

PLATO'S PHAEDRUS

*Translated with an Introduction
and Commentary by*

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The whole argument owes something to Alcmaeon, a younger contemporary of Pythagoras, as is commonly recognised; but the all-important distinction between what is self-moved and what is moved by something else was not, so far as we know, drawn by Alcmaeon, and there is no reason to doubt that it is Plato's own distinction, or rather that he was the first to make any philosophical use of a distinction obvious to common sense and reflected, as Socrates notes (245E), in common parlance. Prof. Taylor however writes:¹ 'It would be rash to say that its introduction [viz. the introduction of the present argument] shows that we are dealing with a post-Socratic development of Plato's own thought, since in principle the argument is that of Alcmaeon of Crotona, that the soul is immortal because it "is like immortal things, and is like them in the point that it is always in motion" (Arist. *de anima* 405A 30).' Here the vagueness of the safeguarding words 'in principle' tends to obscure the importance of Plato's development of Alcmaeon's dictum. What Alcmaeon may be taken to have suggested to Plato is his first step, the premiss τὸ δεικνύμενον ἀθάνατον, in other words his approach to the question of soul's immortality by way of the category of κίνησις.

It has also been rightly observed² that there is a close connexion between the *Phaedrus* proof of immortality and the final argument of the *Phaedo*. Reduced to its essentials, that argument is that soul necessarily and always participates in the Form of life and therefore cannot admit death. Stripped of the terminology of the Ideal theory, this amounts to saying that the notion of life is bound up with the notion of soul, and what it really yields is not (as Socrates maintains) the conclusion that soul is immortal but the tautological proposition that so long as soul exists it is alive. What the *Phaedrus* does is to remould an argument about the relations of words and concepts into one based on observed physical fact, the fact namely of κίνησις. Life, it argues, is bound up with soul because the observed processes or movements which constitute life can only be accounted for by the postulate of a self-moving soul, and the eternity of that self-moving soul is the necessary presupposition of all physical existence. Although it would be too much to say that the *Phaedrus* provides an empirical metamorphosis of the *Phaedo*'s metaphysical or 'rationalist' argument, yet it is rooted, as the other is not, in empirical fact, and that is why Aristotle, whose thought has far more kinship with empiricism than Plato's normally has, is so largely indebted to our present argument for his doctrine of an eternal—albeit unmoved—First Mover.

¹ *Plato, the Man and his Work*, p. 306.

² Frutiger, p. 138 n. 1; Skemp, pp. 5–10; J. B. Bury in *Journal of Philology*, xv (1886).

IX

246A–247C MYTH OF THE SOUL. THE CHARIOTEER AND TWO HORSES. THE PROCESSION OF SOULS

The nature of the Soul must be described in a myth. We may compare it to a winged charioteer driving a team of winged horses. Now the horses belonging to the souls of gods are all good, but a human soul has one good horse and one evil. So long as its wings are undamaged, the soul travels through the heavens; but some souls lose their wings, fall to earth and take to themselves earthly bodies. There follows a vivid picture of the procession of souls, headed by Zeus, to the rim of heaven, and of the difficulty experienced by the human souls in following the divine. The latter finally pass outside the heaven and stand upon its back, contemplating the sights beyond as they are carried round by its revolution.

As to soul's immortality then we have said enough, but as to its 246A nature there is this that must be said: what manner of thing it is would be a long tale to tell, and most assuredly a god alone could tell it; but what it resembles, that a man might tell in briefer compass: let this therefore be our manner of discourse. Let it be likened to the union of powers in a team of winged steeds and their winged charioteer.¹ Now all the gods' steeds and all their charioteers are good, and of good stock;² but with other beings it is not wholly so. With us men, in the B first place, it is a pair³ of steeds that the charioteer controls; moreover one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has the opposite character, and his stock is opposite. Hence the task of our charioteer is difficult and troublesome.

¹ That ὑποπτέρου belongs to ἡμιόχου as well as to ζεύγους follows from 251B 7, πᾶσα γὰρ ἦν τὸ πάλαι πτερωτή.

² The expression ἀγαθοὶ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν recurs at 274A, where it is used of the gods themselves and can hardly bear the literal meaning which I take it to have here. From the use of πονηρὸς καὶ πονηρῶν (*Ar. Frogs* 731, *Knights* 337), we may probably infer that the phrase became stereotyped, and often meant no more than 'wholly good'.

³ It seems to be generally assumed by commentators that ζεύγους in A 7 means a pair of horses; but the word often means a larger number (see *Apol.* 36D and Burnet's note, and cf. *Aesch. frag.* 346 (Nauck), ζεύγους τέθριππων). Plato, while definitely affirming triplicity in the souls destined to inhabit human bodies, deliberately leaves vague the number of 'parts' of soul in general, and of the gods' souls. Robin's assertion (p. lxxx) that συνωρίς means 'un attelage dont les chevaux sont couplés mais ne sont pas identiques' is supported by no evidence, and seems incompatible with τέκνων συνωρίςα (used of Medea's children) at *Eur. Medea* 1145; it evidently springs from the erroneous assumption about ζεύγους.

And now we must essay to tell how it is that living beings are called mortal and immortal. All soul has the care of all that is inanimate, and traverses the whole universe, though in ever-changing forms. Thus when it is perfect and winged it journeys on high and controls the whole world; but one that has shed its wings sinks down until it can fasten on something solid, and settling there it takes to itself an earthy body which seems by reason of the soul's power to move itself. This composite structure of soul and body is called a living being, and is further termed 'mortal': 'immortal' is a term applied on no basis of reasoned argument at all, but our fancy pictures the god whom we have never seen, nor fully conceived, as an immortal living being, possessed of a soul and a body united for all time.¹ Howbeit let these matters, and our account thereof, be as god pleases; what we must understand is the reason why the soul's wings fall from it, and are lost. It is on this wise.

The natural property of a wing is to raise that which is heavy and carry it aloft to the region where the gods dwell; and more than any other bodily part it shares in the divine nature, which is fair, wise and good, and possessed of all other such excellences. Now by these excellences especially is the soul's plumage nourished and fostered, while by their opposites, even by ugliness and evil, it is wasted and destroyed. And behold,² there in the heaven Zeus, mighty leader, drives his winged team:³ first of the host of gods and daemons he proceeds, ordering all things and caring therefor: and the host follows after him, marshalled in eleven companies. For Hestia abides alone in the gods' dwelling-place; but for the rest, all such as are ranked in the number of the twelve as ruler gods lead their several companies, each according to his rank.

Now within the heavens are many spectacles of bliss upon the highways⁴ whereon the blessed gods pass to and fro, each doing his own work; and with them are all such as will and can follow them: for jealousy has no place in the choir divine. But at such times as they go

¹ ἀθάνατον in c 6 stands for ζῶον (nominative) ἀθάνατον ἔσχεν ἐπωνυμίαν. The meaning is that the ζῶα to whom we commonly apply the epithet ἀθάνατα, the anthropomorphic gods of Homer, are the creations of fancy. Whether there are or are not immortal beings composite of soul and body is for the present left open.

² This abrupt transition to the account of the celestial procession is arresting, and doubtless intentional.

³ For this meaning of ἄρμα cf. Eur. *H.F.* 881, ἄρμασιν ἐνδίδωσι κέντρον.

⁴ I take θέαι τε καὶ διέξοδοι as a hendiadys.

to their feasting and banquet, behold they climb the steep ascent even unto the summit of the arch that supports the heavens; and easy is that ascent for the chariots of the gods, for that they are well-balanced and readily guided; but for the others it is hard, by reason of the heaviness of the steed of wickedness, which pulls down his driver with his weight, except that driver have schooled him well.

And now there awaits the soul the extreme of her toil and struggling. For the souls that are called immortal, so soon as they are at the summit, come forth and stand upon the back of the world: and straightway the revolving heaven carries them round, and they¹ look upon the regions without.

It will be convenient, before commenting on the general purport of this section, to call attention to the assertions that soul 'cares for' (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) the inanimate (246B) and that Zeus, heading the procession of souls, orders and 'cares for' all things (246E); for these are noteworthy as being the earliest intimation of the central doctrine of Plato's theology, a doctrine common to the myth of the *Timaeus* and the rational exposition of *Laws* x. In the latter work the priority of soul to body is either indistinguishable from or immediately involves its control of body (892A, 896C); this control is however not in all cases intelligent and providential, for a distinction is drawn between beneficent soul and maleficent (896E), or between ψυχή νοῦν προσλαβοῦσα and ψυχή ἀνοία συγγενομένη (897B). The speaker is vague as to the precise scope and effects of the latter, but clearly it has the same significance as the 'Necessity' of the *Timaeus*, which is for the most part persuaded and ruled by Reason (48A): it is in fact the principle of cosmic imperfection or evil. It is, however, the 'best' soul that controls the great cosmic movements, 'the whole course and motion of the heavens' (897C) and 'cares for the whole universe' (δῆλον ὡς τὴν ἀρίστην ψυχὴν φατέον ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τοῦ κόσμου παντός, *ibid.*). Whether Plato means a single 'best soul' or the best kind of soul need not be discussed here; in either case ψυχή νοῦν προσλαβοῦσα, or the νοῦς βασιλεὺς οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς²—and these are virtually identical, since νοῦς must always come to be 'in a soul' (*Phil.* 30C, *Tim.* 30B)—is Plato's God in the truest sense of that word—the sense in which it is used in all theistic systems, though the word θεός is used by him of other divine beings also, including the visible universe.

¹ αὶ δὲ refers to the same souls as αὐτάς, and is not in antithesis to αὶ μὲν two lines above. This αὶ μὲν is not answered until we reach αὶ δὲ ἄλλαι ψυχαὶ at 248A 1, for Socrates breaks off into a long description of the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος and the θεῶν βίος.

² *Phil.* 28C.

Here in the *Phaedrus* we have only a passing allusion to the theology to be afterwards developed; we have no hint of any irrational or maleficent world-soul. The words ψυχὴ πᾶσα παντὸς ἐπιμελεῖται τοῦ ἀψύχου, πάντα δὲ οὐρανὸν περιπολεῖ do not indeed definitely preclude such a conception, but neither do they suggest it; while the ἐπιμέλεια exercised by Zeus is plainly a beneficent rational providence.

The words with which Socrates introduces his myth of the soul make it clear that the myth will be in part an allegory, that is to say a description in symbolic terms which can be readily translated into what they stand for.¹ It is of course obvious that the charioteer with his two horses symbolises the tripartite soul familiar to us from *Rep.* IV, the soul composite of a reflective or calculative part (λογιστικόν), a 'spirited' or passionate (θυμοειδές), and an appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν). But there is much in the present section and in the pages which follow that cannot be so translated, and that Plato does not intend to be translated; for the most part the myth is the vision of a poet whose images are not disguised doctrine but spring from a non-rational intuition: the reader must therefore allow his rational and critical faculty to be suspended as he reads, seeking to feel with the poet rather than 'understand' him and turn his poetry into prose.²

This warning is especially needed in respect of the present section, with its majestic picture of the procession of souls. We are not to look here for astronomical doctrine allegorically expressed; it is true that there is an astral or astronomical element, but it is impossible to analyse into religious (or theological) and scientific components what the myth has fused into a whole. The twelve gods are undoubtedly those familiar to every Athenian from the altar set up in the Agora by

¹ It is obvious that Plato's myths are not all of one kind. Probably the most helpful classification is that of Frutiger into *allegorical*, *genetic* and *parascientific* (p. 180). He recognises indeed that this must not be applied rigidly: 'Each has a dominant character which justifies its being assigned to a definite class, but they often trench on other classes in this or that particular' (p. 181). Of the third class, to which he assigns our present myth, he writes: 'To complete the results of λόγος, to extend them beyond the limits of pure reason, to take the place, by way of δεύτερος πλοῦς, of dialectic when it comes up against some impenetrable mystery—that is the function of those myths which, for want of a better epithet, we have called parascientific' (p. 223). I would agree that our myth belongs to this class, with the reservation (which Frutiger would doubtless accept) that it contains a large measure of allegory.

² From the standpoint of the rationalist, when he looks back on the myth, it is all παιδιὰ, 'playfulness' (265c). Cf. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 32, on the myth of the *Timaeus*: 'There remains an irreducible element of poetry, which refuses to be translated into the language of scientific prose.' The *Timaeus* however gradually sheds its mythical character, and sets forth undisguised doctrine in physics and physiology: the *Phaedrus* myth is mythical to the end, and yet (as we shall see) is interrupted by occasional 'parentheses' of rational doctrine such as that at 249B-C.

the younger Pisistratus towards the end of the sixth century,¹ and from the east frieze of the Parthenon.² Zeus and Hestia are mentioned here, and later (252C-253B) we hear of Ares, Hera and Apollo. But save for the mention of their going to feast (247A 8; cf. *Iliad* I, 423) there is little or nothing left of Homeric anthropomorphism; the all too human gods have become stars, or rather astral souls, fulfilling each its appointed function in an ordered universe, passing along heaven's highways.³ The myth, however, permits a confusion between the whole soul and its controlling part, so that Zeus is represented as the driver of his winged car.

The astral element in Plato's religion will become prominent in his latest works, *Timaeus*, *Laws*, and the doubtfully genuine *Epinomis*; but it was already implicit in such casual allusions as that of *Rep.* 508A (τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν), and for that matter every Greek thought of the heavenly bodies as divine, though they did not figure in official cults, as the *Epinomis* (988A) recommends that they should. The semi-metamorphosis of Homer's gods into star-souls is therefore natural enough. What of the distinction of Hestia from the other eleven? Its purpose, I should say, is simply to bring more vividly before the mind's eye the picture of the starry heaven revolving round a fixed central body, the earth. How early the goddess of the central hearth came to be thought of as residing at, or as being, the centre of the universe it is impossible to say; but every contemporary reader of our passage, whether or not he knew anything of Pythagoreanism, would at once seize the point of Hestia abiding alone in the house of the gods while the others went on their journey.⁴

It has been too readily assumed, both in ancient and modern times, that the relation of Hestia to the rest necessarily implies some astronomical scheme or planetary system into which the number eleven (or twelve) can be fitted. To my mind there is no such necessity: the mention of Hestia is not significant of anything beyond what I have suggested above. However that be, the only two systems which, so far as I know, have been proposed are both impossible.

The first identifies Hestia not with a central earth, but with the central fire of a Pythagorean cosmology well known to us from Aristotle (*de caelo* 293A 18ff.) and attributed by Stobaeus (*Ecl.* I, 22) and Aetius to

¹ Thuc. VI, 54.

² On which, however, Hestia was replaced by Dionysus (Weinreich in Roscher's *Lexicon der gr. und röm. Mythologie s.v. 'Zwölfgötter'*, p. 823; Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods*, p. 111).

³ δῖεθεοί, a word commonly used for the orbits of heavenly bodies.

⁴ The earliest literary allusion to the 'centrality' of Hestia (who is not a goddess in Homer himself) is in *Homeric Hymn* (V) to *Aphrodite*, l. 30: καὶ τε μέσῳ οἴκῳ κατ' ἄρ' ἕζετο, πῖταρ ἑλοῦσα. For Hestia as the earth, cf. Eur. *frag.* 944N: καὶ γὰρ μήτηρ· Ἔστιν δὲ σ' οἱ σοφοὶ | βροτῶν καλοῦσιν ἡμένην ἐν αἰθέρι and Soph. *frag.* 558N.

Philolaus; but more than a century ago it was pointed out by H. Martin¹ that the total number of bodies in this system was not eleven, but ten; moreover it is improbable, as H. von Arnim remarks,² that earth, moon and sun (and, one might add, the counter-earth postulated in this system) should be represented as leaders of hosts of star-souls.

The other view is that given by Robin in his note on 247A. This goes back at least to the commentary of Chalcidius (fourth century A.D.) on the *Timaeus*,³ though Robin does not mention him. The number 12 is made up of the sphere of the fixed stars, the seven known planets (including sun and moon), three regions or zones of aether, air and water, and the earth. The three zones intermediate between moon and earth evidently come from *Epinomis* 984B ff., where however nothing is said of any δρχοντες of the daemons inhabiting them, though this is essential to Chalcidius's interpretation.

To this, as to the former theory, it seems an insuperable objection that the planets of Greek astronomy did not have hosts of satellites.

As against these planetary interpretations, some scholars have seen here an allusion to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, or rather to the twelve deities guarding⁴ or inhabiting them. It is possible—though I am incompetent to judge of this—that the connexion between groups of twelve gods, which are found in many other countries besides Greece, and the signs is very ancient; in any case it seems established that the famous astronomer and geographer Eudoxus, whom Plato may have known as early as the date of the *Phaedrus*, identified these deities with the twelve Olympians; and there is perhaps a trace of this in the proposal at *Laws* 828c to make each month sacred to one of the twelve.⁵ The suggestion is bound up with a theory that Plato was influenced by Chaldaean astrological beliefs, chiefly through the medium of Eudoxus. So far as any astrological ideas can be detected in the *Phaedrus* itself, they seem confined to the passage 252c–253b, which however seems to me explicable without them.⁶

¹ *Études sur le Timée* II, p. 114. I owe this reference to Prof. J. B. Skemp (*The Theory of Motion in Plato's Later Dialogues*, p. 72) who follows Martin in rejecting the identification.

² *Platons Jugenddialoge*, p. 184.

³ p. 227f. Wrobel: 'Volucris uero curus imperatoris dei aplanas intellegenda est, quia et prima est ordine et agilior ceteris omnibus motibus, sicut ostensum est. Undecim uero partes exercitus dinumerat hactenus: primam aplanem, deinde septem planetum, nonam aetheris sedem, quam incolunt aetherii daemones, decimam aëriam, undecimam umectae substantiae, duodecimam terram, quae immobilis ex conuersione mundi manet.'

⁴ cf. Manilius, *Astron.* II, 434: 'noscere tutelas adiectaque numina signis.'

⁵ But it is difficult, as von Arnim (*loc. cit.*) notes, to fit into this interpretation the remark about Hestia.

⁶ On this whole question see J. Bidez, 'Platon, Eudoxe et l'Orient', in *Bulletin Acad. Belgique* XIX (1933), pp. 195 ff. and 273 ff.; A. J. Festugière, 'Platon et l'Orient', in *Rev. de Philologie* XXI (1947), pp. 5 ff.; and E. R. Dodds in *J.H.S.* LXV (1945), p. 24f. It was Prof. Dodds's paper that directed me to that of Bidez.

If then we may set aside the astronomical puzzle as unreal, the chief problem that remains concerns the tripartite nature of the discarnate souls, both those which are destined to be united to human, and perhaps animal, bodies, and those which remain in the dwelling-place of the gods. The problem of the tripartite soul is amongst the thorniest of all Platonic problems, and in spite of a vast amount of discussion in recent years it cannot be said to be solved.¹ I shall not attempt to reargue the whole question in detail, since the only ground for doing so would be a hope of establishing either a consistent psychological doctrine, held by Plato from first to last, or a development ending in something firm and precise; and I entertain no such hope; rather do I agree with Wilamowitz's conclusion that Plato never attained to a full reconciliation of the various views expressed in the dialogues.²

The bare bones of the problem may be briefly set out: in the *Phaedo* we find simplicity of soul and its restriction to νοῦς; in *Rep.* IV tripartition, though with some expression of doubt (435D); in *Rep.* X a suggestion (tentatively enough expressed) that the soul in its 'true nature' may be incomposite (611D–612A); here in the *Phaedrus* tripartition of the human soul, before and after its incarnation, and composite souls of gods; in the *Timaeus* (69c ff.) tripartition again of the human soul, with local habitats for the three parts and restriction of immortality to reason, but again some expression of doubt (72D); in *Laws* X attribution to the world-soul (and by inference to the individual soul in its 'true nature') of much besides reason, viz. 'wish, reflection, forethought, counsel, opinion true and false, joy, grief, confidence, fear, hate, love, and all the motions akin to these'.³

Now the *Laws* is the latest dialogue, and the *Timaeus* one of the latest; and since the appearance of Cornford's edition of the *Timaeus* I do not deem it necessary to argue that the *Timaeus* records Plato's own beliefs or speculations. But there is complete disagreement in the psychology of the two passages just referred to: the *Timaeus* excludes from the ἀρχὴ ψυχῆς ἀθάνατος (69c, called τὸ θεῖον at 69d), which is provided by the Demiurge himself as distinct from the subordinate gods who provide the ψυχῆς θνητὸν γένος (69e), 'dread and necessary affections: first pleasure, the strongest lure of evil; next pains that take flight from good; temerity moreover and fear, a pair of unwise counsellors, passion hard to entreat, and hope too easily led astray; these they combined with irrational sense and desire that shrinks from

¹ An excellent discussion will be found in Frutiger, pp. 76–96, taking account of all views of importance down to 1930.

² *Platon* I, p. 475: 'Er hat es tatsächlich zu keiner vollen logischen Einheit in dem gebracht, was er über die Menschenseele lehrt und glaubt.'

³ 897A, Bury's translation. Possibly the ψυχῆ whose 'motions' are here enumerated is rather ψυχῆ πᾶσα (the totality of soul, including both the world-soul and individual souls) than the world-soul itself: but *peu importe*.

no venture, and so of necessity compounded the mortal element'.¹ All this implies that emotions and desires are evil and no part of the 'true' soul. Although it is not explicitly said that the divine, immortal part of soul is reason, yet it is located in the head which is τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν πάντων δεσποτοῦν (44D), while the part located in the breast is τοῦ λόγου κατήκοον (70A). Clearly the immortal part is the 'simple' soul of the *Phaedo*; no less clearly the παθήματα excluded here are included among the motions of unembodied soul in the *Laws*.

What does this point to? Is there any good ground for accepting either of these views as more final than the other? I do not think so; rather, Plato wavers to the end between the religious, Orphic-Pythagorean, conception of a divine soul essentially (in its 'true nature') divorced from all physical functions, all 'lower' activities, and a more secular and scientific conception of soul as essentially a source of motion both to itself and to τὰ ἄλλα, of ψυχή πᾶσα as παντός τοῦ ἀψύχου ἐπιμελουμένη (246B). The 'motions' or functions of soul, in the latter view, cannot be divorced from the body that it 'cares for': it can only move the body in virtue of itself possessing 'motions' over and above the reason which contemplates the eternal Forms; as Plato's follower was to observe, διάνοια αὐτὴ οὐδὲν κινεῖ.²

It is significant that the two dialogues in which the moving function of soul is prominent—*Phaedrus* and *Laws*—are the only two in which passions (emotions) and desires are clearly attributed to discarnate soul. The *Laws* in effect, though not explicitly, regards discarnate soul as tripartite, and, if for that reason alone, we ought to take the explicit statement of the *Phaedrus* to that effect as seriously meant.³

In the souls of the gods both horses are 'good and of good stock'. One hesitates whether or not to 'translate' this statement; but if we are to do so, I think the implication is that, whereas the tripartition of *Rep.* IV was deduced from the fact of moral conflict, we may still postulate three⁴ parts of soul when there is no question of such conflict: even 'pure' soul is θυμοειδής and ἐπιθυμητικός as well as λογιστικός. It may further be observed with Frutiger (p. 82) that the doctrine seems necessary to account for the fall of the soul (246C).

Scholars have speculated as to the source of the chariot-imagery. I can see little resemblance between Plato's chariot and that in which

¹ *Timaeus* 69D, Cornford's translation.

² Arist. *E.N.* 1139A 36.

³ Here I disagree with Taylor, *Plato*, p. 307, and Wilamowitz, *Platon* 1, p. 467: 'Das komplizierte Bild des Seelenwagens mit den zwei verschieden gemuteten Rossen ist allein für das Verhalten der Seele im Menschenleibe erfunden; da ist es von glücklichster Wirkung, und um des willen hat Platon es in den Kauf genommen, dass die Rosse Wille (*sic*) und Begierde vor den Wagen der Seele, schon ehe sie das erstmal eingekörpert ist, gespannt sind, ja dass auch die Götterseele so kompliziert ist.'

⁴ Or perhaps more than three: see note on 246A, p. 69 above.

Parmenides¹ made his journey to an unnamed goddess, passing the gates of Night and Day, and guided by the daughters of the sun: equally doubtful is any allusion to the chariot of Empedocles, of which we hear in a single obscure line;² neither of these poets suggests any comparison to the soul.³ But surely the representation of the ruling part of soul as a charioteer is so obvious and natural, especially in view of the common metaphorical use of ἡνιοχεύειν and its cognates,⁴ that we need look no further than to the *Republic* itself for the simile. That the horses (but not of course the chariot, which has no symbolic value) should be winged is normal enough: we remember Pegasus, and the winged horses of Pelops.⁵ I know of no parallel to the winged charioteer, but in view of his symbolic meaning his wings are of course necessary: it would be impossible to exclude from the controlling part of the soul that power of 'raising that which is heavy and carrying it aloft to the region where the gods dwell' spoken of at 246D.

¹ Diels-Kranz, *Vors.* 28B 1.

² *ibid.* 31B 3, line 5.

³ More possible is a reminiscence of the two immortal horses of Achilles (*Iliad* XVI, 148-54), though there is nothing to correspond to the trace-horse of that passage, ὅς καὶ θνητὸς ἔων ἐπέθ' ἱπποῖς ἀθανάτοισι.

⁴ An early and apposite example is Anacreon IV, 1, 5: οὐκ εἰδὼς ὅτι τῆς ἡμῆς | ψυχῆς ἡνιοχεύει.

⁵ Pindar *OL.* 1, 87.

X

247C-248E THE SOUL'S VISION OF TRUE BEING.
ITS FALL AND INCARNATION

In the region above the heavens is that true Being which is apprehended by reason alone. This is the food that sustains the gods; this is the vision which they contemplate until the revolution is completed, after which they return home and give refreshment to the steeds of their chariots.

Other souls share in the vision in different degrees, according to the difficulty experienced by their drivers in controlling their horses; many get their wings broken, and none have the full vision; so they fall back and eat the food of semblance (τροφή δοξαστή).

The fallen souls are first incarnated not in the bodies of lower animals, but of men. There are nine types of human life assigned to them at their first birth, ranging from that of the philosopher, who has had the fullest vision of true Being, to that of the tyrant, who has seen least.

247 C Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily. But this is the manner of it, for assuredly we must be bold to speak what is true, above all when our discourse is upon truth. It is there that true Being dwells, without colour or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof. Now even
D as the mind of a god is nourished by reason and knowledge, so also is it with every soul that has a care to receive her proper food;¹ wherefore when at last she has beheld Being she is well content, and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers, until the heaven's revolution brings her back full circle. And while she is borne round she discerns justice, its very self, and likewise temperance, and knowledge, not the knowledge that is neighbour to Becoming and varies with the various
E objects to which we commonly ascribe being, but the veritable knowledge of Being that veritably is. And when she has contemplated likewise and feasted upon all else that has true being, she descends again within the heavens and comes back home. And having so come, her

¹ Although the sentence beginning at D 1 is so expressed that the grammatical subject of ἀγαπᾷ and the following verbs is mind both divine and non-divine, yet logically the inclusion of the latter is parenthetical: that is to say, it is the felicity of the divine souls that is described down to E 6, the reference to other souls being momentarily dropped, and only resumed at 248A 1.

charioteer sets his steeds at their manger, and puts ambrosia before them and draught of nectar to drink withal.

Such is the life of gods: of the other souls that which best follows 248 a god and becomes most like thereunto raises her charioteer's head into the outer region, and is carried round with the gods in the revolution, but being confounded by her steeds she has much ado to discern the things that are; another now rises, and now sinks, and by reason of her unruly steeds sees in part, but in part sees not. As for the rest, though all are eager to reach the heights and seek to follow, they are not able: sucked down as they travel they trample and tread upon one another, this one striving to outstrip that. Thus confusion B ensues, and conflict and grievous sweat: whereupon, with their charioteers powerless,¹ many are lamed, and many have their wings all broken; and for all their toiling they are baulked, every one, of the full vision of Being, and departing therefrom, they feed upon the food of semblance.

Now the reason wherefore the souls are fain and eager to behold the Plain of Truth, and discover it, lies herein: to wit, that the pasturage that is proper to their noblest part comes from that Meadow, and the C plumage by which they are borne aloft is nourished thereby.

Hear now the ordinance of Necessity. Whatsoever soul has followed in the train of a god, and discerned something of truth, shall be kept from sorrow until a new revolution shall begin; and if she can do this always, she shall remain always free from hurt.² But when she is not able so to follow, and sees none of it, but meeting with some mischance³ comes to be burdened with a load of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, and because of that burden sheds her wings and falls to the earth, then thus runs the law: in her first birth she shall not be planted in any brute D beast, but the soul that hath seen the most of Being shall enter into the human babe that shall grow into a seeker after wisdom or beauty, a follower of the Muses and a lover; the next, having seen less, shall

¹ Just as ἀρετή often means successful performance of function, so κακία here means, not 'vice', but imperfect functioning.

² The words ἀπήμονα and ἀβλαβή doubtless imply exemption from the fall into a body, as Hermeias says. The sentence is probably meant to provide for the existence of δαίμονες intermediate between gods and men (cf. σιριστιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαϊμόνων, 246E).

³ At the nature of the mischance (συντυχία) Plato has left us to guess: even in a myth he will not affect to reveal the full secret of pre-natal sin, though he hints that something must be postulated over and above the defective vision of true Being.

dwell in a king that abides by law, or a warrior and ruler; the third in a statesman, a man of business or a trader; the fourth in an athlete, or
 E physical trainer or physician; the fifth shall have the life of a prophet or a mystery-priest; to the sixth that of a poet or other imitative artist shall be fittingly given; the seventh shall live in an artisan or farmer, the eighth in a sophist or demagogue,¹ the ninth in a tyrant.

The account of the gods proceeding to the circumference of the heavenly sphere, of their being carried round on the outside of it until the revolution has brought them back to their starting place, and of their subsequent return home to the interior of heaven, is mythical rather than allegorical. Allegory is indeed present in the description of the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος with its content of colourless, shapeless and intangible Being; but we are not to infer that the gods' contemplation of that Being is only occasional, and limited on each occasion to the definite time occupied by the revolution. The journey from their home and the return to it are as mythical as the refreshment provided for their horses, the nectar and ambrosia which plainly do not symbolise the 'noetic τροφή' of 247D 1 or anything else. The gods' movements are merely consequent upon the conception of a supra-celestial region, for since star-gods no less than the traditional gods of Homer dwell in heaven they have to be brought to and from that region, and it is natural enough that the duration of their stay there should be what the myth makes it. But it is idle to inquire with Robin² whether the περίοδος occupies twenty-four hours or the whole time of a τέλειος ἐνιαυτός—the *magnus annus* completed when all the heavenly bodies have returned to the same relative positions (*Timaeus* 39D). There is not the slightest ground for finding the *magnus annus* here; on the other hand a period of twenty-four hours is plainly ridiculous. The question, however, is futile because it wrongly assumes that myth is careful to be rational and precise. The myth-maker can use astronomical imagery at will, but he is not tied to any astronomical facts or theories: the revolution is not conceived as occupying any *definite* time, although it provides a framework of recurrent periods which is useful, inasmuch as it will enable Plato to adapt his eschatology to a temporal succession of lives, in the body and out of it, resembling—perhaps reproducing—that of Orphic belief.

No earlier myth has told of a ὑπερουράνιος τόπος, but this is not the first occasion on which true Being, the οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα, has

¹ Δημοσκοπικός (*T*) is preferable to δημοτικός (*B*), and is accepted by Burnet and Robin. The word means 'mob-flatterer', but 'demagogue' conveys the sense sufficiently well, since for Plato the leader of the δήμος is always its κώλαξ. In *Soph.* 268B the word δημολογικός is used.

² p. lxxxv.

been given a local habitation. In the passage of *Rep.* VI which introduces the famous comparison of the Form of Good to the sun we have a νοητός τόπος contrasted with a ὄρατός (508c): but a spatial metaphor is hardly felt there, any more than in our own use of such words as 'province' or 'sphere' for the purpose of differentiating one man's duties or interests from another's. A truer approximation to the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος occurs in the simile of the Cave in *Rep.* VII, where we are plainly told that the prisoners' ascent into the light of day symbolises τὴν εἰς τὸν νοητὸν τόπον τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνοδον (517B); in fact the νοητός τόπος of the first simile has in the second developed into a real spatial symbol. In the myth of the *Phaedo*, which no doubt precedes the *Republic*, the simile of the Cave is, so to say, anticipated in another form: the world of sense-experience lies in a hollow of the earth (which has many such hollows), and the world of truth and reality on the earth's surface.

In these myths and similes Plato's imagination has probably been to some extent conditioned by traditional pictures of Elysium or the Islands of the Blest; he has imagined the other world as near to this earth of ours, if not upon it. Now, however, in the *Phaedrus*, the wings of his fancy take a higher flight; the world of true Being is not merely above the earth, but above the very heaven, *extra flammantia moenia mundi*. This may be thought to be no more than a natural development, as natural as for one of our own poets to sing 'My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars'; but I think the significance is deeper. Plato's new conception of Soul as self-mover has forced on his mind the problem of its status relatively to the eternal, unchanging (unmoved) Forms. In the *Sophist* (248A ff.) he will argue through the mouth of the Eleatic Stranger, and in opposition to these εἰδῶν φίλοι who insisted on the *exclusive* reality of the εἶδη, that τὸ παντελῶς ὄν comprises both ἀκίνητα and κινούμενα: and since there is there no hint of one of these constituents being inferior to the other, we may infer that they are conceived of as having equal status. In the *Timaeus* (30C ff.) however, the myth, taken at its face value, assigns a higher status to the Forms, since the νοητὸν ζῶον is the model to which the Demiurge looks in fashioning both the soul and body of the universe; if the Forms are then in some sense prior to the world-soul, they must *a fortiori* be prior to individual souls. Here in the *Phaedrus* the same priority appears to be attached to them, by giving them a location higher than that of the heavenly dwelling-place of souls; though it is moral Forms, Justice and Temperance (247D) and Beauty (250C) that Plato is chiefly¹ thinking of rather than the Forms of ζῶα, as in the *Timaeus*.

¹ Yet the words τἄλλα ὡσαύτως τὰ ὄντα ὄντως θεασαμένη (247E) allow for other types.

But in both dialogues it is very difficult to be sure whether the assertions and implications of myth ought to be taken at their face value. It may be permissible to suggest that the problem of the relative status of Forms and souls is dealt with only in mythical passages, and passed by in dialectical discussions like that of the *Sophist*, for the very reason that Plato could not, or did not wish to, offer any rational solution of it. The question is perhaps rather for a commentator on the *Timaeus*. It may, however, be noted that a little later (249c) he almost goes out of his way to underline the priority of the Forms by speaking of them as 'those things a god's nearness whereunto makes him truly god' (ἐκείνοις... πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὄν θεϊὸς ἔστιν).

In his description of the fall of the soul Plato is of course drawing on Orphic doctrine and imagery. That the human soul is a fallen δαίμων is one of the main tenets of Orphism, most familiar to us through the fragments of Empedocles's religious poem *Purifications*.¹ But there are here elements of what M. Diels has called² 'transposition' or adaptation, as distinct from mere borrowing: thus the 'oracle of Necessity', ἀνάγκης χρῆμα (Empedocles 115), is probably echoed in the θεσμός Ἀδραστέας, but the contents of the two are only partly identical; the 'plain of truth' or 'meadow' recalls, but wholly changes, the Ἄτης λιμῶν of Empedocles 121.³ Later (250b-c) we shall find a similar 'transposition' of the mystery-rites of Eleusis.

A notable expression is the 'food of semblance' (τροφή δοξαστή, 248b), on which the fallen soul feeds. This is of course the antithesis of νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη by which the discarnate souls are sustained (247d), and is no doubt intended to recall to the reader familiar with the simile of the Divided Line (*Rep.* vi) the double contrast between 'opinable' and intelligible objects as well as between the παθήματα ψυχῆς, the conditions of soul when cognising those objects respectively; τροφή δοξαστή is half-unreal food and food appropriate to the condition of δόξα. The phrase is arresting, but eminently happy in reminding us of the element of allegory in the myth.

With the mention of the 'ordinance of Necessity' the myth passes fully into an Orphic milieu, and for that reason we are entitled, indeed we are compelled, to affix a definite duration to the περίοδος of 248c 4, despite our refusal to do so earlier. After what has been said above this need cause us no embarrassment; the period of revolution has in fact become the Orphic period of 1000 years (the actual figure

¹ Hence Diels-Kranz print the whole passage 248b 5-249b 5 in their Empedocles chapter as *Anklang*.

² In a valuable chapter of *Autour de Platon*: see especially pp. 432-49. For Orphic elements in the Platonic myths see the parallel lists in Frutiger, pp. 254-60.

³ In *Gorgias* 524a the λιμῶν is the place of judgment of souls.

is given in the next section, περίοδος τῆς χιλιετίας, 249a 7) which elapsed between one incarnation and the next.¹

Finally we come to the 'order of merit' of lives, the highest of which falls to the lot of those who have had the fullest vision of the Forms, the lowest to those who have seen least.² The series seems to be one of decreasing worth to society. The first life needs no comment, save that the φιλόκαλος, μουσικός and ἐρωτικός are not persons other than the φιλόσοφος, but denote aspects of him, the first two being virtual synonyms, while the third will find its best elucidation in the general content of the whole myth.

The second life seems to imply the same point of view as Plato adopts in the later dialogue *Statesman*, where constitutional monarchy is the best, or rather the least unsatisfactory, substitute in default of the ideally wise ruler (297d-e, 302e); the πολεμικός καὶ ἀρχικός conjoined with the βασιλεὺς ἔννομος in this second class is best understood as a subordinate sharing his military and civil duties and responsibilities, the adjective ἔννομος applying to him also.³

Plainly this life demands high qualities of character. Rather less is demanded from, and contributed by, the third life, in which the πολιτικός may be understood as roughly corresponding to our administrative civil servant, while the οἰκονομικός is the head of a household and the χρηματιστικός a man of business. All these callings demand integrity, but just because they are not the lives of men in a commanding position, with power over the lives and fortunes of all their fellows, their integrity counts for less socially. Hence if there are to be persons of less moral worth than those of the first two classes, these are callings which they may follow without doing much harm, and in which they can do some good.

The next four are lives which, in their social aspect (and it is this that Plato has in mind throughout), are worth little, even if not positively

¹ The 1000-year Orphic period is implied in Empedocles's statement (*frag.* 115, 20) that the fallen soul must wander apart from the gods for thrice ten thousand seasons (τρὶς μιν μυρίας ἄρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀκαλεῖσθαι). 30,000 seasons = 10,000 years (see Taylor, *Plato*, p. 308), and this corresponds to the ἑτη μύρια made up of ten περίοδοι χιλιετίας in 249a. It has usually been thought that there is a discrepancy between this and the myth of *Rep.* x, inasmuch as the latter makes the 1000 years include the earthly lifetime reckoned at 100, whereas the *Phaedrus* does not (see Adam on *Rep.* 615a). But Frutiger (p. 255) argues that the περίοδος χιλιετίας of 249a extends from the beginning, not the end, of an earthly life. This may be right, but if there is a discrepancy it is of little importance.

² It is clear from 249b 5 that all human souls have seen something; hence ἔταν... μὴ ἴδη (248c 5) must not be pressed to mean utter failure, and ἀτελής (248b 4) should be understood as 'without full success'.

³ To this interpretation I do not consider it a valid objection that in the succeeding lives there is real discrimination, e.g. between πολιτικός, οἰκονομικός and χρηματιστικός.

harmful as are the eighth and ninth. The athlete, the physical trainer and the physician are all concerned with the body; we cannot of course forget that according to the *Republic* (410-412) γυμναστική has a beneficial effect upon the soul as well, but even there it is argued that, unless duly tempered by μουσική, its effect is bad.¹

The μαντικός βίος ἢ τελεστικός, which comes fifth, is no doubt that of the shadier sort of religious 'expert' to whom Socrates refers with such contempt at *Rep.* 364B ff.; Plato is not thinking here of the 'divine madness' found in a Pythia or a Sibyl, and the μάντις here is an ολωμιστικός.

Similarly, when he assigns to the sixth place the life of 'a poet or other imitative artist', Plato cannot have in mind the inspired poetry of 245A which 'glorifies the countless mighty deeds of ancient times for the instruction of posterity'. It has been pointed out by Prof. J. Tate² that μίμησις and its cognates, when used by Plato in discussing poetry, have sometimes a good sense, sometimes a bad; but it can hardly be contested that the bad sense predominates, and in the present phrase Plato must be thinking of that sort of poetical μίμησις which is condemned in the *Republic*; it need not, and indeed cannot, imply that every sort of ποιητικός βίος is so low in the scale of values; if it seems to do so, that is doubtless because uninspired poetry is far commoner than inspired. The seventh life is perhaps the most surprising of all. Why should the artisan and the farmer be of less value to the community than the physical trainer, the doctor, or the man of business? The explanation, so far as the artisan is concerned, is no doubt that Plato shared the common contempt of the Greek aristocrat for manual labour;³ this did not normally, at least in Athens, extend to farming, but farmers are grouped with artisans to form the third class of the *Republic* which, though an economic necessity, is politically repressed.⁴

The penultimate life is that of the sophist or the demagogue, for whose close relation we may refer to *Sophist* 268B-C; there is nothing surprising in their position in the list. Last comes the life of the tyrant, as every reader of *Rep.* IX would expect.

¹ οἱ μὲν γυμναστικῇ ἀκράτῳ χρησάμενοι ἀγριώτεροι τοῦ δέοντος ἀποβαίνουσιν (*Rep.* 410D).

² *C.Q.* xxii (1928), pp. 16 ff.

³ Cf. *Rep.* 495E, with Adam's informative note.

⁴ The third class actually includes all 'producers': but by commonly referring to it as the class of δημιουργοὶ καὶ γεωργοὶ Plato shows that it is labourers of whom he is chiefly thinking. At *Laws* 846D the practice of manual crafts is forbidden to citizens.

248E-249D REINCARNATION AND FINAL LIBERATION OF
THE SOUL. THE PHILOSOPHER'S PRIVILEGE

In general the soul cannot regrow its wings and return to its heavenly home in less than 10,000 years; but for the philosopher this is shortened to 3000. After every thousand years souls begin a new incarnate life, determined partly by lot, partly by their own choice; between each life and the next there is a period of reward or punishment.

Incarnations may be in an animal body, but the first is always in that of a man. Man's power to think conceptually is due to his reminiscence of the Forms which his soul beheld in the divine procession; and the philosopher's earlier liberation is due to his constant devotion to the Forms and his living in conformity thereto. Detached from men's ordinary pursuits, he is accounted insane, though in fact he is possessed by a god.

Now in all these incarnations he who lives righteously has a better 248E lot for his portion, and he who lives unrighteously a worse.¹ For a soul does not return to the place whence she came for ten thousand years, since in no lesser time can she regain her wings, save only his 249 soul who has sought after wisdom unfeignedly, or has conjoined his passion for a loved one with that seeking.² Such a soul, if with three revolutions of a thousand years she has thrice chosen this philosophic life, regains thereby her wings, and speeds away after three thousand years; but the rest, when they have accomplished their first life, are brought to judgment, and after the judgment some are taken to be punished in places of chastisement beneath the earth, while others are borne aloft by Justice to a certain region of the heavens,³ there to live

¹ These words refer, not to the final destiny of the souls, but to the period of reward or punishment between two incarnations. They are caught up again in the sentence beginning at 249A 5, and the intervening lines, referring to the soul's ultimate 'home-coming' and to the special privilege in respect thereto enjoyed by philosophers, are in effect a parenthesis. The γὰρ of E 5 conceals, as often, an ellipse: '(I do not speak as yet of his ultimate μοῖρα) for...'

² These are not two different persons, any more than the φιλόκαλος, μουσικός and ἐρωτικός were different from the φιλόσοφος at 248D 2. But that this is the case we shall not fully understand until later in the myth.

³ This vague phrase is probably intended to suggest a different habitat for the soul which is not yet rewinged (liberated from the κύκλος γενέσεως) from the final heavenly abode. Guthrie (*Orpheus*, pp. 184f.) points out that the distinction, necessary on Orphic principles, between Elysium and a yet higher sphere is not always maintained in Orphic passages of extant literature.

B in such manner as is merited by their past life in the flesh. And after a thousand years these and those alike come to the allotment and choice of their second life, each choosing according to her will; then does the soul of a man enter into the life of a beast, and the beast's soul that was aforesaid in a man goes back to a man again. For only the soul that has beheld truth may enter into this our human form: seeing that man must needs understand the language of Forms, passing from a plurality C of perceptions to a unity gathered together by reasoning;¹ and such understanding is a recollection of those things which our souls beheld aforesaid as they journeyed with their god, looking down upon the things which now we suppose to be, and gazing up to that which truly is.

Therefore is it meet and right that the soul of the philosopher alone² should recover her wings: for she, so far as may be, is ever near in memory to those things a god's nearness whereunto makes him truly god.³ Wherefore if a man makes right use of such means of remembrance,⁴

¹ I accept Heindorf's insertion of τό before κατ' εἶδος, since I do not think συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον is possible Greek for 'to understand by way of what is called a Form'; that would need συνιέναι κατὰ τὸ εἶδος λεγ. or συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγ. τι. My translation follows the interpretation of von Arnim (*op. cit.* p. 198): 'Zum Wesen der menschlichen Seele gehört es τὸ κατ' εἶδος λεγ. zu verstehen, d.h. Wörter, welche Allgemeinbegriffe bezeichnen.' In the same line I accept Badham's λόντ' for λόν. Not only is there force in Thompson's comment that 'to speak of the εἶδος itself as λόν, proceeding or advancing to a "unity", itself being that "unity" which is the result of the process, is a licence of bad writing in which it is difficult to believe that Plato would indulge', but also the received text seems bad Platonism, inasmuch as it can hardly fail to imply that the εἶδος is merely the common element in the sensible particulars. If Plato ever thought that, he certainly does not think so now, since it is flatly contradictory of the ἀνάμνησις doctrine (cf. J. Stenzel, *Studien zur Entwicklung der plat. Dialektik*, p. 107, and von Arnim, *op. cit.* p. 200). It is the man, not the εἶδος, who proceeds from a plurality to a unity which may rightly be described as λογισμῶ συναϊρούμενον, since ἀνάμνησις involves or is accompanied by a generalising process, although the object recollected is not a mere universal. For this use of λέναι cf. *Rep.* 476B: οἱ... ἐπ' αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν δυνατοὶ λέναι. No doubt λόντα ἐφ' ἑν would be expected rather than λόντα εἰς ἑν, but cf. ἀνακύψασα εἰς τὸ δὴ δυνάτω in c 3 below.

² The word 'alone' is strictly inconsistent with 248E 5-7, where it is implied that all souls ultimately regain their wings. But in the present sentence Plato is thinking only of events within a 10,000-year period, and giving the ground for his assertion that the philosopher alone can shorten the period of πτώσεως.

³ I retain θεός, but in English one can hardly speak of a god as 'godlike'.

⁴ Thompson says 'the εἶδη, it would seem, are not themselves δυνάτα but only "memoranda" suggestive of δυνάτα'. I think this is wrong. τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ὑπομνήμασιν are not the εἶδη denoted by ἐκείνοις in the previous line: the words mean such reminders of the Forms by their imperfect sensible copies as the ἀνάμνησις doctrine asserts: see *Phaedo* 73C ff. The philosopher employs these ἀριγὰ (ὁρθῶς χρώμενος) when he conforms his conduct to what he is reminded of. So at *Rep.*

and ever approaches to the full vision of the perfect mysteries,¹ he and he alone becomes truly perfect. Standing aside from the busy doings of mankind, and drawing nigh to the divine, he is rebuked by the D multitude as being out of his wits, for they know not that he is possessed by a deity.

The escape of the lover of wisdom from the 'wheel of birth' after 3000 years is probably another 'transposition' of Orphic doctrine, of which an echo is preserved in Pindar's second Olympian ode.² We have here a noteworthy variation on the doctrine of the *Phaedo*, according to which the philosopher escapes after a single lifetime (80D-81A).³ A difference from the *Gorgias* and *Republic* myths is the absence of eternal punishment⁴ which may have been asserted in the earlier dialogues only out of deference to Homer;⁵ in the *Phaedrus* all souls regain their wings after 10,000 years; but to the questions how long they remain winged, and whether the attempt to follow the procession of gods is repeated immediately, the myth has no answer, nor should we seek to supply one.

There is not a word in our dialogue to suggest that individual souls are ultimately absorbed into a world-soul; on the contrary everything points to the retention of individual existence. The same is true of the *Republic*, where the words αἰ εἰς εἰς αἰ αὐταὶ (611A) preclude absorption, of the *Phaedo* (114C), and of the *Timaeus* (42C-D). No doubt belief in individual immortality should involve belief in the continuity of memory,⁶ and Plato's doctrine of ἀνάμνησις does not involve any *personal* memory, memory, that is, of personal experiences in a former life; indeed the non-existence of such personal memory is recognised symbolically in the myth of *Rep.* x where the souls come to

540A the philosopher-rulers use the Form of Good as a pattern (παράδειγμα), and order their city and themselves accordingly (ἰδόντας τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸ, παραδειγματι χρωμένους ἐκείνῳ, καὶ πόλιν καὶ ἰδιώτας καὶ ἑαυτοὺς κοσμεῖν τὸν ἐπιλοπιον βίον).

¹ The words τέλειος αἰ τελετὰς τελούμενος are untranslatable, since τελούμενος means both 'being initiated' (sc. into a mystery, or revelation of sacred objects) and 'being made perfect or complete' (i.e. realising to the full the moral and spiritual potentialities of one's nature). The Greek words for *mystery*, *initiate*, and *perfect* all derive from the same root, seen in its simplest form in τέλος, 'end', 'goal', 'perfection'. In saying τέλειος δυνάτω μόνος γίγνεται Plato hints that true perfection is not to be won by participation in the ordinary mysteries.

² ll. 68 ff.

³ This is perhaps sufficiently explained by closer adherence in the *Phaedrus* to the details of Orphic eschatology. The *Phaedo* passage is not—or at least not ostensibly—mythical. The *Republic* myth says nothing of the final liberation, but this may be simply due to a limitation of purview.

⁴ *Gorgias* 525C, *Rep.* 615C ff.

⁵ cf. Guthrie, *Orpheus*, p. 168.

⁶ So it is recorded of Pythagoras that 'in life he could recall everything, and when he died he still kept the same memory' (*D.L.* VIII, 4).

the Plain of Lethe and drink the water of Unmindfulness (621A). We must, I think, be content to believe either that Plato overlooked this difficulty or else—and this seems more likely—that he felt (wrongly, as it seems to us) that the impersonal memory of the ἀνάμνησις doctrine sufficiently met it.¹

After its first life in the body the soul comes to the place of judgment and is rewarded or punished according to the good or evil of its incarnate life, as in the other three eschatological myths. Then follow the 'allotment and choosing' (κλήρωσις τε καὶ αἵρεσις), which are dwelt on at length in the Myth of Er, but here only thus briefly alluded to;² the meaning is of course that our lives are partly pre-destined, partly self-chosen.

In the next sentence there is an equally brief allusion to another point expanded in *Rep.* x, the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies. Did Plato seriously believe in this?³ There are undoubtedly difficulties in the way of accepting an affirmative answer to this question, difficulties which have been set out perhaps most forcibly by Prof. Taylor in commenting on a passage at the end of the *Timaeus* (90E ff.) where a summary account of the evolution of the lower animals is given. Perhaps the greatest difficulty is that the animals do not—at all events in Plato's view—possess reason; that he plainly admits at *Rep.* 441A–B; yet possibly this same passage may help us to surmount the difficulty. Children, we are told, are either wholly devoid of τὸ λογιστικόν or only come to possess it late in childhood. Yet the child's soul is surely conceived as the same as that of the adult into which he develops; if then the human soul has had, within the limits of its life in one and the same human body, a period of non-rationality, why should it not be possible for it to lose that rationality again, and yet still retain its identity, when it comes to inhabit the body of an animal?

Secondly, there is, as Taylor points out, the silence of *Laws* x on transmigration into animal bodies, in a passage (904A–905A) where we might well expect some mention of it. The gist of the doctrine there is that virtue and vice are recompensed by a sort of moral law of gravitation, by which the soul goes in the after-life to the company of such other souls as it has fitted itself to associate with. Thus although

¹ cf. A. D. Ritchie, *Essays in Philosophy*, p. 134: 'Plato's doctrine of "recollection" . . . definitely excludes the perpetuity of memory in the ordinary sense.'

² Von Arnim (*P.'s Jugenddialoge*, p. 172) rightly argues that the allusion would hardly be intelligible without a knowledge of *Rep.* x. This is one of his most convincing arguments for dating the *Phaedrus* later than the *Republic*.

³ The later Neoplatonists rejected the literal interpretation; cf. Proclus, in *Tim.* III, 329D–E (Diehl), Whittaker, *Neoplatonists*, pp. 291–3. Plotinus (III, 4, 2) appears to accept it; but see Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* II, p. 33, who thinks that he 'does not take the doctrine of reincarnation very seriously as scientific truth'.

reincarnation in a human body is here doubtless implied, the other sort seems implicitly denied. 'The absolute silence', says Taylor,¹ 'about any migration into animal forms, which might so easily have been got in as one way of sinking into the company of "worse ψυχαι"', seems to show that such a migration was alien to Plato's own imagination.'

There is great force in this argument, but I do not think we are entitled to say more than that Plato did not believe in transmigration when he wrote *Laws* x. That was very near the end of his life, and it is only to be expected that this belief, and perhaps others which figure in the myths, had been by then long exposed to criticism within the school; it may well be that Aristotle had already² expressed mistrust of the notion that 'any soul can enter any body' (*de anima* 407B 22).

But the *Phaedrus* was probably written before Aristotle joined the Academy, and the occurrence of this feature in the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* as well as in our dialogue should preclude us, save for incontrovertible reasons, from doubting Plato's seriousness. It is apposite to quote the well-known passage which closes the myth of the *Phaedrus* (114D): 'To maintain that these things are just as I have said would ill befit a man of common sense, but that either this or something like it is the truth about our souls and their dwelling-places seems to me (seeing that the soul has been proved to be immortal) to be fitting, and I think it a risk worth taking for the man who thinks as we do.'

I do not believe that Plato could have written thus at the end of a myth which involves reincarnation and transmigration if he had not believed in them both. It is true that reference to the latter is confined, in that myth, to the words πάλιν ἐκπέμπονται εἰς τὰς τῶν ζῴων γενέσεις;³ but that surely is because the doctrine had been fully explained at 81E–82B, a passage to which I shall refer in a moment.

In the great eschatological myths there are (as we have already recognised in the case of the *Phaedrus*) elements of allegory and imaginative poetry; there is also the element of speculation or conjecture, but such conjecture is not purely fanciful or arbitrary: it is designed to furnish answers to real and important questions: and one such question is that of the relation between the human and the animal soul. For Plato 'all soul' is a single sort of entity, over against another single sort, body, and the function of soul is to 'care for' (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) body. But just as body is found in different shapes, so soul πάντα οὐρανὸν περιπολεῖ ἄλλοτ' ἐν ἄλλοις εἶδεσι γιγνομένη (256B). It may have one εἶδος in a star, another in a human body, a third in an animal body: the star, the man, the animal are 'all besouled', ἐμψυχα

¹ Commentary on *Timaeus*, p. 641.

² That he had occupied himself with psychology in Plato's lifetime we know from the fragments of his *Eudemus* (circ. 354 B.C.).

³ 113A.

ζῷα, and soul is essentially the same in them all. And yet there is the patent difference that animals have not reason, cannot think in concepts, while men can. Was it not then a reasonable conjecture that man is nearer to the gods, so that the first incarnation will be in a human body, while animals are further from them, so that their existence involves a further 'descent' of the soul? And if a descent, why not a corresponding reascent? That is mythical belief, no doubt, but an ἐκὼς μῦθος none the less.

It is often said (e.g. by Taylor, *op. cit.* p. 640) that transmigration into animal bodies is only asserted by Plato in mythical passages. This is not strictly true, for in *Phaedo* 81E ff. it is asserted by Socrates in an argument with Cebes which is at least ostensibly dialectical. Nevertheless, I do not think this passage gives any good ground for supposing that Plato, even when he wrote the *Phaedo*, meant to establish the belief on a purely rational basis; for in the context Socrates is advancing Orphic beliefs rather in a spirit of persuasion than of reasoned argument; the *Phaedo* indeed, taken as a whole, proceeds gradually from ἐκόντα to ἀποδείξεις, as is commonly recognised—to close however with a large-scale myth.¹

Before leaving this point I must return to the passage at the end of the *Timaeus* (90E ff.) already referred to. Taylor says that 'the brief account of the lower species and of transmigration is manifestly little more than friendly burlesque' (*sc.* of early Pythagorean views). Although I do not agree with this interpretation—which is of course bound up with the author's notion that the dialogue does not represent Plato's own views at all—I think it must be admitted that the passage is highly fanciful, even to the point of becoming grotesque: though I am not sure that it is more grotesque than some other parts of the *Timaeus*. It reads, to my mind, like the rather perfunctory discharge of a task about which Plato did not care much, but which he felt imposed upon him by his general scheme, and in particular by the words he had attributed to the Demiurge at 42C; in any case, the grotesqueness lies not in the application of the transmigration principle *per se*, but in the attempt to describe a *physical* metamorphosis, e.g. of a man's body into that of a bird, which is quite another matter. What is relevant to our present problem is not this passage at the end of the dialogue, but the earlier announcement of the principle of transmigration at 42C, a principle which is part of the laws of Destiny revealed by the Demiurge to the created gods. There the *mise en scène* lifts the principle to the level of serious mythical belief, at which the four great

¹ I would not deny that the dialogues contain passages on the borderline between myth and dialectic, persuasion and argument. In attempting to interpret Plato we are compelled to distinguish his elements—the rationalist, the poet, the moralist or what not, but we must not forget the dangers of a rigid schematisation.

myths of the soul—in *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*—are all set.

Plato is careful to insist that the soul of an animal can pass into the body of a man only if the reverse transmigration has preceded (249B 4). This has of course already been said, or implied, at 248D 1, but the reason for it is now given,² namely that only souls which have seen true Being in the supra-celestial procession can possess that power of conceptual thought which distinguishes man. If it were possible to imagine a soul starting its existence in an animal, its capacity of thinking when it passed into a man's body could not be accounted for.

It is declared in the next sentence that the process of conceptual thinking is just the recollection of those constituents of true Being of which the myth has been telling us. We must not make the mistake of regarding this assertion as itself wholly mythical; it is indeed partly mythical in expression: the use of such words as συμπορευθεῖσα and ἀνακύψασα are evidence enough of that; but in substance it is a strictly philosophical assertion. For the doctrine of ἀνάμνησις, inextricably bound up as it is with Plato's belief both in the Forms and in the soul's immortality, must, on a fair examination of the evidence,² be accepted as a wholly serious tenet at least of Plato's middle period, though its absence from the later dialogues may perhaps mean its later abandonment.

¹ The force of γάρ in B 5 (οὐ γάρ ἢ γε μήποτε ἰδοῦσα κτλ.) is that the sentence which it introduces gives the reason for the words ὅς ποτε ἄνθρωπος ἦν which precede.

² See especially *Phaedo* 92D, where Simmias says ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἀνάμνησεως καὶ μνήσεως λόγος δι' ὑποθέσεως ἀξίως ἀποδείξασθαι εἰρηγται: and see the excellent discussion by Frutiger, *op. cit.* pp. 67–76. I fully agree with his conclusion: 'L'exposé du *Ménon* a un caractère mythique indéniable. Celui du *Phédon* n'est pas un simple complément du premier, comme on le croit d'ordinaire, car il traite la question sur un autre plan, celui de la dialectique.'