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Mary Rachel Taylor April 27, 2009

The Mythology of the Meme:
Tracing the Body and Soul in Philosophical and Theological Mythmaking

by

Mary Rachel Taylor

Adviser Jack Zupko

Department of Philosophy

Jack Zupko
Adviser

Ann Hartle
Committee Member

Katrina Dickson
Committee Member

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Abstract

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Mythology serves as both a guiding principle and the form of the narrative of humanity as well as a viable and mutable representation of the human condition extended through time. When remapped onto mythology, Richard Dawkins's conception of the ever changing yet resilient cultural meme provides a lens through which to examine the consistency of myth and perhaps reconcile its seemingly different manifestations from antiquity to Christianity. Further clarity is achieved when narrowing the investigation to the cultural and philosophical manifestation of the body and soul in each respective time period. As reflected in myths of origin, the relationship between the body and soul serves as the access point to the divine as well as the center for understanding human experience. The discussion is furthered by examining paradigmatic texts from before and after the advent of Christianity. Plato's *Timaeus* provides a classical understanding of the cosmos and Augustine's *City of God* facilitates an investigation of the Christian notion of man in relation to his origin.

The trajectory of the contentious yet unified relationship between the body and the soul has not been broken from antiquity's conception of the self in relation to the divine. Rather, the form of conveyance and the characters to which the ends are directed change, but remain recognizably consistent. This continual participation with the divine can be viewed as manifest in the mode of narration whether that of poetry, philosophical discourse, or Scripture, since each is granted divine authority within the cultural contexts. The aim of this essay is to elucidate the eternal quality of myth, its cultural function and its evolution with respect to the body and soul. Mythological discourses are inextricably tied to one another and representative of a fundamental or basic need of humanity to eventually terminate in the eternality of myth, in this case, by means of philosophy.

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Introduction

Contemporarily, mythology is most often referenced when framing discussions about antiquity, specifically Greek and Roman traditions. The mode and content of these myths are themselves discredited as antiquated narratives of the praise or folly of imagined gods and heroes and their contentious relationships. This invocation of the mythic, however, curtails the understanding of mythology and the work and import that it has always had and continues to exercise in the modern world. Far from being the ignorant waxing of poets, myth serves a greater function that is explicit in antiquity and perhaps more subtle today when examined through philosophy.

Mythology can be conceived of as both reflective of and instructive for those who created it. Thought of in this way, however, mythology is imbued with an almost anachronistic function. In an endeavor to realize the whole story and value of mythology, I would like to suggest that myth must be understood in its truest and most expansive function in the continuum of time and history instead of isolated as a fixture within a specific past that can only remotely inform our modern understanding. To accomplish this examination it is necessary to map not only the origin and mode of myth, but also how these two aspects influence the nature of myth. Thus, mythology serves as both a guiding principle in and form of the narrative of humanity as well as a viable and mutable representation of the human condition extended through time.

The work of Richard Dawkins offers a way in which to examine mythology in its origination and throughout history. He bases his book, *The Selfish Gene,* on what he proposes is "most of what is unusual about man…: culture" (Dawkins 189). He appeals to a scientific sense of culture in which the transmission of culture is analogous to the

transmission of genes. Culture is encapsulated in what he calls "memes," which serve a purpose similar to genes. This formulation gives rise to a form of cultural evolution, bespeaking the constancy and connectedness linking one culture to another. In this project, the meme serves as the guide in tracing mythology; it represents both culture itself and its trans-generational qualities along with those specific aspects within a culture that manifest themselves differently at different times. Dawkins explains that language is another "problem:" it seems to evolve at a rate much faster than any genetic evolution could allow. As such, it is analogous to myth. Myth develops strikingly fast and, though it remains consistent from culture to culture, its content—like that of language—evolves so that, "Geoffrey Chaucer could not hold a conversation with a modern Englishman, even though they are linked to each other by an unbroken chain of some twenty generations of Englishmen, each of whom could speak to his immediate neighbours" (189).

When remapped onto mythology, the cultural meme provides a lens through which to examine the consistency of myth and perhaps reconcile its seemingly different manifestations from antiquity to Christianity. Further clarity is achieved when narrowing the investigation to the cultural and philosophical manifestation of the body and soul in each respective time period. As reflected in myths of origin, the relationship between the body and soul serves as the access point to the divine as well as the center for understanding human experience. The discussion is furthered by examining paradigmatic texts from before and after the advent of Christianity. Therefore, Plato's *Timaeus* provides a classical understanding of the cosmos and Augustine's *City of God* and

Confessions facilitates an investigation of the Christian notion of man in relation to his origin.

Within these texts, it is quickly evident that the body is a problem indicative of man's material and mortal condition. Thus, turning to the soul is required in order to imitate or achieve union with the divine. In ancient philosophy the solution is found in one's ability to completely free oneself from imprisonment within the body by only exercising the soul over the body and, ultimately, by practicing philosophy. In Christianity, however, the body is unable to be discarded, for not only is man made in the image of God, but also God becomes man in Christ, through whom the mortal body is resurrected along with the soul. Though this appears to be a radical break from ancient thought, it attests to the continual need for man's active participation in the divine within himself as represented by the body and soul's relationship. And, relationships outside of himself are represented by participation in humankind, constituting culture and the inherent need for an appeal to myth as a guide within and between the mortal and immortal worlds. Myth can serve this function since its own nature mimics that of the body and soul: part mortal and part immortal. Furthermore, even though myth seems to be created by man and used as a tool to negotiate the complex relationship of the human and divine, I suggest that it is only recognized by man out of the eternal; it is transmitted and transmuted through the meme and manifested in and as culture.

Admittedly, this examination is by no means exhaustive. Rather, the aim of this essay is to elucidate the eternal quality of myth, its cultural function and its evolution with respect to the body and soul. The form of myth and its participants found in Christianity are influenced by and reflective of those found in Platonic myth and

philosophy. Mythological discourses are inextricably tied to one another and representative of a fundamental or basic need of humanity to eventually terminate in the eternality of myth, in this case, by means of philosophy.

I. Beginning in Myth and its Cultural Construction

The observation that mythology permeates thought and practice spanning from paganism to Christianity seems obvious. In the sense that mythology is the telling of stories, the method is presumably the same in a secular or religious practice. However, what differs is the origin of the explanatory tale. The origin lends insight into the social, historical, and even religious contexts out of which myth is created. I posit that the means by which mythology is promulgated attests to its instructional value as well as its formal longevity and importation into succeeding schools of thought. Mythology is a universal tool, utilized by cultures, religions, and families. It creates context and history, a shared experience and explanation–in short, a way in which a participant can frame his/her experience within the world and within time. Additionally, mythology becomes a living or mutable organism of shared experience that permeates both consciously or unconsciously those generations subsequent to that of the origin of the myth. [1] In doing so, the mythological organism also mirrors the construction of human organisms; it is mortal insofar as it is mutable and immortal inasmuch as it is continually reproduced and passed on from one generation to the next. I would like to suggest that this organism

[1] The invocation of the conscious and unconscious here is to assert the presence of a myth and its independence as an entity that affects those subject to it even when they are unaware of it explicitly. In other words, it permeates culture and demands participation whether or not the culture actively creates or acknowledges it.

serves as an ideal tool through which to examine the relationship between the body and the soul–a relationship often explicated or rooted in myth and equally complicated in its participation with the mortal and immortal. An examination of the nature of mythology and what I will call its "mortal" function as a single entity in the created myth and its "immortal" function embodied in subsequent mythologies, presents a unique way in which to think about the similar functions and nature of the body and soul. Likewise, it is helpful to begin in the myths themselves to proceed from a common origin, first examining ancient formulations of mythology manifest in culture through poetry, exemplary of a Platonic division (and what I will argue is a union) of body and soul.

As John F. Moffitt explains, "It was the Greek writer Euhemerus who laid the foundations for the enduring idea that the gods had been recruited from the coarse ranks of mere mortals, thus giving a convenient name, 'euhemerism,' to all such naturalistic mythologies, either written or painted" (Moffitt 159). Moffitt aims to examine paintings created in Spain during the seventeenth century, a time in which the Catholic Church vehemently rejected the claim that the ancient mythology of paganism could serve as a pedagogical tool to disseminate Christian moral teachings. His invocation of euhemerism elucidates the power of the myth and its transmutation and import through history as manifested within culture, specifically material culture. In Moffitt's case, the material culture examined is painting, but could extend to religious objects or writings or, as in this instance, poetry; each proffers insight and functions by reflecting those cultures in which they were created. By treating mythological accounts as reflective of actual historical events, euhemerism embodies the belief that culture and tradition influence and

create myths. In turn, myths are continually changed as they are promulgated in subsequent generations.

Moffitt asserts that "the pagan gods had never disappeared from either collective memory or imagination, but lived on in certain concepts given comprehensive shape before the end of the antique world," thus revealing that once myths had been created to immortalize an actual historical event they became something larger than a single empirical event that occurred in a specific time and space (160). I would like to suggest that myth, once created (whether from an actual event or not is debatable) takes on a life of its own, reflective not only of the time and space within which it was created, but also of a more universal experience that was shared and will continue to be admirable, instructive, or shared by subsequent participants. In other words, myths, once created, are shared by a culture and those involved with them become participants in the myth that itself is participatory in a universal experience. Thus, admiration is demanded by the idealized myth that connects its immediate participants with a universal or collective audience of participants. Additionally, these myths endure due to their instructive qualities; they authoritatively prescribe action within a culture because the myths themselves are derived from an eternal mythological organism.

Admittedly, this argument extends past euhemerism since all myths do not adhere to the Euhemeristic definition of the immortal nature of actual events. As read by Moffitt, in the *De Natura Deorum,* Cicero declares that we see the meaning of mythology codified in four enduring principles:[2]

[2] Much of euhemerism is found in Cicero's account of Euhemerus's theory and the way in which he uses it and expands upon it. What is relevant to this project is the modernization that seems to have been undertaken by Moffitt's invocation and reading of Cicero.

1) Myths are based upon historical fact, however much the original facts may have become subsequently distorted.
2) Given this, the gods were originally mere mortals, later elevated to the ranks of the immortals.
3) As gods, they are cosmic symbols, expressive of either the concord or discord of elementary universal conflicts.
4) The gods and their myths are, therefore, merely the expression of certain *fabulae* embodying sweeping moral and philosophical concepts, in which case the gods themselves are only allegorical figures conveniently set to immediate didactic purposes.

In Moffitt's distillation of Cicero's mythology, it is evident that myths instantiate lessons (often moral) and situate intangible ideals in such a way that they are taught and accessible to those who contributed to the myths along with those who have only brief encounters with them. This is not an infallible method of interpretation, though it does illustrate the value in furthering the understanding of myth by accessing historical and contextual material culture. I suggest that this formulation of mythology as presented by Cicero and modernly enacted by Moffitt illumines particular qualities inherent to myths and their creation. In turn, these qualities can be used to examine not only the nature of mythology but also various uses of myth. For example, this can be seen in classical Greece where there was material "evidence" of Cyclopean masonry or the olive tree given Athens by Athena that instantiated myth as historical and a source of origin for the inhabitants. These myths were often interchangeable with reality or used as justification of action within the cultural realm.

Moffitt's declaration that "the pagan gods had never disappeared from either collective memory or imagination" attests to the eternal quality of myth, and perhaps more importantly where myth often resides: memory. This especially pertains to the collective memory located within the context of a culture or the faculty whence it originates: the imagination. Further, it is important to note the import of myth in relation

to those subject to it or responsible for its creation and propagation. Once created, myth takes on a life-form of its own, one that is active in and reactive to the time in which it is being told, while sustained through various strands or forms in subsequent generations. This organic conception of myth supports the claim that many concepts very well could have been "given comprehensive shape before the end of the antique world" (ibid..). The significance of the organic conception of myth is found when explicating the living nature that is produced from, changed by, and continued from the culture and nature of those who created it. The living quality of myth brings to the forefront the function of reflection and how a large essential claim is formed and shaped that permeates subsequent generations and myths. In addition, the vitality of myth persists in ideas that become completely detached from their origins and enter a "mythic state" completely dependent upon those who participate later in the myth. For instance, an invocation of the Muses has largely become a literary trope devoid of any reference to actual divine inspiration; therefore, this practice has entered the "mythic state."

Another quality teased to the forefront by Cicero's principles is the interaction between the mortal and immortal. In his formulation, the pagan gods are mortals destined for immortality. Though this premise could easily be challenged, I am intent on parsing out the implications following the intermingling of the mortal and immortal. A dichotomy between the mortal and immortal embodies what I suggest is the key to understanding the majority of dichotomies in general and how they enter into discussion: through action, specifically, their interaction. For, the myth and mythology serve dual functions: the myth is not only that which is created by mortals, but it is also mortal itself, continually changing and producing 'progeny,' thus inculcated as an immortal identified

with mythology, which is representative of eternal truths, no longer dependent on mortals.

In his book, *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins explores the living quality of myths and establishes the idea of the 'meme,' a unit of information such as a cultural practice or idea that is transmitted verbally or by repeated action from one mind to another. Derived from the premise that "what is most unusual about man can be summed up in one word: 'culture,'" Dawkins, a more-or-less orthodox Darwinian, argues that the transmission of culture is analogous to the transmission of genes (Dawkins 189). He goes as far as to assert that "memes [the mode of transmission] should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically" (190). For the sake of culture, however, as it is created and propagated by humans, it is useful to focus entirely on the nature of the cultural meme as a metaphor and didactic device in illuminating the import and evolution of culture and in the service of a larger argument for the mythology of culture.

To better understand the argument for cultural transmission as analogous to genetic transmission, it is important to explicate first the origin and import of the meme. Dawkins establishes the meme from the Greek *mimema,* approximating something that is "imitated." He proposes that imitation is in fact the way in which memes are replicated, some more successfully than others. Examples of memes as he envisions them are "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes-fashions…or the way of building arches" (190). Hence, they are not necessarily only replicated materially through written word or art, but also immaterially through, for instance, the "idea-meme." He defines this particular meme as "an entity that is capable of being transmitted from one brain to another," and

though this transmission is not verbatim or exact, the "essence" is indeed the same (ibid.). To depict the transmission of the idea meme, Dawkins uses the example of Darwinism, "which is present in the head of every individual who understands the theory" (191). Those who reject Darwin's theory still participate in the actual meme of the theory though they misunderstand it, rendering it a variation of the meme. In this way, the nature of imitation is demonstrated— an imitation that is not an exact replica, but enough of an understanding to serve as a replication of ideas imitating one another. The replications are always changing in understanding depending on the person and the cultural context in which the meme is replicated. Disparities in subsequent representations or explanations of this theory are not a part of the meme; rather, they are interpretations of an idea or essence that has been transmitted.

Notably, Dawkins correlates the meme with psychological or mental aspects of humans. He argues that an idea-meme can be self-perpetuating because of its psychological impact. For instance, the idea of hell, perpetuated culturally, retains its import and is thus reinforced from generation to generation, though manifested in various ways, i.e., from the notion of Hades to the depiction of Dante's *Inferno*. Thus, the idea of hell has the ability to thrive in the "meme pool." This theory mirrors that of Darwin's survival of the fittest, remapping the genetic traits that are advantageous onto cultural traits that (for differing reasons) are also advantageous to *themselves*.[3] Here, it is important to note that culture is thus encapsulated in the meme and transmitted through the meme's own means; it is within human interaction that various memes are produced

[3] The fact that they survive by maintaining traits that are "advantageous to themselves" is indicative of the meme's ability to thrive culturally, especially as ideas. For example, in the case of the idea of hell, the meme could manifest itself as a warning to society that predicates a moral framework in which those within the society live. On the other hand, a meme containing traits that promote a less harmonious state will perhaps be extinguished by necessity or the death of those who adhere to it.

and maintained. Ultimately, though, the meme represents the living and malleable characteristics of culture that reflect those who participate, are dependent upon its own cultural implications (and whether they are significant or not), and are consequently reactive and imitative in their function. Whereas Dawkins attributes the "mimetic transfer" of culture to a psychological connection in humans, I suggest that this terminates the discussion at a superficial level. The psychological need Dawkins appeals to as the root for mimetic survival gestures towards a more universal human need for the maintenance and transferal of cultural memes. They are needed by not simply individuals but by collective participants in cultures. Thus, they are representative of a human condition that may or may not originate from a mental or psychological need. The possibility of a deeper investigation and understanding is afforded this discussion if we leave the origin of the cultural meme unanswered for the moment. As we shall see, this question is better taken up when examined as originating from an eternal myth.

In accordance with Dawkins's theory of the meme, the living organism which influences human organisms and is inextricable from their experience, it is derived from and dwelling within the natural world and can be examined as a reflection of and participant in human culture and its evolution. Indeed, this formulation is comparable to what euhemerism approximates: each is an attempt to examine the interaction between the mortal and immortal. This initial product of culture takes on a life of its own and must be studied as an active (or interactive) experience with respect to those who participate in it. This conception is most readily contrasted with (and privileged over) the idea of a static examination, devoid of creation and subsequent interaction. One way in which to enter into the discussion of the creation of mythology and its import in the

conception of the body and soul is by examining Hesiod's *Theogony*, an explication of the genealogy of the gods who created the world.

II. Myths of the Origins of Mortals and Immortals Embodied in Poetry

The *Theogony* is an explanation of the creation story of the gods (and therefore man) through poetry, a favored form of revelation that mirrors and is employed by myth. The form of poetry itself mirrors myth insofar as it is created by mortals, but participates in the eternal form of word or creation. Poetry itself, and later revelation, is that which is granted authority from the divine (here, the Muses; in Christianity, God) and as such it mimics man's creation, a creation that it out of the eternal, out of death. As appealed to here, it is exemplary of material culture that serves the dual function of simultaneously reflecting and accounting for the past while projecting itself into the future. Thus, while examining Hesiod's account of creation, the mode by which he reveals it must be kept in mind. It is poetry, a story or *fabulae* that, once spoken or written, is submitted to the treatment (and elevation) of a myth, an organic and vital participant in the interaction between the creator, the culture, and humanity. According to the poem, Hesiod is the ventriloquist of the Muses, imbued with a divine voice. As instructed, Hesiod first tells of the Muses "who gladden the great spirit of their father Zeus in Olympus with their songs, telling of things that are and that shall be and that were aforetime with consenting voice" (Hesiod ll. 36-39). Mnemosyne, Memory, bore the nine Muses "all of one mind, whose hearts [were] set upon song and their spirit free from care" (ll.53-74). The Muses, because they are born of Mnemosyne, are the living personification of both the origin and

the creative memory, not as a monolithic state, but an active (creative) experience establishing the relationship between the immortal and mortal spheres.

The power from immortal or undying gods is shared with the mortal world. For example, when one (such as Hesiod) is at the service of the Muses, "[he] chants the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he forgets his heaviness and remembers not his sorrows at all" (ll. 53-74). Thus, out of Memory is born the gift of storytelling. Importantly, the act of remembering and singing mimics (or imitates) the ability of the Muses when they declare that they "know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things" (ll. 26-28). It follows then that the creation and proliferation of language stems from the well of Memory and is propagated through songs or the poetry (verse) of truth and falsehood, serving as a tool for memory (i.e., of things that were aforetime), a depiction of things as they are (presently being sung about), and as they will be. Therefore, memory and, more importantly, song, which is equivalent to the sweet voice of poetry, relay and uproot events from their mortal groundings to enter into song that is innately immortal due to its source: the immortal and eternal *memory*. Its audience is comprised of both the direct contemporary listeners and those from generations yet to come. From this interaction, access is granted to the immortal for the mortal, and life is imbued with the very act of song that relates the subject and the singer. Also proffered in this explanation of the song of memory is an opening for speech to constitute truth by communing with the eternal. In turn, those who participate with this activity of song or poetry are the creators or arbiters of truth.

According to Hesiod, as he continues the story after the origin of the Muses, the order of the creation of the world follows:

> Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundations of all the deathless ones…and dim Tartarus… and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. (ll.116-138)

In this account, out of Chaos came Earth and subsequently Eros, or Love. Hesiod is one instance representative of many in which the world is formed with Love as a deity born concurrently with the Earth and out of Chaos, the Earth being the physical substance upon which humanity dwells, and Chaos, the intangible consuming material of the Cosmos. Between Chaos and Earth, the deity of Love emerges and bridges the two, mediating their interaction. Hence, Eros is granted the ability to affect both the bodily limbs and the mind's wise counsel of both gods and humans from the outset of the Origin. Within Hesiod's depiction is the inherent dichotomy between the power of love, even as the "sweet union" of two gods, and the absence of Love which constitutes or contributes to the existence of strife for immortals and mortals alike. Hence, Eros acts dually as a deity and as a state of being or interaction between other deities and humans equally, even often detrimentally mediating the interrelations between the immortal and mortal. Significant in this conception is the fundamentally active and interactive quality of love and its ability to mediate between the tangible and intangible, the mortal and immortal, the limbs and the mind. Whether controllable or not, its presence (or absence in many cases) is the origin of action or inaction between the senses and the body, further

unifying or destroying the union or separation of the body and the soul (or mind, i.e., "wise counsel").[4]

Empedocles further addresses the creative and destructive power of Eros in his formulation of the Cosmic Circle of creation reliant on Love and Strife in *On Nature and Purifications*. Love and Strife are the two primary forces to which Empedocles assigns responsibility for the cyclic creation and destruction of the world. He designates Love (*Philia*) as a force of attraction that draws all of the elements together into a Sphere in which no matter can exist actively due to complete fusion or union of the elements within the totality of Love. As the force of Love weakens and Strife strengthens its hold, life is born in the balance and exists only until Strife (*Neikos*) dominates completely. When this occurs, all matter and existence is destroyed and the elements are torn apart in the Whirl resulting in a state of complete separation. After this destruction, a balance is once again struck on the "upturn" with the increase of Love and decrease of Strife. However (given the clockwise movement of the Circle) the ascent to the top of the Sphere allows only for a type of "Counter-world," a foil of our own world marked by "Man-faced Ox-creatures" to re-emerge. This counter-world is opposed to ours for two reasons: it originates from Strife and is within a cycle, so is essentially a "re-creation." The former attends to the notion that man in "our world" is created out of the "Good," in this case Love, which opens a space for us to resemble or participate in the redeeming qualities of that which

[4] Here I want to emphasize the power of the mediation of Love, not its inherent Goodness or "unifying" power. As in Virgil's Eclogue X: "*Omnia vincit amor*" can arguably be read as "Love completely destroys [conquers] all." Thus, Love can be either a completely unifying or destructive power, and as such, is exemplary of the idea meme of Love. The idea of Love as a unifier equivalent to the Good pervades culture. On the other hand, Love as completely destructive, though it has validity, has primarily extinguished itself from culture because it is not advantageous to itself as it usually ends in complete destruction or death. This dual nature of Love also shows our willingness to "risk" the mediation between the mortal and immortal in order to commune with the divine.

made us: Love. Therefore, Love offers a productive way to imitate the creator in the forms of union or harmony while overcoming Strife which is present as a force that pulls man (apart). On the other hand, if we are born out of Strife then our creator is total separation, and without the destruction of ourselves, there is no way to participate or imitate the creator, and by the nature of this re-creation, this man will not be identical to the man produced out of Love.

Empedocles's privileging of our creation from Love can be informed by Dawkins's explanation of the cultural meme. Even though the same "matter" (i.e., meme) is being discussed in both instances of creation, it is presumed to have changed slightly because the world or context has changed in which it is being created. Furthermore, creation out of matter demands a mutable world contingent on the creator -- the world either could be or not. And, in this cycle, it is unlikely that that which is "re-created" will be the same as the previous instance of creation. Nonetheless, the figuration of the world within the tension and balance of the forces of Love and Strife exemplifies their inherent qualities: the ability to create, perpetuate, unify, and destroy.[5] Empedocles further states that "There is a double birth of what is mortal, and a double passing away; for the uniting of all things brings one generation into being and destroys it, and the other is reared and scattered as they are being divided" (Campbell). This cosmos, suspended by and fraught with this continuous struggle between Love and Strife, is "in a state of constant flux, beneath which there is a certain sort of stability in the eternity of the elements" (ibid.).

[5] Scholarship indicates that it is unclear whether Empedocles actually believes Love and Strife to be deities or simply actions embodied which participate or can be attributed to the eternal elements.

Additionally, Empedocles derives that though the world is constantly in flux, this contributes to its "constant state of organic stability in the eternity of the elements." Paradoxically, there is constancy or "stability" found in the perpetual cyclic death and rebirth out of the elements. Thus, both creation and destruction are out of eternity, implicating those mortals created and destined to be destroyed in participation with and subject to this unchanging eternal force, here presented as Love and Strife. This continuous cycle gives rise to the possibility for the perfection of the soul. Empedocles believed that he himself was in fact a daimôn, one who lives among men on earth as a prophet, minstrel, physician, and leader, all activities through which he can "purify" himself in order to reach perfection, and thus, divine status (Empedocles). In this case, the myth of the origin of the world assigns Love and Strife divine status since they both have the capacity to create, but I further that they participate in a larger cosmos: the eternal cosmic cycle. Therefore, Empedocles' divine status would liken him to an immortal participant in the eternal creation, to the figures of Love and Strife, though not responsible for the creation of this cycle.

Inherent to the possibility of the perfection of the soul through action is a reconciliation of the body and the soul: The two are stuck in a continuous turbulent cycle within the self that is similar to the Cosmic Circle proposed by Empedocles. If perfection is attainable and, in turn, divine status, then too, the ability to interact between mortals and immortals is possible. The distinction seems to be action and situation within the mortal sphere. This action is subject to the external forces of Love and Strife in addition to the internal tension between the physical actions rooted in the body and therefore the mortal world, and the transcendent actions rooted in the soul and therefore the immortal

world. Thus, both Love and Strife serve as active forces amongst the mortal and immortal. As such, the agency afforded Love and Strife, whether that of deities or merely external or ecstatic states, is influential in the depiction of the mortal as a reflection of the immortal, one eventually (if following Empedocles' instruction) subsuming or supplanting the other.

My interest here, just as within the conception of myths and subsequent mythology, is the interaction between the divine and human spheres. The deities that govern one often proffer the means by which to traverse between the spheres and further elucidate the interactions between the deities as embodied physically in the mortal world and ideally in the immortal world. Both the deities and their "subjects" are ultimately subsumed in immortality through the creation of culture and myth, which is necessitated because of the continual flux of unification and separation. It is within this interaction and further formulation of Love that there is found a seemingly cyclic conception the body and the soul, their interaction with one another and with immortals. Love, here, serving as the reigning deity for the unification of the body and soul, must be examined not as a state of being, i.e., "being in love," but rather an active or interactive state in which the soul and body must participate, whether for the purpose of unification or for the amplification of separation of the two. Within both conceptions lies the unstated premise that Love as a deity mirrors action within the immortal realm and the mortal realm, while simultaneously bridging the two.

III. The Mythology of Love examined through Plato

The question of the nature of Love, and consequently, human interaction with Love arises in Plato's *Symposium* in which Diotima, when addressing Socrates, states, "It follows that Love *must* be a lover of wisdom, and, as such, is in between being wise and being ignorant" (204b4). Within Diotima's rather long story explaining the origin and nature of Love, her statement reinforces and extends the explanation of Love's dual nature as being neither immortal nor mortal (203e). It is also a productive way in which to examine the relationship between the mortal and immortal construction of the body and soul, a relationship mediated through both the mortal and immortal contextualized within ancient Greece. Love provides a perspective through which to parse out the relationship of the mortal to the immortal in both a pagan world and ultimately its translation (or transfiguration) at the birth of Christianity.

In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes proffers a speech explicating the origin of love that, interestingly, is not in the form of a dialogue, but is in the form of a myth or *fabulae*. In his story, he depicts the nature of mortal love, whence it was born, and how it is governed by and eventually reconciled by the deity Love. He begins by explaining the natural condition of man: initially, there were three sexes consisting of men, women, and a union of the two. Each one was round with four arms and legs and one head with two faces looking in opposite directions; the sexes were originally the children of the sun, the earth, and the moon, respectively. However, the gods grew quite worried by these humans that were strong of might as well as heart. In order to prevent a rebellion against the heavens, Zeus cut them in two so that each would walk upright on two legs, quelling the threat of insolence. After the two parts of man were divided, "each, desiring his other

half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one[.] They began to die from hunger and self-neglect" (Jowett 189d).

Eventually, in an effort to stop them from destroying themselves, Zeus "turned the parts of generation round to the front… [so that] they sowed the seed…in one another" in order that the race continue and that they might be satisfied (Cooper 191c). Aristophanes asserts: "So ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, seeking to make one of two, and to heal the state of man" (192b). However, Aristophanes goes on to note that "the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lovers' intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she [the soul] has only a dark and doubtful presentiment" (195). Aristophanes' final declaration follows: "we must praise the god Love, who is our greatest benefactor, both leading us in this life back to our own nature, and giving us high hopes for the future, for he promises that if we are pious, he will restore us to our original state, and heal us and make us happy and blessed" (ibid.).[6]

Aristophanes' account of the origin of love is a creation myth of a deity, Love, and its namesake's, love's, birth within the mortal realm. Within this myth the interaction between the mortal and immortal is rampant, though it is interesting to note that the Olympic gods are not the primary creators of these "primeval" men. This interaction is what I will map as vertical, one predicated on the hierarchy between the

[6] Aristophanes' account of the creation of sexes does not promote our "natural state" to be that of union between male and female. Rather, his account offers an explanation of differing orientations within the world manifested here as sexual union, but representative of deeper yearnings of the soul to find its other half and thereby to transcend the mortal realm.

mortal and immortal and one's (the mortal's) natural subjugation to the other. If this were not the case, there would be no need for the division of man for he would be viewed as equal and non-threatening to the immortal's "higher" position.[7] These early sexes were complete, in need of nothing because they were whole; hence, they became a threat to the gods because there was no need for the race to obey the gods or implore them to satisfy mortal wants. In fact, there were no wants given the humans' inherent completeness. Their physical union is also indicative of their mental union in which their desires were in full accord with their physical capacities. In this case, it appears that there is no overt struggle between the body and soul because there is no need for the attention to leave oneself (here, the two "selves" as one "self"). In other words, there is no need for the realization of external forces or any attention upward towards heaven because the two, in one, could be completely dependent on themselves.[8] It is because of this independence from the gods that there is no space for Love. Since the human race is completely self-sufficient, there is no desire for any more than what has already been given them.[9]

Further, this formulation encapsulates the need for love and the dual function it serves: Love is an unchanging and beneficent governor and leader that can be appealed to

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[7] This implies a necessary exertion of power in order to exemplify the "natural" state of being created or eternal. However, I would like to suggest that within this account there is space opened for the rethinking of the mortal and immortal relationship. Is it necessarily a "natural" one or could it be a testament to a "mistake," (for lack of a better word) of the immortal's creation of man, and thus the mortal nature of the immortal? Here, the immortal becomes the players that, as we'll see explicated in the *Timaeus*, are equivalent to man's state as on the Christian schematic.

[8] Later, I'll indicate the need for the move from the inward to outward to upward due to Augustine's formulation of "scattered-ness."

[9] There is especially no Desire like that which followed Eros in accompanying the birth and ascension of Aphrodite to Olympus of which Hesiod speaks. In other words, there is no eroticism except perhaps for autoeroticism given the nature of sexes being satisfied internally. But, again, this is manifest internally, and once, the sexes are separated, it is external, but signifies a greater need for union with one's other half.

both in its practical and tangible manifestation as a yearning, not only for the erotic desire of another, but also as a desire of the soul to be complete in its other half (a desire that the soul cannot, in fact, articulate other than the intimation of a whole and the "dark and doubtful presentiment" that it exists). Hence, the concept of love as an intermediary within the mortal sphere originates from an absence or separation and acts as a unifying instrument and guide in "healing" the natural state of man. The tragic separation of the self in Aristophanes' myth is fundamental to the nature of love in conjunction with the nature of man, constituting an interactive relationship between men (horizontally) and between man and the divine (vertically). Moreover, this explanation is an example of the opening of a space between the spoken and actual world. In other words, this explanation would not be possible without the form of myth or song or poetry. As seen in Aristophanes' speech, by viewing the separation of the body as necessary for the perpetuation and reunification of the body and soul, we are allowed access into the dichotomy that has future implications and changes organically, accompanied by its commander: Love.

IV. The Mythology of Plato's Body and Soul

In another examination of the separation of the body and soul, Phaedo recounts Socrates' discussion of the qualities of the body and soul to Echecrates in the *Phaedo*. The dialogue begins with the assertion that "learning is no other than recollection" (Hackett 72*e*). This premise, necessary and logical to what follows, makes a claim regarding a correlation between the soul and knowledge and further serves as the foundation upon which Socrates constructs his argument that the soul is immortal. The

immortality of the soul and its association with recollection as the activity of the soul exemplifies the importance and power of memory in its connection to the soul, but moreover, its import in the soul. If learning is recollection, and therefore Memory, then the participation of the soul in the activity of recollection underscores its origin in the eternal and its participation in a cycle necessitated by this immortal nature when inserted into the mortal world. Additionally, in support of the soul's immortality, it is assumed that "one part of ourselves is the body, another part is the soul" (79*b*), and that there are essentially "two kinds of existences, the visible [which changes] and the invisible [which always remains the same]" (79*a*). Since the soul participates in the immortal, and is necessarily born out of the eternal (out of death 77*d*), which renders recollection and learning interchangeable, the body is the inescapable link and instantiation of the soul mortally and therefore visibly. The soul, it is argued, is naturally "most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself" (80*b*). On the other hand, the body is presumably the opposite and "most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same" (80*b*).

My conception of the nature of myth and mythology is similar to this explanation of the division and interplay between the soul and the body. The myth is similar to the soul in that it participates in the immortal; it originates out of death (the eternal) to give an account of origin and the immortal within the mortal realm. The subsequent mythology that follows from the origin of myth is "multiform, and never consistently the same," i.e., its origin remains but the mythology is picked up by mortals and is subject to constant change or reinvention. Through this depiction, the distinction between the state and form of "mortals," the mythic meme if you will, and their participation in the

immortal (out of eternal) is illuminated. In turn, it serves to further elucidate the participation and ineluctable union (achieved through this interaction) of the body and soul along with the similarities of their participation in the eternal and instantiation through memory.

Socrates continues arguing that if the soul is pure upon separation from the body in death, meaning that it has taken nothing of the bodily with it in life, it will not be destroyed in death or returned to chaos. The practice in life of the soul gathering itself and disassociating from the body is "[the practice] of philosophy in the right way, in fact, [the training] to die easily" (80*c*). Upon entering death in such a prepared manner, the soul "makes its way to the invisible, which is like itself, the divine and immortal and wise" and free "to spend the rest of time with the gods" (81*a*). This picture of the pure soul is juxtaposed with the impure soul, which has been effectively glued to the body through physical desires and pleasures to such an extent that nothing but the physical appears to exist. Socrates declares that a soul weighed down by the physical has become so as a result of constant intercourse and association with the body.

I assert, however, that gathering the soul must be done in relation to the body and within the larger body of the mortal realm that mirrors both human and divine interaction. In other words, in order to reach immortality the soul cannot simply cast off the body or privilege itself entirely over the body. Rather, the mortal body is necessary for the participation of the soul in the immortal, and as such, the two are joined in union with one another. Whether this "union" of the body and soul (note, not "harmony") leads to an immortal end and a practice of philosophy or stagnates as in the re-interment into the mortal realm depends on the holistic participation in life, a life constituted by Memory

and out of death, i.e., the eternal. Importantly, here is the inherent interaction and continual binding of the body and soul and the mortal and immortal through participation only enabled by separation.

In Socrates' account to Phaedo, the philosophical soul realizes that when it begins to practice philosophy that it is tied to the body and must learn to master passions and desires and not relent or surrender to them: "The lovers of learning know that when philosophy gets hold of their soul, it is imprisoned in and clinging to the body, and that it is forced to examine other things through it as a cage and not by itself, and that it wallows in every kind of ignorance" (82*e*). This philosophical soul, embodied in the lover of learning, of wisdom, is thus compelled by the inquiry and examination of what is true, not by visible or physical means, but rather by what the soul "sees," the "intelligible and invisible" (83*b*). The soul of the philosopher follows "reason and ever stays with it contemplating the true, the divine, which is not the object of opinion" (84*a*). In this construct the division appears between the action of the philosopher of loving wisdom and gaining access to the eternal through the practice of recollection (which goes hand in hand with the soul) and the state of being a philosopher in which the soul is prepared for death because the practice has readied and overseen the pure separation of the body from its mortal constraints. Thus, this activity of the soul and recollection constituting philosophy requires participation. The lover of wisdom must seek the invisible through the visible. In this conception, I argue, there is an ineluctable union through separation. The immortal is threaded through the mortal world in the physical bodies of philosophers themselves; their love of wisdom is made possible through the interaction between and not the division of the body and soul or the oversight of one completely in favor of the

other.[10] Mirroring the concept of the body and soul, the lover of wisdom must not only love in the mortal sense, but participate in love as constructed in the immortal realm through recollection. And, finally, once the philosopher has achieved the mastery of the bodily (pleasure and pain) the soul is no longer in danger of being scattered after death in which it is separated from the body—it is saved from being inextricably linked in the descent to Hades.[11] In this Platonic notion of the body and soul, the aim of the soul is the mastery of the body in order to avoid being "nailed" to its passions and, ultimately, the study of philosophy for the purpose of living the Good life. In this construct, the exercise of the soul separates the philosophers from ordinary men because they eventually (if successful) commune with the immortal and are distanced from the mortal realm. However, I suggest that the mere fact that the soul achieves escape from the prison of the body through action bespeaks a human condition of interaction that longs for union with the immortal enabled only through the separation of the body. Thus, the soul of the philosopher is transformed into the immortal, but only because of its interaction with the mortal body; likewise, this illuminates the potential for all mortals to achieve this state once there is a realization of the natural condition of the body and soul. (The likelihood of this happening, however, is very slim.) Further, this human condition of being oriented toward and the need for union with the divine it reflected in the manifestation and the function of the meme and mortal participation in the eternal myth that is enabled through poetry and essentially mandated by the human condition itself: separation.

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[10] It may seem like the complete privileging of one over the other, but hopefully, as I have demonstrated, this cannot be the case given the natural interaction of the two on not only a physical level (if thinking within the mortal realm) but also an intellectual interaction that is predicated on the notion of knowledge as recollection and therefore inescapably a part of the eternal or immortal due to the mediator of Memory.

[11] I connote the separation of the soul from the body as scattered-ness in order to gesture towards Augustine's conception of scattered-ness as indicative of the human condition of separation from the immortal.

Notably, Socrates' argument to Phaedo appeals to an opposition and what he sets forth as the natural subjugation of one aspect, the body, to the other, the soul. For instance, in response to Simmias' objection that the body and soul are in harmony with one another, Socrates invokes Homer's *Odyssey*—appealing to the authority found in its creation as both poetry and myth—in which Odysseus strikes his breast and says, "Endure, my heart, you have endured worse than this" (94*d*). Further, he concludes that "It is quite wrong for us to say that the soul is a harmony, and in saying so we would disagree both with the divine poet Homer and with ourselves" (95*a*). Socrates is appealing to both the natural order, as depicted as a vertical or hierarchical order favored in antiquity, along with Homer, the divine poet. Therefore, the distinction between harmony and union is critical to understanding the relationship of the body and the soul especially manifest in the cultural creation and appeal to poetry. Harmony, as Simmias conceives of it, implies a self-reflective or single dimension of the body and soul. Union, however, encompasses the tension between the body and soul while acknowledging the productive nature of their interaction (i.e., from their participation between and within each others' spheres of the mortal and immortal transcendence to another level completely is able to be achieved).

This same principle of "union" or productive tension holds in Empedocles' argument for a cosmos constituted by and dictated by Love and Strife. When Love reigns supreme, there is no room for life because everything exists within a single dimension, a self-reflexive and unproductive dimension of what could be called harmony. Conversely, when Strife completely consumes the world, there can be nothing except absolute dissolution and chaos—all is one-dimensional and self-contained but dissociated and

therefore not in relation to anything else. In either state of complete harmony or chaos, there is no space to allow for interaction horizontally (man between man, i.e., mortal and moral) or vertically (man between divine, i.e., mortal and immortal). Consequently, there can be no production or union as found in Socrates' account. The existence of complete Strife and destruction, or complete Love and harmony, constitutes states of being that are completely stagnant and one-dimensional. Not until the two, Love and Strife, interact or strike a balance is creation possible. Similarly, the state of complete soul or complete body cannot exist as anything other than abstract one-dimensional states necessarily apart from one another and inactive. Given Socrates' description of the body and soul, one can indeed be privileged over the other, as he proposes is the natural state, but I further posit that one cannot be completely forsaken by the other without ending in a one-dimensional state of "self"-reflection that could only exist statically, and therefore not in any meaningful or creative way. Likewise, this existence of interaction is necessarily with others as collectively participating with each other and the divine; thus, creation between man imitative of the divine is possible (i.e., the crafting of poetry).

Demonstration of the necessity of the interplay between the body and soul is found in the previous explication of Aristophanes' speech and his proffered "origin of love."[12] Again, when humans were comprised of three sexes, men and women were complete in and of themselves. They shared the same "wholeness" of body and soul and there was no need for anything other than themselves. This is essentially a stagnant and

[12] This conciseness of Aristophanes' speech that I allude to as the "Origin of Love" is credited to John Cameron Mitchell and his recapitulation of the "Origin of Love" as interpreted in song.

self-reflexive state existing only in internal fulfillment or interaction.[13] In other words, there was no forced interaction vertically with the divine or horizontally with other humans because theirs' was a state of completeness. Thus, only through separation and interaction between what is separate can there be union. This "union through separation" creates the possibility of immortality in death through the correct kind of participation as set forth by Socrates—the activity of the soul and ultimately, of the philosopher.

Following Aristophanes' speech explaining the origin of love and (as demonstrated) exposition of the body and soul, is Diotima's speech as relayed through Socrates. Diotima gives an "account of the ascent of love, beginning with love for individual young men, and ending with love for the Form of Beauty, which 'always *is* and neither comes to be nor passes away'" (JMC 458). In this conception of Love, Diotima refutes Aristophanes' account of Love in which humans are seeking their other half because, she argues, the other half and the subsequent union of the two is not necessarily "the Good." By ending ultimately in the Form of Beauty and appealing to its constancy, i.e., the fact that the Form is "just what it is to be beautiful," a slightly altered, yet consistently dual concept of Love is presented (Hackett 207). Love is required to be a Form that can be aimed at as in a state of being (as manifest in behavior) as well as an activity to achieve the Form of Love itself. Hence, love in its origination is a journey and individual, yet a participant in a higher or immortal realm through its end as a Form. Diotima declares that "Love must desire immortality along with the good," thus

[13] Self-reflection as I conceive of it here merely implies an absence of any relationship to a dual nature within the self or relation to others around it. This is on the plane of an auto-created world that is (because of previously stated reasons) static. For example, this could be understood in terms of autoeroticism in which one is completely self-reflective in one's desires and therefore "un-productive" due to the completely physical or the mirroring of the self that doesn't open a space for inter-action. Hence, there is action, but not "creative" action as I argue is demanded for the perpetuation of not only the body and soul but also culture.

implicating the activity and agency of love as well as the necessity that it is aimed towards the good and therefore the immortal (ibid.). Though Diotima's focus is on the goal or end of Love embodied in love for the Form of Beauty, it does not in my opinion preclude Aristophanes' formulation as to the reason and action or interaction revolving around love. His is an explanation of not only the physical or visible interaction of mortal humans by means of love, but also the divine through the necessity of love; hers is an elucidation of the activity of the mortal and immortal through participation in the invisible realm of Forms.

I would suggest that the two explanations work towards the same ends and are not inherently contradictory. Simply stated, there has to be interaction between the two realms of mortality and immortality in order to create a union or productive existence. The mode of this interaction springs from the fact that the two aspects, the body and soul, are separate in nature yet contained in the mortal body. Likewise, the interaction between the body and soul is horizontal, yet must be focused on an external form, in this case, beauty and the truth revealed therein—here, conceived as the good. Thus, the mortal and immortal aspects of humans are manifest in the definition and action of love. The oscillation between the body and soul, the mortal and immortal, is further explicated in what Diotima explains to be the parentage of love: the union of Penia (Poverty) and Poros (Resource, the son of "cunning" Mētis). The product of this union, Love, is disposed with a "continual Need, yet infinite ways in which to skillfully and bravely attend to these needs." Diotima goes on to state that Love, "is by nature neither immortal nor mortal. But now he springs to life when he gets his way; now he dies—all in the very same day. Because he is his father's son, however, he keeps coming back to life, but

then…slips away [again]" (203e). This familiar conception of the cyclic nature of Love and its dual mortality within immortality by way of interaction can serve as a tool in the ultimate ascent of the soul to the immortal.

V. Out of Mythology into Poetry, Approximating Wisdom

In addition, the concept of mortality and immortality and the perpetuation of each is furthered in the invocation of reproduction. Physical reproduction of the body remains in the mortal realm, but pregnancy of the soul produces immortal offspring. It is asked, "What is fitting [for the soul to produce]?" Diotima answers, "Wisdom and the rest of virtue, which all poets beget, as well as all the craftsmen who are said to be creative" (209a). Ultimately, these creators, poets, participate in and approximate beauty. Inherent in this conception is the importance of creation and those that are able to create, along with the authority imbued in them for the ability to approximate beauty and, ultimately, the good and the true. I suggest that poets are those truly capable of this task (begetting wisdom) because they are participants in Memory and favored by the Muses, who, as previously established, have the ability to sing both truth and falsity. As Diotima states, "…everyone would look up to Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets with envy and admiration for the offspring they have left behind—offspring, which, because they are immortal themselves, provide their parents with immortal glory and remembrance" (209d).

Because the poets' offspring necessarily participate (given their origins both mortal, of the poet, and immortal, of the Muses) in the immortal, they imbue wisdom in the mortal and an access point for the mortal to the immortal. Their work is derived from

Memory, and memory participates in the eternal, out of which origination can take place (from death) and also out of which the mortal is born. They write not only the mortal and immortal into being, but they also write participation in each. Wisdom is produced or approximated because it is created through poetry, through the true and false singing derived from Mnemosyne, Memory, constituting the ability to recall and to learn, and subsequently, the participation in the eternal. Thus, the poets produce immortal work that approximates the true and beautiful through the interaction between the mortal (themselves) and the immortal (the Muses or the recollection of Memory). This formulation elucidates the duality of poetry in viewing the mortal world in relation to the immortal as well as constituting its authority in creating not simply a reflection of what was, but also a living, immortal "song" (or verse) that becomes visible (and changeable) in the mortal realm, yet remains arguably true and invisible in the immortal realm. Further, this duality denotes mortal entrance into the immortal realm. Poetry is not the perfection of philosophy, but can be suggested to work in a similar way, allowing for the "ordinary" man to participate in the divine, even if it is indirectly. This is seen in Hesiod's *Theogony*, a myth that is born of both mortal and immortal origins.

It is crucial to reiterate the nature of poetry and the sense in which I hope to invoke it. As Hesiod called upon the Muses as the authority for his creation story by beginning, "Tell me these things, Olympian Muses, from the beginning, and tell which of them came first…," I call upon the authority of the Muses and poetry as a sort of Form in which mortal and immortal interaction is intrinsic and the truth and wisdom that can be derived from poetry is unquestioned (Evelyn-White ll.104-115). Thus, I am not simply interested in the literal manifestation and creation of poetry; rather, I aim to approximate

the functions of such a practice and secure it as an authority that lends insight into the conception of thoughts and the nature of things in a vital capacity. Poetry provides a lens through which to actively examine the body and soul and the relationship between the mortal and immortal.

Hesiod is not the only poet to invoke the authority of the Muses, for, "Similarly, in the *Iliad*, we find Homer calling on the Muses" (Hackett Intro 2). As evidenced by these two poets, "The Muses are divine and immortal: They were and thus are appropriate both as witnesses to the truth and as assurance that the story Homer tells is true;" in both poets, "we find the same mechanism, the divine warrant of the Muses, invoked to justify different sorts of claims, the one [Hesiod's] religious and cosmogonical, the other [Homer's] historical" (4). The debate over the authority of the Muses is continual, though as evidenced, the importance of their authority for my usage is derived from their relationship with Memory and the role that memory plays in the formation of not only poetry but mythology amongst and about the mortal and immortal. In addition to this role, memory is encapsulated in the interplay of Love and its participation and mediation between the body and soul. Whether or not the content of the poetry is taken metaphorically or literally the important and irreversible work that each does is beyond the reaches of truth or falsity, and, in fact, takes a life of its own picked up by mortals as embodiment of balance and the approximation of truth, granting access to the divine.

The gesture towards truth inherent in the revelatory nature of poetry provides impetus to first focus upon the similarities between poetry and myth and how they function. Poetry allows access to ideas and thoughts that speak not only of the context in

which and by whom they were created, but also to the life-giving aspect inherent in such creation, and the subsequent visible evolution of those "immortal offspring." Through poetry, especially that which deals with Love, access is granted into the activity of love and the import in and reflection of its effects in mortal lives. These lives can be either mortal or immortal, since they are essentially inseparable as threaded through one another and emphasized by the immortalizing technique of poetry. Importantly, the insight gained is that of not necessarily individual truths, but larger conceptual truths that speak to the implications of poetry in lives as well as the living, malleable character of the medium itself.

Within a philosophical context, the importance of poetry can be understood as similar to that of myth. Both poetry and myth serve as the mode in which philosophy can be created while they also represent the mortal (created) aspect as a portal through which to glimpse the immortal (eternal) end of philosophical activity. The body and soul, as conceived in antiquity, encapsulate the cultural production of the greater question and subsequent examination of how to "act" in the world given our human condition of separation. Furthermore, myth and poetry enable this inquiry into not only the internal construction of the body and soul, but also the external relationship of the body and soul to the world. Myth, in particular (since poetry arguably participates in the creation of myth), provides an explanation of origin and impetus of how those created ought to act in accord with their "divided" nature. This nature can also be understood in the activity of mythmaking and how it culturally manifests itself. Hence, mortals are participants in the eternal myth of humanity and human culture that is bound in cyclic recreation. Without this form of inquiry, which I conclude is fundamental to "guide" human action and

understanding we are unable to accurately understand ensuing generations, especially in the breaking of the cyclic conception of the world to the linear beginning of history with the advent of Christianity and the effect that this shift has in the mode of mythmaking.[14]

VI. Plato's Cosmology Examined through the *Timaeus*

In accordance with the ambiguity of poetry, that is, its ability to speak truths and falsehoods, Plato's *Timaeus* is similarly contested—was it intended to be literal or metaphorical? As Donald Zeyl notes, "Plato presents his story under certain qualifications, particularly the one that his cosmology is merely a 'likely account' (eikōs logos), or even a "likely story" ("eikōs mythos," 29d2)" (Zeyl xxii). This qualification is especially important in light of the observation that some ideas and formulations from his other works seemingly contradict those presented in the *Timaeus*. For instance, the creation of the soul stems from the eternal and is thus essentially claimed to be uncreated in the *Phaedrus*, for instance, the creation of the soul stems from the eternal and is implicitly uncreated, yet in the *Timaeus* the soul is created in both the world and man. Though a strictly literal or metaphorical reading is not proffered (and is seemingly impossible), the work of Plato's cosmology is not diminished. The key is the fact that the work is offered as a likely story, a myth, and within that myth is found an explanation that serves to advance understanding, though not necessarily to crystallize it as indisputable fact. Therefore, I am not utilizing Plato's cosmology as fact at face value;

[14] Vico's philosophy of history could also be invoked here as he parses out the philosophy of history and what I would argue are memes that are transmitted from one culture to another: religion, marriage, and burial. Because I intend to work within the narrower focus of a thematic study, however, I will not invoke his chronological account of history or the ends which it serves.

rather, I am appealing to its authority as the paradigmatic text in which to examine the culmination of the story of origin, mortals' involvement or roles in it, and the mythological aspect inherent in the cultural dissemination of such a "story." In other words, Plato's cosmology offers insight into the distinct creation and evident division between the body and soul along with this dichotomy's own mythological place and import in subsequent formulations; thus, it serves the function of contextualizing our understanding of myth and its "real" or embodied transmission.

Plato's cosmos is a world in which corporeality is not necessary, but is derived from the fact that the world is a "becoming thing." The visible and tangible qualities of the bodily world and the manifestation of the unity of the world come from this Platonic formulation. The unity he speaks of is a result of the "best bond" which comes in nature as proportion, uniting the body of the universe. He states, "…the best bond is one that really and truly makes a unity of itself together with the things bonded by it, and this in nature of things is best accomplished by proportion" (31c). Notably, this unification (through four constituents: water, air, fire, and earth) was integral in the "building of the world" by an "eternal craftsman" (32d) as a result of his intentions—to create a living thing that by its nature should be "as whole and complete as possible made up of complete parts" (33). Additionally, it (this living being) "should be just one world" that should not be susceptible to age or disease (33a4). Continuing in this vein of explication, Plato describes the assemblage and nature of the world as similar to that of man, as a "complete body itself" that contains in its center a soul that extends throughout the entire body that is, in turn, completely covered or encompassed by the body (34b).

In this relationship between the world's soul and body, Plato asserts that "the god…gave priority and seniority to the soul, both in its coming to be and in the degree of its excellence, to be the body's mistress and to rule over it as her subject" (34c). The components from which this god made the soul (of the world) are as follows: he mixed "primarily an intermediate form of being," derived from "*Being* that is indivisible and always changeless, and [from] one that is divisible and comes to be in the corporeal realm" (35). Likewise, he mixed *the Same* and *the Different* with Being; the mixture was in between the indivisible and the divisible (corporeal) counterparts (35). With this description, a precise explanation of the division of the complete parts of the body and soul is relayed, exhibiting the perfection of balance and proportion within the world and, therefore, the body's priority of maintaining the well-being and balance of both the body and soul. This mixture of the same and different is indicative of a fundamental mythic trope of the necessity for interaction in order to create. Timaeus emphasizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of this proportionality, stating, "All that is good is beautiful and what is beautiful is…well-proportioned (87c4-6)" (lxxxvi). This proportion that is exemplary of the good was achieved when "The soul was woven together with the body from the center on out in every direction to the outermost limits of the heavens," while keeping in mind that the body of the heavens came into being as visible and the soul as invisible (36e5-6). Given this fact, however, the soul still "shares in reason and harmony," because it was created by a god "most excellent of all that is intelligible and eternal" (ibid.).

Moreover, a similar explanation of the construction of man's soul reinforces the nature of the soul (whether man's or the world's) and its predilection for discerning

between itself and what is the *same* and what is *different.* This faculty therefore produces either firm and unwavering opinions or understanding and knowledge and is attributed to the soul's own composition of both the *Same* and the *Different* within the *Being*. This composition instills in the soul the unique capacity to seek the virtuous and good in well-balanced proportion to the body.[15] Thus, the distinctively separate formation of the soul and body further enables the interaction between the two, fulfilling what Timaeus originally set forth for the description of the world as Living Thing that is as "whole and complete as possible and is made up of complete parts" (33).

The internal construction of the soul and its interaction with the external body are each individual parts as complete as possible and in accord with the laws of proportion. As such, these parts are required to be in some sort of union that prescribes action, presumably for the virtuous, within the larger world. According to Timaeus, inherent in man's participation in the world is a duality that mirrors the duality of the world. If it were not for this union in separation, bound by proportion and continual mediation, I argue that there would be no impetus to move from man's internal soul to the external body and subsequently the externality of the world. In other words, if this were not the case each man would presumably be self-contained similar to Aristophanes' account with no possibility for change or, more explicitly, no interaction between the indivisible and divisible, the corporeal and the changeless. Visually, the paralysis I propose of the body and soul (if they were made out of the "same" material) could be examined once again in

[15] It should also be noted that this is the participation of that which is created in time, for "it was the Living Thing's nature to be eternal, but it isn't possible to bestow eternity fully upon anything that is begotten." Therefore, he began making "a moving image of eternity: at the same time as he brought order to the heavens, he would make an eternal image…of eternity remaining in unity"—in short, time (37d). Therefore, time is a necessary construct within which to understand our body and soul as it does not detract from eternity or the creation of mortals out of this eternity, for unity is maintained.

Empedocles' exposition of the creation of the world in which at the "top" of his cycle Love reigns completely, and there is no room for movement or change because all is fused together. As presented by Plato, the separation of the same and different and their union in the body is imperative to further production of not only man, i.e., humankind, but also man within and in relation to the world. This is possible because he attributes creation not to the affects of eternality such as Love or Strife, but a craftsman, a god that *is* eternal.

In order to bring these mortal bodies in possession of souls into being, Timaeus explains how the eternal craftsman, god, spoke to the demiurges, gods, he had created who were "neither completely immortal nor exempt from being undone" (41b). In other words, they were made by an eternal maker and as such, inherently immortal, but not the same type of immortality as that which made them; they have to approximate god's power and exercise of creation. The god charged them with creating mortals, 'man,' by imitating the power he had displayed in creating the world (i.e., the body and soul of the world).[16] Then, according to Timaeus, "Once the souls [of 'man'] were of necessity implanted in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first innate capacity…would be sense perception" (42). "The second would be love, mingled with pleasure and pain." Each soul would have allocated to it those natural opposites and the requisite emotions that accompany each. Each man would be responsible for mastering his emotions, and his self-mastery would constitute the just life. If the soul was not able, however, to overcome and continually master them, he would be

[16] As in this sentence, it is beneficial to refer to those created beings as 'man' for the sake of distinguishing the differences of *being*. This notion, however, will be further complicated when aligning the created and creator with the creation of beings on a Christian schematic.

charged with leading an unjust life and could be reborn in the next life as a woman, or, if still unjust in exercising his soul, he would next be born an animal (42b-d).

In this cyclic construction, it should not be forgotten that man is enacting his soul over the body and that he, as a created mortal, is the composite of both the body and soul. Further, the exercise of the soul is enabled by the separation of the body and soul which mirrors that of the world. After these stipulations of the just life were set forth, the creator, god, spoke to the gods and declared their "task of ruling over [the] mortal living things and giving them the finest, the best possible guidance they could give, without being responsible for any evils these creatures might bring upon themselves" (42e). Thus, there is a world created and man (mortal "race") within it that are always already subject to the immortal and the charge to negotiate the body and soul as a whole in need of "guidance," similar to the charge of Love as a commander in the earlier speech of Aristophanes.

When creating these mortals, the gods followed a similar pattern as that which was used to create the universe by the eternal craftsmen.[17] In the beginning, when each body was created and a soul bound within it, the mortal soul lacked intelligence (44b). As a result, a mortal had to learn to correctly identify what was the same and different in relation to it; failure to achieve this result in an unproductive life and a return to Hades "uninitiated and unintelligent" (44c). However, if one was able to differentiate the good and virtuous from the evil by using sense perception and employing love and its manifestation in both pleasure and pain, the mortal would eventually become initiated

[17] By invoking "craftsman," I want to emphasize material creation and the imposition of form from eternity onto mortal bodies and souls. This mimics my argument of the poets and their role in mythmaking: the poets, like the craftsman, impose form and give voice to origin so that we may understand culturally and individually the relationship of ourselves to the divine through their medium of verse.

and an arbiter of knowledge of both the mortal and immortal. In other words, given the construction of the body and soul and the influence of the *same* and *different*, there is an inherent realization of the internalization of the immortal and the mortal participation in it necessary for a just life which informs the way in which philosophy in antiquity manifests itself. This is indicative of the cultural understanding that there is a choice of exercising or "performing" a just or unjust life, but once this choice is recognized, there is no longer an option of *how* to act within the world, for the mortal is aware of his relation to the immortal and the "escape" from it, i.e., the ability to break the cyclic re-embodiment. This same action that I gesture towards can be understood by Pythagoras' declaration that he is not wise; rather he declared himself to be only a lover of wisdom; his speech demonstrated his wisdom and initiated state.[18]

In this instance, the function of the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, is stated to be that of one who masters through self-recognition or investigation of the natural state (of "what's externally there") the emotions and passions, which as Timaeus describes, are two of the first capacities granted man, and terminates in not only the practice of (or what I offer is the embodiment of) virtue, but also inherent in this, the fruition of the soul. Through this action is the fulfillment of the prescribed purpose of the soul and a participation of the mortal with what has been defined as immortal—the craftsman. Man (here, the philosopher) imitates the action of creator who in this account is refracted into the corporeal realm twice: once as the eternal craftsman of the Living Thing (the world) and again through the creation of gods who imitate the creator by making man in the

[18] Later, this sentiment is manifest in Socrates' espousal of his knowing that he knows nothing. This will be reformulated, roughly, in Christian thought as the understanding of the impossibility of understanding or "knowing" God directly.

image of the world's body and soul, and subsequently in the image of the creator since he crafted the Living Thing along with the gods.[19] The imitation extends further as it is again seen in man's imitation of divine creation in his own actions within the world.

Once the function and relationship of the body and soul have been laid out, Timaeus addresses more generally the inclination towards and the benefit found in philosophy, one that is only possible after the recognition of our pursuits into nature and the heavens. He declares that philosophy, heralded by the inquiry into the nature of the universe, is "a gift from the gods to the moral race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed" (47b). Because of this inquiry into that which surrounds man, he is able to observe the "intelligence in the heavens and apply them to the revolutions of our understanding" (47c). The kinship between the immortal and the mortal world is explicit and, indeed, necessary to order and make sense of the world in which man dwells. Hence, the interaction between the created and the creator (no matter how many times removed) enables a sort of self-reflection of the mortal world (47).

In addition to the gods' gift of philosophy and the subsequent reflection of the mortal and immortal, Timaeus describes sound and hearing as "given for the same purpose and intended to achieve the same result [of intelligence and understanding]" (47d-e):

> Speech (*logos*) was designed for this very purpose—it plays the greatest part in its achievement…And harmony, whose movements are akin to the orbits within our souls, is a gift of the Muses, if our dealings with them are guided by understanding, not for irrational pleasure, [but] to serve as an ally in the fight to bring order to any orbit in our souls that has become un-harmonized and make it concordant with itself…For with most of us our

[19] Here, image is invoked as a replication of and separation between the mortal and immortal not as Scriptural but more as a representation of essence and action in created beings.

> condition is such that we have lost all sense of measure, and are lacking in grace (47c-e).

Without speech, the interaction amongst mortals would be greatly reduced along with the participation in what is immortal, as exemplified in philosophy. I extend this claim to mythology and its importance in not only discourse, but also philosophy. Without speech, there would be no myth and no way of explaining, for instance, the cosmology or "eikōs logos" proffered by Plato within the *Timaeus*. This creation of the universe is predicated on the efficacy of speech and its employment in our understanding, thereby rendering the mode of transferal of this story, a myth. The *Timaeus* is providing an explanation of creation as a myth within the narrative structure of myth. It thus encapsulates the mortality of the actual myth itself within the immortal and ineluctable form or structure of the myth that renders the intelligibility of creation possible. Given Timaeus' assertion that philosophy is enabled when inquiring about nature and, in this case, creation, this form of myth is necessary to exercise the soul in a way that not only imitates the immortality of the creator by producing (i.e., like a poet) a myth, but also an understanding and knowledge of how mortals can participate within the mortal realm with the immortal.

The dual realization of the function of speech, and particularly myth, and mortals' agency (though not autonomy in it) precipitates the harmony granted man's soul by the Muses. The Muses represent the created yet immortal gods that have the ability (through song or poetry, essentially speech) to bring the soul into harmony with itself, thus serving as either a parallel or integral role in philosophy. In these instances, philosophy and myth in the form of narrative or poetry, man is approximating what is good and immortal found outside of him, but then re-inserted in the self, manifested as harmony within the soul.

This practice and exercise is only possible in regard to the separation yet cohabitation and dependency of the body and soul. The relationship between the two results in a harmony that mirrors that of the world's body and soul, but that does not lessen the importance of the union through separation as did Simmias' objection to Socrates on the grounds of the harmony of the body and soul in the *Phaedo*. There is a space opened to view the interaction between the body and soul and as such, the emphatic separation of the two in which each participate as complete parts within the whole. In this sense, the construction is similar to those previously examined through the lens of Love as an ideal to be appealed to (similar to the Good), but only possible through separation, and as Timaeus notes, through both pleasure and pain—the second faculty granted to man. Lastly, after thorough examination, Timaeus concludes this "likely account":

> This world of ours has received and teems with living things, mortal and immortal. A visible living thing containing visible ones, a perceptible god, image of the intelligible Living Thing[20], its grandness, goodness, beauty, and perfection are unexcelled. Our one heaven, indeed the only one of its kind, has come to be (92c).

The endeavor to elucidate the Living Thing, this "world of ours," is requisite and indicative of philosophy and reveals both the nature of the relationship between the human and divine and a way in which we, mortals, can (and must) participate in both realms, equally balanced and proportioned.

It is man's work in his "becoming" to reconcile body and soul, and as emphasized by Timaeus, for the soul to take its seat as master over the body, both in the world and in man. The seeking of the virtuous and the good, and thereby discovering the best bond

[20] Zeyl notes to compare 30c-d and 39e: Timaeus describes the Living Thing initially (in 30c) as that which "all other living things are parts, both individually and by kinds," thus including intelligible things that are complete in every way. In 39, he continues to explicate the Living Thing in saying that "The purpose was to make this living thing [the star] as like as possible to that perfect and intelligible Living Thing, by way of imitating its sempiternity."

within the world of nature and of number, philosophy is strikingly analogous to the two large forms that I have appealed to as my guide and authority: love and mythology. Granted, they are not the same, but rather their forms and modes of revelation are strikingly interwoven. Each is dual in nature and requires a realization of the form and function itself by man, mortals, with that of the gods, immortals. In doing this, man is contextualized not only in relation to the gods, but also (perhaps more subtly) in relation to himself. Therefore, I propose that this conceptualization within the whole allows for and even requires the permeation of myth, love, and philosophy in order to participate productively in the world.

Moreover, this construct provides for the duality of the form of philosophy, in which it embodies what a lover of wisdom is and the process of becoming a philosopher. The participation of the mortal in the external form, i.e., the immortal or unchanging, itself grants (what I will loosely call) selfhood to man and the liberation of the form of philosophy itself. Perhaps this construction presented by Timaeus might be better elucidated if understood in terms of the cultural meme. The meme is that which is reflective of culture and also independent of culture. As I invoke it, the meme exemplifies the participation of the mortal in the immortal because it is neither completely created nor capable of undoing itself. It is autonomous in that there is self-selection and survival of one meme over another and this is reflective of its dependency on mortals who perpetuate it.[21] The same qualities apply to, as in the example above, philosophy—in particular, philosophy as defined and aforementioned by Plato and the Socratic discussions. Philosophy, indeed, provides methods within the world for

[21] See the discussion of the created gods and their qualities as neither mortal nor completely immortal.

explaining and contextualizing the relationship between the body and soul and, consequently, the mortal and immortal. In addition, it prescribes modes of action that can also be acted upon philosophically. Most importantly, though, they may be called upon to offer guidance towards the aim of a virtuous life or the good, or simply the understanding of creation and the human condition that needs an explanation for the formulation of the body and soul.[22] Ultimately, the Platonic explanation of creation proffers an origin that is not merely a justification of that which already exists in the world as depicted in Empedocles' and Hesiods' accounts. Rather, his is creation attributed to a single and eternal craftsman, thus providing a second shift in the origin of myth and man, intimating a step closer to the Christian conception of creation. The transference of origin from the natural realm to the supernatural (eternal) realm also opens the door to understanding predicated on the existence of an eternal being, which, in turn, signifies a furthering of philosophy or that which is able to sought or understood. In other words, our mortal understanding has been transferred to an intrinsic acknowledgement of the immortal realm, therefore allowing for greater interaction between the human and divine, and in turn the proliferation of myth. The *Timaeus* serves as the myth that both permeates and produces (while also reflective of) thought in antiquity. The understanding of the intricacies of Timaeus' proffered myth of origin allows for the investigation of what it is, myth, and how it functions as mythology. This

[22] At this juncture I would like to acknowledge that, because I aim to examine the presentation of the body and soul, I am intentionally bracketing the exposition beginning in section 48 of the *Timaeus* in which a more complex description and explanation is proffered—one in which the intelligible and always changeless along with the visible imitation of this changeless model are components along with a third kind or receptacle or "wetnurse" that aided in the becoming of the world. (49a-b). In this conception, Timaeus asserts that " The god fashioned these four kinds [the bodies of fire, earth, water, and air] to be as perfect and excellent as possible, when they were not so before" (53c-d). I intend to leave this explication at face value due to the fact that it divulges much of the mathematical and logical proportion and creation of the world of which I do not see beneficial to furthering our understanding of mythology and dualism.

account inevitably influences all thought that follows it. Thus, it is a creation story grounded in a specific time and place that because of its nature as myth extends to participate in the eternal myth and illuminate the import of mythology. Important to this project is its extraordinary nature and form that is exemplary of and participatory in myth. Instantiated within this work is the ancient understanding of the human condition, the separation of the body and soul, the participation of the mortal and immortal, and the exposition of the necessity of origin. Because of its form as myth and participation in the eternal myth, these characteristics are perpetuated and maintained through the advent of Christianity in the form of mythology. This will be further examined textually as evidence of and manifested in the cultural meme.

VII. Entering into Christianity and Medieval Thought

In this thematic study of the body and soul as manifest culturally in mythology and poetry the movement from paganism to Christianity entails a third shift in origin, and therefore, the understanding of the self in relation to the natural, external world, and subsequently to the divine. Previously in Plato's *Timaeus*, we encountered the fluidity of the mortal and immortal within a construction of the world that is paradoxically eternal in principle yet created in character. Timaeus' explanation stems from an inquiry rooted in the particular that systematically parses out the universal origin of the world's body and soul and the imitation of that process in man's body and soul. Subsequently, his cosmological exercise is an example of the nature of myth and the work that it is capable of doing philosophically and culturally. Within his eikōs mythos resides a definitive narrative that transcends antiquity and provides an account that is applicable even in a

post-pagan world (Zeyl xiii). It is particularly poignant in the life of Augustine, prompting him to pen *The City of God*: *Against the Pagans.*

In order to bridge the formulations of the thought of the body and soul from paganism into Christianity, however, it is necessary to bracket the possible literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* and adhere to its possibility, its presentation as a likely story (ibid.). Thus, we are liberated from the strictures of a universe embodied as the Living Thing, for instance, solely comprised of fire, water, air, and earth. Instead we can transition to Christianity taking with us the "loose structure" of the human body and soul as imitative of the world's body and soul and as explicated through the mode of a creation story that would have been impossible without the invocation of the Muses and the poetic authority of the narrative in antiquity.

Therefore, as we encounter Christianity, we shift the authority and counselor of understanding from a "likely story" to a "revealed truth." Interestingly, the mode of the conveyance of this truth mimics that which we encountered in what Augustine exposes and refutes in Plato's contemplation. Christianity proffers the body and soul as at once in relation to the world and to the divine, but not on the same trajectory as that found in antiquity. For, again, with the advent of Christianity we encounter another shift of origin. As explained, the import of Love was found in its location within the "natural" or mortal realm just as in Timaeus' cosmology, the eternal craftsman and the supernatural (immortal) realm was forefront, informing the relationship of the body and soul. Likewise, in Christianity, the shift is from the observable realms to the revelation of the creator himself. The creator is no longer refracted through intermediaries; the fact that the creator's nature is revealed constitutes the possibility of a different relationship with

mortals. Arguably, there is a distinct separation of the mortal body and soul, but because they are both divinely created in the image of God, one cannot be forsaken for the other. Instead, they must be understood as equals working together to eventually find unity and rest in the Christian God.

The import of the claim that man is created in the image of God can be understood most efficaciously (for purpose of comparison) through the examination of the dogma and sacraments of the Catholic Church and the emphasis on Christ, the physical and allegorical body of God. Beginning with *The City of God* also places our origin of discussion in Augustine's rejection of Platonic philosophy. Just as the text of the *Timaeus* served as the paradigmatic study for the depiction of the ancient body and soul, Augustine will serve as representative of the understanding of the body and soul within Christianity. In doing this, the importance of viewing the Christian idea of the body and soul as already in conversation with the ancient concept of the body and soul becomes evident, and as I argue, an ineluctable result of that ancient discussion.

Additionally, another invocation of Dawkins' cultural meme here will aid in understanding the progression of the body and soul. Again, he argues that "the idea of hell fire is, quite simply, *self perpetuating*, because of its own deep psychological impact. It has become linked with the god meme because the two reinforce each other, and assist each other's survival in the meme pool" (Dawkins 192). In other words, the concepts of hell fire and god perpetuate themselves because there is a quality about them that ensures their survival throughout history as manifest in culture. Dawkins' attribution of these memes' survival to their innate and pervasive psychological impact is arguable, but he gestures towards the larger claim that inherent in their existence is a dependence upon

cultural acknowledgment to give them meaning. They may be called "self-perpetuating," but they are such only insofar as they maintain or participate in the eternal quality that has proven to always carry weight in individuals' lives within the context of culture. Therefore, the pervasiveness of the "god meme" provides a means by which to contextualize and understand the relationship of the body and soul that is fitting since this construct can provide a hierarchical relationship of the self in relation to the rest of the world around it while accounting for a variation of explanation for the origin of the world in which the self operates.

The idea of a meme extant of its own "autonomy" yet simultaneously dependent upon that culture in which it is located should be brought to bear on the discussion of ritual within Christianity, and as purported by Augustine. The meme offers introspection into the shift from paganism to Christianity, particularly with regard to ritual and the practices that survive along with the changing concept of the body and soul. Especially since this evolution is perpetuated seemingly as separate or unaffected by the Revelation that constitutes the new paradigm for the Christian world. Examining Augustine's rebuttal of the *Timaeus* proves that though paganism is largely refuted, the mode of conveyance and the elements involved participate in the eternal forms of myth and remain if not consistent in the players involved in each story, then at least recognizable, from antiquity into medieval philosophy.

Thomas Merton, in his introduction to *The City of God*, professes that Augustine's work "grew out of [his] meditations on the fall of the Roman Empire. But his analysis is timeless and universal. That is to say, it is Catholic in the etymological sense of the word." Catholic indeed means "universally prevalent" or "of universal human interest or

use; touching the needs, interests, or sympathies of all men" (OED). As such, I argue, the shift to Christianity represents a furthering of the mythological work that has already been accomplished in ancient philosophy. What is universal and pervasive in Christianity speaks to not only those generations that come after the Revelation, but also to those before, for it inherently had become to some extent reliant upon and reflective of that which came before it, most importantly Plato. For example, the transcendence established with the dawn of Christianity is that of salvation and union with God, not only within proportion and balance of the self, but also in relation to God, the divine.[23] Thus, the same structure proffered by the process of inquiry in antiquity of the internal self to the external natural realm to the upward or supernatural realm is maintained to some extent in Christianity. In this construct, however, the move is from an internal scattered-ness to external examination of the world (albeit the "religious world") to upward union with and salvation through the divine, God. This move is necessitated by the human condition of scattered-ness and separation from God after the Fall in Christianity. The essential condition of original sin in Christianity creates the need for salvation. In other words, because man is born with original sin, which enters into his existence concurrently with his body and soul, this sin is tied inextricably to the human condition necessitating an orientation outward from the "sinful" self to seek transcendence (specifically salvation, i.e., the absolution of that original sin). Hence, the transcendence in each account, along with the mode of ascent, is predicated on the origin

[23] Here I deliberately change my terminology from mortal and immortal (as used consistently with the previous chapter) to temporal or earthly, i.e., human, and divine. I hope that this distinction will reinforce the differentiation between the pagan and Christian; I chiefly associate the ideas of mortality and immortality with mythology and ancient conception of the cyclic nature of man and the world. On the other hand, I aim to attribute human and divine to a uniquely Christian idea of salvation and what follows from one single eternity or divinity, recognized and called by the name of God.

of one's inquiry, and what I argue to be the origin of the self: in antiquity the origin is the soul, which has the inherent potential to exercise itself and therefore "save" itself; in medieval thought and Christianity, the origin is the body and soul always already understood to be a reflection of the divine, the salvific power residing in the divine, God, instead of man.

VIII. Within *The City of God*

> Although it is sufficient, in the abstract, to divide the Catholic religion into three aspects and call them creed, code and cult, yet in practice, the integral Christian life is something far more than all this. It is more than a belief; it is a *life*. That is to say, it is a belief that is lived and experienced and expressed in action… called mystery. This mystery is the sacred drama which keeps ever present in history the Sacrifice that was once consummated by Christ on Calvary. In plain words…Christianity is the life and death and resurrection of Christ going on day after day in the souls of individual men and in the heart of society. (xii-xiii)

As evident within Merton's assertion about the nature of the Catholic faith, it is participation in the mystery of faith through which a community of faith is constituted, continually within individuals and collectively within the community. Catholicism is not merely an individual belief system that equips man with personal beliefs that in turn prescribe his action within the world. Rather, as evidenced above, it is the acceptance of a creed, the adherence to a code, and the community of a form of life. Additionally, it is the participation of an individual in each of these things within his life. The practice of dogma becomes a lived experience. As exemplified in Augustine, the "autobiography of the Church" he proffers in *The City of God* does not simply put forth an "exposition of dogma" (xi). On the contrary, it is "*lived*."

The lived experience of Christianity in this conception forces the focus onto practice. The interaction demonstrated in this religion provides a macrocosmic manifestation of the participation and interaction found within the body and soul. Participation between the body and soul in Catholicism is essential due to the fact that the body and soul are both created by God and in the image of God. Hence, the imitation or the reflection of the divine is imperative due to the nature of man's creation. Therefore, the participation and interaction between the body and soul that is mirrored by the interaction of the human and divine is not simply important, but imperative to the salvation of the soul. Interestingly, this salvation is granted through Christ's body. The inextricability of the soul from the body is apparent, along with a precedent for their interaction that we have already set and examined in antiquity. Additionally, the participation of the individual within the religious community is loosely similar to the interaction of the individual or a culture with mythology. In other words, Plato's *Timaeus* provided an explanation of origin in narrative that can be appealed to as a transcendent form synthesized of previous offerings or formulations of the same subject. It is plausible that the intercourse of the two narratives of ancient and medieval thought entails roughly the same mechanism for prescribing action within the world, each, however, with radically different ends or purposes.[24] The prescription for action within Catholicism is essentially found within the ritualistic center of the body, Christ's body—the Sacrifice that serves as the focus of the meditative cycle described above by Merton as the continually lived and ever-present "life and death and resurrection of Christ" in, notably, both "the soul of individual men" and the "heart of society" (ibid.).

[24] Here I am simply gesturing towards their similarities though not equating their import, rather their mechanical function within culture and the individual.

Augustine begins *The City of God* with the rejection of paganism and the Roman gods, and specifically ancient thought as presented and practiced by the Platonists. However, he asserts that the Platonists are those closest to approximating the "Christian Truth," and for this reason, perhaps the most subversive to Christian thought (3). He sets forth in the Eighth Book, "If wisdom is God, who made all things, as is attested by the divine authority and truth, then the philosopher [the lover of wisdom] is a lover of God" (Dods VIII.1). Since it does not necessarily follow, however, that "all who are called philosophers are lovers of true wisdom," then there is space open for alternative understandings of wisdom and therefore, the separation of philosophers from theologians as well as believers and non-believers (ibid.). Philosophers do not all believe or accept God as "true wisdom," yet as seen in Plato's case, they can approximate similar ideals. The end of wisdom for the philosopher is transcendence, but a transcendence of the soul that necessarily abandons the body through conscious exercise. The end of wisdom for a believer (and "believing philosopher," for the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive), however, is a union with God who is truth, and such a union does not allow for the rejection of the body due to the "new origin" of man created by a direct and omnipotent God. In other words, the union of God for the believer is a recognition of the relationship between created man and the divine creator that entails a transcendence only enabled by the divine's interaction with man.

Further examining the study of wisdom, Augustine declares that it "consists in action and contemplation, so that one part of it may be called active, and the other contemplative," the active being pertinent to conduct in life and the contemplative being directed toward pure truth sought through "an investigation into the causes of nature"

(VIII.4). Additionally, "If, then, Plato defined the wise man as one who imitates, knows, loves this God, and who is rendered blessed through fellowship with Him in His own blessedness…It is evident that none come nearer to us [Christians] than the Platonists" (VIII.5). Augustine's incorporation of and time spent devoted to the philosophy of the Platonists elucidates the importance of not only Platonic philosophy and the impact it had on the ancient world, but also that which it lacked—revelation. He sets forth a refutation of the Platonist's lack of humility (that they could achieve elevation of the soul through themselves where the divine appeared a mediator, not an end) while acknowledging the immense impact of their philosophical work (and the validity of that work). In other words, what Augustine writes and refutes with such efficacy and gravity, specifically in regard to the Platonists and Roman deities in *The City of God,* is not wholly able to be extracted from his own thinking and writing. Indeed, he redeemed and maintained enough Platonic thought to influence and further his own writings and conceptions of the Catholic Church.

In Augustine's recapitulation of the Platonic treatment of the natural philosophy, he proffers that the result of the exercise of ancient philosophers is the recognition that that which is changeable is not attributed to God; by recognizing this they have "transcended every soul and all changeable spirits in seeking the supreme." (VIII. 6). It becomes more evident, however, that the nature of the body and of the activity of the soul (here, philosophy) is rooted in the material or the natural realm. Though, "They [the Platonists] have understood, from this unchangeableness and this simplicity, that all things must have been made by Him, and that He could Himself have been made by none" (VIII.6). Thus, they understand the belief that there must be One [He] that made

all things, but this understanding is unable to be furthered without revelation. This lack of revelation leaves the Platonists "floundering" in the conclusion that stems from this belief, which holds that out of this distinction there comes the differentiation of body and soul and the preference of the soul over the body. Thus, without (revelation and therefore without) the understanding of Him as the Truth and Wisdom, there is no way for the Platonists to make the final ascent imperative in Christianity—communion with the eternal by means of the body, specifically, Christ's body.

It is evident from these disparities between Christianity and Platonic philosophy that Augustine does not and cannot completely discredit the activity of the Platonic philosophers. His illumination of the pagan world serves to impress upon the Christian mind the import of revelation and its inexorably different starting and ending location for man in relation to the divine. Furthermore, it is this difference of origin in the Christian experience that circumvents the failing or "sin" of the Platonists which, as explained, is their lack of humility and their inability to recognize the creator and eternal as both their mode and end of transcendence. In fact, the reconciliation of the body and soul after death through an eternal intermediary, God, was unthinkable in antiquity due to the fact that there was no revelation of the nature of the divine. Although there was a hierarchical construction, the relationship with the immortal was constituted by action of the mortal alone. In other words, by exercising one's soul, the philosopher could "save himself" from an uninitiated descent into Hades. Hence, in the ancient cyclic concept of origin there was (rarely) a straight trajectory towards salvation of the self (even as the salvation of the soul only), and in Christianity's straight trajectory that becomes a chronological "history" of salvation, there is a subsuming by the divine of the natural world and the

salvation of both the body and soul. This counterintuitive depiction offers insight into both the similarities and the shortcomings of the Platonists and a window through which to view the "same characters" acting in each account as caught up in the eternal and ever-present myth.

Furthering the discussion of the cosmology seen in the *Timaeus*, Augustine provides the Christian myth of the origin of the divine, and subsequently, the world:

> Of all visible things, the world is the greatest; of all invisible, the greatest is God. But, that the world is, we see; that God is, we believe. That God made the world, we can believe from no one more safely than from God Himself… [when] in the Holy Scriptures…His prophet said, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (*The City of God,* Book XI: 4).

In this construction there remains a division between the visible and invisible, yet there comes an alteration in the mortal relationship to each. He writes that "we see" and that "we believe," thus signaling a shift in understanding and extension of the immortal into the mortal realm as that which must be believed as opposed to merely conceived of or acknowledged as an intermediary realm. The immortality previously interjected into the mortal realm in Timaeus' account is truncated by the revelation of the creation of the world and temporality in perfect accord with God's eternal and immutable nature in the Christian description. Thus, in Christianity the visible and invisible concomitantly appear, demanding both sight and belief because each realm bespeaks the nature of the other, i.e., the visible (mortal) attests to the invisible (immortal) nature that must have created it. Furthermore, the intermediary here becomes the mode of transmission: Scripture. Thus, the content of the two creation stories is decidedly different, yet they both terminate in the mandate to transcend the mortal and reside with that which is immortal by means of practice; this practice is manifest culturally as philosophy and

religion respectively and resultant of the origin of their myths.[25] In turn, this acts as the origin of Augustine's own charter for Christian philosophy that necessarily begins in the prescriptive "faith seeking understanding," an endeavor to reconcile or provide a space for religious belief and philosophical reason.

Further, in the Christian account of the creation of the world, there is space for an extraction of man from time through God Himself, as Christ: "For since man is properly understood (or, if that cannot be, then, at least, believed) to be made in God's image, no doubt it is that part of him in which he rises above those lower parts he has in common with the beasts, which brings him nearer to the Supreme" (XI. 2). Thus, the part that is able to "know" God through the intellect and the understanding of the reflective and formative image of God is not shared with all other living things. There is added emphasis on the soul to be the arbiter of knowledge in recognizing man's position and relation to both God and beasts given that he was made through reflective creation (i.e., in the image of God). Inherent in this, however, is also the importance of the body and the physical or material that teases out the space within which to make such recognition. For example, if man could be complete soul there would be no awareness of that which he was opposed to (body) and thus there could be no imitative act of creation by man through action.[26]

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[25] This argument is fundamental in connecting man' inquisitiveness with his state as a created human being that can participate with the divine or immortal through the act of creating himself and therefore imitating the creator as seen before in poetry, but here as the more basic need to "exercise" the self toward an ineluctable end.

[26] I imagine that continuing along this line of reasoning would result in the realization for the necessity of free will, which I would submit is predicated on this conception of the separation (or distinct entities) of the body and soul each as a refraction of the divine within the mortal world. However, since the argument of will is not pertinent at hand then it can be bracketed for later examination.

The fact that God made man in the image of Himself affects the trajectory of the human and divine relationship in Christianity as manifest in medieval thought. Through the mind, which is "naturally capable of reason and intelligence," man can recognize this relationship with the divine and participate in it. Because the mind, however, can be disabled by "besotting and inveterate vices," it must seek to be "gradually healed and renewed," to be "impregnated with the faith, and so purified" (XI. 2). This purification and fulfillment of faith enables man to advance towards the truth itself, i.e., God through "God's Son, [who assumed] humanity without destroying His divinity," thus establishing a "way for man to man's God through a God-man" (ibid.). This God-man is Christ, both the mediator and the Way. Similarities with Platonic depictions of the soul can be found in the implication that reason and intelligence must be exercised continually in order to master "inveterate vices" and in order to become pregnant (either with thought or faith), signifying the production and "re-production" of the divine within the mortal world. The profoundly un-Platonic notion in this Christian account, however, is the entrance of the divine in the human world as Christ. Christ, as God and man serves the salvific function as mediator, the Way for man to be saved from the mortal world through means of a God that is both fully human and fully divine. Whereas the Platonists advocated activity of one's self via the soul to be saved from the mortal world, Christianity promotes the sacrifice of the divine as man within the mortal world to serve as savior for all other mortals, thus implicating the activity of one's self in participation with the divine and transcendence. Thus, similarly "salvation" or simply escape from the mortal world is contingent upon one's own activity and exercise of the soul, but in Platonism the goal can be achieved by participating in the divine but primarily by the advocacy and action of the

self. In other words, this escape of the mortal from the purely created world in the Platonic view is one that is necessitated, again, due to the origin of man and his participation in the cyclic equivalent of "scattered-ness" when born out of the eternal. On the contrary, Christianity requires participation with the divine that is contingent upon the human sacrifice of the divine within the mortal realm after the Fall (to save man from his condition of original sin), and therefore, the end of Christian practice is achieved through one's actions, but in conjunction with the divine's mortal actions.[27]

The relationship between man and the divine in this Christian account proves to be explicit. Additionally, inherent to this construction is the role of both the body and soul as active participants in the pursuit of truth, God. One cannot be divorced from the other. For instance, vices and sin can be found to originate in the soul as well as the body. Thus, each part is accountable to the other and within the larger aim of pursuing God and salvation; for, He is at once "God and man, God our end, man our way" (XII.1). Furthermore, Augustine depicts the relationship between the body and the soul, namely "the flesh" and the soul, and their role in the relationship with the truth:

> among the works of the flesh which he [Apostle Paul] said were manifest, and which he cited for condemnation, we find not only those which concern the pleasure of the flesh, as fornications, uncleanness, lasciviousness... but also those which, though they be remote from fleshly pleasure, reveal the vices of the soul (XIV).

Moreover, "if any one says that the flesh is the cause of all vices and ill conduct, inasmuch as the soul lives wickedly only because it is moved by the flesh, it is certain he has not carefully considered the whole nature of man" (ibid.). Again, by invoking what has been set forth in Platonic thought, Augustine emphasizes the similar distinction of the

[27] It should be noted that in this construction, the divine instantiated in Christ does not add or subtract from the divine, God's, being or nature.

soul and body as entities, but he proposes that they cannot be conceived of as independent of one another or one as more culpable in vice than the other. This image of the soul and flesh assigns responsibility to each, proving neither to be disposable or detestable to the other or to God; if anything, their interaction exemplifies religion's dependency on a similar relationship between man and God. They (man and the divine) are inextricably tied through creation; one is unable to be forsaken for the other because it is this creation and subsequent separation that serves as impetus and a guide for man to be re-united with God. Thus, the relationship between man and God is mutual, yet the primary vector is from man to God and the reflection back to man, since by God's nature He is unchangeable and constant within relation to man and can only be conceived as man's "equal" in the form of Christ. This construct is unique to the account of Christianity and serves to separate it seemingly completely from the tradition of Platonic thought which came before it (especially given antiquity's lack of revelation). In fact, however, though dissimilar with respect to the criterion of Truth, the immortal, mortal, man, and divine serve similar functions and are manifest much in the same way as Platonic philosophical thought. The connection and similarities are manifest in culture as enacted in practice and as responsive to a requisite investigation of origin and mortal/immortal interaction demanded by man's created nature.

Furthermore, the ability to create and imitate still predicates human nature. This was seen in the *Timaeus* as the demiurges created by the eternal craftsman to mediate between the mortal and eternal and they create the human race. Similarly, humanity in the Christian story is connected to the eternal God as reproducers of men which also navigate the mortal and immortal relationship. This access is granted by the reflection of the

eternal in man and the entrance of Christ. Hence, the possibility or potential to be immortal (i.e., "saved") through these relationships in both antiquity and Christianity thereby never completely "undone" proves consistent and what it means to be man. In both cases, the soul is elevated, though in Christianity the body is also resurrected, marking a complete departure of thought about the body and soul from the Platonic tradition. This shift to the resurrection of the actual body, however, is completely unthinkable in the understanding of antiquity, yet necessary due to the origin of the Christian conception of man and his relationship to the divine. This disparity actually serves to further emphasize both the differences between Platonic and Christian thought as well as the similarities. For, in accounts, the end of man and his practice culturally and belief system is predicated on his origin and the production derived from the interaction between the body and soul as a mirror of the hierarchical relationship between the mortal and immortal. The difference then is derived from the beginning of philosophy in antiquity from the intellect and the beginning of belief in Christianity from the mortal soul or heart. As Augustine describes it in his *Confessions,* "What, Lord, do I wish to say except that I do not know whence I came to be in this mortal life or, as I may call it, this living death? I do not know where I came from." Thus, the search is always for that of the mortal origin and the activity of examining that origin out of the immortal as guided by either philosophy or through religion.

Out of Augustine, to Conclude

As exemplified in the writings of Augustine, the trajectory of the contentious yet unified relationship between the body and the soul has not been broken from antiquity's

conception of the self in relation to the divine. Rather, the form of conveyance and the characters to which the ends are directed change, but remain recognizably consistent. These practices may be read as reflective of the cultural meme that survived even the shift from paganism to Christianity because of its resilient nature and its own representation of mortals' interaction and participation in the eternal. The eternal appealed to is myth. Man creates his own mutable mythology which imitates divine creation. This creation, however, is also a gesture towards interaction with the eternal conception of myth in which the mythologies themselves participate. This participation can be viewed as manifest in the mode of narration whether that of poetry, philosophical discourse, or Scripture, since each is granted divine authority within the cultural contexts. Man, whether consciously or unconsciously, is implicated and subject to this eternal due to his inherent need for a larger origin that not only justifies or explains his own existence, but also accounts for his experience. Therefore, myth fulfills the need for explanation that is subject to examination by tracing the meme as representative of culture and modes of communication. The investigation of the cultural meme, in turn, offers a lens through which to view perhaps its own origin: the space between and the interaction of the body and soul. Because the body and soul are necessarily separated, though in different ways in paganism and Christianity, space is created that bespeaks a mandate for interaction with the self and with others.

Mythology proffers a way of intellectualizing this interaction and participation as well as an acknowledgement and embodiment of the fruits of human inquisition and creation. In fact, mortal participation and reflection in the divine is inextricable from our eternal memory. This memory incites man to act in imitation of the divine in hope of

attaining union or at least deeper understanding. Further, mythology proves the handmaiden of this endeavor similarly within philosophy and religion. By no means is this examination all encompassing, but rather it serves to contextualize and understand the creation and survival of myth that is often marginalized or ignored completely. This exercise-arguably here- the soul's exercise proves beneficial as well to reconcile ourselves with the trajectory of what was, what is, and what may be. The question now becomes what other memes within this explanation of myth have survived or mutated or perhaps heralded paradigmatic shifts in modern times and, specifically, within modern philosophy.

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