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WHY DIDN'T PLATO JUST WRITE ARGUMENTS? THE ROLE OF IMAGE-MAKING IN THE DIALOGUES

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Abstract:

Several of Plato's dialogues seem to question the moral and epistemic value of image-making. Yet Plato's own word-images are powerful and alluring. I reconsider a conception of "Platonic" metaphysics in which the visible is denigrated relative to the purely intelligible, and in which only the latter can be an avenue to philosophical enlightenment. Viewing the apparent criticisms of image-making in the context of Plato's own use of images, I argue that his use of images can and does lead to philosophical enlightenment and that images are necessary, in addition to logico-deductive reasoning, because of human limitation.

And a wolf is very like a dog, the wildest like the tamest of animals. But the cautious man must be especially on his guard in the matter of resemblances, for they are very slippery things. *Sophist* 231a

Next we must declare the most important benefit effected by [the eyes], for the sake of which god bestowed them upon us. Vision, in my view, is the cause of the greatest benefit to us, inasmuch as none of the accounts now given concerning the Universe would ever have been given if men had not seen the stars or the sun or the heaven. . . From these we have procured philosophy in all its range, than which no greater boon ever has come or will come, by divine bestowal, unto the race of mortals. *Timaeus* 47a-b

Plato's images are among the most powerful and alluring ever contrived: the cave dwellers of the *Republic* sit in shackles before the shadows cast on the cave wall, prevented from turning their heads toward the real source of those images; the unruly, winged horse of the *Phaedrus* resists the bridled control of the charioteer and therefore fails to ascend to the heights; Socrates, the midwife in *Theaetetus*, aids in the birth of ideas and disposes of those ideas delivered stillborn or unfit; Aristophanes relates the story of our origins as double sided humans in the *Symposium*-two joined as one, cart wheeling around with our other halves in erotic bliss; philosophy is depicted as medicine for the soul when it is in ill health; Alcibiades flaunts his striking and seductive beauty; and we might even say that Socrates' flaunts his ugly visage. These images form so integral a part of the dialogues that the philosophical importance of Plato's image-making demands investigation.¹ And yet several dialogues contain passages in which interlocutors seem to throw into question the moral and epistemic value of image-making, and to denigrate what is visible in comparison to what is purely intelligible. If one wants to consider the significance of Plato's use of images, one must therefore reckon with a deeply entrenched view of what has come to be considered "Platonic metaphysics."

It is widely accepted that Plato subscribes to some metaphysical system that involves two realms or kinds of

being which are hierarchically arranged, and two kinds of apprehension or knowledge that correspond to the two kinds of being. The superior kind of being resides in the things-in-themselves or forms which are real and universal, as well as eternal and unchanging. Furthermore, the realm of the forms is the invisible realm, and so the forms must be known in some other manner than through the senses. They are known, if they can be known at all, through reason alone, i.e., reason that operates independently of the senses or the emotions or the passions. Knowledge of the forms, which is purely rational, constitutes true philosophical enlightenment. Inferior to the forms, in this same system of "Platonic metaphysics," are the phenomena of human experience. We apprehend the phenomena through our senses. They are in constant flux—they are created and perish. Sensation, passion, and emotion, which necessarily accompany human experience since we are embodied creatures, all hinder clear understanding. Furthermore, the phenomena are not wholly real but are imitations or mere images of the forms. Therefore, when we grasp the phenomena we perceive only an image of reality, our apprehension of these phenomena or images falls far short, at best, of philosophical wisdom. Finally—and of serious concern for my project—creating images of the phenomena, as an artist, writer, painter, or poet might do, is merely making images of images—still a further departure from the way of truth and wisdom.²

It is not hyperbole to consider Plato a master of image-making. If this two-realm metaphysics is an accurate depiction of Plato's metaphysical commitments, then we might question why Plato did not himself maintain the level of discourse in his philosophical works by offering only rational argumentation for philosophical positions; why would he sully his own work with lowly, unphilosophical or anti-philosophical images? If to appeal to what is best philosophically is to appeal to what is purely rational, why didn't Plato just write arguments?

To the contrary, the dialogues never fail to appeal to our visual senses, forcing us to see and to create images in our minds in order to understand them. The dialogues draw from the phenomena of human experience over and over again, asking us to understand philosophical ideas through the finite, mutable objects of our experience. And beyond our sense experience, they rely on the fancy of our imagination to create other worlds and images. Are the dialogues, therefore, paradigms of image-making as an avenue for philosophical insight? I will argue that they are and, further, that this traditional view of "Platonic metaphysics" needs slight re-vision.

The Evidence of the Phaedo

Plato's use of images and his implicit belief in their potential for good effect, as evidenced by his pervasive and artful use of them, are grounded, I believe, in epistemic commitments. We must, that is, understand human knowledge, and especially the limits of human knowledge, in order to see why Plato chose to use images as he does and why they are such an effective tool for his project.³

In order to understand their function and why Plato chose to work through images, I return to the story of recollection. The details of that story provide clues about human epistemological limitation and about the role images could play in philosophical enlightenment. I have already investigated in some detail the *Meno*, where the story of recollection is told. I turn now to the *Phaedo*, where Socrates again tells this story. The *Phaedo* also happens to be one of the major sources for passages that seem to denigrate the senses in comparison to reason, and is therefore an appropriate locus for investigating further just what role vision and images might play in philosophy. While *Phaedo*, on the surface, appears to support the traditional view of "Platonic metaphysics,"⁴ it actually provides clear evidence that this view needs re-view and re-vision.

Set in Socrates' jail cell only hours before he drinks the hemlock, the dialogue, *Phaedo*, focuses appropriately on

the immortality of the soul. Near the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates claims that the philosopher tries as far as is possible to live a life in which body and soul are separate. The philosopher is someone who shuns the so-called pleasures of the body such as eating, drinking, and sex. Moreover, such a man thinks little of personal adornment in clothes, shoes, and the like. In this way, the philosopher lives toward and desires death insofar as death is the separation of body and soul.

Socrates: Altogether, then, you think that such a man would not devote himself to the body, but would, so far as he was able, turn away from the body and concern himself with the soul?

Simmias: Yes

Socrates: To begin with, then, it is clear that in such matters the philosopher, more than other men, separates the soul from communion with the body?

Simmias: It is. (64e-65a)[5](#)

Socrates then reasons that anyone who shuns the body would have to shun the senses as well, since the sense organs are bodily organs. This train of reasoning sets up the epistemological dichotomy and its underlying ontology: as body and soul are distinct, so then are the senses and reason, the apprehending faculties associated respectively with body and soul. Likewise, the objects apprehended by these faculties become dichotomous—the objects of human sense experience and things-in-themselves.

Would not that man do this [i.e., separate soul from body] most perfectly who approaches each thing, so far as possible, with the reason alone, not introducing sight into his reasoning nor dragging in any of the other senses along with his thinking, but who employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom? Is not this the man, Simmias, if anyone, to attain to the knowledge of reality?

That is true as true can be, Socrates, said Simmias (66a)

At this point in the dialogue Socrates has thus established the threefold dichotomy: body and soul; senses and reason; objects of human experience and things-in-themselves. As the traditional view of "Platonic metaphysics" would have it, these pairs are wholly disjunctive, but when the story of recollection is introduced, the dichotomies demand a closer look. The story of recollection reveals remarkable means of connecting the two dichotomous elements, the two realms of being. I hope to show that it also contains important clues about the role that images play in linking the two realms.

The story of recollection tells us that before the soul's embodiment or birth, it knew the realities. Upon birth it forgets these truths, and if we are to learn them at all, we must recollect them. Socrates tells us that various things in our experience can remind us of other things. For example, seeing the lyre can remind us of the one who plays it; seeing the cloak worn by a lover can remind us of our lover; seeing a picture of Simmias can remind us of Simmias.

All these examples show, then, that recollection is caused by like things and also by unlike things, do they not?

Yes.

And when one has a recollection of anything caused by like things, will he not also inevitably consider whether this recollection offers a perfect likeness of the thing recollected, or not?

Inevitably (74a).

When we perceive one thing, it calls to our minds some other thing. The item recalled can be different from and/or similar to—like and/or unlike—the item which stimulated its recall. Furthermore, Socrates tells us, the individual who recalls is then induced to analyze the recollection to see what relationship obtains between the thing recalled and the item that brought it to mind. In particular the subject evaluates the likeness or difference between the two. Socrates continues his questioning:

"Now see, said [Socrates], if this is true. We say there is such a thing as equality. I do not mean one piece of wood equal to another, or one stone to another, or anything of that sort, but something beyond that—equality itself. Shall we say there is such a thing, or not?"

"We shall say that there is," said Simmias, "most decidedly."

"And do we know what it is?"

"Certainly," said he.

"Whence did we derive the knowledge of it? Is it not from the things we were just speaking of? Did we not, by seeing equal pieces of wood or stones or other things, derive from them a knowledge of abstract equality, which is another thing? . . ." (74a-b).

What makes this passage remarkable is its claim that we can come to know the abstract realities from the objects of human experience in the process called recollection! By using our senses—in this case, sight—we can come to know something of things-in-themselves. By perceiving we are reminded of, and we recover, the realities our souls once knew. The objects of our experience and the things-in-themselves are both like and unlike, so we glimpse the realities insofar as they are similar to the images before us, and at the same time we recognize that the images before us are not the realities themselves, are unlike them in fundamental ways. Recollection thus provides the link between the two realms; senses and reason are linked by recollection since we rely on our senses in order to grasp what we might later reason about: the realities. And objects of experience and things-in-themselves are linked by recollection since we recall the things-in-themselves through the objects of our experience. Recollection is therefore what allows embodied souls to be integrated beings, and most importantly, recollection is what makes philosophy possible. We *can* have access to the things-in-themselves through our dim images of them in this realm.

But we have not yet fully discovered the power of images as a way to philosophical truth nor fully answered the question, Why not simply exercise the faculty of reason by the use of arguments? The missing link to the story lies in what the *Phaedo* tells us about human limitation. Within the two realm metaphysical scheme, the *Phaedo* places us squarely in one realm and outside the other. Socrates makes it clear that the human life is one of embodiment which necessarily limits the capacities of the soul, in particular the body limits the soul's access to things-in-themselves. There is strong evidence in the *Phaedo*, and in other dialogues as I shall show, that rather than being an escape from this embodied life, philosophy is a way of coping from within it. That is, philosophy is a way of addressing directly our human condition with courage and intelligence. The *Phaedo*, in this way, offers a radically different conception of philosophy than the traditional "Platonic" interpretation of it as purely rational

activity carried out beyond the human realm. The *Phaedo* offers a conception of philosophy as a human activity carried out within—and because of—our limitations.

Our first indication that philosophy might be the remedy for human limitation comes not from Socrates, but from Simmias. Simmias and Cebes each have objections to make in response to Socrates' three arguments for why they should believe that the soul is immortal. This is a critical juncture in the drama. Simmias and Cebes sit before a condemned man who will go to his death momentarily. He speaks of the immortality of the soul, literally on his deathbed, in response to the young men's challenge to the fearless manner in which he faces his fate (63a-b). The young men realize that to bring objections to Socrates' arguments will have frightful consequences if philosophy is not a match to meet those objections. If the issue cannot be settled as to the soul's immortality, then what Socrates' comrades in the jail cell will soon witness will be another event entirely. Simmias admits that both he and Cebes have wanted to ask a question, but were hesitant on account of Socrates' "present misfortune" (84d). Simmias therefore prefaces his objection with the following palliative:

I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do yourself, that it is either impossible or very difficult to acquire clear knowledge about these matters in this life. And yet he is a weakling who does not test in every way what is said about them and persevere until he is worn out by studying them on every side. For he must do one of two things; either he must learn or discover the truth about these matters, or if that is impossible, he must take whatever human doctrine is best and hardest to disprove and, embarking upon it as upon a raft, sail upon it through life in the midst of dangers, unless he can sail upon some stronger vessel, some divine revelation, and make his voyage more safely and securely. And so now I am not ashamed to ask questions, since you encourage me to do so, and I shall not have to blame myself hereafter for not saying now what I think (85c-d).

Simmias appropriately sets philosophy in the context of fundamental human limitation. Human life is carried out in rough waters where there is danger all around. We need beliefs and ideas to help us stay afloat, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to know which of those ideas are to be believed. We should cling to that vessel which serves us best, that belief which best stands the test of dialectic and, holding fast to it, make our way the best we can. To question, as Simmias is doing, is to take courage in this difficult situation, and philosophy is the means by which we test the worthiness of our own vessels and perhaps leave them behind when we have found sturdier craft. In any case, our plight is risky and uncertain, and philosophy provides the life raft. The *Phaedo* thus poignantly portrays the fundamental conflict between the limits of human knowledge and the human desire for answers. Both Socrates and Plato are confronted with the task of urging others to engage in philosophical inquiry when there is little probability that in this life we should find answers to our deepest questions.

Another passage in the dialogue reinforces the same profound difficulty, and again recommends philosophy as the courageous choice in the midst of uncertainty. Properly steeled up with philosophy on their side, Simmias and Cebes go ahead and make their objections, which appear to present formidable challenges to Socrates' arguments. Recalling what is at stake here for the condemned Socrates if the soul proves not to be immortal, it becomes clear that those witnessing the drama might experience anxiety with the introduction of these challenges to Socrates' arguments, and they need reassurance to assuage their anxiety.

Phaedo: Now all of us, as we remarked to one another afterwards, were very uncomfortable when we heard what [Cebes and Simmias] said; for we had been thoroughly convinced by the previous argument, and now they seemed to be throwing us again into confusion and distrust, not only in respect to the past discussion but also with regard to any future one. They made us fear that our

judgment was worthless or that no certainty could be attained in these matters.

Echecrates: By the gods, Phaedo, I sympathize with you; for I myself after listening to you am inclined to ask myself: "What argument shall we believe henceforth? For the argument of Socrates was perfectly convincing, and now it has fallen to discredit." . . .

Phaedo: Echecrates, I have often wondered at Socrates, but never did I admire him more than then. That he had an answer ready was perhaps to be expected; but what astonished me more about him was, first, the pleasant, gentle, and respectful manner in which he listened to the young men's criticisms, secondly his quick sense of the effect their words had upon us, and lastly, the skill with which he cured us, and as it were, recalled us from our flight and defeat and made us face about and follow him and join in his examination of the argument.

Echecrates: How did he do it?

Phaedo: I will tell you. . .(88b-89b).

Notice that this passage marks an abrupt change of scene in the drama. Plato moves away from the jail cell momentarily, back to the original scene in which Phaedo is telling the story to Echecrates. Not only do those witnessing the action first hand in the jail cell need reassurance, but so does Echecrates who is hearing the story of Socrates' final hours from Phaedo's recounting. The reader is therefore also provided with a respite from *her* anxiety by Plato's having created this interlude. The reader who observes both of those scenes suffers the same anxiety and benefits likewise from reassurance. We are all in need of reassurance because of the human anxiety suffered when our epistemological limitations confront our desire to know. In this case the knowing in question is mortally important. Plato and Socrates provide reassurance by way of a break from the pursuit at hand, a brief hiatus that provides time to restore our faith in philosophy.

Socrates' cure for the anxiety of the interlocutors amounts to an admonishment never to tire of the pursuit of an argument and, furthermore, when philosophy fails, never to blame the argument, but to see the failing in ourselves.

[L]et us guard against a danger. . . The danger of becoming misologists or haters of argument, said he, as people become misanthropists or haters of man; for no worse evil can happen to a man than to hate argument. Misology and misanthropy arise from similar causes. For misanthropy arises from trusting someone implicitly without sufficient knowledge. You think the man is perfectly true and sound and trustworthy, and afterwards you find him base and false. Then you have the same experience with another person. By the time this has happened to a man a good many times, especially if it happens among those whom he might regard as his nearest and dearest friends, he ends by being in continual quarrels and by hating everybody and thinking there is nothing sound in anyone at all. . . The similarity [between men and arguments] lies in this: when a man without proper knowledge concerning arguments has confidence in the truth of an argument and afterwards thinks that it is false, whether it really is so or not, and this happens again and again; then you know, those men especially who have spent their time in disputation come to believe that they are the wisest of men and that they alone have discovered that there is nothing sound or sure in anything, whether argument or anything else... First then, said he, let us be on our guard against this, and let us not admit into our souls the notion that there is no soundness in arguments at all. Let us far rather assume that we ourselves are not yet in sound condition and that we must strive manfully and

eagerly to become so, you and the others for the sake of all your future life, and I because of my impending death. . .(89c-91a)

One might object that Socrates is saying exactly the opposite of what I want to argue, since he claims that our faith ought to remain in argument. True enough, but Socrates' view implies that arguments will necessarily fail us. What comes through strongly in these passages is again the fundamental limitation of human beings. Pure argumentation and pure reason are not viable avenues for philosophical enlightenment. Philosophical inquiry will sometimes disappoint us.⁶ We ought not, nevertheless, let that deter us from the life of philosophy. Socrates' cure for anxiety, while assuring us that we ought to remain faithful to philosophy, at the same time warns us of our limitations.

The language used by the interlocutors in *Phaedo* clearly indicates that Socrates and the two young Thebans operate under the shared presumption of human limitation. The separation of body and soul practiced by the philosopher is always carried out "as far as he is able" and "so far as is possible." The philosopher, "if anyone" would be the one to ascend to the realities through reason alone. And Simmias' preface to his objection states explicitly that he and Socrates share the view that it is either impossible or very difficult to acquire clear knowledge. If the *Phaedo* tells us to look to philosophy for preservation in the seas of uncertainty, it would seem to be important to look at how philosophy is carried out in this dialogue. In particular, it is worth inquiring whether philosophy is carried out by pure argumentation, that is, by an appeal to reason separate from other faculties. Clearly this is not the case.

Near the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates describes his discussion of the soul and the afterlife as telling stories (61e), and he prefaces his defense that he is right not to grieve at death by saying that he hopes to go to a good fate, "though I should not dare to assert this positively; but I would assert as positively as anything about such matters that I am going to gods who are good masters" (63c). The middle portion of the dialogue contains what might be called "arguments" for the immortality of the soul—and Socrates' response to objections to those arguments—but these arguments are not enough to convey what really lies at the heart of Socrates' belief that the soul is immortal: the necessity of becoming "as good and wise as possible" (107d). The arguments for the immortality of the soul are supplemented by more images and stories. Death can not simply be separation of body and soul. If only that, death would be an escape and "a boon to the wicked" (107c). The final justice meted out to good and bad souls appears to be more important in some ways than the mere immortality of the soul. Socrates completes the dialogue with a description of the journey of the soul in the afterlife and of the worlds it might come to inhabit. Finally, regarding the truth of the story Socrates has told about the world and the fate of the soul, his final words on the subject are again about human risk and uncertainty:

Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while. (114d)

None of what Socrates contributes to this dialogue would seem to be an appeal to pure reason or rational argumentation. He presents ancient stories and myths, and he presents them tenuously in keeping with his commitment to human limitation. Furthermore, what are the most likely candidates for pure argumentation in this dialogue—the "proofs" for the immortality of the soul—are flanked by disclaimers as to their demonstrative truth, and are in need of supplemental stories that supply essential elements of Socrates' view.

The objections made by the two young men each takes the form of an image. Simmias likens the soul to a harmony and the body to a lyre. He asks why, if when the lyre is destroyed so is the harmony, would not the soul too be destroyed when the body is destroyed. Cebes uses the image of the weaver and his cloak. Perhaps, he argues, the soul is long lived, but not immortal. Then, like the old weaver who has outlived several of his cloaks but dies and leaves one in particular behind him, the soul outlives several bodies, but degenerates continually, and one body is bound to be its last. The man would be foolish, therefore, who went to his death assured that his soul would live on (87b-88b). Plato draws our attention to the self-conscious choice of the use of images when he has Cebes say that, like Simmias, he too is in need of an image in order to express his objection. Simmias and Cebes are perhaps among the most intelligent, most earnest, and most philosophically inclined of all the interlocutors. Surely the manner in which they carry out their philosophical conversation is important. That the entire dialogue argues strenuously two points—that we ought to maintain faith in philosophy and that humans are fundamentally limited—and that it has its two interlocutors making their most acute philosophical points through images has something important to say to us. Combined with Plato's consistent use of image throughout the dialogues, we cannot ignore them.

The Evidence of Other Dialogues

These views of human beings as inherently limited, of philosophy as the appropriate medium for human inquiry due to our limitations, and the need for philosophy to be carried out to some extent through images, are pervasive in the corpus. I do not intend here to provide an exhaustive treatment of all instances of discussions about philosophy and the use of images;⁷ rather I mean to present enough evidence to establish that these ideas appear frequently in the dialogues and are fundamental to Plato's project. In addition to the *Phaedo* there are equally powerful discussions of the limits of human reason and powerful suggestions that philosophy, working through images, is the best way to address those limitations. The *Apology* provides testimony that human limitation is fundamental to Plato's project insofar as it sets out in the clearest fashion the meaning of Socratic ignorance. Socrates remains outstanding among other humans because he recognizes his ignorance while others do not recognize theirs. What makes Socratic ignorance "Socratic" therefore is nothing that mitigates the ignorance. What makes Socratic ignorance "Socratic" is open and explicit recognition of the ignorance itself—the laying claim to that ignorance, which we know is a necessary propaedeutic for philosophy.⁸ Socratic ignorance is therefore a philosophical stance that is emblematic of the universal human condition since all humans are alike in their ignorance, but Socratic ignorance is also representative of an ideal for humans who might aspire to philosophize.

The *Symposium* addresses the human aspiration to philosophize, an aspiration driven by eros. At the same time, *Symposium* portrays our limitations as humans, and it can be read as a dialogue that attempts to bridge the gulf between human ignorance and pure, enlightened wisdom. The language of Diotima's speech, for example, is filled with references to mediation, to finding a middle path, to navigating between two realms, and of the limited being who wants nonetheless to ascend to truth.⁹ In one brief but telling passage Diotima responds to one of Socrates' questions:

"Who then, Diotima," I asked, "are the lovers of wisdom, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?"

"Why, a child could tell by this time," she answered, "that they are the intermediate sort, and amongst these also is Eros. For wisdom has to do with the fairest things, and Eros is a love directed

to what is fair; so that Eros must needs be a friend of wisdom, and, as such, must be between wise and ignorant" (204a-b).[10](#)

Eros, in his capacity as lover of wisdom—as philosopher—is of the intermediate type between wisdom and ignorance. The language here would seem to preclude reading Diotima's speech as simply a method of ascent that was, strictly speaking, recommended and possible for humans. The language is therefore consistent with a view of humans as fundamentally limited, and Diotima puts forward philosophy as the practice reserved for those who love wisdom and the beautiful, but who do not possess them. And we know, too, that Diotima's method of teaching Socrates about eros is through an image: the ladder of ascent.

Drew Hyland argues that the comic and tragic elements of the *Symposium* portray human limitation through their depiction of Eros.[11](#) We can see both the humour and the tragedy of our fundamental incompleteness in Aristophanes' speech, for example. While the images conjured up by Aristophanes' story allow us to laugh at ourselves, on reflection, the details of the myth tell a different story:

First, all humans, from the first generation of split people on, are fated to our situation as erotic: incomplete and experiencing that incompleteness. That situation is not one we can control, nor is it something for which we are directly responsible: it is the consequence of the "original sin" of our forebears. Moreover, second, part of what we are fated to is that, as erotic beings, we are bound to strive to overcome the incompleteness we experience. That is precisely what the energy of eros is. Third, the nature of this erotic striving is such that it will never be finally successful.[12](#)

What Hyland refers to as our incompleteness is rooted in our limitations as humans. We lack the objects of our erotic impulse, one of which is wisdom.

The *Phaedrus* also tells the tale of erotic impulses toward wisdom. It is further linked to the *Symposium* insofar as it contains a myth that has many similarities to Diotima's ladder. The story of the charioteer, like Diotima's ladder, tells the tale of the lover ascending to the heights. Oddly enough, though, *Phaedrus* also relies on recollection and so has important links to the *Phaedo*. Socrates begins his story of the charioteer by saying that he cannot give a direct account of the nature of the soul, but will instead provide an image. He pays particular attention to the manner in which the soul can and should be discussed, claiming that it should not be through discourse, but through image:

Concerning the immortality of the soul this is enough; but about its form we must speak in the following manner. To tell what it really is would be a matter of utterly superhuman and long discourse, but it is within human power to describe it briefly in an image; let us therefore speak in that way (246a).[13](#)

To make images is to do a human thing. The distinction between godly or superhuman discourse and human image-making serves as a frontispiece to the image of the charioteer and his team of horses which represents the human soul. The soul can sprout wings that help it to soar to the gods' dwelling place and to glimpse the realities there. While the gods clearly make the ascent to the realities and dwell there, seeing reality, the plight for humans is quite different. "Such is the life of the gods; but of the other souls, that which best follows after God and is most like him, raises the head of the charioteer up into the outer region and is carried round in the revolution, troubled by the horses and hardly beholding the realities" (248a).[14](#) The image of the charioteer who is trying to control the two horses—one noble, the other troublesome—depicts a human attempt at ascent to the realities, entities which Socrates clearly demarcates as lying beyond human capacity. The horses continue to give humans

trouble, even in the best of human circumstances, bound as we are beneath the gods. Thus the *Phaedrus* underscores our limitation.

But just when Socrates introduces human limitation into the myth of the afterlife, he introduces recollection, which provides a strong link to passages in the *Phaedo* that portray the importance of images for philosophy. An entire menagerie of souls are introduced into the myth of the afterlife, differentiated and hierarchically arranged by the degree to which each soul has glimpsed the realities. Clearly there are several types of souls beyond any human, i.e., embodied, souls (248a-c), but the best type of human soul is the soul of a philosopher or a lover of beauty, and all human souls glimpse what they once knew by means of recollection (249b).

[I]t is not easy for all souls to gain from earthly things a recollection of those realities, either for those which had but a brief view of them at that earlier time, or for those which, after falling to earth, were so unfortunate as to be turned toward unrighteousness through some evil communications and to have forgotten the holy sights they once saw. Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of them; but these when they see here any likeness of the things of that other world, are stricken with amazement and can no longer control themselves; but they do not understand their condition, because they do not clearly perceive. Now in the earthly copies of justice and temperance and the other ideas which are precious to souls there is no light, but only a few, approaching the images through the darkling organs of sense, behold in them the nature of that which they imitate, and these few do this with difficulty. (249e-250b)

The earthly likenesses are dim compared to the realities, but are dim reminders nonetheless. Human access to the realities comes from things in this world that are images of the realities. What is needed is simply the right use of the aids of recollection (249c). Furthermore, the philosopher' vision—a vision of objects of human experience that reveal dim glimpses of reality—will be difficult and rare. In this manner the *Phaedrus* echoes elements of *Phaedo*.

The *Timaeus* sets up the world of human experience as an image of some other world, specifically claiming that this world is a copy of some other world after which it is patterned. Timaeus then plays on the etymological link between likenesses as an ontological entity and likelihood as an epistemological category, arguing that since humans must deal with an image or copy we must accept that our knowledge will only be likely.

Again, if these premises be granted, it is wholly necessary that this Cosmos should be a Copy of something... Wherefore, Socrates, if in our treatment of a great host of matters regarding the Gods and the generation of the Universe we prove unable to give accounts that are always in all respects self-consistent and perfectly exact, be not thou surprised; rather we should be content if we can furnish accounts that are inferior to none in likelihood remembering that both I who speak and you who judge are but human creatures, so that it becomes us to accept the likely account of these matters and forbear to search beyond it (29b-d).[15](#)

Since what we experience as humans is an image of some other reality, then it would seem to be of paramount importance both to recognize that fact and to understand the difference between the images and the original. Two of the necessary conditions for turning toward the things-in-themselves is recognizing their existence and understanding (albeit in a limited capacity) their difference from what we sense and experience. As limited beings we might use one to ascend to the other, but we cannot confuse the two. We cannot change our finite, limited existence, but we must still be aware of and turned toward what lies beyond. The *Euthyphro*, *Theaetetus*, and *Meno* portray interlocutors who confuse giving examples with giving definitions. This amounts to confusing

objects of human experience with the realities. The mistake of confusing examples and definitions that Euthyphro, Theaetetus, and Meno make is therefore akin to the confusion of the cave dwellers in the *Republic*. They too confuse what they sense and experience with the realities that cause them. Their bondage lies metaphorically in their chains, but points to their inability to be turned toward something of whose existence they are yet unaware.

The *Republic* is perhaps the dialogue singly most responsible for the condemnatory view of images and image-making imputed to Plato.¹⁶ Ironically, it is also the source of the most vivid and memorable images Plato created. In addition to its description of the cave and its unfortunate denizens, the dialogue in its entirety is predicated on the analogy between the justice in the city and justice in the soul. And even further, this analogy is itself introduced by way of yet another image:

Since we are not clever persons, I think we should employ the method of search that we should use if we, with not very keen vision, were bidden to read small letters from a distance, and then someone had observed that these same letters exist elsewhere larger and on a larger surface. We should have accounted it a godsend, I fancy, to be allowed to read those letters first, and then examine the smaller, if they are the same.

Quite so, said Adeimantus; but what analogy to this do you detect in the inquiry about justice?

I will tell you, I said: there is a justice of one man, we say, and, I suppose, also of an entire city? ... Is not the city larger than the man? ... Then, perhaps there would be more justice in the larger object and more easy to apprehend (368d-e).

The dim vision of the investigating party is emblematic of our human ignorance. Our ignorance necessitates that we look to one image which is more easily seen or understood in order to understand another. The entire method of the *Republic*, in its effort to see justice in the soul, is based on looking at likenesses in order to learn about the object of inquiry.

The simile of the sun is likewise intended to help the interlocutors understand the form of Good by way of another powerful image. Socrates puts off discussing the nature of the Good directly because he is not presently up to the task. Instead he offers "what seems to be the offspring of the good and most nearly made in its likeness (506e). We are left to wonder whether Socrates, or any embodied being, is up to the task, and whether the image of the sun is therefore the most philosophically appropriate means for helping the young men understand the nature of the Good after all.

Images play another important role in the *Republic*. Near the end of Book IX, Glaucon comes to understand the purpose of the images Socrates has drawn, the image of the ideal city and the corresponding soul.

"I understand," [Glaucon] said, "You mean [the wise man] will [take part in politics] in the city whose foundation we have now gone through, the one that has its place in speeches, since I don't suppose it exists anywhere on earth."

"But in heaven," I said, "perhaps a pattern is laid up for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees. It doesn't make any difference whether it is or will be somewhere. For he would mind the things of this city alone, and of no other" (592a-b).¹⁷

The image of the just city is that to which the wise person looks when modelling his or her own soul. We model

our souls on the ideals as those ideals are represented in and through images. The images' imaginary status is immaterial for Socrates since as long as there is the ideal image to gaze at, the wise person's attention can be fixed and focused, and the just life can still be glimpsed. Glaucon's replies to Socrates' claim that the image of the city is a model to look at for the philosopher, "It is likely" an insignificant end to Book IX.

The Republic, that behemoth work of education, learning, politics, arete, and the role of the philosopher, is the single largest source of the most intricate and beautiful images. And it, too, portrays images as appropriate vehicles for important philosophical endeavours. Given these brief but highly significant examples from the *Republic*, it is difficult to imagine taking at simple face-value the criticisms of images and image-makers that occur in that dialogue. Plainly, Socrates sees images as not only legitimate and useful, but as the human manner of proceeding philosophically.[18](#)

In a consistent manner, therefore the dialogues portray a decided emphasis on the limitations of humans. In the face of our limitation, the dialogues urge the interlocutors and the reader to philosophize and to take up the philosophical life. If we are to take that urging seriously, then there must be an avenue to philosophical insight open to limited beings such as ourselves. What that avenue might be lies right before our eyes, instantiated in the dialogues themselves: not merely arguments to higher truths, but images that attract our gaze and turn us toward philosophy.

The Philosophical Effect of Images and Image-Making

When we perceive images of all kinds, even images of images created by the poet, painter, or image-maker in general, we experience the same phenomena. When we see images and recognize them as such, we see similarity and dissimilarity (Cf. *Phaedo*, 76a). It is the image's very unlikeness to its intended object—its otherness—that stimulates comparison. This makes it interesting, captivating. We look also for the basic similarity that makes the image an image of something. We then move dialectically between the two seeing further similarities and dissimilarities along the way. We are moved to consider the qualities of the image, what the corresponding qualities of the original must be, why there is this difference, what the significance of the difference is, and how the unlike could be like. Real learning comes from the deeper exploration of images (metaphors, analogies, myths) in which the several details of image and original are compared. Clearer and detailed pictures emerge from which one can gain complex understanding of both objects under view.

It is no accident that the movement here between image and original resembles basic dialectic movement. On one level, Socrates practices dialectic through question and answer and recommends it to his interlocutors in an effort to help them to ascend to higher truths. Likewise the dialectic that Plato creates with respect to his readers requires parallel cognitive movement. The reader moves forward and backward—spatially and temporally—repeatedly through the text while making sense out of it. She also is attracted and repelled at various stages of dealing with what the text might reveal about her. The way of philosophy—whether through question or image—is lateral and at the same time vertical, upward through struggle.

The phenomenology of images resembles dialectic in another important manner. Just as dialectic necessitates that learning has as its source the learning subject and not an external authority (as deductive argument might), so our viewing and learning from images necessitates this as well.[19](#) Neither is an image an exact likeness of its original nor are its differences from the original plainly obvious. The richness of an image, and therefore its philosophical value, are appreciated on reflection. We must work with the image, turn it over in our minds, see it from many

perspectives—some of them not our usual perspectives—and we must think about what the image is and what it is not.

Let us look at one example of an image and its original. Late in the *Symposium*, the drunken Alcibiades relates the tale of his failed seduction of Socrates. He tells the assembled party that he will create an image of Socrates in order to praise him.

[Socrates] is likest to the Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries' shops; those, I mean, which our craftsmen make with pipes or flutes in their hands: when their two halves are pulled open, they are found to contain images of gods (215a-b).[20](#)

As Alcibiades draws out the details of this simple image, we see both similarity and difference. Like the Satyr, Socrates has bulging eyes and a pushed in nose; but unlike Silenus, Socrates has beauty as well. Like the Satyr, Socrates is a figure who associates himself with erotic objects—young, beautiful men; but unlike the Satyr, as Alcibiades' failure to lure him into bed indicates, Socrates' erotic liaisons are not indulged through sexual activity. Like Marsyas, Socrates has great power to enchant his listeners, although not with a flute, but rather with his words. We learn from this image that Socrates' external appearance belies what is inside, that he is complex. We learn that his grotesque face contrasts with the beauty of his soul. We learn that The Many can be deceived if they fail to open him up to see what is inside.

In a brief space, this simple image manages to convey a detailed and complex picture of Socrates. It is, therefore, not at all like the image-making Socrates describes flippantly in the *Republic* as walking around holding up a mirror to everything (596d-e). A mirror of Socrates would tell us less than this rich image. Recall that an image has both likeness and unlikeness. A mirror simply reflects exactly what is put before it, whereas an image, properly constructed, can induce us to see a richness in the objects before us and to gain insight into the object that might not be plainly evident. Is this enough for us to hold out hope, therefore, that images can lead to truth? Yes. Alcibiades says as much, in fact, just before introducing the image cited above:

The way I shall take, gentlemen, in my praise of Socrates, is by similitudes. Probably he will think I do this for derision; but I choose my similitude for the sake of truth, not of ridicule (215a).[21](#)

That images lead to truth is argued by Jean-Francois Mattei in his treatment of myth in the dialogues.[22](#) Images are an integral part of philosophy, Mattei argues, and reason cannot be the sole avenue open for philosophical enlightenment. Beginning with the question, "Why does Plato reintroduce [myth] regularly in a serious contemplative mood at every decisive stage of his reflections?"[23](#) Mattei argues that the images provided through myth, contrary to the common view that they are inferior to logico-deductive argument, are complementary to it and necessary to philosophical insight. Myth reveals "in iconic form the initial truth of the world"[24](#) which Mattei calls the Theater of Ideas. Mattei contrasts the step-by-step verification that comprises logical reasoning with the instantaneous vision offered by myth, and he argues that mythical images complete a rich philosophical process. Myth suspends the drama momentarily and thus arrests the action of dialectic. "The suspension of human action is the necessary condition of contemplation."[25](#) At junctures of suspended action where myth is introduced, the dialogues create points of contemplation, vision, and cessation of dialectic. Dialectic returns later to reconstruct the vision of myth seen in the inner theater of each soul at these points. Philosophy consists in this synthesis of mythic vision and dialectic examination.

Broadening philosophy to include images in a related manner, Gerald Press argues that the kind of knowledge to be found in the Platonic dialogues is best understood to be vision, that is *theoria*, rather than *episteme*.[26](#)

By *theoria* or vision I mean something that is in some way the opposite of the kind of knowledge that has been the focus of much Western philosophy since Aristotle. For one thing, it refers to a mental image or seeing rather than to a proposition or set of propositions.[27](#)

Press reasons that the knowledge Plato means to give is a "showing rather than a telling how things are."[28](#) Such a conception of knowledge in the Platonic dialogues, Press argues, allows us to find a *tertium quid* between the traditional dichotomies that lay the ground for battles of interpreting Plato: skeptic or dogmatist, philosopher or dramatist. And against the two real metaphysical views attributed to Plato, Press says:

The picture is this: the material, changing imperfect, temporal, sensible so-called "real" world is that in and through which we gain enrapturing intellectual glimpses of an immaterial, unchanging, perfect, eternal, purely thinkable ideal world. Frustratingly, the ideal remains beyond our grasp just because we live in time and space; wherefore we must keep on striving, inquiring for it. Our only access to it in this life is through dialogue, but every dialogue is a conversation with a real, not an ideal, interlocutor and therefore is partial, from a particular point of view or orientation, and subject to the limitations and specificities of time, place, and interlocutor.[29](#)

If the Platonic dialogues urge the use of images in the service of good philosophy, then what can be concluded about the traditional view of "Platonic metaphysics"? That there are two distinct realms—of things-in-themselves and of the objects of human experience—seems clear enough. But that pure reason, leading to insight into the forms, is to be identified with philosophy, is not supported by the texts. Reason alone as an avenue to enlightenment is not a possibility for humans. Our re-vision of the metaphysics that the dialogues support must include philosophy as the very tool necessary for limited, embodied persons. Philosophy mediates between the two realms for those beings necessitated to dwell in one alone. In this capacity, philosophy certainly includes arguments, but it relies as well on images in the form of myth, analogy, metaphor, and the like. Pure reason is left to the gods; philosophy is left to humans.

A renewed look at Plato's metaphysics reveals surprising results. Even the forms—the eternal, unchanging bearers of reality—and the disembodied rationality that can grasp the forms are themselves images.[30](#) It has perhaps escaped our notice that even these stories that are spun throughout the dialogue are imagistic, and what has traditionally passed for Plato's metaphysics and his epistemology are themselves comprised of images. We have perhaps neglected to see that even these things called "forms" take shape in our imagination in ways other than their ascribed reality. They are meant to have no physical manifestation and yet they are presented to us and are taken up into our cognition as shapes, forms. Furthermore, we must imagine another world beyond our own, this realm of the things-in-themselves, this reality which is different from our lived experience, and we must construct it from our fancy or imagination, furnish it with conceptions drawn from our own limited experience. And yet Plato expects us truly to have some access to this reality from the images he creates and from the images he compels us to create for ourselves.

Ultimately, all of Plato's images are addressed to an audience firmly, and necessarily, grounded in human phenomena and are meant to turn us toward philosophy. Does this imply that ultimately we are only relegated to images? Perhaps yes. But fortunately we have philosophy. If we take seriously that this world is a mere image of the reality it imitates, then indeed we must forever deal in images. It is the human lot.[31](#)

We might now have a bit more insight into Plato's use of images. He is providing the link for limited humans to the realities. Just as looking at two equal stones can help us to recollect the reality of equality itself, so also other perceptions and images can aid in our recalling many other truths. Imperfect as this is, and even risky as it is, this

is the avenue open for embodied beings such as ourselves. Plato faces the task of urging us to philosophy when he knows that we can only practice it as the limited beings that we are. How do you urge one to philosophy in the face of the guarantee that arguments will fail? Knowing the power of images and image-making, Plato is induced to choose them as an appropriate medium to move us in certain directions. Plato is infamous for "his" critique of poets and image-makers. Yet he is the poet and image-maker extraordinaire. While he puts warnings about the use of these devices in the mouths of his interlocutors, at the same time he places those very devices alongside the warnings. A full understanding of the dialogues cannot overlook this fact.

I wish to return to the epigrams that frame this essay. The first, from the *Sophist*, seems to warn us away from resemblances by evoking a sense of danger. The tamest of animals, the dog, might very well look to us like the wildest, the wolf. Mistaking one for the other could well have dire consequences. The second epigram, from the *Timaeus*, praises our vision which is responsible for philosophy "in all its range, than which no greater boon ever has come or will come, by divine bestowal, unto the race of mortals." There would appear to be some tension between the meaning of the two passages. On the one hand, we put ourselves in danger if our vision is not keen enough to distinguish between like things, the dog and the wolf. And on the other hand, our vision, a gift from the gods, is of the greatest benefit to us and has procured philosophy into our midst. I hope that my argument has shown that these two claims are not truly contradictory; instead they convey the essence of the dialogues' presentation of vision and image. Images and vision are at the same time risky and of great benefit to us. It is our vision that casts our gaze ultimately toward philosophy, but it is also our vision that can drag us down into the mire. What accounts for the difference between these two activities? The objects of our gaze. Plato's dialogues provide the kinds of resemblances that humans need in order to steer clear of danger, the images that cast our eyes toward philosophy.

Epi-Logos

I began this paper asking why Plato does not rely on pure rational argumentation in his own philosophical work. Arguments, by their very nature argue toward a conclusion. Again, I do not claim that the dialogues are void of any positive philosophical content; nevertheless the dialogues, while containing arguments, do not themselves work toward conclusions in the way we expect philosophical arguments to do. The dialogues never give us an unambiguous logos, an account, an answer to the "What is X?" questions posed in them. What the dialogues *do* give us, consistently and often is Socrates' commitment to stories, myths, and images.

Many of the devices whose function I have already discussed in other terms, can also be conceived in terms of Plato's use of images. For example, we saw that with irony, in order for the reader to understand the irony as ironic, she must first have seen herself as different from the interlocutor. On further reflection, because the irony was about the interlocutor's mistaken self-image, about the inconsistency between the image of the interlocutor seen by the reader and the image of the interlocutor seen by himself, the reader was forced to reconsider whether she suffered from the same difficulty and therefore whether she was truly as different from the interlocutor as she thought. The reader sees two images of the interlocutor, and if all goes well, must also confront the possible double image of herself (image and self-image). The movement of the reader in this process mimics that of our general movement in learning from images: we first see an image's difference then its similarity to its object, and we move dialectically between the two.


In a related manner, Plato's device of character portrayal involves the creation of images. Plato draws these images and sometimes guides our perception of them by his use of names. Each character portrayal is a fragment

of a life, portraying the essence of that life, and perhaps of the consequences—good or ill—of living that life. Each character is a portrait of an individual or a type, and can be used by Plato to say something about how we might want to draw our own characters. Transformation is possible when we are able to see images of ourselves in these characters. Looking back and forth from the characters to ourselves, seeing like and unlike, we make assessments and can be moved to become less like some characters and more like others.


The dramatic form of the dialogues is a holistic way of drawing images. Each dialogue is an image of philosophical conversation and of the Socratic or philosophic life. Plato's image of the philosophical life draws us into it, in both the senses of pulling us into that life and painting us into it. In general, the role of images and image-making helps us to see the possibility for new, better selves. We are able to imagine a possible life for ourselves which is not yet realized, and to turn toward that life.


If Plato's entire philosophical project is to turn us toward the philosophical life, he does not give us an argument whose conclusion is that. Being the limited creatures that we are, we cannot be turned by logos alone. Plato must therefore choose to enter into another kind of relationship with us, one that accesses our souls more powerfully. He turns us toward the philosophical life through all of these devices that we tend to call literary. We need these images of ourselves, of what we could become, and what the philosophical life has to offer in order to be turned. We see in several dialogues that the tools of the poets and image-makers can be corrupting influences on the soul. They can be corrupting because they are devices that go directly at the human soul, can penetrate it and make a deep and lasting imprint. But by the same token, since these devices can have access to the soul, we must believe they can also be capable of—and wielded for the sake of—good. That which is capable of the greatest evil must also be capable of the greatest good.³² The very danger of poetry and images are also at the heart of their effectiveness. And hence the risk and danger in human life: that we might fail to improve our souls and perhaps corrupt them. Plato is willing to take this risk and urges us to take it with him. He puts to use the devices of the poets and image-makers, harnessing their power in an effort to turn our souls toward philosophy.


Notes


1. There are many ways to think of images. As the few brief examples cited in the opening paragraph indicate, some images in the dialogues are what we call metaphors; some are more properly considered analogies; some of them are woven into the fabric of what we consider myths or allegories. In addition, some are what we might call "fictional" stories, and in some cases these images take the form of plastic artifacts. The Platonic texts support the grouping of these various instances under the single heading, "image." Plato's language surrounding the use of images includes, as well, various cognates of "image." I hope to point toward a link between these images and the role of vision in Platonic metaphysics by drawing attention to the further connection of "that which is seen" and "form". 


2. For dialogues that are plausible sources for this view, see e.g., *Phaedo*: 65a-67b, 66e, 79a; *Republic*: 509c-511e; 514a-518b; 597e-603b; *Sophist*: 234b-236e; 264c-266e; *Parmenides*: . My quarrel with the view, and my reason for placing "Platonic metaphysics" in quotation marks, is twofold: First there is a problem with imputing these views straightforwardly to Plato given the dialogue form, the variety of interlocutors who espouse them, and the complex dramatic circumstances that surround their utterance. Second, as I shall argue explicitly here, Plato's use of images makes these metaphysical claims, at the very least, worth a second look. While the dialogues are consistent with the possibility that Plato might be committed to the two-realm metaphysical view,


they are inconsistent with a view of philosophy as a purely rational enterprise. Although ultimately, my aim is not to understand Plato's view, but rather the function of images in the dialogues. 


3. My entire discussion of human limitation owes much to the work of Drew Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence*, (Albany: SUNY Press), 1995. 


4. In accordance with Mitchell Miller's notion of mimetic irony (*Plato's Parmenides: The Conversion of the Soul*, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 4 ff), a reading of the *Phaedo* might argue plausibly that the dualism that pervades the dialogue is Socrates' attempt to mirror his interlocutors' own beliefs, specifically Pythagorean dualism. If so, then a reading of the dialogue that refuses to impute such dualism to Plato is even more plausible. 


5. All quotations from *Phaedo* come from the Loeb edition, translated by Harold North Fowler, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1990. I have made some changes from standard English spellings to standard American spellings. 


6. This or something like this seems to be the upshot of Socrates' "failed" investigation with Theaetetus. 


7. My entire project implies that any reading of a dialogue would require detailed analysis of setting, language, character, language, and so forth. I can only refer, in a limited capacity, therefore, to various passages in dialogues without full treatment of them. 


8. See also *Meno*, 84a-b; *Theaetetus*, 210c. 


9. This position is argued by Luce Irigaray, "Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium, Diotima's Speech," translated by Eleanor H. Kuykendall, in *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 1994, pp. 181-195. 

10. Translated by W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Edition. I have used "lovers of wisdom" instead of Lamb's "followers of wisdom" and I have used "Eros" rather than "Love." 


11. As well as the comic elements. *Finitude and Transcendence*, Chapter 5, "The Whole Tragedy and Comedy of Philosophy," pp. 111-137. 

12. *Ibid.*, p. 118. 


13. Translated by Harold North Fowler, Loeb edition. All other citations are from this translation unless noted otherwise. I have substituted "image" for Fowler's "figure" in order to be consistent with all the translations of the same cognate elsewhere in this chapter. 

14. The description continues through 248b-d with language clearly stating that the charioteer will necessarily fail in his attempts to reach the realities. 


15. Translated by R.G. Bury, Loeb Classical edition. Cf. H. S. Thayer, "Plato on the Morality of Imagination," *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 30, June, 1977, pp. 594-618, esp. pp. 615-616. 


16. The *Republic* in its entirety is read by Drew Hyland as a treatment of human limitation and philosophy as the means to transcend that limitation, *Finitude and Transcendence*. See esp. Chs. 2 and 3. Hyland means as well for his reading of the *Republic* to create a perspective for reading the entire Platonic corpus. 


17. Translated by Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books), 1968. 


18. I might disappoint some readers by not offering my own interpretation of those passages in the text that are critical of images and image-making. That is not my point here. In addition to which, the secondary literature on the subject is already voluminous, including interpretations that "rescue" the images. I have offered, however, a better context for understanding those passages by providing strong evidence that the criticisms of images and image-making should not be accepted as "Plato's view" of images without careful consideration of Socrates' and Plato's own reliance on images and imagery in the service of good philosophy. 

19. This connection was suggested to me by Max Creswell. 


20. Loeb edition, translated by W.R.M. Lamb, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1991. 


21. Cf. Nussbaum, "The Speech of Alcibiades," in *Fragility of Goodness*, esp. pp. 184 ff. She addresses the issue directly of Alcibiades' claim to tell the truth but, contrary to my position here, Nussbaum sees the telling of truth through images as disallowed by philosophy. 


22. "The Theater of Myth in Plato," in Charles A. Griswold, Jr., *Platonic Readings/Platonic Writings*, (New York: Routledge), 1988, pp. 66-83. 


23. Ibid., p. 68. 


24. Ibid. 


25. Ibid., p. 70. 

26. *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 3(1995), 61-89. 


27. Ibid., p. 71 


28. Ibid., p. 72. 

29. Ibid., p. 81 

30. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.ix.12: "To say that the Forms are patterns, and that other things participate in them, is to use empty phrases and poetical metaphors." I agree with Aristotle wholeheartedly that these are poetical metaphors, but that they are empty phrases I cannot accept. 

31. I have been asked on several occasions whether I am making Plato out to be a Post-modern figure. Such a conjecture seems off the mark. To say that humans must always deal with images is not to say that there are nothing but images, i.e., there is no truth or reality. The purpose of images is to help us to ascend toward some

higher reality or truth. There is some reality to which we aspire and of which we can fall short. Indeed, it is embedded in what it means to be an image that it is an image *of something*. 

32. Cf. *Crito*, 44d; *Phaedo*, 107d; *Republic*, 605c-d, 607c. 

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