdum*); also Gallop (1975) pp.89-90 on “soul stuff”. The illogicality is that when one asks the question “What were you before you became alive?”, the answer is not “Dead.”, but “A disembodied soul”. Denial of coming-to-be/passing away is an easy way of illustrating that the number of souls must be fixed; and the denial is a traditional argument, appearing in Parmenides and Empedocles.

Cebes goes on to summarise the demonstration from *Meno*. With this passage (and particularly Simmias' question - surely irony on Plato's part, and perhaps Simmias': cf.73b6-9) we are back in the realm of the sophist/pseudo-philosopher.¹⁰ Note also that the argument is not adduced by Socrates as part of his proof, but he certainly seizes upon it as another way of proving the soul's immortality (the third so far?), and a far-fetched and illogical explanation of anamnesis follows,¹¹ based more on "reminding"¹² than "recollecting": first, reminding through sensibles (pictures, lyres, etc..), then the carrying back of the process through sensibles to true recollection of the Forms (74a9ff..)¹³ It is the same system of (noetic)¹⁴ recollection of prenatally viewed Forms from the catalyst supplied by sensibles which features more clearly in *Phaedrus*, with the exception of the unusual idea of recollection from dissimilars (76a2-4).¹⁵

¹⁰ Cobb (1973) pp.618,619

¹¹ For example, Socrates easily persuades Simmias that the opposite of recollection is forgetting: "loss of knowledge" (75d10-11).

¹² Ackrill (1973) p.181 discusses the problems with translating of remind/recollect. Recollection in *Phaedo* serves much the same function as in *Meno*, so I do not propose to discuss it again; the new feature is the Forms, and anamnesis serves its second function (the first was the proof of immortality) as an introduction to this difficult concept. Chen (1990) p.59,n12 discusses the differences in this new theory of anamnesis. Gallop (1975) p.115 adds that in *Phaedo* recollection "is concerned with the understanding of the concepts rather than with the proof of propositions."

¹³ Morgan (1984) p.240. The point is not developed, but it seems that not everyone is able to give an account of the Forms (76b8-c7); no doubt it depends not only on one's ability to recollect, but the extent to which one's body has interfered with the soul.

¹⁴ Dorter (1972) p.209

¹⁵ It is unfortunate that the Form of "Equal" is used in *Phaedo*, as it is very difficult to grasp because equality, unlike beauty (the example used in the *Phaedrus*), is deceptive. Plato never attempts to prove the existence of the Forms, they are always taken for granted as part of accepted thought, even during their criticism in *Parmenides*: cf. Annas (1982a) pp.217ff.; Peters (1967) pp.47ff.

The idea of reincarnation (or rather, incarnation) is always close to this subject, though never made explicit. It is not important for Socrates' argument on the immortality of the soul. For example, Socrates persuades Simmias and Cebes that total knowledge is received before birth (75e5),¹⁶ without any further discussion of the processes involved in this first incarnation.¹⁷

The fifth proof of immortality follows, that which proves the existence after death (pre-existence has been shown) of the soul. This argument is based on the kinship/similarities of properties of the soul and the divine (invisible, unvarying, composite, immortal, natural adaptation for ruling), and follows up the idea of the *Seelenwanderung*.¹⁸ The crux is that, at death, the philosopher's soul, having been purified of bodily taint, goes towards that with which it is more akin (namely the divine), while the other (impure: 81b1ff) souls stay heavy with "ingrained" (81c5), βαρύς and γεώδης (c9) corporeality (83d4-e3) and are kept weighed down in the world of the sensible φόβω τοῦ ἀειδοῦς τε καὶ Ἄιδου (81c11). These souls are seen as ghosts in graveyards (c11-d4):

καὶ οὐ τί γε τὰς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ταύτας εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὰς τῶν φαύλων, αἱ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀναγκάζονται πλανᾶσθαι δίκην τίνουσαι τῆς προτέρας τροφῆς κακῆς οὕσης· καὶ μέχρι γε τούτου πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ ξυνεπακολουθοῦντος τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς ἐπιθυμία ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα. ἐνδοῦνται δέ, ὡσπερ εἰκός, εἰς τοιαῦτα ἦθη ὅποι' ἄτ' ἂν καὶ μεμελετηκυῖαι τύχωσιν ἐν τῷ βίῳ. (81d6-e3)

¹⁶ Simmias makes the point, quickly rejected, that we perhaps gained the knowledge at the moment of birth: 76c14-15. If so, when did the soul "forget" its knowledge?

¹⁷ Gallop (1975) p.111 makes the analogy that while a prison can exist before a man is imprisoned, a body cannot exist before incarnation if the soul is the animating agent.

¹⁸ Ferwerda (1985) p.273; he concentrates on the "orphyic"/shamanic elements of this phenomenon.

This is a unique, and no doubt whimsical, explanation as are the glimpses that follow, of an implicit reincarnation process, viz. the characteristic lives of the tainted souls:¹⁹ gluttons, lechers and drunkards become donkeys (81e5-82a1); tyrants, robbers and the unjust become wolves and birds of prey (82a3-4); temperate and just, but unphilosophical, souls become harmless creatures such as bees, wasps and ants (82a10-b6), ἢ καὶ εἰς ταῦτόν γε πάλιν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος, καὶ γίγνεσθαι ἐξ αὐτῶν ἄνδρας μετρίους (b6-8).²⁰

Juxtaposed to this is the fate of the philosopher (i.e. the fate of Socrates), bound by different rules. The philosopher appears immune to any part of the reincarnation process (except for the initial incarnation). This is because only the philosopher understands the way to complete wisdom (82d9-83c4), and thus happiness, and the philosopher will be the only soul rewarded by being placed among gods (and the best sort of men - 63b5-c4);²¹ as for the rest, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα ἐξιέναι, ὥστε ταχὺ πάλιν πίπτειν εἰς ἄλλο σῶμα καὶ ὥσπερ σπειρομένη ἐμφύεσθαι, καὶ ἐκ τούτων ἄμοιρος εἶναι τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τε καὶ καθαροῦ καὶ μονοειδοῦς συνουσίας (83d10-e3).

¹⁹ Crombie (1962) p.311; Guthrie (1975) p.341, esp.n.3 on the incarnations as “fantasy”.

²⁰ For the only parallel to this, cf. *Timaeus* 91d-92c, in a similarly light-hearted mood. The *Phaedrus*, by comparison, features incarnations in different grades of men (from tyrants to philosophers). *Republic* 620a ff. is closer, with souls choosing animal forms that fit with their character; for example, Orpheus chooses the swan, Ajax the lion. Cf. Crombie (1962) pp.302ff.

²¹ Note the corporeality of this vision: it does not appear to end in *homoiosis*; but, cf. Meijer (1981) p.248.

Moreover, even after death there is no corporeal-type rewards²² for the philosophic soul; if it indulges in pleasures after death, it is incarnated again, and must endure a process akin to the “endless task of a Penelope working in reverse at a kind of web” (84a6; the threads are the corporeal “fetters”: cf. 67d1). The reward is simply being with the divine.²² The punishment is reincarnation.²³

The preparations of the philosopher are phrased in a way overtly reminiscent of mystery religion and the purification therein.²⁴ For example:

καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἄιδου ἀφίκηται, ἐν βορβόρω κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. εἰσὶν γὰρ δὴ, ὡς φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετὰς, ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάρκχοι δὲ τε παῦροι.²⁵ οὗτοι δ' εἰσὶν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς. ὧν δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ κατὰ γε τὸ δυνατόν οὐδὲν ἀπέλιπον ἐν τῷ βίῳ, ἀλλὰ παντὶ τρόπῳ προουθυμήθην γενέσθαι· εἰ δ' ὀρθῶς προουθυμήθην καὶ τι ἡνύσαμεν, ἐκεῖσε ἐλθόντες τὸ σαφὲς εἰσόμεθα, ἂν θεὸς ἐθέλη, ὀλίγον ὑστερον, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ. (69c1-d7)²⁶

The purification that we must undergo is not of the regular sort (limited asceticism, certain taboos, etc.); instead it is a continuous process of keeping the soul uncontaminated by the body, and never giving in to the body's demands (for

²² Socrates likens himself (incorrectly) to swans singing joyfully before departing into the presence of their divine master: 84e3-85b8

²³ Annas (1982b) p.127 points out that the seriousness of this punishment for the soul is disguised by the heavy irony of the animal transformations. She also argues that reincarnation is a serious idea for Plato (“not a crackpot personal belief”: p.127). I would tend to believe this about its use in later dialogues, but see the *Phaedo* as rather experimental in that regard.

²⁴ See: Parker (1983) pp.281-2; de Vries (1973); Hawtrey (1976) for Corybantic elements; Adkins (1970); Stewart (1972); Guthrie (1975) pp.338-9,339n.1.

²⁵ See Appendix B for the interpretation of this adage.

²⁶ This is, of course, reducing the psychic experience to the level of common eschatology.

example, 64c10-e2, on the uselessness of the pleasures of food, drink, sex and material belongings; also, 67c5-d1; 83b6-7).²⁷ It is a separation of body and soul that is, again, strictly corporeal.

Beyond this purification through denial (which in effect is much the same as the abstentions of the Pythagoreans; q.v.), it is the actual pursuits of the soul which are so important that they must be left uninterrupted by the body (66b1-67b5). The soul appears as *voûς* (reason/mind/intellect): 65e2-4; 65e6-66a9.²⁸ Its function is to gain knowledge through intellect (not the distorting senses - they make the soul “dizzy, as if drunk”: 79c7), for it is knowledge (love of wisdom) which is the key to the philosopher’s escape from mortality. Partial knowledge can be gained on earth, despite the body’s efforts, but complete knowledge is only gained after death, in Hades (68b1), so the philosopher thus looks forward to and welcomes death. Morgan makes the point that Plato has for the first time linked psychology and epistemology: philosophy has taken the place of other therapeutic forms of purification,²⁹ with *phronesis* as its vehicle.³⁰ It is a radical denial of the

²⁷ This is the first stage of Plato’s thought on the soul, and a break from traditional thought (although the idea appears in the sectarian movements). See Loraux (1982) p.20. In the later dialogues it is the soul itself which needs to be controlled.

²⁸ Solmsen (1983) p.362 notes that Plato’s innovation was to make Mind (*voûς*) part of soul; on differentiated unity (tripartition) vs. unity, see Claus (1981) for the history of the soul; Guthrie (1957a); Hall (1963); Crombie (1962) pp.341ff.; Gerson (1987) p.93.

²⁹ On philosophy as catharsis: Festugiere (1950) pp.123-156,157,166ff.; Blank (1993) p.434 cites *Sophist* 230b4-e3, where the analogy is made that dialectic is to the soul as the physician is to the body. Dorter (1972) pp.212-214 discusses the idea that recollection is (metaphorically) purification - a doubtful theory, because recollection always occurs in myth, while purification does not (purification is set in the present, recollection in the past). This dialogue features the only linking of the two, which again is suspect. It also seems unlikely - Dorter (1972) p.215 cites Stewart’s (1960) pp.229,305-6 suggestion - that recollection is the (mythic) image of the presence of prenatal knowledge (a “genetic myth”), while purification is the literal version.

body (cf. 114d8-115a3) - to be incarnated is the worst thing that can happen to a soul.³¹

Simmius' and Cebes' final objection to immortality (on the grounds that a harmony [=soul] is unable to exist without its "instrument" [=body]) uses an "image" (87b4) which transforms metempsychosis into metamorphosis of a sort. A weaver (the soul) weaves a new cloak (body) for himself whenever his old cloak wears out, but he will, nevertheless, eventually die of old age (87b5-88b8). The implication is that there is neither pre-existence nor post-existence, nor true incarnation.³² Needless to say, the argument fails.³³

³⁰ Morgan (1990) pp.55,63,64. How much of this is an attempt to soothe his friends? For example, ἡ που χαλεπῶς ἂν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους πείσαιμι, ὡς οὐ συμφορὰν ἡγοῦμαι τὴν παροῦσαν τύχην.. (84d9-e1). Certainly, the eschatological myth at the end of *Phaedo* can be compared with the myth in *Gorgias* - an optimistic statement that justice will win out for Socrates: Annas (1982b) p.139. Every aspect of the dialogue is aimed at justifying Socrates' confidence that he welcomes death - Crombie (1962) p.303.

³¹ "The incarnate soul is *eo facto* impure": Chen (1990) p.69. Also, Guthrie (1975) p.338; Gallop (1975) p.88. Note the extensive discussion on the (paradoxical) prohibition against suicide (61b9ff.); cf. Courcelle (1965); Taran (1966); Currie (1958) p.125; Gallop (1975) pp.83ff.; especially Strachan (1970) - the prohibition has been seen as Pythagorean (a fragment of Clearchus ascribes both the body-prison idea and a suicide prohibition to Euxitheus, an unknown Pythagorean); there is also a strong "Orphic" tradition through Xenocrates and Olympiodorus. See: P.Boyancé "Xenocrate et les Orphiques" *REA* 1948 219ff., and Appendix B. On the body/soul dichotomy: Parker (1983) pp.281-2; Crombie (1962) pp.303ff.; Gallop (1974) p.94: it parallels the sensibles/Forms relationship.

³² Is this a hint of eternal recurrence? That is, does the weaver weave the same cloak again and again, so that, "unallegorised", the soul goes into the same body again and again? This seems unlikely. Eternal recurrence is an idea which is never made explicit in Plato, although there are hints in the *Politicus* myth through the idea of the cyclic recurrence of historical events (especially disasters such as floods etc.), caused by the reversal of the cosmic revolutions; Guthrie (1978) (p.193-196). See Appendix E on eternal recurrence.

³³ On the grounds that composite things are mortal, while it has been shown that the soul is immortal. This picture actually makes sense of the paradox that the soul controls the body, yet the body has the power to disrupt the soul entirely. The idea at 95d1ff. that the entry of the soul into the body was the beginning of its perishing (through "disease") also has some plausibility, though again, it denies immortality; see: Crombie (1962) p.304.

Immortality of the soul is finally conceded by all parties at 106e8-107b10. Socrates then illustrates the consequences of the soul's being immortal, in terms of a myth of judgement (107d3 ff.) in which reincarnation has been seen (by Annas)³⁴ to blur the overall moral message of the myth and its relevance to Socrates' approaching death (at 118):

εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἦν ὁ θάνατος τοῦ παντὸς ἀπαλλαγὴ, ἔρμαιον ἂν ἦν τοῖς κακοῖς ἀποθανοῦσι τοῦ τε σώματος ἄμ' ἀπηλλάχθαι καὶ τῆς αὐτῶν κακίας μετὰ τῆς ψυχῆς· νῦν δ' ἐπειδὴ ἀθάνατος φαίνεται οὐσα, οὐδεμία ἂν εἴη αὐτῇ ἄλλη ἀποφυγὴ κακῶν οὐδὲ σωτηρία πλὴν τοῦ ὡς βελτίστην τε καὶ φρονιμωτάτην γενέσθαι. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἔχουσα εἰς Ἄιδου ἢ ψυχὴ ἔρχεται πλὴν τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφῆς, ἃ δὴ καὶ μέγιστα λέγεται ὠφελεῖν ἢ βλάπτειν τὸν τελευτήσαντα εὐθύς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἐκεῖσε πορείας. (107c6-d6)

Briefly, the myth runs as follows: on death the soul is taken by its allotted *daimon*³⁵ to the judgement place from where it journeys to different areas of Hades (depending on its purity), accompanied by a psychopompic figure. The judgement place appears to be in this world, because it is the psychopompos' job to take the soul between worlds (after the judgement), but 113d1-3 shows this is not so (see below). The journey is complex, and the more impure souls tend to go slowly and get lost as they try to find another body (cf. 81c11ff.), until they are eventually forced by the *daimon* to the judgement place. They also take a long time to reach their place of punishment because no one is willing to accompany them and show the way. The long journeys (they are eventually taken to the

³⁴ Annas (1982b) p.129

³⁵ Cf. *Republic* 620e1

correct place) are part of their punishment. In Hades they experience “the things they must” (107e2-3), and are then “during many long cycles of time” transported by another guide back to this world.

“Hades”, we find, is a generic name for an area of the world that we cannot see (not necessarily underground). For the world is not as it appears: what we call earth is really one of many hollows in a greater earth set in the centre of the heavens (not “Heaven”: see 111a3ff), surrounded by aether, and true earth (perfect and unspoiled, unlike our world)³⁶ is what we would see if we poked our heads above our hollow.³⁷ A long description of the true nature of the earth follows (110b5-111c2),³⁸ the point being that the true earth is an Elysium (or an Isles of the Blessed),³⁹ a dazzling (gold and minerals) earthly heaven,⁴⁰ where another race of men (and animals - 111a4-5) dwell in the earthly manner,⁴¹ but alongside the gods (..καὶ φήμας τε καὶ μαντείας καὶ αἰσθήσεις τῶν θεῶν καὶ τοιαύτας συνουσίας γίγνεσθαι αὐτοῖς πρὸς αὐτούς: 111b8-c1).

As well as this Elysium, the earth is riddled with deeper hollows (representing different regions), all interconnected, where streams of water, mud, lava and fire flow around, pulsed by movement of the earth.⁴² The major

³⁶ Allegorical of the soul?

³⁷ Clay (1985) pp.234-235 notes the parallels in *Phaedrus* and *Republic* of an allegorical nature: for example, the Cave.

³⁸ Morgan (1990) p.76 discusses the Pythagorean, Philolaus, and Ionian, influences on the idea.

³⁹ There are indeed islands in this world - 111a6 - surrounded by *aether*.

⁴⁰ The very oxymoron shows that this is a myth aimed at the corporeally bound.

⁴¹ These men live for much longer than us, and surpass us in all the senses and wisdom.

⁴² On “l'idrologia sotterranea” see Funghi (1980) pp.191ff.

confluence of all the streams is at “Tartarus”, into which all the streams pulse and then surge out continuously and cyclically. The four major streams are Oceanus, Acheron (flowing to the Acherusian Lake), Pyriphlegethon (flowing to the Styx), and Cocytus. It is an interesting use of traditional underworld features in a new setting.

It seems, from this story, that all the souls (pure also) are judged at the region (presumably the aforementioned underground regions) where their *daimon* takes them, and are divided according to their deeds; pure souls are freed,⁴³ and sent to live on the true earth, and those who are also philosophers εἰς οἰκήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους ἀφικνοῦνται (114c3-4), and live ἄνευ σωμάτων. This creates something of a problem, as it would seem that philosophers achieve a rank *higher* than gods. Those considered incurably evil are flung into Tartarus for eternity. Those who lived “indifferently” journey to Acheron, and then sail on boats to the Acherusian Lake where they live (for an unspecified time) and are appropriately rewarded or punished. From this point τινὰς εἰμαρμένους χρόνους μείνασαι, αἱ μὲν μακροτέρους, αἱ δὲ βραχυτέρους, πάλιν ἐκπέμπονται εἰς τὰς τῶν ζώων γενέσεις. (113a3-5) Finally, the souls who have committed grave offences, but are deemed curable, undergo a rather unusual form of penance: first they spend a year in Tartarus with the incurable (this is presumably as a deterrent for future sins); then, they are thrown out by the surging streams, and by different

⁴³ ὥσπερ δεσμωτηρίων (114b9): note the recurrence of the motif of freeing from incarceration, and its obvious allegorical connotations; cf. the moment at 60b1-c7 when Socrates is freed from his chains.

rivers (depending on their type of crime) they pass by the Acherusian Lake (where the multitude of souls wait - 113a2-3) where they have to beg forgiveness from those whom they injured.⁴⁴ If they are forgiven, they pass into the Lake (and thus, eventually, to their next incarnation); if not they return to Tartarus and the cycle begins anew until they are forgiven.

ἀλλὰ τούτων δὴ ἔνεκα χρῆ ὧν διεληλύθαμεν, ὦ Σιμμία, πᾶν ποιεῖν, ὥστε ἀπετιῆς καὶ φρονήσεως ἐν τῷ βίῳ μετασχεῖν· καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη. (114c5-8)

The mention of reincarnation is so brief (107e3-4) that one could almost miss it, and consider this myth an Homeric story of Hades and Elysium with some philosophical embroidery. And indeed it seems somewhat anomalous that reincarnation does not have a higher profile. Moreover, the myth introduces features considerably different ~~to~~ those at 81b ff.: from /

(1) there appears to be a different, more traditional view of the soul's crimes. This could be explained as arising from the switch to myth (that is, the true details have been "allegoricised"). The shift is from the earlier impersonal picture of the philosopher (*intellectual* purity) to a judgement based on *moral* purity (οἳ τε καλῶς καὶ ὀσίως βιώσαντες.: 113d3-4). Only after this moral judgement is intellectual purity taken into account. Purification through philosophy appears to

⁴⁴ One is reminded of the policy in South Australia of bringing young offenders together with their victims (after road accidents, etc..) to see the consequences of their actions.

be of secondary consideration (although important, it obviously does not relate to all the souls) to moral purity (114c1-5).⁴⁵

(2) As part of this traditionalism, the final myth places more emphasis on the “other” souls (ordinary people) than on the select intellectual minority (whose destiny is inexplicable: 114c4-5). In this respect, the *Phaedo* myth, under all the geophysical trappings, gives a typical eschatology, in a similar vein to that in *Gorgias*.⁴⁶

(3) There is extensive retention of individuality, necessary in a moral system, otherwise there is no deterrent or learning value in reward/punishment (the souls who beg forgiveness illustrate this retention of individual memory).⁴⁷ However, *eternal* individuality would seem to go against the concept of purification, because personality is a reflection of the effect of the body on the soul;⁴⁸ the philosopher denies all elements of corporeality, and one would presume that individuality is part of this.⁴⁹ Individuality is essentially a corporeal judgement in any case.⁵⁰ It

⁴⁵The same situation is encountered in myth at *Republic* 615a ff., tempered by the fact that moral purity does not guarantee that we make the best choice - thus knowledge is important after all (619c). Of course, in the dialogues we do not see such a great distinction between the two types of purification (moral and philosophical), and virtue can be equated with knowledge, to the extent that moral error *is* intellectual error. I am grateful to David Hester for clarifying this for me, but I still wonder whether Plato is adapting his material for better accessibility to his audience. On virtue and knowledge: Prior (1991).

⁴⁶See point (7) below for a further discussion of the myths “ordinariness”.

⁴⁷Gallop (1975) pp.223-224

⁴⁸In *Republic* it affects the choice the soul makes of its next life, often for the worst.

⁴⁹I would not deny the importance and the *necessity* for individuality: it is morally *pointless* to have a system where the soul does not retain memory (or have the ability to recall past lives) and its personal characteristics which have enabled it to reach its present position in the cycle of reincarnation. Terminology is problematic: it is necessary to distinguish between individuality (identity) and character (personality). That is, it is one’s specific character traits which cause the

seems almost like a tarnish on the soul, akin to the effects of materiality, which do a lot to shape individual character.

Reincarnation, by its very nature, is “anti-personalist”, and it appears as such particularly in this dialogue: the identity of the body does not matter to the system.⁵¹ Crombie tenders the analogy that nothing is lost when one melts down a bronze statue, because the metal can be used again (!).⁵²

Given the rise of awareness in the individual in the fifth century, I rather doubt whether a system of belief that advocated separation from character, personality and individuality, would have been popular. The Eleusinian Mysteries, for example, provided for a happy after-life seen in corporeal terms (like the Homeric/Virgilian⁵³ Elysium), full of departed shades continuing earthly pursuits (eating, drinking, gaming etc..). This concept of immortality is closer to that in Diotima’s tale in the *Symposium* - temporal immortality achieved through what one leaves behind.⁵⁴ There seems to have been little concept of Plato’s type of

same errors in the next life. Certainly the introduction of the tripartite soul in *Republic* and *Phaedo* solves this problem better.

⁵⁰ Cf. Morgan (1990) p.68; Crombie (1962) p.324 on the relation of “self” and soul. He concludes that - as in *Republic* - personal identity is quasi-causal.

⁵¹ Crombie (1962) p.324

⁵² Crombie (1962) p.324; also Williams (1969) p.219 on the same analogy with a key. I am more inclined to view the soul as a computer floppy disk which can be placed in any computer (ignoring the problem of compatibility!) and used to “animate” the computer from the command line. Another suitable analogy, suggested by my supervisor Dr. A. Geddes, is to a record, which can not only be played on any machine, but is also prone to “tarnishing”.

⁵³ On Virgil *Aeneid 6*: Solmsen (1982d); Solmsen (1982e); Dieterich (1913) pp.154ff.

⁵⁴ *Symposium*, despite being chronologically placed between *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, displays none of their characteristic features (anamnesis, reincarnation, complex eschatology, etc..). Rather, it offers a new interpretation of immortality, based on the embodied soul (rather than the discarnate, as in the other dialogues): it tenders immortality of one sort for the philosopher, and

incorporeal immortality (the invisible passing to the invisible to which it is akin)⁵⁵ as a general belief in contemporary Athens.⁵⁶

The dichotomy between the myth and the preceding arguments seems emphasised by the fact that nothing in the previous discussions of immortality had made the discarnate soul capable of such corporeal-type acts as penance in a disembodied state.⁵⁷ At 114c3-4 it is stated that philosophical souls will live *ἀνευ σωμαίων* for eternity, implying that, prior to their departure, the souls are not “bodiless”: this seems to point to a very traditional eschatology: viz, (Homeric) shades, and etc.. Similarly, the earthly heaven of 110b5-111c2 has obvious appeal to the materially-bound.

(4) one ground of similarity with 81d ff. is the view that the myth culminates in “an apology for philosophy by sketching its ultimate rewards”.⁵⁸ The important point is that it is a discussion of rewards in terms that ordinary people understand. I do not know - and cannot know - whether Socrates/Plato viewed the world,

of another sort for the rest of humanity. The philosopher receives (the usual) eternal immortality in exchange for virtue - i.e. his soul will go to the gods to dwell. The rest of embodied humanity can achieve personal immortality of a limited kind. This vicarious immortality comes from the legacies one leaves behind to continue one's personality/individuality - primarily fame and offspring. This immortality seems opposed to Plato's use of the soul as the immortal carrier of personality, through reincarnation, into new bodies. It makes more sense if the soul, when it leaves the body, is destroyed, so that the only kind of immortality available at all is temporal. See: Guthrie (1975) p.375; Bels (1985) pp.115,123; Hackforth (1950) pp.43,45; Luce (1952) pp.138-139; O'Brien (1984) pp.185-201; Dyson (1986) pp.60-72. See Krell (1988) p.170 for the idea of advancing up a ladder of love: love of body → love of soul → love of laws/constitution → episteme → vision of beauty itself (211a7).

⁵⁵ Friedländer (1969) p.183

⁵⁶ Stewart (1960) pp.87ff.

⁵⁷ Gallop (1975) p.224

⁵⁸ Morgan (1990) p.71

underworld, or heavens in this manner;⁵⁹ but it is a coherent picture (removed one degree back from reality) of the results of philosophy in human terms (reward and punishment). Thus, it has the usual moral application of this sort of myth - to direct people to the correct course by frightening them away from immorality (and amorality).⁶⁰ Myth is thus the logical way of explaining the no doubt unintelligible ideas associated with the teachings of philosophy.⁶¹

τὸ μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν, ὡς ἐγὼ διελέλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ· ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκίσεις, ἐπεὶπερ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὔσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρέπειν μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεῦσαι οἰομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν· καλὸς γάρ ὁ κίνδυνος· καὶ χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ, διὸ δὴ ἔγωγε καὶ πάλαι μηκύνω τὸν μῦθον. (114d1-8)⁶²

As Gallop comments, if one were to repeat the myth over and over like a spell, one could only look to the future with pessimism,⁶³ considering that the only souls who get out scot-free are the philosophers - the despised minority.

⁵⁹ But, see Funghi (1980) p.176. Annas (1982b) p.126 suggests that Plato introduces the cosmology in a specific attempt to move away from the religious traditions of heaven and hell; and that, far from being a poetic fancy, it is an attempt to make them part of our actual world. Aristotle (*Meteorologica* II, 335b33-336a33) thought the geography and hydraulics as impossible nonsense - "a failed geography lesson"!; Annas (1982b) pp.119-120.

⁶⁰ Morgan (1990) p.72

⁶¹ 64b2-6 illustrates the unpopularity (or more particularly the lack of understanding) of philosophy: οἶμαι γὰρ ἂν δὴ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦτο ἀκούσαντας δοκεῖν εὖ πάνυ εἰρησθαι εἰς τοὺς φιλοσοφούντας καὶ ξυμφάναι ἂν τοὺς μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν ἀνθρώπους καὶ πάνυ, ὅτι τῷ ὄντι οἱ φιλοσοφούντες θανατῶσι καὶ σφᾶς γε οὐ λελήθασιν, ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν τοῦτο πάσχειν. The comic poets also provide considerable bad press about the dangerous (but mainly ridiculous) eccentricities of the philosophers: see DK I,478-480 for references to the Pythagoreans in comedy; also, of course, Aristophanes *Clouds*.

⁶² Cf. 100a ff. on the tools of which the philosopher makes use. Also, 78a1-9 on spells; and the attack on "writings, charms, incantations" at *Gorgias* 484a4-5.

⁶³ Gallop (1975) p.224

Part of the problem is the inability to expound upon complex and contraversial ideas without (as Socrates found) being seen as seditious.⁶⁴ This appears to be why the pure vision of philosophy is amalgamated with common eschatology, resulting in a simple system whereby reward/punishment is the motivation for virtue: the myth serves as a multi-faceted learning tool.⁶⁵ One aspect of it is the interesting idea that dialectic serves the philosophers while myth is for everyone else, rather than myth being “a fabulous attempt to push thinking where reason should not tread”;⁶⁶ for both logos and mythos appear to reach - despite the extensive panopy of the myth - the same conclusion.⁶⁷

(5) Part of the judgement is the meting out of punishment, and the nature of the punishments given appear to go against the “deterrent” view of the myth: they are primarily retributive and *vindictive*, rather than remedial.⁶⁸ Gallop sees the punishments as typically purgatorial, based on the presupposition of rebirth (that is, the deterrent value).⁶⁹ However, I would argue that the learning value (to

⁶⁴ Morgan (1990) p.58, for example, would see the *Phaedo* as “blatantly revolutionary, a nearly seditious document”, challenging the Delphic theology and the “polis tradition”, and, moreover, anti-Athenian.

⁶⁵ This has left an unpleasant taste in the mouths of many commentators. For example, consider Annas’ reaction to the myth in *Republic*: “The Myth of Er is a painful shock; its vulgarity seems to pull us right down to the level of Cephalus..It is not only that the childishness of the myth jars; if we take it seriously, it seems to offer us an entirely consequentialist reason for being just..”: Annas (1982a) p.349; cf. Halliwell (1988) p.18. However, 107c6-8 correlates with this; see Morgan (1990) p.72.

⁶⁶ Morgan (1990) p.570; cf. Friedländer (1969) p.183

⁶⁷ That is, dialectic serves the philosopher, and myth serves the ordinary people - therefore, the obvious technique is to use myth to communicate dialectic.

⁶⁸ Crombie (1962) p.324. Gallop (1975) p.223 disagrees, emphasising their typical purgatorial nature. The punishments are certainly not as vindictive as those in the myth at *Laws* 870d-e, where, in his next life, a murderer is killed by the same method which he himself used on his victim.

⁶⁹ Gallop (1975) p.223

other souls) of the punishment is played down, and its purificatory function emphasised.⁷⁰

(6) The problem, mentioned above, that the philosopher gains a destiny higher than the gods (to live bodiless for eternity), from which position he is never ousted, can only be explained by reference to a higher world than the Olympian. The idea presumably looks forward to the cosmic system of the *Phaedrus* myth, where the world of the Forms is above that of the gods. It is obviously the same sort of place as that to which the soul aspired while still incarnate (79d1-7).⁷¹ Is this, therefore, the place where the souls were *before* the first incarnation? This is logical if it is a place of complete disembodiment. This in turn implies a fall of some sort: perhaps we should suggest a pre-incarnate situation similar to that in the *Phaedrus* myth?

(7) There is an obvious inconsistency in the treatment of the wicked/corporeal souls. At 81d9-e3 the soul, which is weighed down by its bodily/earthy links, wanders around graveyards and is eventually imprisoned again in a body with a character similar to its previous character; 108a7-b3 continues this thread in the myth. However, in the myth there is no mention of the next life (107e3-4) being dependent upon one's previous character, because the souls do not pass out of the punishment cycle until they have paid their penalty (are completely purified?). Presumably, a second punishment (incarnation in an animal, for example) is not

⁷⁰ See point (7) below.

⁷¹ Gallop (1975) p.95

required.⁷² However, if that is so, where is the necessity for reincarnation? Surely all reason has been lost (apart from that of Necessity - who is not mentioned in this dialogue in her *Meno* role)? The brief mention of reincarnation seems, rather, to weaken the point of the myth made at 114c5-8 (quoted above). The very urgent appeal in this passage seems to deny that another life is possible, because it stresses the importance, above all things, of the goodness and wisdom which bring the ultimate prize. 114d8-115a3 is in a similar vein.

Annas has commented on this *volte-face*, and believes that the problem is that reincarnation and judgment-style eschatology are essentially incompatible. We *expect* that reincarnation will occur as the reward/punishment after death, but instead punishment occurs *in Hades* after the judgement. To this I would add the further incompatibility of the idea of reincarnation following *purification* as a further punishment. Throughout the *Phaedo*, the worst thing that can befall the soul is to be associated with the body; yet, in the final myth, when incarnation would be the most extreme punishment (particularly if it were into a “bad” life), the idea is not followed through, and reincarnation (the innovative idea) becomes extraneous and obsolete in the face of older traditional punishments. This irreconciliation causes the problem of 114c2-6 - the two sorts of afterlife (corporeal and incorporeal). It is a problem only resolved in the *Phaedrus* (q.v.), where the afterlife is strictly incorporeal, and *only* the philosopher escapes

⁷² Thus reinforcing the view that the transformations at 81e5 ff. are *jeux*.

unscathed. As Annas points out,⁷³ in light of the emphasis on the soul's shedding its materiality, a corporeal paradise is in itself a *bad end* for the soul; yet the "bodiless" paradise does not really have a place in the cosmology.⁷⁴ This can only blur the moral message of the dialogue. For example, the under-developed idea of reincarnation is not able to reinforce the moral consequences of injustice/evil that would be reinforced in a doctrine which included the ability to learn from one's past errors (another idea at odds with the paradox of striving to rid oneself of "self").

Central to this myth is the message that it is *now*, in *this* life, that one must look to one's afterlife (114c5-8; 114d8-115a3), and this, again, is incompatible with reincarnation, except (as Annas makes clear) for the idea of using fear as a tool against injustice/immorality. And the scare value of post-mortem mythology will function regardless of reincarnation: reincarnation simply makes the myth more frightening because of its sheer repellent eccentricity - for example, the idea of becoming a horrible animal.⁷⁵ It is only Socrates' concise summary of his "beliefs" (114c5-8; 114d8-115a3), followed by his death - after upholding all of the principles by which he lived - that save from obscurity the formerly strong message that justice must win out (eventually).

⁷³ I have made the same point, above.

⁷⁴ Annas (1982b) p.128

⁷⁵ Annas (1982b) p.129

(8) Finally, few precise details are supplied on the practicalities of reincarnation, and the general obscurity of the position of reincarnation makes these details difficult to fix. For example, the length of the cycle (in and out of the body) is indeterminable (έν πολλαῖς χρόνου καὶ μακρᾶς περιόδοις: 107e4), as is the number of incarnations required. There is no hint of cosmic time scales (as in *Politicus*) or of maximum/minimum numbers of incarnations before release (as in *Phaedrus*).⁷⁶

I would assume - from the emphasis that it has received in the dialogue - that the aim of the cycles is for all souls to be purified: therefore, the cycle should end when all of the souls are purified to a level where they can pass to the "Elysium" or (if philosophers) to the place beyond there.⁷⁷ The waiting-place between incarnations is the Acherusian area from where souls who have been punished/rewarded and purified are taken back to the world of the living (113a3-5). There appears to be no concept of demotion after one's final placement in Elysium; the idea would be completely out of keeping with the tenor of the myth. However, it seems that those who dwell in Elysium continue to practise self-restraint (111b2-3).

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⁷⁶ Rankin (1964) p.122 is wrong to see philosophers escaping after three incarnations - this is the system of the *Phaedrus*, and it is dangerous to form a conglomerate doctrine.

⁷⁷ Crombie (1962) p.311

I would conclude that reincarnation does not emerge as a strong, practicable doctrine but rather as the connecting link throughout the dialogue between immortality, the Forms, anamnesis and the afterlife eschatology. It seems the ultimate irony that Socrates tells Simmias and Cebes that he is no “teller of tales” (61b5).⁷⁸

⁷⁸ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός..

CHAPTER 7: REPUBLIC

The clearest presentation of a well-formulated (mythic) system of reincarnation, in nearly all aspects of the process, is presented in the Myth of Er which concludes *Republic X*. Despite an unusual cosmological setting, upon which is imposed an even odder discussion of musical harmony, it appears to be quite a logical system, partly, one imagines, because of the *materiality* of the vision and the *corporeality* of the souls. The latter retain close links with their former bodies in personality and character; moreover, these supposedly immaterial souls display an almost pathetic human fallibility, which makes their journey to a new life so similar to earthly progress.

The myth makes clear a number of important points: the cycle is a continuous one, and there seems no possibility of complete escape (as in *Phaedo*). The soul follows an unceasing circuit of life → “death” → journey to judgement place → judgement → journey to place of reward/punishment → return journey to meadow → journey to spindle of Necessity to choose next life → ratification of new life → journey to Lethe for drinking of forgetfulness → incarnation into new life, and so on. It is almost an automatic cycle of events, so smoothly is it carried through. However, there is nothing automatic about the unique feature of the soul choosing its next life.¹

¹ But, cf. *Phaedrus* (q.v.).

The details of the reincarnation process are as follows; I will discuss the various sections of the myth point by point:

1. The myth is introduced as “the story of a brave man”.² It follows two significant arguments: first, a proof of the soul’s immortality (608c-611a) based on the premise that everything is destroyed by its own natural, inherent evil (as, for example, iron by rust). The evil peculiar to the soul is vice, but it obviously does not kill the soul, because there are many wicked people walking around who ought to be dead; therefore the soul is immortal (moreover, the number of souls will always remain the same: 611a4-8).³

Second, there is a discussion of the earthly rewards for the unjust and just, concentrating on why the unjust can be seen to reap many benefits on earth, while the just do not appear to receive their due. The point is made that both groups eventually receive what is owing to them in this life, because the just are dear to the gods, and the unjust hated. Moreover - a very important point in the discussion - it is agreed that it is worthwhile to be just for its own sake.⁴ 613d-e gives the earthly rewards/punishments which finally come to both groups in their old age. Socrates continues that these rewards/punishments are nothing compared

² All translations in this chapter are taken from Halliwell (1988).

³ Cf. Kenny (1969) pp.249-50: justice is the health of the soul.

⁴ Cf. the story of the Ring of Gyges, and the idea that all humans desire to do injustice with impunity: 612b2-5. On the Ring of Gyges analogy: Zaslavsky (1981) pp.166-167.

with what the souls receive *after* death (614a5 ff.). To illustrate this, the Myth of Er is told.

Another prominent thread in the discussion is the benefit of wisdom. It is the soul's natural desire to seek wisdom, and to keep company with the divine to which it is akin (611e1ff.) through philosophy. At 589e, for example, Socrates "proves" that the life of a philosopher is 729 times more pleasant than that of a tyrant.⁵ The beneficial effect of philosophy is compared to raising an encrusted statue of the sea god Glaucus from the sea and removing all the barnacles and *earthly incrustations* etc. which have hidden its true form. It is one of the most successful analogies in the *Republic*.⁶ The earthly soul has these same incrustations ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἐστιάσεων (612a2-3), and must be purified through its pursuit of wisdom. It is this barnacled soul which enters into the cycle of reincarnation in the myth.⁷

Symbolic references to all of the above points can be found in the Myth of Er, reinforcing the myth's connection with the rest of the dialogue:

⁵ Kenny (1969) p.237. The activities of the philosopher are described at 496d-497a. Is there a certain amount of pleasure being scored by the philosopher in making the best life like his own? It certainly shows a well-developed self-interest (which would no doubt be denied). In many ways Socrates/Plato has not advanced beyond Empedocles: he, too, saw his own type of life as the best, just under that of the gods to whom he would soon progress. Is an element of vindictiveness present against those who knock philosophy?

⁶ Clay (1985) pp.235-236. It is obviously similar to the idea of *Phaedo* (q.v.), where souls must purify themselves of their earthly accretions, or tarnishing; Shiner (1972) p.27.

⁷ Halliwell (1988) p.23.

2. 614b1-8:⁸

This passage contains one of the clearest parallels with shamanism to survive in Greek literature.⁹ Pamphylia is a region in southern Asia Minor, and the shamanic tradition appears mainly in the north (Thrace) and in the central Asian area (close to the Black Sea),¹⁰ so it may be that Er's regionality is significant. The story is a variation on the traditional katabatic journey, except that this time it is undertaken not by a "living" person with body and soul (Orpheus, Odysseus, Theseus, Peirithoos, Heracles, Aeneas etc.) but only by the soul.¹¹ There is, in the underworld, no meeting with the bodily shades of *people* as in the above journeys, but instead a meeting with their souls:

This poses a few questions; for example, how is a soul identified as (for example), Orpheus or Odysseus (620a4; 620c4)? Nowhere more than in this myth is the problem of the limited incorporeal vocabulary so marked, to the extent that we think of the souls as shades, or even (as in the Christian Heaven/Hell?) as "people". One might presume, following the lead given at *Gorgias* 524e5-525a4

⁸ Er, a Pamphylian, died, but his body remained free of decay for twelve days, at which time he woke up on his funeral pyre and told the tale of his soul's journey. Note: these are not quotations, but summaries of the most important details of each section.

⁹ I have discussed shamanism in Appendix D. Cf. Morgan (1990) p.25; Ferwerda (1985) pp.271-2; Halliwell (1988) p.172. For another parallel, see the story of Epimenides of Crete (D.L. 1.114ff.) who slept in the cave of Zeus for decades, during which time he was regarded as dead; he lived for 150 years; fasted for long periods; and was considered to have been reborn many times. This is no doubt part of an initiatory tradition. For the details see Burkert (1972) pp.150-152. Also the stories of Aristeas (*id.* pp.148-150), Hermodotimus, Phormio and Leonymus (pp.152-153). Cf. also the healing sleep and visions of the cult of Asclepius.

¹⁰ Burkert (1972) p.162

¹¹ On the *katabasis*: R.H.Terpening (1985) *Charon and the crossing* Bucknell U.P., Lewisburg (pp.25-62); Wagenvoort (1971) pp.113-161; Robertson (1980) pp.274-300; R.J.Clark (1979) *Catabasis: Vergil and the wisdom tradition* B.R.Gruner, Amsterdam.

that the souls bear distinguishing marks of some sort?¹² I think that the very corporeality of the vision is intended to reinforce the argument of the preceding conversation: that is, to reinforce the *personal* nature of the cycle through the rewards/punishments and the choice to come, based as it is on each soul's very individual nature. It also serves to blur the division between life and death. Certainly, "living" *per se* does not seem to be a priority in the system; this is the one part of the cycle which cannot be directly controlled. Moreover, at 618b2-4 the individual character that each soul has is stressed. It is this which is the "factor X" in how the chosen life will be led (cf. points 5. and 7., below).¹³

3. 614b8-616b1.¹⁴

¹² For example, tyrants' souls have whip marks and scars from false oaths.

¹³ Halliwell (1988) pp.172ff. sees the corporeality of the vision as a problem in terms of determining the myth's symbolism, and tentatively accepts the idea that we *are* to imagine the souls as having versions of their former bodies, especially in the light of the concept of the souls' camping etc. Souls ought to be invisible: cf. the "ghosts" of *Phaedo* 81c-d. He concludes, however, that the language problem is "unavoidable" when discussing "other levels of being" (p.173). It is interesting to note that in the main body of the dialogue the soul is tripartite - or a differentiated unity: Hall (1963) p.69 - but in the myth it appears in its traditional bodily unity.

¹⁴ Er's soul had gone with a crowd of other souls to a place where there were two chasms in the earth, and another two in the sky, between which a judgement was held. The just received a tablet attached to their front, and were sent up through the right-hand opening in the sky; the unjust received their tablet on their backs, and were told to take the left-hand passage down into the earth. Er was told that he was to be a messenger back to our world, and so had to watch everything. He saw souls returning from the other chasms and they set up camp in a nearby meadow and talked about their experiences.

The souls from heaven were pure, and told of happy experiences and visions of beauty; the other souls were dusty and thirsty, and wept about the sufferings they had undergone, and had witnessed, in the 1000 year journey. They told Er that for every injustice the penalty was ten times the crime, paid tenfold (i.e. ten human lives @ 100 years/life). A similar system was in practice for just souls, with ten-fold rewards given. The penalties were greater for impiety to the gods, or parents, and for murder. The thoroughly depraved (mainly tyrants) received eternal punishment in the lower chasm, and the mouth of the chasm refused to let them exit (it bellowed at them). Ardiaeus, the tyrant, was being flayed and having his flesh torn off as the souls passed on their way to the exit. The eternal sinners made the souls fear that they, too, would be refused exit, so they emerged with great relief.

The judgement place is at some sort of heavenly cross-roads,¹⁵ a midway point between the four openings, presumably suspended in space. The exact location cannot be guessed, but it appears to be somewhere on the earth, rather than underground. Nearby is a meadow, perhaps between the two earthly openings. The judges remain unnamed (in *Gorgias* they are the traditional Rhadamanthys, Minos and Aeacus who divided the judging between them).¹⁶ The symbolism of evil/left and good/right (of the openings) is a long-established motif. It is perhaps unusual that, despite the number of journeys which the soul undertakes in the intercarate period, the details are not made more specific. There are none of the pseudo-*Guides Bleus* descriptions that one finds in *Phaedo*. Moreover, the judgement is played down, as are the punishments/rewards.¹⁷

All of these elements are subordinated to the final choice that the souls must make, because, as I will discuss further, below, it is the purpose of the myth to emphasise the *consequences* of this choice, and thus, by analogy, how one lives one's life on earth. The order of the myth is almost a reversal of what one might expect: that is, it might have been more appropriate (although much less dramatic) to have begun with the choice, then the life, the punishment and finally the choice

¹⁵ Adam (1963) has attempted to draw this; vol.2, p.435.

¹⁶ That is, Rhadamanthys' area of jurisdiction is Asia, Aeacus' is Europe, and Minos is the court of final appeal: 524a.

¹⁷ Stewart (1960) p.143 believes that the idea of the judged wearing tablets describing their crimes and sentencing may have come from the Orphic gold leaves placed in the graves of the dead, which give directions to the underworld. He compares the similar function of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. See Appendix A.

again. Unfortunately, the drinking at Lethe throws a spanner in the works (see point 7., below).

The time which the souls have at the meadow to talk about the blessings of the reward and the horrors of the punishment, offers a unique opportunity for the souls to learn of others' lives, and *learn from them*, and thus avoid making the wrong choice. It seems difficult to believe, after so much prodding in the direction of the correct choice, that so many souls go wrong. Despite everything, the soul seems to make an instinctive, irrational choice, based, for example, on greed (619b7-c1). The time in the meadow is obviously when the philosopher comes into his own: this is the point emphasized by Socrates in his aside to Glaucon at 618b6-619b1.

The mathematics of the punishment/reward period is unfathomable: it seems that for the multiple sinner the punishment period would be in excess of 1,000 years. However, this mandatory sort of time period often appears, and its actuality cannot be relied upon. In Empedocles, for example, there is a period of 10,000 years which evidently means simply "a very long time". However, in *Phaedrus* (q.v.) the time scale is a very important part of the working of the system. Very few people in the ancient world would have lived out one hundred years, so this is, perhaps, a "cosmic" or mandatory human lifetime. Halliwell sees a

certain “sense of cosmic order and organisation” in the repetition of “ten” units at 615a.¹⁸

There appears to be, unlike in *Phaedo*, little emphasis on purification or “salvific” rites.¹⁹ It is not mentioned as part of the 1000 year punishment/reward, although it can be implied in the rewarded soul’s brief description of the “visions of extraordinary beauty”, with their mystic connotations. It is certainly not emphasized in any way.²⁰ Unlike the other dialogues, the Myth of Er seems to have shaken itself free of some of the traditional religious ideas of divine justice (a process continued in *Phaedrus* and *Laws*). The fact that souls choose their next life is one illustration of this process; the absence of purification may be another.

4. 616b1-617d1:²¹

This section is interesting for cosmic speculation,²² but, more relevantly, it seems to emphasise the regularity and eternal nature of the cycle. The picture of

¹⁸ Halliwell (1988) p.171; Er lay undecomposed for ten days - 614b5. Brumbaugh (1989) p.85 would agree that Plato uses arithmetical details to show that Justice holds sway in the heavens: for example, symmetry of speeds, balance of numbers. Cf. Adam (1963) pp.434,437; de Vogel (1966) pp.202ff., and Shorey (1903) pp.82ff.

¹⁹ Morgan (1990) p.40

²⁰ On mystery vocabulary, cf. note 23 in my discussion of *Phaedo*.

²¹ After seven days in the meadow, the souls moved on for four days until they reached a great column of light which held the sky. Attached to this was the spindle of Necessity through which the heavenly rotations turned. The spindle had eight whorls of various distinguishing characteristics fixed one inside another, forming a single continuous whorl. The spindle revolved in the lap of Necessity (in the direction of the heavenly orbit), and a Siren sat on each of the rims of the whorls. The eight Sirens each sang a single note and this made up a concord. Around the rim sat the Fates, daughters of Necessity - Lachesis, Klotho and Atropos. They sang of the past, the present and the future, respectively, and they helped move the rotations with their hands.

the Fates singing of the past, present and future (most apt in a reincarnation cycle), and the dominating figure of Necessity reinforce this impression.²³

5. 617d1-618b6.²⁴

There are some very unusual, indeed unique, ideas expressed in this passage. The idea of souls being able to choose their next life is extraordinary. It is a double-edged freedom though, as I will discuss, below. The organisation based on a system of lots, is a very corporeal image (like taking a number at the meat counter of a supermarket!). It emphasises the controlled nature of the process, and the fairness, for it means that every soul gets a chance for a proper look at the lives, without having to snatch up what it can get. All randomness is removed from the system, and the choice becomes wholly that of the soul, as the priest emphasizes (617d6-e5): ψυχαι ἐφήμεροι, ἀρχὴ ἄλλης περιόδου θνητοῦ γένους θανατηφόρου...ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον, ἦν τιμῶν καὶ ἀτιμάζων πλεον καὶ ἔλαττον αὐτῆς ἕκαστος ἔξει. αἰτία ἐλομένου· θεὸς ἀναίτιος. Moreover, there are more

²² Cf. the introduction to Parmenides' poem, where he goes up in a chariot with Daughters of Sun, rides through the Gate of Justice, and comes to the Region of Light where Wisdom receives him: Stewart (1960) p.312.

²³ See Peters (1967) p.18 on Ananke. Also Onians (1954) pp.332ff.; Adam (1963) p.452.

²⁴ The souls were arranged in ranks by a priest and had first to approach Lachesis. The priest (picking up lots and lives from Lachesis' lap) told the souls that they had to choose a *daimon* (and thus a life) by lots, which he threw on the ground, and then lot by lot in order they had to pick a life from a selection (greater than the number of souls present) which he then placed on the ground also. There were lives of tyrants, men pre-eminent physically, or in breeding, or ancestry, degenerate lives, male and female, all mapped out with wealth, poverty, length of life and etc.. The only thing not included was the character of the soul, for that was what the choosing soul added to the life, and this could not be determined. The souls were warned by the priest that the choice was theirs alone, so they must be careful.

than enough lives to choose from (618a3), including animal lives (618a3-4). It is remarkable that more appropriate choices are not made.

The idea of souls “choosing” their own *daimon* (equivalent to a life) is without parallel. In *Phaedo*, it was the *daimon* which led its soul to the judgement place. Here again, the *daimon* is a separate entity, resembling in no way the (shamanic?) conception of *daimon* seen in Empedocles’ system (where it is the soul itself). Socrates makes a number of allusions to his *daimon*, or, as he rationalizes it, his δαιμόνιον σημεῖον (“divine sign”: 496c4; *Apology* 31d; *Euthyphro* 3b; *Euthydemus* 272e; *Phaedrus* 242b), but in these passages, the *daimon* acts in its traditional role of guardian angel:²⁵ it warns him away from evil, and has been with him since birth.²⁶

6. 618b6-619b1:²⁷

In this section, the myth breaks off, and Plato gives Glaucon one part of the “message” of the myth. The section can be seen to illustrate the sorts of ethical

²⁵ *eudaimonia* - happiness - is having a good *daimon*. Cf. Clark (1975) pp.145-163.

²⁶ Without, one might add, pointing him towards good (however, it does this as well in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*: Brickhouse & Smith (1986) pp.512,517. Cf. Peters (1967) pp.33ff. In *Symposium* the *daimon* appears in its third role, as divine messenger between gods and men: Guthrie (1975) p.375. See also, Guthrie (1957a) p.233; Dodds (1951) p.213; Adam (1963) p.454.

²⁷ The myth breaks off: at the choosing place it is necessary to make the best choice possible, and this can be achieved only by learning to differentiate between good and bad lives, and by calculating all of the available elements and combinations (political power/private life, strength/weakness, cleverness/ignorance etc) to achieve the best in one’s choice. The definition of the best life is one which leads the soul to greatest justness. Things to avoid are riches and tyranny.

choices one has to make throughout life),²⁸ even though this goes against the idea of all of the particulars of one's next life being fixed. The exception is, of course, what the soul adds to the life it is given, for this is the only flexible element - so, in this context, Socrates' message makes good sense. I have discussed this "wildcard" element further, below. Annas agrees that the whole myth serves to dramatize the consequences of one's day to day decisions, which seem trivial, but in the context of such an eschatological system, take on greater meaning: it is the decisions we make that make us the people we are.²⁹

7. 619b2-621b7:³⁰

²⁸ According to Halliwell (1988) p.186.

²⁹ Annas (1982a) pp.351-352. That is, it is an attempt to balance free-will and necessity?

³⁰ Returning to the myth, the first lot immediately chose a tyrant's life out of greed and haste; he discovered when he looked at it properly that he was destined to eat his children and suffer terrible evils. Then he blamed everyone but himself for his poor choice; he was a man who had come from the sky exit, and had lived a well-ordered and quite good previous existence, but non-philosophical.

Those from the sky generally made bad choices, lacking experience in hard toils; those from earth chose more carefully, and thus the result was a general reversal in good and evil. Those who had lived philosophically, and chose wisely on the basis of this life, usually kept to a good life and easy passage from world to world.

Er then told of some of the choices of well-known souls (ἐλεεινὴν τε γὰρ ἰδεῖν εἶναι καὶ γελοῖαν καὶ θαυμασίαν· κατὰ συνήθειαν γὰρ τοῦ προτέρου βίου τὰ πολλὰ αἰρεῖσθαι: 620a1-3): Orpheus became a swan because he hated women, and did not wish to be reborn from one; Thramyras' soul chose a nightingale; a swan chose a human life;

..εἰκοστὴν δὲ λαχοῦσαν ψυχὴν ἐλέσθαι λέοντος βίον· εἶναι δὲ τὴν Αἴαντος τοῦ Τελαμωνίου, φεύγουσαν ἄνθρωπον γενέσθαι, μεμνημένην τῆς τῶν ὄπλων κρίσεως· (620b1-3)

Agamemnon's soul, hating the human race, chose an eagle; Atalanta, a male athlete; Epeis, a skilled woman; Thersites - the buffoon - took an ape's form. Finally, Odysseus chose (he had the last lot); he searched for the life of a private, peaceful individual, having lost his ambition through the memory of his former toils. This soul said that even if he'd had first go in the lots he would have chosen this life.

καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων δὴ θηρίων ὡσαύτως εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἰέναι καὶ εἰς ἄλλα, τὰ μὲν ἄδικα εἰς τὰ ἄγρια, τὰ δὲ δίκαια εἰς τὰ ἡμερα μεταβάλλοντα, καὶ πάσας μίξεις μίγνυσθαι. (620d2-5)

After the choice was complete, the souls approached Lachesis, and she sent them on with the *daimon* of the life they had chosen. The *daimon* led the soul to Klotho, who ratified the choice, and then to Atropos, who made the choice binding. Then the souls went under the throne of Necessity, and onwards to the plain of Forgetting (*Lethe*), to a camp at evening by the river

This section has created significant difficulties for interpreters:³¹ firstly, how can “the soul which had once been Orpheus’s” be so firmly identified? Does this imply that the last life of the “Orpheus” soul was *as* Orpheus? It must, or else the soul would have no way of identifying itself as such because of the condition of limited memory (drinking of Lethe after each choice, and so forgetting the previous life).

If the last life of the soul was not as “Orpheus”, then how can the soul possibly be called this? As far as we can tell, the tag “Orpheus” should refer to physical characteristics - that is, to the *body*. There is one loop-hole of escape from this problem: at Lethe, the souls must drink a certain quantity of water;³² however, some drank considerably more (the very senseless): is it possible that some drink considerably less? The allusion is quite clearly made that Er was not allowed to drink, and thus was able to report back what he had seen. In Socrates’ concluding remarks (621c1ff.), he states that if we heed the story τὸν τῆς Λήθης ποταμὸν εὖ διαβησόμεθα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ μίανθισόμεθα. Does this mean that, having heard this story, after choosing our next life we will drink sparingly

Heedless (*Ameles*), whose water a vessel cannot contain. All had to drink a certain amount, and the less sensible drank more than they needed. At once upon drinking, they began to forget everything. At midnight when all were asleep there was thunder, and an earthquake, and the souls went like shooting stars to their births. Er was not allowed to drink, and woke up on his pyre at dawn.

³¹ As in many myths, it is necessary to make some assumptions to make sense of the myth. That is, it is the nature of a myth to describe things which are imaginary, or to attempt to go beyond reality.

³² On water and drinking of springs/wells etc.: Lincoln (1982) for comparative examples.

and thus some details of our previous lives will be retained?³³ In that case, the soul's identification as "Orpheus" would have begun from the first time it drank sparingly (if the cycle had no beginning);³⁴ before that moment it was presumably one of the very many other nameless/unrecognisable souls.³⁵

Relating real-time to this metaphysical system of time is obviously pointless. Halliwell has pointed out that any attempts at chronology from myth-life to real-life are impossible. For example, Herodotus had dated the Trojan War to 1280BC, yet "Agamemnon" and "Odysseus" were already choosing their (next) lives after their one thousand year reward/punishment.³⁶ In my opinion, Halliwell is being too pedantic about this: after all, Socrates never tenders a time-frame for Er's experience. Moreover, although it does not seem indicated here, it is possible for the idea of human years not to equate 1:1 with cosmic years: consider the "Great Year" of the cosmos in the *Politicus* myth, which equates to 10,000 human years. In this sort of time scale, it would be possible to override the doubts on chronology - "Odysseus" and "Agamemnon" could thus have had any number of lives since the Trojan War.³⁷

³³ Halliwell (1988) p.21

³⁴ Certainly there is no idea of an original sin leading to the cycle as punishment. If there was, it might make the system more satisfactory.

³⁵ But then, to *keep* this memory, the soul must not drink on any other visits.

³⁶ Halliwell (1988) pp.189-190

³⁷ Another solution, based on comparison with modern belief in reincarnation, is that it is possible for a number of people to have experienced being (e.g.) Cleopatra; that is, this soul is not *the* Orpheus, but one of the number of souls who took a turn at being Orpheus. This seems very unlikely. Eternal recurrence could supply an even more unlikely explanation: see Appendix E. It is likely that the answer lies in the nature of myth *per se*.

Of course, to be reasonable, it seems more likely that the examples of well-known people are used not because this is what occurred in the system, but because - their characters being commonly known - they are the best illustrations of the effect that one's individual character has on what should essentially be a rational choice.³⁸ They represent the uncontrolled self, and illustrate the dangers of not analysing one's choice, in the same way that the first lot, who snatch up the life of a tyrant without considering its implications, illustrate the undoing that an impulsive, unchecked soul can cause itself.

Odysseus is the best example of this. Although he makes a carefully considered choice which will make his path through this life quiet and simple, it is still the *wrong* choice:³⁹ an essentially selfish choice - as all the choices are - motivated by the wrong aims. In its own way, it is just as bad as the tyrant's life, especially since Odysseus' next life will almost inevitably be worse. However, he is at least beginning to show signs of heading in the right direction with his choices; he certainly did not choose an evil life (from a moral point of view), and he used his intellect and thought about what was wrong with what he had already experienced. He would seem to be about one or two steps away from making the right choice.

³⁸ Zaslavsky (1981) regards the example of Epeius as a joke.

³⁹ Hirst (1940) pp.67-68 and Blundell (1992) pp.168-170 discuss the *paraprosochian* of Odysseus' choice: it is not at all what we expect. Blundell makes the point that only Odysseus, out of all the souls mentioned, does not persist in the same kind of life as before, but learns from it. Odysseus is a character admired by Plato, it seems - in *Hippias Major* he embodies rational skill in pursuit of one's goals (p.169).

The correct choice, uninfluenced by habitation (620a2-3)⁴⁰ and, inevitably, the one with least appeal,⁴¹ is the *philosophic life*.⁴² This reinforces 611e ff., as does Socrates' concluding message.

620a7-8 is a unique image: the soul of a swan⁴³ (how is it identified as such?) choosing the life of a human for its next incarnation, καὶ ἄλλα ζῶα μουσικὰ ὡσαύτως. The significance of this is surely that, regardless of the fact that "Orpheus" does not want to be born of woman in his next life, he will be eventually, particularly if musical animals usually are. It illustrates the irrationality of his choice, but also may show the pointlessness of such choices, because one presumes that after the drinking of Lethe, he will not realise the reasons *why* he chose this life. It is a wasted choice, and one that will presumably take another two lives to compensate for. There is, however, no idea in this myth of animal (or female; cf. *Timaeus*) incarnation being a punishment *per se*.

A number of questions come to mind about the new incarnate life of the soul. The first is in response to the brief note at 615c1-2: τῶν δὲ εὐθὺς γενομένων καὶ ὀλίγον χρόνον βιούντων περί ἄλλα ἔλεγεν οὐκ ἄξια μνήμης.

⁴⁰ Zaslavsky (1981) pp.169-170

⁴¹ Cf. the discussion of *Phaedo*, note 56 for references to the unpopularity of philosophical life. Halliwell (1988) p.187 notes that Plato's view of the tyrant's life is the opposite of the popular view of power and politics.

⁴² Blundell (1992) p.169

⁴³ On the birds in *Republic* cf. Skutsch (1968) n.24.

One can only wonder about lives which are cut off ‘prematurely’ by disease, injury or accident (including death at the time of birth). Was death at birth, or by any other of these ‘accidental’ means, part of the chosen life (destiny), or was the soul robbed of a chance for a full-life by other circumstances? That is, by the death of the body. The problem is that death is usually seen as the separation of body and soul, and a youthful death would seem to go against nature. Certainly, if death during youth was part of the life, one would expect this to have been made clear at the time of choosing (when the tyrant, for example, saw the details of his life). The only unknown in the life plan appears to be the soul, but it is inexplicable how this could affect the direction of life so young.⁴⁴

There must have been a different system for souls whose “vehicles” had died very young, for there would not have been time for the life to have been lived enough for a fair judgement to be made. This is such a minefield that it is no wonder it is glossed over.⁴⁵

⁴⁴The only viable option appears to be that the souls in these young bodies were so evil that there was a special escape clause to remove them from this world before they could grow old enough for the influence of the soul to take effect. Yet, this idea does not appear to be present at all, or at least not to the extent that it is seen in *Laws* (q.v.).

⁴⁵What are the implications of this system for conception/individuality of children; that is, surely this would mean that, while the container of the soul could resemble its progenitors, the soul inside would be of a different, older character than the child might appear. If the cycle was a well-known system, how would the concept of a strange soul within a child affect the parents’ expectations of child? Questions like this are unanswerable, based as they are on a system which is incomplete, and unknowable, beyond one generation. Moreover, the assumption relies on a retention of memory beyond incarnation. The mythic nature of the “proof” must never be forgotten, also.

My second question is whether it is possible for a soul to change its destiny, either inadvertently (having remembered nothing about the intercarne world), or intentionally (having drunk sparingly of Lethe)? That is, is it innate in the soul to make the best out of one's life, even if ignorant of the reincarnation cycle? Or is the course of life so fixed that nothing will vary? This seems unlikely - referring back to the pictures of the different lives, the *soul* formed the one unknown factor in the life plan: what the individual soul brought to each life could not be judged. This gives the life some flexibility. For example, if a soul was in a bad life, and was strong, rational and fighting, and decided to be philosophical, this would not appear to infringe Necessity, or Atropos (for the chosen life *is* being lived by the soul).

It would certainly be a small ray of hope if the souls had this power. After all, it is an unusual situation where souls have the power to pick their future lives, but do not have the power to control what happens within them. The only problem is that the soul in question must realise that its life needs to be changed, and inevitably this implies some idea of recollection which is not found in the myth.⁴⁶ The other side of the coin is that it would be much easier for the soul to go further astray than the life-plan might have implied.

If one's destiny is predetermined by forces beyond one's control, this could be used to explain all manner of inexplicable occurrences in the world. For

⁴⁶ Is it present at 498d3-4? Halliwell (1988) p.29,n.48.

example, if the soul is set on a predetermined evil path, then no amount of human education etc. will affect this path. Is the system thus a way of explaining the origin of evil?

8. 621b8-d3:

The Myth of Er ends with another message from Socrates:

καὶ οὕτως, ὦ Γλαύκων, μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπόλετο, καὶ ἡμᾶς ἂν σώσειεν, ἂν πειθώμεθα αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸν τῆς Λήθης ποταμὸν εὖ διαβησόμεθα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ μίανθησόμεθα· ἀλλ' ἂν ἐμοὶ πειθώμεθα, νομίζοντες ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν καὶ δυνατὴν πάντα μὲν κακὰ ἀνέχεσθαι, πάντα δὲ ἀγαθὰ, τῆς ἄνω ὁδοῦ ἀεὶ ἐξόμεθα καὶ δικαιοσύνην μετὰ φρονήσεως παντὶ τρόπῳ ἐπιτηδεύσομεν, ἵνα καὶ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς φίλοι ᾦμεν καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς, αὐτοῦ τε μένοντες ἐνθάδε, καὶ ἐπειδὴν τὰ ἄθλα αὐτῆς κομιζόμεθα, ὥσπερ οἱ νικηφόροι περιαιρόμενοι, καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν τῇ χιλιέτει πορεία, ἣν διεληλύθαμεν, εὖ πράττωμεν.
(621b8-d3)

One could simply accept this dictum, and that of (618b6-619b1), and see the myth as a symbolic representation of the correct way of life (caution, philosophy, moderation). There are, however, some unusual features, the most obvious of which is that the myth seems to be promulgating the idea that one should be just for the sake of the rewards one earns (or the punishments one avoids), rather than for the sake of justice itself: that is, souls pursue justice through fear of punishment. The horrific nature of the punishments is illustrated by the flaying of Ardiaeus just inside the exit to the meadow (presumably in sight of those about to begin their journeys). The idea that justice is promoted for

inconsequential reasons, rather than for its own sake, has worried commentators such as Annas and Halliwell,⁴⁷ who see it as contrary to the discussion of justice which occurred immediately prior to the myth.

I think, however, that the concept of justice for its own sake is a difficult one to illustrate even in myth, and it is a concept particularly difficult to explain to others less interested or understanding of philosophy, because the benefits are intangible⁴⁸ (indeed, the idea of justice for its own sake, implies that there are no other tangible rewards), and the life involved so strict. *It appears to go against human nature to be a philosopher.* Compare, also, 496b7-c3 on the temptations that keep people from philosophy: καὶ γὰρ Θεάγει τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα παρεσκευάσται πρὸς τὸ ἐκπεσεῖν φιλοσοφίας, ἡ δὲ τοῦ σώματος νοσοτροφία ἀπείργουσα αὐτὸν τῶν πολιτικῶν κατέχει.

I do think that these commentators are over-emphasising the reward section. Rewards are dealt with in two lines; moreover, they are in no way material, but are described as εὐπαθείας..καὶ θέας ἀμνχάνους τὸ κάλλος (615a3-4). This appears to be a transcendental, rather than material, reward. The rewards are, however, “sensible” (how can rewards be described except in sensible terms?). If anything, the 1000 year reward seems under-emphasized: it does not really *give* the souls anything tangible.⁴⁹ It seems to be the (illogical) complete opposite of the

⁴⁷ Annas (1982a) pp.349-351; Annas (1982b) pp.130ff.; Halliwell (1988) p.18.

⁴⁸ To the non-philosopher.

⁴⁹ Nor is there any indication that it is a chance for reflection.

punishment life. The punishment life is important because it is a deterrent against choosing a bad life. It is ridiculous to see the reward life in terms of a deterrent from choosing a *good* life: however, this is what it appears to be.

If one is to escape through philosophy, which is a matter of gaining the experience (and thus knowledge⁵⁰) to make the correct choice, one would think that most experience would be gained by living in as many different lives as possible, and drawing on these for one's choice - however, to get into these lives one has to make the wrong decisions, and then have the philosophical *voûç* to remember them next time. There seems little hint of any recollection doctrine, unless it is contained in the implication that some souls drink less of Lethe than others.⁵¹ Rather than living the bad lives, it seems that observing them, and noting the various permutations will suffice; and this is precisely what Er is doing.

This is what the philosopher does - he experiences other lives through trained observation on earth, as well as after death, so his soul can make the correct choice sooner than the other, non-philosophical, souls. However, the myth seems to deny this experience to "ordinary" souls: first, by the 1000 years of reward/punishment which cause the soul to disregard its purpose and previous life experiences (often to its detriment), and to rely on the results of the 1000 year period; second, by the erasure of the soul's memory of the previous life prior to

⁵⁰ Although experience is not equivalent to knowledge.

⁵¹ Halliwell (1988) p.21

the next incarnation. This second aspect is particularly nasty, and the motive for it is very obscure.

If the Myth of Er is a moral tale, as seems to be emphasised, where is the morality in not being able to learn from one's past experience? There is, to be sure, a limited opportunity for this: the soul can build upon the experiences of the life immediately prior; but there seems no way for the soul to capitalize upon the lives that it has already led before this one, if the knowledge which it gained from the experience, is lost after that life. That is, as a soul, you choose the next life with the benefit of hindsight, but then lose the memory of *why* you made the choice, and therefore what it was based upon. In the next cycle, it has to be worked out again. The cycle has limited ethical significance, more so because there is no escape - no ladder of lives one has to ascend to eventual freedom. Justice does not conquer all in the end.⁵²

There seems little purpose in attempting to gain any "bonus points" (and thus a period of post-mortem reward) from life to life, because the result of the reward period is that many of the souls go out and immediately make a wrong choice. A soul, unable to realise the repercussions of its choice, could get trapped in the same few alternating good and bad lives for eternity, particularly since there seems to be no escape, even for the philosopher (619d7-e5). And what of the

⁵² As Annas (1982a) p.352 remarks, this would not be realistic. Halliwell (1988) p.23 suggests that a final escape might be possible if one could completely remove the barnacles from the soul.

repeat offender: is there a maximum number of times that the souls can live badly, or is there the prospect of eternal punishment?

ἔφη γὰρ δὴ παραγενέσθαι ἐρωτώμενω ἑτέρω ὑπὸ ἑτέρου ὅπου εἶη Ἄρδιαῖος ὁ μέγας. ὁ δὲ Ἄρδιαῖος..τύραννος ἐγεγόνει.. γέροντά τε πατέρα ἀποκτείνας καὶ πρεσβύτερον ἀδελφόν, καὶ ἄλλα δὴ πολλὰ τε καὶ ἀνόσια εἰργασμένος, ὡς ἐλέγετο. ἔφη οὖν τὸν ἐρωτώμενον εἰπεῖν, οὐχ ἦκει, φάναι, οὐδ' ἂν ἦξει δεῦρο. (615d2-3)

It is a pessimistic and cruel system:⁵³ everything is against the soul's reaching some sort of plateau, where it chooses good philosophical lives and experiences the rewards for any length of time. Of course, if one could remember having gone through the system over and over with no hope of escape, it would be depressing, and lead to a lack of concern for how each life was to be lead.⁵⁴ Drinking Lethe almost seems a kindness in the face of this possibility. Moreover, it seems somewhat ironic that a philosophical life is the most desirable for the soul, because it is the one that brings *least* earthly reward. The only one who sees Socrates' death as a reward for his just nature is Socrates himself.

The idea of a period of punishment which sets a soul on the correct path is logical, and appears in many other eschatological myths in Plato (also in Pindar): the deterrent value of punishment is a frequent theme in the dialogues.⁵⁵ However, the opposite is ludicrous: that a reward period, which is obviously made

⁵³ "sadistic": Annas (1982a) p.351

⁵⁴ That is, it might lead to injustice.

⁵⁵ It is, of course, not limited to eschatological contexts: cf. prisons etc.

up partly of mystic experiences (cf. 615a3-4) could so seriously upset the choice of the next life. One would think that it should *reinforce* the value of opting for the same life, or a similar, at the next choice. However, it seems that the 1000 years of bliss dimmed the vision of the previous life in some way, so that the next life choice was inevitably wrong. The reward life made the souls lazy, corrupt and stupid because of the ease of their life, and therefore, their unawareness of toils and hardships.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the hardships of punishment sharpen the desire to choose a better life. One other solution may be that the rewarded souls who chose wrongly were those who, like the first lot who chose the tyrant's life, lacked the element of philosophy to reason out their situation.

The singling out of the life of a tyrant is significant and symbolic, and it is this, apart from anything, which links the myth to the rest of *Republic*. For structuralists the emphasis is on cannibalism.⁵⁷ For the rest of us, it is a neat tying

⁵⁶ Zaslavsky (1981) p.167; Halliwell (1988) p.22.

⁵⁷ Dombrowski (1984) goes so far as to argue that the Platonic philosopher/guardian *should* be a vegetarian, and is not a whit put out by the complete lack of evidence for this practice - indeed, at 404b-c it is suggested that the guardians eat roasted meat. Ophir (1991) p.36 links the roasted, *not boiled*, meat symbolically to the boiling of Dionysus by the Titans, and thus to Orphism. On the other hand, Dombrowski believes that philosophers should be vegetarian to re-establish the link with the lost Golden Age. He is, I believe, overly influenced by, and has transposed over, Empedocles' (and the Pythagorean) taboos. On vegetarianism: 372a-c, for example, lists the food stuffs (all vegetal, but including dairy products) of the citizens in the first plan of the Republic; however, when Glaucon complains about the paucity of treats, the new vision of the Republic encompasses huntsmen and butchers (373b-c), and the diet "the sort of food we have today" (372d). This goes against Dombrowski's proclamation, "That the Republic was to be a vegetarian city was one of the best kept secrets in the history of philosophy": Dombrowski (1984) (p.7). On butchers in antiquity: Berthiaume (1982) pp.62-70. Cf. Socrates' request for a cock to be sacrificed at *Phaedo* 118. On the horrific, degenerative effects of meat-eating: Detienne & Vernant (1989); Burkert (1983). It seems that, in the dialogues, dietary restrictions are *not* in place because of the fear of (a) eating other souls; (b) offending the gods; or (c) repeating the Titan's crime. Rather, the prescribed diet appears to be chosen with a view to the citizens' living

of ends. Plato has little interest in primitive taboos. One wonders, however, if Ophir is correct that the significance of the tyrant's cannibalism is that it is a symbol of his breach of the boundary between men (just) and animals (unjust). For example (as I have mentioned previously), in Hesiod, animals devour each other because they have no justice.⁵⁸

Two elements stressed in the dialogue are missing from the Myth of Er. First, the myth does not seem to offer the philosopher any special status (discussed above); second, there is no mention of the Forms, or higher realities. Both of these concepts are intertwined in the parables of the Sun, Line and Cave.⁵⁹ The Forms (and thus recollection) may be absent because they are inappropriate to the moral or ethical setting of the myth and its simple ideas of reward/punishment for justice/injustice. One might suppose that if they were going to be anywhere, the Forms would have been seen higher than the openings in the sky where the good souls go. One problem is that in this cycle there is no layered Heaven (as in *Phaedrus*). It seems unlikely that it was the Forms which the good souls saw in their 1000 years sojourn. Of course, seeing the Forms is of no use if all memory is subsequently erased.⁶⁰ In the same way, strictly there can be no personal immortality.

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long and healthy lives (does the diet bear any resemblance to Spartan dietary habits?). Moreover, there was not a lot of meat available in the area at the time.

⁵⁸ Ophir (1991) p.37; Hesiod *Works* 267-268; Zaslavsky (1981) p.162 notes that eternal punishment is usually reserved for political criminals.

⁵⁹ Annas (1982a) p.253

⁶⁰ To continue a previous analogy, in this case, the floppy disk in the system has had its information erased, but is still formatted.

This system of reincarnation always remains in the realm of myth, and functions symbolically; it certainly is not put forward as a canonical religious belief of the *Republic* - for when such beliefs appear they are generally traditional. At 540c, for example, guardians go the Isles of the Blessed after death. At 468e-469a heroes are seen (in a quotation from Hesiod) after death as hallowed spirits, protective deities wandering the earth. The only other mention of reincarnation is at 498d1-4, and may be simply a playful gibe, or perhaps an anticipation of Book X. Referring to an argument in progress, Socrates remarks, πείρας γὰρ οὐδὲν ἀνήσομεν, ἕως ἂν ἡ πείσωμεν καὶ τοῦτον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἢ προὔργου τι ποιήσωμεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν βίον, ὅταν αὐθις γενόμενοι τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐντύχῳσι λόγοις. This sounds more like a gibe at his opponents than reference to a specific doctrine.

At 496d9-e2, Socrates remarks that the philosopher is content εἶ πῃ αὐτὸς καθαρὸς ἀδικίας τε καὶ ἀνοσίων ἔργων τὸν τε ἐνθάδε βίον βιώσεται καὶ τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν αὐτοῦ μετὰ καλῆς ἐλπίδος ἵλεώς τε καὶ εὐμενῆς ἀπαλλάσσεται. This does not imply reincarnation. There is further ambiguity at 498c1-4: referring to the young men in the state, Socrates says that when they grow old τότε ἤδη ἀφέτους νέμεσθαι καὶ μηδὲν ἄλλο πράττειν, ὅ τι μὴ πάρεργον, τοὺς μέλλοντας εὐδαιμόνως βιώσεσθαι καὶ τελευτήσαντας τῷ βίῳ τῷ βεβιωμένῳ τὴν ἐκεῖ μοῖραν ἐπιστήσειν πρέπουσαν.

CHAPTER 8: PHAEDRUS

Περὶ μὲν οὖν ἀθανασίας αὐτῆς ἰκανῶς· περὶ δὲ τῆς ἰδέας αὐτῆς ὧδε λεκτέον· οἶον μὲν ἔστι, πάντη πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος· ταύτη οὖν λέγωμεν. (246a2-6)¹

Starting from the premise that the soul is immortal,² Socrates develops a myth to illustrate the soul's tripartite nature, and how each part works; he then extends the myth to explain the concept of the madness of love, but also the benefits of love between a philosophical couple.

Reincarnation is closely linked to the context of the dialogue - the debate on rhetoric between Lysias (represented by Phaedrus) and Socrates which concludes Ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐ τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἢ ῥητορικὴ ἂν εἴη τέχνη ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων...; (261a7-8) Thus rhetoric is used not only in public but also private spheres. The latter (rhetoric in private) forms the theme³ which is followed throughout the dialogue and explained primarily in myth.

The perfect soul is depicted as a winged group comprised of a charioteer and two well-controlled and well-behaved horses, flying up into the heavens for

¹ That is, this is the easiest way to describe it: Crombie (1962) p.325. All translations in this chapter taken from Rowe (1986b).

² On more specific arguments for immortality (which are irrelevant here) see Robinson (1968) pp.12-15. He notes the different approach to immortality in *Phaedrus*, viz, empirical and traditional *contra* the Platonic metaphysics of *Phaedo*. The soul in *Phaedrus* is "noetic", as will be discussed.

³ Wyller (1991) p.55

the express purpose of viewing the Forms.⁴ These souls correspond to the gods (given their Olympian names), who are immortal and rule the world, because their wings are so perfect that they lift up the soul to the highest level of the heavens,⁵ where they lead around separate processions of all the other souls (246e6-247a9). Zeus is prominent; he has an ordering and managing role (246e5). At feasting time (247a9), the gods fly up to the top of the arch/vault of heaven and pass out onto the outside of the heavens where they are carried around and view the Forms.⁶ The journey to the Forms is not easy for the souls (247b2-4); lesser souls have a much more difficult time than the gods, and few make the complete journey.

The first point to make is that the winged gods/immortals of *Phaedrus* are not seen as anthropomorphic.⁷ 246c2-6 makes this quite clear: “mortals” are souls who have lost their wings and taken on an earthly body.⁸ Beyond denial of anthropomorphism, it is an attempt to describe the immateriality of souls; as 246a2-6 makes clear, there is no other way, apart from myth/analogy, to communicate a picture of the soul. One can detect two layers of description: first,

⁴ The idea of chariots in the heavens reappears in *Timaeus* 41e. There, souls are mounted on stars and shown the Forms. The celestial chariot is a common idea: for example, the chariot in Parmenides' proem (DK 28B1). Stewart (1960) p.11 cites other comparative examples. Cf. the chariot image in the *Bhagavadgita*.

⁵ 246d6ff.: the natural function of the wings.

⁶ I tend to picture the heavens as a structure resembling the Pantheon in Rome, where the gods would pass out through the oculus and go on top of the dome to view the Forms. Cf. Solmsen (1982c) who asks whether in this dialogue Plato has deliberately set out to answer the question “Where are the Forms?”

⁷ Rowe (1986a) p.173

⁸ Note also 246c8-d1: ..ἀλλὰ πλάττομεν οὔτε ἰδόντες οὔτε ἰκανῶς νοήσαντες θεόν, ἀθάνατόν τι ζῶον, ἔχον μὲν ψυχὴν, ἔχον δὲ σῶμα, τὸν αἰεὶ δὲ χρόνον ταῦτα συμπεφυκότα.

a nebulous picture of the soul as a feathered but formless mass;⁹ second, the depiction of the tripartition of this shadowy soul as the winged chariot and the two horses.

The less perfect souls are characterized by the inherently (innately)¹⁰ evil left horse (or in the worst case, *two* badly controlled horses) which defies the charioteer's control and thus drags down the soul. The three elements of the soul roughly correspond to the three parts of the soul detailed at *Republic* 435e-444e: the rational (τὸ λογιστικόν), spirited (τὸ θυμοειδής), and the appetitive (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικός).¹¹

⁹ In no other dialogue is the immateriality of the soul so nearly reached; in comparison note the corporeality of the souls of *Republic* 10 who appear as "shades" with tablets attached to them: 614b8 ff.

¹⁰ McGibbon (1964) pp.56,61 notes that this view that *passion* is inherently evil is not found elsewhere; the idea of the evil lower part of the soul is common in other dialogues (e.g. *Timaeus* and *Republic*).

¹¹ As Peters (1967) p.170 has noted, a major problem for interpreters is that Plato does not hold to a single concept of the soul; for example, the tripartite soul is posited on ethical grounds, but in *Phaedo*, there is a unitary soul, based on epistemology (*ibid*). Therefore, it is dangerous to assume that this same tripartition is intended in *Phaedrus* - and thus doubly difficult to explain the ambivalence of the soul's parts: see Hackforth (1952) pp.107-108 on the problem of the inherently evil part [left horse] (which denies the soul a real harmony or equilibrium). As Ferrari (1987) pp.125-126 has noted, in *Republic* and *Phaedo* the pure, discarnate soul is incomposite, while in *Phaedrus* the discarnate soul is immortal *and* composite. He would view this as a development in thought (based on "contingency") which is reflected in *Laws* (*id.*, pp.126 & 129ff. on contingency). Other commentators are more sceptical about finding a logical development in Platonic thought on the soul: for a brief sample cf. McGibbon (1964a) p.63; Bett (1986) p.20; and Hackforth (1952) p.75 citing Wilamowitz. Rowe (1986a) p.171 sees the soul as tripartite when discarnate, but with the two lower parts non-operational; however, I would argue that, in the most perfect souls (gods) the lower parts seem to be exceptionally well-trained. For example, at 247b2-4, they are εὐήντιος ("obedient to the rein": LSJ). Gerson (1987) pp.81ff., 93 postulates that the chariot and horses represent the incarnate divided self (i.e. good and evil?): this is more probable - especially in light of the problem of reconciling the duality of the chariot and right horse - but is made problematic because tripartition is so obviously represented both in the *discarnate and* incarnate states. The situation in *Republic* - where the view of the soul in Book 10 contradicts that at 435e-444e - is a prime example of this problem. *Contra*, see Hall (1963) p.72 - *Republic* 611b-612a - on the common thread between all theories of the soul being their *differentiated unity*. In this theory the duality of the rational part of the soul into reason (the search for ἐπιστήμη) and opinion (δόξα) explains the evident tripartition of *Phaedrus*. This is

The right “horse” is of nobler breed, both in appearance (253d2-4: beautiful, white and clean-limbed) and nature (253d6-e1: lover of honour, sensible to shame, easily controlled by words, not the whip); the left horse is the opposite of these qualities - black, hubristic, deaf, requiring whip and goad, but ignoring them both (253e1-5). Driving is naturally difficult for the charioteer, who personifies rational thought.

These are the souls which follow the processions of the eleven Olympian gods¹² as they go on their procession around the heavens. The souls choose which god they will follow, and this is an important determining factor in the development of their incarnate character,¹³ because souls assimilate the qualities (positive and negative) of their chosen god.¹⁴ Zeus and Ares are mentioned: Zeus (246e4-6; 252c3) is the *best* god to follow to get the equipment (character) of the lover of wisdom (the philosopher - the best incarnate life: 248d1); he is an orderly, rational leader. Followers of Ares are prone to belligerent behaviour.¹⁵ We have to guess at the characteristics of the other gods (252d1-5):¹⁶

appropriate to the sense at 248b5 (the “food of semblance” [Hackforth’s (1952) translation] of the fallen souls), but does not form a workable theory in other dialogues: differentiated unity appears to be a convenient way of explaining anything.

¹² Hestia stays at home. For the various interpretations of this, see Hackforth (1952) pp.73-74.

¹³ In the first life at least: see 252d1-5, quoted below.

¹⁴ The process of ὁμοίωσις (253b1).

¹⁵ The example also applies to other aspects of life: cf. 252d1-5.

¹⁶ 253b1-5 gives characteristics which followers of Hera and Apollo seek in their beloved: for the former, regal nature.

καὶ οὕτω καθ' ἕκαστον θεόν, οὗ ἕκαστος ἦν χορευτής, ἐκείνων
 τιμῶν τε καὶ μιμούμενος εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ζῆ, ἕως ἂν ἦ
 ἀδιάφθορος, καὶ τὴν τῆδε πρώτην γένεσιν βιοτεύη.¹⁷

If one can only become the best type of philosopher by following Zeus,¹⁸ is there a way for the souls to determine which god to follow? If it were known that philosophy was the key to quicker release, then surely the procession following Zeus would be the largest? One must presume that a soul's character determines the choice, which implies that some sort of character is innate. This realizes four influences upon the soul: innate character,¹⁹ character as a result of following the gods,²⁰ knowledge from the type of vision of the Forms, and character developed in earthly incarnation.²¹

¹⁷ This proscription certainly raises an interesting question regarding the memory that we presume these souls to have. It seems that the memory of the long vision of the gods does not last as long as the much shorter, and only partial, glimpse of the Forms. What sort of "forgetfulness" is implied which differentiates between the two memories? The implications for the next life are profound; viz, inability to recognize the god in the beloved, and inability to shape the beloved like the god and become like the god oneself. As these are both essential steps in the journey towards acquisition of wisdom (essential to rise up to the status of philosopher), the soul would appear to be stuck in a black-hole without any nexus to the previous experiences (because, presumably, there will be no direct memory of the past life either, as in the post-Lethe incarnations of *Republic* Book 10).

¹⁸ Dyson (1982) p.307 suggests that the *only* way to become a philosopher is to follow Zeus. This is opposed by the idea that it is the view of the Forms which determines incarnation as a philosopher: *ibid*. The other important point is that - as 248c illustrates - one cannot say that followers of Zeus get a better look at the Forms than the other gods (*ibid*) or that the followers of other gods have less hope for a successful partnership with their beloved (*id.*, p.309).

¹⁹ Crombie (1962) p.328 suggests some sort of "congenital inferiority".

²⁰ These first two are linked, in that the character of the soul will determine which god it is attracted to: presumably the chosen god reflects the soul's own character.

²¹ This variety of reasons can adequately solve the problem of *Republic* 474bc and 491ab, where all souls were presumed to have an equal pre-natal knowledge of the Forms, but for unknown reasons were not able to access this memory to the same degree when incarnate: Morgan (1990) pp.42,175, and my discussion on *Republic*.

If we assume that the myth gives the picture of an original fall from the heavens, then the souls can bring no past experience to bear on their choice. Of course, the ability to change processions might be implied by 247a6-7: ..ἔπεται δὲ ὁ ἀεὶ ἐθέλων τε καὶ δυνάμενος· φθόνος γὰρ ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἴσταται. That is, is there a process of trial and error? This would depend on whether the time required for the procession was long enough²² to give the souls the opportunity of picking and choosing among the gods for the best option before the movement to the feast.

At the time of the feast, the less perfect souls - handicapped by the left horse refusing to obey the charioteer's control - struggle to follow the gods up to the vault of heaven. The charioteer following the "best" procession (that of Zeus?) may get high enough to poke his head out over the vault to see the Forms; however, the distraction of his horse allows him only to get a partial view, although he has his head out for the whole revolution. The next best group, fighting to control their horses, bob up and down, and see only some of the Forms. The remaining souls charge around beneath the vault and, being badly controlled, crash together, losing their wings and dropping to earth. These souls (the majority) do not get a view of the Forms *at all*: they are doomed not to be incarnated as humans until they see the Forms.

²² Suggestions have ranged from 24 hours to 10,000 years or a *magnus annus*: see Hackforth (1952) p.80.

One notes - considering the different lengths of time spent by each soul viewing the Forms before their fall - that the souls will not fall simultaneously. Thus, the human incarnation cycle will begin at a different time for each soul; thus, the souls will presumably not return to the procession at the same time. I will discuss the significance of this, below.

The importance of the Forms (*viz, doxa/episteme*) is expressed (in allegory) at 248b6-8: the pastureland of the plain of truth where the Forms lie is the best nourishment for the best part of the soul and the wings. Souls which do not see the Forms feed only on “semblance” (248b5). The Forms represent the universals, which are differentiated from the particulars²³ (249b6-c6) by conceptual thought (*νοῦς*), which animals do not possess. 249b6-c6 makes this explicit:

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 εἶναί φημεν, καὶ ἀνακύψασα εἰς τὸ ὄν ὄντως.

Thus, souls which have had *any* view of the Forms are *potentially* rational.²⁴ This knowledge is perceived only by the intellect, and nourishes it.

²³ In Crombie's words: (1962) p.328. The particulars as the “semblance” of the Forms is perhaps a better expression of this: Hackforth (1952) p.82 on 248b5.

²⁴ Rowe (1986a) p.166

The description of the type of view is important because it is a contributing factor to the first embodiment that befalls the souls:

After the revolution the gods return within the heavens. The fate of the other souls depends both on their view of the Forms and their subsequent behaviour (a result of their innate character). For example, the soul which saw any part of the Forms will return to its procession and follow it unharmed until the next trip to the Forms; if it again sees the Forms, it will be unharmed again, and so on. The Forms provide the nourishment for the wings and the good part of the soul which enables it to maintain the vision of the Forms when it returns to the procession. That this is hinting towards a role for memory seems certain, and the repercussions of this are illustrated at 248c6 ff., where a soul which once saw the Forms cannot make it back to the vault for another look, and so undergoes the fall into an earthly body. The failure is the result of “some mischance”²⁵ (in the allegory, this is presumably represented by the soul being held up or thrown off course by the other badly-controlled souls) and is represented as “forgetfulness” (λήθη - 248c7: forgetfulness of the need to see the Forms and/or forgetfulness of the need to follow the god),²⁶ and incompetence (κακία - 248c7).²⁷

²⁵ Bluck (1958a) p.158 believes that συντυχία does not refer to chance; he sees this as contradicting “..Plato’s undoubted belief both in divine providence and in free will and the responsibility of the individual for the conditions of his life..” (p.157,n.2).

²⁶ Is the forgetfulness a consequence of the battering that the wings get in the struggle with the other souls? That is, the damage to the wings destroys the nourishment which the wings have gained from the view of the Forms; thus the soul “forgets” the Forms. This would be a literal representation of the phenomenon of *amnesia*, often caused by a blow to the head (equivalent, here, to a blow struck against reason?).

²⁷ For the considerable debate on the interpretation of κακία, see McGibbon (1964a) pp.56,n.1 & 60: κακία as the lack of skill of the charioteer in controlling the inherently evil horse, *contra*

The forgetfulness and the κακία are both the result of the *charioteer's* failure, rather than the horses' fault *per se*. The charioteer - representing rational thought - is clearly indicated as the member of the team responsible for controlling and training the horses.²⁸ The left horse is *always* bad, and *always* requires the effort of the charioteer to control it. 254a3-255a1 illustrates this: the "trained" left horse becomes out-of-control at the sight of the beloved, and requires to be cowed by the strength²⁹ of the charioteer in a continual learning/training process.³⁰ By analogy, the human soul requires the same training, so that it can turn itself from the temptation of particulars (drinking, physical love, greed, imperfect physical representations of the Forms, etc..) to the contemplation of the Forms *per se*; this is accomplished by knowledge/wisdom.³¹

Bluck (1958a) p.157: κακία as the *result* of bad training, rather than the inherent evil of the horse. Bluck would suggest (p.157) that the left horse cannot "...be suffering from bad training if it has never been on earth and spoil its nature there.."; he uses this to show that *Phaedrus* does not depict an original fall, because the horse could only have received its bad training as a "left-over" from its previous earthly existence/s. Against this, I would argue that the left horse is evil by birth rather than by training. It is the charioteer's continuous striving for control of the left horse (and the group as a whole) which is reinforced throughout the dialogue. Even the well-trained horse loses control and reverts to its innate character when it sees the beloved: 254a3-255a1.

²⁸ The exception, of course, is the team of the gods, which functions like well-oiled machinery. This, however, has little epistemological purpose in the dialogue; rather it seems only to provide a necessary symmetry.

²⁹ Note the great strength (indeed, cruelty) required by the charioteer to cow the left horse: 254d8-e5.

³⁰ The length and result of the training process is shown at 254e5-255a1, where the left horse eventually holds the beloved in reverence and awe.

³¹ As in other dialogues, wisdom is equated with knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), which is knowledge of the Forms gained through recollection; the sensible world equates with opinion (δόξα). On the acquisition of knowledge *per se*, Morgan has noted that a soul's educational capabilities and capacity for knowledge of the Forms is a blend of "non-cognitive and cognitive factors"; Morgan (1984) p.241,n.7. As I have already discussed, there are four influences on the soul's development of consciousness of the pre-natal vision - viz, innate character, character as a result of following the gods, knowledge from the type of vision of the Forms, and character developed in earthly incarnation. All of these influence recollection, which is the only way to gain true

The forgetfulness of the soul is an ambiguous idea: why does the soul “forget” when it appears to have done nothing except travel in procession with the gods? It seems that the soul is affected by the traits of the god it follows; thus, if it follows gods other than Zeus, it takes on their characteristics, and concerns and interests, and forgets the over-riding concern to remember the Forms. The wrong sort of knowledge will also be an attributing factor - although one might consider the pursuit of δόξα, rather than true knowledge, to be a greater problem on earth than in the heavens.³²

One might interpret “chance” in another way: because the souls do not fall simultaneously, they cannot return to the heavens simultaneously (as they have to live out the full amount of years in the cycle); if the procession of the gods is a regular heavenly movement, as seems certain from their fixed feasting time, one wonders if, after the return, some souls do not follow the procession for as long as others (who arrived back earlier). Thus *inexperience* might also be a factor in the soul’s ability to follow the god up to the top of the heavens.³³

knowledge (of the Forms). This process of acquisition of knowledge is likened to initiation into mysteries (249c4-d3).

³² Ferrari (p.134) concludes that this combination of “fortune and fallibility” in the heavens is not ethically satisfying: it reduplicates the system on earth, and is indicative of a weakness in the system - the element of luck lessens the soul’s own guilt for its fall. Ferrari considers *Phaedrus* to be a dialogue of “contingency”; thus, he would see incarnation as a contingency (an accident) for which one cannot feel guilt (p.135). Responsibility (replacing guilt) takes the form of *coping* with the contingency. I would not consider this to answer the ethical question raised above; one notes, however, that there is the similar dilemma in *Republic*, where souls *choose* their next lives but are given no apparatus (i.e. memory) to use these lives to their full potential.

³³ Of course, *contra*, one could argue that the souls might have to wait for the procession to begin again, so that they *do* all begin again, simultaneously.

The mechanics of the first incarnation are simple but puzzling. The soul will go into one of the nine categories of lives, and will be “planted” (248d1) into the seed from which will grow a man (248d1-5), or will “settle down” and “take on” (246c2-5) its appropriate human body. Central (allegorical?) to this fall is the total loss of wings. The first life is not based on personal choice - unlike later incarnations (249b1-3) - but is the “law” (248c8), presumably based on the ordinance of Necessity (Ἀδραστεία: 248c2). The appearance of “Necessity” removes the awkwardness of accounting for *how* the souls were divided up into the nine groups of lives; that is, it removes the need for a formalized judgement.³⁴ The fullest development of this transposition of souls (“pigeon-holing”) can be seen at *Laws* 903d ff., where the system has become fully automatic.

The soul which is “forgetful” or badly-trained, and does not see the Forms at all, is incarnated into an earthly body - more specifically, into a *human* body (248c8-d2). There is a certain processual ambiguity in this, especially if one compares 249b1-c1: one might expect that souls which have had no view of the Forms would enter *animals*, and would have to live out their ten lives as animals (not being able to become humans without viewing the Forms). However this logical stage of psychic development is side-stepped; therefore, even souls who have not seen the Forms become humans in their first incarnation (as do the souls

³⁴ Of course, the apparatus for a judgement does exist: 249a5-6. Adrasteia (248c2): cf. the role of Ananke in the Myth of Er (*Republic* 616b1-617d1).

in *Timaeus* 42b ff.), regardless of the fact that recollection will be impossible.³⁵ The reasoning is that animals have no grasp of conceptual thought (νοῦς; the result of viewing the Forms).³⁶ It would be incorrect to allow animals to become humans who lack reason: this is what differentiates us from animals.³⁷ Thus, the first life *must* be a human incarnation, and it will be into one of the nine classes of lives listed at 248d1-e3, regardless of how this contradicts 249b-c.³⁸

There is an epistemological problem with incarnation as an animal; it implies that the soul has the opportunity to see the Forms in its next discarnate state, if it is to become a human in the second incarnation. This is not made explicit by the evidence, although I have suggested a solution to this, below. Another, more plausible, alternative is that the soul which does not see the Forms will spend its entire 10,000 years (ten lives) in animal bodies, and it is only at the close of 10,000 years, when all of the souls have returned to the trains of the gods, that the soul gets another opportunity to view the Forms. This, in turn, implies a continuing cycle of incarnation; that is, after this cycle of 10,000 years, the cycle begins anew.

³⁵ There is also the interpretation of some commentators that the passage may mean that *all* souls get some view of the Forms: McGibbon (1964a) p.56,n.1; cf. Hackforth (1952) p.83. However, McGibbon (1964a) p.57, n.5 concedes that the evidence does seem to indicate that there was a third category of souls, viz, those who had no vision of the Forms at all (in contrast to those who had seen the Forms in the past, but had later been unable to recall them).

³⁶ As 249b4-c6 makes explicit. Hackforth (1952) p.91 notes that if a soul went from an animal (without νοῦς) to a human, the human νοῦς could not be accounted for. This seems to be a quite logical explanation, based as it is on the explicit statement of the text at 249b4. Scott (1987) pp.348,360-365 would argue for a stronger link with the “all knowledge is recollection” thesis of *Meno*. I think, however, that this is implicit in the dialogue, represented by 249b4ff.

³⁷ Crombie (1962) p.328

³⁸ Cf. Tomin (1988) p.32

There is a certain symmetry to this idea, particularly in the light of the regular feasting of the gods.³⁹

These nine categories of lives are given in order of descending worth to society.⁴⁰ The point is made at 248e3-5 that the variations within these lives (that is, good/happy/profitable lifestyle vs. bad/unhappy/unprofitable lifestyle) are a direct consequence of the soul's way of life.⁴¹ This produces a situation opposite to that of *Republic*, where the life is chosen, but the fate is determined by destiny; in *Phaedrus* the life is allotted, but the fate is self-determined, and based on behaviour during life.

The specific life which the soul receives is determined by the degree of the view of the Forms that the soul had before the fall; that is, the souls which had the best view become philosophers, men devoted to the Muses, and lovers;⁴² the next best view produces law-abiding kings, generals or leaders; third, business-men (domestic and public) and civil servants;⁴³ fourth, body trainers and doctors; fifth,

³⁹ Even the gods have the tripartite soul, although it does not trouble them. One might ask whether other souls can achieve this perfection and so pass out of the vault in any permanent, divine way: for example, become *daimons*?

⁴⁰ Hackforth (1952) p.83

⁴¹ Cf. the idea at *Republic* 496d5-497a5, where the life of a philosopher has less benefit (in terms of personal development) in an unworthy society than in a worthy: Ferrari (1987) p.136.

⁴² The notion that lovers, along with philosophers, are entitled to the best lives fits with the general theme of the dialogue.

⁴³ Hackforth's interpretation: (1952) p.83

seers or exponents of mystic rites; sixth, mimetic activities (poetry); seventh, craftsmen or farmers; eighth, sophists or demagogues; ninth, tyrants.⁴⁴

One presumes that the soul which does not see the Forms becomes a tyrant; this is a reasonable explanation of the philosophical ignorance (and rejection of philosophy) of the tyrant, who relies on sophistry and seductive rhetoric to achieve his aims.⁴⁵ The scale of nine lives certainly makes the dichotomy between politics and philosophy clear. The list can also be seen to express a scale of good to evil lives. For Plato, the search for good, through philosophical thought (acquisition of knowledge), is the *raison d'être* of life.

Theoretically, therefore, what happens to the tyrant after the first life? The soul which did not see the Forms could advance, stay the same, or degenerate. Although this soul did not see the Forms (and thus cannot recollect the pre-natal vision), it chooses its next life for itself, so might choose a higher life (and live badly in it: 248e3-5). The soul might also choose the same life again (or a

⁴⁴One notes that there is no category suitable - in terms of contemporary Greek culture - for incarnation as women. The souls, as usual, preserve gender neutrality, and one would expect gender to be determined by incarnation. The fact that the souls are immortal beings, and that they fall into human bodies, may suggest that the human race is a distinctly different entity from these heavenly souls; however, this would presume that human beings could live without being ensouled, and this plainly contradicts the arguments for immortality at 245c6 ff. - viz, that the soul is the "mover" of the body. I do not intend to suggest that the omission of women is, or was, a great problem. One notes, however, that this dialogue is oriented towards men to an extent not found in other dialogues (even *Timaeus* grants women some importance in the evolutionary cycle, even if they are only to be degenerate men).

⁴⁵See the evils of this at 258b ff. Is *Phaedrus* intended as an attack on the tyrants of Syracuse who kept calling on Plato, but rejecting his advice? The date of *Phaedrus*, and the information supplied by the *Seventh Letter*, expressing Plato's dislike of the corrupting influence of political power (325c5-326b4), might suggest that he was making a broader swipe. Cf. Rowe (1986b) pp.3-6 for a discussion of this motif. Tomin (1988) pp.26-41 reviews the date of the dialogue.

degeneration/improvement of it). The third option is that it chooses the life of an animal. This is presumably a degeneration, and it is difficult to see how the soul could reasonably be able to make the choice to return to a human life. It implies continuity of memory between more than one life.⁴⁶ There is also a sense that the ability to think rationally is *innate* in humans, regardless of whether the Forms are seen, and thus that the soul in an animal (although not a rational being) is able to draw on this innate reason to make the next choice of life.

The point is that the *character* of the soul which has had no view of the Forms will influence its subsequent choice of life, and the way it lives its next life. The soul which has not seen the Forms *will not be able to live any of its lives in the best possible way without the rational νοῦς acquired by vision of the Forms*. It is not like other souls which had a *glimpse* of the Forms, and thus have some data within them to draw upon: these souls have no data to access and will presumably live out their ten cycles without hope of early escape.

There has been much debate on the relative positions of, for example, body trainers (trainers of athletes) and farmers, or seers and craftsmen;⁴⁷ the positions of these seem somewhat contradictory, especially if the lives are graduated on the criteria of worth to society.⁴⁸ For example, one might consider farmers to be of

⁴⁶ Rowe (1986a) p.166 suggests, tentatively, that Plato is having it both ways, namely implying that animals are *potentially* rational although not rational *per se*.

⁴⁷ One might also think that poets rank more highly than their debased position in *Republic* would suggest.

⁴⁸ Guthrie (1975) p.426, for example, sees the catalogue of lives as a passing fancy.

considerable worth to society (more so than civil servants!). Hackforth has pointed out, however, that Plato is also listing the lives in terms of *social* worth, based on his own beliefs of such: for example, at *Laws* 846d, manual crafts are forbidden to citizens; at *Republic* 495e, farmers are ranked with artisans as part of the third class (politically repressed through economic necessity).⁴⁹ Plato's contempt for poets is well-known from *Republic*, as is his hatred of sophists and tyrants.⁵⁰

After this first life, there is a judgement of the sort of life which the soul has led in the body.⁵¹ The soul cannot regrow its wings (and thus cannot return to the heavens) until 10,000 years have elapsed.⁵² This period is then broken down into ten further periods of 1,000 years, corresponding to 10 embodiments/incarnations.⁵³ The truly philosophic soul is a special case: this soul regains its wings after 3,000 years and returns to the heavens. The process of regrowth of the wings is outlined in specific terms at 250d1-252c4ff., and is linked to the memory of the Forms. There is no hint that the three lives have to be lived

⁴⁹ Examples taken from Hackforth (1952) p.84.

⁵⁰ Hackforth (1952) pp.83-84 provides appropriate references. I think that one might see the distribution of lives as a "bell-shaped curve" - few of the best possible lives (philosophers), few of the absolute worst lives (tyrants), and the majority in between.

⁵¹ Cf. the ruling on lifestyles at 248e3-5.

⁵² I do not see a problem with Bluck's (1958b) p.412,n.14 objection that to add up to 10,000 the last life must be followed by a reward/punishment life. This seems a quite logical observation.

⁵³ One presumes a 100 year life and a 900 year reward/punishment. The significance of Plato's numbers (particularly nine and ten) has been discussed by Brumbaugh (1989) pp.83-86 among others; for example, one might compare the nine year punishment owed to Persephone at *Meno* 81b-d (= Pindar fr.133); the nine lives of the souls in *Phaedrus*; the life of the philosopher as 729 times (= 9³) more pleasant than that of a tyrant at *Republic* 589e.

sequentially; but, as the entire cycle is only 10,000, it would seem expedient for these to be the first three lives (in sequence).

About the judgement: it is usual in eschatological myths for *fear* to play a major role in the conversion of souls who lack understanding of their position. The situation is different in this myth, and I think this can be ascribed to the context: Plato is preaching to the converted rather than - as in *Republic* or *Laws* - setting out a story which will scare the majority into submission through irrational belief. For Phaedrus - who is of a higher intellectual level than the majority (note his appearance in *Symposium*) - there are none of the details of topography or terrible punishments which one finds in *Phaedo*. The inter-corporeal stage is only mentioned briefly:

αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι, ὅταν τὸν πρῶτον βίον τελευτήσωσιν, κρίσεως ἔτυχον, κριθεῖσαι δὲ αἱ μὲν εἰς τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς δικαιωτήρια ἐλθοῦσαι δίκην ἐκτίνουσιν, αἱ δ' εἰς τοῦρανοῦ τινα τόπον ὑπὸ τῆς Δίκης κουφισθεῖσαι διάγουσιν ἀξίως οὗ ἐν ἀνθρώπου εἶδει ἐβίωσαν βίου. (249a5-b1)

This has raised considerable debate, being considered somewhat superfluous to the essential rationality of the system.⁵⁴ Embodiment on earth is a punishment for the soul *per se*, in that the soul's natural environment is in the heavens.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ What one would like to anticipate at this point is an automatic system such as that of *Laws*.

⁵⁵ Note the description of the embodied soul at 250c4-6: ..καθαροὶ ὄντες καὶ ἀσήμαντοι τούτου ὃ νῦν δὴ σῶμα περιφέροντες ὀνομάζομεν, ὁστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι.

Where is the region of heaven set aside for the reward of souls? Is the region a part of the original area where the souls followed the gods? Does the reward consist of following the gods again, and receiving another view of the Forms for the remainder of the 1,000 years before the next incarnation? This would be a considerable reward. If the reward is in essence a purificatory exercise,⁵⁶ then the rewarded souls can maintain their memories of the god/s and the Forms, which were diminished after the loss of the souls' original purity. This would certainly aid the leading of a second (and third) philosophical life. However, it seems that the view of the Forms is only given again after the 10,000 years of incarnations. The passage is unfortunately vague.⁵⁷

Perhaps 249a9-b1 refers to a more concrete reward, such as a period in an Elysium.⁵⁸ There is a parallel with the period of heavenly reward (and punishment) discussed at *Republic* 614b8-616b1.⁵⁹ One significant difference (between *Phaedrus* and other eschatological myths) is that there is no concept of eternal punishment: it is cosmically determined that *every* soul will return to the heavens after 10,000 years. This has the implication that *whatever* state the soul is

⁵⁶ One tends to see punishment in terms of forced catharsis; see the discussion of *Republic* 614b8-616b1, below.

⁵⁷ McCumber (1982) p.34 suggests that souls would be able to escape from the cycle more quickly if they discussed each other's experiences in a "universal discourse". This implies a long continuity of pre/post-natal memory.

⁵⁸ As Bluck (1958b) p.410 suggests; though he would restrict entrance to Elysium to philosophical souls.

⁵⁹ Viz, the just ascend to the right side of the sky; the unjust take the left-hand passage down into the earth. The returning souls discuss their experiences: the souls from heaven have been purified and tell of happy experiences and visions of beauty; the other souls are dusty, thirsty and weeping about the sufferings they have undergone and seen in the 1,000 year journey, where every crime and good action is repaid tenfold.

in after the ten incarnations, it will return to its natural environment whether it has achieved the status of philosopher or not. It is this problem (viz, the aimlessness of the cycle) which leads me to suggest that 10,000 years does *not* signify the ultimate end of the cycle, and that the cycle will not end until *all* the souls have achieved the status of the all-knowing philosopher, or have passed to some further position (perhaps among the gods or as *daimons*?).

Where, to carry this analogy further, does the soul of the philosopher - which has escaped the cycle after 3,000 years - go, and what does it do? There are a number of possibilities: the philosophic souls could be apotheosized or become *daimons*) à la Empedocles, and live with the Forms.⁶⁰ They might stay in the waiting-place (an Elysium?)⁶¹ for the 7,000 years it takes for the other souls to complete their 10 lives, at which point all of the souls could be dealt with together. Perhaps when the cycle begins again, the philosophers are a special class of followers of Zeus?

If, as I believe, the cycle of lives in the myth depicts an on-going cycle, it is hard to see the point of living as a philosopher if it brings no tangible benefits (if the cycle begins again, and the soul has to live three more philosophic lives). The life of a philosopher is inevitably hard, and to achieve three lives in succession must be exceptional, given the gradual loss of the first memory which occurs after

⁶⁰ Cf. the ultimate destiny of the philosopher at *Phaedo* 63b5-c4 and 114c3-4.

⁶¹ Bluck's suggestion: (1958b) p.410.

the first life (252d1-5). What seems a more appropriate middle-ground option would be that in the next journey around the heavens behind the gods, the philosophic soul has developed to the extent that it never falls (through chance, weight etc..) again. This option is expressed at 248c3-5: θεσμός τε Ἴ�δραστείας ὄδε;

ἥτις ἂν ψυχὴ θεῶ συνοπαδὸς γενομένη κατίδη τι τῶν ἀληθῶν,
μέχρι τε τῆς ἐτέρας περιόδου εἶναι ἀπήμονα, κἂν αἰεὶ τοῦτο
δύνηται ποιεῖν, αἰεὶ ἀβλαβῆ εἶναι·

This does not give the philosophic soul any tangible rewards,⁶² nor does it represent a complete escape from the cycle. However, as no complete loss of memory (comparable to that in *Republic*) occurs between lives/circuits, it must be easier for the philosophic soul to maintain its position close to Zeus. It may eventually be able to do this to the extent of reaching above the vault of the heavens completely, and taking part in the revolution of feasting on the Forms.⁶³

⁶² Cf. Bluck (1958a) p.160, who notes that rewards are not considered important compared with the importance of practising virtue. It might be better expressed that the rewards are in no way commensurate with the hardship involved in living a life of virtue.

⁶³ That it is not *literally* a banquet of the gods, but an allegorical feasting (247a6) is expressed by the idea that the view of the Forms *is* the nourishment for the viewer (the result is wing growth/maintenance): 247d4, 247e4 etc. Note the reference to the inadequate nature of the “food of semblance” at 248b5. At 247e2-7 one notes that the charioteer feeds on the view of the Forms in the Heavens, but the horses are given more tangible supplies - mangers with nectar and ambrosia (247e5-6) - when they return below the heavens. This must reflect the dictum at 247d1-5 that nourishment is provided by the things most appropriate (akin). Nectar and ambrosia, despite their divine nature, are viewed as tangible and material “food”; therefore, it is fitting that the lower parts of the soul (those most linked with the corporeal) should feed in this way, despite the immortal nature of the whole. The idea of two parts of the soul being detached from the other part for feeding is ridiculous. Elsewhere it is stressed that the soul is an indivisible unity; this is reflected by the gods maintaining having three soul parts. This is presumably the passage on which Rowe (1986a) (p.171) based his judgement that the soul is tripartite when discarnate, but with the two lower parts non-operational; of course, there is a good deal of difference between a soul which is non-operational and one which is completely detached. I think this section can be written off as the result of imagination: the fact that the inseparable feathered soul/charioteer and horses can “go home” and separate seems to me to be merely an extension of the myth to complete the picture (of horses); it lends little credibility to the non-allegory. Of course, one

To return to the inter-carnate period of the non-philosophic soul; the punishment occurs in a specific “place of punishment” (δικαιωτήριο).⁶⁴ There is no indication in the text of where the judgement occurs; it is certainly not underground. An Underworld seems anomalous in this picture of the layered celestial world. One might argue that the *underground* nature of the punishment reflects the *earthly* nature of the crime - that is, the corporeality attached to the soul. It seems more likely that there is a way-station between the two places (as in *Republic*) where souls congregate and judgement occurs.⁶⁵ Rowe’s interpretation of δικαιωτήριο is insightful: the underworld is a “place of correction”. This reinforces the *educative* function implicit in punishments, and also serves as a link to the idea of acquisition of knowledge (through recollection), the maintenance of which is so important for the upwardly-mobile philosopher.

This system does not represent a simultaneous or universal fall. A soul does not fall *until it does not see the Forms*,⁶⁶ some souls do not fall at all (248c3-5),

might postulate that the “home” (some sort of way-station between the heavens, the vault and earth) is the Elysium where the gods and the thrice-lived philosophers dwell, and that the procession around the heavens is not the natural state of the souls. It could be extended to illustrate - as in *Republic* - that the soul *is* separable, and that only the upper part is immortal. This would make rubbish of the essential details of the myth, such as the necessity for unity, and the importance of the choice of individual procession. I would suggest that this aspect (the stabling of the horses) is nothing more than a *jeu d’esprit*.

⁶⁴ Definition from LSJ. A later translation (2nd century AD) of this is “place of judgement”.

⁶⁵ It is difficult, given the traditional trappings of the myth, to postulate an automatic judgement of the type found in *Laws*.

⁶⁶ This fact alone would put paid to the idea of each cycle being fixed in time and space as a *magnus annus*; if all souls fall at different times, there can be no predetermination of cycle length.

and there is no indication (rather the contrary) that every soul must fall.⁶⁷ Therefore the system cannot be seen to be one of *necessary* punishment for all souls for an original sin. Indeed there are no strong, morally-based arguments of this sort in *Phaedrus*.

That is, the fall does not represent a burden of accumulated guilt (for example, the Titanic crime) which has to be worked off before the soul can return to the heavens.

Nor does it represent the usual conditions of a moral crime. For example, in Empedocles fr.115, the fall of the soul occurs because of the crime of eating flesh (also through necessity), and the guilt, purificatory and punitive aspects of this are greatly emphasized.⁶⁸ In Empedocles fr.136, purification is partially

⁶⁷ Bluck (1958a) p.158 has suggested that the "weight" (248c7-9) which drags the soul down is the weight of corporeality (as it is in *Phaedo*). In the myth, however, it is the *loss* of the wings which drags the body down. The unity of soul and wings is compromised if the balance is upset by the loss of wings: the soul has no way of keeping itself aloft, and thus falls. It is not the case that the weight of the soul has increased beyond the weight which can be sustained by the wings. Moreover, the idea that the fall is induced by the "weight" of forgetfulness seems illogical: the "food of semblance" (248b5) which the forgetful soul feeds on causes the wings to degenerate and the soul to fall, rather than causing the soul to grow too heavy for the wings. At 246d9-e5 the point is made that the wings are nourished by things noble and good (in particular the divine), and wasted by bad; that is, the immortal soul is nourished by things akin to it (divine, immortal: the Forms). It is the eating of nourishing food (the recollection of the Forms) which produces the regrowth of the wings. Surely the soul cannot eat so much of this vision that the wings drop off! This is hardly logical. There is no mention of "physical", corporeal accretions such as the barnacles on the statue at *Republic* 611e1 ff., or the earthly accretions which keep souls floating close to earth, above cemeteries, in *Phaedo* 81c11-d4: these souls are "impure" (81b1ff) and heavy with "ingrained" (81c5), "heavy and earthy" (c9) corporeality (83d4-e3). The concept of the weighed-down soul has influenced all of Bluck's subsequent arguments, so that he sees the reincarnation process in terms of a cycle of purification. I have already discussed the problem of perceiving the Phaedrean soul in terms of traditional "purity". McGibbon (1964a) pp.56-57, p.60 also puts forward strong opposition to this view.

⁶⁸ Purification: Empedocles fr. 128 (defilement); punishment: fragments 118, 121, 124.

achieved by correct thought. In *Phaedrus*, knowledge (of the Forms) is central; however, there is little emphasis on the incarnations as a form of purification. Another indication of this may be the absence of any idea of permanent banishment from the heavens (eternal punishment in Hades, for example).⁶⁹

Contra the cycle as a fixed period of (necessary) purification, the evidence implies that some (or nearly all?) souls leave the cycle and return to the heavens in an unpurified state. This would certainly defeat the purpose of a cycle which was intended as a purificatory exercise.⁷⁰ I tend to doubt that purification *per se* is the object of the *Phaedrus* cycle.⁷¹ Rather, although a loss of purity is implied (250c3-4), the fall is described (despite the veil of myth and allegory) in strictly rational terms: indeed *it is a fall of reason*. Not only is the pseudo-ancestral sin motif absent, but the body is not the anathema that it is in *Phaedo*.⁷² The remark about the body as an oyster (250c4-6) is the only reference to this view, and it is not taken any further. Life in the body is not the *best* life for the soul, but it is hardly the burden that it is in *Phaedo*, because escape appears to be guaranteed after 10,000 years of incarnate life. Likewise, little emphasis is placed on the allure

⁶⁹ Related to this, one might add, is the lack of references in *Phaedrus* to aspects of purification such as the control of bodily desires. There is a brief reference to Socrates' desire that τὸ δὲ χρυσοῦ πλῆθος εἶη μοι ὅσον μήτε φέρειν μήτε ἄγειν δύναίτο ἄλλος ἢ ὁ σώφρων (279c1-3). This is certainly not a rejection of materiality akin to that in *Phaedo*, or among the Pythagoreans parodied in the comic poets. The only enforced control which seems important is that of sexual appetite, controlled by celibacy; this is the hardest test of the soul: 250e3-256e2.

⁷⁰ Cf. the forced catharsis (the penalty paid to Persephone) of Pindar fr.133.

⁷¹ Cf. McGibbon (1964a) p.60. One might draw a parallel with the post-mortem punishments in the Myth of Er, which are strictly punitive (punishment is paid out at the rate of ten times the crime) and contain no element of purification (unlike *Phaedo*).

⁷² Rowe (1986a) p.173 discusses this.

of the corporeal, except in the context of sexual attraction to the semblance to the Forms.

One does note (as a comparison with the σώμα/σῆμα debate in *Gorgias*, *Phaedo* and *Cratylus*) that the soul which sees the Forms (described as “revelations” - φάσματα: 250c4) while in the body (σῶμα) is described as ἀσήμαντος (“un-entombed”); in the analogy with the oyster, the soul’s normal state is described as imprisoned (δεδεσμευμένος: 250c6). This is Plato’s predilection for word-play which is so prominent in other dialogues on the soul; yet again it is impossible to reach a firm conclusion on whether the body is a prison or a tomb. As I noted above, all that we *can* say is that embodiment is a change to a less pleasant and less natural environment for the soul; but whether it is to be seen as imprisonment or entombment is left deliberately ambiguous.

Regarding the question of whether the 10,000 years represents the *total period* that the soul spends away from the heavens: it is certainly the minimum time required for the (non-philosophic) soul to regrow its wings. This seems anomalous with Plato’s usual dictum that everyone must strive to be a philosopher, and that there is no release by any other means. In *Phaedrus*, every soul will be winged again after 10,000 years, regardless of its status.

In *Timaeus*, the process of the cycle of incarnations can be likened to an evolution of both species and moral character. The cycle is much looser in *Phaedrus*, although equally self-determined. The only prohibition is that the soul cannot embody a human until it has viewed the Forms.

Why does a human *choose* to become an animal? In the light of Empedocles fr.117 (and fr.146),⁷³ one might argue that it is necessary to live as every sort of creature to gain the full experience of the world necessary to escape the constant cycle of incarnations. Here, however, escape is guaranteed after 10,000 years. It is noticeable that although there is no formal linking of the dual senses of “recollection” (recollection of past lives; recollection of the prenatal view of the Forms), one might presuppose that to live a second and third philosophic life the soul would need to have some memory of the previous life to build upon. However, the solution may instead look toward *Republic* 565d-e (the cannibal becomes a wolf), or forward to the flippancy of *Timaeus* 91d ff. (birds from astronomers; snakes from the extremely stupid and corporeally attached.). The next life is chosen by the soul (249b1-4), and this choice is determined by the soul’s character. Some sort of loss of memory is implied before the *second* incarnation, because the soul has no access to memory of the gods which it followed, except during its first “pure” incarnation (252d3-5). The loss of memory could be linked to the *impurity* of the soul, that is, the result of corporeal

⁷³ Guthrie (1957) pp.235f. sees *Phaedrus* as an Empedoclean dialogue (using fr.115 in particular).

accretions (252d1-5). This memory loss is never made specific and does not have the central position that it has in *Republic*.⁷⁴

One might ask whether the acquisition of common knowledge (of the Forms) implies a corresponding loss of individuality? Certainly, the intended aim of all souls ought to be philosophy (uniformity?), but the dialogue also places a good deal of emphasis on individuality. There is (it seems) no final absorption into a greater soul mass, and souls are given the opportunity to choose their god and develop their characters.⁷⁵

The best incarnate lives are those of men devoted to the Muses, philosophers (lovers of wisdom) and lovers *per se* (248d ff.). These lives are the result of following the right god (Zeus), and receiving a good view of the Forms. The consequences of these two events influence, but do not control, the incarnate soul - its incarnate life and behaviour are self-determined. Thus, *life* as a philosopher is given to the soul, but the choice of *how to live* in this life is an autonomous decision.

There may be “environmental” limitations on practising the best sort of life;⁷⁶ for example, the soul in the lowest type of life (the tyrant) is handicapped

⁷⁴ There is no “physical” representation of this process (e.g. a drinking at Lethe).

⁷⁵ Can we see the Forms as a yardstick of comparison to determine whether souls have the right knowledge? - similar to, for example, an IQ test).

⁷⁶ Bluck (1958b) pp.412ff.

from being a philosopher (i.e. from being virtuous) by his environment and the expectations of his environment. One might consider Plato's problems with the tyrants of Syracuse in this context (although one might think that, beyond all other lives, a tyrant would be most free to pursue the life that he desired); a better analogy (although Plato does not mention women in this dialogue)⁷⁷ might be that of a high born female in the Greek world - few of the environmental options which make the philosopher able to pursue philosophic virtue are open to these women.⁷⁸ A final handicap is, of course, the life one led before this one, which may affect the soul's character.⁷⁹

This "best" sort of life, carried out by the soul incarnated as a philosopher, is that life which is viewed by other embodied souls (who are ignorant/forgetful of the Forms) as the life of a crazy man - a life of madness. This judgement is purely subjective, and based on the ignorance of the other souls. The philosopher, in touch with his recollection of the Forms (249b6-c4), ignores the sensible and material, and strives to ὄρνιθος δίκην βλέπων ἄνω, τῶν κάτω δὲ ἀμελῶν, αἰτίαν

⁷⁷ See the articles by duBois (1985) and Wender (1973) on this issue of Plato's presumed misogyny. I have elsewhere commented on duBois' views on women in *Timaeus* (q.v.).

⁷⁸ duBois (1985) is sympathetic to Plato; she describes the dialogue in terms of "Socratic transvestism" (p.96), sexual contradictories (pp.95ff.), collection/connection and division (p.96) where male and female roles become reversed (contradict). "Reproduction is..ascribed exclusively to men; they will inseminate each other with philosophy, in a sexual act in which women have no part." - despite this fact, duBois believes that Socrates breaks down the barriers of misogyny in Greek culture (p.96) by becoming an androgyne (p.97), and thus seducing the reader/Phaedrus with the forbidden. Unfortunately, in practical, doctrinal terms, there is no mention at all of the role of women in the reincarnation cycle, or in philosophy, in *Phaedrus*; in the most simple terms this *would* point to what duBois is attempting to deny: "...homoerotics based on absolute rejection of women from intercourse with men, on the practice of philosophy which also exiles women."

⁷⁹ Bluck (1958b) pp.412-414

ἔχει ὡς μανικῶς διακείμενος. (249d7-e1). The best philosopher (there are grades in this life too, depending on one's behaviour) looks only to the universals (249b6-c1), and is considered to be crazy by his fellow men (249d8-e1):⁸⁰

ἔξιτάμενος δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων σπουδασμάτων καὶ πρὸς τῷ
θείῳ γιγνόμενος, νοθετεῖται μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ὡς
παρακινῶν, ἐνθουσιάζων δὲ λέληθεν τοὺς πολλοὺς. (249c8-d3)

Thus, *Phaedrus* can also be seen to explain the peculiar behaviour of the philosopher (the lover) who neglects the material and corporeal in his search for the divine.⁸¹

The philosophic soul is also attacked by a madness which is induced by beauty and equated with *love*.⁸² The explanation is clever and allegorical,

⁸⁰ One might argue that all philosophers are regarded as mad (in varying degrees) by those who cannot or do not understand their motivation/s. The non-conforming nature of the philosopher is a major aspect of this mind-set; one might consider, for example, Diogenes, who lived in a barrel, masturbated in public, and died attempting to cure his dropsy by burying himself in animal dung. One commentator has pointed out that his cure can be seen as a rational attempt to raise his temperature - thus illustrating the different perspectives with which we approach the "eccentricities" of the philosophers.

⁸¹ Cf. Socrates' rejection of Alcibiades, and his explanation in terms of "love" at *Symposium* 218b-219e: there is a higher and truer love beyond the physical (which is all that Alcibiades' seeks).

⁸² This is a major "erotic" theme of *Phaedrus* - the explanation/justification in rational and philosophical terms of the pursuit, "adoption" and education of attractive youths by older men for various kinds of relationships. Commentators are coy about seeing the dialogue as a Socratic seduction. Ferrari (1987), for example, is explicit that the imagery of the prickling of the feathers tips, the sweat softening the sealed lips, the swelling of the quills, etc. (p.154) is sexual (albeit disembodied), but he does not make any explicit connection between this and the personnel of the dialogue. Dyson (1982) p.309 would see a series of "invitations" to courtship. It seems to me that not only is the dialogue set in a context unfamiliar to the philosopher, but that there is a seduction of sorts occurring within the dialogue. Socrates attempts to lure Phaedrus away from Lysias to his own form of love, viz the non-physical. There could not be a greater dichotomy between this "natural" seduction in a natural setting, and Alcibiades' attempted (physical) seduction of Socrates in the sophisticated and "cultured" context of *Symposium* 218b-219e (where Phaedrus was also present). Socrates' rejection of Alcibiades and his seduction of Phaedrus are grounded in this same belief that there is a higher and truer love. That *Phaedrus* immediately

based on the central tenets of Socrates' myth, viz, the soul as chariot and horses, the procession of gods, the Forms, and reincarnation. It also has links with the earlier themes of *Phaedrus* - the function of rhetoric, and the education of the soul (*ψυχαγωγία/παιδαγωγία*).

The arguments are similar to those of *Meno* 81d6, where Socrates, attempting to define virtue, argues that learning/knowledge is wholly recollection. In *Phaedrus*, this idea has become more sophisticated and less open to refutation, the result of using a better example to illustrate how and why recollection occurs. The problem inherent in using an abstract concept to illustrate a process of thought in physical terms is self-evident. This was the problem with illustrating the recollection of "virtue" in *Meno*.⁸³

In *Phaedrus* Socrates chooses the least abstract of all these personified concepts (Justice, Virtue, Goodness, Beauty etc..), one which can be visualized in purely physical terms,⁸⁴ and which is obvious to every person (although they

follows *Symposium* - according to Guthrie's (1975) order - lends credence to the idea of a deliberate juxtaposition. And the aim of this? The truly philosophic soul occasionally lapses (256c-d) and the punishment is minor (felicity is maintained). I find this significant, because the philosopher should be the *last* to lapse: one would think that he had total self-control, and too much to lose (i.e. his escape in three lives). Compare also Alcibiades' drunken slander of Socrates' alleged affairs with other youths at *Symposium* 222b7ff., which seem to build up a picture of a most unusual seduction technique based on a sexually-charged anti-seduction and the mutual benefits of philosophy. The other side of the coin is that Socrates is giving Phaedrus the same message as he gave Alcibiades in an attempt to defuse a potential misunderstanding of the situation and relationship.

⁸³ The ridiculous mathematical "proof" that all knowledge is recollection further demonstrates this problem of dealing with abstracts: *Meno* 82b ff.

⁸⁴ Prior (p.122) would argue that none of these concepts has an appropriate visual image. *Phaedrus* would show that this view is incorrect.

perceive its significance in different ways): viz, "Beauty". Beauty is the only physical reference point from which the embodied soul can recollect the Forms.

Only Beauty can be seen and understood with any ease.⁸⁵

τοῖς δ' αὖ μεγίστοις οὐσι καὶ τιμιωτάτοις οὐκ ἔστιν εἶδωλον οὐδεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰργασμένον ἐναργῶς, οὐ δειχθέντος τὴν τοῦ πυνθανομένου ψυχὴν ὁ βουλόμενος ἀποπληρῶσαι, πρὸς τῶν αἰσθήσεων τινα προσαρμόττων, ἱκανῶς πληρῶσει. διὸ δεῖ μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατὸν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι· τὰ γὰρ ἀσώματα, κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα, λόγῳ μόνον ἄλλω δὲ οὐδενὶ σαφῶς δείκνυται, τούτων δὲ ἔνεκα πάντ' ἐστὶ τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα. (*Politicus* 285e-286a)

This is very convenient, in the context of the argument, for explaining and justifying physical attraction without consummation.

The model for recollection is that the embodied soul sees a sensible (a beautiful youth),⁸⁶ which brings about varying degrees of recollection of the prenatal view of the Form of Beauty, and of the beauty of the procession of the gods. Logically, the philosopher (the follower of Zeus) is most able to make the connection between his reaction to the beautiful youth (desire, arousal, loss of faculties etc..) and the Form of Beauty. The philosopher is also most able to deal with these reactions in the best way, and it is this *best* approach to beauty in the flesh which forms the crux of Socrates' discussion.

⁸⁵ McCumber (1982) p.35f. suggests that the "beauty" in question is not specifically a likeness to the Form of Beauty, but the beauty of the Forms as a whole.

⁸⁶ *Phaedrus* makes no reference to the beauty of women: one wonders whether beautiful women also bring recollection of the Forms? The context (*Phaedrus*' presence) demands that only youths are mentioned.

The intended purpose of the beautiful sight is to trigger the soul into recollection of the pre-natal view and its significance. The degree to which this is carried forward depends on how the significance of the reaction is analysed and self-related by the soul. The vision *should* re-awaken the soul to its desire for increased knowledge of these partially-recollected visions. Further knowledge is achieved through further recollection, and the degree to which this occurs depends on the four points influencing the soul: innate character, character as a result of following the gods, knowledge from the type of vision of the Forms, and character developed in earthly incarnation.⁸⁷ The ultimate aim is regrowth of the wings, quicker escape from the cycle of reincarnation, and return to the heavenly procession.

The reaction to beauty is described both in terms of the “feathery” soul, and the soul as charioteer and horses. The embodied soul is one which has lost its wings and dropped to earth. Recollection of the Forms makes the wings grow again. This regrowth/recollection is stimulated by the sight of sensibles which resemble (are the semblance of) the Forms, with the result that the soul falls in love with the sensibles.⁸⁸ The degree to which the soul reacts to sensible beauty depends on the type of view it received in the heavenly procession, the particular procession it followed, and, finally, the time/lives elapsed since the procession and

⁸⁷ Discussed above.

⁸⁸ If we could see wisdom, δεινούς γὰρ ἂν παρείχεν ἔρωτας. (250d4-5).

viewing. The soul's reaction to beauty (in this example), based on these factors, determines its destiny in the next life.

The physical reaction to beauty is described in graphic terms: the soul "sees" a beautiful youth and is consumed by the madness (251d8-e1) of love. The allegorical-cum-physical result is that, while the object of beauty is seen, the closed, dried up feather follicles of the soul are re-moistened by the "effluence" of beauty, and feathers begin to sprout again. While the soul sees the source of beauty, this is a delightful sensation; however, when the beautiful youth moves out of sight, the soul begins to dry again, and the process is quite painful (an itching). In an attempt to assuage this pain, the soul desires to be constantly in sight of the object of beauty. The description is that of desire and arousal, and well describes the madness and pain - yet sweetness (251e5) - of love. The sensations felt by the soul are also akin to those of initiates into mystery religions: τοῖς δὲ δὴ τοιούτοις ἀνὴρ ὑπομνήμασιν ὀρθῶς χρώμενος, τελέους ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος, τέλος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται. (249c6-8).⁸⁹

⁸⁹The language of the mysteries is a constant feature of *Phaedrus*, and has led many commentators to attempt to identify the dialogue's religious background. For example, Morgan (1990) p.172 thinks that the terms are especially reminiscent of Eleusinian terminology. He cites 250b8-c1: ..εἰδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην..; the use of "mystes" and "epopteia" (250c4); also 253c3 on initiations/*teletai*. Morgan (p.199,n.50) would, however, after Graf, see *Phaedrus* as an Orphic version of an Eleusinian mystery religion - which the similarity of Pindar fr.137 might reinforce. Morgan's statement that Pindar was sympathetic and familiar with Orphic teachings and texts - based on *Oly.*2.68-77 (q.v.), *Pyth.*4.175-177 and fr. 133 - can hardly be shown with any degree of certainty, as I hope that I have already demonstrated. However, the specific problem with Morgan's theory is that we have absolutely no definite evidence to back up his claim that "Plato is of course our best source for Orphic materials before the Hellenistic period." (p.206,n.44). What Morgan has demonstrated is the danger of using "Orphic" as a generic term. One might - considering the work of Cole (1980) - equally well use the term "Bacchic". The connection of Plato with Southern Italy is little help in this regard. I

In terms of reincarnation, the re-sprouting of the wings is the first step in the return of the soul to the heavenly procession. However, because the soul is rooted in the body, this causes the strange behaviour of the philosopher who shuns materiality - his soul attempts to take departure of the corporeal. The recognition of beauty in terms of its resemblance to the divine (gods and Forms), and thus the decision to worship, and work towards elevating the youth to greater resemblance of the divine (ὁμοίωσις),⁹⁰ brings corresponding virtue to the philosopher's soul. This leads to a better judgement, and thus a quicker end to the reincarnation cycle.

Souls which have had recent or prolonged contact with the Forms, and have an understanding of the heavenly procession, react differently to this stimulus than those distant to the process, or corrupt (250e1-251a1). These latter, when in the presence of the beautiful boy, desire satisfaction through physical "love". The philosopher (as the highest class of human life) sees beyond the physical; for him, the sight of beauty brings recollection of the Forms and the heavenly procession: "…activated by pure love, with the help of philosophic discourse.."⁹¹

The result is that while the philosopher *defines* his subsequent relationship with the youth in terms of "lover" and "beloved", his *intention* for the relationship

have discussed these problems more specifically in Appendix B on Orphism. Stewart (1960) pp.15-16 also comments on the link with Eleusis.

⁹⁰ Cf. 279b9: δόιητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τᾶνδοθεν

⁹¹ Tomin (1988) p.34

is “Platonic” - that is, the philosopher constructs a relationship on a purely spiritual level. This is the optimum relationship for the philosopher (and, presumably, the youth) in terms of the post-mortem judgement and allocation of the next/final life. The basis of the relationship appears to be educative, based on ψυχαγωγία. The philosopher sees and further shapes the youth in the mould of the god whose procession he had followed.

It is also the influence of this god which affects the way a soul “deals” with love. For example, followers of Ares think they have been wronged, and kill themselves or their beloved; followers of Zeus are most able to cope calmly with love. The recollection (subconscious) of the god also influences the beloved chosen by the soul. Like attracts like: the philosopher seeks a love most like Zeus (that is, a youth who displays an interest in philosophy and leadership: 252e2-3).⁹² It also seems that a potential philosopher is attracted to another potential philosopher in this way (252e5-7); in both cases, the lover and the beloved set out on a mutual path to self-fulfilment through learning. The training seems to involve some sort of mutual *homoiosis* with the god - making the beloved like the god. Thus the philosopher acts as the youth’s mentor, shaping the youth into a philosopher.

⁹² One might even see in *Phaedrus* the beginning of what has become a popular form of psychoanalysis, that of (Jung’s) “archetypes”. This is an interesting point in the comparison of Phaedrus’ and Alcibiades’ (changing) attitudes to love. Phaedrus is flattered by Socrates implicitly comparing him - because of his interest in thought and his close connection with a philosopher - with Zeus; for his part, Socrates is steering Phaedrus away from Lysias’ seductive but sophistic rhetoric, turning him towards a more definite involvement in philosophy. On flattery: Dyson (1982) pp.308ff. Regarding Alcibiades, see note 82, above.

A philosopher can be defined as a soul, formerly in the procession of Zeus, who had an exceptionally good view of the Forms, but who fell by some mischance, into the best type of human life, and who, by pursuing philosophic values will regrow its wings in three lives, providing it sustains an exceptional recollection of the Forms and the procession.

This is an important consideration regarding the reincarnation cycle: the best type of life is that of physical and mental hardship (as a philosopher), and early (perhaps permanent) escape from the cycle is only possible for the philosopher; thus, by training philosophers, setting youths on the right path to learning, and making philosophy attractive and respectable, the philosopher has a *philanthropic* role in society. In terms of the myth, he is re-introducing souls to the divine sights through philosophy.⁹³ Are these souls familiar because they were once in the procession behind the god they resemble (i.e. Zeus) but, having already lived one life, have forgotten their view of the procession and the Forms? Perhaps this is how souls who have “forgotten” are able to work their way out of the cycle and stay out: the philosopher, who has the necessary knowledge from recollection shows the way. This is problematic, particularly if there is no retention of past-life experience: there is no guarantee that trainee philosophers will retain this training

⁹³ This may equate with McCumber's (1982) p.34 suggestion regarding “universal discourse” as a way to speed through the cycle of incarnations.

into the next life.⁹⁴ Socrates is specific that only the philosopher attains sustainable wing regrowth:

διὸ δὴ δικαίως μόνη πτεροῦται ἢ τοῦ φιλοσόφου διάνοια· πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνοις αἰεὶ ἐστὶν μνήμη κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεϊὸς ἐστίν. (249c4-6)

The training of the youth is obviously mutually beneficial, but more so for the philosopher. It does this through the “recollection” engendered in training the youth; in terms of the myth, this contact keeps the feathers well-nourished, enabling the disembodied soul to soar to the heavens again. In “practical” terms, it ensures that the philosophical soul is incarnated for its second stint as a philosopher again. If this can be repeated a third time, the philosophic soul is free of the cycle of incarnation.

The process and challenge of philosophical versus physical love is more clearly explained in terms of the chariot and horses (253c7 ff.). The soul perceives the beautiful youth, the good horse remains controlled by the charioteer, but the evil horse leaps towards the youth and suggests sexual pleasures to the soul.⁹⁵ The charioteer is willing, but when close to the youth it recollects from the youth’s appearance the reverence owed to the god and, ashamed, pulls the horses violently back. The evil horse still desires intercourse, and because of this has to be trained again and again, until this physical desire is controlled, and the soul can follow the

⁹⁴ Will the soul receive a better life on judgement?

⁹⁵ This sort of passion is inherently evil: cf. McGibbon (1964a) p.56).

youth in reverence and awe (for the godlike nature of the youth's beauty: 254e8-255a1) without this desire intruding. Thus the youth is eventually won over (despite all that he might have heard about such relationships)⁹⁶ by reason of his age, affection, and necessity (*χρεὼν*: 255a7), and keeps company with the lover in the gymnasium and elsewhere. This leads to the beloved "loving" the lover: receiving the same confused emotions (equating with the regrowth of feathers) as the lover had, and eventually misconstruing this and desiring a physical relationship with the lover.

This is the lover's hardest choice. Physical love is bad for the soul, and brings no benefit to either party; philosophical (Platonic) love is the best sort of love and brings wisdom.⁹⁷ Wisdom is thus the ultimate aim of the philosopher, and the key to escape from the reincarnation cycle. Wisdom is achieved through correct psychagogy - the leading of the soul back to the winged state, which is achieved through Socrates' definition of rhetoric at 261a7-8.⁹⁸ Love is the catalyst - the "*psychagogos*" for this return.⁹⁹ The opposite is the rhetoric of Lysias by which Phaedrus was initially seduced.

⁹⁶ Alcibiades' claim about Socrates' (sexual) relationships with youths comes to mind: *Symposium* 222b7ff.

⁹⁷ Mutual love produces the indivisible unit (the "universal eros") that the universe is built upon? - cf. McCumber (1982) p.36.

⁹⁸ Translated by Rowe (1986b): "...the science of rhetoric...[is]...a kind of leading of the soul (psychagogy) by means of things said.."

⁹⁹ Wyller (1991) p.55

The degree to which the soul pursues and loves wisdom determines the soul's destiny in the reincarnation cycle:

ἐὰν μὲν δὴ οὖν εἰς τεταγμένην τε δίαιταν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν νικήσῃ τὰ βελτίω τῆς διανοίας ἀγαγόντα, μακάριον μὲν καὶ ὁμονοητικὸν τὸν ἐνθάδε βίον διάγουσιν, ἐγκρατεῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κόσμιοι ὄντες, δουλωσάμενοι μὲν ᾧ κακία ψυχῆς ἐνεγίγνετο, ἐλευθερώσαντες δὲ ᾧ ἀρετῇ· τελευτήσαντες δὲ δὴ ὑπόπτεροι καὶ ἐλαφροὶ γεγονότες τῶν τριῶν παλαισμάτων τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς Ὀλυμπιακῶν ἐν νενικήκασιν, οὐ μείζον ἀγαθὸν οὔτε σωφροσύνη ἀνθρωπίνη οὔτε θεία μανία δυνατὴ πορίσαι ἀνθρώπῳ. (256a7-b7)

By comparison, souls with some latent philosophical tendencies, but ruled by a code of honour, tend to get swept away in the heat of the moment and consummate their friendship. They remain friends (believing they are thus pledged) and continue their sexual relationship, but infrequently (256c6), because they know that it is not right. In terms of reincarnation,

ἐν δὲ τῇ τελευτῇ ἄπτεροι μὲν, ὠρμηκότες δὲ πτεροῦσθαι ἐκβαίνουσι τοῦ σώματος, ὥστε οὐ μικρὸν ἄθλον τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μανίας φέρονται· εἰς γὰρ σκότον καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ γῆς πορείαν οὐ νόμος ἐστὶν ἔπι ἐλθεῖν τοῖς κατηργημένοις ἤδη τῆς ὑπουρανίου πορείας, ἀλλὰ φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν μετ' ἀλλήλων πορευομένους, καὶ ὁμοπτέρους ἔρωτος χάριν, ὅταν γένωνται, γενέσθαι. (256d3-e2)

This passage raises a number of interesting questions: first, how does one translate the “impulse to gain [wings]” in practical terms of the cycle? This seems to imply that the soul retains some memory of this previous life, which contradicts Plato's usual use of recollection only in the context of the pre-natal visions, not of previous earthly lives. It is hard to imagine what the “impulse” might consist of in

these terms. For the soul not to repeat its mistake/s again, one would need a full recollection of the previous life.

Is this memory quantitative? That is, if an imperfect soul retains some memory, then will the most perfect soul (the philosopher) have even more memory to draw upon? How is this memory accessed? I wonder if the “impulse” is associated with the character/nature of the soul which the soul takes with it to each new life. This is also a problem, because it appears to contradict the previous rule that a soul only retains memory of the pre-natal vision if it lives a perfect first life. However, this may be the key to the problem - that the “impulse” which the soul gets *is* a further retention of memory of the pre-natal vision, rather than of the last life.¹⁰⁰ It is constant recollection that makes a philosopher.¹⁰¹ The acquisition of a good “class” of life in the next incarnation will also aid the soul in living a more philosophical life next time.

The second question that the passage raises concerns the period of reward/punishment: the nearly perfect soul seems to reap the same reward as the perfect, philosopher’s soul. The only difference between the two is that the philosophical soul has achieved wing regrowth (to some extent) while the less

¹⁰⁰ Although - because there is no mention of forced loss of memory (for example, a drinking at Lethe) - one wonders whether memory *is* still available to the soul, and simply has to be tapped into by becoming a philosopher. The semantics are a problem - to tap into the memory is to become a philosopher, but one needs to be a philosopher to do this.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Dyson (1982) p.307

perfect soul has not.¹⁰² That is to say, the less-perfect soul will not count this life as one of the three lives needed to escape from the cycle before 10,000 years - that is the reward only of the philosopher. The soul which nearly made it seems to be given its fair reward (οὐ σμικρὸν ἄθλον: 256d5): it does not have to go εἰς τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς δικαιωτήρια ἐλθοῦσαι δίκην ἐκτίνουσιν (249a6-7). One presumes, from 256d8-e2 that these two souls,¹⁰³

..εἰς τούρανου τινὰ τόπον ὑπὸ τῆς Δίκης κουφισθεῖσαι
 διάγουσιν ἀξίως οὐ ἐν ἀνθρώπου εἶδει ἐβίωσαν βίου. (249a7-
 b1)

To get this reward, the souls must have had a favourable judgement. This illustrates, first, that there are grades of good/evil and grades of punishment for both; secondly, it gives us the important information that not all souls have to pay the penalty because of necessity. As I argued, above, there does not appear to be any idea of an ancestral sin necessitating requital from all souls. I have already discussed the possibility that these rewarded souls rejoin the procession of gods. This does not seem to be indicated here; rather, the reward seems to be depicted as an Elysium-like period of existence¹⁰⁴ in a place removed from the judgement place *and* the area of the procession of the gods.

¹⁰² Is Plato/Socrates admitting that sexual abstinence is impossible except for a very few souls (the philosophers)? Certainly it is impossible to know the extent of abstinence without references to the worth of *heterosexual* liaisons.

¹⁰³ The idea of the two souls with matching plumage is whimsical, and a play on the like-attracting-like motif. For the idea, one is reminded of *Iliad* 23.90-91 and *Odyssey* 24.73-79 where the ashes of Achilles and Patroclus (two men seeking honour rather than pure philosophy) are buried in the same urn as a mark of their close relationship.

¹⁰⁴ Which obviously does not require wings to sustain the souls in the heavens!

The fate of the absolutely non-philosophical soul is not made specific; but one presumes that these souls must live through ten cycles of reincarnation before they return to the heavens, where, I would suggest, the procession begins again for these souls, with the attempt to view the Forms, and, if they fail, they fall into human bodies and the next cycle of incarnations.

*

What is the purpose of reincarnation in *Phaedrus*? It is deeply embedded in myth but, on the most basic level, *reincarnation is the reason why humans must be philosophers*. *Phaedrus* justifies the existence of the philosopher as the best possible way of life. In this, *Phaedrus* has much in common with other Platonic dialogues: an unusual and unrewarding picture of life has been humanized for the benefit of souls who might not otherwise have any motivation towards a philosophical life. Thus, *Phaedrus* is part of a common tradition (Empedocles *et al*) - the demonstration of how a particular way of life, which is despised by the multitude, can in fact be justified as the best. That is, Socrates is turning *Phaedrus* away from the attractive and fashionable company of Lysias, and justifying the attractiveness of his own way of life. In this sense, as Rowe notes, reincarnation/recollection “..is a logical solution to a problem.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Rowe (1986a) p.61. Rowe thinks that reincarnation and recollection are serious beliefs of Plato. I cannot judge this; however, their fluidity and changing appearance in different dialogues would suggest to me that they are very convenient tools to get a message across in an easily comprehended manner - viz, by myth or stories.

Both recollection and reincarnation receive one of their most serious and prolonged treatments of all in this dialogue, but it is still, nevertheless, in mythic form. Reincarnation brings the dialogue to the point where Socrates has firm (although mythic) ground on which to build in his return to discussing the original themes of the dialogue, viz, rhetoric and sophistry (257d8). Just as the venture into myth (and reincarnation) in *Meno* enabled Socrates to give Meno a glib answer and then return to the true subject, so too in *Phaedrus*, the remainder of the task of persuading Phaedrus can be accomplished from a fixed ground:

..ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν δέ, ὥσπερ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ Πολέμαρχος τέτραπται, τρέψον [Lysias], ἵνα καὶ ὁ ἐραστής ᾧδε αὐτοῦ μηκέτι ἐπαμφοτερίζῃ καθάπερ νῦν, ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς πρὸς Ἔρωτα μετὰ φιλοσόφων λόγων τὸν βίον ποιῆται. (257b3-6)

Mortals have a gift from the gods and Muses - the ability to speak - but we are obliged to use this gift for the best reasons. It is important to use knowledge for good ends. This is the *raison d'être* of philosophy; it is also how sophists and rhetoricians go wrong - they use their ability to speak "well" (plausibly) for the wrong motivations. They are corruptible and corrupting because of their ability to "lead the soul" (ψυχαγωγία: 261a8; 271d1); and people are corrupted by their ignorance of the difference between the universals and the particulars (262a5ff), viz, their inability to know the truth:¹⁰⁶ οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖνο μόνον σκοπεῖς, εἴτε οὕτως εἴτε ἄλλως ἔχει (275c2). Thus the whole picture of the soul and the Forms connects to the main theme of the dialogue:

¹⁰⁶ As McGibbon (1964a) p.60,n.3 points out, "...for Plato the moral and intellectual aspects are one."

..ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι αὐτῶν τοὺς βελτίστους [speeches] εἰδόντων ὑπόμνησιν γεγονέναι, ἐν δὲ τοῖς διδασκομένοις καὶ μαθήσεως χάριν λεγομένοις καὶ τῷ ὄντι γραφομένοις ἐν ψυχῇ περὶ δικαίων τε καὶ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν [ἐν] μόνις ἡγούμενος τό τε ἐναργές εἶναι καὶ τέλος καὶ ἄξιον σπουδῆς· δεῖν δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους λόγους αὐτοῦ λέγεσθαι οἷον ὑεῖς γνησίους εἶναι, πρῶτον μὲν τὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐὰν εὐρεθεῖς ἐνή, ἔπειτα εἴ τινες τούτου ἔκγονοί τε καὶ ἀδελφοὶ ἅμα ἐν ἄλλαισιν ἄλλων ψυχαῖς κατ' ἀξίαν ἐνέφυσαν· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους χαίρειν ἐῶν - οὗτος δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀνὴρ κινδυνεύει, ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἶναι οἷον ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ εὐξάμεθ' ἂν σέ τε καὶ ἐμέ γενέσθαι. (277e9-278b4)

This is the philosopher (278d4); and the necessity to avoid the opposite is “explained” by the reincarnation myth, illustrating the damaging repercussions of negligent ψυχαγωγία.

CHAPTER 9: TIMAEUS

Reincarnation is essential to the myth of creation in *Timaeus*. It explains how human souls (created by the Demiurge from a deteriorated form of the World Soul mixture, and therefore divine: 41d4ff.) came to be on earth. There are a fixed number of souls (as many as the stars), and each soul is allotted to a “consort” star. The souls were mounted on their stars καὶ ἐμβιβάσας ὡς ἐς ὄχημα τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν ἔδειξεν, νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους εἶπεν αὐταῖς (41e1-3). All souls saw and heard the same, to ensure that they all started equally ranked. The newly made souls were then given male human bodies by the lower gods, then incarnated ἐξ ἀνάγκης (that is, souls were designed to be placed in bodies) on earth and the other ὄργανα χρόνου (planets).¹ The first generation is only male,² and if these men live without breaking any of the celestial laws, the souls return to their consort stars forever.³ The souls of those who err suffer further incarnations, and their souls also deteriorate into the lesser forms of creatures - women, animals and fish.

Was the time of the first incarnation a “Golden Age”? Did it last only one generation (until women/animals appeared?) or more than one - until, for example,

¹This is an interesting idea, mentioned twice (42d; 41e), viz, life on other planets.

²The implications for procreation are interesting; the ramifications for feminists are immeasurable - see below!

³Rankin (1964) p.27,n.3 would argue that both sexes appeared in the first incarnation, although the text belies this; Guthrie (1978) p.307 finds this suggested at 42a. The other possibility is that the first generation is a double creature (an *Urmensch*; cf. Empedocles' conjoined primordial creatures: Rankin (1964) p.79) as in *Symposium* 196b7.

a disaster of the sort seen in Hesiod and Empedocles?⁴ The idea of a golden age is inseparable from Greek cosmogonical/theogonical thought; however, I do not think that it is present in *Timaeus* because, for all souls, *any* life on earth will be inferior to the life in heaven.⁵

If all of the souls start out with equal knowledge of what they can and cannot do, *why do they degenerate?* In a sense it seems that “human nature” predestines the “fall”: viz. it is *innate* that some incarnate souls will turn to evil, others to good and etc. Beyond this, it seems that the souls are *inherently wicked*: διαθεσμοθετήσας δὲ πάντα αὐτοῖς ταῦτα, ἵνα τῆς ἔπειτα εἴη κακίας ἐκάστων ἀναίτιος.. (42d2-4).⁶

The solution, from 43-44, is that when the soul was bound into the body, the soul’s natural orbit was damaged, causing distortions which affected its judgement, and, aligned with the influence of external stimulation on the senses (42a-b), the soul was overpowered and lost its ability to reason. The sensations themselves are a result of the soul’s violent movements in the body (43c).⁷

⁴ In Empedocles’ system, the golden age ended when the divine *daimons* first consumed meat - fragment 128.

⁵ *Phaedrus* makes this very clear (q.v.).

⁶ Cf. 42d5-e4: τὸ δὲ μετὰ τὸν σπόρον τοῖς νέοις παρέδωκεν θεοῖς σώματα πλάττειν θνητά, τό τ’ ἐπίλοιπον, ὅσον ἔτι ἦν ψυχῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δέον προσγενέσθαι, τοῦτο καὶ πάνθ’ ὅσα ἀκόλουθα ἐκείνοις ἀπεργασαμένους ἄρχειν, καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν ὅτι κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα τὸ θνητὸν διακυβερνᾶν ζῶον, ὅτι μὴ κακῶν αὐτὸ ἑαυτῶ γίγνοιτο αἴτιον.

⁷ The distorted shapes of our bodies are the result of the wild convulsions of the soul in the once-globular body mass - 44d; as 44d-e illustrates, the immortal soul part is housed in the head, but we are given a body to stop the head from rolling around on the ground (and also as the vehicle for the soul). That this is a *jeu d’esprit* - Guthrie (1978) p.307 - is reasonably clear.

The effect is worse in growing children because of the external demands on the container (nourishment, etc.):⁸

ὅταν δὲ τὸ τῆς αὐξῆς καὶ τροφῆς ἔλαττον ἐπίη ρεῦμα, πάλιν δὲ αἱ περίοδοι λαμβανόμεναι γαλήνης τὴν ἑαυτῶν ὁδὸν ἴωσι καὶ καθιστῶνται μᾶλλον ἐπιόντος τοῦ χρόνου, τότε ἤδη πρὸς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἰόντων σχῆμα ἐκάστων τῶν κύκλων αἱ περιφορὰὶ κατευθυνόμεναι, τό τε θάτερον καὶ τὸ ταῦτὸν προσαγορεύουσαι κατ' ὀρθόν, ἔμφρονα τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτὰς γιγνόμενον ἀποτελοῦσιν. ἂν μὲν οὖν δὴ καὶ συνεπιλαμβάνηται τις ὀρθὴ τροφή παιδεύσεως, ὀλόκληρος ὑγιῆς τε παντελῶς, τὴν μεγίστην ἀποφυγῶν νόσον, γίγνεται· καταμελήσας δέ, χωλὴν τοῦ βίου διαπορευθεὶς ζωὴν, ἀτελῆς καὶ ἀνόητος εἰς Ἄιδου πάλιν ἔρχεται. (44b1-c4)

The second point is that the new mortal parts of the soul⁹ influence the rational, immortal soul, so that it is distracted from its purpose. The new parts are separated in the body: emotion (passion, ambition, courage) is housed in the breast/heart, and appetite in the stomach (69d6-70a2). These elements produce the δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα..παθήματα (69c8-d3) - desire, pain, pleasure, fear, confidence, etc.: ὧν εἰ μὲν κρατήσοιεν, δίκη βιώσοιντο, κρατηθέντες δὲ ἀδικία (42b2). The separation is to ensure minimal contact between the parts (the neck is an ἰσθμός, 69e1) and, just as in *Phaedrus*, the “emotion” part can act with the “rational” part to control the “appetitive” part.

⁸ Cf. *Laws* 808d on children as the most intractable of all “wild creatures”.

⁹ Cf. 42e1 (n.6, above).

There is no mention made of recollection, nor indeed of any use of memories of past lives to correct the present. Indeed, there is very little emphasis on reincarnation as punishment for moral offences; rather, emphasis is on the pursuit of philosophic wisdom, and the denial of evidence of the senses,¹⁰ as well as obedience to the divine laws.

..καὶ νῦν ὡς διὰ βραχυτάτων ῥητέον ὅτι τὸ μὲν αὐτῶν ἐν ἀργίᾳ διάγον καὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ κινήσεων ἡσυχίαν ἄγον ἀσθενέστατον ἀνάγκη γίνεσθαι, τὸ δ' ἐν γυμνασίοις ἐρρωμενέστατον· διὸ φυλακτέον ὅπως ἂν ἔχωσιν τὰς κινήσεις πρὸς ἄλληλα συμμέτρους. τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ' ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἶδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῆδε, ὡς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἐκάστω δέδωκεν, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ φαμεν οἰκεῖν μὲν ἡμῶν ἐπ' ἄκρῳ τῷ σώματι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένειαν ἀπὸ γῆς ἡμᾶς αἴρειν ὡς ὄντας φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον, ὀρθότατα λέγοντες· ἐκεῖθεν γάρ, ὅθεν ἡ πρώτη τῆς ψυχῆς γένεσις ἔφυ, τὸ θεῖον τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ρίζαν ἡμῶν ἀνακρεμαννὺν ὀρθοῖ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα. τῷ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἢ περὶ φιλονικίας τετευτακότι καὶ ταῦτα διαπονοῦντι σφόδρα πάντα τὰ δόγματα ἀνάγκη θνητὰ ἐγγεγόνεναί, καὶ παντάπασιν καθ' ὅσον μάλιστα δυνατὸν θνητῷ γίνεσθαι, τούτου μηδὲ μικρὸν ἐλλείπειν, ἅτε τὸ τοιοῦτον ηὔξηκότι· τῷ δὲ περὶ φιλομαθίαν καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀληθεῖς φρονήσεις ἐσπουδακότι καὶ ταῦτα μάλιστα τῶν αὐτοῦ γεγυμνασμένῳ φρονεῖν μὲν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα, ἄνπερ ἀληθείας ἐφάπτηται, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη που, καθ' ὅσον δ' αὖ μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, τούτου μηδὲν μέρος ἀπολείπειν, ἅτε δὲ αἰεὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εἴ κεκοσμημένον τὸν δαίμονα σύνοικον ἑαυτῷ, διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. (89e6-90c6)

It seems that if one follows philosophical inquiry, then none of the laws of destiny will be broken. This still begs the question of how the soul knows that it is to pursue philosophy. *Timaeus* 90c6-7 tells us that the correct “food” for the soul is the study of things akin to the divine in us - namely, the thoughts and revolutions

¹⁰ Note the fate of the astronomical “observer” at 91d.

of the universe. Studying the harmonious circuits of the universe helps repair the circuits in our heads which were distorted by our incarnation.

Therefore, it is not a simple matter of recollecting the divine laws: if the souls remembered their divine lessons, then one would expect the whole first generation to live only one incarnate life on earth, then return immediately to their consort stars. If it is somehow innate that they do not keep the ordinances in mind, then it is a nasty trick of the Demiurge/gods, and souls will *inevitably* err because they are ignorant of any laws of the gods. This is the intention here: there is an escape to heaven, but it must be earned.¹¹ The soul, because it is essentially rational, must have the innate knowledge that philosophy is the correct path. Their ability to achieve it depends on the two factors described above (damage to the orbits of the soul, and influence of the two mortal attachments). The result is analogous to *Phaedrus*: every soul has a different capacity for recalling their pre-natal experience; or, as in *Republic* (474b-c;491a-b), all souls have a different capacity for learning.¹²

Timaeus 51ff. adds a little to this: it discusses (briefly) the argument about how we can know whether Forms (ultimate realities) exist - viz, they are only

¹¹ Cf. *Republic* 717e ff (on nasty tricks): the soul chooses its new life and sees its destiny in that life, but then has to drink from Lethe and thus forgets what it has seen - and so, cannot use that knowledge to circumvent the evils that it will face in life.

¹² Morgan (1990) p.142; Gulley (1954) p.202 thinks that 41e implies recollection, although there is little to support this. He bases his assumption of the similarity of the chariot images in 41e and *Phaedrus* (q.v.).

realized by intelligence (thought), not opinion (senses): καὶ τοῦ μὲν πάντα ἄνδρα μετέχειν φατέον, νοῦ δὲ θεοῦς, ἀνθρώπων δὲ γένος βραχὺ τι (51e5-6). There is no explicit or implicit mention of any role that recollection could take in this process. Moreover, when the souls are travelling the universe, they are not shown the Forms, because it appears that the Forms do not exist in Space.¹³ Again, the only way of acquiring the necessary knowledge to get out of the cycle is by thought - but the actual impetus *to* thought remains unknown.

After the first generation of men, souls that do manage to keep the laws perfectly are returned to their consort star, and live happily there, forever.¹⁴ They have escaped further incarnations. Those who do not, face a destiny fixed on three points of reference:

(1) In the second incarnation they become women (42b;90e-91d): as duBois has remarked, “..women are the result of men’s inability to behave philosophically.”¹⁵ This (particularly the passage on hysteria, 91c) has been seen as uncharacteristic

¹³ See the complex discussion of the three realities, being, space and becoming: 48a ff. Peters (1967) p.17-18 would see anamnesis as implicit at 41e-42b.

¹⁴ “Death” is the departure of the soul:

τέλος δέ, ἐπειδὴ τῶν περὶ τὸν μυελὸν τριγῶνων οἱ συναρμοσθέντες μηκέτι ἀντέχωσιν δεσμοὶ τῷ πόνῳ [of trying to cut food and drink into triangle likenesses] διστάμενοι, μεθίσσιν τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ δεσμούς, ἡ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ’ ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν ἀλγεινόν, τὸ δ’ ἢ πέφυκεν γιγνόμενον ἡδύ. καὶ θάνατος δὴ κατὰ ταῦτα ὁ μὲν κατὰ νόσους καὶ ὑπὸ τραυμάτων γιγνόμενος ἀλγεινὸς καὶ βίαιος, ὁ δὲ μετὰ γήρωος ἰὼν ἐπὶ τέλος κατὰ φύσιν ἀπονάτατος τῶν θανάτων καὶ μᾶλλον μεθ’ ἡδονῆς γιγνόμενος ἢ λύπης. (81d4-e5)

¹⁵ Guthrie (1978) p.307: that is, women originate from morally defective souls. duBois (1985) p.93 goes on to analyse the dialogue - logocentric and phallogocentric - as an attempt by Plato “to appropriate maternity to the male philosopher” (p.92).

misogyny on Plato's part, although it seems more likely to be simply representative of a wide-spread and widely acknowledged view of women's *natural* (physical/biological) inferiority to men.¹⁶

It has been suggested by those who believe that Plato held an emancipated view of women,¹⁷ that the particular misogyny of the second incarnation is a Pythagorean feature. Timaeus is a Pythagorean from Lokri,¹⁸ and in the Pythagorean table of opposites, men:women (in opposition), just as right:left, good:evil, light:dark, limited:unlimited, and etc.¹⁹ Unfortunately this does not explain evidence for the equal status of men and women in Pythagorean groups.²⁰

Secondary to the creation of women is the appearance of sexual relations. Reincarnation as a means of downgrading the role of (female) sexual relations would be an interesting study, except that the gods *supply* men and women with the genitals which have a "desire for sexual reproduction" (91b4)²¹ - an intended

¹⁶ Rankin (1964) p.98; Rankin cites comparisons with *Republic* 469d,579a; *Alcibiades I* 126c; *Epistle VIII* 355c; *Laws* 790a.

¹⁷ In the light of *Republic*, where men and women have equal roles in the running of the city (451e-452a; 540c-d); also *Laws* 690 and 806. For the other side of the coin, see *Republic* 469d on "feminine smallmindedness" (Lee's translation - *Plato: The Republic* Penguin,Harmondsworth). Also, *Phaedo* 60a2-7. Many other examples are to be found in D.Wender "Plato: misogynist, paedophile, and feminist" *Arethusa* 6 (1973) 75-90. Guthrie (1978) p.307 notes that women are dealt with only briefly because Timaeus has promised to take the story only as far as *mankind*.

¹⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that any such figure existed, although it has been suggested that he was modelled on Archytas of Tarentum, the philosopher whom Plato met c.338BC in Sicily. Cf. DK 44A1 (D.L. 8.84) on the tradition that Plato copied *Timaeus* from the Pythagorean books of Philolaus: KR p.307ff.

¹⁹ Guthrie (1978) p.307; cf. Guthrie (1975) on the Pythagoreans, including the table of opposites.

²⁰ See Chapter I.

²¹ Translation from Lee,D. (1971) *Plato: Timaeus and Critias* Penguin,Harmondsworth

function. Because the organs are near the appetitive part of the soul, they are uncontrollable (naturally disobedient and self-willed, and compared at 91b6 to a wild creature, intractable to reason), and demand more intercourse than is necessary for reproduction alone, and so require to be controlled: it is all part of the denial of all but the immortal part of the soul.

Can it be that sexual relations are only needed when women are created because, (a) they are functionless without it, or (b) they are uncontrollable without it (if so, why create women anyway?)? Rather, it seems that (c) natural reproduction cannot be replaced by reincarnation; reproduction is required to create the next *generations* of species - that is, the gods create the first generations and supply the means for the following generation to be produced from these. Combating sexual desire remains also a further test of the soul.

(2) μὴ παυόμενός τε ἐν τούτοις ἔτι κακίας (42c1-2), in its next (third) incarnation the soul became the animal most suited to its particular crime/character (42c; 91d-92a).

The process seems more akin to metamorphosis/transformation than metempsychosis. For example, after describing the physical means of forming the human body and the function of hair, nails etc., Timaeus comments,

ὡς γάρ ποτε ἐξ ἀνδρῶν γυναῖκες καὶ τᾶλλα θηρία γενήσονται,
 ἠπίσταντο οἱ συνιστάντες ἡμᾶς, καὶ δὴ καὶ τῆς τῶν ὀνύχων
 χρείας ὅτι πολλὰ τῶν θρεμμάτων καὶ ἐπὶ πολλὰ δεήσοιτο
 ἦδεσαν, ὅθεν ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐθύς γιγνομένοις ὑπετυπώσαντο
 τὴν τῶν ὀνύχων γένεσιν. τούτῳ δὴ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ταῖς προφάσεσιν
 ταύταις δέρμα τρίχας ὄνυχάς τε ἐπ' ἄκροις τοῖς κώλοις ἔφυσαν.
 (76d8-e6)

However, it is clear from the text that animals are produced with the third incarnation:²² birds from harmless, empty-headed men interested in the heavens, but silly enough to think that visible evidence is all the foundation that astronomy needs; land animals from non-philosophers who did not use the circles in the head, and were controlled by the part of the soul housed in the breast. Their affinity with the earth resulted in their becoming closer to it (as quadrupeds), and their elongated skulls were the result of crushing their circles through lack of use. Moreover, the more stupid a soul, the more legs he received (touching the ground); thus, the lowest of the land animals are snakes who have no feet at all. (91d-92a)²³

(3) the fourth incarnation provides for the most stupid of all the souls - water creatures:

..οὐς οὐδ' ἀναπνοῆς καθαρᾶς ἔτι ἠξίωσαν οἱ μεταπλάττονες, ὡς
 τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὸ πλημμελείας πάσης ἀκαθάρτως ἐχόντων, ἀλλ'

²² On metamorphosis as derived from metempsychotic thought (and having taken its place), see Stewart (1960) pp.277,279; also cf. *resurrection* in *Politicus*' aetiological myth - the *body* serves more than one life, but eventually wear out: Stewart (1960) pp.194-196. (See Appendix E)

²³ The human to animal incarnations are reminiscent of *Republic* 565d-e (the transformation of the allelophagos into a wolf). Note Ophir (1991) p.35 on metamorphosis, and man's intermediate position between gods and animals. Also, *Phaedo* 81e-82a (and cf. *Republic* 620a ff. on the appropriate animal lives *chosen* by souls). Rankin (1964) p.52 notes that the *Timaeus* develops a "reverse evolution".

ἀντὶ λεπτῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς ἀναπνοῆς ἀέρος εἰς ὕδατος θολερὰν
καὶ βαθεῖαν ἔωσαν ἀνάπνευσιν· ὅθεν ἰχθύων ἔθνος καὶ τὸ τῶν
ὀστρέων συναπάντων τε ὅσα ἔνυδρα γέγονεν, δίκην ἀμαθίας
ἐσχάτης ἐσχάτας οἰκῆσεις εἰληχότων. (92b2-c1)

One wonders, since these souls are evidently so stupid, how they can redeem themselves and return to their consort stars? For redemption consists of gaining understanding: καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα δὴ πάντα τότε καὶ νῦν διαμείβεται τὰ ζῶα εἰς ἄλληλα, νοῦ καὶ ἀνοίας ἀποβολῇ καὶ κτήσει μεταβαλλόμενα (92c1-3). What is there for a fish to gain understanding of?²⁴ The escape clause is quite clear: there is no end to the process πρὶν τῇ ταύτῳ καὶ ὁμοίου περιόδῳ τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ συνεπισπώμενος τὸν πολὺν ὄχλον καὶ ὕστερον προσφύντα ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος καὶ ἀέρος καὶ γῆς, θορυβώδη καὶ ἄλογον ὄντα, λόγῳ κρατήσας εἰς τὸ τῆς πρώτης καὶ ἀρίστης ἀφίκοιτο εἶδος ἕξεως (42c4-d2). The “first and best form” is ambiguous: does it refer to the first incarnation as *man* (..διπλῆς δὲ οὔσης τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, τὸ κρεῖττον τοιοῦτον εἶη γένος ὃ καὶ ἔπειτα κεκλήσοιτο ἀνὴρ: 42a1-3) or to the return to discarnate state with the consort star? A return to the former would allow a wholly good life to be led not as a reward life (cf. Empedocles fr. 146), but as a final test. A return to the latter would, of course, be preferable.

There seems to be no limit to the number of incarnations, nor any limitations on changing creatures. It seems that a snake could become another

²⁴ Cf. Hesiod *Works and Days* 267-8 on birds, beasts and fish - they eat each other because they do not possess justice; Ophir (1991) pp.36-37 on the political significance of such.

animal if it changed its crime/character, and *vice-versa*. Unlike *Phaedrus*, no time limit is mentioned, and the cosmos seems to have been created to exist eternally.²⁵ There are none of the eschatological details supplied in the other dialogues; for example, there is no mention of a judgement between each life.

However, *Timaeus* 44c might indicate that the soul has a stint in Hades prior to its next incarnation. From the context, one would assume that Hades was a place of punishment, although this is not mentioned. It may be that Hades is the *waiting-place* for the next incarnation: compare Anchises' tale of the souls lined up for incarnation at Lethe in *Aeneid* 6.703ff. (however, the location is not strictly in Hades), or the Myth of Er in *Republic X* (q.v.), where souls wait for their turn to choose the next life *after* their punishment/reward. There is no suggestion of retributive punishment in *Timaeus*. The language used seems to suggest that this is not the soul's first time in Hades, but there is no evidence that the soul began its first incarnate life from Hades; rather, the evidence points to the incarnations occurring directly from heaven, where the soul first was joined to the body.

Logically, this system would appear to require a fifth incarnation, into plants. However, they are specifically classed as having mortal souls, and created for the first generation to eat;²⁶

²⁵ Cf. the myth in *Politicus*, where the cosmos is destroyed every 10,000 years - one "Great Year". For the details see Guthrie (1978) pp.193-196; cf. Appendix E on reincarnation and eternal recurrence in both the *Politicus* myth and the Empedoclean cosmos.

²⁶ Thus unwittingly solving the problem of what *can* be eaten, if ensouled humans, animals or plants are off the menu.

τῆς γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνης συγγενῆ φύσεως φύσιν ἄλλαις ἰδέαις καὶ αἰσθήσεσιν κεραννύντες, ὥσθ' ἕτερον ζῶον εἶναι, φυτεύουσιν ἃ δὴ νῦν ἡμεῖρα δένδρα καὶ φυτὰ καὶ σπέρματα παιδευθέντα ὑπὸ γεωργίας τιθασῶς πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔσχεν, πρὶν δὲ ἦν μόνα τὰ τῶν ἀργίων γένη, πρεσβύτερα τῶν ἡμέρων ὄντα. πᾶν γὰρ οὖν ὅτιπερ ἂν μετάσχη τοῦ ζῆν, ζῶον μὲν ἂν ἐν δίκη λέγοιτο ὀρθότατα· μετέχει γε μὴν τοῦτο ὃ νῦν λέγομεν τοῦ τρίτου ψυχῆς εἴδους, ὃ μεταξὺ φρενῶν ὀμφαλοῦ τε ἰδρῦσθαι λόγος, ᾧ δόξης μὲν λογισμοῦ τε καὶ νοῦ μέτεστιν τὸ μηδέν, αἰσθήσεως δὲ ἠδείας καὶ ἀλγεινῆς μετὰ ἐπιθυμιῶν. πάσχον γὰρ διατελεῖ πάντα, στραφέντι δ' αὐτῷ ἐν ἑαυτῷ περὶ ἑαυτό, τὴν μὲν ἕξωθεν ἀπωσαμένῳ κίνησιν, τῇ δ' οἰκείᾳ χρησαμένῳ, τῶν αὐτοῦ τι λογίσασθαι κατιδόντι φύσει οὐ παραδέδωκεν ἢ γένεσις. διὸ δὴ ζῆ μὲν ἔστιν τε οὐχ ἕτερον ζῶου, μόνιμον δὲ καὶ κατερριζωμένον πέπηγεν διὰ τὸ τῆς ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ κινήσεως ἐστερηθῆσθαι. ταῦτα δὴ τὰ γένη πάντα φυτεύσαντες οἱ κρείττους τοῖς ἥττοσιν ἡμῖν τροφήν.. (77a3-c7)²⁷

The implications of this passage (for reincarnation) are as follows:

- (i) plants are mortal (lack the uppermost, immortal soul part of humans, made from the World Soul mixture);
- (ii) plants therefore cannot experience transmigration, as it is the upper part that transmigrates;²⁸
- (iii) as a consequence it is permissible to eat plants.²⁹

However, Plato gives few specific dietary restrictions, unlike his ascetic predecessors. His dictum is to use wisdom in everything, including eating wisely

²⁷ Cf Empedocles' fragment 110.10: πάντα γὰρ ἴσθι φρόνησιν ἔχειν καὶ νόματος αἰσαν.

²⁸ It is Plotinus who introduces transmigration into plants into Platonism: cf. *Ennead* III,6.6;2.13;4.2; IV,7;3.13; VI,7.6. See Armstrong (1977) p.24.

²⁹ Although this is little mentioned in Plato, it was obviously parts of Empedocles' thought - see fragments 136 and 140 - and is an important theme in the overall discussion.

and sparingly: nothing in excess. *Timaeus* 72e3-a8 makes it clear that man was not created with eating as his first priority:

τὴν ἐσομένην ἐν ἡμῖν ποτῶν καὶ ἐδεστώων ἀκολασίαν ἤδεσαν οἱ συντιθέντες ἡμῶν τὸ γένος, καὶ ὅτι τοῦ μετρίου καὶ ἀναγκαίου διὰ μαργότητα πολλῶ χρησοίμεθα πλέονι· ἴν' οὖν μὴ φθορὰ διὰ νόσους ὀξεῖα γίγνοιτο καὶ ἀτελεῖς τὸ γένος εὐθύς τὸ θνητὸν τελευτῶ, ταῦτα προορώμενοι τῇ τοῦ περιγενησομένου πάματος ἐδέσματός τε ἕξει τὴν ὀνομαζομένην κάτω κοιλίαν ὑποδοχὴν ἔθεσαν, εἵλιξάν τε πέριξ τὴν τῶν ἐντέρων γένεσιν, ὅπως μὴ ταχὺ διεκπερῶσα ἢ τροφή ταχὺ πάλιν τροφῆς ἐτέρας δεῖσθαι τὸ σῶμα ἀναγκάζοι, καὶ παρέχουσα ἀπληστίαν, διὰ γαστριμαργίαν ἀφιλόσοφον καὶ ἄμουσον πᾶν ἀποτελοῖ τὸ γένος, ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ θειοτάτου τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν.

There appear to be no prohibitions on killing/eating animals (or for that matter, men), although one can easily guess the consequences to the soul. These prohibitions on murder, diet etc., would go beyond *Timaeus*' subject range (cosmogony, theology, teleology), and we must assume that this dialogue lacks eschatological references (common to the myths of *Republic*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* etc..) for the same reason.

There are a few other questions; first, does the fixed number of souls (41d-e) imply that all of the souls will eventually again dwell with their consort stars, and the earth (and the other planets) will be uninhabited?³⁰ Certainly, *Timaeus* is a creation myth where life as a human being is of little import, despite souls being created specifically to dwell on earth.³¹

³⁰ The same situation arises in *Phaedo*.

³¹ Souls are incarnated by necessity: is this simply to establish a *genus*? cf. Crombie (1962) pp.333-335.

Second, is return to the consort star possible for all souls? Return to the stars was, presumably, *allowed* for by “necessity” for all souls - but was it *inevitable*? Or, was return possible only for some (for example, those who fulfilled the philosophical conditions within a specified time)? This is not clear because, unlike Empedocles fr.115, the soul did not strictly “fall” (through some fault of its own),³² nor was it once (semi-)divine or a daimon. If every soul has the opportunity to escape, then the time taken will obviously be long, if not endless, for philosophy (the study of dying: *Phaedo* 64a) is not a popular pursuit for the living.

³² Although even in Empedocles fr.115 the sin was caused by necessity - that is, it was unavoidable. On the necessary fall in *Timaeus* - Bluck (1958b) p.163. Guthrie (1978) p.309 suggests that the inevitable flaw in the soul is the result of its deteriorated mixture, and that Ananke is symbolic of the element of imperfection in things.

CHAPTER 10: LAWS

The occurrence of reincarnation in *Laws* is one of the most interesting in the Platonic corpus, because it is connected intimately with passages of important ethical and moral thought. Moreover, the instances appear in an unusually pared down eschatology: almost, as Saunders has described it, in a “scientific eschatology”.¹ The major appearances of reincarnation are at 870de, 872de and 903d-905e, and culminate a series of pictures illustrating aspects of the declining faith and morality which the law-maker has to understand and combat. It is an attempt to build up laws which tackle every moral, political and social issues which could affect the smooth running of the successful city.²

The occurrences form two sides of the same belief: 870d ff. gives a mythic prelude to the law; indeed it acts as the first stage in crime prevention, and the actual law is given only for the benefit of the truly hardened who will defy such a “believed” story:

τούτων δὴ πάντων περὶ προοίμια μὲν εἰρημένα ταῦτ' ἔστω, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις, ὃν καὶ πολλοὶ λόγον τῶν ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς³ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐσπουδακώτων ἀκούοντες σφόδρα πείθονται, τὸ τῶν τοιούτων τίσιν ἐν Ἄιδου γίγνεσθαι, καὶ πάλιν ἀφικομένοις δεῦρο ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὴν κατὰ φύσιν δίκην ἐκτεῖσαι, τὴν τοῦ παθόντος ἅπερ αὐτὸς ἔδρασεν, ὑπ' ἄλλου τοιαύτη μοῖρα τελευτῆσαι τὸν τότε βίον. πειθομένῳ μὲν δὴ καὶ πάντως φοβουμένῳ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ προοιμίου τὴν τοιαύτην δίκην οὐδὲν δεῖ τὸν ἐπὶ τούτῳ νόμον ὑμνεῖν, ἀπειθοῦντι δὲ νόμος ὅδε εἰπήσθω τῇ γραφῇ..

¹ Saunders (1973) p.234. This “scientific eschatology” seems to be the logical conclusion to the process of rationalisation that one can trace in the series through *Politicus*, *Timaeus* (particularly so), and *Critias* to *Laws*: an interest in cause and effect.

² “Magnesia” in Crete.

³ If anything, this is strongly reminiscent of Pindar fr.133.

It seems to be a particularly vicious and vengeful system, and a never-ending one: body/soul A kills body/soul B by method X; in the next life body/soul A is killed by method X by some other soul; this new soul will then be killed by method X in its next incarnation, and so the cycle of punishment goes on:⁴ there seems to be no benefit obtainable for the avenger at all in terms of increased virtue. Rather, the avenger, who is only doing what is right and necessary by divine law (destiny), will be punished in turn in the next life. The system cannot even be defended in terms of the preservation of the blood-kinship relationship, because there is no indication that one will return to the same family in the next life.⁵ Rather, it is the divine supervisor of the system who (at 872d) is glorified as ἡ τῶν συγγενῶν αἱμάτων τιμωρὸς δίκη. Such a system relies on total and unquestioning faith in the divine.

It is a terrible dilemma: if it is predestined that a soul will kill another soul to avenge a previous crime, there seems little point in the soul striving for virtue. It is possible to explain the mixed messages that the myth gives (the necessity for both killing and virtue). One could see the dichotomy as the link between myth and reality: despite the myth's insistence on destiny (necessity), the situation is not entirely hopeless if one heeds the warning. Is this a loop-hole enabling escape for

⁴ Does one presume from this that multiple murderers will be murdered in every life by the various methods they used on their victims until all of the crimes are atoned for?

⁵ i.e. can one postulate this vengeance to explain such inter-generation tragedy as in the house of Atreus?

the virtuous soul from predestination? That is, *one* soul will kill another, but the avenging soul is not specified, or predestined, and thus the necessary act (872e) can be circumvented by virtuous souls and carried out by non-virtuous souls. It still seems an unnecessarily cruel system.⁶

One of the implications of this system is that, according to divine law, there are going to be murders and the like.⁷ That crimes do still occur is a reflection of the mutable nature of human beings - the result of the body-soul union. As in other dialogues, κοινωνία γὰρ ψυχῆ καὶ σώματι διαλύσεως οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ κρεῖττον, ὡς ἐγὼ φαίην ἂν σπουδῆ λέγων (828d4-5). This is the familiar idea of the influence of the corporeal on the soul, a factor which cannot be controlled by the divine, and which is difficult for the soul to manage despite its own element of divine.⁸

This is where civic law steps in and reinforces divine law (and stops killing on trumped up “moral” grounds). At 880e ff. the problem arises that although injustices are destined to be punished after death, there is still the question of what

⁶ Comparable to the quixotic idea in *Republic* of souls choosing their next lives but being unable to base their choice on memory of the last life, and being unable to change events of the new life. It can be likened to the system of *Phaedo* carried to the ultimate extreme of vindictiveness: that is, at *Phaedo* 113a ff., souls in the underworld had to beg forgiveness from those they had sinned against before being incarnated anew.

⁷ A point reinforced by the predisposition of humans to evil (lack of virtue etc.). Cf. the Ring of Gyges story at *Rep.* 612b2-5: we desire to do evil (be unjust) and go unpunished. Moreover (*Laws* 780e-781d) women have a lesser potential for virtue than men by reason of their secluded (unordered) position in society. The Athenian’s solution for this is to make men and women equal in status, but - even in a utopian city - he rates this as only an outside possibility because of the objections of both men and women.

⁸ For example, 904b ff.

to do with grievous offenders during life. The problem is not just ethical,⁹ but also practical - the community must be protected, and the offenders severely punished *while they live*, as well as after death:¹⁰

πατρός γὰρ ἢ μητρός ἢ τούτων ἔτι προγόνων ὅστις τολμήσει ἄψασθαί ποτε βιαζόμενος αἰκία τινί, μήτε τῶν ἄνω δείσας θεῶν μήνιν μήτε τῶν ὑπὸ γῆς τιμωριῶν λεγομένων, ἀλλὰ ὡς εἰδὼς ἅ μηδαμῶς οἶδεν, καταφρονῶν τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων εἰρημένων, παρανομεῖ, τούτῳ δεῖ τινος ἀποτροπῆς ἐσχάτης. θάνατος μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἔσχατον, οἱ δὲ ἐν Ἄιδου τούτοις λεγόμενοι πόννοι ἔτι τε τούτων εἰσὶ μᾶλλον ἐν ἐσχάτοις, καὶ ἀληθέστατα λέγοντες οὐδὲν ἀνύτουσιν ταῖς τοιαύταις ψυχαῖς ἀποτροπῆς - οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγίγνοντό ποτε μητραλοῖαί τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων γεννητόρων ἀνόσιοι πληγῶν τόλμαι - δεῖ δὴ τὰς ἐνθάδε κολάσεις περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τούτοις τὰς ἐν τῷ ζῆν μηδὲν τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου λείπεσθαι κατὰ δύναμιν. (880e6-881b2)¹¹

One notes from this that - despite all the interdictions - killing was not forbidden, but *officially sanctioned by the law* in a number of situations.¹² Murderers are executed, cast out, stoned and left unburied (873b);¹³ animals which deliberately murder humans are tried and executed (873e), and inanimate objects¹⁴ with murderous intent are cast out (873e-874a).¹⁵ That these killings are sanctioned by the law implies that they are also sanctioned by the divine.

⁹ 903b-905b provides a clear ruling on ethical and moral issues.

¹⁰ This is also stressed at 728c, where the evil soul is destroyed to save the others.

¹¹ The punishments in question are banishment, scourging, alienation from community and, finally, death. This appears to contradict the statement, above, about death not being a severe penalty; however, I presume that for one not believing in any afterlife etc., death is the most severe punishment.

¹² That is, it is wrong to see *Laws* as an "Orphic"/Pythagorean dialogue because it obeys none of the tenets ascribed to these movements (q.v.).

¹³ There are none of the ethical debates about suicide (from cowardice, not necessity) as in *Phaedo* 61b9ff: suicides are simply buried away from others, without name.

¹⁴ There is a *non sequitur* regarding the prosecution of inanimate (ἄψυχος) objects: at 870d and 872e-873a the idea is raised that murderers will themselves be murdered in their next incarnation by the same method with which they dispensed with their victims of this life. However, an object without ψυχή will not undergo reincarnation, so can never be dealt with in the same way as one ensouled (ἔμψυχος).

What one would expect to find is a system of punishments or controls which are remedial or educative,¹⁶ rather than vindictive. Moreover, one might expect that killing ought not to be necessary in the properly functioning state, particularly in view of the divine laws. These *cannot* be passed over as simply myth, for they form the foundation of the city's moral and ethical laws.

For example, it is in myth that one of the greatest ethical dilemmas is (implicitly) resolved: that is, the problem of why, if the gods have our interests at heart, there is so much injustice done in the world. In comparative religions (cf. the karmic laws) reincarnation explains such seemingly tragic events as birth defects, injustices, unkind events, sudden deaths, crimes against humanity and etc., by reference to the evil life that the soul lived in its previous incarnation. As 872e illustrates, a matricide will be incarnated as a mother and killed by "her" offspring - the past life circumstances explain the seemingly inexplicable tragedy of the next life. This is further illustrated at 870a and 906b-c where greed is held up by the evil as permissible ("why shouldn't we?") and appears to go unpunished by the gods, when, in fact, justice will catch up with the unjust in the next world if not in this.¹⁷

¹⁵ Except lightning or acts of God/s.

¹⁶ As the cruel punishments in *Phaedo* and *Republic* are at least intended to be.

¹⁷ Greed is injustice: 906c.

This is a point that Dodds¹⁸ stresses: he believes that rebirth (as he defines reincarnation) in Greece becomes a satisfactory explanation for the problem of (a) why there is so much human suffering (899e-900a asks this question), and (b) why the gods appear to take no interest in this suffering. However, apart from the evidence here in *Laws*, one can hardly argue for an explicit acceptance of reincarnation on these grounds: it was not a belief that gained a great hold on the imagination of the majority, as Dodds implies. If Dodds' "Guilt-Culture" phenomenon is wide-spread, for the reasons given, one might expect a more explicit theodical movement, and a much wider appearance of reincarnation beliefs.¹⁹ I have discussed Plato's perception of the educative experience in reincarnation, below.

What this all boils down to is a city running on *fear*: fear of punishment in this life (the rules are strict and all-embracing), and fear of the afterlife. *Fear is a very effective deterrent.*

The gods are not to be feared,²⁰ for they look after our interests with justice. This is part of the central argument of Book 10 of *Laws*: the refutation of the claims of the atheists that, (a) there are no gods; (b) if there are, they do not care about us (and so the evil prosper and tragedies occur to the seemingly just);

¹⁸ Dodds (1951) pp.150-152

¹⁹ Instead of single appearances once or twice in an era, usually in a poetic/mythic rather than didactic context.

²⁰ Even Pluto, god of the dead, is not to be feared - 828d. Death *per se* is good: 721b; 828d.

and (c) if they do take an interest in us, it is because they can be bribed to do so. These claims are refuted, and the onus put on the law-maker to punish atheists,²¹ because all of the moral laws rest on the premise that the gods take a just and impartial interest in human affairs.

The charge of atheism is tendered in a manner strongly reminiscent of the treatment of Galileo: at 886de and 966d-967d, for example, the quasi-scientific thought of the philosophers, and others, is attacked and equated with atheism. There must be no rationalization of the physical processes of the universe (for example, postulating that the stars are not divine but merely stones).²² This is a situation where nothing is allowed to undermine faith in the divine - because this faith is the foundation upon which the entire utopia is built. It is the link between all parts of the society's structure - legal, social, moral and ethical.²³

872e-873a shows how earthly law is considered a back-up (almost a final resort) to divine law (Justice) for dealing with a minority of society (the truly evil). That it is so considered, illustrates that those who sin do so against heaven. This, in turn, implies that they pay scant attention to heaven, and is a natural lead in to the discussion of the evils of atheism and questioning the divine.

²¹ For the punishments (by law) see 907d-910d.

²² The divine nature of the cosmos is proven by the knowledge that (a) the soul is older than anything else and immortal, and (b) the order of the universe proves its divine influence on it.

²³ Illustrated by the necessity of having Guardians of the Law with a strong background in theology, or, preferably, divine themselves - 866d.

εἰ πατέρα ἀπέκτεινέν ποτέ τις, αὐτὸν τοῦτο ὑπὸ τέκνων
 τολμήσαι βία πάσχοντα ἔν τισι χρόνοις, κἂν εἰ μητέρα,
 γενέσθαι τε αὐτὸν θηλείας μετασχόντα φύσεως ἀναγκαῖον,
 γενόμενόν τε ὑπὸ τῶν γεννηθέντων λιπεῖν τὸν βίον ἐν χρόνοις
 ὑστέροις· τοῦ γὰρ κοινοῦ μινθέντος αἵματος οὐκ εἶναι
 κάθαρσιν ἄλλην, οὐδὲ ἔκπλυτον ἐθέλγειν γίγνεσθαι τὸ μινθέν
 πρὶν φόνον φόνῳ ὁμοίῳ ὅμοιον ἢ δράσασα ψυχὴ τείσῃ καὶ
 πάσης τῆς συγγενείας τὸν θυμὸν ἀφιλασαμένη κοιμίσῃ. ταῦτα
 δὴ παρὰ θεῶν μὲν τινα φοβούμενον τὰς τιμωρίας εἴργεσθαι χρὴ
 τὰς τοιαύτας· εἰ δέ τινας οὕτως ἀθλία συμφορὰ καταλάβοι,
 ὥστε πατρὸς ἢ μητρὸς ἢ ἀδελφῶν ἢ τέκνων ἐκ προνοίας
 ἐκουσίως ψυχὴν τολμήσαι ἀποστερεῖν σώματος, ὁ παρὰ τοῦ
 θνητοῦ νομοθέτου νόμος ὧδε περὶ τῶν τοιούτων νομοθετεῖ..
 (872e5-873b1)

One can see a multi-layered picture building up, where the long defence of the gods, the *cause célèbre* of Book 10, is one level of the argument for strict control of thought and actions: that is, if atheism exists, there will be no fear of the divine law (Justice), and this will lead to injustice. It is necessary to minimize injustice in both believers and non-believers (if one cannot completely remove atheists); therefore, for the first group there is the warning by myth/story (which inspires enough dread for the believers), and for the second group there are the laws. Both myth and law back each other up to form a system which deals with all aspects of society - and religion, and reverence for the divine, are tools for ordering society.²⁴

For example, 880de:

²⁴ For example, compulsory monthly processions when only sacred songs will be sung to reinforce the role of the divine: 829be.

Νόμοι δέ, ὡς ἔοικεν, οἱ μὲν τῶν χρηστῶν ἀνθρώπων ἔνεκα γίνονται, διδαχῆς χάριν τοῦ τίνα τρόπον ὁμιλοῦντες ἀλλήλοις ἂν φιλοφρόνως οἰκοῖεν, οἱ δὲ τῶν τὴν παιδείαν διαφυγόντων, ἀτεράμονι χρωμένων τινὶ φύσει καὶ μηδὲν τεγγθέντων ὥστε μὴ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἰέναι κάκην. οὗτοι τοὺς μέλλοντας λόγους ῥηθήσεσθαι πεπονηκότες ἂν εἶεν· οἷς δὴ τοὺς νόμους ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὁ νομοθέτης ἂν νομοθετοῖ, βουλόμενος αὐτῶν μηδέποτε χρεῖαν γίνεσθαι.

I tend to agree with Saunders that *Laws* represents a *radical penology*, where the most important thing (beyond human life and liberties) is the well-being of the city and, beyond that, the well-being of the universe (903c), both of which are interconnected and dependent. The dialogue functions on these two levels of civic and cosmic, and everything is incidental and sublimated to the well-being of the two.²⁵

Cosmic law controls the order of the heavens, and this is founded on constant, even movement following the divine laws.²⁶ Earthly law does the same on a smaller scale.²⁷ Just as evil intent is controlled in the cosmos, so too on earth it must not be simply balanced with or subordinated to good, but removed

²⁵ Also 903c. The idea may be analogous to a forced “attunement”?

²⁶ Although, even in the divinely controlled heavens there can be problems with good and evil, as the introduction of the concept of the good and evil “World Soul” illustrates (896e). It is the task of the ultimate controller to overcome these conflicts by developing a system which can deal with it. Details of this supervisor are never made completely clear. He is “King” (βασιλεύς) and “draughts-player” (πεττευτής); however, the Olympian gods still exist (904b1). The actual role of the good and evil World Souls is ambiguous. One presumes that they are analogous to the good/evil desires affecting the embodied soul, requiring similar control. This is one of the major parallels between the cosmos and the city: I have discussed this further, below.

²⁷ A parallel macrocosm/microcosm is suggested.

altogether. Thus the laws prescribe the greatest extremes of punishment or control needed to control the mutable forces in society.

The message appears to be that, in a properly controlled society, fear based on faith (or even superstition) ought to be enough to deter the majority from evil. This is illustrated at 870e5-871a1 and again at 872d ff.:

...λέγειν μὲν δὴ χρεῶν αὖ πάλιν τὸν ἔμπροσθε σμικρῷ ῥηθέντα λόγον, ἂν ἄρα τις ἀκούων ἡμῶν οἶος ἀποσχέσθαι γένηται μᾶλλον ἐκῶν διὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα φόνων τῶν πάντη ἀνοσιωτάτων. ὁ γὰρ δὴ μῦθος ἢ λόγος, ἢ ὅτι χρὴ προσαγορεύειν αὐτόν, ἐκ παλαιῶν ἱερέων²⁸ εἴρηται σαφῶς, ὡς ἡ τῶν συγγενῶν αἱμάτων τιμωρὸς δίκη ἐπίσκοπος νόμῳ χρῆται τῷ νυνδὴ λεχθέντι καὶ ἔταξεν ἄρα δράσαντί τι τοιοῦτον παθεῖν ταῦτ᾽ ἀναγκαίως ἄπερ ἔδρασεν· (872d4-e5)

Despite its totalitarian aspects, it is a sound expression of the way that a city can be saved from declining moral standards and crimes by radical punishments and punishment beliefs.²⁹ However, it is a far from utopian picture, characterized by the hard line approach to civil liberties; that is, there is to be no expression of anything likely to disrupt the equilibrium of the city. 701b makes this clearer, expressing the problem of too much freedom and not enough control in terms of society's moral decay:

²⁸ This is a conveniently vague expression: cf. my discussion of this feature in the *Meno*. As in *Meno*, there is little information to be derived from such an unspecific source. The only hint may be supplied at 782c: in the context of the mutability of tastes, politics, society and etc., it is noted that in a sort of early Golden Age, men abstained from killing and meat-eating, and this was what it now described as an Ὀρφικὸς βίος (782c7). This is too tenuous a link with the "ancient priests" of 872e1-2. It is more relevant as evidence that there was a life-style peculiar to the Orphics (presumably) contemporary with Plato (q.v.).

²⁹ It is also quite simple: being evil → receiving a worse incarnation. Cf. the retrogression of *Republic* 619b-c.

Ἐφεξῆς δὴ ταύτη τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἢ τοῦ μὴ ἐθέλῃν τοῖς ἄρχουσι δουλεύειν γίγνοιτ' ἄν, καὶ ἐπομένη ταύτη φεύγειν πατρός καὶ μητρός καὶ πρεσβυτέρων δουλείαν καὶ νουθέτησιν, καὶ ἐγγὺς τοῦ τέλους οὖσιν νόμων ζητεῖν μὴ ὑπηκόοις εἶναι, πρὸς αὐτῶ δὲ ἤδη τῷ τέλει ὄρκων καὶ πίστεων καὶ τὸ παράπαν θεῶν μὴ φροντίζειν.. (701b5-c2)³⁰

*

The actual mechanics of the reincarnation process are developed at 903d ff., but not in the form familiar in the other Platonic eschatological myths. All of the post-mortem processes of the other myths (journeys, judgement, topographical descriptions etc.) are replaced by the automatic movements of the πεπτευτής (903d3-e1):³¹

ἐπεὶ δὲ αἰεὶ ψυχὴ συντεταγμένη σώματι τοτὲ μὲν ἄλλω, τοτὲ δὲ ἄλλω, μεταβάλλει παντοίας μεταβολὰς δι' ἑαυτὴν ἢ δι' ἑτέραν ψυχὴν, οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἔργον τῷ πεπτευτῇ λείπεται πλὴν μεταπιθέσθαι τὸ μὲν ἄμεινον γιγνόμενον ἦθος εἰς βελτίω τόπον, χεῖρον δὲ εἰς τὸν χεῖρονα, κατὰ τὸ πρέπον αὐτῶν ἕκαστον, ἵνα τῆς προσηκούσης μοίρας λαγχάνῃ.

And, at 904c9-e2:

σμικρότερα μὲν τῶν ἠθῶν μετάβαλλοντα ἐλάττω κατὰ τὸ τῆς χώρας ἐπίπεδον μεταπορεύεται, πλείω δὲ καὶ ἀδικώτερα μεταπεσόντα, εἰς βάθος τὰ τε κάτω λεγόμενα τῶν τόπων, ὅσα "Αἰδὴν τε καὶ τὰ τούτων ἐχόμενα τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπονομάζοντες σφόδρα φοβοῦνται καὶ ὄνειροπολοῦσιν ζῶντες διαλυθέντες τε τῶν σωμάτων. μείζω δὲ δὴ ψυχὴ κακίας ἢ ἀρετῆς ὅποταν μεταλάβῃ διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς βούλησιν τε καὶ ὀμιλίαν γενομένην ἰσχυράν, ὅποταν μὲν ἀρετῇ θείᾳ προσμείξασα γίγνηται

³⁰ The speaker goes on to compare the actions of these sinners with the crime of the Titans against Cronos' authority.

³¹ 903e-904a: Saunders (1973) p.241 would see this strange passage as an attack on Heraclitus' confused system of inter-element transfer, a system which would produce an enormous confusion of mixed elements within three transformations (incarnations). To this is juxtaposed the picture of the divine system of total, simple and automated order. The fact that Heraclitus saw the universe in terms of opposites controlled by Justice is also analogous to the picture of the universe (two World Souls) in *Laws*.

διαφερόντως τοιαύτη, διαφέροντα καὶ μετέβαλεν τόπον ἅγιον
ὄλον, μετακομισθεῖσα εἰς ἀμείνω τινὰ τόπον ἕτερον·

The process of movement has been systemized by the πεπτεντής: it seems to be analogous to a gigantic system of pigeon-holes, where the “judgement” of the soul is based on the balance of virtue (good) and evil in the soul at the time of death, rather than determined by a list of the good and bad deeds of the soul during life or by the subjective judgement of individual assessors, and thus open to abuse.³² This system is an equalizer: no-one has any advantage over anyone else, and “human” emotions such as pity, anger, fear etc. do not affect what appears to be a mathematical judgment. For example, one presumes that if a soul is 10% evil and 90% virtuous, it goes to a certain, fixed position. This explains the unusual description of souls which have changed little except for moving slightly sideways: the balance of good and evil has changed little, so the subsequent position is not altered.

One notes the recurrence of the microcosm-macrocosm duality: the disposition of the souls both reflects and influences the wider arrangement of the universe, and is intended for its benefit.³³

³² Cf. the affixed tablets of *Republic* 614b8-616b1. On the judgment by “earthly” judges, cf. the comments on their shortcomings at *Gorgias* 523b5-524a8. Even the Last Judgement is based on the acts of one’s life recorded in the book of life: *Revelations* 20.12.

³³ Not so much the *balance* of good and evil as the *neutralization* of evil by good. Cf. 875a ff., where this is expressed in terms of the microcosm (the state) vs. the individual.

The passage at 904d also rationalizes the concept of “Hades”, or the Underworld. The areas still exist, but they are used to illustrate an essentially immaterial system. Rather than strictly a topographical area (as in other eschatological myths), Hades is the representation in the human mind of the soul’s demotion (and, as such, punishment) to a worse life, which cannot be described in immaterial terms.³⁴

At 905b, there is reference to the soul not being able to avoid paying the penalty for its crimes on earth or after, in Hades, or a worse place (presumably Tartarus).³⁵ This does imply retention of belief in the topography of the traditional Underworld, which is confusing in the context of punishment by reincarnation, and is made more so by the reference at 904d to Hades in the sense that it is “so-called” - that is, men believe in a lower region and *call* it Hades, but in fact it is a symbolic representation of the indescribable movements of the soul by the περτευσής.³⁶ That reincarnation is the *main* punishment is made clear by 903d3-e1 (quoted above).

³⁴ At 727d the soul is told that Hades may be a blessing rather than an evil.

³⁵ I do not see this as a reference to a “punishment life”: the concept of reward and punishment lives appears to be absent from this system; rather, it is the next life which will be a reward or punishment for the previous life.

³⁶ Cf. the situation in *Politicus*, where souls are incarnated from the earth, without mention of any underworld mythology: 269c-274e.

904e4-905a4 seems to illustrate that this is how the next life is viewed: souls with evil inclination fall into the company of other evil souls (904e: and presumably get worse):

Αὕτη τοι δίκη ἐστὶ θεῶν οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
 ᾧ παῖ καὶ νεανίσκε ἀμελείσθαι δοκῶν ὑπὸ θεῶν, κακίῳ μὲν
 γιγνόμενον πρὸς τὰς κακίους ψυχάς, ἀμείνω δὲ πρὸς τὰς
 ἀμείνους πορευόμενον, ἔν τε ζωῇ καὶ ἐν πάσι θανάτοις πάσχειν
 τε ἃ προσήκον δρᾶν ἐστὶ τοῖς προσφερέσι τοὺς προσφερεῖς καὶ
 ποιεῖν. ταύτης τῆς δίκης οὔτε σὺ μὴ ποτε οὔτε εἰ ἄλλος ἀτυχῆς
 γενόμενος ἐπεύξεται περιγενέσθαι θεῶν· ἦν πασῶν δικῶν
 διαφερόντως ἔταξάν τε οἱ τάξαντες χρεῶν τε ἐξευλαβεῖσθαι τὸ
 παράπαν.

This is viewed as part of the punishment (the “greatest judgement”: 728b) - that is, the innate demarcation of the evil man from the influence of the good.³⁷ Virtuous souls collect with other virtuous souls and so advance. The point being made is that in each life, one has to wage a personal fight against vice, because one’s destiny depends *directly* on behaviour during life:

Ψυχῆς οὖν ἀνθρώπῳ κτῆμα οὐκ ἔστιν εὐφύεστερον εἰς τὸ
 φυγεῖν μὲν τὸ κακόν, ἰχνεῦσαι δὲ καὶ ἐλεῖν τὸ πάντων ἄριστον,
 καὶ ἐλόντα αὖ κοινῇ συνοικεῖν τὸν ἐπίλοιπον βίον· (728c-d)³⁸

This raises the question of the ultimate goal towards which the souls are aiming with their virtuous behaviour. No end to the system is proposed, but the souls scoring 100% virtue are placed in a higher and better region, reached by a sacred road. This could hint at either a final transcendence in discarnate form,

³⁷ 728bc

³⁸ 726-727 makes the dichotomy quite clear: the human soul must be honoured second only to the gods (727a, 727b); it is honoured not by flattery and gifts, but through the pursuit and attainment of virtue.

perhaps as a quasi-divine figure (which 966d suggests as a requirement for the νομοθέτης), or else - if no definite end is posited - in the highest form of earthly life possible.³⁹ At 721b-c (for example) one notes the similarity to the argument in *Symposium*, that humans achieve immortality by means of offspring and fame, rather than by apotheosis.

The impersonal aim of the system is clear: to promote virtue, and rid the city/universe of vice (904b). This can provide a theoretical end to the incarnations: that is, when every soul achieves complete virtue there is no further need for reincarnation. That this is unlikely to occur is suggested by the embodied soul's inherent predisposition for evil:⁴⁰ the virtuous souls may not remain virtuous, and so the system must continue.

The pursuit of virtue is somewhat enigmatic: what is "virtue"? It is care of the soul. At 959a ff. the Athenian stresses that the soul is superior to the body (and is the life-force) and, therefore, burial rites should not be extravagant because the body means nothing; it is merely the semblance of the soul:⁴¹

..βοήθειάν τε αὐτῷ μήτινα μεγάλην εἶναι τετελευτηκότι· ζῶντι γάρ ἔδει βοηθεῖν πάντας τοὺς προσήκοντας, ὅπως ὅτι

³⁹ In Plato, this is usually as philosopher: cf. Empedocles fr.146 for his top earthly lives, and fr.146 for the final translation to a place among the immortals.

⁴⁰ At 906a, the point is made that there are many more evil souls than virtuous souls.

⁴¹ πείθεσθαι δ' ἐστὶ τῷ νομοθέτῃ χρεῶν τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ λέγοντι ψυχὴν σώματος εἶναι τὸ πᾶν διαφέρουσαν, ἐν αὐτῷ τε τῷ βίῳ τὸ παρεχόμενον ἡμῶν ἕκαστον τοῦτ' εἶναι μηδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ τὴν ψυχὴν, τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἰνδαλλόμενον ἡμῶν ἕκαστοις ἔπεσθαι, καὶ τελευτησάντων λέγεσθαι καλῶς εἶδωλα εἶναι τὰ τῶν νεκρῶν σώματα, τὸν δὲ ὄντα ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ὄντως, ἀθάνατον εἶναι ψυχὴν ἐπονομαζόμενον, παρὰ θεοῦς ἄλλους ἀπιέναι δάσοντα λόγον, καθάπερ ὁ νόμος ὁ πατριος λέγει - τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀγαθῷ θαρραλέον, τῷ δὲ κακῷ μάλα φοβερόν.. (959a4-b6)

δικαιότατος ὢν καὶ ὀσιώτατος ἔζη τε ζῶν καὶ τελευτήσας ἀτιμώρητος ἂν κακῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἐγίγνετο τὸν μετὰ τὸν ἐνθάδε βίον. ἐκ δὲ τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων οὐδέποτε οἰκοφθορεῖν χρή, διαφερόντως νομίζοντα τὸν αὐτοῦ τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν τῶν σαρκῶν ὄγκον θαπτόμενον, ἀλλ' ἐκείνον τὸν ὕον ἢ ἀδελφόν, ἢ ὄντινά τις μάλισθ' ἡγεῖται ποθῶν θάπτειν, οἴχεσθαι περαίνοντα καὶ ἐμπιμπλάντα τὴν αὐτοῦ μοῖραν, τὸ δὲ παρὸν δεῖν εὖ ποιεῖν, τὰ μέτρια ἀναλίσκοντα ὡς εἰς ἄψυχον χθονίων βωμόν· (959b6-d1)

By implication, therefore, care of the body is not a priority for the virtuous man,⁴² although this is never taken to the extreme of bodily denouncement. One can perhaps see an acceptance and striving for balance between the desires of the soul and those of the corporeal: the dialogue certainly lacks the rigid “puritanism” of, for example, *Phaedo*.⁴³

The relentless nature of “Justice” is stressed: there is no escape from the judgement, and one’s sins cannot be hidden anywhere (905a). Moreover, there is no valid excuse for one’s evil behaviour, nor any escape (905b). This point brings the dialogue both back to the atheist debate of 884a ff. (Book X), and forward towards a definition of law which integrates all of the discussion of Books IX and X. At 880de the point is made that laws are necessary to guide the uneducated (the ignorant).⁴⁴ This idea was carried to its logical conclusion at 875a ff.:

ὡς ἄρα νόμους ἀνθρώποις ἀναγκαῖον τίθεσθαι...ἢ δὲ αἰτία τούτων ἦδε, ὅτι φύσις ἀνθρώπων οὐδενὸς ἰκανὴ φύεται ὥστε γνῶναί τε τὰ συμφέροντα ἀνθρώποις εἰς πολιτείαν καὶ γνοῦσα,

⁴² This would certainly fit with the pictures drawn in other dialogues of the ideal ascetic philosopher.

⁴³ At *Laws* 728e the best sort of body is the one at the middle of all the extremes of body types: the temperate and stable body.

⁴⁴ They also act as reminders for the virtuous (the educated).

τὸ βέλτιστον αἰεὶ δύνασθαι τε καὶ ἐθέλειν πράττειν. γνῶναι μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον χαλεπὸν ὅτι πολιτικῇ καὶ ἀληθεῖ τέχνῃ οὐ τὸ ἴδιον ἀλλὰ τὸ κοινὸν ἀνάγκη μέλειν - τὸ μὲν γὰρ κοινὸν συνδεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον διασπᾶ τὰς πόλεις - καὶ ὅτι συμφέρει τῷ κοινῷ τε καὶ ἰδίῳ, τοῖν ἀμφοῖν, ἦν τὸ κοινὸν τιθῆται καλῶς μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἴδιον· δεύτερον δέ, ἐὰν ἄρα καὶ τὸ γνῶναί τις ὅτι ταῦτα οὕτω πέφυκεν λάβῃ ἱκανῶς ἐν τέχνῃ, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀνυπεύθυνός τε καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ ἄρξῃ πόλεως, οὐκ ἂν ποτε δύναίτο ἐμμεῖναι τούτῳ τῷ δόγματι καὶ διαβιώναι τὸ μὲν κοινὸν ἠγούμενον τρέφων ἐν τῇ πόλει, τὸ δὲ ἴδιον ἐπόμενον τῷ κοινῷ, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πλεονεξίαν καὶ ἰδιοπραγίαν ἢ θνητῆ φύσις αὐτὸν ὀρμήσει αἰεὶ, φεύγουσα μὲν ἀλόγως τὴν λύπην, διώκουσα δὲ τὴν ἡδονήν, τοῦ δὲ δικαιότερον τε καὶ ἀμείνονος ἐπίπροσθεν ἄμφω τούτῳ προσθήσεται, καὶ σκότος ἀπεργαζομένη ἐν αὐτῇ πάντων κακῶν ἐμπλήσει πρὸς τὸ τέλος αὐτὴν τε καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὅλην. ἐπεὶ ταῦτα εἴ ποτέ τις ἀνθρώπων φύσει ἱκανὸς θεῖα μοῖρα γεννηθεὶς παραλαβεῖν δυνατὸς εἴη, νόμων οὐδὲν ἂν δέοιτο τῶν ἀρξόντων ἑαυτοῦ· ἐπιστήμης γὰρ οὔτε νόμος οὔτε τάξις οὐδεμία κρείττων, οὐδὲ θέμις ἐστὶν νοῦν οὐδενὸς ὑπήκοον οὐδὲ δοῦλον ἀλλὰ πάντων ἄρχοντα εἶναι, ἐάνπερ ἀληθινὸς ἐλεύθερός τε ὄντως ἢ κατὰ φύσιν. νῦν δὲ οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐδαμοῦ οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ βραχὺ· διὸ δὴ τὸ δεύτερον αἰρετέον, τάξιν τε καὶ νόμον, ἃ δὴ τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ὀρᾷ καὶ βλέπει, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀδυνατεῖ. (874c8-875d5)

This expresses an idea central to Socratic ethical thought: viz, that vice comes about through ignorance, and that virtue is a result of knowledge. Thus it is through understanding (knowledge) that the soul realizes virtue, and so advances up the scale of lives. In terms of the conduct of the soul, one can see that the laws supply the necessary knowledge to the evil (ignorant) to enable them to grow towards virtue. However, it is the soul itself which must determine which way it will go.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that although there is no reference to the soul as tripartite or the like, at 906b the greedy (unjust) soul is described as bestial θηριώδης; this links with the conception in, for example, *Phaedrus*, that the parts of the soul are like untrained animals.

Thus it is a system based on two levels of change: (automated) change determined by divine law, and change within the soul brought about by personal effort - the second determining the first. Unlike *Republic*, where the events of one's chosen life are fixed and immutable, the soul in *Laws* is able to improve (and worsen) its life (and thus its prospects for the next life) through its own self-determination.⁴⁶

I would argue that Plato is the first thinker to develop fully the ethical aspects of reincarnation.⁴⁷ The beginnings of ethical thought can be seen in Empedocles' poetry, but it is Plato who first makes clear the connection between reincarnation and *education*. For Plato, it is the educative experience which is important for the soul's development: "correct" education leads to virtue, and a "bad" education leads to vice.

Education is engendered by realization of the soul's "plight" or "position", but *gained* by acting on this realization. For example, one major decision for the soul concerns the company it frequents. As 904e illustrates - and as I have developed above - it is part of the soul's destiny that like attracts and influences like: therefore, for example, to break away from bad company would be one major, practical step towards virtue.⁴⁸ Another way of attaining virtue, related to

⁴⁶ This is considerably fairer than the system detailed at *Republic* 619b2-621b7 (q.v.).

⁴⁷ Dodds (1951) pp.150f. seems to be arguing along these lines, but dating the realization much earlier.

⁴⁸ Cf. 904c2-4: ὅπη γὰρ ἂν ἐπιθυμῆ καὶ ὁποῖός τις ὦν τὴν ψυχὴν, ταύτη σχεδὸν ἐκάστοτε καὶ τοιοῦτος γίγνεται ἅπας ἡμῶν ὡς τὸ πολὺ. It is a "you are what you eat" situation.

this, is by imitating the behaviour of the divine, and by following the guidance and rational ordering of the immortal part within us. This is *law* (713e-714a), and an example of allowing the superior to rule over the inferior (as shepherds over sheep, etc.): 713d ff.⁴⁹

A further step towards virtue - especially in the light of 906b1 (σωφροσύνη) - is the control of one's desire/greed for food, drink, sex, etc. 782e-783a describes the soul as having an "instinctive lust", or craving, for food and drink which is nearly impossible to overcome, and which is only surpassed by sexual desire (lust). These evils are controlled τρισὶ μὲν τοῖς μεγίστοις...φῶβῳ καὶ νόμῳ καὶ τῷ ἀληθεῖ λόγῳ.. (783a5-7)⁵⁰

That the soul is capable of making these decisions is illustrated by 904b and 904d:

τῆς δὲ γενέσεως τοῦ ποίου τινὸς ἀφῆκε ταῖς βουλήσεσιν
ἐκάστων ἡμῶν τὰς αἰτίας. (904b8-c2)

μείζω δὲ δὴ ψυχὴ κακίας ἢ ἀρετῆς ὁπόταν μεταλάβῃ διὰ τὴν
αὐτῆς βούλησιν τε καὶ ὁμιλίαν γενομένην ἰσχυράν.. (904d4-6)

"Education" is a blanket term to describe all of the ways in which the soul learns from, and reacts to, its environment. How this self-determination begins is

⁴⁹ Cf. 906b and 906c-d for examples of the abuse of this relationship in the context of atheism.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Phaedo* 64c10-e2, 67c5-d1 and 83b6-7. At *Laws* 727a ff. all the evils that man confers on the soul by flattery, cowardice, greed, evil etc.. are detailed. For an analogy, cf. the point made at 909d-e: private shrines are forbidden as they are part of an attempt to bribe the gods with flattery (for the defence see 906c ff). To honour the soul one should: bequeath modesty, not money, to the next generation (729b); set a good example; reverence kin and gods and laws (729c ff.) and etc. *Moderation* is the key.

not described. There is, for example, no reference to *anamnesis*. Instead, at 906a we read that humans have some sort of innate knowledge, a knowledge which is also shared by the gods, but in greater measure.⁵¹ This is obviously similar to the idea expressed elsewhere, that we have a spark of the divine within us (our souls),⁵² or that our souls are somehow akin to the divine.⁵³

Obviously, the first task for the soul is to acknowledge or realize the system of which it is a part: this assumes that there is some way for the soul to arrive at this realization. From the picture drawn (in the context of a civic code of religion and morality), the soul's existence in the body appears framed within unwritten law, and thus does not require this self-discovery; therefore, one might expect reincarnation to be an integral part of state religion.

To believe this is to take Plato's example too far, and to forget the context in which reincarnation appears. I would argue that *Laws* represents a style of argument familiar in *Meno* and *Phaedo*: the speaker takes a topic which is generally unbelieved or unproved,⁵⁴ and sets out to make it believed/proved, using - as in *Meno* in particular - whatever arguments will do the job. In *Laws*, reincarnation is essential to the argument against atheism, and it is only by means

⁵¹ ..δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη μετὰ φρονήσεως, ἐν ταῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐμπύχοις οἰκοῦσαι δυνάμεσιν, βραχὺ δέ τι καὶ τῆδε ἂν τις τῶν τοιούτων ἐνοικοῦν ἡμῖν σαφές ἴδοι.

⁵² *Timaeus* 41d-e develops the idea that human souls and the divine World Soul are both made from the same mixture. Cf. *Republic* 590cd, where wisdom and control come from the divine within.

⁵³ For example, *Phaedo* 81b ff.; *Republic* 611e1ff.

⁵⁴ For example, immortality at *Meno* 81a ff. and *Phaedo* 70c4-d5 ff.

of a doctrine of reincarnation that the speaker can “prove” that the gods exist and look after us. The result, however, is more than a reply to the atheists: the speaker has provided an answer to the great ethical problem of why the evil appear to prosper, and the innocent suffer.

As in *Meno* and *Phaedo*, it is ironic that his arguments are based on an idea (reincarnation) which does not seem to have had widespread acceptance in Greek popular thought: the Pythagorean movement did not survive into the fourth century, and the Orphics appeared to be only a minority group. Neither group realized their potential to the same degree as the popular Eleusinian mysteries (for example), yet, in turn, the cult at Eleusis never realized its full ethical potential in the way that Plato realized it with reincarnation in *Laws*.⁵⁵

Reincarnation is used (and is necessary) to create a workable system of ethics for the state - by providing a suitable backup for human/earthly justice which is ultimately fair for all. This divine fail-safe is at the heart of the combination of cosmic law (represented through myth), and civic law, and forms a unique picture of an automated justice system which is infallible and just: and Justice is the *raison d'être* of *Laws*:⁵⁶

φθείρει δὲ ἡμᾶς ἀδικία καὶ ὕβρις μετὰ ἀφροσύνης, σῶζει δὲ
δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη μετὰ φρονήσεως. (906a7-b1)

⁵⁵ See my Introduction for the Eleusinian Mysteries; cf. Appendix B on the Orphics.

⁵⁶ Cf. also 904b, 905ab.

REINCARNATION IN EARLY GREEK THOUGHT:
SOME CONCLUSIONS

I do not have all the answers to my questions about reincarnation. I can, however, make a number of suggestions and tender some opinions, which I hope will serve as an adequate conclusion to this topic:

(1) There is no one coherent doctrine of reincarnation, which can be seen to develop either ideologically, or chronologically, in early Greek thought. Although this thesis traces the appearance of reincarnation from its religio-mystic origins to its climax in philosophy, it is difficult to view a *development*. Even in the Platonic dialogues, it appears in myth, as an anonymous, and often slightly less than respectable doctrine, and its own ethical dimensions are rarely stressed, even when it forms the background, or proof, upon which Plato founds his own system of ethics. Reincarnation begins in the mystic movements, and never entirely breaks free from them.

(2) Any attempt to cross-reference the doctrines present in the sources will inevitably fail. The doctrines present in Pythagorean, Pindaric, Empedoclean, and Platonic (and even Orphic) thought are all *similar*, but not quite similar enough; it is not satisfactory to link them on the premise that reincarnation is the unifying common feature.

Implicit in this, (3) the traditional view is that Empedocles, Pindar and Plato were using “Orphic-Pythagorean” concepts; yet the unreliable nature of our knowledge of Orphism and Pythagoreanism, and the reluctance of later authors to give their sources, makes this far from certain.¹

(4) Reincarnation was never a major religious movement; it seemed to exist more as a (pseudo-)philosophical tenet, rather than as the basis for widespread cult practices. It never broke away from traditional eschatology, and, in most appearances, appears slotted in to a traditional, eschatological framework. This sometimes leads to superfluity, as we see in *Phaedo*. In Pindar’s *Olympian 2*, for example, reincarnation rests uneasily within a very Homeric framework of traditional mythology. The so-called Orphic myth of Dionysus and the Titans, while unusual, is hardly a complete break with anthropogonical tradition, and the Orphic poems have many similarities with Hesiod (if they are to be associated with reincarnation at all). Empedocles is the only candidate for a radical break with tradition, but he not only retains the traditional theology, but also the Greek emphasis on purifications. Moreover, the nature of the fragments makes it difficult to verify that Empedocles is illustrating reincarnation set in the cosmic regions.

(5) However, this is not to suggest that reincarnation was not a *belief* among a number of individuals and groups: it certainly appears to be a belief attributable to

¹ Pindar fr. 133, quoted in *Meno*, appears to be a rare exception; but the provenance of the beliefs in this fragment are far from ascertainable.

Theron of Akragas, for example. But, as I have already noted, while it was evident in group movements, these tended to be small, situated away from the centre of the Greek world, and holding no doctrines entirely consistent with other small enclaves. I would suggest that the only author who held reincarnation as a personal belief was Empedocles; yet, then again, we have the problem of how his *Katharmoi* fit with the *Physics*.

(6) If I had to suggest a general picture of reincarnation in the early Greek world, I would speculate that it did not make its first appearance on the Greek mainland. Southern Italy was, as Woodbury remarks,² a “hot-house culture” of semi-mystical cults, and indeed it seems that Magna Graecia was particularly susceptible to chthonic and eschatological beliefs.³ Certainly it coincides with the regionality of the sources: Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, Pindar and Empedocles have firmly established connections with Magna Graecia; Plato’s connection with Sicily is equally well known, although, as a direct influence, it is rather more problematic (particularly if it post-dates his most metempsychotic dialogue).

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The “big picture” seems to be that reincarnation was a nebulous concept even in contemporary Greece. Its arrival cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty; its appearance is almost impossible to verify before the time of

² Woodbury (1966) p.598

³ The distribution of the gold leaves is indicative of this. I have discussed the Magna Graecian connection most fully in Appendix B.

Xenophanes (mid-sixth century); there is no evidence that it was ever a canonical tenet of a large organization; and, although it may appear to be a widespread belief, this is in fact an optical illusion - it is found on many boundaries and marginal areas of the Greek world, but these groups appear small, often endangered because of their odd beliefs, and reincarnation is never clearly attested in Attica.

What appears most surprising to me is that reincarnation never succeeded in Greece, despite appearing at a time when desire for continuity of individuality was most prominent, and in a period which is one of the richest in terms of introduced soteriological rites. It seems that the Greek desire for personal immortality (in all of its varied senses) continued to follow a very traditional eschatology. The failure of reincarnation in early Western thought - unlike in the East where metempsychotic beliefs continued to exist and grow - is almost unfathomable. Does the solution lie in the failure to integrate traditional belief with innovative religiosity without engendering superfluity?⁴

⁴ As, for example, in Plato's *Phaedo*, where there was little need for *two* eschatological systems.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PHERECYDES OF SYROS

The work of Pherecydes of Syros (*floruit* 540 BC) has been described by modern commentators as “wilfully bizarre.. infantilism”, “primitive”,¹ “inexplicable”,² a “literary curiosity”,³ and of no importance whatsoever in the history of Greek thought.⁴ For Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1091b8), however, he was a “mixed theologian”,⁵ one of those “who do not say everything in mythical form”; as such he seems to stand on the border between pure theogonic myth/story (for example, Hesiod’s *Theogony*), and the work of the first Milesian thinkers, in particular, Anaximander, with whom Pherecydes vies (unsuccessfully, I would think)⁶ for the title of first Greek prose writer.

The issue in my discussion of Pherecydes is whether his writing included, or was likely to have included, any reference to reincarnation or transmigration. The sources for this are, inevitably, problematic. They are,

- (1) surviving fragments of Pherecydes;
- (2) accounts and interpretations of Pherecydes’ (supposed) subject matter.

¹ Frankel (1975) pp.241,243

² Burnet (1952) p.3

³ Barnes (1979) I, p.12

⁴ Hussey (1972) p.31: “To put it more sharply, in the history of the human mind the Milesians are of cardinal importance, and Alcman and Pherecydes not at all”.

⁵ One of the *μεμιγμένοι*.

⁶ Discussed below.

It can be readily seen from the fragments⁷ that there is no real, or implied, reference to reincarnation. However, there are also very few fragments on which to base this sweeping judgement.

As for (2), the relevant comments are as follows:⁸

Suda, s.v. Φερεκύδης (DK7A2) (2 Schibli)

διδασκῆναι δὲ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ Πυθαγόραν λόγος, αὐτὸν δὲ οὐκ ἐσχηκέναι καθηγητὴν, ἀλλ' ἑαυτὸν ἀσκῆσαι κτησάμενον τὰ Φοινίκων ἀπόκρυφα βιβλία. πρῶτον δὲ συγγραφὴν ἐξενεγκεῖν περὶ λόγῳ τινὲς ἱστοροῦσιν, ἑτέρων τοῦτο εἰς Κάδμον τὸν Μιλήσιον φερόντων, καὶ πρῶτον τὸν περὶ τῆς μετεμψυχώσεως λόγον εἰσηγήσασθαι.

Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, I.16.38 (DK7A5) (7 Schibli)

magni autem est ingenii sevocare mentem a sensibus et cogitationem ab consuetudine abducere. itaque credo equidem etiam alios tot saeculis, sed quod litteris exstet, Pherecydes Syrius primum dixit animos esse hominum sempiternos, antiquus sane; fuit enim meo regnante gentili. hanc opinionem discipulus eius Pythagoras maxime confirmavit.

Maximus Tyrius *Philosophumena*, 7.4.9-13 (36 Schibli)

ὡς Φερεκύδης ὑπερεφρόνει [τῆς νόσου] ἐν Σύρῳ κείμενος, τῶν μὲν σαρκῶν αὐτῷ φθειρομένων, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἐστώτης ὀρθῆς, καὶ παραδοκώσεως τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν τοῦ δυσχρήστου τούτου περιβλήματος.

Aurelius Augustinus *Contra Academicos* 3.17.37 (48 Schibli)

Pythagoras autem Graeca philosophia non contentus, quae tunc aut paene nulla erat aut certe occultissima, postquam commotus Pherecydae cuiusdam Syri disputationibus immortalem esse animum credit, multos sapientes etiam longe lateque perigrinatus audierat.

⁷ vide Schibli (1990) and DK 7 B.

⁸ Text and any translations are taken from Schibli (1990). DK concordance numbers (A=testimonia; B=fragments) are also given, where they exist.

Tatian *Oratio ad Graecos* 3 (51a Schibli)

γελῶ καὶ τὴν Φερεκίδου γρασολογίαν καὶ τοῦ Πυθαγόρου τὴν περὶ τὸ δόγμα κληρονομίαν καὶ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, κἄν τινες μὴ θέλωσι, τὴν περὶ τούτου μίμησιν.

Tatian *Oratio ad Graecos* 25 (51b Schibli)

Πυθαγόρας Εὐφορβος γεγονέναι φησὶ καὶ τοῦ Φερεκίδου δόγματος κληρονόμος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης τῆς ψυχῆς διαβάλλει τὴν ἀθανασίαν.

Lactantius *Divinae institutiones* 7.7.12 (85a Schibli)

immortales esse animas Pherecydes et Plato disputaverunt: haec vero propria est in nostra religione doctrina.

Lactantius *Divinae institutiones* 7.8.7 (85b Schibli)

in eadem sententia fuit etiam Pythagoras antea, eiusque praeceptor Pherecydes, quem Cicero [see 7 Schibli, above] tradidit primum de aeternitate animarum disputavisse.

Apponius *In Canticum Canticorum* 3.5 (DK7A5) (86b Schibli)

Ferecydes autem vocabulo, animam hominis prior omnibus immortalem auditoribus suis tradidisse docetur, et eam esse vitam corporis, et unum nobis de caelo spiritum; alterum credidit terrenis seminibus comparatum. deorum vero naturam et originem ante omnes descripsit: quod opus multum religioni nostrae conferre probatur, ut noverit turpiter natos turpioremque vitam duxisse, dedecorosius mortuos, quos idolatriae cultor deos adfirmat.

Porphyry Πρὸς Γαῦρον περὶ τοῦ πῶς ἐμψυχοῦται τὰ ἔμβρυα 2.2 (DK7B7) (87 Schibli)

..τοῦ μὲν ὅταν καταβληθῆ τὸ σπέρμα τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον [sc. τῆς εἰσκρίσεως τῆς ψυχῆς] ἀποδιδόντος ὡς ἂν μηδ' οἴου τε ὄντος ἐν τῇ μήτρᾳ γονίμως κρατηθῆναι μὴ τί γε ψυχῆς ἔξωθεν τῇ εἰσκρίσει ἐαυτῆς τὴν σύμφυσιν ἀπεργασαμένης - κἀνταῦθα πολὺς ὁ Νουμήνιος καὶ οἱ τὰς Πυθαγόρου ὑπονοίας ἐξηγούμενοι καὶ τὸν παρὰ μὲν τῷ Πλάτῳι ποταμὸν Ἀμέλιτα, παρὰ δὲ τῷ Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς τὴν Στύγα, παρὰ δὲ τῷ Φερεκίδῃ τὴν ἔκροην ἐπὶ τοῦ σπέρματος ἐκδεχόμενοι..

Porphry *De antro nympharum* 31 (DK7B6) (88 Schibli)
 ..καὶ τοῦ Συρίου Φερεκύδου μυχοῦς καὶ βόθρους καὶ ἄντρα καὶ
 θύρας καὶ πύλας λέγοντος καὶ διὰ τούτων αἰνιττομένου τὰς τῶν
 ψυχῶν γενέσεις καὶ ἀπογενέσεις.

A number of features stand out from these accounts, and I shall discuss these individually:

(i) none of the sources are even closely contemporary with Pherecydes (or Pythagoras). The most influential of the sources is undoubtedly Cicero, and one wonders what his source was.⁹ He seemed to have had a certain amount of interest in aspects of Pythagorean/Orphic doctrine (cf. his comments at *De Senectute*, 20; *Somnium Scipionis*, 3.10 (= *De Re Publica* 6.15); *De Re Publica* 6.14; *De Amicitia* 14; and *Tusc.Disp.* 1.74).¹⁰ A possible link is thus suggested through Pythagoras as Pherecydes' pupil.

(ii) the majority of sources link Pherecydes to Pythagoras in a teacher-pupil relationship, and, (iii) inherent in this is the idea that Pythagoras received his special ideas on the soul (viz. transmigration) from Pherecydes. A number of points can be made about this supposed relationship:

(a) We have no evidence (apart from late doxography) that Pherecydes was a teacher. By the time of Aelian, for example, Pherecydes was regarded as a dangerous, Socratic figure:

⁹ Schibli (1990) (p.104) suggests Poseidonios.

¹⁰ Note my comments on this in the chapter on Plato's *Phaedo*.

καθήμενον γὰρ ἐν Δήλῳ μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν ἄλλα τε πολλά φασὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας εἰπεῖν καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῦτο, μηδενὶ τῶν θεῶν θῦσαι, καὶ ὅμως οὐδὲν ἥττον ἠδέως βεβιωκέναι καὶ ἀλύπως, οὐ μείον τῶν ἑκατόμβας καταθυόντων. ὑπὲρ ταύτης οὖν τῆς κουφολογίας βαρυτάτην ζημίαν ἐξέτισεν. (Aelian *Varia historia* 4.28; 37a Schibli)

(b) It seems that the doctrinal link of Pherecydes and Pythagoras can be traced back to the famous epigram to Pherecydes by Ion of Chios, reported in D.L. 1.120 (56 Schibli).¹¹ The epigram is ambiguous:

ὡς ὁ μὲν ἠγορέη τε κεκασμένος ἠδὲ καὶ αἰδοῖ
καὶ φθίμενος ψυχῇ τερπνὸν ἔχει βίοτον,
εἴπερ Πυθαγόρης ἐτύμως σοφός, ὃς περὶ πάντων
ἀνθρώπων γνώμας εἶδε καὶ ἐξέμαθεν.

As Kirk and Raven have pointed out, the epigram could be interpreted to mean that Pythagoras “learned” about the soul from Pherecydes; or, it could simply refer to Pythagoras’ learning and knowledge, quite independent of Pherecydes.¹² The link is therefore somewhat tenuous. The tradition, however, is very strong.¹³

The quotation from Maximus Tyrius (c. AD 125-185) offers another example of the blurring of traditions that surrounds the early Greek writers. The idea of the “bothersome garment” is reminiscent of Empedocles’ doctrine of reincarnation (viz. fr. 126 DK “..clothing [*sc.* the *daimon*?] in an unfamiliar

¹¹ Cf. the epigram of Douris (57 Schibli).

¹² KR p.51, based on Gomperz *WS* 47 (1929) p.14,n.3

¹³ Cf. 27, 28, 29a, 29b, 29c, 30a, 30b, 31, 37b, 42, 43, 44a, 44b, 44c, 45a, 45b, 46a, 46b, 49, 50a, 50b, 51b, 52, 53b, 54a, 55, 84 Schibli; Tatian is perhaps the only sceptic (51a).

garment of flesh”). However, it is perfectly possible to see the “bothersome garment” as referring to Pherecydes’ irritating skin condition (phtheiriasis) mentioned by a number of sources: cf. 26, 27, 33, 34a, 34b, 37a, 37b Schibli on Pherecydes’ dying “devoured by lice”; also 29b, 30a, 30b, 32 Schibli more specifically on phtheiriasis.¹⁴ The “deliverance” could therefore be simply the eagerness with which he awaited escape from an irritating disease. The ambiguity of the passage leaves it wide open to interpretations of both sorts. To add to the confusion, a separate tradition links Pherecydes’ death with a prophecy which he gave prior to the Magnesian/Ephesian war (cf. D.L. I.117-18; DK7A1). The unusual (usually horrid and/or mad) ends of the early Greek thinkers are legendary and various.¹⁵

(c) Another late source (Porphyry *apud* Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 10.3.6-9; 22 Schibli; DK7A6) discusses the (deliberate?) blurring of the traditions of Pherecydes and Pythagoras, as illustrated by Andron and (*contra*) Theopompus. The former ascribed a series of miraculous events and prophecies to Pythagoras; the latter, according to Porphyry, deliberately ascribed these same events to Pherecydes. It certainly appears that the miracles ascribed to Pherecydes do belong to Pythagoras, who had innumerable such events associated with him.¹⁶ Also, compare Diogenes Laertius’ comment on the miracles: ἔνιοι δὲ Πυθαγόρα

¹⁴ 35 Schibli (Pliny *NH* 7.172) also mentions worms creeping out of Pherecydes’ body.

¹⁵ Cf. Empedocles on Etna; Diogenes covering himself with dung and etc.. There are usually a number of legends associated with the deaths of such people.

¹⁶ Cf. Burkert (1972) pp.144,147

περιάπτουσι ταῦτα (I.116; DK7A1; 16 Schibli). For the miraculous stories, see 17-22, 24, 26 Schibli.¹⁷

(d) Finally, it is common to find, among the doxographers (who have, as Schibli has pointed out, a *horror vacui*), a persistent tradition of “teacher-pupil” relationships among the Greek thinkers, which can often take the form of a father-son bond.¹⁸ It may be this *horror vacui* that ascribed Pherecydes’ learning to “Phoenician books” (*Suda*) when no suitable teacher could be found.¹⁹ It seems an unlikely tradition.²⁰

In the face of such wild theories, I would follow Kirk and Raven’s sensible suggestion that what has occurred is, as the evidence suggests, that the better known tradition surrounding Pythagoras has been transferred back to his alleged teacher Pherecydes, and that part of this tradition is Pythagorean belief in transmigration.²¹

¹⁷ Cf. KR pp.50-51; Rohde (1925) pp.300ff.

¹⁸ de Vogel (1966) p.240 sees this phenomenon particularly in the 4th century.

¹⁹ Cf. 46a Schibli. The idea of secret books is not restricted to Pherecydes: a similar tradition is associated with Empedocles.

²⁰ But, see Walcot (1965) p.79 on comparative oriental motifs in Pherecydes; also West (1971) and (1963). It is noted that Tzetzes (53a Schibli) makes Thales, as well as Pythagoras, a pupil of “the Assyrian Pherekydes”. On the oriental learning of Pherecydes (especially in Egypt) cf. 38, 39, 40, 41 Schibli. The authorities are all very late. Moreover, knowledge which cannot be ascribed to Greek originality is often ascribed to the orient, and specifically Egypt; cf. the doxographic tradition in the *Suda* (2 Schibli; also Philo: 80 Schibli).

²¹ KR p.60,n.1; Long (1948) pp.13ff. also agrees. Schibli (1990) p.11,n.24 notes that the influence of Pherecydes on Pythagoras was assumed to be proved among Neopythagoreans and Neoplatonists.

(iv) a number of influential sources (for example, Porphyry) are Neoplatonists. This has caused a number of problems, not least due to their date being so far removed from Pherecydes, but mainly because of their tendency to allegorise. I will begin by discussing how Schibli has, to my mind, wrongly interpreted the evidence of the Neoplatonists with regard to Pherecydes' supposed transmigration beliefs.

Schibli restores to Pherecydes a near-complete, complex picture of transmigration: immortal souls "passing away" through Porphyry's nooks and caves (88 Schibli: *De antro nymphearum* 31) and being born (again) at underworld rivers.²² Moreover, he links the rivers with semen by means of fragments 86 and 87, extending the fragments' analogies to include the transmigration of souls by dissemination of seeds (semen), an idea taken partly, no doubt, from fr.60 where Chronos puts [eggs smeared with] semen into the five nooks (one presumes - it is rather fragmentary).²³ The semen link is continued in the evidence of the Neoplatonists: cf. the allegories of Numenius (fr.87) *et al*, which link rivers, symbolically, with semen (cf. Plato's Ameles of *Republic* X and the Hesiodic/Orphic Styx). Transmigration/reincarnation is therefore seen as analogous to the insemination process: the body is ensouled by the entry of seed. He then goes on to restore the topography of Pherecydes' underworld by reference

²² *Contra*, D.L. I.24 gives the tradition that Thales was the first to say that souls were immortal: Schibli (1990) p.105,n.4.

²³ Pherecydes' book is called either "*Pentemuchos*" or "*Heptamuchos*": see West (1963) and Walcot (1965) for the arguments; also 'Pherekydes' *RE* xix 2025-2033 (1938).

to Platonic myth (particularly the *Phaedo*),²⁴ as well as the framework for a katabatic journey, and finally restores to Pherecydes a complete, ethical *bios* along Pythagorean lines, based on fr.90. The result is that Schibli can attest that “..Pherecydes wrote with some deliberation about metempsychosis and thus bestowed upon the soul itself more significance than any (known) Greek author before him.”²⁵

Schibli can restore all of this from only four fragments (86, 87, 88 and 90 Schibli), all of which post-date Pherecydes by at least 800 years.²⁶

It seems to me to be inherently dangerous to put too much emphasis on the works of the Neoplatonic allegorists (Numenius, Porphyry, Celsus and Origen) in this regard; for example, Schibli's claim that Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean assumptions need to be reduced to the minimal claim that Pherecydes wrote of the experiences of souls in a context of metempsychosis. However, even if they are, there is no reason to assume that Pherecydes did anything of the sort.

Numenius (whom Edwards sees as the foremost figure in a 2nd century school of allegorical commentary on the ancient theologians),²⁷ for example, could

²⁴ Schibli (1990) p.120,n.36; cf. West (1971) p.25 who agrees.

²⁵ Schibli (1990) p.125

²⁶ Schibli (1990) p.108

²⁷ Edwards (1990) p.258

combine Plato's "Myth of Er" (*Republic* X) with Odysseus' return to Ithaca.²⁸ Moreover, as Edwards has pointed out, among the fragments of the other Pherecydes (of Athens; c.450BC) is a fragment about a Cave of the Nymphs which comes from the scholiast on Apollonius Rhodes (4.1936) who does not mention that there were two Pherecydes. The doxographic tradition is silent on the second Pherecydes' influence (cf. Edwards' comments on Porphyry in the *Suda*: it does not indicate whether Porphyry realised that there were two Pherecydes).²⁹

I would suggest, therefore, that because of their allegorising, their great temporal and psychological distance from Pherecydes, and their dubious source material, that the testimonia of the Neoplatonists cannot be relied upon to restore a picture of Pherecydes' work.

The problems in Schibli's theory go beyond this. He has attempted to restore what is obviously an anachronistic hotchpotch of later belief to a writer

²⁸ Edwards (1990) p.258 gives a further demonstration with the allegorizing of the fable of Atlantis in *Timaeus* by Origen, Numenius and Porphyry; cf. Pepin (1958) on Celsus' allegories of battles in the *Iliad*, and the battle at Pherecydes 78 Schibli (DK7B4); cf. also 79 and 83.

²⁹ Edwards (1990) p.260,n.11. This is a contentious issue: Wilamowitz had postulated that "Pherecydes" was a generic label for the early Ionic theologians (just as "Hippocrates" is for the medical corpus). He arrived at this conclusion because of the confusion of the two Pherecydes. The separate identities of the two Pherecydes has since been established: see Jacoby (1947) pp.13ff.; for a summary of the contention, cf. von Fritz *RE* s.v.'Pherekydes' xix 2025-2033 (1938); also Rohde (1925) p.399,n.xi,51. As Edwards (1990) notes, however, the nature of Porphyry's sources is still at issue. On the allegorizing of Pherecydes (and Heraclitus) by the Neoplatonists, see Pepin (1958) p.449 (on Celsus and Origen); Edwards (1990) p.261; KR p.60; Schroder (1939) pp.110ff.; von Fritz (1938) col.2028. Jacoby (1947) pp.13-15 has commented that von Fritz remains influenced by Wilamowitz's idea: cf. col.2031; also "...spekulativ-allegorischen Elementes dem gesamten Werk ist das zentrale Probleme für das Verständnis der Schrift und ihrer Stellung in der griechischen Literatur." (col.2028). Freeman (1975) p.37 would see the fragments as part of an "allegory of creation".

considered by many to be far less talented than his immediate predecessor (Hesiod) or his immediate successor (Anaximander). Schibli actually points out many of the flaws in his own argument. For example, the fact that fr.60 refers to the generation of the gods from Chronos' seed, not the generation of humans. This is a common motif in theogonies. He also cites the Neoplatonic love of the flux and instability of rivers etc., and Numenius' allegory of Odysseus' final resting place representing the soul which, having passed through repeated incarnations, is finally free.³⁰

The system of belief (or myth?) which Schibli attempts to restore is extensively cross-referenced with Pythagoras' "beliefs", and those of early Pythagoreanism. The well known problem of lack of early written evidence (and total lack of Pythagoras' own writings) is ignored, despite Schibli quoting Burkert's well-known *caveat* on speaking of a Pythagorean "doctrine".³¹ Furthermore, detail is restored, for example, from what appears (as Schibli admits) to be a piece of gross hyperbole (90 Schibli).³²

It seems to me that Schibli was mistaken in extrapolating the one piece of evidence from Porphyry (88 Schibli) which specifies the topographical details which might have occurred in Pherecydes' poem. He has taken caves and nooks and added rivers and katabatic journeys, adapted for the most part, from Platonic myth. Drinking at the Ameles has obviously been allegorised, and has become the

³⁰ Schibli (1990) p.116,n.28

³¹ Schibli (1990) p.119,n.35: Burkert (1972) p.135.

³² Schibli (1990) p.123

transfer of souls through semen.³³ This is an anachronistic line of thought even for the fifth century, and is most certainly out of place in the sixth.

The essential problem appears to be an acceptance of all sources as being of equal value. The problem, detailed above, of the two Pherecydes and the “Cave of the Nymphs” is not developed. Yet, as Edwards has commented, Porphyry in *De antro nympharum* is writing of reincarnation as an accepted theory (based, in this case, on the Zodiac):³⁴ thus Porphyry is hardly a balanced or neutral witness.³⁵

Zuntz has remarked on the early Greek disinterest in caves,³⁶ and has commented that two sources have influenced scholars to view caves in early Greek thought with more interest than contemporary evidence may warrant: the first source is, of course, the Neoplatonic speculations (especially Porphyry’s *De antro*); the second is the Platonic myths of the underworld.³⁷

³³For example, Schibli (1990) p.120,n.36 sees the myth in *Phaedo* as peculiar and without precedent, and suggests a link, through this very oddness, to Pherecydes. West (1971) pp.25-26 notes that the introduction of semen is a feature of later allegorizing.

³⁴Edwards (1990) p.259

³⁵Cf. the views of KR on the Neoplatonists (p.60).

³⁶Zuntz (1971) p.255,n.2

³⁷Zuntz (1971) p.255,n.1; as Zuntz notes, the exception may be Empedocles (p.255); he also sees Pherecydes as “foreign” to the Greek tradition.

Finally, Schibli uses the very fact that Pherecydes is writing in a traditional form (viz. theogony/cosmogony) to justify the fact that, due to the constraints of the literary form, sometimes it was not possible to say what he could have said.³⁸

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I believe that it is possible to establish a more conservative, less anachronistic, framework in which to set Pherecydes' work, and supposed metempsychotic beliefs. I summarise this as follows:

(a) the fragments formed part of a theogony/cosmogony which developed along traditional lines, and was closer to the mythical theogony/cosmogony of Hesiod than the proto-science of the early Milesian cosmologists. Note Aristotle's comments on Pherecydes in this regard.³⁹

(b) despite the legendary place of Pherecydes as the earliest prose writer, his work betrays the influence of the early Milesians (for example, in the *ex nihilo* creation),⁴⁰ most obviously Anaximander, and thus is probably either contemporary with (and looking to) Anaximander, or slightly after Anaximander

³⁸ Schibli (1990) p.124; moreover, he makes the point (p.105) that as there is no evidence to the contrary, we should accept certain statements without too much scepticism. It is unfortunate that the testimonia do not back up this neat idea.

³⁹ Aristotle is the nearest contemporary source to Pherecydes; moreover, he is immune to Neoplatonic influence. See *Metaphysics* 1091a29 (= DK 7 A 7; 81 Schibli).

⁴⁰ KR p.55

(noting that Anaximander was evidently thirty years older than Pherecydes).⁴¹ The fact that Anaximander is the other candidate for first prose writer makes the influence of the new style on Pherecydes seem logical. The appearance of “Chronos” (= Time) in Pherecydes is also suggestive of more abstract thought (there is, of course, the real danger that Chronos is simply a fancy spelling of Cronos).⁴²

(c) It is correct to ask what Pherecydes’ influences may have been. The peculiar etymology, and the rather bizarre elements of the cosmogony (viz, the robe on the tree: fr. 73, 76 Schibli), have suggested an oriental influence to many commentators.⁴³ There seems to be little in the fragments to suggest a link (mythic or otherwise) with either “Orphism” or early Pythagorean thought.⁴⁴ It has been suggested that Pherecydes’ work can be linked with the Orphic *Rhapsodic Theogony*; however, this is based on common style rather than subject matter, and the *Rhapsodic Theogony* post-dates Pherecydes.⁴⁵ Moreover, West’s tentative suggestion that the “outflow” can be linked with the Orphic “Spring of Memory” is

⁴¹ Kahn (1960)

⁴² KR pp.55ff; Zeller (1881) p.91,n.2. On Anaximander, see Kahn (1960); for different overviews of the subsequent situation for the “theologians”, see Gigon (1954), Jaeger (1947), and Vlastos (1970). On the “kosmos”, see Peters (1967) pp.108-109.

⁴³ Most particularly, West (1971) & (1963). He notes (1971, p.68) that we can assume oriental (ANE) motifs in Pherecydes, but this “does not, unfortunately, help us to reconstruct the details of his eschatology”; cf. Walcot (1965) p.79; I think that Burnet’s speculation that Pherecydes preserves fragments of “Minoan” belief may be negated: (1914) p.4. Hussey (1972) pp.30ff.; KR pp.9,71: “..practically no indication of special near-eastern influence..”

⁴⁴ The exception - cf. Schwabl (1958) col.1460 - may be the name Kronos/Chronos; however this only appears in later Orphic poetry. von Fritz (1938) col.2029 gives the references; at col.2031 he notes that Pherecydes appears between Hesiod and the Orphic fragments.

⁴⁵ Rohde (1925) p.597

tenuous in the extreme.⁴⁶ As Kirk and Raven have pointed out, there is little of the magician or shaman to be resurrected from the fragments.⁴⁷ Vlastos' suggestion that Pherecydes may have been writing a mystical handbook to certain rites is somewhat undermined by the apparent lack of a cult which is relevant to the figures in the theology.⁴⁸

(d) there is no reliable contemporary evidence to suggest that Pherecydes knew of, or wrote about, reincarnation or transmigration, or that he was influenced by eschatological thought. The slight evidence to the contrary (Cicero and the *Suda*) is late and, in the case of the latter, no doubt influenced by Neoplatonic/Christian speculation and allegory.

To take the extreme point of view (as K-R have done), not only is there no reliable and retrievable hint of metempsychosis in the work, but “..There is no good evidence for attributing any special interest in the soul to Pherecydes”.⁴⁹

(e) Pherecydes has, it seems, taken the traditional form of the theogony/cosmogony, and has added (i) his own peculiar etymologies;⁵⁰ (ii)

⁴⁶ West (1963) p.171; Gomperz (1901) p.86 writes that Pherecydes founded an Orphic community; however, he gives no source, and I can find no reference to it.

⁴⁷ KR p.51

⁴⁸ Vlastos (1970) pp.103ff.,107

⁴⁹ KR p.60

⁵⁰ This has parallels in later philosophy: cf. Socrates' use of this in *Cratylus*; also Herodian (62 Schibli) on the peculiarity of Pherecydes' etymologies; Brandon (1963) p.186.

primitive Milesian cosmological speculation⁵¹ blended with (?) oriental and local myth; (iii) his own prose style: “a wonderful mixture of a little science...and a lump of mythology” (Gomperz).⁵²

⁵¹ Which may have influenced the commentators to see a link with the similar motions of a reincarnation cycle?

⁵² Gomperz (1901) p.87. As KR put it (p.71), a mixture of crude myth and originality.

APPENDIX B: "ORPHISM"

Popular tradition, both ancient Greek and scholarly, traces the entry, or first appearance, of reincarnation in Greece back to "Orphics" and/or Pythagoreans.¹ As I have discussed, reincarnation belief among followers of Pythagoras is reasonably well attested (See Chapter One). The Orphic tradition poses a far greater problem, indeed, a number of problems, not the least of which is that the majority of evidence is of unparalleled variety, ambiguity, unreliability and obscurity - to the extent that the group is rarely referred to by name. Indeed, for many years, it was assumed that no such group existed. Histories of reincarnation often omit the entire corpus of nebulous,² yet relevant, evidence which goes under the generic title of "Orphic", on the grounds that there was no such group.³

¹ See Burkert (1972) p.128 for a summary of the problem. Note Henrichs' more than accurate summing up in Burkert (1977) p.21: "Trying to reconstruct a coherent body of Orphic lore, beliefs and behaviour for the archaic, classical or Hellenistic period is like doing a sophisticated and large-scale jigsaw puzzle with an incomplete set that lacks most pieces and has no picture on its front cover. Methodologically this is one of the most difficult, inconclusive and subjective pursuits in classical scholarship." Cf. Nilsson (1935) p.181: "Orphism is more famous, more debated than any other phenomenon of Greek religion."

² Nilsson (1935) p.206; Linforth (1941) p.x

³ H.S. Long's (1948) dissertation on metempsychosis is the prime example. Long writes: "There is absolutely no early evidence connecting the doctrine of metempsychosis with the name of Orpheus"; and, because there is no link between Orpheus and Orphism, therefore there was no metempsychosis in Orphism. (Long, Appendix II, pp.90f.) Long follows Linforth (1941), who in turn follows Wilamowitz's famous statement, "Eine orphische Seelenlehre soll erst einer nachweisen.": Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1932), vol.ii, p.194. Methodologically, this means using only evidence mentioning Orpheus by name - very problematic if Orpheus and Orphics/Orphism are not related! Moulinier (1955) also follows this ultra-rationalist approach. They are balanced by Guthrie's composite view, but most particularly, by the numerous works of Walter Burkert, viz, 1968, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1985, and 1993 (see Bibliography).

I do not intend to argue the cases for and against the existence of Orphics. One of the bone tablets from Olbia has shown that in the fifth century BC there was a group of people calling themselves “Orphikoi”, who were presumably attached to a larger Dionysiac or Bacchic group/cult⁴ at Olbia.

Rather, I would like to appraise some of the evidence which is labelled “Orphic”, because it is very relevant not only to the notions of reincarnation found in Pindar and Plato, but also to the eschatological mood of the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

The origin of Plato’s eschatological ideas has always been an enigma, because direct references to any known doctrine, or beliefs, are always (presumably intentionally) oblique. In the past, these have been called Orphic and/or Pythagorean, with the implication or assumption that there *is* an Orphic system of belief.⁵

The fact is that we *need* an Orphic system of beliefs to explain references in Plato and others. For example, Plato himself mentions (perhaps

⁴The other bone tablets have inscriptions referring to Dionysus; Burkert (1982) p.12. The connection of Dionysiac and Bacchic is made in Aeschylus’ fragmentary *Edonians*: Cole (1980) p.227 cites fr.76 Mette; cf. Burkert (1977) p.4 *contra* Linforth (1941) pp.53f. Note Cole’s remarks that “a worshipper can be called *bakchos*, but a worshipper is never called Dionysos”: (1980) p.229,n.21.

⁵References in Plato’s dialogues to Orpheus/(Musaeus)/Orphic things: *Republic* 363d, 364b-365a, 620a; *Phaedo* 69c; *Symposium* 179d; *Ion* 533b, 536b; *Laws* 701b, 782c, 829d; *Protagoras* 316d; *Philebus* 66c; *Cratylus* 402b, 400c: see Ziegler (1942) cols.1373ff., and *OF* Index II.

facetiously) an Orphic doctrine of the soul at *Cratylus* 400c. If we compare Pindar's fragment 133, it is obvious that the only way that it can be interpreted (with our available knowledge) is by way of reference to the myth of the murder of Dionysus by the Titans.⁶ Even Linforth agrees that this interpretation has "a high degree of probability".⁷ This is *the* Orphic myth *par excellence*. To return to Plato, compare the nonchalant reference to the "Titanic nature of man" (*Laws* 701c: Τιτανική φύσις).⁸

That is, despite all attempts to deny any concrete reality to Orphism, there are a number of references which cannot be explained in any other way, other than by reference to *Orphika* (Orphic things) and the corpus of material called Orphic.

The root of the paradox lies in how we define "Orphic": it is a generic term. There is no evidence that Orpheus *per se* is linked with the religious movement named in his honour.⁹ Apart from the scanty evidence from Olbia,

⁶ See Rose (1936) and (1943). For the sources (all late): *OF* 207-208, 210, 214, 216c, 220, 34, 35, 210b, 140, 224. Dionysus is also called Dionysus-Zagreus: see Fauth "Zagreus" *RE* IX A,2 (1969); Nilsson (1935) p.222. There was certainly no Dionysus-Zagreus cult in the classical period: Moulinier (1955) p.66.

⁷ Linforth (1941) p.350. See Rose's response to Linforth's criticisms: Rose (1943).

⁸ This is - despite how glibly it is used - presumably, a well-known adage/proverb: Nilsson (1935) p.202.

⁹ It is certainly difficult to connect Orpheus with a religious movement dealing with reincarnation or salvation: his record contains far too many failures for his promotion as a messianic figure! He failed to bring Eurydice back from Hades, and even, if he succeeded (as *Alcestis* 357 hints), this is NOT reincarnation, but resurrection of the body - restoration of the intact body and soul unit. This is just what happens to *Alcestis* in Heracles' *katabasis* in Euripides' play, and the fact that Orpheus is hinted to succeed in *Alcestis* should make us immediately suspicious. Cf. Isocrates *Busiris* 11.8 about Orpheus bringing back the dead: see Bowra (1952) for a discussion of *Alcestis* and Eurydice myth in general. The other aspects of

there is no proof that the Orphics were ever a large and organized group, movement, or sect.¹⁰ I am inclined to agree with Alderink¹¹ that the terms Orphic/Orphism¹² describe a mood, or spirit, of eschatological thought.¹³ The best example of a generic use is undoubtedly the term “Puritan”:

the Orpheus myths are equally inconsistent: the concept of the singing head points more to an oracular than soteriological connection; the details of his death actually indicate hostility towards Dionysiac/Bacchic rituals (confusing, given the clear evidence from Olbia of Orphic Bacchics); his presence on a large number of Apulian vase-paintings of death and the Underworld is more promising, but similarly ambiguous - he may be in Hades attempting to charm the rulers into releasing Eurydice. Likewise, the terra-cotta group, from a tomb, of Orpheus and Sirens may have an eschatological significance (what?), but it could also be considered an Argonautic reference: on the Argonautic journey see esp. Szeliga (1986); Schwartz (1985b) p.241; Graf (1990) p.96; Ziegler (1942) cols. 1333ff.; Graf (1990) pp.95ff.; Bremmer (1994) p.68,n.47 (on archaic Argonautic poetry); and, of course, the *Orphic Argonautica*. On the terra-cottas (in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu) see Burkert (1980) pp.39f. (linking them with the cosmology in the myth of Er at *Republic* 617b): they are illustrated in West (1983) pl.4. Eschatological symbolism is difficult to identify: as West (1983) pp.24f. has noted, “At one particular centre, Tarentum, Orpheus is a recurrent figure, often just a celebrity in Hades.” On the character of Orpheus: Linforth (1941) pp.2-38; Montegu (1958) pp.3-11. On the prestige of ascribing works to an old and respectable name: Burkert (1977) p.38. For Orpheus as shaman - see Appendix D.

¹⁰ That is, if one applies the criteria for calling an organisation a “sect”, then, based on the current state of our evidence, the “Orphics” were not a sect: Nilsson (1935) p.221 agrees. W.Burkert (1982) p.3 notes the characteristics of a sect:

A sect is a minority protest group with (1) an alternative lifestyle, (2) an organisation providing (2.1) regular group meetings and (2.2) some sort of communal or co-operative property, and (3) a high level of spiritual integration, agreement on beliefs and practices, (3.1) based on authority, be it a charismatic leader or a sacred scripture with special interpretation, (3.2) making the distinction of ‘we’ versus ‘they’ the primary reference system, and (3.3) taking action on apostates. The historian will add (4.1) the perspective of diachronic stability (some religious sects have survived for more than two thousand years) and (4.2) local mobility (many sectarian groups have been migrating through continents without losing their identity). It is evidently the integration of family reproduction into the sectarian life, with the resulting indoctrination of the infants according to the rules of the group that makes such organisations virtually indestructible.

A “church” differs only quantitatively; and a sect can survive within a religion. Individuals can exist *within* a sect: this is what Langmuir (1990, pp.140 & 163) calls “religiosity”: maintaining one’s identity whilst still conforming to the overall expectations of the movement.

¹¹ Alderink (1981) pp.5,14,19 etc.

¹² Wilamowitz and Linforth both pointed out that, although there is a sizeable amount of poetry attributed to one “Orpheus”, which is thus called “Orphic poetry”, “Orphics” are not referred to in the sense of a group of people, or a sect, and “Orphism” is a term that is *never* used in antiquity. As Burkert (1977, pp.5f.) notes, an “-ism” implies a “parcel, well tied up,

lest it should spill its contents anywhere but along well-channelled 'influences': that is, a closed system - an idea incompatible with ancient mystery religions. Cf. Linforth (1941) p.ix. ¹³ Alderink (1981, pp.17-18) provides a useful list of phenomena that can be called "Orphic". For example, it can mean the members of a group, or community, following the (ascetic) Orphic way of life (*Orphikos bios*), based on the texts ascribed to Orpheus. Or it can refer to the writers of the so-called Orphic poems and *Hymns*. *Cratylus* 400c appears to attest to this use, which may be a way of conferring authority and antiquity on a text: Linforth (1941, p.295) and West (1983, p.3). The *Hymns* are attributed to Orpheus, but vary in date from the sixth century BC to the fourth century AD: see Athanassakis (1977); Linforth (1941) pp.179-198; Taylor (1896); West (1968); Moulinier (1955) p.100; Burkert (1977) p.8 (they may have been collected in Pergamum in the second century AD); Ziegler (1942) cols.1323ff. A third sense is that "Orphic" can refer to the practitioner of certain rites and teachings - the itinerant Ὀρφεοτελεστής ("Orphic initiator": Theophrastus *Characters* XVI; cf. Plato *Republic* 364b-e). As Rose pointed out, "The word 'Orphic' is utterly lacking in precision..": review of Linforth (1941) in *CR* 57 (1943) 33-34. West (1983, p.3) makes an important distinction: "We must never say that 'the Orphics' believed this or did that, and anyone who does say it must be asked sharply 'Which Orphics?'. It is legitimate to talk about these Olbian or Tarentine Orphics, or any other specific group of Orphics that we can identify, but not to talk about 'the Orphics' in general. As for 'Orphism', the only definite meaning that can be given to the term is 'the fashion for claiming Orpheus as an authority'. The history of Orphism is the history of that fashion." For example, Dodds (1968, p.148) wrote that he *used* to know a lot about Orphism, but now it all appeared to be "a house of dreams". To summarize, at the turn of this century, Orphism was considered to be the strongest cult in the Hellenic world in the sixth and fifth centuries. It had a complex anthropogony and theogony, numerous religious texts, a doctrine of transmigration of the soul (and, therefore, by inference, a doctrine of reincarnation/metempsychosis), and a "way of life" (*Orphikos bios*) involving asceticism (including vegetarianism) and purification. The aim of this life was to free the (divine) soul from its prison, or tomb-like body and, through numerous transmigrations, make it divine again, along the lines of the (Orphic) myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus-Zagreus. The gold plates were considered Orphic, as was the cosmogony parodied in Aristophanes' *Birds*, and Hippolytus was an Orphic. Moreover, for some commentators, Orphism was "a drop of alien blood in the veins of the Greeks": Rohde, quoted by Dodds (1968, p.139). It was something to be despised - a sad flaw in the facade of pure Hellenism. In line with this was the idea that it must only have been the lowest, most gullible, least educated class of people who turned to foreign (Orphic) religions - those who lacked "vigorous self-confidence", the opposite of those rational and "knightly" figures who pursued "Pythagorism": Gomperz (1901, p.123) on "Orphicism" [sic]. But, cf. Farnell (1912) p.5 on "...the Orphic-Pythagorean sectaries who were the first missionaries..of higher thought." For others, Orpheus was the precursor of Christ, linked through the rites of omophagy and the Dionysiac connection, to the Holy Communion: Macchioro (1930) pp.78-80 on mimetic communion; cf. Detienne (1975) p.50. This interpretation owes not a little to the representation of Christ as the Orphic singer in Clement *Protrep.* I,5-6: Wyller (1991, p.63). These grand schemes have since been reduced to a few scattered groups on the margins of the Greek world, calling themselves "Orphics", but probably attached to a Dionysiac group. Far from being a religion of the poor, evidence such as burial/entombment with gold lamellae, vases, papyri and examples of rich, Dionysiac ash urns, such as the gilded crater found in another tomb at Derveni - Burkert (1977, p.4) - as well as the evidence for payment of initiators, point more towards an exclusive, marginalized and esoteric group: Bremmer (1994) pp.72 & 88. Cf. Graf (1993), pp.255ff. for a social/economic study of the burials associated with the gold lamellae. Graf concludes that the Bacchic cults had a particular attraction for powerful and wealthy women, as in the example of Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great - Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 2-3: [de Olympiade Alexandri matre] ἕτερος δὲ περὶ τούτων ἐστὶ λόγος, ὡς πᾶσαι μὲν αἱ τῆιδε γυναῖκες ἔνοχοι τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς

..there has never been a church called Puritan, *simpliciter*, as there are, e.g., Anglican and Presbyterian churches; yet ‘Puritan’, ‘Puritanism’ meant something in the religious history of Great Britain and the U.S.A.¹⁴

That is, it can be a generic term, often pejorative, for anyone holding views akin to the Puritans.

However, I would suggest that “Orphic”, as a generic term, refers to slightly more than simply a spirit in Greek thought. If one can group together the characteristics which generally earn the title of “Orphic”, *without* implying that these characteristics are all part of a movement, then it solves a number of the above problems.

Euripides’ *Hippolytus* best illustrates this conceptualization of “Orphic”. As I have noted above, “puritan” can be a pejorative term; by analogy, this is how Theseus uses “Orphic things” (Ὀρφέα: 1.952) in his tirade against Hippolytus:

ἤδη νῦν αὖχει καὶ δι’ ἀψύχων βορᾶς
σίτοις καπήλευ’, Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων
βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς·
(*Hippolytus* 952-4)¹⁵

οὔσαι καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμοῖς.. (*OF* p.59, test.206); Moulinier (1955) p.68; Burkert (1993) p.261.

¹⁴ Rose (1941) p.34

¹⁵ This passage is also important in that it illustrates that Bacchic terms (βάκχευειν) were used of Orphic rites in the fifth century: Bremmer (1994) p.86; Moulinier (1955) p.17.

Theseus is *not* saying that Hippolytus *is* an Orphic; rather, he is using “Orphic things” as a generic and pejorative term, covering all the odd ideas which Hippolytus follows (vegetarianism and the various - predominantly sexual - abstinences), and the private nature of Hippolytus’ worship, all of which Theseus does not understand: Hippolytus is *like an Orphic*.¹⁶ In fact, Hippolytus - who has just returned from the Eleusinian Mysteries - is not a typical “Orphic”, because he is a hunter:¹⁷ this is incompatible with any belief in reincarnation, transmigration, or kinship of living things, all of which we can number as part of the nebulous notion of “Orphic things”. Thus, we hear in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* 1032-1033 that Ὀρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετάς θ’ ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ’ ἀπέχεσθαι, Μουσαῖος δ’ ἐξακέσεις τε νόσων καὶ χρησμούς.¹⁸

A survey of references would suggest that the following ideas/doctrines fit into this generic category as part of an Orphic way of thinking: an ascetic lifestyle (the Ὀρφικὸς βίος);¹⁹ vegetarianism;²⁰ a belief in the pre-existence of the soul;²¹ a belief in the soul imprisoned, or entombed, in the body;²² a

¹⁶ Montegu (1958) p.89,n.59. Cole (1980) p.228: cf. the derision of Demosthenes (*De corona* 18.259f.; *OF* p.59, test. 205) towards Aeschines, who helps his mother in private initiations. On Hippolytus, see also Linforth (1941) pp.51ff.; Burkert (1982) pp.11-12.

¹⁷ Montegu (1958) p.89,n.57

¹⁸ This, referring as it presumably does, to the Eleusinian Mysteries, may not necessarily forbid murder *because* of the repercussions for reincarnation, but could refer to the condition of the Eleusinian Mysteries that initiands be free of blood-guilt.

¹⁹ Plato *Laws* 782c

²⁰ Euripides *Hippolytus* 952ff. (quoted above); *Laws* 782c (inanimate food).

²¹ This is not uncommon: see Schibli (1990) p.108,n.10 for a discussion.

prohibition of burial in wool;²³ a prohibition on killing (all creatures);²⁴ the myth of Dionysus and the Titanic crime;²⁵ rites of purification and/or initiation carried out by mendicant priest/initiators using books, perhaps cosmogonical;²⁶ a corpus of writings associated with the name of Orpheus;²⁷ gold lamellae; an eschatology based on punishment (and reward) in the Underworld,²⁸ with a prominent role for Persephone.²⁹ This picture presents an amalgam of ideas which could well have been - and, in some cases, definitely were - shared with other movements.³⁰

My immediate interest is whether “Orphic” is a notion which can be associated specifically with reincarnation. The latest discoveries (that is, those postdating the nihilism of Linforth and H.S.Long), are ambiguous in the extreme, but a survey of these sheds much light on the Platonic eschatologies.

These new resources - the Derveni papyrus, the Olbian bone tablets, the Hipponion and Pelinna gold lamellae - have completely changed the face and the focus of Orphic scholarship.³¹

²² Plato *Cratylus* 400c

²³ Herodotus 2.81

²⁴ Aristophanes *Frogs* 1032-1033 (quoted above).

²⁵ Plato *Laws* 701bc; Pindar fr.133

²⁶ Plato *Republic* 364b-365a; Theophrastus *Characters* XVI

²⁷ Plato *Republic* 364b-365a; Euripides *Hippolytus* 952ff.

²⁸ Perhaps Plato *Republic* 366ab?: ‘ ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἐν Ἄιδου δίκην δάσομεν ὧν ἂν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσωμεν, ἢ αὐτοὶ ἢ παῖδες παίδων’. ἀλλ’, ὦ φίλε, φήσει λογιζόμενος, αἱ τελεταὶ αὐτῶν μέγα δύνανται καὶ οἱ λύσιοι θεοί, ὡς αἱ μεγίσται πόλεις λέγουσι καὶ οἱ θεῶν παῖδες ποιηταὶ καὶ προφῆται τῶν θεῶν γενόμενοι, οἱ ταῦθ’ οὕτως ἔχειν μηνύουσι.

²⁹ See Alderink (1981) p.17ff. for a complete list of the other senses of “Orphic”.

³⁰ Nilsson (1935) p.229

³¹ They are also all from the boundaries of the Greek world: Burkert (1980) p.40.

The Derveni Papyrus is a mid-fourth century allegorical commentary on an older (c.500BC?) cosmogony ascribed to “Orpheus”, found partly burned on the pyre outside a tomb near Derveni (Macedonia).³²

The poem discussed and quoted in the commentary has demonstrated that not only was there an interest in “Orphic things” in the fourth century,³³ but also that there were Orphic cosmogonical poems existing from at least the sixth century.³⁴

The commentary is evidently intended as some kind of revelation to those in the know.³⁵ More relevantly, column 16 can be linked to the view of “Orphic” priests given by Plato (*Republic* 364b-e), and Theophrastus (the Ὀρφεοτελεστής: *Characters* XVI). Alderink has assessed this passage:

The Derveni author speaks of those who participated in the mysteries in cities: of them, he says, it is no wonder that they do not attain knowledge; they do not hear and at the same time understand the words. Still others, who are initiated by those making a craft of sacred rites, are worthy of astonishment and pity. They merit astonishment because they seem to seek knowledge but actually finish the rites before acquiring the knowledge or even asking questions; they are to be pitied because they pay the fees in advance of the rites but leave before

³² Sources: Kapsomenos (1963); Kapsomenos (1964); Merkelbach (1967); Burkert (1968); Boyancé (1974); Burkert (1977); Funghi (1979); Burkert (1980); Alderink (1981); Burkert (1982); West (1983); McClintock (1985); Rusten (1985); Bremmer (1994) pp.87f.

³³ Alderink (1981) p.26

³⁴ Finkelberg (1986) p.322,n.2

³⁵ For example, III.8: “I will speak for those entitled. Close your doors, ye profane.” Translation by Bremmer (1994). Unfortunately, as Burkert (1980) p.30 notes, it is also “Ein bizarrer Text, nicht einfach zu verstehen..”(“)

their completion, leaving with neither knowledge or fulfilled expectations. In contrast to the communal and private rituals stands the enterprise of the author of the commentary: allegorical interpretation of Orpheus' poem with the goal of seeking and disseminating knowledge.³⁶

Although this adds much to our understanding of ritual, it is too vague to be a useful source on eschatology. However, it does illustrate that Plato's opinion that paid initiators were charlatans was not a one-off criticism.³⁷

The idea that the true knowledge is gained by the deeper understanding of a theological work, is a throw-back to the idea that Orphism was a book (written) religion.³⁸ It is interesting to ask whether Orphic ritual is based on correct interpretation of Orphic writings. There is certainly a large tradition of Orphic writings - theogonies, *Hymns* etc.: Plato's βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον παρέχονται [sc. ἀγύρται καὶ μάντεις] Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως (*Republic* 364e3; *OF* 3).³⁹ So, burial with a book roll may have had a ritual significance: did Orphic ritual involve cremation with a book roll?⁴⁰ The rolled papyrus found in the right hand of the deceased in the fourth century tomb at Kallatis (Rumania) may be comparable.⁴¹ Moreover, an Apulian vase of 330-320BC

³⁶ Alderink (1981) p.52. In West's (1983) and Rusten's (1985) column numbers, 16 becomes column 17. Cf. Bremmer (1994) p.88; Burkert (1982) p.5.

³⁷ As Rusten (1985, p.140) notes, it implies that public rituals were equally useless. However, he believes that the commentator is "...using reductionist logic to deny that there is any way of gaining knowledge of the divine.." (p.140).

³⁸ Nilsson (1925) p.215.; Alderink (1981) pp.95 and p.116,n.9: salvation achieved through the reading of sacred books?

³⁹ West (1983), p.23 translates "hubbub of books".

⁴⁰ Blank (1982), p.172

⁴¹ The roll was not large (about the size of a cigarette). Only two words were retrieved (by infra-red photography as it crumbled away to dust within three minutes of exposure to air):

illustrates a man enthroned in a *niaskos*, or *Heroon*, with a book roll in his left hand. Next to him (at the entrance) stands Orpheus with his lyre.⁴²

The books may be simply funerary gifts, however the more obvious analogy is a "Book of the Dead".⁴³ Yet, as a number of scholars have noted,⁴⁴ an esoteric allegorical commentary is far from being a passport for the dead (Totenpasse/Totenbucher)⁴⁵ in the way that the gold lamellae (see below) detail the urgent and relevant concerns of the deceased. Surely the poem of Orpheus itself would have been more appropriate? The Derveni commentary does not refer to the underworld or afterlife, and it does not mention the myth of Dionysus and the Titans.⁴⁶ Yet, it is difficult to deny that the burial of written matter seems to have been a feature of this Orphic mood.

Burkert (1980) pp.38f.; cf. the comments of Schmidt (1975) p.114, and Condurachi commenting to Schmidt at the same *convegno* (p.185).

⁴² Burkert (1977) p.3 and (1980) pp.38f.; illustrated in West (1983) pl.2 (cf. p.25). The vase in question is an amphora from the Antikenmuseum Basel, S 40, discussed in greater detail in M.Schmidt, A.D.Trendall & A.Cambitoglou *Eine Gruppe apulischer Grabvasen in Basel* (1976) pp.32-34, pl.11. For Orpheus in eschatological contexts on (predominantly) Apulian vase painting, see Trendall (1989) pp.266-270; also (although hardly expressing standard viewpoints), Smith (1967). We should not forget, however, that at Derveni the book roll was on the pyre *outside* the tomb: West (1983) p.25,n.67. West (pp.25ff.) gives latter Bacchic/Dionysiac parallels for books as *hieroi logoi*.

⁴³ The Tibetan Book of the Dead is read in the place of death for many days after death (49), because the soul lingers and receives it directions. However, in Greek belief, the soul is gone at the instant of death. Are the books and lamellae to be viewed as symbolic, rather than part of ritual?

⁴⁴ Dillon in response to Burkert (1977) p.15; Seaford (1986) pp.20f.

⁴⁵ A "vademecum": Ziegler (1942) col.1386; cf. Bremmer (1994) p.87. Those suggesting a "Book of the Dead" connection: West (1971) pp.65f. & n.2; Graf (1974) p.125; Vermeule (1979) p.58. Burkert (1975) p.87 calls the Hipponion lamella "un testo bacchico con affinità egiziano-pitagorica" - this is certainly covering every option! A third option is that they are an *aide-mémoire* for a test of the initiate: that is, those who give the right responses (based on their initiation) reach Elysium; the rest are diverted (and reincarnated?). Therefore, initiation is a rehearsal for the transition to death and the Underworld? - Seaford (1986) p.25. Cf. Smith (1967) p.96 on the lamellae as "certificates of purity".

⁴⁶ Burkert (1977) p.5

West associates the cosmogony of the Derveni papyrus with metempsychosis through certain cosmic ideas, which “triangulate” the common doctrine of Pherecydes, the Derveni theogony, and Pythagoras.⁴⁷ This is far from certain; reincarnation is attested as a belief of Pythagoras,⁴⁸ but it is not present in the fragments of Pherecydes (see Appendix A).⁴⁹ Moreover, the Derveni papyrus’ fragmentary state (it breaks off before the birth of Dionysus) supports no references to reincarnation.⁵⁰

As for the subject matter of the poem under discussion in the Derveni commentary, it is a “theological cosmogony”.⁵¹ It has been suggested that the Orphic cosmogony, and the Orphic beliefs, exist in a macrocosm-microcosm relationship: that is, the destiny of humans is not separate from the destiny of the world.⁵² This has cross-cultural parallels: one way in which the travelling priests/initiators of the Near East cured ills was by the reciting of cosmogonies;⁵³ in the Greek evidence (*Republic* 364b-365a), these itinerant

⁴⁷ West (1983), pp.18ff.

⁴⁸ This leads on to the next question: who came first, Pythagoreans or Orphics? Nilsson (1935) p.212; Burkert (1972) p.128-133: general consensus - excepting H.S.Long (1948) - would see Pythagoreanism as a variant of Orphism. See Burkert (1968) pp.105ff., for an attempt to extract Pythagorean mathematics and “Naturwissenschaft” from the Derveni papyrus *via* Philolaus.

⁴⁹ *Contra* West (1983), p.19 and West (1971).

⁵⁰ Bremmer (1994) p.87

⁵¹ Alderink (1981), p.26

⁵² Alderink (1981) p.51, based on Burkert (1968), p.104

⁵³ Burkert (1990) (p.24); Schwartz (2) (p.241). As Burkert (1990) (p.24) believes, “...as illness is an indication that something has gone wrong, and is moving towards catastrophe, it is of vital importance to find a fresh start; the most thorough method is to create a world anew, acknowledging the dangerous forces proceeding, or still surrounding, this kosmos but

initiators use books of Orpheus *et al* to effect their initiations and expiations.⁵⁴ Yet the concept of creating the world anew does not seem to be very Greek; there is little Greek apocalyptic literature, although it is possible that Empedocles' cosmic system included a periodic destruction and renewal.⁵⁵

The Derveni papyrus seems to follow the same theogonical development as, for example, the Rhapsodic Theogony. However, it is cut off before the union of Zeus and Rhea produces Persephone, and thus before the "Orphic" myth of Dionysus and the Titans.⁵⁶ It is only attested late,⁵⁷ but it does seem that the story is not only implied and understood in Pindar fragment 133, but essential.

extolling the virtuous power that guarantees life and lasting order. Thus, in Babylonian texts, we find cosmogonies used as charms against toothache or a headache, or for facilitating childbirth; practically all the literary texts can also be used as mythical precedences of magical action: to stop evil winds, to procure rain, to ward off pestilence". That is, cosmogonies function to renew life: Alderink (1981) p.51 and Burkert (1968) p.104.

⁵⁴ Moreover it is by means of these travelling priests that the cosmogonies are transmitted. Bremmer (1994) p.7 points out that priests are not influential figures in Greek culture unless they are connected with an important sanctuary.

⁵⁵ It has been suggested - by the reviewer of West (1983) in *CPh* LXXXI (1986) p.158 - that Orphic books are *hieroi logoi* rather than theogonies. As Burkert (1982) p.8 notes, however, the majority of fragments are mythological/cosmogonical rather than liturgical. For all of the Orphic theogonies, see West (1983). Cf. Schwabl "Weltschöpfung" *RE* Suppl. IX (1962) §25 (col.1467); Bremmer (1990) pp.22ff.

⁵⁶ See this myth in West's restoration (from *OF* 60-235) of the Rhapsodic Theogony: West (1983), p.74-75. The more common myth is that Dionysus was the child of Semele, born from Zeus' thigh: Richardson (1987), p.64; Kerényi (1976) pp.256,278. Euripides *Rhesus* 966 links Orpheus and Persephone: Moulinier (1955) p.17.

⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., Olympiodorus *In Plat. Phaedon.* 61c (2,21 = *OF* 220). Cf. Strachan (1970) for the body/tomb idea which accompanies this passage. On Olympiodorus: Armstrong (1977) p.483; esp. Boyancé (1948), attempting to demonstrate Olympiodorus' accuracy based on Xenocrates. For example, Xenocrates fr.20 (Heinze), referring to φρονιά: "it is Titanic - and it culminates in Dionysus"; tr. by Alderink (1981) p.69. Seaford (1986) p.9 describes Xenocrates as contemporary with the lamellae - quite a stretch, as they extend over eight hundred years.

West would base the Derveni theogony on the Protogonos Theogony, which he believes was composed for a Bacchic society in Ionia about 500BC, and included a doctrine of salvation by Dionysus and a metempsychotic doctrine, all set in a cosmogony.⁵⁸ This seems too big a leap to make.

The idea of a Bacchic society seeking Orphic poetry is possible from our knowledge of the Dionysiac objects in the other tombs/burials at Derveni, and probable in the light of the discoveries at Olbia. West believes that the common link is Ionia, because of Pherecydes' (and Pythagoras') connection with this region. Yet there is not a shred of evidence for a reincarnation doctrine in Ionia at this time.

Dionysus can have a soteriological function. The gold lamellae from Pelinna, for example, contains the command, "Tell Persephone that Bakkhios himself has set you free".⁵⁹ Free from what? The obvious answer is linked to the myth of Dionysus and the Titanic crime, particularly in the light of the statement by Olympiodorus (*OF* 232):

ὅτι ὁ Διόνυσος λύσεώς ἐστί αἴτιος· διὸ καὶ Λυσεὺς ὁ θεός,
καὶ ὁ Ὀρφεὺς φησιν·

ἄνθρωποι δὲ τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας
πέμψουσιν πάσησι ἐν ὥραις ἀμφιέτησιν

⁵⁸ Which may have been parodied by the cosmogony in Aristophanes *Birds* 690ff. (= *OF* 1; c.414BC). His use of the cosmic Egg has an later Orphic reference. Unfortunately, a comic attestation is hardly decisive, particularly since Aristophanes appears to be parodying Hesiod in the same passage: Nilsson (1935) p.199; Nilsson (1957) pp. 140-141 (egg as a symbol of life); Montegu (1958) pp.78-79; Adorno (1975) p.11; West (1976) p.226 (Eastern comparisons); Guerin (1968) p.260 (egg as a symbol of rebirth).

⁵⁹ Lamella P1.2: εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνοι σ' ὅτι Βά<κ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε - tr. Graf (1993), p.241

ὄργια τ' ἐκτελέσουσι λύσιν προγόνων ἀθεμίστων
 μαιόμενοι· σὺ δὲ τοῖσιν ἔχων κράτος, οὓς κ' ἐθέλησθα,
 λύσεις ἔκ τε πόνων χαλεπῶν καὶ ἀπείρονος οἴστρου.

Therefore Bakkhios/Dionysus is speaking for the soul of the deceased on the Pelinna lamella, ensuring that Persephone accepts the soul of the deceased, and that the soul receives the same rewards/blessings as the other blessed in the underworld.⁶⁰ As to the actual freeing, it *could* relate to a doctrine of the body as a prison of the soul, from which the soul is released. This would be compatible with the so-called Orphic doctrine of the soul⁶¹ given at *Cratylus* 400c⁶² (attributed to οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα).⁶³

⁶⁰ Graf (1993), p.243

⁶¹ Aristotle *De anima* 410b19 (*OF* 27) writes that the Orphic epics teach that the soul enters the body in respiration from the universe, carried by the winds. This is not explicitly metempsychotic, for, as Alderink notes, it could refer to the *creation* of humans - that is, it is the first and only incarnation, part of an anthropogony. Cf. Proclus *In Plat. Remp.* II 339,17 (*OF* 223) citing an Orphic poem of flying souls entering bodies. The most obvious analogy is to the winged souls of *Phaedrus* (q.v.); Aristophanes *Birds* is another. It is easy to link the idea with the body as prison/tomb doctrine (*Cratylus* 400c) - the soul can be compared to a caged bird: e.g. Plutarch *Consol. ad uxor.* 10, 611df. See Turcan (1959) for a discussion of the bird-soul (l'âme-oiseau). Also Courcelle (1965), (1966) and (1965). The idea of flying souls, or souls as birds etc., is a common one in other traditions; also bees, butterflies, moths etc: Dietrich (1974) p.121. Cf. Aristotle *Hist. Anim.* 551a14. Regarding Aristotle *De anima* 410b19, Alderink argues that, given the context (Aristotle is denying that the body and soul are distinct), Aristotle is not ascribing a doctrine of reincarnation to the Orphics, but criticizing the idea of souls entering bodies from the air by pointing out that this does not account for plants and non-breathing animals. That is, his objections to the Pythagoreans and Orphics are on different grounds (he objects to the Pythagorean idea that the soul can inhabit a number of different bodies), and thus, he is not recognizing reincarnation in Orphic doctrine (but, presumably, a *first* and *only* incarnation). As Alderink admits, this is *argumentum ex silentio*: Alderink (1981) pp.56ff. That is, it is possible that theories of pre-existence, separateness of body and soul, and souls borne on the winds, do not necessarily have to add up to a theory of transmigration/reincarnation. Cf. Nilsson (1935) p.213. As Burkert (1972) p.126 notes, "Metempsychosis is not attested directly for Orphism in any ancient source - only the pre-existence of the soul." As to why this first incarnation occurs, Alderink connects it to the Titanic myth; I have discussed this in the following note.

⁶² Cf. *Phaedo* 62ae and my discussion of the σῶμα-σῆμα problem in that chapter (n.3). Also - *Gorgias* 493a, 525a; *Phaedo* 61d-62b, 81e-84a, 92a: see Adorno (1975) p.14. This idea raises a great many problems, not the least of which is that Plato's etymologies are often given tongue-in-cheek: Ferwerda (1985) p.268ff. Yet the concept of the body as prison is usually interpreted as a Pythagorean doctrine, with the etymology of the body as tomb more

At *Republic* 364b-365a, the same function of removing ancestral wrongdoings is ascribed to the mendicant initiators (whom we can call Orphic

commonly associated with the Orphics. The third etymology (from σώζω and σῶμα) may be Socrates' own: Rehrenbock (1975) pp. 17, 24f., 30. Linforth (1941, p.147) would hold the third etymology as Orphic. If the body is the tomb of the soul, this might be associated with the uncleanness of death, and the need to avoid the body: Nilsson (1935) pp.219,207f. Cf. *Gorgias* 492e (See Appendix C), where Socrates has heard from wise men that we are now dead and our body (σῶμα) is our tomb (σῆμα). The most common explanation is that the body is to be despised because it is the Titanic part of ourselves. This is what the myth of Dionysus explains: Dionysus-Zagreus was torn apart by the Titans, enemies of Zeus, and eaten. Zeus slew the Titans with his thunderbolt, and from the soot of their ashes formed humankind. Therefore, man has elements of the Titans and elements of Dionysus: a mortal has something immortal inside him, a part of Dionysus. This manifests itself as his soul: the soul is immortal, and is striving to free itself from its human prison and become divine again. When the body dies, the soul is judged, and if its stay in the body has not been morally pure, the soul is returned to another body - basically, to try again. Therefore, the aim of movements believing in reincarnation is to save the soul from further reincarnations - to stop the dimming of its divine nature: Finkelberg (1986) p.326. This neatly wraps up the etymology of σώζω in *Cratylus* 400c, also. Other scholars have doubted that such a strict duality of body and soul is intended. Alderink, for example, tenders a quite plausible interpretation of the body as tomb/prison problem based on *Phaedo* 62b. This passage tells us that we live in the prison (φρουρά) of the soul, watched over by the gods who hold us as their chattels; that is, the body is a prison where the soul is guarded by the gods who are in fact looking after it. Thus the soul is imprisoned as a punishment, but this is also a time for acquiring freedom. Thus, there is no concept that the body is the source of evil: rather, the soul is in the body for safekeeping until the penalty is paid. The myth of Dionysus and the Titans is used as an explanation of why the soul is in the body, and explains the duality of body and soul as a creation of the late sources in which the myth first appears - cf. Linforth (1941) pp.307ff. Alderink would interpret the concept of the "Titanic nature of man" (*Laws* 701bd) not to mean that humans have a dual Titanic-Dionysiac nature, but that they "are capable of acting in a *manner*, or after the *pattern*, of the Titans". The punishment for acting after the pattern of the Titans is incarnation; salvation/liberation comes through Dionysus: Alderink (1981) pp.61ff. Alderink binds this up in a (dual) cosmogony/anthropogony framework, which I do find not convincing. It seems to me that we are intended to regard the soul's sojourn in the body as an evil and a punishment. If the gods are watching over us, they are not really doing a lot of good, because we have to live out our punishment, regardless. Mansfeld, in a review of Alderink's book, notes that, "I agree that the body as the soul's prison is a less gruesome idea than the body as the soul's tomb, but it is not a particularly cheerful one either. Possibly, the Orphics formulated an optimistic cosmology; in as far as life in the body is concerned, however, their anthropology is certainly pessimistic, even when their cosmology is not." *Mnemosyne* (1985) XXXVIII 436-438. It is difficult to postulate a disinterest in the body in the face of rich grave finds - that is, we might expect that a dualist view of the body/soul would minimize the body. Cf. Linforth (1941) p.263. On the lack of uniformity in burial practices, see Macchioro (1930) pp.109-120.

⁶³ As Burkert (1982) p.4 notes, the plural implies scepticism.

because of their use of Orphic books). And, in Pindar's fragment 133, Persephone accepts requital for ancient wrong.

I do not think that we should be so ready to fit a doctrine of reincarnation into this vague picture. Fragment 133 of Pindar does refer to reincarnation, however, there is no evidence to associate reincarnation specifically with the myth of Dionysus. The Orphic myth refers to Dionysus' rebirth in the sense of the resurrection of his body, and while this does not deny a role to reincarnation, the myth can stand on its own.⁶⁴

The tenuousness of any Dionysiac connection with reincarnation is illustrated in other evidence. One of the bone tablets from Olbia not only demonstrates that "Orphikoi" existed in the fifth century, but that they were connected with a Dionysiac or Bacchic group.⁶⁵ Although there may be an element of antagonism between Orpheus and Dionysus in myth,⁶⁶ there seems to be no reason why there cannot be Orphic Bacchics.⁶⁷ Neither have any

⁶⁴ Ideally, restoration would be the worst thing for the soul - it is indicative of the soul's failure to escape the body: cf. Kahn (1971) p.9. I have discussed this in regard to Platonic reincarnation (q.v.).

⁶⁵ *Contra* Linforth (1941) p.171

⁶⁶ Viz the story in Aeschylus' lost *Bassarael/Bassarides* (*OF* p.14, test.45; cf. Ps-Eratosthenes *OF* p.33, test.113) that Orpheus had adopted Apollo-Helios as his god, and Dionysus avenged this insult by persuading the Thracian women (*aka* Maenads?) to tear Orpheus apart: Nilsson (1935) pp.203-4; Linforth (1941) p.10; Montegu (1958) p.7; West (1983) p.12; Eliade (1986) p.114. Yet there is also a parallel, in that the manner of Orpheus' death is similar to the fate of Dionysus at the hands of the Titans. The antagonism between Orpheus and women is presumably not carried over, because much of the "Orphic" Dionysiac/Bacchic evidence relates to the participation of women: Graf (1993) pp.255ff.; Detienne (1975) pp.72f,78.

⁶⁷ There is a considerable amount of evidence to show that there were from the first century BC: Linforth (1941) pp.207-32; West (1983) p.26. As Bremmer (1994) p.86 comments, "The

strong connection with a fixed cult centre or meeting place,⁶⁸ and both can be seen as influences on movements other than those specific to their “cult”. For example, Dionysus is linked to the Eleusinian Mysteries,⁶⁹ as is Orpheus/Orphism.⁷⁰

two most popular early mysteries, then, were cults of precisely those two divinities who were ‘eccentric’ in the Greek pantheon”. Of course, Orpheus is not, strictly speaking, a divinity.

⁶⁸ Nilsson (1935), p.221. That is, unless one accepts the ridiculous suggestion that the “Orphic Temple” in Littlecote Park is the first - and only - example of a pagan Orphic temple (built in the brief reign of Julian the Apostate): Walters (1982). In the *Bacchae*, Thebes is the first place to become a local centre for the followers of Dionysus, but this does not imply the usual rules for establishment of a foreign cult; see, for example, line 40: Versnel (1990), p.152. Cole (1980) pp.235f. lists the few instances of temples and/or sanctuaries dedicated to Dionysus, predominantly in Magna Graecia, illustrating the importance of Dionysus for Southern Italians. There were, however, no official mysteries of Dionysus institutionalized by a great city: Cole (1980) p.236. Likewise, there is no evidence (other than hearsay - see below) for a great Athenian Orphic cult: Montegu (1958) p.87. It appears that the link between the two lies in their marginalized, private nature. As a parallel, it is a characteristic of oriental cults to have no fixed cult centre, unlike the Greek mystery cults: Sfamini Gasparro (1985), p.xiii. Tradition assigns Onomacritus (under the patronage of Pisistratus) an important role in introducing (or inventing - cf. Herodotus 5.90) Orphic belief at Athens; see the late testimonia in *OF* pp.55-56): Fauth (1969) col.2262; Nilsson (1935) pp.195ff.,202; Gianotti (1972) p.524; Macchioro (1930) p.74; esp. Guepin (1968) pp.228ff. For example, Pausanias 8.37,5 (*OF* p.56 - test.194): παρά δὲ Ἄμφικριτος Ὀνομάκριτος παραλαβὼν τῶν Τιτάνων τὸ ὄνομα Διονύσῳ τε συνέθηκεν ὄργια καὶ εἶναι τοὺς Τιτάνας τῷ Διονύσῳ τῶν παθημάτων ἐποίησεν ἀντουργοὺς. The evidence is ambiguous because of its late date. It appears to be a common motif that tyrants are susceptible to these types of movements - cf. Theron of Akragas in Pindar’s *Second Olympian Ode* (q.v.): Adorno (1975) p.25.

⁶⁹ This is a connection present since the sixth century: Graf (1974) pp.40-78; cf. Guepin (1968) p.269; Versnel (1990) p.154; Fauth (1969) cols.2261ff. On Dionysus’ attributes: Carpenter & Faraone (1993); Detienne (1975), (1979) and (1981) for the structuralists’ interpretations (omophagy and Other-ness). Considering the lack of evidence for “Orphism” in the major cities, Detienne is surely incorrect to see it as part of this political/social protest movement denying traditional religion and mores. He does admit some doubts: (1975) p.55. See Burkert’s criticisms of this methodology: (1982) p.2

⁷⁰ Orpheus (proverbially) introduced mysteries to Attica: Euripides *Rhesus* 943-4; Ps.-Demosthenes 25.11 (First Speech Against Aristogeiton) (*OF* 23); Aristophanes *Frogs* 1032-1033; Ephorus *apud* Diodorus 5,64.4. See West (1983), pp.24ff.; Linforth (1941), pp.99ff. Graf (1974) suggests that one of these mysteries in which Orpheus/Orphic things played a role was the Eleusinian. However, there is no evidence in the Eleusinian Mysteries for anything more than the promise of happy afterlife in the Underworld - certainly reincarnation did not play a role at Eleusis, despite, as Vlastos (1970, p.103,n.38) notes, the persistent connection of Orpheus and Eleusis. Orpheus is linked to Eleusis by the poetry ascribed to him, not by “Orphic” beliefs: Pausanias IX, 27,2 (*OF* 304, 305); cf. Moulinier (1955), pp.100ff.; Boyancé (1975). Tierney (1922) p.77 suggests the opposite: “Orphism” was influenced by the Eleusinian Mysteries. Other evidence for the foundation of mysteries is late: Linforth (1941), pp.262-263 gives a thorough list, but it lacks any common thread. On

They are also similar in the itinerant nature of their initiations, and can be compared to that other imported ecstatic figure, Cybele, whose itinerant priests wandered the towns and countryside, converting people and begging offerings.⁷¹

I have already noted the appearance of itinerant initiators in Plato's Republic 364b-365a - the passage provides most of our information on this phenomenon, viz,

ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπωδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκείσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐορτῶν, ἐάν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλη, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδικῶ βλάβει ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεοὺς, ὡς φασιν, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν. τούτοις δὲ πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις μάρτυρας ποιητὰς ἐπάγονται, οἱ μὲν κακίας πέρι εὐπετείας διδόντες, ὡς

τὴν μὲν κακότητα καὶ ἰλαδὸν ἔστιν ἐλέσθαι

ῥηϊδίως· λείη μὲν ὁδός, μάλα δ' ἐγγύθι ναίει·

τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἰδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάρουθεν ἔθηκον

καὶ τινα ὁδὸν μακρὰν τε καὶ τραχεῖαν καὶ ἀνάντη· οἱ δὲ τῆς τῶν θεῶν ὑπ' ἀνθρώπων παραγωγῆς τὸν Ὅμηρον μαρτύρονται, ὅτι καὶ ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν -

λιστοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί,

καὶ τοὺς μὲν θυσίαισι καὶ εὐχολαῖς ἀγαναῖσιν

λοιβῆ τε κνίση τε παρατρῶπῶσ' ἄνθρωποι

λίσσόμενοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῆ καὶ ἀμάρτη.

βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, Σελήνης τε καὶ Μουσῶν ἐκγόνων, ὡς φασι, καθ' ἃς

the connection of Orpheus/Orphism with Demeter and Kore-Persephone: Ziegler (1942) cols.1395ff.

⁷¹ Burkert (1979) (p.105). This practice (of begging for a livelihood in the name of Cybele) was looked on with disapproval, and the first priest (called a *metragyrtes*) to come to Athens, the man who introduced the cult to the Athenians, was given a harsh reception: Suda s.v. 'Metragyrtes': quoted in Versnel (1990) (p.105); Burkert (1985) p.176 believes these people were viewed with great suspicion. I would agree: the Mormons are perhaps a modern parallel?

θηπολοῦσιν, πείθοντες οὐ μόνον ιδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις,
ὡς ἄρα λύσεις τε καὶ καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων διὰ θυσίων καὶ
παιδιάς ἡδονῶν εἰσι μὲν ἔτι ζῶσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ τελευτήσιν,
ἃς δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν, αἱ τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν ἀπολύουσιν
ἡμᾶς, μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει.⁷²

These priests/initiators - *Orpheotelestai* - have been seen as the only “tangible reality behind the phenomenon of Orphism”.⁷³ *Republic* 364b-365a gives a picture of itinerant charlatans taking advantage of the gullible and anxious. The passage is obviously derisive in tone,⁷⁴ but the overall picture it gives - of individuals servicing individuals - is reinforced by both Column 16 of the Derveni papyrus (see above) and Theophrastus’ Superstitious Man (ὁ δεισιδαίμων: *Characters* XVI).⁷⁵

Plato’s criticism, reiterated at *Protagoras* 316d, centres on the fact that it is grossly untrue that there is a magic way to achieve the same ends as a life of justice.⁷⁶ It seems reasonable that Plato does not despise Orphic followers and practices *per se*,⁷⁷ but, as Nilsson points out, detests “..the vile jugglers

⁷² Is “greatest cities” a reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries: Guepin (1968) p.237.

⁷³ Burkert (1982) p.4. Their reputation has made the movement always seem less than respectable and legitimate.

⁷⁴ Cf. Plutarch *Apothegm. Laconic.* 224e (*OF* p.58, test.203).

⁷⁵ It has been suggested that these priests are part of a closed community, in that they train together, and are, perhaps, self-perpetuating: this is suggested by Smith in Burkert (1977), p.29. Certainly there are parallels for this sort of organization in Greece, for example in the official initiators (*telestai*) of the Eleusinian Mysteries, drawn from the Kerkyes or Eumolpidae families. Burkert (1982) pp.4ff. has an interesting discussion of the family organisation of *telestai*, which is also seen in the Hippocratic tradition. The *Orpheotelestai* stand out because they lack this community. Cf. West (pp.101-103).

⁷⁶ One might compare Diogenes’ criticism of the Eleusinian Mysteries (D.L. 6.39): why should a criminal get preferential treatment over an honest man after death just because he was initiated?

⁷⁷ Adorno (1975) p.16, points out that Plato appears to know of two kinds of books, viz, (1) theogonies, cosmogonies and myths, and (2) magic formulae for initiations. The former are

who..grew like parasites on the mystic movement and profited by the superstitions of people and their fear of hell".⁷⁸ That is, these charlatans exerted a form of emotional blackmail over the gullible, by frightening people with pictures of the terrors of the afterlife for the uninitiated.⁷⁹ From Plato we know some of these punishments (which are often thought to have an origin in Orphic writings): for example, the uninitiated lie in mire (*Phaedo* 69c);⁸⁰ the righteous live in "eternal drunkenness" (*Republic* 363cd).⁸¹

The users of these books do not seem closely connected with one cult/movement or another, but adapt to the needs of anyone requiring their services. They are not only connected with Orphics, but appears as purifiers and/or medicine men in *On the Sacred Disease* (Hippocrates VI.362f.: μάγου καὶ καθαρταὶ καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες), and also at *Phaedrus* 244de, where they deal with the ills produced by ancestral sins.⁸² What they offer is a quick

unimpeachable sources, and are quoted at *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 14) and *Cratylus* 402b (*OF* 15); the latter belong to the charlatans. Cf. Alderink (1981) p.111,n.27.

⁷⁸ Nilsson (1935) p.208

⁷⁹ I wonder whether Plato also despises those who cannot stick to a life of asceticism, justice and philosophy? In this context he may well disapprove of these 'casual Orphics' - Alderink (1981) p.17. Yet, elsewhere, he appears resigned to the limitations of 'ordinary' humans.

⁸⁰ Is this symbolic of their *impurity*? Nilsson (1935) pp.210f.; Montegu (1958) p.86; Guthrie (1935) p.163.

⁸¹ Μουσαῖος δὲ τούτων νεανικώτερα τάγαθὰ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ παρὰ θεῶν διδάσκει τοῖς δικαίοις· εἰς Ἄιδου γὰρ ἀγαγόντες τῷ λόγῳ καὶ κατακλίναντες καὶ συμπόσειν τῶν ὀσίων κατασκευάσαντες ἐστεφανωμένους ποιοῦσιν τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἤδη διάγειν μεθύοντας, ἠγησάμενοι κάλλιστον ἀρετῆς μισθὸν μέθην αἰώνιον.

This passage goes even further, claiming that the unjust are dealt with harshly in this world as well as the next. I do not agree with Nilsson (1935) p.210 that Plato is *not* criticizing this view of the afterlife (eternal drunkenness) but merely "crudely" expressing the intense joy of the just.. This hardly does Plato justice, particularly when it is followed by 364b-365a. Cf. Montegu (1958) p.85 & n.41.

⁸² As a phenomenon, they appear to have existed in Greece since the Dark Ages: Burkert (1983), p.116. Empedocles' fragments 111 and 112 (DK) display his similar mendicant role.

purification ritual - more acceptable than both the requirement of a full ascetic lifestyle, or a life of strict justice. They may even have functioned as confessors, and, as Plato tells us, could also be practitioners of black magic (as Vlastos notes) because they offer to bring harm to enemies.⁸³

It seems that the picture of itinerant initiators fits well with the scattered nature of evidence for Bacchic/Orphic initiations. At Olbia, however, the situation appears somewhat different. Olbia⁸⁴ appears to have had a long and fruitful connection with Bacchic initiations.⁸⁵ For example, Herodotus 4.78-80 records the initiation of King Skyles into Bacchic rites at Olbia.⁸⁶ Therefore, might not the presence of "Orphikoi" among the Bacchic initiands at Olbia be a

⁸³I find an interesting parallel with this, between the idea of the lamellae of iron (the *defixionum tabellae*) which are used for cursing, and the Orphic gold lamellae which may act as the passwords to the rewards of the afterlife. Of course, it is going beyond the evidence to suggest that the two traditions are specifically connected, but it does seem an unusual coincidence, particularly when allied with the concept of magic in our sources. There is considerable evidence for the inscription and deposition in graves of lamellae as curse tablets from the fifth century, where dark coloured metals (such as lead) might be symbolic of evil: is the gold of the Orphic lamellae symbolic of the blessings to come? Zuntz (1971) pp.393 & 278-286. The Orphic association with magic is confirmed by Euripides *Cyclops* 646-9 (*OF* p.25, test.83), where the chorus claims to have a magic spell of Orpheus, and also by a reference at *Alcestis* 962 (*OF* p.17, test.59). Vlastos (1970, p.123, n.99) notes other references to magic and Orphics. Macchiore (1930, p.253f.,n.2) points out that magical cures are associated with Orphism in the *Orphic Hymns*. See Nilsson (1949), p.95 for a relevant definition of the difference between magic and religion.

⁸⁴Is the name "Olbia" significant? Cf. the use of ὄλβιος (happy/blessed) on the gold lamellae: e.g. *OF* 32c, 32d. Grant (1990) pp.27-30 gives a short history of the site (on the coast of the Ukraine), noting the discovery of the earliest example of a business letter (written on lead, c.500BC). The find supports the position of Olbia as a settlement populated by professional import/export merchants, a further illustration that these cults did not merely attract the poor and gullible.

⁸⁵A sixth century inscription on a mirror details the initiation of a couple at Olbia: Cole (1993) p.277

⁸⁶Graf (1993) p.243. This initiation seems to be by means of the Bacchic ecstasy familiar from Euripides *Bacchae*.

result of the itinerant nature of the *Orpheotelestai*?⁸⁷ Further to this, one might ask whether this Orphic influence could have introduced eschatological belief to the Dionysiac cult?⁸⁸

To look at the evidence:⁸⁹ the bone tablet in question has the inscriptions ΒΙΟΣ-ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ-ΒΙΟΣ, ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ, ΔΙΟ<ΝΥΣΥΣ>, ΟΡΦΙΚ<ΟΙ>.⁹⁰ West associates this with life after death, which seems to be a fair interpretation. “Truth” could refer to the intended results of a Dionysiac or Orphic initiation, which is again a fairly standard way of describing initiation into a mystery religion.⁹¹ Yet life-death-life⁹² does not have to refer to

⁸⁷ As Burkert (1980) p.41 notes, the concept of a moving initiators etc., explains the lack of consistent teaching, and the wide scattering of similar evidence, such as the gold lamellae.

⁸⁸ Can we, therefore, describe Orphism as an intellectualized Dionysiac religion? For an eschatological connection to Dionysus cf. Heraclitus DK 22B15: εἰ μὴ γὰρ Διονύσῳι πομπὴν ἐποιῶντο καὶ ὕμνων δίσμα αἰδοίοισιν, ἀναιδέστατα εἴργαστ' ἄν' ὠντὸς δὲ Ἄϊδης καὶ Διόνυσος, ὅτεω μαίνονται καὶ ληναΐζουσιν. Nilsson (1935) p.222 and (1957) pp.118ff discusses the link of Dionysus and Hades.

⁸⁹ Sources: Tinnefeld (1980); Burkert (1980); West (1982); West (1983); Zhmud (1992). They were found in the *temenos*, not in a funereal context.

⁹⁰ Illustrated in West (1983) p.19

⁹¹ The exact purpose of the tablets is unknown. Versnel (1990) p.151 - following West (1982) p.25 - suggests that they are membership tokens (symbols of participation). Cf. Graf (1990) p.101 on Orpheus and secret societies; Burkert (1982) p.12 tentatively suggests amulets attached to votive garments.

⁹² Seaford (1986) pp.14ff. suggests that the tablets are connected with Heraclitean philosophy, based on the antithetical style of these phrases. He does *not* postulate an Olbian Heraclitean belief, but rather that the Olbian evidence demonstrates that Heraclitus' style originated in mystery religions. Cf. West (1982) pp.28-29. I do not think that Heraclitus' system refers to the standard idea of transmigration - viz, body to body. His system appears to involve *transformation* not transmigration of the soul: the soul/life-spirit passes “into the unending cycle of elemental transformation, which is a cycle of life”: Kahn (1979) p.214. That is, at DK 22B36, B30, B62 and B80, death is a transformation between states, and involves a cycle of transformations through the elements (fire, earth, air, water) and back to the soul: see Seaford (1986) pp.14-20. Kahn argues that while Heraclitus may have begun with the Pythagorean concept of transmigration, he placed more emphasis on the idea of change of state, and did not follow up the traditional duality of soul and body. Thus, death became a descriptive term for any major change of state in the panpsychic world: “The statement..[DK 22B 36]..that the psyche which dies is reborn as water and the water which dies is reborn as earth, can be seen as a generalization of the doctrine of transmigration for the whole cycle of

reincarnation - it could logically be connected with rebirth or resurrection, or even more simply, to the new life in the Underworld in traditional eschatological belief (as seen in the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example).⁹³ It is dangerous to consider it firm testimony for a cycle of reincarnation, particularly when there is no evidence that Dionysiac/Bacchic rites promised any more than a blessed life in the Underworld.⁹⁴ Moreover, as I have noted, rebirth appears to be indicated in both variants of the myth of Dionysus (Dionysus son of Semele, and Dionysus victim of the Titans).

This conclusion can be reinforced by, first, the gold lamellae, a number of which have clear Dionysiac affinities; second, knowledge of other Dionysiac cults and cult practices; and, third, the grave inscriptions of Dionysiac initiates.

elemental transformations, in which every stage is simultaneously a death and a rebirth.” (p.221) Thus *everything* is literally akin (p.222) This is a denial of personal identity: there is “psychic contiguity or contact, not strict identity” (p.223). This is well illustrated by the concept of transformation into the elements as a mass - there is no idea of self-contained existence as a soul unit, nor is there a belief in personal immortality (p.253). This has its basis in a concept of flux (p.224) - there is no continuity of definite form (p.225). In practical terms, after “death” the soul is not reincarnated *as* (one) fire, but rather is transformed along with other souls *into* fire. In conventional terms, this is not reincarnation. Heraclitean reincarnation is also denied by Barnes (1979) p.323,n.13. Cf. Macchiore’s (unsupported) view that Heraclitus introduced Orphism to Greece. See the detailed discussion of Heraclitus’ eschatology in Kahn (1979) pp.210-240. Finkelberg (1986) notes that the Heraclitean abstinences may parallel those called Orphic-Pythagorean. However, this is far from certain; certainly Heraclitus desired to keep the soul *dry*, but whether this implied dietary abstinences, it is not possible to determine. He did suggest sexual abstinence.

⁹³ Cf. Isocrates *Panegyrikos* 4.28; Aristophanes *Frogs* 448-455; Pindar fr. 137; *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 480-483.

⁹⁴ On the same series of bone tablets the word ΨΥΧΗ appears. Ferwerda sees this as a sign (and our only evidence) that the Olbian Orphics did at least think about the soul -- this is a harmless enough opinion! Ferwerda (1985) p.273

The gold lamellae have been the subject of much debate, but the three most recent finds seem to indicate that the majority were buried with initiates of a Bacchic mystery cult.⁹⁵ The lamella from Hipponion (B10) has two lines (absent on other lamellae), which tell that the dead (woman) will go along the sacred road with the other “initiates and Bakkhoi” (μύσται καὶ βάκχοι) to a

⁹⁵ The history of the gold lamellae is complex: Zuntz (1971), who produced a full edition of the lamellae known up to that date, believes that they are Pythagorean. One problem in determining their influences is that they obviously had a wide transmission (Crete, Thessaly, Southern Italy) over a long period of time (the latest lamella - A5 - dates to third century AD Rome, and was used as an amulet: Seaford 1994, p.16), and were probably not specific to only one initiation cult.

They were classified by Zuntz into types ‘A’ and ‘B’: the A lamellae have Persephone as the key figure, and the soul’s purity is the main criterion for its admittance to the Underworld. There is a formula for immersion in milk, and the deaths are by lightning. The B lamellae have the guards of the spring in the Underworld as the key figure/s; the soul has to remember the right procedures for the underworld journey, and the elements of lightning and the milk formula are absent (except in B10, from Hipponion). B9 from Thessaly (the J. Paul Getty Museum lamella) has a longer version of the text found on the five lamellae from Eleutherna (Crete), thus demonstrating that even though they were far separate in place and time (by approximately two hundred years), the Cretan lamellae were not a local development, but part of a widespread panhellenic tradition: Graf (1993) p.240; Frel in the discussion in Burkert (1977) p.19.

Janko (1984) has attempted to restore a lost archetype for the B texts. It was thought that the A and B texts were sufficiently different to demonstrate two traditions (one Bacchic, one of Persephone), but the latest discovery - the two identical lamellae from Pelinna (Thessaly), have bridged the gap between A and B, and contain what may be an archetypal text with features of both A and B.

The exact purpose of the gold lamellae is difficult to determine. They may have a ritual context, and reflect ritual - references to milk and wine may indicate libations, and the poems themselves may have been recited, either at initiations or funerals, or have served as aide-mémoire for initiations. In terms of their burial with the dead, there is some evidence that they were placed on the breast, or near the head for ease of reference: Graf (1993) p.254f; Macchioro (1930) p.120. In this way they are somewhat like the tablets fixed to the dead souls at *Republic* 614b8-616b1. The Petelia lamella (B1) was rolled into a cylinder and placed in a sheath, hung around the neck: Lincoln (1982) p.22.

Were the lamellae (or the archetypal poem) handed out by the travelling priests? See Bremmer (1994) p.95,n.29; Graf (1993) p.250. As Seaford (1994) p.16 has noted, “What makes the lamella special is its *direct* representation of anonymous belief, in the context of ritual practice, unmediated by literature.”

It should be noted that the lamellae *never* give the name of Orpheus: Adorno (1975) p.32. The symbolism of milk may be that it represents the new beginning: Graf (1993) pp.247ff. Cf. Lloyd-Jones (1990) pp.107-108.

blissful afterlife. Thus, this can be seen as “un documento di misteri bacchici”,⁹⁶ as, by association, can the other B texts.

The most intriguing question about B10 must be, what is the difference between the μύσται and the βάκχοι? Burkert suggests that the *mustai* are initiates in general, while the Bakkhoi are initiates specifically from a Bacchic ecstatic group.⁹⁷ Therefore B10 is evidence that initiates into a Bacchic cult could expect an especially blissful afterlife.

The mysterious reference at *Phaedo* 69c (*OF* 5: εἶσιν γὰρ δῆ, [ὡς] φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετάς, ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι) would seem to reinforce this interpretation that Bacchic initiates are a separate category to other initiates, and enjoy a particularly blessed fate (in *Phaedo*, the analogy is made to living among the gods). The fifth century inscription from Cumae lends further validity to this, proclaiming a separate tomb for initiates of Bacchic mysteries: οὐ θέμις ἐντοῦθα κεῖσθαι ἰ μὲ τὸν βεβαχχευμένον.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Burkert (1975) p.86.

⁹⁷ Cf. Cole (1980) p.232 who notes the generic nature of *mustai*, but believes that both terms refer to initiation into mysteries of Dionysus, but that the Bakkhoi have received more secret knowledge than the *mustai*. The earlier attestation for *mustai* and Bakkhoi in a fragment of Heraclitus (DK 22 B14) is of doubtful authenticity, so the Hipponion text (late fifth century) is probably the first attestation: Cole (1980) p.232,n.32; Burkert (1980) p.37. But cf. Euripides *Cretans* fr. 472 N: Versnel (1990) p.151.

⁹⁸ Burkert (1977) p.3, raises the question of whether a cemetery implies the existence of a community. A chamber tomb seems hardly large enough, though. Presumably, it is reserved for the extra pure or true initiates: cf. *Phaedo* 69c. On the Cumae find (*LSS* no. 120) and its significance: Graf (1993) p.249; Cole (1993) p.278; Bremmer (1994) p.88; Macchioro (1930) p.108; Versnel (1990) p.151.

The simple distinction in the afterlife between the initiated and non-initiates has evidently gained a further distinction in this group of evidence.⁹⁹

The Pelinna lamellae (cut like ivy leaves - the symbol of Dionysus) add to this: the second line of the common text proclaims εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνοι σ' ὅτι Βά<κ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε,¹⁰⁰ and the final line promises a life among the other blessed, below the earth. I have discussed the meaning of line 2, above, in terms of how well it may fit with the myth of Dionysus and the Titans, and thus with reincarnation. There is, however, no indication on these specifically Bacchic lamellae for reincarnation beliefs or hopes.¹⁰¹

A not specifically Bacchic¹⁰² lamella from Thurii (A1 = OF 32c) is suspected to contain a reference to reincarnation. At line 6 we find κύκλου δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλείοι.¹⁰³ Reincarnation is often connected with the idea of a cycle of lives, and this could be a reference to something of the sort.¹⁰⁴ *If this lamella does refer to reincarnation, it is the only non-literary*

⁹⁹ Cole (1980) pp.231f. The number of tombs, with Dionysiac associations, gathered together at Derveni, may indicate a similar distinction in burial customs. Certainly, the practice of group-organized burials continued into the Hellenistic and Roman ages, but, as Cole points out, it was not specific only to Dionysiac groups: Cole (1993) p.285.

¹⁰⁰ Graf (1993), pp.241f.

¹⁰¹ Cf. the interpretation of Lloyd-Jones (1990).

¹⁰² It is difficult to identify anonymous evidence of mystery cults, because of the similarities and inter-relations between cults and groups: Moulinier (1955) pp.107-108; Seaford (1994) p.16; Nilsson (1935) p.185.

¹⁰³ "I flew out of the heavy circle of painful grief": tr. Seaford (1994), p.16

¹⁰⁴ Zuntz would suggest that it is a metaphor for the harshness of life, or else is a Pythagorean reference to the "wheel of Ananke", but it should be noted that he does not believe in any Orphic traditions: (1971) pp.320-322. Cf. his comment, "A quale orfismo? Il mio, il tuo, il suo, il nostro?..Orfismo e una voce greca non esistente.." in *Orfismo in Magna Grecia: Atti del quattordicesimo convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia: Taranto, 6-10 Ottobre 1974*

evidence that survives in Greece and Magna Graecia to attest to such a belief held by 'real people'. The Thurii lamellae (A1, A2, A3) are also unusual in that the speaker claims to be one of the divine.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, they are similar to Empedocles fragments 112, 113, 115, 146, 147. On A2 (= *OF* 32d), from the same tumulus as A1, the deceased claims to have paid the penalty for unrighteous deeds: this could refer to the similar penalty exacted by Persephone in Pindar fr. 133, and thus to a common link with the Titanic myth.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the Thurii lamellae give too little information to confirm the existence of a belief in reincarnation,¹⁰⁷ and the Thurii example differs from others in a number of ways, so it can hardly be seen as typical.¹⁰⁸ However, I think that it is the most positive evidence thus far. If it is a reference to reincarnation, it illustrates how little spread the doctrine had, in that of the fifteen leaves from throughout the Greek world, reincarnation only features on one.

p.158. Seaford (1986) p.24 connects the κύκλος with the transition in initiation and death from one circle to another, from the undesirable (βαρυνενθής) to the desirable (ιμερτός) circle, and suggests that rings and crowns (the στέφανος; *OF* 32c l.7) mark this transition. This would seem to me to break with the most logical symbolic significance of the circle, viz, its binding, bonding and linking nature. Cf. Ziegler (1942) col.1389.

¹⁰⁵ In all of the B texts, except B1, the final fate is not mentioned: a happy afterlife is to be assumed? B1 (from Petelia) places the deceased among the "other heroes": cf. Janko (1984) p.99.

¹⁰⁶ Graf (1993) pp.253f.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Burkert (1985) p.299: "In the remaining gold-leaf texts metempsychosis is not necessarily presupposed, but not excluded either."

¹⁰⁸ For example, it is possible that the elaborate tumuli erected at Thurii refer to a special class of dead, such as victims of lightning, or heroes: Zuntz (1971) p.337,n.1; Burkert (1975) pp.93, 102f.; *contra* - Graf (1993) pp.253f. Seaford (1986) pp.4ff. would connect the lightning with that which destroyed the Titans, although noting that the lightning is probably imaginary, dreamed up by the initiated who see themselves as "eternally absolved Titans" (p.8).

I have made some references to examples of Dionysiac burial and cult practices. Herodotus 2.81 (*OF* p.62, test.216) appears to give another which perhaps refers to a Orphic/Dionysiac reincarnation belief:¹⁰⁹

οὐ μέντοι ἕς γε τὰ ἱρὰ ἐσφέρεται εἰρίνεα οὐδὲ
συγκαταθάπτεταί σφι· οὐ γὰρ ὄσιον. ὁμολογέουσι δὲ ταῦτα
τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσι δὲ
Αἰγυπτίοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι. οὐδὲ γὰρ τούτων τῶν
ὀργίων μετέχοντα ὄσιόν ἐστι ἐν εἰρινέοισι εἵμασι θαφθῆναι.
ἔστι δὲ περὶ αὐτῶν ἱρὸς λόγος λεγόμενος.¹¹⁰

The ban on burial in wool can be linked to reincarnation beliefs by the idea that it is forbidden to kill ensouled creatures. *Yet, it is not necessary to kill a sheep to produce wool.*¹¹¹ The other alternatives are that wearing wool goes against the concept of kinship between ensouled creatures,¹¹² or that wool is in some way impure. There seems to be no rational explanation for the ban, and thus it may reflect a Pythagorean taboo, and not be linked with reincarnation.¹¹³ Our lack of knowledge is particularly galling, when we consider that Herodotus was living in Thurii only one generation prior to the Hipponion lamella.¹¹⁴ However, it does reiterate the connection (in some way) between Orphic and Bacchic (and Pythagorean) ritual.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ The passage is textually difficult (two alternate readings): see Smith's (1967, pp.106ff.) defence of the manuscript tradition *contra* Linforth; also Burkert (1977) p.4,n.22 who accepts the longer version. Cf. Burkert (1972) pp.127ff. with Moulinier (1955) p.9.

¹¹⁰ See *LSS* 56, *ID* 2180 for a prohibition on wool (and women) in an Egyptian cult on Delos.

¹¹¹ If anything were to be banned it would be sheep *skins* and the leather products of other animals.

¹¹² Is it *robbing* animals?

¹¹³ The body in the tumulus yielding lamella A4 was evidently covered in a *linen* shroud ("lenzuolo bianco molto fine"), although it disappeared on contact with air: Graf (1993) p.252

¹¹⁴ Graf (1993) p.252

¹¹⁵ Burkert (1977), p.4; Burkert (1972) p.128. Regarding *syncretistic* ritual, the Gurob papyrus fragments (*OF* 31; Hellenistic, early third century BC) may suggest a ritual connected with the Orphics, but, as the central part of the ritual is a sacrifice, it is probably

The final area of evidence is the corpus of grave inscriptions of Dionysiac initiates/followers. These are mainly of late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial date,¹¹⁶ and it is noticeable that there are few promises about the afterlife after the third century BC, which may be connected with the public nature of these inscriptions,¹¹⁷ or with the secret nature of Dionysiac rites. A secondary problem is that it is often difficult to detect a specifically Dionysiac burial,¹¹⁸ because of the “secular” overlap of Dionysiac symbols, or deliberate vagueness.¹¹⁹ Cole has surveyed these inscriptions and concludes that (1) none reflect the eschatology of the gold lamellae; (2) few have anything to say about the afterlife beyond the suggestion that the deceased is at an eternal Bacchic party; and (3) “..there is no theme of rebirth in the Dionysiac sepulchral texts.”¹²⁰

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more relevant to the omophagic (*sparagmos*) ritual of the Bacchics: Tierney (1922) is convinced that it is Orphic; see Kern’s discussion of this at *OF* pp.101-104. Burkert (1987) pp.70-71 notes its Bacchic-Orphic features. Ritual is often connected with mimetic activity - the re-enacting of mythology: see Finkelberg (1986) p.326; but especially the structuralists - Detienne (1975), (1979) and (1981); Detienne & Vernant (1989). Cf. Dowden (1992) pp.102-118 for the link of myth and ritual.

¹¹⁶ Despite the banning of the Bacchanalia by the Senate in 186BC, the lamella from Rome (A5 = *OF* 32g) shows the continuity of tradition: Burkert (1993) p.260 discusses this.

¹¹⁷ Cole (1993) p.278

¹¹⁸ For example, when mystery initiations are mentioned, they are usually the Eleusinian Mysteries: Cole (1993) p.292

¹¹⁹ Cole (1993) pp.278-9, 294. The prevalence of Dionysiac themes of revelry on sarcophagi etc. may indicate no more than the hope for the same to continue in the afterlife.

¹²⁰ Cole (1993) pp.293-294. Cf. id. p.295: “..Dionysus is not a savior [sic] who promises to his worshipers [sic] regeneration, but with the stories of his own rebirth and rejuvenation, he is one who makes this life more sweet and the next one, perhaps, only a little less harsh.” But cf. Plutarch *Moralia* 611de, who says that the Bacchic initiation taught them not to fear death, because it was not dissolution by release of the soul: cited by Cole (1993) p.280.

This Appendix has attempted to clarify some of the Orphic problems, as they relate to eschatology. It is clear that there is simply no clear, unambiguous, unequivocal reference to an organised Orphic movement, or brotherhood, teaching beliefs in reincarnation, and the latest discoveries in this area have shifted the focus of investigations to Bacchic and Dionysiac cults, for whom reincarnation is *never* attested.¹²¹

There is no evidence, even, that what the Bacchic initiation promised was any more than a happy, or less horrid, afterlife, and as such, this is simply an addition to the traditional eschatology.¹²² Ecstatic Dionysiac groups followed the earthly pursuits of wine, dance etc., and evidence points to the continuation of these beyond the grave, rather than to reincarnation or rebirth, despite the possibility of restoring a theme of rebirth from Dionysiac mythology.¹²³

¹²¹ The focus is also firmly fixed in marginal areas of the Greek world: Versnel (1990) p.155; Burkert (1980) p.40.

¹²² Bremmer (1994) p.80 has asked why - if Bacchic mysteries are so concerned with the afterlife - maenads do not appear on funerary vases. Against this, see the statuette of a maenad in the hand of the (female) deceased at Lokri; also, the maenad sculpture outside the sarcophagus containing the Pelinna lamellae: Burkert (1977) p.3; Graf (1993) p.243. Obviously this is not decisive. It seems that there were two Bacchic traditions, as illustrated by *Phaedo* 69c (ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τε παῦροι). It is difficult to link the omophagy of the Bacchic ecstasies with the reported abstinences of the Dionysiac Orphics, and so, Dionysus of the maenads may not equate with the Orphic Dionysus: note Henrichs' objections in the discussion in Burkert (1977) p.22. The solution presumably lies in the shared current of ideas, which could allow the gilded crater of Derveni (with its scenes of Bacchic revelry) to contain the ashes of the dead: Burkert (1977) pp.3f.

¹²³ Cf. Plutarch *De esu carniū* I.996c: τὰ γὰρ δὴ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον μεμυθευμένα πάθη..αἰνιγμένος ἐστὶ μῦθος εἰς τὴν παλιγγενεσίαν: Macchioro (1930) p.77. For Plutarch's (Pythagorean?) opinions on reincarnation see *De esu carniū* I.996b, 7.996c (the Titan myth - *OF* 210), II.3.997de, 5.998cd. Tsekourakis (1986) pp.135ff. notes that Plutarch does not regard reincarnation as the main reason for abstinence from meat, but searches for 'rational'

The end result is profoundly dissatisfactory, proving only the existence of a nebulous network of cross-fertilized beliefs, interwoven through the mystery religions of the Greek world.¹²⁴ The latest discoveries put us no closer to determining, for example, the source of Plato's ideas on reincarnation.¹²⁵ Yet, on the strength of the evidence from *Meno* alone, I would be inclined to argue that reincarnation is an "Orphic" idea.

The Pindar fragment in *Meno*, with its reference to Persephone, would indicate to me a close connection with Southern Italy. Indeed I wonder whether we are not too delicate in not equating the beliefs of Magna Graecia outright with "Orphic things".¹²⁶ That is, I would suggest that Plato picked up his so-called Orphic ideas in Sicily,¹²⁷ and that those beliefs that we call Orphic are in fact Magna Grecian.¹²⁸

reasons, such as adoption by necessity, vaguer medical rationales, and just behaviour towards animals possessing reason etc. On Plutarch as an Orphic: Feibleman (1959) p.152.

¹²⁴ A "collusion": Alderink (1981) p.79; cf. Nilsson (1957) p.122; Seaford (1994) p.16. This makes it impossible to verify suggestions such as the influence of Orphic thought on, for example, Anaximander (and *vice-versa*), impossible: Bacigalupo (1965) p.285,n.9; McClintock (1985); Vlastos (1970) p.102,n.34. Or, compare the common tradition of the *katabasis* or underworld journey, which features in so many early testimonia: for example, the Orphic *katabasis* - *OF* p.304, test. 176, 222, 223; Nilsson (1935) p.211. Cf. Ziegler (1942) cols.1391ff. for the "Hadesfahrt" motif in the myths of Theseus, Heracles etc.

¹²⁵ Cf. however, Lincoln (1982) who believes that Plato's vision of the underworld in the myth of Er is drawn from the same source as, for example, lamella B1 (*OF* 32a) from Petelia, and this source is a Proto-Indo-European cosmologem.

¹²⁶ Cf. Dieterich (1913) p.84 on the "pythagoreisch-orphisch-bakchischen Gemeinden und Mysterien" of Southern Italy. He relates all of the evidence (lamellae etc.) to a Southern Italian *Nekyia* tradition: pp.108,125,127.

¹²⁷ Morgan (1990) has attempted to trace the mystic and mystery references in Plato's dialogues back to their Bacchic, Pythagorean and Orphic roots (that is, back to popular religion), by analysing Plato's use of the language, concepts and rituals of mystery cults. It is an important study, but flawed by Morgan's treatment of "Orphic Pythagoreanism". Morgan

I do not think that reincarnation can be totally ruled out of the Orphic corpus of beliefs:¹²⁹ I am optimistic that one day evidence will appear for another so-called Orphic group with a slant towards reincarnation.¹³⁰ If this new evidence was associated with Sicily, and Akragas in particular, this would hardly be a surprise. Both of our best attested beliefs in reincarnation come from Akragas, and Plato has close connections with nearby Syracuse.

In conclusion, I am not convinced that the *origin* of reincarnation in Greece lies within an Orphic group or sect, but I am certain that we cannot lightly dismiss the comparative evidence. As Mansfeld notes: “.if Pind., fr.133 (Schroeder) *ap. Plat., Meno* 81 a, is ‘Orphic’..no amount of special pleading will be able to dismiss the inference that at least some members of the Orphic family believed in metempsychosis.”¹³¹

points out (p.206,n.44) that “Plato is of course our best source for Orphic materials before the Hellenistic period.” In making this statement, it seems that Morgan has unwittingly pointed to a major problem: viz, how do we know that Plato is making Orphic references? Secondary to this, how can we rely on the deliberately vague information given by Plato to reconstruct an Orphic religion? I think that we need to give the cautionary proviso that when we use the term “Orphic”, it is *generic*. Morgan, relying on Burkert, appears to make this point, but ignores its significance. “Orphic Pythagoreanism” is equally vague - almost meaningless. As Morgan points out, Plato was as likely to have met Bacchic influences in Sicily as anything else. To what extreme do we go? Cf. Jaeger (1959) p.144: “Nothing could be more wrong than to make Plato an Orphic” or Solmsen (1982f) p.49In., “.I venture to think that my account of Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato is not damaged by my hesitation to allow for Orphic influence.”

¹²⁸ It is interesting for the hypothesis of Magna Graecian association with the origins of Orphics, that many of the authors who have “Orphic” writings attributed to them in Clement and the *Suda* (*OF* pp.63-74) are from Sicily and Southern Italy: Nilsson (1935) p.194. As Sabbatucci (1975) p.38 asks, can we restore some sort of “unita culturale Magna Grecia”?

¹²⁹ I sometimes wonder whether the only connecting link between the so-called “Orphic” evidence is that it is all on unusual media! Cf. Festugiere’s comment (quoted by Detienne, 1975 p.51) that it is “un ‘étrange pot-pourri”.

¹³⁰ Cf. Nilsson (1935) pp.216f.

¹³¹ Review of Alderink in *Mnemosyne* (1985) XXXVIII 438

APPENDIX C: PLATO GORGIAS

Gorgias 523a1-526d2 exemplifies the difficulties inherent in interpreting myth. The myth in question is the earliest of the four “great” eschatological myths, and there is considerable debate about the possible appearance of reincarnation in it.¹ There are a number of reasons for the doubts:

(1) Most importantly, there is no explicit mention of reincarnation. This is particularly significant in the light of 492e9-493c4, where Socrates repeats three tales: first, that it could be true, as Euripides writes, that τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ καταθανεῖν, τὸ καταθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν.² Second, a wise man once said that we are dead and that the body (σῶμα) is our tomb (σῆμα); third, a κομψὸς ἀνὴρ, ἴσως Σικελὸς τις ἢ Ἰταλικὸς compared the soul of an appetitive man (one who was never “filled” to satisfaction) to a leaky jar (τετρημένος πίθος): these men, the most wretched of all in Hades, are forced to carry water in a sieve (κόσκινον) to a τετρημένος πίθος. The allegory is extended by the wise man: the sieve *is* the soul of the foolish man, unable to hold anything because of its ἀπιστία and λήθη.³ “Now this is all fairly strange,” Socrates concludes (493c4).

¹ Annas (1982b), Irwin (1979) p.248 and Crombie (1962), for example, agree that it is not present; Dodds (1959) and Friedländer (1969) believe that it is, but for different reasons.

² 492e9-11: οὐ γὰρ τοὶ θαυμάζοιμ' ἂν εἰ Εὐριπίδης ἀληθῆ ἐν τοῖσδε λέγει, λέγων--
τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ καταθανεῖν,
τὸ καταθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;

Dodds (1959) p.299 comments that this is the ascetic ideal, and is (p.304) in strict contrast with Callicles' hedonism. Blank (1991) p.24 notes that the “subtle man” (a5) is unflattering, as is the *kompsoi* (usually used of the pseudo-wise - esp. sophists). By the use of these spokespeople, Socrates is disassociating himself from the body/soul views. Cf. my previous discussion of myth; also Ferwerda (1985) p.270.

³ “unreliability” and “forgetfulness”: all translations are from Irwin (1979).

That the three elements of the story must be treated with suspicion is obvious (cf. *Meno* 81a ff., where reincarnation is introduced through the medium of utterings of “priests and priestesses”). The very absence of reincarnation from this hotchpotch⁴ of belief is unusual! (See point (3), below)

(2) The most important point made in *Gorgias* is that justice is the only thing worth living for (cf. the second analogy to the σώφρονος and ἀκόλαστος lives, both types of men filling very different jars at 493d5-494a6.).⁵ There are a number of prongs to this attack: virtue is best; to be dead is the happiest thing for the soul (for example, 492e3-6). The evil of pleasure is one of the strongest motivations for the myth: that is, when you die it is not *really* the end - there is a final court of retribution.⁶ Another important point is that only the philosopher knows the correct way to fulfil the conditions of the correct type of life. The benefits of the philosophical life are made clear through comparison with the bad lives of others, especially the tyrant and sophist (519c3-d7), both of whom personify injustice.⁷

⁴ Dodds (1959) pp.297-299,373 discusses the numerous sources for the story of the water-carriers, a primitive story familiar in myth and ritual in various forms. See also Keuls, E. *Water-carriers in Hades ??*

⁵ This could also be read as an allegory on reincarnation, except that such allegories are anachronistic and Neoplatonic; cf. the Neoplatonic interpretations of Platonic cosmological dualism in Proclus: Friedländer (1969) pp.187-188.

⁶ Annas (1982b) p.125

⁷ Blank (1991) pp.31,33 for the idea that *Gorgias* is primarily concerned with linking ignorance and [post-mortem] punishment; among the ignorant are sophists and unqualified politicians (p.35).

Reincarnation would fit well into these ideas, *but only if it were a punishment* (that is, if life on earth was considered a punishment). However, there is no sign of this idea in the three stories at 492e9-493c4: rather, the point is made that the post-mortem punishment is the most important, because it levels the injustices of life. There is no hint that souls are incarnated back into this world as (for example) animals; nor is there any parallel with the radical punishment of *Laws* 870d-e, where, in the next life, the murderer dies by the same manner in which he disposed of his victim.

(3) The eschatological myth is introduced at 523a1-3 in a remarkably clear way - as a *belief* of Socrates': "Ακουε δή, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἠγήση μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον· ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω λέγειν."⁸ This is a unique statement of opinion from Socrates with respect to an obvious myth, and would tend to lend weight to the argument that, (a) the features of the myth are what Socrates *believes* about the afterlife, and (b) significant features which are absent, *are absent because they are not part of his system of belief*.

⁸ Dodds (1959) p.377 views it as the sort of *logos* discussed in the *Seventh Letter* - expressing in imaginable terms a 'truth of religion', and compares *Laws* 872d-e where the Athenian is not sure whether the vindictive doctrine of punishment (exact requital) is a myth or a *logos*. Blank (1991) p.35.

However, I would temper this with a warning that the myth serves a certain purpose in this dialogue, and reincarnation would weaken this message - thus, it is not so much rejected, as simply left out.

(4) one cannot miss the deliberate duplication of the images of trials/judgements in this world and the next: Socrates is about to be judged in life, and the judgement in death not only parallels this, but also overshadows it as the more important judgement. The idea of finality is explicit - this life is the only chance one gets to prove one's just nature. The finality of Socrates' own trial is known to the reader - it ends his life - and this appears to be expressed in the post-mortem judgement: it *is* a 'Last Judgement'.⁹ From this, as from his own death, there is no way back, and indeed - as is illustrated by his decision not to go into exile and thus escape death - he does not want to struggle against the inevitable (fate/destiny). This is the same point to which the brief stories about life *being* death link, but we are without the sense (implicit in *Phaedo*) that Socrates is offering the arguments as a *comfort* to his friends. In *Gorgias*, he is not surrounded by friends, but by the worst that life has to offer to the philosopher - viz, tyrannical rule, abuse of power, and sophistry. Reincarnation has no place in this argument; it could only weaken the powerful image of finality.¹⁰

⁹ Annas (1982b) p.123

¹⁰ Annas (1982b) p.124

523b5-524a8 makes a clear analogy to Socrates' own trial in Athens: it is said that souls used to be judged on earth *before* they went to Hades, but the earthly judges were taken in by the 'clothes' of the embodied souls and by the false witnesses whom the souls called; therefore, Zeus replaced the earthly trial with a post-mortem judgement, where the souls, stripped of their earthly paraphernalia,¹¹ are judged by divine judges, ἵνα δικαία ἡ κρίσις ᾗ (523e6).¹²

The significance of the myth lies in the implication that Socrates' unjust earthly punishment will eventually be put right: it is an optimistic myth ("..that the moral order which we see imperfectly realized in this actual world is yet actually perfect.");¹³ even more so for the philosopher who disdains the body in favour of the soul.¹⁴

(5) Certain commentators (particularly Dodds) have taken reincarnation to be implicit and necessary to make sense of the myth as a *deterrent to injustice*. The myth is of the typical eschatological genre.¹⁵ The problem rests with the question of *how* we know about the fate of the soul in Hades. In itself, the question is illogical: there are many other examples of myths which are not communicated

¹¹ Cf. Empedocles fr. 126; also *Cratylus* 403b5.; Annas (1982b) p.123. In the old system, the souls also knew when they were going to die, so they could prepare. This was also stopped.

¹² Friedländer (1969) p.175 on the aptness of the judging; Annas (1982b) pp.122ff.

¹³ Sidgwick *The Methods of Ethics*, cited by Annas (1982b) pp.123,141,n.19.

¹⁴ Perhaps not so good for those who enjoy earthly life; for these, the idea of *reincarnation* as righting this life's injustices is obviously more apt; cf. *Laws* (q.v.) for this.

¹⁵ See the discussion of the details of these myths in the sections on *Phaedo* and *Republic*.

directly, but which are purely myths in the sense of stories with a purpose. Cf.

Republic 330d4-331a3:

εὖ γὰρ ἴσθι, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι, ἐπειδὴν τις ἐγγύς ἢ τοῦ οἴεσθαι τελευτήσῃ, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ δέος καὶ φροντὶς περὶ ὧν ἔμπροσθεν οὐκ εἰσήει. οἳ τε γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ διδόναι δίκην, καταγελῶμενοι τέως, τότε δὴ στρέφουσιν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν μὴ ἀληθεῖς ᾧσιν· καὶ αὐτός... ὑποψίας δ' οὖν καὶ δειμάτος μεστός γίγνεται καὶ ἀναλογίζεται ἤδη καὶ σκοπεῖ εἴ τινα τι ἠδίκησεν. ὁ μὲν οὖν εὐρίσκων ἑαυτοῦ ἐν τῷ βίῳ πολλὰ ἀδικήματα καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὑπνῶν, ὥσπερ οἱ παῖδες, θαμὰ ἐγειρόμενος δειμαίνει καὶ ζῆ μετὰ κακῆς ἐλπίδος· τῷ δὲ μηδὲν ἑαυτῷ ἄδικον συνειδῶτι ἠδεῖα ἐλπίς ἀεὶ πάρεστι καὶ ἀγαθὴ γηροτρόφος, ὡς καὶ Πίνδαρος λέγει.

“Hades” is well-named: it is truly the region of “unseen” fears, and a strong threat to be just, *now*.¹⁶ It is a matter of *belief*. As Socrates notes about Hades,

ὅτι τε γὰρ, ἐπειδὴν ἅπαξ τις ἡμῶν ἀποθάνῃ, ἀεὶ ἐκεῖ ἐστίν, φοβοῦνται, καὶ ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ γυμνὴ τοῦ σώματος παρ' ἐκεῖνον ἀπέρχεται, καὶ τοῦτο πεφόβηται· (*Cratylus* 403b1-5)

I think that Dodds is looking too hard for empirical “proof” of the myth: trying to match it with the katabatic tradition of *Republic* X.¹⁷ Failing to find this, he would see reincarnation as *presupposed* - the only way of communicating the post-mortem message:¹⁸ that is, there is no point in having post-mortem punishments (especially, eternal punishments) if there is no way for them to serve as *παραδείγματα* (525c2-3) to the living *via* the memory of reincarnated souls. Yet,

¹⁶ Annas (1982b) p.124. Compare Christianity: you do not need concrete proof of Heaven/Hell to be awed/frightened by it.

¹⁷ Or *Odyssey* XI and *Aeneid* VI. I think that his interest in shamanism is more than a little responsible for this view.

¹⁸ Dodds (1959) esp. p.380; Friedländer (1969) p.185.

not only is there *no* mention in this dialogue of recollection or continuation of personality through prenatal/intercarnate memories, but the myth is not even accepted as the *only* truth - Socrates adds the usual tempering note:

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, ὦ Καλλίλεις, ὑπὸ τε τούτων τῶν λόγων πέπεισμαι, καὶ σκοπῶ ὅπως ἀποφανοῦμαι τῷ κριτῇ ὡς ὑγιεστάτην τὴν ψυχὴν... Τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθος σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραδὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐδέν γ' ἂν ἦν θαυμαστὸν καταφρονεῖν τούτων, εἴ πη ζητοῦντες εἶχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὔπειν· (526d3-5; 527a5-8)

Other commentators have also argued for reincarnation from an *argumentum ex silentio* point, particularly on the basis that *Gorgias* is the first work to display characteristics of what one might call the Magna Graecian tradition ("Orphism"/Pythagoreanism),¹⁹ and is thus a product of Plato's visit to Sicily c.338BC. Yet the katabasis tradition pre-dates anything found in "Orphism" or Pythagoreanism, and the concept of carrying water in sieves is part of a wider tradition of impossible tasks.²⁰ Moreover, there are elements which can also be ascribed to initiatory mysteries of the Eleusinian kind.²¹

Rather, the myth appears to have a traditional background (apart from the introduction of a unsuccessful earthly judgement, which has obvious symbolic value),²² and upon this has been superimposed suitable, educative

¹⁹ Crombie (1962) p.302 notes that "...the sympathetic mention of mystical doctrine would have been taken as showing reincarnationalist leanings"; cf. Friedländer (1969) p.174; Dodds (1959) pp.297-298; Guthrie (1935) is the most complete source on "Orphic" elements in *Gorgias*.

²⁰ Cf. C.Sourvinou-Inwood (1986) pp.37-58

²¹ Guthrie (1975) p.305,n.2

²² And the judgement occurs at the Meadow, rather than in Hades proper: Dodds (1959) p.373 gives examples.

rewards/punishments appropriate to the philosopher's likes (philosophers go to the Isles of the Blessed: 526c2-5) and hates (tyrants and kings: 524e2-525a8; 525d1ff.). There is no suggestion of future earthly lives as punishments or otherwise.²³

I would conclude that *Gorgias* does not contain any *explicit* evidence of reincarnation, and any *implicit* doctrine seen in the myth is the result of commentators' unnecessary cross-references with other dialogues (in the interests of obtaining a "complete" doctrine), the confused "Orphic"-Pythagorean (mystic) tradition, and unfounded allegorizing. To this I would add that the myth was not intended, for the reasons given above, to contain any concept of reincarnation, regardless of the ready availability of metempsychosis doctrines (and their suitability to certain aspects of the myth). It is unfortunate that these very myths caused Socrates to be unconvincing to his sophistic audience.²⁴

²³ It is also lacking the "quasi-scientific trappings" of later dialogues: Dodds (1959) p.373.

²⁴ Annas (1982b) p.125.

APPENDIX D: GREEK SHAMANISM AND REINCARNATION

The intriguing point about the theory of shamanism in Ancient Greece is that the miraculous deeds attributed to the so-called shamanic figures (Orpheus, Pythagoras, Empedocles) have many parallels with northern shamanic tradition.

I do not intend to linger on shamanism, a phenomenon which I believe to be greatly over-rated as an observable influence on sixth century Greek mystic/religious thought.¹ I would argue that the resemblances between the typical shaman (defined below) and the so-called Greek miracle-mongers (Pythagoras *et al*) are superficial; moreover, there is not a trace of evidence for post-mortem transmigration in the shamanic tradition.²

“Shaman” is a Siberian word; it designates,

..a type of magician recognizable throughout central and north Asia, the Arctic, the Americas, Indonesia, Australia, and Oceania. His characteristic feature is his ability to work himself into a state in which his spirit leaves his body and undertakes journeys and adventures beyond the reach of ordinary humans. It can fly through the air for immense distances, visit the centre of the world, and pass from there to the several levels of heaven; it can plumb the depths

¹The idea was adapted from Meuli “Scythica” *Hermes* 70 (1935) 121-176 by Dodds (1951) pp.135-178, and adopted whole-heartedly by Burkert (see note 2.). For a short history of the phenomenon *vide* Philip (1966) p.159 and Bolton (1962) p.125.

²Shamanism has been very fashionable for the past thirty years, but it is interesting to note that some of its more outspoken representatives have now changed their minds. W.Burkert is one of these: in the English edition of his *Weisheit und Wissenschaft* (= *Lore & Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 1972) he has modified his views on shamanism as an observable phenomenon in Greece. For example, “..more thorough acquaintance with ancient religion has pushed the concept of ‘shamanism’ further into the background”: Burkert (1972) [preface]. A more general view of the whole debate can be seen in Lloyd-Jones (1991) p.191; in his opinion, Meuli’s suggestion is “by no means certain to be right.”

of the sea, or go to the land of the dead. The shaman is thus able to negotiate with gods and spirits (in their secret language) on the community's behalf, or converse with the souls of the departed and bring messages back from them. He can cure the sick by going after their fugitive souls (if necessary as far as the realm of the dead) and bringing them back to their owners, or by defeating morbid demons in combat. He alone can see souls and spirits; often they assume animal forms, but the shaman can deal with animals and birds too, and understand their language. He has access to the whole of nature. His spiritual adventures are dramatically represented to the onlookers by his mimetic dancing, symbolic acts, fits, trances, vociferations; or he may report them in lengthy songs.³

One of the problems, as Eliade has noted, has been the tendency to misuse the term "shaman" as an equivalent to "medicine-man", or leader of any ecstatic movement: there has been a lack of specification.⁴ A far-greater problem lies in the evidence itself, which is often contradictory, late, and cited in writers of dubious authority.

ORPHEUS AS SHAMAN

E.R.Dodds first suggested that Orpheus might be a shaman.⁵ This is an interesting supposition, especially if one looks to the Thracian background of Orpheus.⁶ A number of other connections can be made:

³ West (1983) p.5

⁴ Eliade (1964) p.3

⁵ "A psychically unstable person who has received a call to the religious life": Dodds (1951) p.140; Eliade (1964) p.391 has discussed the position clearly. See note 53, below, for the difficulties associated with Dodds' vague definition.

⁶ Dodds (1951) p.147

(1) The early poetry associated with the name "Orpheus" can be seen as representative of a shamanic type, particularly the poem entitled Descent to Hades.⁷ Other poems appear to be spells or incantations.⁸ According to this view, the first poems attributed to Orpheus were presumably poems composed for religious groups with rituals similar to shamanic practices.⁹

(2) Orpheus had a special rapport with animals, whom he charmed with his music; he also charmed trees and rocks.¹⁰

(3) Orpheus took part in the journey on the *Argo*;¹¹ his role, it seems, is to counteract the Sirens.¹² He was also the *keleustes*, who gave the rhythm to the oarsmen, and the bard.¹³ A deeper interpretation of the Argonauts' journey is that it was a shamanic voyage to the Underworld. Orpheus is also important because he has the typical shamanic powers of ordering: thus his singing has an ordering and reconciling influence.¹⁴

⁷ West (1983) p.6

⁸ Burkert (1982) p.5: In Euripides *Cyclops*, one of the satyrs claims to have a magical formula of Orpheus.

⁹ West (1983) pp.6-7. According to West, Orpheus may well have been a shaman-figure (from northern Europe, and/or from the traditional Thracian area - cf. the story of Zalmoxis in Herodotus 4.94 - somewhat Hellenized, made semi-divine by links with Apollo, and his special powers were attributed to his musical ability. Then, by a process of rationalization, Orpheus must have lost his more shamanic associations.

¹⁰ In the Finnish poem, *Kalevala*, the singer - a magician - attracts animals with his song. In other cultures, it is the job of a shaman-figure to attract animals with music before a hunt: Graf (1990) p.84.

¹¹ Cf. the *Orphic Argonautica*.

¹² Is this "a symbolic defeat of Death"? - Schwartz (1985b) p.241.

¹³ Graf (1990) p.96. Other, later associations of Orpheus and the Argonauts emphasize his role as the only initiate in the Samothracian mysteries: *ibid*; or stress his ability to prophesy - i.e. as the seer (however, the Argonauts already had another seer on board); or to control the weather.

¹⁴ Schwartz (1985a) p.2089A; Schwartz (1985b) p.241; note the metope from the Scythian Treasury at Delphi showing the *Argo* and Orpheus; the grounds for suspecting that the *Argo* voyage is shamanic are that the outward and return journeys are so similar.

(4) Orpheus journeyed to Hades to recover his wife, Eurydice (by charming the rulers of Hades with his song); earlier versions of the story may have shown that he succeeded.¹⁵ There is a similar “Orpheus Tradition” among North American Indians, and also along the Pacific rims of Asia and Polynesia.¹⁶ In these stories, however, the “Orpheus-figure” is not usually a shaman.¹⁷ Moreover, as Eliade has shown, katabatic journeys play no role in true shamanism.¹⁸

(5) Orpheus’ death; it is generally believed that he was torn to pieces by a band of Thracian women, possibly under Dionysiac influence.¹⁹ Dismemberment has been seen as a typical shamanic initiation ritual,²⁰ however, there are more obvious parallels with the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus by the Titans, and with the numerous stories of dismemberment in Dionysiac cults.²¹

(6) The *Orpheotelestes* has been regarded as a shaman-type figure: a type of priest, or initiator, who went around the country purifying individuals,²² removing their

¹⁵ That is, *contra* Virgil *Georgic* IV: Linforth (1941) pp.16ff.

¹⁶ Where a man goes to the world of the dead to recover someone, usually a relative, he can lead back the relative with conditions (for example, that he does not look back while leaving), and, usually, he breaks the conditions, and does not succeed.

¹⁷ Graf (1990) has argued that the story of a journey to the world of the dead might have come to Greece simply as that - a story; the Greeks then used the story without its shamanic connotations: Graf (1990) p.84. A more obtuse theory is that his wife was simply a ritual substitute for Orpheus to visit, and return from, the underworld as part of his shamanic initiation: Schwartz (1985b) p.242.

¹⁸ Eliade (1964) p.393

¹⁹ Graf (1990) pp.85-86. There are many variations on this: one is that Orpheus had adopted Apollo-Helios as his god, and Dionysus was avenging this insult. This is the tale told in Aeschylus’ lost *Bassarides*: Linforth (1941) p.10; Eliade (1986) p.114. Other motives are more prosaic - for example, Orpheus was ignoring the women after his wife’s death, and they were jealous. There is also the idea of Orpheus’ hostility towards the feminine (seen in his contest with the Sirens): he cannot tame his female killers with his song - Eliade (1986) p.114.

²⁰ A fairly permanent one! It is quite well-attested in Tibet, for example: Schwartz (1985b) p.242; Dillon *Hermathena* 138 (1985) p.68, reviewing West (1983).

²¹ Euripides’ *Bacchae*, for example.

²² A sort of door-to-door salesman of salvation, as Plato seems to describe at *Republic* 364b-365a. Burkert (1982) p.4; Dodds (1951) p.142: shamanic religion is individual religion. Philip (1966)

guilt and sin for money. The *Orpheotelestai* are, as Burkert points out, the only “tangible reality behind the phenomenon of Orphism”.²³ They seemed to use holy “Orphic” books,²⁴ and purification played a part in the salvation. These people do not seem to have belonged to one sect or group, but to have travelled around like traditional shamans.

The shaman was the person to whom people turned to explain what could not be explained with reason, and to give the reassurance that reasoning did not give.²⁵ The *Orpheotelestes* (not closely connected with an “Orphic” cult) seems to allow people a quick way to purification, rather than leading a fully ascetic lifestyle; he functions almost in the role of a confessor: the sort of person whom Plato describes at Republic 364b-365a.²⁶ In other societies there were people with similar functions. One way in which these shaman-figures cured ills was by the reciting of cosmogonies,²⁷ and this has also been seen as a link with the *Orpheotelestai*: for example, Burkert points out that cosmogonies are transmitted by these travelling priests.²⁸

p.161 would argue (*contra*) that shamans are closely connected to their communities in (truly) shamanic societies.

²³ Burkert (1982) p.4

²⁴ Nilsson (1925) p.215 calls Orphism “..a book religion, the first example of the kind in the history of Greek religion.” I presume - considering the small number of books which would have been in circulation - that only the initiator used the books.

²⁵ Gould (1987) p.11

²⁶ West (1983) p.21; Parker (1983) pp.303ff.

²⁷ Schwartz (1985b) p.241. Cf. Burkert (1990) p.24.

²⁸ Burkert (1990) p.24. I have discussed this at greater length in Appendix B.

It seems to me that this evidence is tenuous in the extreme. There are a number of stumbling blocks: for example, Orpheus is not a human, or even a legendary figure: he is a mythic character.²⁹ Moreover, the actual link between Orpheus and Orphism (within which sphere one would expect the shamanic Orpheus to operate) is far from clear: indeed, the link with Bacchic religion is much stronger - there is no evidence that Orpheus *per se* played a pivotal role in the phenomenon of Orphism.³⁰ A third flaw is that there is no evidence for attributing any truly shamanic features to the *Orpheotelestes*.³¹ As Bremmer notes (on the whole problem of shamanic influence), “..when there are parallels..these are not exclusively shamanistic.”³² From this alone one could conclude that there is nothing definitely suggestive of shamanism in the Orphic movement.³³

PYTHAGORAS AS SHAMAN

Walter Burkert sees Pythagoras as part of a long tradition of shamanic figures in early Greece (with Aristeas, Abaris, Epimenides, Phormio and Empedocles); this is based on the legends of miracle-working and bilocation common to this group.³⁴ With regard to Pythagoras, the connection is made

²⁹ Cf. Philip (1966) p.161

³⁰ And, as Eliade (1964) notes (p.389) there is no shamanic link with Dionysiac worship.

³¹ For example, they might have been dwellers on the fringe of the mysteries, degenerated into unscrupulous “quacks”; cf. Theophrastus’ “Superstitious Man” (*Characters* XVI.12) who makes a monthly visit to the *Orpheotelestes* - Parker (1983) p.307; see Ussher (1993²) p.152n. for this interpretation. Cf. Plato’s disdain of such people at *Republic* 364b-365a.

³² Bremmer (1987) p.47

³³ Eliade (1964) p.391; cf. his opinion of the directions given to the soul on the gold plates: they are the dead equivalent of the live soul-journeys of shamanism; however, since shamanism lacks a concept of Hades, this is a rather difficult analogy. See Appendix B.

³⁴ Burkert (1972) pp.148-155 lists the common experiences. Eliade (1964) p.389 notes that Epimenides’ stay in the cave on Ida represents “..a classic initiatory ordeal, but it is not

clearer by the story of Zalmoxis in Herodotus 4.94ff., the tradition of the Pythagorean katabatic journey,³⁵ and the numerous links with Apollo.³⁶ Hyperborean Apollo is a northern deity, and provides the geographical link between Pythagoras and shamanism.

However, the strongest evidence for Pythagoras as shaman comes from comparative data. Pythagoras fits into a series of miraculous figures - including Aristeas and Abaris (both linked with Apollo) - who are seen as shamanic. The problem with such parallels is that they are often only coincidental. Bolton has rationalised the tradition on Aristeas in medical terms. For example, the tradition surrounding Aristeas associates him with soul journeys and adventures (which he can relate to his listeners, including stories of his soul as a bird), bilocation, divination, the attributes of a medicine-man, and a poem (*Arimaspea*).³⁷ In Herodotus 4.13ff Aristeas goes into a trance in a fuller's shop and is left for dead;³⁸ Bolton sees this as a typical cataleptic trance/seizure (and asks, moreover,

necessarily 'shamanic'." However, Epimenides' divination, prophesying, ecstasies and cures do have parallels in shamanism. Philip (1966) p.161 comments that of these names associated with shamanism and miraculous events, some are real, others legendary or mythical; if we were going to term all such appearances "shamanic", then to the list should be added most of the unusual figures of the archaic age, including Parmenides (who wrote about a journey of the soul). As he notes, because of the nature of the time, "It would be easy to paint a very 'irrational' picture of their world." (p.162). Cornford (1971) pp.89ff. provides a very confused account of these figures and offers many comparative examples.

³⁵ Burkert (1972) pp.155-157; Eliade (1964) pp.392f. points out that katabatic journeys have no place in shamanic tradition.

³⁶ See references in Chapter 1, n.19. But cf. Eliade (1964) p.387 who notes that there is no parallel between Delphic Apollo (oracles and etc..) and shamanism.

³⁷ Bolton (1962) p.126

³⁸ Cf. the very similar circumstances of Er at *Republic* 614b8: Halliwell (1988) p.172. Eliade (1964) p.393 would see this as a cataleptic trance, and much more reminiscent of shamanism than other Greek ecstatic traditions. The fact that this story appears in a myth and is ascribed to a

whether Aristeas' supposed soul journey was not a physical journey). As Bolton has noted, there is a tradition of such figures being cast in the mould of Pythagoras;³⁹ he would trace this to Heraclides Ponticus, who (he believes) took unusual stories and made them conform to a pattern of Pythagorean influence.⁴⁰ However, Heraclides was not sympathetic to Pythagoras.⁴¹

Philip has given a list of problems with shamanism in Greece: viz, it is not a central feature of society (as it is in Siberia); there is no Greek word equivalent to "shaman";⁴² there is no record of practices entirely characteristic of shamanism;⁴³ one finds evidence for behaviour categorized as shamanic before the opening of trade on the Black Sea (from where Dodds argues that shamanism was introduced to Greece);⁴⁴ there are no phenomena observable among the closest neighbours to the Greeks;⁴⁵ in Greek tradition, the soul-journey is undertaken not for benefit to

Pamphylian, not a Greek, makes it difficult to use as evidence of the phenomena in Greece. Eliade (1964) p.394 suggests some sort of "archetype of 'gaining existential consciousness'."

³⁹ No doubt one of the reasons being their common Apolline tradition: cf. Eliade (1964) p.388.

⁴⁰ Bolton (1962) pp.165ff. & 183; cf. Guthrie (1962) pp.163-165.

⁴¹ fr.81; fr.129: cited by Burkert (1972) p.160. de Vogel (1970) p.86 agrees with Philip (1966) that Heraclitus is not referring to Pythagoras as a shaman. She believes that he would have used other terms to do this. The question, of course, is which terms in particular? Cf. Burkert on ΓΟΗΣ (below). Philip (1966) p.170,n.14 points out that Heraclides came from Pontus, so may well have understood any Scythian shamanic beliefs.

⁴² *Contra* Burkert (1972) p.164 who believes that ΓΟΗΣ is a term equivalent to "shaman": cf. Burkert (1962) "ΓΟΗΣ. Zum griechischen 'Schamanismus'" *RhM* 105, 36-55, where he concedes (p.45) that there is no definite evidence for this, or for shamanism.

⁴³ Cf. Bremmer (1987) p.47: "...when there are parallels..these are not exclusively shamanistic."

⁴⁴ One *cannot* argue from this that shamanism was not introduced but was a cross-cultural phenomena, because there is evidence for only a few unrelated characteristics, not a whole system.

⁴⁵ As Bremmer (1987) pp.47ff. notes, there is no evidence that the Scythians - whom Dodds (1951) believes to have introduced shamanism to Greece - held shamanic beliefs about the soul; however, Eliade (1964) p.395 believes that they would have known of them, and that there are some parallels.

the community (as in true shamanic societies), but often without purpose and on the traveller's own account; as for the (typical) use of verse, a lot of other people used verse without any shamanic purpose; bilocation is not equivalent to the soul-journey. Finally, as Philip notes, the Archaic Age is full of people and events which are deemed "miraculous":⁴⁶ *curious religious ideas do not necessarily imply shamanism*, nor is it at all surprising that a tradition of miraculous events surrounds such people.⁴⁷ This is the problem of imprecise definitions, again.

Ferwerda points out an interesting problem for Pythagoras as shaman. The shamanic soul (from where shamans get their power) is the "free soul" of Homer; why then should there be any belief in the body as a tomb or a prison of the soul, if it is possible for the soul to wander freely beyond the body *during life*.⁴⁸ The idea would upset all evidence found in Plato *et al* for such beliefs. The point being made, I believe, is that the soul *does not wander during life*, and it is death that brings freedom.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Philip (1966) p.161

⁴⁷ Philip (1966) p.159. Vernant (1991) pp.322-323 does not refer to shamans, but *magi (theioi andres)* - figures playing formative roles in the troubled and changing society of the seventh and sixth centuries, among whom he numbers Solon. They are important because they are raised above society's problems (because of their "exceptional powers") and as such, I presume, have an impartial view of society's needs. Certainly Pythagoras' reputation as moral reformer to Croton - cf. Morrison (1955) p.135 - would fit with this. I do not see why such figures have to be divine: they could, for example, be simply *inspired* by the divine.

⁴⁸ Ferwerda (1985) pp.271-272

⁴⁹ Note the interesting parallel of Pindar fr.131 Bergk where the soul is awake while the body sleeps (and *vice versa*); there is no idea here of the soul physically wandering from the body; rather it seems umbilically tied. Eliade (1964) p.387 cannot link the concept of Hades and shamanism.

EMPEDOCLES AS SHAMAN

E.R.Dodds suggested that Empedocles was not only a Greek shaman, but also the last Greek shaman.⁵⁰ If one looks at fragments 111 and 112, and takes into account the fragment that mentions Empedocles' soul/*daimon* flying about the cosmos (fr.115), one can make some sort of a case based on comparative evidence. Unfortunately, the pieces do not all fit.

On the positive side: Empedocles says that he has travelled through the cosmos, he can heal people, and he has assumed animal forms (fr.117). However, one does not necessarily need special abilities to do any of these. As I have indicated (Chapter 3; q.v.), the cosmic adventure, and the incarnation in animals, could have been elaborated by Empedocles on the grounds that he *must* have done these things, and been these things, or else he would not have arrived at his current high position.⁵¹

Apart from these points, what we have represented in Empedocles - and what the sequence of fragments 115, 118, 128, 139, 136, 145, 137, 146, and 147

⁵⁰ Dodds (1951) p.145

⁵¹ Moreover, he regards himself as a god. This is *hubris*: Zuntz (1971) p.252; no shaman (who has to communicate with the gods) would overstep the mark in this way. The fact that the word "*daimon*" is associated with shamans proves nothing. Dodds (1951) p.166,n.61 would suggest that although Zalmoxis is described as a *daimon* by Herodotus 4.94.1, one should compare Strabo's account of Zalmoxis (7.3.5) where he is "either a heroized shaman...or else a divine prototype of shamans". I cannot agree.

shows - is Empedocles' belief in a universal doctrine of reincarnation applying to the whole of humanity.⁵²

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I am far from convinced about the existence of shamans in Greece;⁵³ it is, as N.J. Richardson has written, "a blanket term for a whole range of phenomena".⁵⁴ For instance, Morgan can cite shamanic influences on Socrates, based on the story of Zalmoxis in Herodotus.⁵⁵

Herodotus' story has a lot to answer for in this debate. All links to shamanism eventually return to Thrace as Greece's the point of contact with this influence; yet as Minar notes, we must not predicate interdependence of Greek and Thracian beliefs based solely on the evidence of Herodotus 4.95.⁵⁶ As Eliade confirms, the features of the Zalmoxis story (as told by Herodotus) are not shamanic:⁵⁷ "other 'shamanic' elements persisted in the Thracian religion, but it is

⁵² Kahn (1971, Appendix p.30-36) gives a specific discussion on Empedocles (and to a lesser extent Pythagoras) as a shaman, and concludes that shamanism is not a phenomenon to be associated with the Greek thinkers, as it describes a highly specified category of person, not simply a medicine man or sorcerer.

⁵³ For example, Dodds' (1951) definition of the Greek shaman (p.140) is hardly a full and accurate description of the phenomena; with such a vague definition, it is easy to categorize all ecstatic/mystic leaders as shamans, as both Dodds (1951) and West (1983) have done. Lewis' (1971) comments (p.56) are relevant in this respect: he believes that Dodds has taken a "misleading model" of shamanism (i.e. a wrong definition) and that this has "skewed his interpretation."

⁵⁴ Richardson's review of West (1983): *CR* XXXV (1985) p.88.

⁵⁵ Morgan (1990) p.25: "At least part of Alcibiades' famous description - Socrates' immunity to cold and drink, his trance-like state followed by prayer to the sun - smacks of the magical, ecstatic and exotic, once again suggesting contact with northern religious traditions either in 432 or in 437-436."

⁵⁶ Minar (1942) p.5

⁵⁷ Although the version in Strabo - cloud-walkers - could be interpreted as hemp-induced ecstasy; Eliade (1964) p.390.

not always easy to identify them.”⁵⁸ I interpret this to indicate that the features do not, therefore, follow the paradigmatic pattern of shamanism (familiar from Siberia, for example). There are coincidences and parallels, but they can be explained in other ways.⁵⁹ As this seems to indicate, there is no complete picture of shamanic culture emerging among Greece’s closest neighbours to the north (Thrace and Scythia), and it is a dangerous move to postulate “pan-shamanism”.⁶⁰

Thus there is little evidence which specifically associates the early Greek thinkers with shamanism.⁶¹ As I have enumerated above, there are significant problems with the possible cross-fertilization of traditions. As Philip comments, “..in fact only the persons who are supposed to be explained by ‘Greek shamanism’ serve as evidence suggesting that such an institution existed.”⁶² The shaman tradition seems far removed from the Greek world.⁶³

A more important conclusion is that reincarnation and shamanism have no connection, not only in the Greek world, but as part of world-wide shamanic tradition. Burkert would see a close connection (viz., the shamanic soul entering a

⁵⁸ Eliade (1964) p.390. Cf. Lewis (1971) p.100 on the “supposedly Thracian” origins of Apollo (and Dionysus).

⁵⁹ Eliade (1964) p.388: there may have been “a certain primordial ‘shamanism’”.

⁶⁰ Cf. Dodds (1951) p.147. Moreover, it does not appear in the western neighbours of Italy and Etruria either: Philip (1966) p.161; Eliade (1964) p.394,n.82 agrees.

⁶¹ cf. Bremmer (1987) pp.47ff.

⁶² Philip (1966) p.160

⁶³ Graf (1990) p.85

living body); however, as he admits, this is not equivalent to *post-mortem* transmigration (reincarnation).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Burkert (1972) p.165; cf. Dodds (1951) p.144.

APPENDIX E: REINCARNATION AND ETERNAL RECURRENCE

Eternal recurrence (cyclic return)¹ and reincarnation beliefs are often linked, particularly in sources on the early Greek thinkers Pythagoras and Empedocles.

For example, Barnes (*The Presocratic Philosophers*, II, p.200ff.) raises an interesting point about Empedocles' cosmic cycle: he believes that Empedocles was attempting to illustrate the theory of eternal recurrence. He bases this theory on the "fact" that many other philosophers (Pythagoras, the Stoics, and Nietzsche) have been attracted to eternal recurrence. He uses Nietzsche to define eternal recurrence:

"Now I die and disappear," you would say, "in the totality of things I am nothing. Souls are as mortal as bodies." But the knot of causes in which I am bound up returns - it will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence. I come again with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with these snakes - not to a new life or a better life or a similar life: eternally again to this very same life, the same in largest and in smallest points; and I teach again the eternal recurrence of all things.²

With reference to Empedocles, Barnes is arguing that in each repetition of the cosmic cycle (i.e. in the periods of Strife → Love; and Love → Strife) identical events recur to the last detail. This is the reason, he explains, that Empedocles can

¹The seminal study is M.Eliade (1954) *The Myth of the Eternal Return* Bollingen Foundation, N.Y. (= 1st Eng.ed of *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour*). On the Greek liking for cyclic time: Guthrie (1957b) pp.63ff.

²Barnes (1979) II, p.202: from Nietzsche *Also Sprach Zarathustra* III, 'Der Genesende'.

speak of immortality: because, in a sense, mortals are immortal because they come back in the same form eternally.

There are a number of flaws in this theory; firstly, there is no evidence in the fragments to show that anything of the kind occurred.³ Secondly - a major philosophical flaw - one would need, as Nietzsche saw, a theory of "causal determinism" to control the recurrences; thirdly, the nature of the cycle inherently forbids identical repetitions (except, one would presume, by chance), because Empedocles allows only six immortal elements in the cosmos; everything else is a mixture of these six elements. If anything else were to recur, it would therefore be immortal; this is a direct challenge to the immortality of the six elements; the point is that Empedocles did not want a challenge to his six elements. What is perhaps more true is that he never considered the possibility of other (compound) objects becoming immortal, except in the wider sense that everything would achieve immortality by being uncompounded.⁴

One can argue against eternal recurrence on common sense grounds, also. There is really no point in having eternal recurrence within a cosmic cycle that also contains a theory of reincarnation. It is incompatible. Barnes' intended immortality

³ That is, there *is* evidence for the cyclic destruction, but no evidence to show that the next era is a *recurrence* of the previous cycle.

⁴ Inwood (p.38,n.88) provides the best argument against Barnes' almost unanswerable theory. The final problem, which Barnes (1979, vol.II) himself points out (pp.204ff.), is that of time; views on the nature of time are manifold, and the Eudemian/Newtonian (cyclic/linear) argument is unanswerable. In one view, eternal recurrence is probable; in the other, impossible.

is hardly comforting; it is a reduction of the status of the individual to an functionless automaton. There is no room to improve in the next recurrence, as exactly the same events recur, along with the same reactions. The only saving grace - one presumes - is that one does not remember one's past life. As Barnes points out, "Such an immortality would be tedious if we had perfect memories; and it is, indeed, hard to see why anyone should find comfort in it."⁵ The one saving grace of eternal recurrence (although not in this case) is that it is one satisfactory metaphysical solution to the fascinating mystery of *deja vu*.

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With regard to Pythagoras, the case against eternal recurrence is even simpler, for there is no indication that Pythagoras devised a cosmology comparable with Empedocles' (i.e. a cosmology adaptable to a doctrine of eternal recurrence); the available tradition points to a primitive number cosmology (or cosmogony).⁶ Of course an argument *ex silentio* is hardly proof of this.

It is unusual that while there is such a strong tradition of belief in Pythagorean transmigration, there is no similarly strong belief in eternal recurrence.⁷

⁵ Barnes (1979) II, p.203

⁶ Cf. Guthrie (1962) pp.276ff.

⁷ Except among a number of commentators: cf. Guthrie (1978) pp.193ff., who traces recurrence of historical events to the Pythagoreans. There are a larger number of beliefs *contra*: for example, Philip (1966) p.169,n.9.

There are two Greek references of relevance to a Pythagorean belief in eternal recurrence. First, a fragment thought to be from Dicaearchus:⁸

μάλιστα μέντοι γνώριμα παρὰ πᾶσιν ἐγένετο πρῶτον μὲν ὡς ἀθάνατον εἶναι φησι τὴν ψυχὴν, εἶτα μεταβάλλουσιν εἰς ἄλλα γένη ζώων, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ὅτι κατὰ περιόδους τινὰς τὰ γενόμενά ποτε πάλιν γίνεται, νέον δ' οὐδὲν ἀπλῶς ἐστὶ, καὶ ὅτι πάντα τὰ γινόμενα ἔμψυχα ὁμογενῆ δεῖ νομίζειν. φαίνεται γὰρ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα τὰ δόγματα πρῶτος κομίσαι ταῦτα Πυθαγόρας. (DK 14,8a)

This passage hardly shows a reliable understanding of early Pythagorean belief;⁹ for instance, metamorphosis, rather than metempsychosis, appears to be suggested. The idea that “nothing is ever absolutely new”¹⁰ could be linked to reincarnation as well as recurrence: for example, the idea of all soul matter returning to a common soul mass. However, it is difficult to explain away the belief that “events recur in certain cycles”. Compare the second relevant passage - Eudemus *apud* Simplic. *Phys.* 732,30 (DK 58B34):¹¹

εἰ δὲ τις πιστεύσειε τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις, ὥστε πάλιν τὰ αὐτὰ ἀριθμῶ, κάγω μυθολογήσω τὸ ραβδίον ἔχων ὑμῖν καθημένοις οὕτω, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὁμοίως ἔξει, καὶ τὸν χρόνον εὐλόγον ἐστὶ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι.¹²

This definitely refers to eternal recurrence.

⁸ Cited by Porphyry *VP* 19.

⁹ See Guthrie's discussion (1962) pp.169-170 on the lack of reliability of these post-Platonic sources quoted in the Neoplatonic writers; apart from a tendency of the original writers to confuse Platonic and Pythagorean elements, they were quoted by compilers far less accurate.

¹⁰ Translation of KRS no.285.

¹¹ Eudemus, pupil of Aristotle, is presumably a contemporary of Dicaearchus.

¹² Note the similarity to the passage from Nietzsche, cited above.

There is a strong comparative (mainly eastern) tradition of periodic cycles of events. The main comparison has been with the Babylonian “Great Year” (usually the “..period necessary for sun, moon, and planets as well to reach again the same positions in relation to each other as they occupied at a given moment.”¹³), although it is noted that this seems to refer mainly to recurrences of cosmic catastrophes (floods etc..).¹⁴

In terms of a Greek “Great Year” in Pythagoras’ teaching, (as I have discussed in the chapter on Pythagoras) there is late evidence for a 216 year interval *between* Pythagoras’ incarnations.¹⁵ However neither in this, nor any other source, is there a hint of a “Great Year” akin - for example - to the 10,000 year cycle of *Timaeus* 39b.

¹³ Guthrie (1957b) pp.64f.; cf. Guthrie (1978) p.194: the 10,000 year “Great Year” at *Timaeus* 39b.

¹⁴ Cf. van der Waerden (1965) col.847 who notes that the Eudemos fragment is the only evidence for “ewige Wiederkehr”. This is backed up in van der Waerden (1952) with the Eudemos fragment; cf. van der Waerden (1963) (col.295). However, he seems to be one of the few who believe in a connection, along with Gomperz (1901) p.140 who sees it - wrongly - in Heraclitus and Anaximander, and the Babylonian “World-year” (pp.142f; although on p.125 he thinks that there may have been change without destruction). Cf. van der Waerden (1952) p.132 on Heraclitus: *contra* Kahn (1974) p.165. van der Waerden (1952) pp.129ff. argues that Pythagoras received the doctrine of eternal recurrence from Eastern sources (he cites influences from Babylon to India - pp.138-152). It seems to be based on Iamblichus’ story that Pythagoras had Babylonian teachers (p.153). Of course, according to tradition, Pythagoras also went to Crete, Egypt, and an inordinate number of places where he picked up ancient wisdom. The concept of the well-travelled mystic is common to nearly every Greek “sage” (cf. the legends surrounding Pherecydes), and there seem to be few who have not had (alleged) contact with Egypt and the East. One can hardly use this as definite evidence - it verges on a literary/doxographical device (cf. Herodotus’ numerous ascriptions of Greek wisdom to Egypt). van der Waerden (1952) p.129 stresses the aspect of cosmic catastrophe in the Babylonian tradition - it is notably absent from the Pythagorean evidence; but cf. the discussion of the myth in Plato’s *Politicus*, below.

¹⁵ In the *Theologumena Arithmeticae* 52 (DK 14,8). This is based on 6 cubed; KR p.223f.,n.1; cf. Philip (1966) p.169,n.9. van der Waerden (1965) col.847-8 comments on the alternative figure of 207 years.

I cannot see how reincarnation can combine with eternal recurrence to form a satisfactory view of a life. The problem with eternal recurrence is that one lives the same life over and over again, with no possibility for change (although, as I pointed out, above, one does not know that life is endlessly repeating): the point of reincarnation is to *improve* one's life from incarnation to incarnation. Thus I contend that the two beliefs are not compatible.

As Kirk and Raven note, Pythagoras *might* have believed in eternal recurrence, but later sources could have taken the idea from Empedocles.¹⁶ It was certainly a feature of Stoic thought.¹⁷

There is another option: rather than restoring a doctrine of eternal recurrence to Pythagoras or Empedocles, it would be more feasible to see these aspects of their doctrines in terms of *cyclic renewal*. This can be seen, I believe, in Plato's unusual aetiological¹⁸ myth in *Politicus*. Ancient commentators on Platonic myth were more than ready to ascribe myths to less "philosophical" sources, and this may well have occurred as a result of this myth. Certainly the deliberate vagueness of Plato towards his own sources lends force to this view.

¹⁶ Incorrectly; or even Anaximander, for example, who believed in everything being born from and returning to the *apeiron*: cf. Eliade (1954) p.120. Also KR pp.223f.,n.1.

¹⁷ *ibid*; cf. Eliade (1954) pp.89,n.59 & 119) on the appearance of true eternal recurrence (*anakuklosis*) in later Pythagoreans and Platonists.

¹⁸ Stewart (1960) p.196

The basic tenet of the myth (269c-274e: related by the stranger of Elea)¹⁹ is that the universe rotates under the guidance of Kronos, but eventually, at the right time, he lets go, and the universe begins to rotate in the opposite direction, under its own steam (for it is a living creature and has stored up the energy of its revolutions). The reverse rotation is sanctioned by Kronos, because the universe has partaken of the bodily, and is thus not free from change - it needs to change. With cosmic change comes human change: destruction of nearly all living creatures and survival of only a few humans. These humans (including the dead) are affected by the reversal in that they stop growing old and begin to grow towards youth again, and eventually back to babies (in mind and body) and then disappear.²⁰ The dead bodies disappear even faster. The departed generation is replaced by the earth-born generation who had lived primordially. They are seen to be reborn from the dead in the universe's womb. Rebirth from death is a sign of cosmic reversal.²¹ A few of the "dead" were translated to a different life by Kronos.²² The new generation lived in a sort of Golden Age²³ (abundant food, no states, common relations), with Kronos as their shepherd, and with no recollection of their previous lives. In this existence, men talked with animals (and *vice versa*), all learning everything to be known. Eventually (after a certain number of compulsory

¹⁹ This in itself seems suspicious to me because the myth can be interpreted as a parody of Parmenidean ontology.

²⁰ *Contra* Guthrie (1978) p.195, I do not see Heraclitus fr. 88 (KR no. 205) nor Hesiod *Works and Days* 181 as examples of this process. Guthrie notes that the latter example is not specific to cosmic reversal. I would see it more as a portent of coming disaster.

²¹ This is reminiscent of *Phaedo* 70c4-d5.

²² cf. Pindar *Oly.*2; *Phaedo* 82d9-83c4; *Phaedrus* 249a.

²³ Eliade (1954) p.122

“births” from the earth (in the manner of seed), Kronos “dropped the tiller”²⁴ of the universe (as did other gods), and there was a period of destruction and catastrophe, then a settling back into order of the universe (which was not as devastated as during the previous reversal). However, the earth (because of its material content) became forgetful of order, and eventually had to be rescued again by Kronos taking control of the tiller again.²⁵ The relationships with beasts broke down, men became feeble, and thus fire (given by Prometheus) and the other aids had to be given (and further deterioration began). Birth, conception and etc.. were now in the manner known in this age. Part of the blame is put on the shepherd - it was ruinous statesmanship that a leader be so different (he was a god) from his subjects.²⁶

It is a most unusual and obscure myth. It is superficially similar to Empedocles’ doctrine of the cyclic cosmic system;²⁷ The concept of destruction and reversal is certainly familiar.²⁸ Other elements are not,²⁹ and indeed there are

²⁴ As Guthrie (1978) p.196 comments, this is an extraordinary story.

²⁵ One might ask why - if he has to keep rescuing the universe - Kronos does not simply hold on to the tiller all the time: for it seems predestined that he will have to keep taking over?

²⁶ cf. Burnet (1914) p.291 who sees a contrast with a Pythagorean theocracy.

²⁷ Skemp (1987) p.87 notes that the picture of the cosmos may be Pythagorean; however (p.87,n.2) the idea of the universe as a living creature is older. The nautical metaphors are seen as Pythagorean (pp.95f. & 96,n.1): however, this is a common metaphor, and the use may be coincidental in that it is particularly appropriate for the context of state leadership.

²⁸ Cf. Finkelberg (1986) p.323,n.9, who discusses periodic destruction in the doxographers (based on Theophrastus).

²⁹ cf. Skemp (1987) pp.88ff. who comments on the power of “Mind” in the role usually assigned to Necessity. It is a cosmic system quite different to that in *Timaeus* and *Republic* Book 10 - the suggestion implied is that it is a myth invented to fit the didactic context.

some impressive differences,³⁰ which may point to an Eastern origin for the myth.³¹

At 272e1-3 there is an obscure reference to rebirth: ..καὶ τὸ γήινον ἦδη πᾶν ἀνήλωτο γένος, πάσας ἐκάστης τῆς ψυχῆς τὰς γενέσεις ἀποδεδωκυίας, ὅσα ἦν ἐκάστη προσταχθὲν τοσαῦτα εἰς γῆν σπέρματα πεσοῦσης.. Compare the detail at 272a1-2: ἐκ γῆς γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες, οὐδὲν μεμνημένοι τῶν πρόσθεν. I presume that, in the case of the adult bodies which grow younger and eventually disappear into the earth, it is actually the soul which disappears into the earth, to be reborn later, rather than the “body”. If so, this is a very unusual (indeed incompatible) blend of resurrection and reincarnation. Resurrection implies the “rebirth” of the same body and the same soul, while the events quoted above must refer to a rebirth from the earth which is in fact a reincarnation:³² the process of ensoulment has occurred before the “body” leaves the earth below. However, I do not deny that the passages are ambiguous: for example, it is not made clear that the reborn soul exists in a different body, or the same. It is the same soul, but with no recollection of its past lives. On comparative evidence (*cf. Republic* Book 10), one would presume a different bodily identity. The passages do not seem to

³⁰ Skemp (1987) p.90: for example, the *Politicus* myth seems to be more of an oscillation than a true cycle.

³¹ Egyptian or Zoroastrian thought: Skemp (1987) pp.91,92ff.; cf. Eliade (1954) p.7,n.6 on links with Mazdaism.

³² *Contra* Stewart (1960) p.196 who sees a coalescence of resurrection and reincarnation in the myth.

indicate that the same life is lived again, but their ambiguity hardly leaves room for definite judgements.³³

The important point is that cyclic renewal, and eternal recurrence, are different ideas, although based on the same concepts. It seems that eternal recurrence does not fully appear until Stoic thought.³⁴ So while reincarnation can exist in a theory of cyclic *renewal* (as could be the case in Pythagorean³⁵ and Empedoclean theory), it is morally purposeless in a system of eternal recurrence.

³³ cf. Socrates' scepticism at *Republic* 546a of periodic cycles (based on bizarre mathematics); Eliade (1954) p.132. *Phaedo* 87b5-88b8 (the analogy of the soul and the weaver) is unlikely to refer to eternal recurrence.

³⁴ Guthrie (1957b) p.68. And the Stoic periodic destruction is caused by fire, not "natural" catastrophes.

³⁵ If the evidence was not so prone to other influences.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGPh	<i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
BASP	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSCA	<i>California Studies in Classical Antiquity</i>
C.U.P.	Cambridge University Press
DA	<i>Dissertation Abstracts</i>
DK	Diels, H. & Kranz, W. (1951) <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> ⁶ (3 vols) Weidmann, Berlin
D.L.	Diogenes Laertius
FGrHist	Jacoby, F. <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> Berlin/Leiden, 1923-1958
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICS	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
KR	Kirk, G.S. & Raven, J.E. (1975) <i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i> CUP
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., Scott, R. & Jones, H.S. <i>Greek-English Lexicon with a Supplement</i> ⁹ Oxford, 1968
LSS	Sokolowski, F. <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques: Supplément</i> Paris, 1962
Mnem	<i>Mnemosyne</i>
Nauck	Nauck, A. (ed.) <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> ² Leipzig, 1889
OF	Kern, O. (1922) <i>Orphicorum Fragmenta</i> Weidmann, Dublin/Zurich
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PP	<i>La Parola del Passato</i>
QUCC	<i>Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica</i>
RE	Pauly-Wissowa <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> Stuttgart, 1894-1980
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
REL	<i>Revue des études latines</i>
RFIC	<i>Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
SO	<i>Symbolae Osloenses</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
WS	<i>Wiener Studien</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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