

University of Windsor
Scholarship at UWindsor

Critical Reflections


Essays of Significance & Critical Reflections
2016

Mar 11th, 2:00 PM - 2:30 PM

"On Γίγνων"

Faith D. McFadden
Duquesne University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/essaysofsignificance>

 Part of the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), [Classical Literature and Philology Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

McFadden, Faith D., ""On Γίγνων"" (2016). *Critical Reflections*. 7.
<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/essaysofsignificance/2016/cr2016/7>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Conference Proceedings at Scholarship at UWindsor. It has been accepted for inclusion in Critical Reflections by an authorized administrator of Scholarship at UWindsor. For more information, please contact scholarship@uwindsor.ca.

On Γίγνων:
Διάνοια και Ἀγάλματα as seen in Birth and Line Metaphors

“...γέννοι, διος ἐστί μαθών.”¹ The seventy-second line in Pindar’s second Pythian Ode, the enigmatic “Become as you are, having learned such a thing.” There exists about the enigmatic statement a certain sense of “self-birth” that is necessary for one to undergo. This short line from Pindar is not the only instance of becoming in the Greek world; a similar line was inscribed as one of the Delphic imperatives, “know thyself”.

It is no surprise, then, to see that the Platonic dialogues are also instantiated with the idea of “becoming”, γίγνομαι in the Greek. Just as γίγνομαι was a verb with a variety of meanings, so too is the idea of “becoming” in the Platonic dialogues. This idea of becoming ranges from the theory of recollection, as described most specifically in the *Meno*, to the use of birth metaphors as found in the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedrus*.

In his book, *Blindness and Reorientation*, philosopher C.D.C Reeve introduced another dialogue which makes use of the birth metaphor, the *Symposium*. And although this is in no way unusual or unexpected, the language of the birth metaphor differs sharply from that found in the *Theaetetus*, with few of the same words being used in birth metaphor as in the other. Indeed, the birth metaphors of the *Theaetetus* and the *Symposium*, as Reeve found it, are so different, they appear to be metaphors for two different kinds of birth. This idea of difference is supported in the fact that the “offspring” in the two dialogues is represented by two completely different words: in the *Symposium*, it is ἀγάλματα², whereas in the *Theaetetus*, it is διάνοια.

This paper will examine C.D.C Reeve’s use of ἀγάλματα as a birth metaphor in the dialogue the *Symposium*, and compare it to the other birth metaphors as found in the *Theaetetus*.

This paper posits that there is a difference betwixt the ἀγάλματα found in Socrates and the

¹ Loeb, 238

² C.D.C Reeve, *Blindness and Reorientation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

διάνοια with which certain men are found to be pregnant³. The relationship of ἀγάλματα and διάνοια are commensurate to the relationship of διάνοια and νοήσις as found in the hierarchy of understanding in the soul in the line metaphor of the *Republic*.

The paper will seek to prove this thesis by means of close philological and philosophical examination of the selection and use of words chosen in birth metaphors in the dialogues of first the *Theaetetus*, then in the *Symposium*.⁴ Having established the difference and connection of the birth metaphors in the prior dialogues, the paper will then move into a comparison of the birth metaphors to the line metaphor in the *Republic*.

The Theaetetus, "Ἡ Διάνοια"

Let us begin with an examination of the *Theaetetus*, the dialogue in which the birth metaphor is most obvious. It is in this dialogue that Socrates openly aligns himself with the midwife, stating not only that he is the son of the “noble and burly” midwife Phaenarete⁵, but also that he himself practices the art of midwifery. “Now my art of midwifery is just like theirs in most respects. The difference is that I attend men and not women, and that I watch over the labor of their souls, not of their bodies.”⁶

This is the most open of the metaphors, a mere surface analogy for the understanding of *Theaetetus*. The metaphor deepens as Socrates continues to state, “the most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.”⁷ This is Levett’s

³ As is described as offspring in the *Theaetetus*.

⁴ Although other dialogues will be mentioned to further elucidate a point, these will be the three main dialogues used.

⁵ *Theaetetus* 149a1-2

⁶ *Theaetetus* 150b7-c1

⁷ Levett’s *Theaetetus* 150c1-c4

translation, but Fowler’s translation of the passage describes that which is brought forth either as a phantom, or as “a real and genuine offspring.”⁸

Upon examining the Greek, one finds that the word which both Levett and Fowler translate as “real offspring” is in fact not the Greek for offspring at all. At no time in the dialogue is the word *παῖς* used, the common word for “child” in Greek. At select times in the dialogue⁹ is *ἔκγονος* used, an adjective taking the genitive which means “born of, sprung from”, or used substantively as a noun meaning “child”.

The word chosen by Plato, instead, to describe the “genuine offspring” or the “real truth” is the word *διάνοια*. This word in fact has no connotation of child or birth at all in the Greek lexicon; Liddle and Scott define *διάνοια* as a “thought, a purpose, an intelligence, an understanding”. And yet one cannot fault either translator; the metaphor of the midwife and the very verbiage of the sentence—the verb is *ἀποτίκτω*, to bring forth, to bring forth into the world—ensure that the connotation of *διάνοια* is that of “offspring”.

Through this examination, it becomes clear that that to which men give birth is ἡ *διάνοια* ἢ γόνιμόν τε καὶ ἀληθές—an offspring which is both true and genuine. This *διάνοια* is something *ἔκγονος τῆς ψυχῆς*, that is, born from the soul. That which Socrates delivers of pregnant men is therefore some sort of understanding or intelligence that is born directly from the soul, as opposed to that which is *εἶδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος*, a “phantom” and “false”. The grammar of the sentence opposes the two nouns, the understanding and the phantom, and their following descriptors, real and false respectively. Through this language, it was manifest that this is a birth metaphor for *διάνοια* in the Platonic dialogues. It is not the body of the man who is pregnant so much as it is his soul; but as the soul is encapsulated in the body, physical words of birth must be

⁸ Fowler’s *Theaetetus* 150c1-c4

⁹ For example, *Theaetetus* d1-d2

used to describe the birth of ideas—of δίανοια—in the soul. This δίανοια, being both real and true, is therefore linked to knowledge.

Reeve's Symposium, T' Ἀγάλματα

In chapter two of *Blindness and Reorientation*, philosopher C.D.C Reeve introduces another birth metaphor, the likes of which previously not seen in previous readings of the *Symposium*: the use of the word ἀγάλματα. He does not pay attention to the very clear birth metaphor given by Socrates in the *Symposium*¹⁰, but rather suggests that ἀγάλματα is a birth metaphor for Socrates himself.

The word is first used when Alcibiades enters the feast in the *Symposium*, upon which entrance he declares “Socrates is most like those silenuses sitting in the statuary shops, the ones the craftsmen manufacture, with pipes and flutes, but when opened in the middle, they turn out to have ἀγάλματα of the gods inside them” (215a7-b3).¹¹

The simile is rather an odd one, as there is no clear idea about the nature of a “silenus”, as there are no longer any ones extant.¹² What is clear enough to conclude, however, is that “as a silenus contained statues of the gods, so Socrates, too, contained things relevantly similar to them.”¹³

Having discussed the somewhat puzzling nature of the silenus, Reeve explores the use of the word ἀγάλματα, first giving the standard definition, “typically a figurative statue in honor of a god or—and more often in Plato—a figurative statue of any sort: the puppets that cast their shadows on the walls of the cave are ἀγάλματα (R.7, 517d7).¹⁴

¹⁰ *Symposium* 209a-e5

¹¹ Reeve, 20

¹² Reeve, 20

¹³ Reeve, 20

¹⁴ Reeve, 20.

Reeve returns to an analysis of the *Symposium* text, and it is revealed that these ἀγάλματα found in Socrates are “ἀγάλματα of virtue, and that they have the greatest reach—or rather, that they extend to everything that is appropriate for a man who intends to be fine and good to consider.” (221e1-222a6)¹⁵

From this conclusion, that ἀγάλματα are “ἀγάλματα of virtue”¹⁶, he draws another: that the ἀγάλματα are themselves to be seen as embryo-like entities”.¹⁷ He draws this conclusion from the verb choice of Alcibiades to describe Socrates, that he “teems” (216d7), the translation of γέμω. Γέμω is a verb which typically means “to be full” or “to be filled with”¹⁸, and Reeve links this meaning to the verb κύω, the verb “to conceive” or “to be pregnant with”.

From this series of word choices and definitions, Reeve concludes that it is a portrayal of Socrates “as a male pregnant with embryonic virtue”¹⁹. He solidifies this idea first by aligning it with “deep roots in Greek thinking about sexual reproduction”, that the “female serves only as an incubator from an embryo produced exclusively by a male”.²⁰ He also aligns this idea of male reproduction with Diotima, “when she portrays reproduction as involving pregnant males seeking females in whom to beget”.²¹

There is a twofold problem, however, which arises out of Reeve’s connotative translation and understanding of ἀγάλματα as a birth metaphor, and Socrates as a “pregnant male figure” in the *Symposium*. The first of these two problems centers on the *Theaetetus*. Reeve focuses on the *Phaedrus* and the *Alcibiades*, as well as the *Symposium*, to illustrate the idea that ἀγάλματα is “embryonic virtue” with which Socrates is pregnant. There is no mention of the *Theaetetus*, and

¹⁵ Reeve, 21

¹⁶ Reeve, 22

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid; Reeve cites this as being said by Apollo in a work by Aeschylus.

²¹ Reeve, 23.

if this is indeed a metaphor, as Reeve suggests, there is little explanation as to why there is no mention of the *Theaetetus* in his discussion. This is remarkably odd, in that the *Theaetetus* is the dialogue in which there is heavy use of the birth metaphor, as discussed above.

Moreover, Socrates states openly in the *Theaetetus* that midwives are those who have had children, as “human nature is too weak to acquire skill where it has no experience.”²² At the same time, those who are midwives must be “past child-bearing” as “women never practice as midwives while they are still conceiving and bearing children themselves.”²³ By aligning himself with the midwife and declaring his difference from them to be those whom he practices upon—men—and of what he delivers them—either phantoms or δίανοια—it is clear that Socrates at one time gave birth to his own δίανοια, but is past that “child-bearing” age, as he now acts as a midwife for other pregnant men.

This fact appears to go directly against the suggestion of Reeve that Socrates is a figure of a “male pregnant with embryonic virtue”, if his understanding of ἀγάλματα is correct. In fact, the *Theaetetus* makes quite the opposite point—that Socrates, while perhaps pregnant once, is no longer so. This troubles the Reeve understanding of ἀγάλματα quite seriously, for how could Socrates be pregnant with “embryonic virtue” while it is quite clearly stated that he can no longer give birth? If Reeve’s understanding of ἀγάλματα is correct, it would seem that either it or Socrates is impotent—both of which solutions seem ludicrous. How could “embryonic virtue” be impotent; how could the “wisest man” as proclaimed by the Delphic oracle, be impotent? Furthermore, ἀγάλματα is never found in the *Theaetetus*; Plato uses δίανοια as the ἔκγονος of men’s souls.

²² *Theaetetus* 149c2-c4

²³ *Theaetetus* 149 b6-8

There is a further—and perhaps more troubling—difficulty to Reeve’s understanding of ἀγάλματα as “embryonic virtue” in a pregnant Socrates. The word “ἀγάλματα” means “a statue in honor of a god”, with the specific meaning in Plato of “any figurative statue”.²⁴ Reeve kept that sense of the word in his choice translation of “embryo” which he states as “genuinely similar to figurative statues”.²⁵ What Reeve does not resolve so readily or persuasively is the use of the exact same word, ἀγάλματα, in the *Republic*’s metaphor of the cave.²⁶ Although he does indeed mention the usage, he resolves this simply it is this meaning of the word which “Alcibiades initially seems to have in mind”.

Reeve continues on to clarify the meaning of ἀγάλματα, but without exact or final resolution of this problem. It has been proved in the *Theaetetus* that Plato chooses his words with and for a definitive cause. Ergo, it throws into doubt that Plato could use at the same time ἀγάλματα to mean both “puppets” and “shadows” in the *Republic* and “embryonic virtue” as a birth metaphor in the *Symposium*. It is hard to believe that Socrates could be aligned with the things which cast shadows, as he is both a midwife of souls²⁷ and the “kind of gadfly” on the “great and noble horse”²⁸ of Athens, and of whom the Delphic oracle said “that no one was wiser.”²⁹

And yet although a close reading of the *Theaetetus* in light of Reeve’s suggestion of ἀγάλματα produces conflict, a closer reading reveals resolution, both for the problems found in the text of the *Theaetetus* itself and with the problems in Reeve’s suggestion as discussed above.

Let us return to the section of the *Theaetetus* which was so troublesome for both the *Theaetetus* and Reeve’s birth metaphor. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates states, “For one thing which

²⁴ The Middle Liddle and Scott

²⁵ Reeve, 22

²⁶ *Republic* 517d-7

²⁷ The *Theaetetus*

²⁸ *Apology* 30e

²⁹ *Apology* 21a7

I have in common with the ordinary midwives is that I myself am barren of wisdom.”³⁰ “The God...has forbidden me to procreate...I cannot claim as the child of my own soul any discovery worth the name of wisdom.”³¹ This appears to make it clear that Socrates has never had any *διάνοια* of his own, as the God has forbidden him procreation. And yet at the same time, as midwife to those men who are allowed to procreate, Socrates must have at one time given birth to such an offspring of understanding. For he also states that the duties of midwifery cannot be entrusted to anyone who has not experience what it is like to give birth, as “human nature is too weak to acquire skill where it has no experience.”³²

The paper questioned how this could be, as Socrates states two direct contraries within thirty lines of each other. The paper also questions how he could have *ἀγάλματα*, when it is nowhere mentioned in the *Theaetetus*. Perhaps both these questions can be answered in an understanding that, while both words belong to birth metaphors, there are two different levels to the kind of understanding that comes from the soul.

On διάνοια and ἀγάλματα

The idea that *διάνοια* and *ἀγάλματα* are two different instantiations of that which can be *ἔκγονος τῆς ψυχῆς* is a solution, in fact, readily acceptable. For if one accepts that both of these things can be born from the soul, the problems in both the *Theaetetus* and with Reeve’s suggested birth metaphor are solved.

It is very clear in the *Theaetetus* that Socrates is no longer able to give birth to *διάνοια*; indeed, that he does not have “any wise invention, the offspring born of [his] own soul.”³³ That is

³⁰ *Theaetetus* 150c4-c5

³¹ *Theaetetus* 150c9-d2

³² *Theaetetus* 149c2-c3

³³ *Theaetetus* 150d1-d2

it say, he can no longer have any *διάνοια*; he has not had *διάνοια* ἔκγονος τῆς ψυχῆς. But he *must* have had some sort of understanding at one point, otherwise he could not act as a midwife.

It is at this point the Reeve suggestion of *ἀγάλματα* is introduced. Before the introduction of this suggested birth metaphor as Socrates pregnant with *ἀγάλματα*, one reads the *Theaetetus* with ἡ *διάνοια* as the sole genuine and true thing which can be born of the soul. If Reeve is correct and *ἀγάλματα* can be in be connotatively read as “embryonic virtue”, this is a new genuine and true thing which can be born of the soul. Moreover, *ἀγάλματα* carry a more advanced dimension than *διάνοια*, as Plato describes these things as “the greatest importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man.”³⁴ There is no such qualitative value given to *διάνοια*, although the understanding born of the soul is most definitely a valuable thing. This value is given in the *Symposium*, where the same birth metaphor language to describe *διάνοια* is used to describe what a man must do in order to commune with Beauty.³⁵

When these two dialogues and their respective birth metaphors are read together, it seems very likely possible that one must first give birth to *διάνοια*, and then, once having given birth to such an understanding in the soul, one can nurture it as though “he nurtures the newborn”³⁶ to this new level of understanding, this “embryonic virtue” that Socrates has within him as though her were a silenus, this *ἀγάλματα*. In short, *ἀγάλματα* is the advanced stage of *διάνοια*. Socrates has given birth to *διάνοια*, enabling him to be a midwife to those men with pregnant souls, but he can no longer give birth to such offspring because his soul is now nurturing *ἀγάλματα*.

This idea that *ἀγάλματα* ἔκγονος τῆς ψυχῆς is a more advanced state of *διάνοια* is supported not only in the readings of the *Theaetetus* and the *Symposium*, but also in the very etymology of the word itself. In the fifth and fourth centuries, there was movement in Greek

³⁴ *Symposium* 222a5

³⁵ *Symposium* 211c

³⁶ *Symposium* 209c8

culture termed “presentification”, “the making present of the invisible to the imitation of appearance.”³⁷ It is in this age that ἀγάλματα came into their own, as it were. One must note the dictionary definition of ἀγάλματα, “an honorific statue of a god”. The aim of these statues was to “establish a true communication, and authentic contact” with the god they represented.³⁸ The ἀγάλματα were much more than simple statues, mimetic representations, but rather they were an “attempt to construct a bridge...that will reach toward the divine.”³⁹ It must “participate intimately with the divine, and yet by the same move, it must also emphasize what is inaccessible and mysterious in divinity, its alien quality, its otherness.”⁴⁰ Perhaps most importantly, the ἀγάλματα had to “stress the incommensurability between the sacred power and everything that reveals it to the eyes of mortals in what can only be an inadequate and incomplete way.”⁴¹

This reading of ἀγάλματα manifests the idea that one’s soul must first undergo the conceiving and delivery of διάνοια—which is an understanding born of the soul, integral to the journey of philosophers to commune with the forms, as made clear in Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium*. But ἡ διάνοια is not the last step in the philosopher’s journey to know the forms; otherwise Socrates would never have stopped giving birth to his metaphorical offspring. Instead, one must nurture the διάνοια into ἀγάλματα, which are bridges to know the forms.

The Republic: διάνοια and ἀγάλματα as commensurate to the line metaphor

The idea that the soul must conceive and bear forth διάνοια, and from that birth of understanding the soul might nurture Reeve’s ἀγάλματα, that embryonic virtue which Socrates has in his soul, which act as bridges to the forms—this is not an unfamiliar division. This idea of a further development of διάνοια is found not only in the birth metaphors of the *Theaetetus* and

³⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 152.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

of the *Symposium*, but also in the *Republic*. These instantiations of two kind of understanding ἔκγονος τῆς ψυχῆς are manifest not in birth metaphors of the *Republic*—the cave metaphor may be taken as a birth metaphor—but most specifically in the metaphor of the line, which Plato gives in Book VI.

In the line metaphor,⁴² Socrates distinguishes two realms, the “visible” and the “intelligible”.⁴³ The visible section of the line consists of “shadows, then reflections in bodies of water and in...shiny materials.”⁴⁴ The “other subsection of the visible” consists of “the originals of these images.”⁴⁵ The original Greek differentiates these subsections as εἰκασίαν and πίστιν⁴⁶, respectively. The former means “image” or “conjecture”; the latter, “belief”.

The next section of the line Socrates classed as the “intelligible”, and he divides it into the subsections of δῖανοια, and νοήσιν. These subsections are not nearly so easy to explain, as they belong to a realm which one can only know, and not see.

In one subsection, the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is compelled to base its inquiry on hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle, but to a conclusion. In the other subsection, by contrast, it makes its way to an unhypothetical first principle, proceeding from a hypothesis, but without the images used in the previous subsection, using the forms themselves and making its methodical inquiry through them.⁴⁷

The latter subsection of the soul in the intelligible realm is δῖανοια; the former is νοήσις. Δῖανοια is further explained through the practice of geometry, that geometers “use visible forms and make their arguments about them, although they are not thinking about them, but about those others things that they are like? They make their arguments with a view to the square itself and

⁴² Beginning *Republic* Book VI 509d6

⁴³ *Republic* 509e7

⁴⁴ *Republic* 510a1-a2

⁴⁵ *Republic* 510a4-a6

⁴⁶ *Republic* 511d8-e1

⁴⁷ *Republic* 510b3-b8

the diagonal itself, not the diagonal they draw...⁴⁸ The soul who has reached the stage of *διάνοια* is able to “use images in seeking those other things themselves that one cannot see except by means of thought.”⁴⁹ The thoughts which are turned out as result by these image-assisted inquiries are called “hypotheses”—a genuine and true understanding born of the soul. A *διάνοια*.

It is from these hypotheses that one can proceed, insofar as the soul “makes its way to an unhypothetical first principle.”⁵⁰ This *νοήσις* in the soul “requires no assumption and is the starting-point of all...making no use of whatever of any object of sense, but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas and ending with ideas.”⁵¹ The translation provided by C.D.C Reeve is slightly more provocative: “making no use of anything visible at all, but only of forms themselves, moving on through forms to forms, and ending in forms.”⁵² An examination of the Greek reveals that what Reeve translates as “form” and Shorey as “idea” is in fact *ἔιδος*. Regardless of the translation choice, what must be grasped from this section of the *Republic* is that it is only through *νοήσις* that the soul might achieve communion with that which Plato calls *ἔιδος*.

One cannot ignore the appearance of *διάνοια* in both the line metaphor and the birth metaphors of the *Theaetetus* and *Symposium*, especially as Plato is known as a calculating wordsmith. It would be possible, perhaps, to explain away the parallelism as a mere coincidence if not for the fact that, in both metaphors, *διάνοια* has the same nature and function. The nature of *διάνοια* in the line metaphor is as an understanding, “something intermediate between opinion

⁴⁸ *Republic* 510d5-e1

⁴⁹ *Republic* 510e3-511a1

⁵⁰⁵⁰ *Republic* 510b6

⁵¹ *Republic* 511b6-c1.

⁵² *Ibid.*

and reason.”⁵³ That is, δίανοια falls in between νοήσις and πίστις, between reason and the originals of images. In the combined birth metaphors of the *Theaetetus* and the *Symposium*— as shown by Reeve— δίανοια is the stage above εἶδωλον—a phantom or imposter—and the stage prior to νοήσις, a stage in which the soul has within it “embryonic virtue”, ἀγάλματα, the bridges that connect the embodied soul to the realm of the forms. Having ascended to this stage in his soul, Socrates cannot descend back into the state of giving birth to δίανοια, and this statement is supported by his belief that, when knowing the Good, one cannot do something which is not in accordance with it—a phenomenon also known as akrasia.

Up to this point, the paper has addressed these two metaphors as separate, as parallel lines. But in the prior analysis, it is clear that the line metaphor and its subsections of πίστις, δίανοια, and νοήσις conveys the exact same divisions of understanding in the soul as does the combined birth metaphor. Δίανοια has the same function in both metaphors. Ἀγάλματα aligns with νοήσις in that, when the soul has understanding, it is able to know and connect with—as much as an embodied soul is able—the forms. The bridge by which this understanding⁵⁴ is connected to the forms is by the ἀγάλματα which reside in the soul.

It is not impossible to see that these metaphors are metaphors for the same thing—the steps through which one must go to achieve knowledge of and communion with the forms. Moreover, the idea that there are many metaphors for one idea—if one will allow the word—is an idea frequently found in Plato. To understand this, one must look and the nature and function of the metaphor in the Platonic dialogue.

For Plato, metaphors have a twofold purpose: the first is that a metaphor acts as a noble lie for the οἱ πολλοί, the men who do not have philosophic souls and therefore will never see for

⁵³ *Republic* 511d3-d4

⁵⁴ Be careful here that it is the understanding of νοήσις and not the understanding δίανοια

themselves the things which the metaphors represent. The metaphor is a noble lie in that there is no actual line as given in Book VI of the *Republic*, but the line does make some aspect of the truth which the metaphor represents accessible to those men whose souls are not of philosophic bent. In short, there is no line of the intelligible and the visible, but there *is* a realm of the intelligible and the forms.

The second purpose of the metaphor is to void the pitfalls of writing which Plato outlines in the *Phaedrus*.⁵⁵ This purpose of the metaphor is seen in the nature of the birth metaphor. This birth metaphor is not a physical metaphor, as is the line analogy, but rather it is a verbal metaphor, in that Plato uses words concerning conception and birth to avoid objective writing. Objective writing is condemned in Plato because, among other things, it “reach[es] indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn’t know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not.”⁵⁶ By using such a method as the birth metaphor, Plato avoids such a problem. The birth metaphor acts as “a discourse that is written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener...”⁵⁷ Unlike objective, directive writing—which is didactic and simply tells the external mind what is and what it not, the use of metaphors in the Platonic dialogues requires one to think, so that the idea conveyed by the metaphor is reached—by dialect and by personal thought and inquiry—between mind and mind, between soul and soul. This applies not only towards one man to another, but also from one man to himself. A metaphor is not only for inducing a reader into the laborious process of conceiving *διάνοια*—so that they might eventually come to a point of *νοήσις*, where their souls will nourish *ἀγάλματα* of the forms—but also for reminding the philosopher “when he reaches old forgetful

⁵⁵ *Phaedrus* 275a1-b3

⁵⁶ *Phaedrus* 275e2-e4

⁵⁷ *Phaedrus* 276a5-a6

age”; “it is likely he will sow gardens of letters for the sake of amusing himself, storing up reminders for himself...”⁵⁸ Writing must be done in metaphors for this reason, and even then, “at their very best, these can only serve as reminders to those who already know.”⁵⁹

The *διάνοια* which is so essential to the soul cannot be sparked by objective writing, for writing is an image, essentially. Just as the geometer no longer looks to drawings of the squares but to the square itself, so must the reader of the Platonic dialogue look beyond the literal words of the metaphor, and to that which the metaphor represents, which “one cannot see except by means of thought.”⁶⁰ This idea is further supported in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates states:

The dialectician...plants and sows within [the soul] discourse accompanied by knowledge—discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows...such discourse makes the seed forever immortal...⁶¹

Perhaps this passage more than any other underwrites the idea that the soul must first conceive *διάνοια*, and then progress in understanding to *νοήσις*, in which the soul nourishes within it *ἀγάλματα*. The discourse which is not “barren”, as stated above, is that which is *διάνοια*, while that which grows from the *διάνοια* and makes the seed “forever immortal” are *ἀγάλματα*. As bridges to the forms—which are outside of space and time—it makes perfect sense that that the *ἀγάλματα* too, are immortal, just as is the soul. Moreover, Plato states that “such discourses should be called his own legitimate children, first the discourse that he may have discovered already within himself and then its sons and brothers...”⁶²

The idea that the metaphors of the Platonic dialogues are commensurate to one another is not mere conjecture, but a solidly proven thesis. The *διάνοια* *ἐκγονος* τῆς *ψυχῆς* of the

⁵⁸ *Phaedrus* 276 d1-d3

⁵⁹ *Phaedrus* 278a1-a2

⁶⁰ *Republic* 510e3-511a1

⁶¹ *Phaedrus* 276e5-277a3

⁶² *Phaedrus* 278a6-b1

Theaetetus is commensurate to the fruitful discourse of the *Phaedrus*—linked by the same metaphor of children—which is commensurate to the δίανοια of the *Republic*'s line metaphor, related not only by the very word choice of Plato, but by their same nature and function in the soul—as a stepping stone to that state of the soul which nourished ἀγάλματα, which are bridges to the forms, which, as Reeve so accurately revealed, is “embryonic virtue” in the soul of Socrates.

Works Cited

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Reeve, C.D.C. *Blindness and Reorientation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Levett, M.J, trans. "Theaetetus" in *Plato Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

Reeve, C.D.C, trans. *The Republic*. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004.

Shorey, Paul, trans. "Republic II Volume Books VI-X" in *Loeb Classical Library*, edited by G.P Goold. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Fowler, Harold North, trans. "Theaetetus" in *Loeb Classical Library*, edited by G.P Goold. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Nehamas, Alexander and Paul Woodruff, trans. "Phaedrus" in *Plato Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.