

## PLATO'S MOVING *LOGOS*

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die.

Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still.

T.S. Eliot, *Four quartets* (Burnt Norton V)

The poet gives voice to the action of words as they reach out to attain expression. He observes the dangers inherent in this effort: words can break, can become simply unintelligible. Such broken words can no longer function within the fixed constraints of grammar and thus 'will not stay in place, | Will not stay still'. A.J. Greimas in *Structural semantics* defined an 'actantial' model of language:<sup>1</sup>

If we recall that functions in traditional syntax are but roles played by words – the subject being 'the one who performs the action', the object 'the one who suffers it' – then according to such a conception, the proposition as a whole becomes a spectacle to which *homo loquens* treats himself.

For Greimas there lies deep in the heart of language a drama; a drama quite independent of *homo loquens* and quite external to him/her. There are many ways that language can be said to 'move'. I would like to explore some Platonic variations on this theme.

### *Introduction*

The importance of the late fifth- and early fourth-century intellectual enlightenment in Greek culture and its intense preoccupation with language and thought are axiomatic for all interpreters of antiquity. Central to many recent studies on these issues are assumptions regarding Greek conceptualizations and articulations about speech and thought and their interrelationships. The wider context of this paper is the study of Athenian attempts to structure through language, especially metaphorical language, the

<sup>1</sup> A.J. Greimas, *Structural semantics* (1983) 173.

experiences of speaking and thinking.<sup>2</sup> The narrow aim of the paper is to demonstrate how Plato uses the vocabulary of motion for both speech and thought and how this vocabulary plays important roles in the dialogues.

Athenian writers, in a wide range of texts, present language as an active, dynamic force. *Logos* is often spoken of as acting upon the world, and this vocabulary of action and energy bears witness to the power and cultural significance of rhetoric at Athens.<sup>3</sup> From Aeschylus' words that 'pierce' and 'lash' the heart<sup>4</sup> to the sparring of the Just and Unjust Arguments in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, from Gorgias' claim that speech is a *δυνάστης μέγας*<sup>5</sup> to Isocrates' view that it is the force that has helped to establish all human institutions (*Nicoles*, 6–9), Athenian literature is alive with active presentations of words and speech.

For Plato too *logos* is a dynamic, moving force. Throughout the dialogues words move in many, often surprising ways: speech goes round in circles; arguments travel in all directions; propositions go walking off; and words run loose in the world attaching themselves to various bits of reality. In part 1 of the paper I shall set out some of Plato's images of arguments in motion, while in part 2 I shall explore the antithesis of motion and rest, posing the question: in Platonic terms is the best kind of *logos* moving or still?

### *Part 1: Arguments in motion*

When people engage in a dialectical debate in Plato they are often described as undertaking a particular journey in thought and speech. The image of interlocutors travelling along the road of inquiry or discussion is very familiar.<sup>6</sup> But at times the

<sup>2</sup> This paper was begun during a research project at King's College London on Greek images for language and thought. I am grateful for the award of a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, which made this research possible. During my fellowship at King's I was fortunate to benefit from discussion with M.S. Silk and M.M. McCabe. I would like to thank the audience at the Cambridge Philological Society for their very useful corrections and insights on this paper, and my colleagues, Dr D.L. Cairns, Dr M.F. Heath and Dr R.W. Brock, for their invaluable comments, criticisms and encouragement.

<sup>3</sup> On the power of words in Athens see J.P. Vernant, *The origins of Greek thought* (1982) 49–50; R.G. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek tragedy* (1982) 4, and P. Laín Entralgo, *The therapy of the word in classical antiquity* (trans. L.J. Rather and J.M. Sharp) (1970) 240–1.

<sup>4</sup> Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 563 *ἰκνεῖται λόγος διὰ στηθέων* ('the word pierces my breast') and *Suppliants* 466 *ἤκουσα μαστικτήρα καρδίας λόγον* ('I hear a threat that is a lash to my heart'). For Aeschylus' use of metaphors for *logos* see the excellent account of David Sansone (*Aeschylean metaphors for intellectual activity*, *Hermes Einzelschrift* 35, 1975). Particularly illuminating are his comments on *logos* as 'something organic' (34–9 and 77–92).

<sup>5</sup> Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen* 8.

<sup>6</sup> For argument as a journey see *Critias* 106a *Ὡς ἄσμενος, ... οἷον ἐκ μακρᾶς ἀναπεπαιμμένος ὁδοῦ. νῦν οὕτως ἐκ τῆς τοῦ λόγου διαπορείας ἀγαπητῶς ἀπήλλαγμα* ('How delighted I am ... – like a person at the end of a long journey – now I have gladly left off from the journey of discourse') and *Lysis* 812a *ἔμοιγε οὐ φαινόμεθα ἐκτὸς πορεύεσθαι τῶν ὑποτεθέντων λόγων* ('It seems to me that we have not

*logos* itself is also said to progress, to move forward. Often such comments seem unremarkable, as for example the phrase προοίων ὁ λόγος ('as our discussion progresses') at *Laws* 812e8. However, Plato develops this simple idea of an argument progressing so that the *logos* becomes an independent, external force with its own power of locomotion and its own impact on the speakers. Often this impact is violent. A frequent image for argument in Plato is that of battle or contest: fierce debate is itself a μάχη;<sup>7</sup> the interlocutors 'engage in battle' with each other<sup>8</sup> and fight using words as their weapons.<sup>9</sup> But the interlocutor can attack not only a human opponent but also the argument itself.<sup>10</sup> At *Phaedo* 89c Socrates speaks of 'renewing the fight' and 'defeating' the argument of Simmias and Cebes: πρὶν ἂν νικήσω ἀναμαχόμενος τὸν Σιμμίου τε καὶ Κέβητος λόγον ('until I fight back and defeat the argument of Simmias and Cebes') and at 91b again talks of attacking an argument: παρεσκευασμένος δὴ ... οὕτωσι ἔρχομαι ἐπὶ τὸν λόγον ('thus prepared I advance against the argument'). In turn, an argument can mount an attack on the speakers. At *Euthydemus* 303a *logos* is likened to a staunch opponent in the boxing ring,<sup>11</sup> as Socrates reflects on a previous dialectical encounter: Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, ὃ Κριτών, ὥσπερ πληγείς ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου, ἐκέιμην ἄφρωνος ('And so, Crito, I was lying there

travelled beyond the original discussion'). See also *Lys.* 213e; *Rep.* 484a, 532e; *Laws* 688e and 779d. The image of the journey in Greek thought is discussed by O. Becker, *Das Bild des Weges*, *Hermes Einzelschrift* 4 (1937).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. *Phil.* 15d, *Soph.* 246c and *Th.* 179d.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. *Euthyd.* 277d; *Hipp. Maj.* 286d, 287a; *Phil.* 22d; *Soph.* 246c, 261a; *Rep.* 348a and 501c.

<sup>9</sup> *Th.* 154e συνελθόντες σοφιστικῶς εἰς μάχην τοιαύτην, ἀλλήλων τοὺς λόγους τοῖς λόγοις ἐκρούομεν ('after coming to grips in such a sophistical battle, we are striking each other's words with words'); *Euthyd.* 294d τῷ δὲ ἀνδρείοτατα ὁμόσε ἤτην τοῖς ἐρωτήμασιν, ὁμολογοῦντες εἰδέναι, ὥσπερ οἱ κάπροι οἱ πρὸς τὴν πληγὴν ὁμόσε ὀθοῦμενοι ('but they bravely went to meet the enemy-questions, in agreement that they knew the answers, like wild boar thrusting themselves to meet the blows'); *Symp.* 219b Ἐγὼ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα ἀκούσας τε καὶ εἰπὼν, καὶ ἄφεις ὥσπερ βέλη, τετρωσθαι αὐτὸν ᾤμην ('But indeed after hearing and after saying these things, I thought that after letting loose my arrows, as it were, I had wounded him'); *Symp.* 189b Βαλὼν γε ... ὃ Ἄριστόφανες, οἷει ἐκφεύξεσθαι ('But, Aristophanes, you intend to throw your weapon and then to run away') and *Th.* 180a ἀλλ' ἂν τινὰ τι ἔρη, ὥσπερ ἐκ φαρέτρας ῥηματίσσια αἰνιγματώδη ἀνασπώντες ἀποτοξεύουσι, κἂν τούτου ζητῆς λόγον λαβεῖν τί εἶρηκεν, ἑτέρῳ πεπλήξῃ καινῶς μετονομασμένῳ ('But if you ask someone something, drawing out – as it were from a quiver – little enigmatic phrases, they shoot them at you like arrows, and if you seek to grasp the meaning of one man's account, suddenly you are struck by another newly-made metaphor').

<sup>10</sup> At *Hipp. Min.* 369c Hippias charges Socrates with 'getting hold' of the details (ἐφαπτόμενος) and failing to 'grapple with the matter as a whole' (οὐχ ὅλῳ ἀγωνίζῃ τῷ πράγματι).

<sup>11</sup> At *Phil.* 22e–23a in the debate on the relative benefits of pleasure and reason, Socrates' argument against the benefits of pleasure is characterized as a boxing-match between him and his *logoi* on one side and pleasure on the other. Notice how in this passage both the speaker (Socrates) and the *logoi* are jointly responsible for the knock-out blow: Ἀλλὰ μὲν, ὃ Σώκρατες, ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ νῦν μὲν ἦδονῃ σοι πεπτοκέναι καταταρεῖ πληγείσα ὑπὸ τῶν νυνδῆ λόγων ('Well, Socrates, it does now seem to me that pleasure has fallen to you, knocked out, as it were, by your arguments just now'). Compare *Gorg.* 462a where a *logos* has been knocked off its feet (the speakers are presented as wrestlers at 461c–d).

speechless, as it were struck down by the argument’).<sup>12</sup> Thus *logos* is an adversary which is capable of inflicting injury on the interlocutor. The image of *logos* as a force that can overpower the speakers appears again in the *Theaetetus*. As the interlocutors face *aporia*, Socrates presents such failure in inquiry as humiliation before the power of *logos* itself. In his vision the interlocutors will be rendered so weak as to allow the *logos* to trample over them (*Theaetetus* 191a):

ταπεινωθέντες οἶμαι τῷ λόγῳ παρέξομεν ὡς ναυτιῶντες πατεῖν τε καὶ  
χρησθαι ὅτι ἂν βούληται.

I suppose we shall be laid low, like sea-sick passengers, and give ourselves into the hands of the argument and let it trample all over us and do what it likes with us.

The verb *πατεῖν* expresses the strength and superiority of *logos* in contrast to the physical weakness of the sea-sick passengers. It also suggests that the victorious *logos* will act in a flagrantly hubristic fashion. The phrase *χρησθαι ὅτι ἂν βούληται* indicates the kind of treatment meted out to people with no rights. Thus Socrates presents confusion in debate as tantamount to letting the *logos* have the upper hand, and clear thinking thus becomes a matter of protecting oneself and one’s honour.<sup>13</sup>

*Logos* is again presented as a hostile force at *Philebus* 43a when Socrates regards himself and Protarchus as under attack from an advancing argument. In the face of this threat he advises Protarchus to join him in escape:

<sup>12</sup> The boxing metaphor here is part of Plato’s wider image of argument as a combat sport which is common in the dialogues. It is well established that Greek authors made great use of combat imagery (see e.g. M. Poliakoff, *Combat sports in the ancient world* (1987) 32 and 52) and critics have further pointed out that combat imagery was particularly associated with the sophists. Daphne O’Regan (*Rhetoric, comedy and the violence of language in Aristophanes’ Clouds* (1992)) discusses the sophistic use of combat terminology for debate and Protagoras’ punning book title *καταβάλλοντες λόγοι* (‘Overthrowing arguments’), viewing them as the inspiration for Aristophanes’ presentations of violent language (see e.g. 11 and 124). Likewise, F.G. Hermann (‘Wrestling metaphors in Plato’s *Theaetetus*’, *Nikephoros* 8 (1995) 77–109) has observed that ‘wrestling metaphors in the context of discussion and argument seem to be particularly connected with Protagoras’ (106) and has highlighted the references to Protagorean terminology at *Euthyd.* 286c, where Socrates refers to the argument of the Protagoreans which not only ‘trips up’ (ἀνατρέπων) the other arguments but also itself, and at 287e4, where the argument ‘in throwing down falls itself’. What has not been especially noted is that Plato follows Protagoras (and indeed Aristophanes’ satire) in making the *logoi* themselves combatants rather than simply weapons in the hands of the interlocutors. What is of interest to me in the *Euthyd.* passages is how the *logos* is an active force with its own power of movement (286b–c) οὐ γὰρ τοι ἄλλὰ τοῦτόν γε τὸν λόγον πολλῶν δὴ καὶ πολλάκις ἀνηκῶς αἰεὶ θαυμάζω – καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἄμφι Πρωταγόραν σφόδρα ἐχρῶντο αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ παλαιότεροι· ἐμοὶ δὲ αἰεὶ θαυμάσιός τις δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ τοὺς τε ἄλλους ἀνατρέπων καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτόν; (288a) ἀλλὰ εἰσεν ... οὗτος μὲν ὁ λόγος ἐν ταῦτῳ μένειν καὶ ἔτι ὥσπερ τὸ παλαιὸν καταβαλὼν πίπτειν.

<sup>13</sup> That honour is at stake in the *elenchos* has been noted by D.L. Cairns (*Aidōs* (1993) 371 n.82), who cites passages in Plato where dialectic is shown to require bravery and perseverance (e.g. *Euthyd.* 294d and *Charm.* 160d–e) and where the *elenchos* is viewed as potentially humiliating (e.g. *Euthyd.* 295b and *Charm.* 169c).

ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὑπεκοτῆναι τὸν λόγον ἐπιφερόμενον τοῦτον βούλομαι. τῆδ' οὖν  
διανοοῦμαι φεύγειν, καὶ σύ μοι σύμφευγε.

But I wish to avoid this argument that is advancing on us. So I intend to escape  
in this way, and you should escape with me.<sup>14</sup>

One of the effects of this idiom of the hostile *logos* is to present the interlocutors as engaged in battle not with each other but with some dangerous, external force. Thus dialectic becomes a co-operative exercise against a common enemy, a device which allows the speakers to turn their attention away from each other and out towards the external world. The image of *logos* as an adversary confers on issues of argument an objective, independent status. Difficult questions exist 'out there' and are not just manufactured in the course of debate.

At *Philebus* 43a discussion is presented not only in martial terms but also in terms of movement. For the verbs ὑπεκοτῆναι, ἐπιφερόμενον and φεύγειν characterize the threat posed by the new argument, and Socrates' proposed response to it, as movement in different directions. Like two armies on a battlefield, *logos* moves forward in attack while Socrates prepares to flee, wanting to 'get out of its way'. The image here is of a 'discursive space'<sup>15</sup> in which both *logoi* and the speakers are able to move about. To address a particular issue is to engage with and meet a *logos*, while avoiding an issue becomes dodging its advance and moving away into another area. Thus debate is a situation where abstract *logoi* are physically present alongside the human speakers and where both have the power to move. The different stages of a debate are then expressed as the various movements of speakers and of *logoi* themselves.

This striking idea of speakers and *logoi* moving around the same physical location is presented again in the *Republic* in a beautiful image which, although brief, contains a complex set of associations. The image occurs in book 6 (503a–b) as Socrates refers to his earlier avoidance (412a) of the issue of appointing rulers. Now that the issue of philosopher-kings is out in the open (raised at 471c), he can address the matter of education and selection more fully. He offers a resumé of the discussion so far and comments (503a): τοιαῦτ' ἅττα ἦν τὰ λεγόμενα παρεξιόντος καὶ παρακαλυπτομένου τοῦ λόγου, πεφοβημένου κινεῖν τὸ νῦν παρόν ('Something of this sort was said while the argument passed by and veiled its face, afraid to rouse

<sup>14</sup> The alternative scenario of a *logos* escaping from a speaker is presented at *Phdo.* 89c εἰ σὺ εἶην καὶ με διαφεύγοι ὁ λόγος ('if I were you and the argument (the point) were to escape me/get away from me'). Cf. *Parm.* 135d6 (εἰ δὲ μή, σὲ διαφεύξετα ἢ ἀλήθεια, 'otherwise the truth will escape you').

<sup>15</sup> The phrase 'discursive space' is used by Adi Ophir in *Plato's invisible cities, discourse and power in the Republic* (1991) 124–31, and is explained thus (124): 'The dramatic space is the one unfolded and organized by and through the movement of the dialogue's interlocutors. The discursive space is the one unfolded and organized by and through the movement of the dialogue's arguments.' In chapter 5 'The space of discourse' (132–67), Ophir discusses spatial and journey metaphors for argument in the *Rep.*

this present debate'). The topic was left aside earlier because Socrates realized that it would provoke anger and outrage (502d). He thus comments at 503b:

᾽Οκνος γάρ, ἔφην, ὃ φίλε, ἐγώ, εἰπεῖν τὰ νῦν ἀποτετολμημένα·

We shrank, my friend, ... from uttering the audacities which have now been hazarded. (tr. Shorey)<sup>16</sup>

Socrates' apprehension is expressed in the terms ὄκνος and ἀποτετολμημένα. At 503a this apprehension is transferred onto the *logos* itself, for it decides to pass by because it is afraid (πεφοβημένου) to stir up controversy. If the *logos* had stopped and been noticed, it would have been beckoned into the discursive space. Thus it would have caused the interlocutors – the humans – to begin discussing it. So, with apparent sensitivity for the smooth running of the overall debate, the *logos* avoids being drawn in. The participle παρεξιόντος suggests that the *logos* is quite close to the speakers as it passes by. The *logos* is moving along in the same broad area as the speakers because it is relevant to the debate in hand and requires further discussion. But it does not come into direct contact with the speakers, for it chooses to pass by. This decision to keep moving (suggestive of an acquaintance dodging an unwanted encounter in the street) thus provides an interesting image for Socrates' decision to avoid a particular subject at this point.

So much for the first participle, but what about the second – παρακαλυπτομένου? There would seem to be two reasons why the *logos* takes this unusual step of veiling itself:

i) the act of veiling is a display of modesty and shame:<sup>17</sup> the proposal represented by the *logos* is so potentially shocking and outrageous that it requires at this stage an act of respect for conventions. The association between veiling and shame is made explicit at *Phaedrus* 243b where Socrates has covered his head in a display of shame during his defamation of Love. With the veil the *logos* imposes silence on itself and draws out of the public domain.

ii) The image of covering oneself up (the verb is also used for disguise) conveys deliberate concealment. The *logos* is afraid of stirring up unwelcome debate and so tries to avoid drawing attention to itself. It wants to pass by without being seen.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Shorey's translation of *Rep.* appears in *Plato, collected dialogues*, E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (edd.), Bollingen Series LXXI (1961). Other translations used from this collection are: Lane Cooper (*Euthyphro*); W.K.C. Guthrie (*Meno*) and F.M. Cornford (*Theaetetus*).

<sup>17</sup> See Cairns, *Aidōs* 15 n.15 on 'averting the gaze or seeking to hide oneself' in the phenomenology of shame and *aidōs*, and 292–3 on the act of veiling: 'The veiling of one's head is a typical *aidōs*-reaction, a consequence of the fear of being seen and part of the general complex of associations between *aidōs* and the eyes.' Also on veiling as an act of modesty and shame see Cairns, "'Off with her *aidōs*!": Herodotus 1.8.3–4', *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 46 (1996) 78–83, esp. 79–80.

Thus Socrates' tactful avoidance of controversy is expressed in the image of a topic modestly drawing a veil over itself. But secondly, this quiet exit, observed by no one except Socrates, suggests his skill in manipulating the course of the conversation. Socrates is the only one aware that a subject has been dropped. In terms of the personification of *logos*, the image suggests not only that the *logos* is present and moves within the discursive space but also that it is aware of the progress of the debate between the speakers. For the action of the *logos* shows that it understands its own relevance to and impact on the discussion. By moving unseen through and out of the discursive space the *logos* avoids 'setting in motion' (κινεῖν)<sup>18</sup> a controversial debate. Because the subject of how to select rulers has been raised in a preliminary way, this particular *logos* is present in the debate, but since it is not to be developed, the *logos* leaves the area. Thus Plato offers an unusual and evocative image for the situation where a speaker avoids developing a point.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, the change to a new topic of conversation is represented by the parallel image of *logos* entering the discursive space. At *Republic* 503a the *logos* disappears when it is not discussed, and at *Sophist* 231b, as Socrates speaks of a new subject under discussion, the *logos* is said to have 'appeared' beside the speakers, ἐν τῷ νῦν λόγῳ παραφανέντι ('in the present discussion that has just appeared'). This image of independent *logoi* able to decide on their own entrances and exits in discussion is used also in the *Theaetetus* (184a) and *Phaedrus* (260e). In the *Theaetetus* passage Socrates envisages how new *logoi* might enter the debate shamelessly and so obscure the main subject (184a):

καὶ τὸ μέγιστον, οὗ ἕνεκα ὁ λόγος ὄρηται, ἐπιστήμης πέρι τί ποτ' ἐστίν, ἄσκεπτον γένηται ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπεισχωμαζόντων λόγων, εἴ τις αὐτοῖς πείσεται·

and the most important issue, on account of which the debate was initiated, the nature of knowledge, might become unobserved, because of the arguments rushing in like disorderly revellers, if someone is persuaded by them.

Here the unwanted *logoi* (which represent digressions) burst into the discursive space like gatecrashers into a party, and in the ensuing confusion threaten to obscure the original subject of debate. Elsewhere in the same dialogue other unwanted digressions pose a threat in the form of a flood of water (177b–c):

<sup>18</sup> The verb κινεῖν is used similarly at *Polit.* 277d5 and 297c8. See Rowe's note on *Polit.* 272d5 and the idea of 'moving' or 'waking up' (ἐγείρω) an account (C.J. Rowe, *Plato: Statesman* (1995)).

<sup>19</sup> *Rep.* 503a echoes Pindar *Nem.* 5.14–19. The passages share both the context of risk and the idea of a thought or argument choosing to remain unseen. In *Nem.* 5 the poet declares: 'I shrink from telling of a mighty deed, I one ventured not in accord with justice' and elaborates: στάσομαι· οὐ τοι ἅπαντα κερδίων ἢ φράϊνοισα πρόσωπον ἀλάθει' ἀτρεκέλης ('I will halt, for not every exact truth I is better for showing its face': tr. W.H. Race, *Pindar II* (1997)).

περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων, ἐπειδὴ καὶ πάρεργα τυγχάνει λεγόμενα, ἀποστῶμεν – εἰ δὲ μή, πλείω ἂν ἐπιρρέοντα καταχώσει ἡμῶν τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς λόγον – ἐπὶ δὲ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν ἴωμεν, εἰ καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ.

So concerning these matters, since really they are a digression, let us stop our discussion – but if not, a constant stream of more and more topics will flood in and will bury our original argument – so let us go back to where we were before, if you agree.<sup>20</sup>

At *Phaedrus* 260e–261a the *logoi* come forward of their own accord and are formally introduced by the human speakers. In the debate on the relationship between knowledge and rhetoric, rhetoric (personified) takes for granted that she is a science, but Socrates has some doubts:

S: For I seem as it were to hear certain arguments approaching and solemnly protesting even before the case comes to court that she is lying, (ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀκούειν δοκῶ τινῶν προσιόντων καὶ διαμαρτυρομένων λόγων, ὅτι ψεύδεται) ...

P: We need these arguments, Socrates, bring them here before us and examine what they say and how they say it.

S: Come here, then, you noble beasts, and persuade Phaedrus ... (tr. Rowe)<sup>21</sup>

Here the personified *logoi*, like witnesses in the preliminary stages of a trial, come forward into the court to make an obstructive plea (a *diamarturia*).<sup>22</sup> So these *logoi* purposefully enter the debate to make their contribution.

Alongside the familiar metaphors of interlocutors travelling and journeying, these images of *logoi* moving into and out of the debate create the effect of argument as a

<sup>20</sup> Compare *Phaedrus* 229d.

<sup>21</sup> C.J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* (1986).

<sup>22</sup> In *The shape of Athenian law* (1993), S.C. Todd explains the procedure of a *diamarturia* (136): ‘*Diamarturia* is a formal assertion of fact by means of a witness. The witness is produced before a magistrate during the preliminary stages of a trial, and the fact to which he testifies is one which has a binding legal impact on the course of that trial ... The ideal use of *diamarturia* is clear: its effect is to bar the original hearing, because the witness is deemed to be telling the truth until the opposite is proved; if the plaintiff wishes to proceed further, he must sue the witness in a *dikē pseudomarturiōn*.’ In Plato’s image the question, ‘does the man who knows need the science of rhetoric?’, constitutes a court case involving personified rhetoric. Before the formal hearing of this case certain arguments present themselves as witnesses and offer an obstructive plea (‘Rhetoric is lying when she says that she is a science’), designed to prevent this particular case coming to trial. Phaedrus, as the magistrate of the court, will have to decide whether or not the trial goes ahead. This legal image presents the situation where a subsidiary point in debate is shown to have an important bearing on the main issue. If the evidence of the *logoi* is accepted and it is decided that rhetoric is not a science, the original question will have to be modified before progress can continue.

series of coming and goings. Movement is used to express both the activity of working through a set of questions (getting from *a* to *b*) and the structuring of a debate, where different subjects are raised and dropped. The dialogues are full of such imagery and indeed it is difficult to conceive of dialectic without the idea of movement. Further, on the nature of language in general, Plato observes – albeit in a playful passage – that language itself is always in motion (*Cratylus* 408c):<sup>23</sup> Οἴσθα ὅτι ὁ λόγος τὸ πᾶν σημαίνει καὶ κυκλεῖ καὶ πολεῖ ἀεὶ (‘You know that speech signifies everything and circles and always ranges around’). In view of this conception of *logos* as, it would seem, necessarily mobile, it is at first surprising to find that Plato on occasion prizes stillness and stability within the realms of discourse and thought. Indeed, in a number of works Plato sets up an antithesis between the motion and stillness of *logos* and characterizes movement in highly negative terms. In part 2 I shall consider Plato’s antithesis between moving and still *logoi* and shall show how Plato’s attitudes to motion are deeply rooted in his cultural background.

### *Part 2: Is the best kind of logos moving or still?*

Part 2 consists of two sections: (2.1) motion as disturbance and (2.2) circles of perfection. It is the task of the first section to show how Plato develops a well-established unease about disorderly motion and how in his accounts of discourse and thought he draws on poetic language of motion as disturbance. In the second section (2.2) I shall demonstrate how Plato finally resolves the tension between movement and stillness by means of the idea of circular motion, which is used to characterize both thought and speech. Overall, the aim of part 2 is to establish Plato’s attitude towards moving and static *logoi* and, put simply, my question becomes: ‘in Platonic terms is the best kind of *logos* moving or still?’

#### 2.1. Motion as disturbance

In Greek culture before Plato there is a strain of thought whereby the concept of fixity is positive and whereby disorderly movement signifies disruption, trouble and turmoil.<sup>24</sup> The essential contrast is between unmoved calm and disturbance caused by

<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, at *Thi.* 202a certain demonstrative pronouns and accompanying adjectives are said to ‘run around’ everywhere as they attach themselves to different nouns: ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐδὲ τὸ ἐκεῖνο οὐδὲ τὸ ἐκαστον οὐδὲ τὸ μόνον οὐδὲ τοῦτο προσοιστέον οὐδ’ ἄλλα πολλά τοιαῦτα ταῦτα μὲν γὰρ περιτρέχοντα πᾶσι προσφέρεσθαι, ἕτερα ὄντα ἐκείνων οἷς προστίθεται (‘We ought not even to add “just” or “it” or “each” or “alone” or “this”, or any other of a host of such terms. These terms, running loose about the place, are attached to everything, and they are distinct from the things to which they are applied’: tr. Cornford).

or linked with motion. Thus Archilochus addresses his soul (West 128): θυμέ, θύμ', ἀμηχάνοισι κήδεσιν κυκώμενε ('Soul, my soul, stirred up by hopeless troubles'), and Sappho describes the shock of love (L-P 130): Ἔρος δηῦτέ μ' ὀ λυσιμέλης δόνει, ('Once again limb-loosening Love makes me tremble').<sup>25</sup> In Greek medical writing movement can indicate that something is wrong in the human body. Helen King<sup>26</sup> has discussed the *De mulierum affectibus* and its view of the physical cause of hysteria: 'namely, the tendency of the womb to run wild within the body if it is not allowed to conceive' (116). When all is working well, the womb stays in its place but when its natural functions are impeded, it begins to move around the woman's body, causing all sorts of physical maladies.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, for Alcmaeon the brain can stay in place or can shift position, and if it shifts, the movement incapacitates the senses in different ways.<sup>28</sup> This association between motion and disturbance is also used by Thucydides at the very opening of book 1. First Thucydides refers to the war as a κίνησις (lit. a 'movement') and second draws a contrast between the migrations of tribes in ancient Hellas and the stability of the society at Athens. There is no doubt as to which form of social life Thucydides prefers, as he ranges movement, disruption and disunity against stability, security and political unity (2.5–6):

τὴν γοῦν Ἀττικὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον διὰ τὸ λεπτόγεων ἀστασίαστον οὖσαν ἄνθρωποι ὥρουν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ ... ἐκ γὰρ τῆς ἄλλης Ἑλλάδος οἱ πολέμῳ ἢ στάσει ἐκπίπτοντες παρ' Ἀθηναίους οἱ δυνατώτατοι ὡς βέβαιοι ὄν ἀνεχώρουν.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. the use of ἔμπεδος in Homer, which denotes steadfastness in the battle-line and in personal conduct (*Il.* 5.254, 527; 16.520; 18.158; and *Od.* 11.152, 628; 17.464; 19.493; 21.426 and 22.226), and the positive association between the absence of movement and peace at Bacchylides 5.199–200 (τοὺς ὀ μεγιστοπάτωρ | Ζεὺς ἀκινήτους ἐν εἰρήν[α φυλάσσει]). Deborah Steiner (*The crown of song* (1986)) discusses how Pindar uses symbols of motion to represent impermanence and instability in human life (ch. 6 'Winds and waves', 66–70) and how storm imagery is contrasted with that of good weather. Further, she explains how at *Pyth.* 5.10–11 and *Isth.* 7.23 Pindar develops the contrast between motion and fixity through supporting imagery of light and darkness: 'Pindar thus turns his metaphors towards his encomiastic ends, celebrating the man who may transcend the motion-filled condition in which he lives, and achieve one fixed moment of calm and sunshine' (72).

<sup>25</sup> Tr. D.A. Campbell, *Greek lyric I, Sappho and Alcaeus* (1990).

<sup>26</sup> H. King, 'Bound to bleed: Artemis and Greek women' in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (edd.), *Images of women in antiquity* (1983) 109–41.

<sup>27</sup> Lesley Dean-Jones in *Women's bodies in classical Greek science* (1994) discusses the Hippocratic view that the womb could relocate to other parts of a woman's body ('The "wandering womb"' 69–77) and sets out the various verbs used for the womb's movement (e.g. στρέφω, τρέπω, ἐπιβάλλω, ἐμβάλλω, προσιπίτω, θέω, σεύομαι). She comments on Plato's use of the idea of the mobile womb (*Tim.* 91b–d) and makes the important observation (70): 'The Hippocratics never describe the womb explicitly as an individual animal wandering at will within the body of a woman, in fact the gynaecologists never use the verb "to wander" (πλάνω) to describe the womb's movements'. Why Plato should have added this term to the vocabulary of the womb's movements is not considered by Dean-Jones, but is important for my discussion on wandering in Plato (below). Plato introduces the idea of 'wandering' to bring the concept of the mobile womb into line with his distinction between orderly and disorderly motion whereby 'wandering' becomes a sign of irrationality.

<sup>28</sup> For Alcmaeon's views, as reported in Theophrastus' *Fragment on sensation*, ch. 26, see James Longrigg, *Greek rational medicine: philosophy and medicine from Alcmaeon to the Alexandrians* (1993) 47–81, esp. 58.

It is interesting to observe that Attica, which, because of the poverty of her soil, was remarkably free from political disunity, has always been inhabited by the same race of people ... for when people were driven out from other parts of Greece by war or by disturbances, the most powerful of them took refuge in Athens, as being a stable society. (tr. Warner)<sup>29</sup>

Ruth Padel<sup>30</sup> has noted other Greek texts where movement is presented as negative and her account ('Inner movement: source of knowledge, sign of pain', 65–8) focuses on movement as 'a sign of something wrong' (67). She observes a concern with such movement across a range of fields: 'In one way or another, fifth-century philosophers, historians, and scientists are all concerned with conflicted, hurtful, important movement' (66).<sup>31</sup> While the Greeks did indeed see movement as a source of disruption and turmoil, it is important to remember that they also viewed some types of movement as natural and to be welcomed. To take Hippocratic views as an example: while the movement of the womb around the body is problematic, the movement of fluids and substances through the body is natural and necessary, as in the case of air, of blood as the carrier of nutriments, and of semen moving through the 'spermatic veins'.<sup>32</sup> It is when such movement is blocked that diseases occur, as can be seen in *De virginum morbis* where the author tells that when the exit of the womb is closed and thus impedes the flow of blood, women experience sluggishness, numbness and, finally, delirium.<sup>33</sup> In more abstract terms, movement is positive when a journey in thought leads to a new discovery, as Parmenides describes in his sublime proem, or when a poet is transported to fresh insights and powers of expression via the 'chariot of the Muses'.<sup>34</sup> When Pindar's poems make their voyages out, their power of movement is contrasted positively with the immobility of statues, and their journeys abroad spread the fame of the poet and victor. Thus the movement of the poems is a mark of their success.<sup>35</sup> In

<sup>29</sup> R. Warner, *Thucydides, the Peloponnesian war* (1954).

<sup>30</sup> Ruth Padel, *In and out of the mind* (1992).

<sup>31</sup> While Padel allows that 'movement is also the source of being moved, of interest, intensity, and excitement' (*In and out* 68), her emphasis remains on movement as destructive and painful.

<sup>32</sup> See Longrigg, *Greek rational medicine*, e.g. 37 (air), 62 (blood), 68 (*pneuma*), 79–80 (semen). In view of these necessary movements, Padel's claim that 'Greeks do not have our sense that perpetual movement within is normal' (*In and out* 67) would seem to be too sweeping.

<sup>33</sup> See Longrigg, *Greek rational medicine* 42–3; King, 'Bound to bleed', and Dean Jones, *Women's bodies* 50–1 and 123–35.

<sup>34</sup> On the image of the chariot of the Muses and of the poem as a journey see R. Harriott, *Poetry and criticism before Plato* (1969) 63–8, and Steiner, *Crown*, ch. 7 'Pindar's paths' (76–86).

<sup>35</sup> Pindar, *Nem.* 5.1–3 Οὐκ ἀνδριαντοποιός εἰμ', ὥστ' ἐλινύσοντα ἐργάζεσθαι ἀγάλματ' ἐπ' αὐτᾶς βαθμίδος | ἑσταότ'· ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσας ὀλκάδος ἐν τ' ἀκάτω, γλυκεῖ' αἰοῖδά, | στεῖχ' ἀπ' Αἰγίνας, διαγγέλλοις, ὅτι ... ('I am not a sculptor, so as to fashion stationary | statues that stand on their same base. | Rather on board every ship | and in every boat, sweet song, | go forth from Aigina and spread the news ...') (tr. Race). Steiner notes the positive aspects of this mobility (66–7): 'the ode's power to travel to the far corners of the earth, through space and time, and so to spread the glory of its patron'. For further comments on how Pindar attributes the power of movement to his poetry and how this is a positive feature, see Steiner, 39, 75 and 85.

view of the positive aspects of movement in Greek thought, it would seem more precise to say that movement *can be* a sign of something wrong, when that movement is *disorderly*. My contention is, then, that there is in Greek thought a general unease about disorderly motion and that Plato, influenced by this, reproduces in his dialogues the tension between disorderly motion and the positive aspects of stability. This can be seen in Plato's development of two well-established poetic images of disorderly motion: wandering and rolling.

### 2.1.1. Wandering and rolling

To begin with wandering: the 'wandering mind' is in poetry and myth an image of madness,<sup>36</sup> and the inner movement of madness or of suffering is often linked with external wandering. Padel notes the case of Io, whose madness 'drives her limbs into wandering',<sup>37</sup> and Dowden<sup>38</sup> links the Io story with that of the daughters of Proitus, who, after being driven mad by Hera, wander the woods of Arcadia. Dowden comments on the use of wandering in such myths: 'Wandering is indeed a characteristic form of segregation of initiands from civilised society' (90). Wandering as a form of segregation, where people find themselves outside social norms, and as a sign of inner turmoil, is already well established in Homer:<sup>39</sup> e.g. in *Iliad* 10.91–2 Nestor asks Agamemnon why he is out in the camp in the darkness of night, and the king replies:

πλάζομαι ὄδ', ἐπεὶ οὐ μοι ἐπ' ὄμμασι νήδυμος ὕπνος  
ἰζάνει, ἀλλὰ μέλει πόλεμος καὶ κήδε' Ἀχαιῶν.

I wander thus because sweet sleep does not settle upon my eyes, but war troubles me and the woes of the Achaeans.<sup>40</sup>

A second common image of motion as disturbance in Greek poetry is that of storms

<sup>36</sup> See Padel, *In and out* (31, 83, 121, 176), and *Whom gods destroy: elements of Greek and tragic madness* (1995) ch.10 'Madness as "wandering"' and ch.11 'Resonances of wandering'.

<sup>37</sup> *In and out* 121. For the wandering motif, see also *PV* 572, 576, 585 etc.; *Or.* 466; *Aj.* 886 and *OT* 3, 122–3, etc.

<sup>38</sup> Ken Dowden, *Death and the maiden* (1989).

<sup>39</sup> See Padel, *Whom gods* 108–9.

<sup>40</sup> The external movement of wandering is closely linked with inner movement in these lines, as Agamemnon goes on to say that his heart is not ἔμπεδον (94) (see note 24 above). For a negative view of wandering in general, see *Od.* 15.343 where Odysseus informs Eumaeus *πλαγκτοσύνης δ' οὐκ ἔστι κακώτερον ἄλλο βροτοῖσιν* ('than wandering nothing is more evil for mortals'). See also Archilochus 130 (West) lines 4–5 *ἔπειτα πολλὰ γίνεται κακά, ἰ καὶ βίου χρήμη πλανᾶται καὶ νόον παρήρορος* ('then comes much trouble, and a man wanders in need of food and distraught in mind'; tr. J.M. Edmonds (adapted), *Elegy and iambus* II (1931)).

at sea.<sup>41</sup> One particular aspect of this storm imagery is that of the rolling movement of the waves, whipped up by the winds and threatening disaster to those at sea. Alcaeus famously tells of the trials of political upheaval (L–P 326):

ἀσυννέτημι τῶν ἀνέμων στάσιν  
 τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔνθεν κύμα κ υ λ ί ν δ ε τ α ι,<sup>42</sup>  
 τὸ δ' ἔνθεν, ἄμμες δ' ὄν τὸ μέσσον  
 νᾶϊ φορήμεθα σὺν μελαίνα,  
 χεῖμωνι μόχθεντες μεγάλῳ μάλα·

I fail to understand the direction of the winds: one wave rolls in from this side, another from that, and we in the middle are carried along in company with our black ship, much distressed in the great storm. (tr. Campbell)

The verb κυλίνδομαι is the normal word for the rolling movement of waves and is often used as part of Homer's vocabulary of storms.<sup>43</sup> When Homer uses storm vocabulary as an image of suffering and disaster, the rolling wave comes to signify the swelling up of danger and trouble, a feature that occurs in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. At *Iliad* 11.347 Hector in battle is likened to a storm-wave which rolls against his enemies, νῶϊν δὴ τότε πῆμα κυλίνδεται, ὄβριμος Ἐκτωρ ('this disaster is rolled against us, this massive Hector'), and similarly, at *Odyssey* 2.163 'great disaster' is said to be 'rolled' against the suitors (τοῖσιν γὰρ μέγα πῆμα κυλίνδεται).<sup>44</sup> Further, the verbs κυλίνδω/κυλίνδομαι have other negative connotations in Homer, which strengthen the association between the ideas of rolling and disorder.

In the *Iliad* κυλίνδομαι is used of an injured horse writhing in pain around a fixed arrowhead (8.86) and of a person in grief rolling on the ground and covering himself with dung, e.g. *Iliad* 24.639–40 where the distraught Priam tells of his pain:

ἀλλ' αἰεὶ στενάχω καὶ κήδεα μυρία πέσσω,  
 αὐλῆς ἐν χόρτοισι κυλινδόμενος κατὰ κόπρον.<sup>45</sup>

day and night I groan, brooding over the countless griefs,  
 groveling in the dung that fills my walled-in court. (tr. Fagles)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> On storm imagery in Greek poetry in general see Padel, *In and out* 81–8 ('Flow and storm'), and for Pindar's use of storm imagery see Steiner, *Crown* 66–72.

<sup>42</sup> The verb κυλίνδεται ('rolls') will be examined in the Platonic context (below).

<sup>43</sup> *Il.* 11.307; 14.18; *Od.* 5.296. When waves are described as rolling in Homer, the usual context is that of a storm at sea, where the language of rolling conveys the destructive force of the waves. On one occasion only (*Od.* 9.147) rolling is used as a neutral description of the movement of large waves at sea.

<sup>44</sup> See also *Il.* 17.99, 17.688 and *Od.* 8.81. J.B. Hainsworth (*A commentary on Homer's Odyssey* I (1988)), identifies the use of κυλίνδετο at *Od.* 8.81 as a 'traditional metaphor' (352).

<sup>45</sup> See also *Il.* 22.414, 24.165 and Nicholas Richardson's comments on this act of mourning (*The Iliad: a commentary* V (1991) 150).

<sup>46</sup> R. Fagles, *Homer, The Iliad* (1991).

Thus rolling is used for the disorderly physical motion that expresses a creature's pain and suffering. But Homer also speaks of objects 'rolling around' – bodies, helmets and boulders – and here too κυλίνδομαι has pronounced negative connotations. At *Iliad* 11.146 Agamemnon kills Hippolochus, slashes off his arms and head and sends his body rolling through the crowd: χείρας ἀπὸ ξίφει τμήξας ἀπὸ τ' αὐχένα κόψας | ὄλμον δ' ὡς ἔσσευε κυλίνδεσθαι δι' ὀμίλου. The image captures both the violence of Agamemnon's act and the total humiliation of Hippolochus who (now dead) has not only lost control over his own movement but also is being treated as a common object rather than a person. The idea of an object rolling around is used to *prefigure* a person's injury or death at both *Iliad* 13.579 and 16.794, where the rolling object is a helmet, knocked from the head of a warrior.<sup>47</sup> In both passages the helmet is described as rolling around on the ground (μετὰ ποσσὶ; ποσσὶν ὑφ' ἵππων), a detail which expresses lowliness and dishonour.<sup>48</sup> A warrior's helmet should remain fixed on his head; if not, the warrior himself, like the helmet, will soon be propelled by forces beyond his control. At *Iliad* 13.142 a boulder rolling downhill signifies the loss of control that attends battle frenzy. Here Hector sweeps forward in battle like a boulder rolling headlong down a slope, the momentum of which is increased by the motion downwards. Like the boulder, Hector is not in control of his own movement,<sup>49</sup> and in both cases the uncontrolled motion unleashes a destructive force: as a rolling wave will sweep away all that is before it, so will the boulder on the slope and Hector on the battlefield.

The verb κυλίνδω/κυλίνδομαι is used 15 times in the *Iliad*, with all the occurrences signifying disturbance or trouble in some way: first, rolling is used to express the violence of a natural force which will sweep away everything in its path; second, the rolling around of creatures conveys pain and grief; and thirdly, the rolling of objects on the ground represents defeat, dishonour and the loss of control. The use of the verb in the *Odyssey* paints a similar picture, the only exception being the neutral description of waves at sea at 9.147. The other nine appearances of 'rolling' in the *Odyssey* are

<sup>47</sup> At *Il.* 13.578–9 Helenus strikes Deipyrus and shears off his helmet; the helmet falls to the ground and one of the soldiers picks it up as it rolls among the feet of the fighters (ἡ μὲν ἀποπλαγχθεῖσα χαμαὶ πέσε. καὶ τις Ἄχαιῶν | μαρναμένων μετὰ ποσσὶ κυλινδομένην ἐκόμισσε). In the space of one line Deipyrus is dead. Similarly at 16.794–6, when Apollo knocks off Patroclus' helmet (which he has borrowed from Achilles), attention is drawn to the fate of the helmet itself: ἡ δὲ κυλινδομένη καναχὴν ἔχε ποσσὶν ὑφ' ἵππων | αὐλῶπις τρυφάλεια, μάνθησαν δὲ ἔθειραι | αἶματι καὶ κονίησι. Since Patroclus will soon be dead, the helmet rolling on the ground prefigures the fate of the man. R. Janko (*The Iliad: a commentary* IV (1992) 411), observes on *Il.* 16.794: 'The poet dwells on this moving detail as if it stands for the hero's own head lying in the dust.' Cf. 112 on *Il.* 13.526–30: 'falling objects rolling noisily on the battlefield are a *topos*'.

<sup>48</sup> This association of rolling with defeat and dishonour appears again at *Il.* 14.411, where Aias strikes Hector on the chest with a boulder, making him spin like a top and then fall to the ground. The boulder is one of many that had been used to prop up the ships and 'had rolled among the feet of the combatants' (παῶ' ποσὶ μαρναμένων ἐκυλίνδετο). The stone is thus ordinary and common, a lowly object which prefigures the lowly state of the defeated Hector.

<sup>49</sup> See R. Janko, *Il. comm.* IV 62, on the boulder comparison and on the force behind Hector's motion.

linked in some way with trouble, disaster or the loss of control.<sup>50</sup> As in the *Iliad*, rolling expresses how an individual can lose control over his own movement and thus be at the mercy of powerful external forces. At *Odyssey* 1.162 Telemachus imagines his father dead and visualizes his bones ‘rotting in the rain’ or churned around in the sea: οὐδὲ δὴ που λεύκ’ ὄστέα πύθεται ὄμβρῳ ἢ κείμεν’ ἐπ’ ἠπείρου, ἢ εἰν ἄλι κῦμα κυλίνδει (‘whose white bones, it may be, rot in the rain as they lie upon the mainland, or the wave rolls them in the sea’). This passage is neatly echoed much later in the poem when Odysseus, in the guise of a beggar, describes to Eumaeus how he was shipwrecked and rolled helplessly along by a wave (14.314–15): ἐννημαρ φερόμην, δεκάτη δέ με νυκτὶ μελαίνῃ ἢ γαίῃ Θεσπρωτῶν πέλασεν μέγα κῦμα κυλίνδον (‘for nine days I drifted, and on the tenth night, in darkness, a great wave rolled me and brought me to the shore of the Thesprotians’). When Eumaeus tells Penelope of the beggar’s tale, he uses the intensive – and highly unusual – form of the verb, προπροκυλινδόμενος,<sup>51</sup> to convey his plight (*Odyssey* 17.524–5):

ἔνθεν δὴ νῦν δεῦρο τόδ’ ἵκετο πῆματα πάσχων,  
προπροκυλινδόμενος

from there he has made his way to this place, suffering hardships,  
driven helpless along. (tr. Lattimore)<sup>52</sup>

The beggar ‘rolls on’ in his travels because, prey to misfortune, he has lost control of his own movement and his own fate. LSJ translate this instance of προπροκυλινδομαι as ‘wandering from place to place’, fusing together the two ideas of rolling and wandering with their shared connotation of helplessness.

In these two poetic images of rolling and wandering, disorderly motion signifies trouble and suffering. The preferable alternative to disorderly motion in all these instances is stability. The action of rolling, whether that of waves in storms or of objects

<sup>50</sup> *Od.* 5.296 describes waves rolling in a stormy sea and the related image of trouble rolling upon people like a great wave is used at 2.163 and 8.81. κυλινδομαι denotes writhing around in grief at 4.541 (repeated at 10.499): αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κλαίων τε κυλινδόμενός τε κορέσθην, and the verb is used to convey Sisyphus’ loss of control as he seeks to complete his hopeless task (11.598, αὐτὶς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λάας ἀνααίδης).

<sup>51</sup> The intensive verb προπροκυλινδομαι occurs only twice in Homer, in the passage quoted and at *Il.* 22.221, where Athene tells Achilles it would now be futile for Apollo to grovel before Zeus on behalf of Hector. On *Il.* 22.221 Richardson (*Il. comm.* V 131) comments: ‘This is remarkably contemptuous towards Apollo, especially προπροκυλινδόμενος ... προπροκυλινδόμενος means ‘grovelling in front of’ as a suppliant, like Priam when supplicating the Trojans, κυλινδόμενος κατὰ κόπρον, at 414a; ... This vivid compound recurs at *Od.* 17.525, and nowhere else in later literature.’ Joseph Russo (*A commentary on Homer’s Odyssey* III (1992) 44) explains the verb’s sound effect: ‘προπροκυλινδόμενος onomatopoeically recreates the forward rolling it signifies, as it takes us all the way to the penhemimeral caesura in completely dactylic movement. It occurs only here and at *Il.* 22.221, and nowhere else in Greek literature.’

<sup>52</sup> R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (1965).

moving randomly, signifies danger and the loss of control. Trouble and disaster are presented as forces that knock a person off balance: a rolling person or object does not enjoy a steady, regular motion but is in disarray, pitched into chaos by some outside force. The preferable alternative to this confused state is to remain in control of one's own movement. The action of wandering signifies anxiety, madness and separation. Inner anxiety and distress is expressed by the need for external movement beyond one's normal bounds. Remaining static in one's rightful place is the preferable alternative to being forced to roam in unfamiliar surroundings. In both these images motion is the result of a loss of stability and so a polarity is established between disorderly motion (negative) and stillness (positive).

### 2.1.2. Motion as disturbance in Plato

Plato adopts the established poetic images of wandering and rolling and uses them in various ways in his exploration of *logos*. Perplexity is imaged as a helpless wandering to and fro (*Hippias Minor* 376c): ὅπερ μέντοι πάλαι ἔλεγον, ἐγὼ περὶ ταῦτα ἄνω καὶ κάτω πλανῶμαι καὶ οὐδέποτε ταῦτά μοι δοκεῖ ('As I was saying before I wander all over the place concerning these matters and am always changing my opinion'), and throughout the dialogues wandering is used as a motif for confusion, irrationality and ontological instability.<sup>53</sup> For example, in the *Timaeus* as Plato contrasts the work of Reason and Necessity, the latter, which is associated 'not with order and intelligibility, but with disorder and random chance' (Cornford),<sup>54</sup> is identified also as 'the wandering cause' (τὸ τῆς πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας, 48a7). Similarly, rolling is used to signify disorder in *logos* in various ways, as will be shown later. For the moment let it simply be noted that Plato applies storm imagery to *logos* when he presents dialectic as a voyage and difficulties in argument as dangers in a stormy sea. For example, in the *Republic* Socrates speaks of 'waves of paradox' that threaten to overwhelm the speakers<sup>55</sup> and elsewhere we hear of 'the tempest of logic' and of speakers being 'storm-tossed' on the sea of argument (*Philebus* 29b);<sup>56</sup> χεμαζόμεθα γὰρ ὄντως ὑπ' ἀπορίας ἐν τοῖς νῦν λόγοις ('We really are storm-tossed by difficulty in this present discussion'). Thus Plato makes use of the established opposition between stability and disorderly motion.

But there is evidence that Plato characterizes not just disorderly motion, but motion *per se*, as negative and as inferior to stability. In various passages Plato reveals a marked preference for stability over all movement. For example, in ethics stability (βεβαιότης)

<sup>53</sup> See also *Hipp. Min.* 372e; *Hipp. Maj.* 304c; *Prot.* 356d; *Alc.* 117a–118b; *Phdr.* 263b; *Soph.* 230b; *Phdo.* 81d; and *Rep.* 479d.

<sup>54</sup> F.M. Cornford, *Plato's cosmology* (1937) 165.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. *Rep.* 472a, 457b, 457c, 473c.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. *Euthyd.* 277d; 293a; *Lach.* 194c; *Tht.* 177b, 184a; *Phil.* 14a. Compare the image of argument as a strong river at *Laws* 892c–93b.

is one of the features of a good life, alongside order and peace (*Republic* 503c), and in epistemology a connection is established between truth and fixity in passages such as *Phaedo* 90c9 (βεβαίον); *Timaeus* 37b8 (βέβαιου); and *Laws* 653a8 (βεβαίονος). This preference for stability is manifest in the nature of the Forms – constant, eternal, admitting no change or movement.<sup>57</sup> It is in the context of this marked antithesis between motion and rest that one must view Plato's accounts of moving *logoi*. The antithesis can be clearly seen in the *Euthyphro*, where Plato explains the difference between fixed and mobile *logoi*.

In the *Euthyphro* Socrates questions the young man about the nature of holiness and Euthyphro in confusion laments (11b): περιέρχεται γάρ πως ἡμῖν αἰεὶ ὃ ἂν προθώμεθα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλει μένειν ὅπου ἂν ἰδρυσώμεθα αὐτό ('Somehow everything that we put forward keeps moving around for us, and nothing wants to stay where we put it'; tr. Cooper, adapted). Socrates then compares the statements to the statues of Daedalus which go running off (ἀποδιδράσκει) and agrees that they will indeed not stand still (μένειν, 11c6). Euthyphro retorts that it is not he but Socrates who has the power of Daedalus, because it is Socrates who has made the statements 'move about' (περιμένα). As far as Euthyphro is concerned the statements 'would have held their place' (ἔμενεν ἂν, 11d1). Thus it is the effect of Socratic questioning that has caused Euthyphro's statements to 'go walking off' (15b, βαδίζοντες). Without scrutiny, Euthyphro's statements are apparently stable, but when tested, they reveal themselves as highly mobile, that is, inconsistent. A sound argument in this context would be one that remained stable, a point made explicitly by Socrates himself when he says (11d) that he would rather see their arguments 'stand fast and hold their ground' (μένειν καὶ ἀκινήτως ἰδρῦσθαι).

Thus Plato presents the view that a stable argument is a sound argument, reflecting a fixed, consistent intellectual opinion, whereas a moving argument is one confounded by the speaker's confusion and self-contradiction. David Sansone (*Aeschylean metaphors*) observes that at *Agamemnon* 1184–5 Cassandra's image of *logos* leaving behind hunting-tracks is particularly appropriate to the spoken word. He then notes (91): 'Abstract thought and logic must await the development of writing in order for language to "stand still" (Plato, *Euthyphro* 15b)'. But Plato's point here is different from Sansone's, since this section of the *Euthyphro* has nothing to do with the question of the relationship between the written and spoken word. Plato does not suggest here that the spoken word is necessarily more mobile than writing, since Socrates' comment at 11d clearly opens up the possibility of live discussion attaining stability through sound arguments – a point reinforced by the discussion at *Phaedrus* 276a where living speech is 'written in the soul of the learner'. Further, even if Euthyphro's propositions had been written down as he discoursed with Socrates, this would not have prevented

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. *Phdo.* 78d (αὐτὴ ἢ οὐσία ἧς λόγον δίδομεν τοῦ εἶναι ... πότερον ὡσαύτως αἰεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταῦτά ἢ ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως; ... Ὠσαύτως ... ἀνάγκη ... κατὰ ταῦτά ἔχειν) and *Symp.* 211b (αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδές αἰεὶ ὄν).

his confusion. For it is perfectly possible to write down an illogical and contradictory argument. For Socrates and Plato propositions can only ‘stand still’ when they are logical and sound, regardless of whether they are written down. Confusion, then, is associated with motion, and clarity and certainty with fixity and stability.<sup>58</sup> This polarity of fixity and motion occurs also in the *Meno* (97d–98a) as Socrates again makes use of the motif of Daedalus. This time it is inner thoughts rather than external statements that are compared to the volatile statues, as Socrates observes:

True opinions are a fine thing and do all sorts of good so long as they stay in their place (παραμένωσιν), but they will not stay (οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν) long. They run away from a man’s mind (ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου); so they are not worth much until you tether them (δήση) by working out the reason. That process, my dear Meno, is recollection ... Once they are tied down (δεθῶσιν), they become knowledge, and are stable (μόνιμοι). That is why knowledge is something more valuable than right opinion. (tr. Guthrie).

As Plato’s thought develops, his language of fixed and mobile propositions becomes part of a much wider polarity of fixity and motion, in which it is fixity and stability that are prized. For in the ontology and epistemology of later dialogues, the eternal, constant Forms alone give rise to fixed knowledge, whereas the flux of phenomena merely generates unsteady belief and opinion. Further, these different states of cognition are reflected in different types of verbal accounts. For the kinds of thoughts a person has determine the kinds of accounts they give. Words mirror thoughts and, further, both are related to one’s view of outer reality. Two examples illustrate the point. First, in the *Theaetetus* Theodorus describes the impossibility of debating with the followers of Heraclitus. For these thinkers hold a view of ‘moving reality’ and accordingly (*Theaetetus* 180a): ἀλλ’ εὖ πάνυ φυλάττουσι τὸ μηδὲν βέβαιον εἶναι μήτ’ ἐν λόγῳ μήτ’ ἐν ταῖς αὐτῶν ψυχαῖς (‘but they take very good care to leave nothing settled either in discourse or in their own minds’; tr. Cornford). In contrast, accounts of the fixed reality of Being are themselves stable and unchanging (*Timaeus* 29b6–c1):

Concerning a likeness, then, and its model we must make this distinction: an account is of the same order (συγγενεῖς) as the things which it sets forth – (τοῦ μὲν οὖν μονίμου καὶ βεβαίου καὶ μετὰ νοῦ καταφανοῦς μονίμους καὶ ἀμεταπτώτους – καθ’ ὅσον οἷόν τε καὶ ἀνελέγκτους προσήκει λόγοις εἶναι καὶ ἀνικῆτοις [A; ἀνικῆτοις F],<sup>59</sup> τούτου δεῖ μηδὲν ἐλλεῖπειν) – an account

<sup>58</sup> Compare *Gorg.* 527b where a proven argument ‘stands steadfast’ (οὗτος ἤρμεῖ ὁ λόγος) and 508e–509a where established points are described as ‘held fast and bound by arguments of steel and adamant’ (κατέχεται καὶ δέδεταί ... σιδηροῖς καὶ ἀδαμαντινοῖς λόγοις).

<sup>59</sup> The text is disputed. F.M. Cornford (*Plato’s cosmology*) follows Burnet’s text (ἀνικῆτοις) and concludes (ad loc.): ‘The uncertainty of the reading does not affect the sense.’ This may be true, but it does affect the image. A.E. Taylor (*A commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* (1928)) also favours ἀνικῆτοις: ‘The

of that which is abiding and stable and discoverable by the aid of reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable (so far as it is possible and it lies in the nature of an account to be incontrovertible and irrefutable [immovable], there must be no falling short of that). (tr. Cornford)<sup>60</sup>

The Heracliteans cannot think or speak in a fixed way because of their view of the world: everything is moving. In contrast, those who have perceived the fixed reality of Being are able not only to think fixed thoughts, but also to express them in settled discourse. In this way the *logos* mirrors not only the thoughts of the person speaking, but the nature of the subject-matter too. Thus accounts of Being will remain the same and stable forever, just like the Forms themselves.<sup>61</sup> In her perceptive account of 'creative discourse' in the *Timaeus*,<sup>62</sup> Catherine Osborne observes the significance of Timaeus' remarks at 29b–c (186):

The point concerns the status of his own account: an account that interprets a subject that has permanent being can have the same permanence as the subject to which it correlates, in so far as it is possible for words to serve this role and to be immune to correction.

So there are both static and moving thoughts and words in Plato, and while fixity is associated with knowledge and truth, motion is linked with uncertainty, confusion and the changing phenomenal world. In the *Timaeus* Plato suggests that accounts of true reality – or Being – will themselves be static. It is difficult to conceive of a discourse or account that does not move or change. But Plato seems to be suggesting that such a discourse is necessary and indeed inevitable if we are to speak about true, unchanging reality. In the *Cratylus* Plato explores the issue of how human language can speak of what is divine. Timothy Baxter<sup>63</sup> in his comprehensive study of this work has argued that Plato here proposes a 'prescriptive ideal' for human language, to enable language to reveal the true nature of that which it describes. Reflecting on such an ideal language,

ἀνίκητος of A in b8 is shown to be more probable than the ἀκίνητος of F by the ancient versions. The *inexpugnabilis* of Chalcidius might represent either word ... but Cicero's *neque convinci potest* is unambiguous. Here again we may suspect that the common archetype of A and F probably had a marginal variant.' R.D. Archer-Hind (*The Timaeus of Plato* (1888)) opts for ἀκίνητος and translates: 'so far as it lies in words to be incontrovertible and immovable'. Because of the image established by μονίμους, I also favour ἀκίνητος. In support of this reading, one may observe the same play on ἀνίκητος/ἀκίνητος in Bacchylides 5.57 and 200, while against the reading one may note the double pairings in this *Tim.* passage: μονίμους with ἀμεταπτότους (abiding/unchangeable) and ἀνελέγκτους with ἀνίκητος (incontrovertible/irrefutable).

<sup>60</sup> Cornford, *Plato's cosmology*.

<sup>61</sup> In contrast, no account of the changing, visible world can ever be 'a final statement of exact truth' (Cornford, *Plato's cosmology* 23–4).

<sup>62</sup> Catherine Osborne, 'Space, time, shape, and direction: creative discourse in the *Timaeus*', 179–211 in C. Gill and M.M. McCabe (edd.), *Form and argument in late Plato* (1996).

<sup>63</sup> T. Baxter, *The Cratylus: Plato's critique of naming* (1992).

Baxter comments (54): ‘Plato’s ideal language would be quite unlike his dialogues, indeed it would rule out “dialogue”, as nothing really needs to be discussed; it is a *τέλος* to be aimed at, where language finally reflects the essences of things. The model ... would probably be a mathematical one.’ Our ordinary, human language, in contrast, is, as Baxter says, ‘fluxy’ in its nature. Osborne (‘Creative discourse’ 186) observes how this tension between the nature of language and reality is apparent at *Timaeus* 29b7–8: ‘Note that here Timaeus appears to recognize that there may be a problem about describing eternal reality in words. Clearly, language cannot in fact be wholly timeless and changeless to match the Forms’.<sup>64</sup> Despite this fundamental problem, however, human language can still be used in a stable way, at least at the level of the word, as Plato tells in a famous passage at *Timaeus* 49b. On the traditional interpretation of this passage (Taylor, Cornford) and that of Donald Zeyl’s excellent article,<sup>65</sup> Plato says here that it is difficult (*χαλεπόν*) to use a ‘reliable and stable *logos*’ when we speak of the fluxy world around us – οὕτως ὥστε τινὶ πιστῶ καὶ βεβαίῳ χρῆσασθαι λόγῳ (*Timaeus* 49b). And this method involves a new way of referring to phenomena, as is set out at 49d–e. Plato’s point is that our use of terminology must not suggest that the phenomenal world is a permanent subject but must make clear that all phenomena are mere attributes of a basic, permanent entity (here the Receptacle). If we are scrupulous in this way, our *logos* about the world can be ‘stable and reliable’.

So much for the use of names and terms for the world, but what about accounts and conversations? Can stability be achieved at the level of discourse? What would a static, unchanging discourse look or sound like? The passages discussed in part 1 show how easily the image of movement lends itself to the nature of dialectic. How can this dynamic vision be reconciled with that of a fixed, static *logos*? One approach to this question is to apply the distinction between process and product. The evidence of the passages discussed from the *Euthyphro*, *Meno* and *Timaeus* shows that Plato is consistent in recommending that a moving process (dialectic) give rise to a stable product: in the *Euthyphro* the desired product is stable propositions, in the *Meno* stable opinions and in the *Timaeus* stable accounts. When viewed in this way, dialectic can be seen as a process which takes the interlocutor from fixity to movement and on to a new fixity: first, there is a state of stability where someone holds an untested opinion; second, through questioning which leads to *aporia* the opinion is probed and unsettled (at this stage the person is shifting around, moving between true and false opinions); and third, through further analysis a new, fixed opinion is achieved. On this view Plato is able to reconcile the moving, dynamic process of dialectic with the desired outcome of fixed, static products. But in dialectic each fixed proposition becomes merely a step in a larger debate. When viewed in this way, dialectic becomes a perpetual movement

<sup>64</sup> She reiterates the point in her later section on ‘Time’ (196): ‘These problems with our ordinary language indicate that normal discourse is not well suited to dealing with what is timeless; and one possible explanation of this is that discourse, like the world, is inherently temporal’.

<sup>65</sup> Taylor, *Commentary*; Cornford, *Plato’s cosmology*; Donald J. Zeyl, ‘Plato and talk of a world in flux: *Timaeus* 49a6–50b5’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79 (1975) 125–48.

between stable opinions and ever-new states of confusion, for an opinion is only fixed until new questions are raised. Since one generally cannot be sure that a proposition (product) would not benefit from further testing (process), the distinction between process and product is not so clear. Thus the same *logos* under different aspects can be both process *and* product. These reflections relate interestingly to Plato's own discussion of the relative merits of books and oral communication in the *Phaedrus*.

In this dialogue there is a suggestion that unlike the ephemeral spoken word, books leave behind 'something clear and steadfast' (τι σαφές καὶ βέβαιον, *Phaedrus* 275c). In terms of the opposition between motion and fixity, such βεβαιότης must surely be a good thing? Not so, for Socrates points out that although written words seem to 'talk intelligently', when you ask a book a question, 'it signifies only one thing alone, forever the same' (ἐν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταῦτόν ἄει, *Phaedrus* 275d). Books are criticized here because they cannot answer back. Fixity is not a virtue, because it represents an inflexibility, an inability to adapt and change to suit the needs of the situation. The formal fixity of the letters on the page reflects the fixity of thought and response represented thereby. So this *logos* (the book) stays still in a negative way. In the *Phaedrus* the power of the spoken word is unmatched by written discourse. And indeed the spoken word is actually described here as 'alive' (*Phaedrus* 276a): τὸν τοῦ εἰδότης λόγον λέγεις ζῶντα καὶ ἔμψυχον, οὗ ὁ γεγραμμένος εἶδωλον ἄντι λέγοιτο δικαίως ('You mean the living and ensouled speech of the man who knows, of which written speech would rightly be called a kind of phantom'; tr. Rowe). The terms ζῶντα and ἔμψυχον are very strong: the spoken word is living and actually has its own soul. Now although the *Phaedrus* has established that soul is the cause of motion,<sup>66</sup> the spoken word, contrary to expectation, does not move. In fact, given the development of the image of speeches as living beings, actually having not only a father (the speaker) but also brothers, and as plants that grow up in the souls of others,<sup>67</sup> this lack of explicit movement seems odd. Furthermore, the spoken, living word is described as 'written in the soul of the learner' (276a γράφεται ἐν τῇ τοῦ μαθάνοντος ψυχῇ). The living word, then, turns out to be inscribed and so in a sense fixed – in so far as anything living and animate can be 'fixed' in a self-moving ψυχή. The stability the oral *logos* enjoys is not formal but epistemological, while its form remains fluid in having the potential to develop in subsequent processes of discussion (i.e. to be mobile). Thus no clear-cut distinction between process and product will do justice to Plato's thought on this matter.

The only movement word applied to *logos* in the immediate context here is at 275e1 where it describes the action of books not of the spoken word. Moreover, it is a word whose overtones are far from positive – κυλινδοῦμαι: ὅταν δὲ ἅπαξ γραφῆ, κυλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἐπαίουσιν, ὡς δ' αὐτως παρ' οἷς οὐδὲν προσήκει ('And when once it is written, every composition is trundled

<sup>66</sup> For soul as the cause of motion see *Phaedrus* 245c–d.

<sup>67</sup> For fathers and sons see 275e4 and 278a6; for brothers see 276a1 and 278b1; and for seeds and plants see 276c8 and 276d–277a.

about [rolled] everywhere in the same way, in the presence both of those who know about the subject and of those who have nothing at all to do with it'; tr. Rowe). So we have the rolling book. Why does the book roll? What does this mean?

M.M. Mackenzie has commented on the use of this verb here and has observed how in other passages in the dialogues *κυλίνδομαι* refers to 'the inability of belief about the sensible world to be fixedly true or false'.<sup>68</sup> Mackenzie has rightly drawn attention to the negative epistemological connotations of this verb, but to understand why it should come to have such connotations in the first place, it must be set in the context where movement signals disturbance. It was shown earlier how 'rolling' was used in Homer and tragedy as part of storm imagery of wind and wave and how it was also used to express pain, grief, defeat, dishonour and the loss of control. I maintain that we need this poetic background in order to appreciate the force of this verb. In the dialogues *κυλίνδομαι* is a fairly rare word – it occurs only twelve times in the corpus, and ten of those occurrences carry the epistemological overtones that Mackenzie mentions. Mackenzie refers to the use of *κυλίνδομαι* at *Phaedrus* 275e1, *Republic* 479d5 and *Theaetetus* 172c, and the negative epistemological connotations are also obvious in seven other occurrences: *Phaedo* 81d1 and 82e5; *Sophist* 268a2; *Timaeus* 44d9; *Phaedrus* 257a2; *Politicus* 309a6; and *Republic* 432d8.<sup>69</sup> At *Phaedo* 81d1 the disembodied soul rolls around when it cannot escape to the invisible world<sup>70</sup> and at 82e5 the verb expresses the plight of the soul imprisoned in the human body, where – in an ironic twist – the unsteady motion of the soul's rational faculties is a direct result of its being too tightly fixed to the body and its concerns (ἀτεχνῶς διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ προσκεκολλημένην, ἀναγκαζομένην δὲ ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ διὰ τούτου σκοπεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ... καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην). At *Sophist* 268a2 the phrase διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις κυλίνδησιν ('because of his rolling in speeches') explains how the mimic who is 'well-versed' in discussion is aware of his own ignorance. The use of the noun *κυλίνδησις*, where 'rolling' comes to mean 'constant practice or skill', *prima facie* indicates simply the repetition of a particular activity culminating in a certain competence, but it is quite apparent that it carries the same epistemological overtones that Mackenzie observes at *Theaetetus* 172c. In the *Theaetetus* passage Socrates uses the verb 'roll' as he draws a contrast between men who have 'hung around' lawcourts and such places all their lives (οἱ ἐν δικαστηρίοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐκ νέων κυλινδούμενοι) and those reared on philosophy. In the *Sophist* the noun appears as the Stranger defines the sophist as the mimic of the wise man. In both passages rolling denotes repeated activity and at the same time connotes epistemological weakness – neither those who haunt the lawcourts nor the sophists have true knowledge.

<sup>68</sup> M.M. Mackenzie, 'Paradox in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* n.s. 28 (1982) 64–76. See 73 n.14.

<sup>69</sup> The verb appears on only two other occasions in the corpus: *Rep.* 388b6 and *Tim.* 59d5. *Rep.* 388b6 is a quotation of *Il.* 22.414–15 where 'rolling' is an expression of Priam's grief. Therefore, the only passage in Plato where *κυλίνδομαι* does not carry an epistemological reference is *Tim.* 59d5 where it is used in the context of an etymology for ὕδωρ – the name 'liquid' derives from its motion and its rolling course over the ground.

<sup>70</sup> This passage will be discussed below, in conjunction with *Phdr.* 257a.

At *Timaeus* 44d9 the epistemological connotations of *κυλίνδομαι* can be seen again as the creator gods make the human body the vehicle for the human head 'so that it might not roll upon the ground' (ἵν' οὖν μὴ κυλινδούμενον ἐπὶ γῆς). The contrast in this passage between the low position on the ground<sup>71</sup> and the high position afforded by the body (see 45a) clearly works to associate the rational faculties of man with the divine (always in an 'up' position in Plato). Rolling around on the ground is a lowly activity, not fitting for the home of reason.

In Homer the dominant use of the verb as part of the vocabulary of storms conveys a certain helplessness and hopelessness, a sense of having lost control over one's actions and motion and thus of being at the mercy of powerful, external forces. Plato's use of these poetic associations of 'rolling', summoning up the storm imagery of wind and wave, can be particularly seen when he uses *κυλίνδεομαι* of the lost, unphilosophical souls at both *Phaedo* 81d1 and at *Phaedrus* 257a2. In the *Phaedo* passage the souls who fear the invisible realm become heavy and so are unable to depart this world. Such a lost soul then spends its time haunting burial places 'rolled around tombs and graves' (περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη). At *Phaedrus* 257a association with a non-lover engenders a meanness in the boy's soul which 'will cause it to wallow [be rolled] mindlessly around and under the earth for nine thousand years' (tr. Rowe: ἐννέα χιλιάδας ἐτῶν περὶ γῆν κυλινδουμένην αὐτὴν καὶ ὑπὸ γῆς ἄνουv παρῆξει). These are the souls that cannot achieve a peaceful afterlife and their rolling motion becomes an image for their wretched, restless state.<sup>72</sup> The afterlife condition of these souls is a direct consequence of their failure to achieve knowledge and so Plato uses the rolling image not only to convey the plight of the souls but also to indicate why they are in this state – i.e. their failure to attain sure knowledge of fixed reality. Plato uses *κυλίνδομαι* to signal epistemological unsteadiness and illusion and marries this with the storm-tossed rolling familiar from Homer. The inspiration for this fusion of ideas may have come from Pindar, *Olympian* 12, where the poet expresses the uncertainty of life in an image combining storms and false hopes (*Olympian* 12.5–6a):

αἶ γε μὲν ἀνδρῶν  
πόλλ' ἄνω, τὰ δ' αὖ κάτω  
ψεύδη μεταμόνια τάμνοισαι κυλίνδοντ<sup>73</sup> ἐλπίδες·

<sup>71</sup> Without the services of the human body, the head would roll about on the ground in the same way as the lowly stones and the dishonoured heroes in Homer (see above).

<sup>72</sup> Anne Lebeck ('The central myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 13 (1972) 267–90) notes the use of *κυλινδεῖται* at both *Phdr.* 257a1–2 and 275e1, but translates the verb as 'flit', which obscures its connotations and significance in the passages (286–7).

<sup>73</sup> On 'rolling' in Pindar see P. Bulman, *Phthonos in Pindar* (1992). Referring to the usages at *Nem.* 4.40 and *Pyth.* 2.23, she observes: 'For Pindar, as for Plato, *κυλινδεῖν* is pejorative, designating the aimlessness and uselessness of objects rolling around in space and time' (85). This tantalizing note unfortunately adduces none of the Platonic evidence. W.J. Verdenius (*Commentaries on Pindar* I, *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 97 (1987) 95) comments on rolling as an unsteady movement in this passage and at *Pyth.* 4. 209.

As for men's hopes,  
they often rise, while at other times they roll down  
as they voyage across vain falsehoods. (tr. Race)<sup>74</sup>

When at *Phaedrus* 275e the written book is described as 'rolling around', the verb κυλίνδομαι sends a clear signal that all is not well – a point that is soon reinforced when Socrates (three lines later) speaks of the book as 'ill-treated' (πλημμελούμενος) and 'abused' (λοιδορηθείς), with no father to help it and incapable of defending itself (275e). In terms of the motion image, the book is cast up and down, rolled around by external forces like the unfortunate wanderers in Homer.<sup>75</sup> Who knows where it will come to rest, in whose hands it will arrive? The unsteadiness of the book's motion also reveals that it cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge. But in addition, there is a further aspect of the book's circular, rolling motion that deserves comment. For here perhaps is one of our own English metaphors – that of a book being 'in circulation'. Is there any evidence that this metaphor is active in the Greek usage? Here a passage from Aristophanes is illuminating:

ἧς ἐγὼ οὐκ ἤκουσα τοῦνομ' οὐδὲ πεντήκοντ' ἐτῶν  
νῦν δὲ πολλῶ τοῦ ταρίχους ἔστιν ἀξιώτερα,  
ὥστε καὶ δὴ τοῦνομ' αὐτῆς ἐν ἀγορᾷ κυλίνδεται.

<sup>74</sup> Race, *Pindar* I (1997). For Pindar's views on ἐλπίς see Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar* 95. On the theme of human stability and mutability see H. Fränkel, 'Man's "ephemeros" nature according to Pindar and others', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 77 (1946) 131–45. On the phrase ἄνω ... κάτω here see Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar* 93–4, who argues that the common translation 'up and down' is incorrect and that 'to and fro' is preferable, since the movement indicated is horizontal, not vertical. Verdenius cites Plato's usage of the phrase at *Phil.* 43a3 in support of his argument. Verdenius has also discussed the phrase in his earlier note 'ΑΝΩ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΤΩ', *Mnemosyne* 17 (1964) 387, where he rightly concludes that the meaning of the phrase at *Rep.* 344b, as at 508d and *Phdo.* 96b, has to be 'to and fro' or 'moving about'. Plato uses the phrase to convey disorderly motion, especially as a metaphor in the context of changing opinion, see *Prot.* 356d; *Gorg.* 481e; *Hipp. Min.* 376c and *Th.* 195c. (For instances where 'up' and 'down' are used by Plato as a vertical metaphor for progressions in thought see R. Robinson, 'Up and down in Plato's logic', *American Journal of Philology* 84 (1963) 300–3.)

<sup>75</sup> The ideas of wandering and rolling are fused together, as noted above, in the use of the verb προπροκυλινδόμαι at *Od.* 17.525 and are also brought into close conjunction at *Il.* 11.307–8 in a description of the wild motion of wind and waves (πολλὸν δὲ τῶρι κύμα κυλίνδεται, ὑψόσε δ' ἄχνη | σκίδναται ἐξ ἀνέμοιο πολυπλάγτοιο ἰωῆς). Plato directly associates wandering with rolling on two memorable occasions: first, at *Phdo.* 81d, where the lost unphilosophical soul is 'rolled around' graveyards (κυλινδουμένη) and where such souls are compelled to 'wander' about these places until they have 'paid their penalty' (πλανᾶσθαι ... πλανώντα); second at *Rep.* 479d, where Socrates sets out the three levels of existence and knowledge and locates the objects of the masses' opinions in the mid-region between non-existence and full reality: ἠὲρήραμεν ἄρα, ὡς εἶοιεν, ὅτι τὰ τῶν πολλῶν πολλά νόμματα καλοῦν τε περὶ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων μεταξὺ που κυλινδεῖται τοῦ τε μὴ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὄντος εἰλικρινῶς. ('We would seem to have found, then, that the many conventions of the many about the fair and honourable and other things are tumbled [rolled] about in the mid-region between that which is not and that which is in the true and absolute sense'; tr. Shorey). In the subsequent paragraph Socrates refers to the object caught by the faculty of opinion as 'the wanderer' (τὸ πλανητόν), thus making the objects of opinion both roll and wander in this mid-region.

I hadn't even heard the *word* 'dictatorship' for fifty years back, but now it's a good deal cheaper than salted fish, so much so that its name is actually bandied about in the market place.

(Aristophanes, *Wasps* 490–2, tr. Sommerstein)<sup>76</sup>

So ἐν ἀγορᾷ κυλίνδεται ('rolled around in the market-place') is a metaphor for being in common usage. In the same way, our book rolling around in the outside world is open and common to all. It circulates, goes the rounds. 'Rolling' here indicates a commonness and cheapness, which results from something being readily available, connotations which may have developed from usage such as that at *Iliad* 14.411, where the stone singled out for Hector's demise had hitherto been 'rolling around' with many others on the ground.

The interpretation of 'rolling' as having common or vulgar associations is borne out by *Politicus* 309a where the Stranger describes how the art of kingship separates out noble people from the base and consigns the base to slavery: τοὺς δὲ ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ τε αὖ καὶ ταπεινότητι πολλῇ κυλινδουμένους εἰς τὸ δουλικὸν ὑποξεύγνουσι γένος ('And again those who wallow in great ignorance and baseness it brings under the yoke of the class of slaves'; tr. Rowe).<sup>77</sup> The common aspect of rolling would also seem to underlie the usage at *Republic* 432d8. Here Socrates realizes that he and his friends have been hunting for justice in the wrong place: πάλαι, ὃ μακάριε, φαίνεται πρὸ ποδῶν ἡμῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς κυλινδεῖσθαι, καὶ οὐχ ἑωρῶμεν ἄρ' αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἡμῶν καταγελαστότατοι ('Why, all the time, bless your heart, the thing apparently was tumbling about our feet from the start and yet we couldn't see it, but were most ludicrous'; tr. Shorey).<sup>78</sup> The fact that justice was rolling around at their feet expresses its availability to the hunters and its 'everyday nature'. Whereas the interlocutors had 'looked off into the distance' for justice, as if it were some rare creature, all the time it has been readily available at their feet, rolling around or 'hanging about' like a common stone. Since 'rolling' has marked epistemological connotations elsewhere in Plato, it is reasonable to look for them here too. At first they are not apparent but are brought out when the verb is repeated at *Republic* 479d. These are the only two occurrences of κυλίνδομαι in *Republic*. In book 4 Socrates teasingly suggests that justice has been tumbling about at their feet all the way through their search, but in book 5 makes it clear that the objects of ordinary people's opinions tumble about in the mid-region between unreality and full reality. So where does this leave the justice that he is searching for? If it is really so readily available at the feet of the hunters, can this be

<sup>76</sup> A.H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes, Wasps* (1983).

<sup>77</sup> C.J. Rowe, *Plato: Statesman* (1995).

<sup>78</sup> R. Waterfield's translation (*Plato, Republic* (1994)) of the phrase πρὸ ποδῶν ... κυλινδεῖσθαι as 'it's been curled up at our feet' entirely misses the force of the verb, since 'curled up' not only denotes a lack of movement but also suggests a fairly comfortable state. Although he later (479d) translates the verb more appropriately ('mill around'), the lack of consistency obscures the connection. In contrast, Shorey's consistent translation of κυλίνδομαι allows Plato's sly point to emerge.

the true and perfect justice? Surely it is more likely that this justice at their feet is an unsteady image of its Form? The use of *κλίνδομαι* in book 4 thus strikes a warning note (i.e. there is something unsteady about this justice) which is not explained until the account of reality in book 5. In other words, since the Forms have not yet entered the discussion, the definition of justice at 433a can only be provisional. And this provisional quality will soon be shown to be the result of the epistemological unsteadiness that marks all accounts of objects in this realm of Becoming.

To return to the opposition of fixity and mobility in the *Phaedrus*: the fixed book is rolling around outside while the living word remains written in the soul. What is going on? Mackenzie has argued that Plato is setting up a paradox designed to subvert the simple opposition of fixed and mobile words. Such paradox, she maintains, ‘displays the flexibility that ordinary treatises lack’ for ‘it changes shape, twists about and alters its meaning’.<sup>79</sup> By using paradox Plato is able to demonstrate how a written text (i.e. his own) can be ‘unequivocally alive’.<sup>80</sup> Mackenzie’s conclusions are attractive and convincing, but I am puzzled as to why Plato uses no positive or even neutral word for motion, despite the images of *logos* as a living being (human and plant). Why in the *Phaedrus* – where motion is so dominant a motif and where, as it seems, Plato highlights the flexibility and dynamism of a text – is the only word for the motion of *logos* the negatively charged verb *κλίνδομαι*? Although it emerges from the *Phaedrus* that any *logos*, either written or oral, should have a reliable epistemological content (be ‘fixed’) and be flexible enough to contribute meaningfully to the process of learning (be ‘mobile’), Plato stops short of establishing either a positive motion or an unambiguously positive fixity for *logos*. Is this Plato’s final word on the movement of *logos*? Perhaps not.

## 2.2. Circles of perfection

Alongside the association of disorderly motion with disturbance and suffering, there is in Greek thought a conception of circular motion as an expression of perfection and completion. W.K.C. Guthrie observes how fundamental this association was for Greek culture, from the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, which were considered divine, to the circular repetition of time and the seasons on earth.<sup>81</sup> He discusses Greek views of cyclic activity of *ψυχή* (life/soul) and comments that for the Greeks ‘the analogy between the regularity of motion in a circle and psychic functions, especially reason,

<sup>79</sup> Mackenzie, ‘Paradox’ 69–70.

<sup>80</sup> Mackenzie, ‘Paradox’ 72.

<sup>81</sup> *History of Greek philosophy* I (1962) 351–7, on circularity in Greek thought and Plato’s debt to Alcmaeon (on which see also Ch. Mugler, ‘Alcméon et les cycles physiologiques de Platon’, *Revue des études grecques* 71 (1958) 42–50). For poetic expression of the theme of circularity see Sophocles, *Aj.* 670–3 and *Trach.* 129–30.

must be accepted as natural' (356). J.B. Skemp<sup>82</sup> shows how in the *Statesman*, *Timaeus* and *Laws* Plato emphasizes the perfection and divinity of circular movement. In these works Plato sets up an opposition between rectilinear and circular motion<sup>83</sup> and emphasizes that circular is superior. In the *Timaeus* Plato identifies seven types of motion: the first type, circular, the other six, linear, namely (43b) 'backwards and forwards, right and left, up and down'. The divine universe itself is spherical in shape<sup>84</sup> and at 34a we are told how it came to move in a circle (*Timaeus* 34a):

For he assigned to it the motion proper to its bodily form, namely that one of the seven which above all belongs to reason and intelligence; accordingly, he caused it to turn about uniformly in the same place and within its own limits and made it revolve round and round (αὐτὸ ἐποίησε κύκλῳ κινεῖσθαι στρεφόμενον); he took from it all the other six motions and gave it no part in their wanderings (ἀπλανές). (tr. Cornford)

In marked contrast human beings are made to move in all six linear directions, a motion which is again described as 'wandering' at 43b (πλανώμενα).<sup>85</sup> All linear motions are characterized as 'wanderings' – terminology with its own strong epistemological colouring. Circular motion, on the other hand, is linked not only with perfection but also rationality. At 34a Plato explicitly associates circular motion with reason and intelligence, and this lays the ground for the later account of the rational thought process. For at 37a–c Plato opens up the very nature of the soul itself and reveals there two moving circles: the circle of the Same and of the Different. The movement of these circles does not simply represent but actually is the rational activity of human beings (*Timaeus* 37a–c):<sup>86</sup>

Seeing, then, that soul had been blended of Sameness, Difference, and Existence, ... and moreover revolves upon herself (αὐτὴ τε ἀνακυκλουμένη πρὸς αὐτήν)

<sup>82</sup> J.B. Skemp, *The theory of motion in Plato's later dialogues* (1942; enlarged ed. 1967).

<sup>83</sup> In 'Straight and circular in Parmenides and the *Timaeus*', *Phronesis* 19 (1974) 189–209, Lynne Ballew has shown that this opposition in the context of knowledge and being goes back to Parmenides.

<sup>84</sup> On the implications of sphericity see R.J. Mortley, 'Plato's choice of the sphere', *Revue des études grecques* 82 (1969) 342–5.

<sup>85</sup> Note also the storm and wave imagery in this passage: κατακλύζοντος ... κύματος.

<sup>86</sup> Compare the illustration of intelligence at *Laws* 898a–b. Edward N. Lee has offered a detailed analysis of Plato's use of the idea of circular thought in 'Reason and rotation: circular movement as the model of mind (*nous*) in later Plato' (in W.H. Werkmeister (ed.), *Facets of Plato's philosophy*, *Phronesis* supplementary volume II (1976)). While his review of the relevant passages in *Timaeus* and *Laws* is useful (esp. section two on the nature of axial rotation), his subsequent exegesis is obscure. For example, Lee explains the notion of circular thought (which he takes to be metaphorical, 88) by means of the idea of perspective and vision (e.g. 81: 'it is this "perspectiveless" character of its all-pervading orientation towards the center that seems to me the decisive feature of Plato's rotation analogy'). But Lee's vision metaphor seems only to complicate matters further. When his account concludes with a distinction between two different perspectives (the 'threshold' and the 'dweller's') and two types of mysticism ('quietist or static' and 'a more activist mysticism', 92), Plato's texts seem to have been left behind.

... Now whenever discourse ... is about that which is sensible, and the circle of the Different, moving aright, carries its message throughout all its soul – then there arise judgments and beliefs that are sure and true (δόξαι καὶ πίστεεις ... βέβαιοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς). But whenever discourse is concerned with the rational, and the circle of the Same, running smoothly, declares it, the result must be rational understanding and knowledge (νοῦς ἐπιστήμη τε). (tr. Cornford)

David Sedley,<sup>87</sup> in a very lucid account of Plato's idea of circular motion within the soul, concludes (329):

Circularity is appropriate to rational thought, no doubt, because circular motion is eternal, and reason has eternal entities or truths as its proper objects. However, there is every indication in the text that the circularity of these motions is not merely a metaphor for eternity, but is, as Aristotle recognised, meant as a physical fact too. Our thoughts, like those of the world soul, do literally move in circles.

On the issue of how an incorporeal reality can move in space, Sedley argues (329–30):

The incorporeal ... differs from the corporeal, not by necessarily being altogether nonspatial, but by lacking essential characteristics of body, such as visibility and tangibility (cf. 28b, 31b). There is no reason why an incorporeal should not have a circular motion, even though its invisibility and intangibility make this undetectable to the senses.

Thus the incorporeal circles of the Same and the Different move constantly inside the soul and the whole soul revolves. Since circular motion is now a necessary and natural condition of the soul's rational activity, motion *per se* is no longer disturbance. The distinction between circular and linear motion, one characterized as orderly and rational, the other as disorderly and irrational, has thus enabled Plato to accommodate motion as a positive feature in his philosophy. As Sedley says, by studying the heavenly motions (328) 'we can come eventually to assimilate the disordered revolutions of thought within our own heads to the perfect celestial revolutions of the divine intellect'. Similarly, in Skemp's terms<sup>88</sup> 'the philosopher must learn to impose rational circularity on his rectilinear necessity' (57). However, even within this positive view of circular movement certain basic prejudices remain, for, as is made clear in *Laws* 10, circular motion is the best type of motion precisely because it is most like stillness itself.

At *Laws* 893b discussion turns to the different kinds of motion. The Athenian begins a dialogue with himself and establishes (a) that some objects move and others are still

<sup>87</sup> David Sedley, "'Becoming like god" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle' in T. Calvo and L. Brisson (edd.), *Interpreting the Timaeus–Critias*, International Plato Studies 9 (1997) 327–39.

<sup>88</sup> J.B. Skemp, 'Plants in Plato's *Timaeus*', *Classical Quarterly* 41 (1947) 53–60.

and (b) that both require space. On the issue of moving objects, he poses the question: 'Some of them, presumably, will do so in one location, others in several?' and offers the following exchange in response (893c4–7):

Τὰ τὴν τῶν ἐστῶτων ἐν μέσῳ λαμβάνοντα δύναμιν λέγεις, φήσομεν, ἐν ἐνὶ κινεῖσθαι, καθάπερ ἢ τῶν ἐστάναι λεγομένων κύκλων στρέφεται περιφορᾷ; — Ναί.

'Do you mean', we shall reply, 'that "moving in one location" is the action of objects which are able to keep their centres immobile? For instance, there are circles which are said to "stay put" even though as a whole they are revolving.' 'Yes.' (tr. Saunders)<sup>89</sup>

Now that he has established that there is a type of movement that takes place in one single location – i.e. circular movement around a fixed centre (or 'axial rotation'), he can contrast movement that takes place in a number of locations (893d6–e1):

When you speak of motion in many locations I suppose you're referring to objects that are always leaving one spot and moving on to another. Sometimes their motion involves only one point of contact with their successive situations, sometimes several, as in rolling (τῷ περικυλινδεῖσθαι). (tr. Saunders)<sup>90</sup>

With this use of περικυλινδεῖσθαι, a *hapax legomenon* in the dialogues, Plato makes the point that there is a world of difference between the steady movement of axial rotation, movement in a single location, and the action of rolling, where an object not only changes location but also makes several points of contact with its successive situations.<sup>91</sup> A little later at 897d the Athenian asks 'So what is the nature of rational

<sup>89</sup> T.J. Saunders, *Plato, The laws* (1970).

<sup>90</sup> J.B. Skemp's translation of this key section (893c–e) is as follows (*Theory of motion* 97–8): "'Is it of moving things which have the power of being stationary at their centre that you speak', we shall reply, "when you say that they move in one place, like the revolution of so-called 'humming tops'?" "Yes." ... "Moreover, when you speak of things moved in a succession of places, you appear to be describing objects moving on continually from place to place, in some cases pivoting themselves at one point gliding along, in other cases rolling with changing pivotal points.'" Thus Skemp terms the two types of motion in several locations as (a) 'gliding' (with one point of contact) and (b) 'rolling' (with several points of contact). On the idea of axial rotation at 893c4–7, Skemp comments (100): 'The reason for the pride of place accorded to this kind of motion and the detailed exposition of it is, of course, because it is the motion of the οὐρανός itself, perfectly combining motion and rest.' Skemp goes on to observe that 'We have here in a summary form the language of *Tim.* 39a and of *Laws* 7.822a, where the reference is to the double-motion astronomy' (101).

<sup>91</sup> On 893d6 and the 'passing from rotation to rectilinear motion' Skemp comments (*Theory of motion* 101): 'Why Plato distinguishes gliding and rolling is not clear. The heavenly bodies rotate and glide but do not roll, for their axis is fixed. There may be a reference to lost theories of planetary motions or Plato may simply wish to give an exhaustive classification. This does not mean that rolling is not a "physical" motion: it is a physical possibility, even if not actualised in the planets.' On my analysis of κυλινδομα Plato uses περικυλινδεῖσθαι to mark the transition from orderly to disorderly motion.

motion' and announces that an indirect method of answering the question will be required: 'Still, in answering this question we mustn't assume that mortal eyes will ever be able to look upon reason and get to know it adequately: let's not produce darkness at noon, so to speak, by looking at the sun direct. We can save our sight by looking at an *image* (εἰκόνα) of the object we're asking about' (tr. Saunders). He then selects from the list of ten motions the one which 'reason resembles'. Taking up his earlier distinction between movement in a single location and movement in successive locations, he clarifies that it is the first of these that is 'most like' the movement of reason (898a):

τούτοιον δὴ τοῖν κινήσειον τὴν ἐν ἐνὶ φερομένην ἀεὶ περὶ γέ τι μέσον ἀνάγκη κινεῖσθαι, τῶν ἐντόρων οὕσαν μίμημά τι κύκλων, εἶναι τε αὐτὴν τῇ τοῦ νοῦ περιόδῳ πάντως ὡς δυνατὸν οἰκειοτάτην τε καὶ ὁμοίαν.

Of these two motions, that taking place in a single location necessarily implies continuous revolution round a central point, just like wheels being turned on a lathe; and this kind of motion bears the closest possible affinity and likeness to the cyclical movement of reason. (tr. Saunders)

When Cleinias (understandably) asks for some clarification, the Athenian explains that reason and motion in a single location are alike in that they share a type of motion, that is: '(a) regular, (b) uniform, (c) always at the same point in space, (d) around a fixed centre, (e) in the same position relative to other objects' (Τὸ κατὰ ταῦτά δήπου καὶ ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ; tr. Saunders). To explain the point further, the Athenian contrasts this orderly type of motion with disorderly motion which would surely be 'associated with every kind of unreason' (ἀνοίας ἂν ἀπάσης εἴη συγγενής; tr. Saunders).

So Plato makes clear at *Laws* 893c that revolution around a fixed point – axial rotation – enjoys a special status as the type of motion that enjoys the greatest stillness. This circular motion, as Skemp observes, is 'the motion of the οὐρανός itself, perfectly combining motion and rest' (100). Since it shares in stillness, axial rotation is able to display those features of uniformity and stability which Plato so prizes.<sup>92</sup> In the accounts of the *Timaeus* and *Laws* 10 the circular motion of axial rotation represents rational thought and thus for Plato movement no longer necessarily signals disturbance.

What about discourse? How is the circular motion of thought to be reconciled with the apparently linear motion of discourse? Could there also be a circular motion of discourse? Well, there has been a circular way of debating all the way through the dialogues, but it has not been a very positive circular motion. For when the *logos* of

<sup>92</sup> Remember that in the *Republic* Plato's way of demonstrating that something can be in motion and at rest at the same time is the illustration of the spinning tops, which are still in respect of their axes but move in respect of their circumferences (436d).

argument goes in a circle, it means that the interlocutors are stuck in some sort of confusion or ignorance, as for example at *Charmides* 174b: *πάλαι με περιέλλκεις κύκλω*. ('all this time you have been dragging me round and round in a circle').<sup>93</sup> One can see how circularity is an apt metaphor for fruitless debate. However, coming round again and again to the same point of argument is not always presented in negative terms in the dialogues. For there is for Plato a positive way of saying the same thing over and over again. At *Gorgias* 517c we find a comment from Socrates which at first sounds like a familiar reproach against circular discourse:

Well, now we're doing a ridiculous thing, you and I in our discussion. All the time we're having a dialogue we never stop coming round to the same place all the time (*εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ἀεὶ περιφερόμενοι*), with each not knowing (*ἀγνοοῦντες*) what the other is saying. (tr. Irwin)<sup>94</sup>

Before this is dismissed as a throwaway or slightly clichéd remark, bear in mind that it follows a number of significant comments throughout the dialogue on the theme of consistency. Lucinda Coventry<sup>95</sup> has discussed Socrates' emphasis in the *Gorgias* on the importance of consistency (481d–82c, 490e, 491b) and has noted (181) his evident pride in the admission that he 'always says the same things about the same things' (*ταῦτὰ ... περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν*, *Gorgias* 490e and 491b). Coventry explains (182) that Socrates is not here claiming the type of verbal consistency or repetition found in written texts or prepared speeches. Rather, Socratic consistency is the 'ability to maintain a constant position in successive arguments'. This view of consistency in motion, maintained in successive positions, is supported by a passage in the *Timaeus* which offers a surprising echo of *Gorgias* (490e).<sup>96</sup> Timaeus is explaining the movement of the stars. Each star is created in the figure of a circle and is given two

<sup>93</sup> For the same image, see also *Thet.* 200c (*καὶ οὕτω δὴ ἀναγκασθῆσθε εἰς ταῦτὸν περιτρέχειν μυριάκις οὐδὲν πλέον ποιοῦντες*); *Cleit.* 410a (*περιδεδοράμην εἰς ταῦτὸν ὁ λόγος τοῖς πρώτοις*) and *Phil.* 19a (*οὐκ οἶδ' ὄντινα τρόπον κύκλω πὼς περιαγαγὼν ἡμᾶς ἐμβέβληκε Σωκράτης*). See also *Euthyd.* 291b; *Euthyphr.* 15b; *Polit.* 286c; *Laws* 659d and 688b. Circular motion is also used to express confusion in Plato's images of intellectual dizziness and whirlpools; see *Phdo.* 79c; *Crat.* 411b, 439c; *Prot.* 339c; *Lys.* 216c; *Thet.* 155c and *Laws* 663b, 892e.

<sup>94</sup> T. Irwin, *Plato, Gorgias* (1979).

<sup>95</sup> 'The role of the interlocutor in Plato – theory and practice' in C.B.R. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and individuality in Greek literature* (1990) 174–96.

<sup>96</sup> The striking phrase 'ταῦτὰ ... περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν' occurs remarkably few times in the Platonic corpus; apart from the three occurrences in the *Gorg.* (490e11, 491b8, 527d7) and this echo at *Tim.* 40a8, the only other use of the phrase is at *Minos* 316d1, where again the theme is of intellectual consistency (*πότερον οὖν οἱ ἐπιστήμονες ταῦτὰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν νομίζουσιν ἢ ἄλλοι ἄλλα; Ταῦτὰ ἔμοιγε δοκοῦσι*). Other passages where *περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν* appears in the context of intellectual consistency are: *Soph.* 230b8; *Meno* 96a3 and *Rep.* 603d2. Although all these passages deal with the theme of consistency in thought, the only ones that share the phrase 'the same ... about the same' are the three in the *Gorg.* and that in the *Tim.* Further, since *Gorg.* 491b8 and 527d7 present the negative formulation, 'never the same about the same', only two passages share the positive formulation, 'always the same about the same', i.e. *Gorg.* 490e11 (*ἀεὶ ταῦτὰ ... περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν*) and *Tim.* 40a8 (*περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀεὶ τὰ αὐτὰ*).

movements: axial rotation and forward movement (40a–b). On axial rotation, Timaeus tells how each star has τὴν [κινήσιν] μὲν ἐν ταύτῳ κατὰ ταυτά, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἄει τὰ αὐτὰ ἑαυτῷ διανοουμένῳ ('one [motion] uniform in the same place, as each always thinks the same thoughts about the same things'; tr. Cornford).<sup>97</sup> Thus each star simultaneously moves forward in its own orbit and rotates around its own axis. These kinds of motion share most in stillness and so are superior to the random, linear movement of bodies on earth. This verbal connection between the *Gorgias* and *Timaeus* emerges from their shared concern with consistency in discourse. What seems to be a minor (although suggestive) detail in *Gorgias* is worked more fully in the *Timaeus* into a more striking picture of how discourse can manifest circular movement as a positive feature.

Catherine Osborne has discussed the 'Space and shape' of Timaeus' discourse and tells how spatial metaphors in the speech ('Creative discourse' 196) 'envisage the account as something that has a shape, and that moves forward or returns to its starting-point, just as the heavens that it describes are circling in physical space'.<sup>98</sup> Osborne analyses the nature of the journey through which Timaeus takes his audience and suggests three possible explanations of its route. Of these it is the third possibility that illuminates the notion of circular and consistent discourse that Plato seems to be advocating in *Gorgias* and *Timaeus*. Osborne states (198):

The third possibility is that what is envisaged is a number of circular orbits intersecting at a point but tracing a different path on a sphere. This model has the advantage of accounting for the fact that we find ourselves back at the point of intersection and yet in each case setting out to trace a new path that will again return us to the origin. It also corresponds in spatial structure to the arrangement of the circles of the Same and the Different out of which the demiurge constructs the world-soul (36b–d), which rotate across each other in contrary directions and at varying speeds.

Just as Socrates 'always says the same things about the same things' and is able to 'maintain a constant position in successive arguments' (Coventry 182), so Timaeus

<sup>97</sup> Cornford (*Plato's cosmology* 118–19) explains how it is that the stars move 'forward' while keeping their relative positions, and comments on the notion of axial rotation: 'Every star has also, we are now told, a second motion, rotation on its own axis. The reason is that "each always thinks the same thoughts about the same things". Here, for the first time in the *Timaeus*, it is explained why axial rotation is regarded as "that one of the seven motions which above all belongs to reason and intelligence" (34a).' For Alcmaeon's influence on the formulation of this passage see Guthrie, *History of Greek philosophy* I 356.

<sup>98</sup> In a similar fashion Anne Lebeck ('Central myth') observes Plato's idea of moving discourse at work in the *Phdr.* and further notes the contrast between 'ordered' and 'disordered' motion in Plato (284): 'Important for this dialogue and for Plato's philosophy as a whole is the image of motion and a way by which to go. On the one hand, movement symbolizes impermanence, flux, deranged perception. On the other, it is creation, life, soul. And intelligence is understanding things in their motion ... The first is disordered movement, aimless wandering, zig-zag. The second is ordered motion, turning in place, ascent ... Every dialogue, by virtue of form alone, is a symbol of such movement and the search for a way.'

'bends his account round to form a series of circles' (Osborne 198). Thus such circular discourse may reveal the kind of stability held up as an ideal at *Timaeus* 29b. For such *logoi*, blessed with a fixed centre and a steady rotation, are truly μόνιμοι.<sup>99</sup> But also, since dialectic is able to move through successive arguments and still respond to the needs of the different interlocutors, it displays the vitality and life so important in the *Phaedrus*. Thus dialectic grounded in an understanding of the Forms emerges as perfectly combining motion and rest – just like axial rotation and the orbits of the heavenly stars. Therefore, to return to the question raised earlier: the image of *logos* endlessly circling around a fixed axis on a steady orbit suggests that in Platonic terms the best kind of discourse is both moving *and* still.

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<sup>99</sup> Discourse attains stability through its relationship with the wholly immovable Forms, and thus whatever fixity discourse has is dependent on, and necessarily inferior to, the perfect stability of Being. In terms of value, then, even the best discourse is inferior to the Forms to which it relates. Osborne ('Creative discourse' 187–9) discusses the hierarchy of discourse in Plato and comments on the different truth-status of discourse and the Forms (187): 'Discourse itself seems to be a candidate for *reliability* but not for truth, which is a feature attributable to the permanent entities to which reliable discourse relates, or, by extension perhaps, to the cognitive state associated with them.'