

# *Argumentum ad Lunam*: Pauline Discourse, “Double Death,” and Competition on the Moon\*

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## ■ Abstract

This article asks what Paul’s claims about cosmology signify in terms of his competitive position on the nature and purpose of the moon. Specifically, in an age in which discourses and demonstrations involving the moon were rife, I argue that Paul is invoking principals shared by writers like Plutarch on the “double death” of the human being (first as *soma* on the earth, then as *psyche/nous* in orbit around and on the moon) and that he envisions an afterlife among the stars in pneumatic form that, to the degree it is anthropomorphic, is ideally male. I also posit that this aspect of Paul’s thought has been overlooked, in part due to the idiosyncratic-yet-pervasive translation of *doxa* in Paul as “glory” rather than in terms related to typologies and judgment, as it is elsewhere in Greek philosophical literature.

## ■ Keywords

cosmology, early Christianity, gender studies, Lucian, Paul the apostle, Plutarch, Stoicism, moon

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## ■ Introduction

Lucian's meet-cute with Endymion in *Verae historiae* reads a little like an ancient rendition of a *Penthouse* letter. Thrust up to the surface of the moon by a sudden whirlwind, Lucian and his fellow seamen are seized by moon-dwellers mounted on the backs of large, three-headed “vulture dragoons” (τοῖς Ἴππογούποις, 1.10–11).<sup>1</sup> They meet Endymion, a former earthling, now ruler of this lunar realm, and are conscripted into a cosmic battle over the uninhabited Morning Star (τὸν Ἑωσφόρον).<sup>2</sup> Lucian describes fighting alongside lettuce-winged birds (θριδακίνης φύλλοις, 1.12), massive spiders, and wind-walkers (οἱ Ἄνεμοδρόμοι) who gird their loins and let their “folds” swell with air (κολπώσαντες . . . τῷ ἀνέμῳ) like the hull of a ship (τὰ σκάφη, 1.13). All festooned in fava bean hard hats (οἱ κύαμοι καὶ καρτεροί; 1.14), they duke it out with the opposing forces, including colossal ants, radish-slingers (ἔσφενδόνων ῥαφανίδας), and the delightfully named but fearsome “Puppycorns” (οἱ Κυνοβάλανοι)<sup>3</sup>—dog-faced men atop acorns feathered like boas (πτερωτῶν, 1.16).

Lucian and the moon men (τοῖς Σεληνίταις, 1.18) emerge victorious. Hostilities end. For his efforts, Endymion offers Lucian citizenship, as well as his own son in marriage—as it happens, the moon is entirely devoid of women. Not only do men marry men and give birth to other men via gestational calf (γαστροκνημίαις) or sowable testicle (ὄρχιν) and priapal tree,<sup>4</sup> Lucian claims no one in this lunar stag even knows the word “woman” (οὐδὲ ὄνομα γυναικὸς ὄλωσ ἴσασι, 1.22). From the economic scale of dildos to preferences in cuisine and coiffeurs, from their honeyed-mucus to their fur-lined, kangaroo-pouch bellies, Lucian spares no detail of these moon-dwellers, their habits, and their Camelot.

Lucian's various “pseudo-documentary fictions” are often labeled simple satire, but they do not comfortably conform to one particular genre of writing.<sup>5</sup> In the case of *Verae Historiae*, the author is transparent about his interests; lamenting the host of “past poets, historians and philosophers who have written so much that smacks of myth and marvels” (τῶν παλαιῶν ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων πολλὰ τεράστια καὶ μυθώδη συγγεγραφότων, 1.2), he endeavors—in a pique of

<sup>1</sup> I am borrowing the Loeb Classical Library translation for “vulture-calvary” in this instance. I also adopt the term “Puppycorn” below (n. 3); Lucian, *Works* (trans. A. M. Harmon; vol. 1; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913). Otherwise, all translations are my own, unless noted.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Endymion and Selene myth, see Karen ni Mheallaigh, “Selene and Endymion: Desire and the Female Gaze,” in eadem, *The Moon in the Greek and Roman Imagination: Myth, Literature, Science and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, hereafter, *Moon*) 21–26. On Endymion and Selene and the afterlife, Paul Zanker and Björn C. Ewald's *Living with Myths: The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi* (trans. Julia Slater; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) offers multiple examples of the pair featured on sarcophagi, with Selene descending down to a naked, sleeping Endymion; 96–103, 158–62, 203–7, 240–44, 334–44.

<sup>3</sup> Κύων (“dog”) and βάλανος (“acorns”).

<sup>4</sup> Presumably indicating the gastrocnemius muscle of the leg.

<sup>5</sup> Karen ni Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) preface.

admitted “vain fancy” (κενοδοξία) —to write something of similar poetic license, albeit one plainly full of lies (ψεύδομαι, 1.4). This conceit surely signals satire, but his transparency betrays an even greater game. Among his apparent intentions, for instance, are his sympathies for “sexually grounded political theories” like those espoused by Plato, which, among other things, actively exclude women.<sup>6</sup> In the specific case of his lunar sojourn, Lucian is also participating in a long-standing intellectual practice: utilizing the moon as a locus for articulating one’s philosophical, moral, psychological, and religious ideas or interests.

From Parmenides and Heraclitus to Plutarch and Lucian, in the competitive landscape of Greek and Roman intellectual expertise, espousing a position on the nature of the moon and cosmos was essential to establishing a claimant’s bona fides. So common is this motif within ancient Mediterranean discourse on physics and philosophy, in literature, and among those seeking prestige for divine knowledge, that it is reasonable to assume that, within certain circles, having a position on the moon was even *expected* by one’s audience. One way to establish and maintain cultural or social capital was to stake your lunar claims. Paul the apostle is no exception.

Paul references cosmology and “the [starry] heavens” (τοῖς οὐρανοῖς)—often misleadingly translated as simply “heaven”—frequently, perhaps most famously in 2 Cor 12, where he reports on an elusive journey to the “third [starry] heaven” (τρίτου οὐρανοῦ).<sup>7</sup> And 1 Cor 15 is noteworthy for its classifications of types of terrestrial and extraterrestrial bodies and *doxa* (δόξα), including the moon, sun, and stars, as well as for its similarities to arguments made by so-called Middle Platonists<sup>8</sup> like Plutarch and Philo.<sup>9</sup> Throughout Paul’s undisputed corpus, his didactic approach on matters from analytical physics to moral psychology are often misread as “theology” or meditations on the “world” without full attention to the implications of his material theories and other taxonomies as compared with similar discussions among the pre-Socratics or within Platonism, Pythagoreanism, and Stoicism.

<sup>6</sup> Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017) 6.

<sup>7</sup> οὐρανός does not only possess a general or amorphous sense of “heaven” but the far reaches of the concave ceiling of visible stars. Ocellus, for instance, divides the cosmos into three parts, including the “heavens” (οὐρανῶ) as the upper regions encompassing the moon, sun, and stars as distinct from both the earth and the “mid-air” region between the earth and moon (*On the Nature of the Universe*, 9–10); also cited in Ni Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 104 and discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> I use the term “Middle Platonism” in a broad sense, encompassing a period of development from about 100 BCE through the 3rd cent. CE, while acknowledging that this is not a category from antiquity; for more on this terminology, consider John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), and *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Phil 3:19–21 and 2 Cor 4:1–5:10; I will discuss the use of the terms δόξα and οὐρανοῖς in each of these passages in what follows. Colossians 2:16 also makes mention of a “new moon” (νεομηνία).

Paul's use of technical terms like *pneuma*, *nous*, and *logos* places him squarely in dialogue with the philosophy of his day on the composition and purpose of the moon, planets, stars, and other celestial bodies, both seen and unseen. Couched within a larger trend of imperial "wonder-culture" in the first century—and in competition with a variety of teachers, wonderworkers, superapostles, and the like—sufficient evidence remains to reconstruct portions of Paul's cosmological theories.<sup>10</sup> The implications of such a reading have bearing on the nature of Christ, the process of resurrection and transformation of resurrected bodies, and—not unlike Lucian—on the sexual politics of extraterrestrial existence. This examination also initiates a conversation about how Paul distinguished himself from others touting specialized or divine knowledge or power (ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, 1 Cor 2:4).

In what follows, I will sketch some of the predominant theories on the composition, purpose, and function of the moon relevant to Paul's thought. I will then demonstrate how the moon, sun, and "starry heavens" factor concretely into Paul's cosmology; in short, it is plausible that Paul, like Plutarch, sees the moon as a clearinghouse for souls awaiting a cosmic determination for their eternal state, akin to what Plutarch (and later Augustine) describes as a "double death."<sup>11</sup> In this construction, those who lived virtuous earthly lives enjoy eternal Elysium on the moon or find peace by merging their minds and souls with the cosmos, while those tethered to the passions either sink precipitously back toward the earth or perish. Paul is not unique by any means in these selenic views, yet he distinguishes himself, in part, through his interpretation of Christ's role in this cosmic and idyllic future. His utopian vision also participates in a strain of discourse about society and gender politics that may offer some insight into questions about astral epistemology in the afterlife—specifically, like Lucian, Paul may envision lunar afterlife as pneumatic, but also principally male. At minimum, Paul's rhetoric aligns with discourse about "wise men" as found in Philo (e.g., *Spec.* 2.42–45) who, on account of their virtue, give their souls wings (ψυχὰς ὑποπτέρους) and dance through outer space (αἰθεροβατοῦντες) among the moon, sun, stars, and planets (σελήνη καὶ ἡλίω καὶ . . . ἀστέρων πλανήτων), spared from the ultimate death of the soul.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For more on the concept of "wonder culture," consider Ni Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian*, passim, and Joseph A. Howley, *Aulus Gellius and Roman Reading Culture: Text, Presence and Imperial Knowledge in the 'Noctes Atticae'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) preface.

<sup>11</sup> For Augustine on "double death" (*duplae mortis*), see *Trin.* 4.3.

<sup>12</sup> Philo variously describes these wise men as wise scholars or associates (σοφίας ὁμίλητάς), practitioners of wisdom (ἀσκηταὶ σοφίας), or "righteous" or "blameless" men (ἀνεπιληπτον . . . ἀνθρώπων). I have taken some liberties with "outer space" above for the sake of simplicity; a more literal translation is "aether," which I will discuss. On the concept of "soul death" in Paul, see Emma Wasserman, particularly her *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT 2.256; Tübingen: Mohr Seibek, 2008). NB: Tertullian also refers to Stoic sublunar "wise souls" (*animae sapientes*) with the derogatory term "Endymiones": "But shall our sleep be in the aether with Plato's boys, or in the air with Arius, or in the environs of the moon with the Endymiones of the Stoics?" (*sed in aethere dormitio nostra cum puerariis Platonis aut in aere cum Ario aut circa lunam cum Endymionibus Stoicorum?*; *De anima* 55); also cited in Ni

By situating Paul's thought within this cosmological landscape, I offer a more thoroughgoing and cohesive understanding of not only his intellectual points of reference but also his strategic interests as someone vying for reputational power. I also aim to add to our knowledge of what Stanley Stowers has called the "new terrain [of philosophy]" for thinkers of the imperial period like Paul, Philo, and Plutarch, which combines elements from Pythagoreanism with Platonism, "mixed with elements of Stoic thought."<sup>13</sup> Paul is not merely eclectic in his philosophical proofs for how one "participates in Christ" and achieves a promised pneumatic, lunar existence.<sup>14</sup> His descriptions of *pneuma*, his cosmology, and his astrobiology are systematic and, indeed, rather mundane, given his social and cultural context. Thus, it may be that anachronistic translations and theologically driven prejudices against categories like "paganism," "astrology," and "magic" are largely responsible for setting Paul apart from such narratives.

Likewise, assumptions about Paul's limited engagement with this new terrain obscures the extent to which he deploys complex philosophical language, particularly when a given word also appears in the Septuagint (LXX). One such term, noted above, is *doxa*. Traditional New Testament-centric translations of *doxa* as "glory" or "glorious" conform with its rather straightforward presentation in the LXX as a concept related to reputation, radiance, or illumination. However, this translation fails to capture *doxa*'s principle meaning elsewhere in Greek literature: true or false opinion or judgment. In Platonic and Stoic circles, it can also connote perception, intelligence, and creative or "designing fire."<sup>15</sup> I propose that Paul, well-versed in Greek philosophical language, intended a more multivalent meaning in using *doxa* when discussing the afterlife and cosmos; those "in Christ" will certainly obtain luminous, pneumatic bodies like the moon, sun, and stars, but that effulgence will be fueled—like Philo's "wise men"—by superior judgment and virtue.

### ■ "Fly me to the moon, Let me play among the stars . . ." <sup>16</sup>

This study owes much to Karen ni Mheallaigh's *The Moon in the Greek and Roman Imagination: Myth, Literature, Science and Philosophy* (2020), which offers a comprehensive analysis of ancient literature on the moon that greatly supplements allied attempts in the fields of New Testament and early Christian studies to situate

Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley K. Stowers, "Paul and the Terrain of Philosophy," *Early Christianity* 6 (2015) 141–56, cit. 149.

<sup>14</sup> On the concept of "participation in Christ": Stanley K. Stowers, "Matter and Spirit, or What is Pauline Participation in Christ?," in *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (ed. Eugene Rogers; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 91–105.

<sup>15</sup> A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1, *Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 278.

<sup>16</sup> Bart Howard, "Fly Me to the Moon" (1954), perhaps best remembered for Frank Sinatra's cover in 1964's *It Might as Well Be Swing* with Count Basie, released with Reprise records.

similar concepts and terminology.<sup>17</sup> Ni Mheallaigh's monograph also effectively aggregates discourses and practices in the imperial period that used knowledge or control of astral bodies as a means of obtaining and maintaining authority and social capital.

Through such indices, it becomes clear that from the pre-Socratics forward, there is near consensus that the visible cosmos was divine in nature. Plato, for instance, referred to the stars as "divine eternal animals ever abiding"; similarly, for Aristotle, the stars were "beings of superhuman intelligence, incorporate deities."<sup>18</sup> Both Plato and Aristotle also believed that human beings were integrally tied to the moon, sun, and planets. In the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*, Plato suggests that humans are "lower" beings in the cosmic hierarchy but ones that retain the potential to "return to the stars" should they lead virtuous lives. Plato agrees that "when once the human soul has entered upon this life, its destiny is henceforth subject to the courses of the stars," a position to which Aristotle adds the destiny of animals (incidentally leading to more than one debate as to whether a man and a donkey born at the same time are fated to lead the same life).<sup>19</sup> Indeed, there is no shortage of discourse on the potential influence the cosmos may have on humanity's day-to-day existence. The proliferation of astrology—including calculating the stars to predict the future, to predict one's death, or to invoke liminal or intermediary deities, like daemones, associated with regions aloft—also contributed to "outer space" becoming integral to ontological discourse *writ large*.<sup>20</sup>

Across philosophical schools and literature broadly, the moon often took "centre-stage" in such meditations.<sup>21</sup> Its relative proximity fostered discussion about its nature, its changeability (i.e., phases), and its prospective inhabitants, all while acting as a foil for claims about the earth itself and the mortal condition. Is the moon a giant celestial mirror reflecting our own landscape; is it a cosmic eye, an ocular pupil of the gods, or perhaps even a face, ever-observing?<sup>22</sup> Could it be an

<sup>17</sup> Also useful is Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science: During the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era* (vol. 1; New York: Columbia University Press, 1923).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26. For an excellent overview on philosophical opinion on the nature of the stars as it relates to immortality: M. David Litwa, "Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body," in *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (Boston: de Gruyter, 2012) 119–51.

<sup>19</sup> Thorndike, *A History of Magic*, 25–26.

<sup>20</sup> Pliny the Elder laments about astrology: "there is no one who is not eager to learn the future about himself and who does not think that this is mostly truly revealed by the sky"; cited from Thorndike, *A History of Magic*, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Here I am interfacing with Ni Mheallaigh's argument about the moon relative to the actions of Alexander of Abonouteichos, to be discussed: "Alexander proves himself to be a creative innovator of the ordinary bag of tricks. He also places the Moon centre-stage in a complex drama of religious belief and scepticism . . . between the gullible 'idiots' who belong 'over there' in far-flung cultural wastelands like . . . Pontus, and the sophisticated readers who are identified with the normative centre, the city of Rome" (*Moon*, 45). NB: she ultimately nuances this claim, stating that to reduce reception to a binary of urban sophisticates and suburban boors is an oversimplification.

<sup>22</sup> There is a fair degree of overlap between theories of the moon as mirror and as eye in Greek literature and philosophy. This is due, in no small part, to its light and reflectivity and, thus,

ethereal cloud sitting “atop the Earth like a felted hat” buoyed by “terrestrial winds” or ocean vapors?<sup>23</sup> Or is it a galactic uterus “monthly swelling and shrinking [with] life-giving moisture and occasional reddening to the colour of blood”?<sup>24</sup> Certain Pythagoreans and, later, members of the Old Academy associated the moon with the afterlife: a stellar Isle of the Blessed. Theorizing that the soul (ψυχήν) was made of a similar ethereal-yet-material “light” (φωτοειδῆ), one could conclude that it would rise upward from the body (σῶμα) after death.<sup>25</sup> There, the soul was likely to chance upon a host of other extraterrestrial beings in sublunar orbit. Beyond the variety of daemones (some oracular, some unvirtuous, former mortals) described by Xenocrates or Herclides, Varro later adds the souls of immortals, made of “aether and air” (*aethere et aere*), as well as heroes, *lares*, and *genii* (*heroas et lares et genios*) perceptible only by the mind and “not the eyes” (*sed eas animo, non oculis uideri*).<sup>26</sup> In a somewhat macabre scene, Macrobius suggests this same region is populated with the lifeless bodies of those waiting to be ensouled, a claim that echoes the tripartite mapping of the Pythagorean Ocellus who places the moon in the uppermost starry heavens (οὐρανῶ), that stratum between the moon and the earth (γῆ) teeming with daemones, immortals, and those “coming-to-be” (ἀθανασίας καὶ γενέσεως).<sup>27</sup> As philosophical schools honed their respective doctrines, prose and poetry invoked similar imagery, from Sappho’s Selene gazing upon Endymion<sup>28</sup> to Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* with its parade of virtuous souls dotting the Milky Way.<sup>29</sup>

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visibility. Parmenides, for instance, supported a theory of heliophotism, suggesting that the moon is “ever-gazing at the rays of the sun” (DK28 B15 [G33; LM D 28]), while also calling the moon “round-eyed” (κύκλωπος, DK28 B10 [G24; LM D 12]); for more examples and a detailed discussion of ancient theories on sight and reflectivity, including the moon as a dilating and contracting pupil, see Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 68–82.

<sup>23</sup> Xenophanes and Heraclitus are representative examples in this case; Heraclitus suggests that the moon is a colossal concave bowl (σκάφαι) brimming with fire and aimed at the earth. Cf. Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 28–29. This uterine imagery also pertains to Plutarch’s theory (relevant to Paul) that the moon is a receptacle for souls and, therefore, has the potential to be penetrated with seed and/or ensouled and/or bring forth new life.

<sup>25</sup> Herclides fr. 98a–99; Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 107 n. 209.

<sup>26</sup> Cited from Augustine, *Civ.* 7.6 (fr. 226); Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 108.

<sup>27</sup> Macrobius, *In somn.* I 11, 1–12, esp. 5–6; Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 105, 107. cf. n. 7. Philo also describes this region as specifically “dusky” (σελήνην ἀερί ζοφερῶ, *Abr.* 205–206), which may intend to invoke a sense of “gloomy” (ζοφος).

<sup>28</sup> For example, Sappho fr. 96.

<sup>29</sup> Cicero, *Rep.* 6.16; Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 107; Litwa, “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” 139. There is a rich body of literature on what one might term journeys to heaven or space, including texts like the *Testament of Abraham*. For more on this genre, one useful source is Catherine Hezser, “Ancient ‘Science Fiction’: Journeys into Space and Visions of the World in Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman Literature of Antiquity,” in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 397–438.

The moon figured prominently in the discourses and actions outside of strict literate culture as well. Celestial objects or beings could direct or influence human lives; it was also possible to harness that power to one's benefit. Among seafarers and farmers, for instance, whether the moon, stars, and planets played a role in phenomena like weather or earthquakes had significant "real world" consequences.<sup>30</sup> A mastery of "the heavens" indicated privileged or divine knowledge; related displays of authority offered prestige and, in certain cases, encouraged or inculcated social ties. Pliny the Elder was well within his rights, however, to express meteorological skepticism about tongue-shaped gems—*glossopetra*—raining down from the sky during lunar eclipses and granting divinatory powers.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, performative engagement with the moon in its role as a symbolic key to specialized status was endemic.

The so-called Thessalian Trick, or "drawing down the moon," was one such practice and a source of anxiety from the Greek period well into late antiquity. Associated with Thessalian "witches," it reputedly involved filling a bowl with water and creating an aperture in order to conjure the moon in front of eager spectators. Particularly convincing during an eclipse, the maneuver was so popular that the bishop Hippolytus was still condemning it in the third century CE.<sup>32</sup> That the infrastructure behind the trick itself was easily explained belied its purpose; the mere proposition that human beings could apprehend the moon—physically or conceptually—was tantalizing enough.

Indeed, interest in displays of lunar authority was pervasive across the social and economic spectrum. In the first century CE, for example, Plutarch describes certain elites in Rome—descendants of the "most ancient families" (ἡ τοῖς παλαιωτάτοις τοῦθ' ὑπήρχεν ἐξάρητον)—wearing crescent-shaped trinkets on their shoes (Διὰ τί τὰς ἐν τοῖς ὑποδήμασι σεληνίδας οἱ διαφέρειν δοκοῦντες εὐγενεῖα φοροῦσιν, *Quaest. rom.* 282A),<sup>33</sup> indicating "that after death their souls will again have the moon beneath

<sup>30</sup> Pliny, *Nat.* 18.340–56.

<sup>31</sup> "[Pliny] is openly incredulous about the gem *glossopetra*, shaped like a human tongue and supposed to fall from the sky during an eclipse of the moon and to be invaluable in selenomancy"; Thorndike, *A History of Magic*, 98; *Nat.* 37, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Hippolytus, *Haer.* 4.37–38.

<sup>33</sup> Concerning lunar-inspired amulets, of note are *lunulae*. Typically associated with young women, there are multiple styles of *lunulae* that have been found as grave goods and in funerary portraits throughout the Mediterranean. This raises the question of whether the crescent was always, as scholars tend to conclude, apotropaic or associated with fertility and menstruation—perhaps they are related in some measure to the afterlife. Supporting the idea that this kind of cosmic-themed jewelry was à la mode in the 1st cent.—and among the imperial family in particular—Domitia wears a *lunula* as she processes with the Augustan family on the Ara Pacis (my gratitude to John Bodel for bringing this to my attention). Beyond the elite, however, there is evidence that Flavian soldiers wore similar pendants on their belts and/or placed them on the bridles of their horses. There was also a general imperial-era penchant for placing crescents on pets like dogs and cats. For more on the *lunulae*, some useful bibliography includes H. Wrede, "Lunulae in Halsschmuck," *Wandlungen. Studien zur antiken und neueren Kunst, Ernst Homann-Wedeking gewidmet* (Waldassen: Stiftland-Verlag, 1975) 243–54, and Christopher A. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman*



their feet” (ὅτι μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν αὐθις αἱ ψυχαὶ τὴν σελήνην ὑπὸ πόδας ἔξουσιν, 282A).<sup>34</sup> This kind of sartorial boasting was in lockstep with the imperial penchant for “construct[ing] pseudo-genealogies which inserted [aristocrats] into the lineages of famous Greek heroes of history or myth.”<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, Plutarch describes such noble ancestors floating in the aether surrounding the moon or walking on its surface with “firm footing . . . like victors crowned with wreaths of feathers” (*Fac.* 943D). And among them were daimones and “saviors” (δαίμονες . . . καὶ σωτῆρες, 944D) who could elect to intercede in human events, from inspiring oracular speech to performing rescues at sea, and everything in between.<sup>36</sup>

Lucian’s amusing caricature of Alexander of Abonouteichos (second century CE) also looms large. A self-styled “Neo-Pythagorean holy man” and reputed charlatan, Alexander claimed to be a prophet of Asclepius, founder of a cult to Glycon, son of Apollo, divination specialist, and consort to the moon goddess Selene, among other illustrious talents.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps remembered best for his oracular autophone snake puppet, he achieved notoriety and remuneration chiefly through his prognostications, all the while leveraging his associations with the moon to enhance his paranormal résumé. He reputedly arranged a marriage between his daughter and the Roman senator Rutilianus, who just happened to be one of Alexander’s more generous benefactors.<sup>38</sup> The resultant ceremony mirrored a mythic “drawing down” of the moon; claiming that his daughter was conceived with the moon goddess, Alexander presented the maiden on a rooftop and had her descend into the arms of her Endymion. To read Lucian’s account, Alexander’s ambitions are notable in that his pocketbook did not discriminate between social strata. Likewise, he did not limit his activities to one sphere of influence; in addition to his public displays of divine ability, Alexander was literate, composing hexameters and choreographing text-based prophecies, including slipping a self-serving proclamation about the resurrection of Asclepius into the egg of a serpentine hatchling.<sup>39</sup> As an imperial-aged figure in competition with early Christians, among others, in Asia Minor, Alexander demonstrates that the moon remained a key touchstone for religious

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*Imperial Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Such associations with lineages may have additional significance for early Christianity insofar as Paul also argues for ties between *pneuma* and kinship.

<sup>35</sup> *Lucian: Alexander or the False Prophet* (trans. Peter Thonemann; New York: Oxford University Press, 2021) 34.

<sup>36</sup> Iamblichus, for example, suggests that Pythagoras was from the moon (*Vit. Pyth.* 6.30); in the same passage cited above, Plutarch cites the Dioscuri.

<sup>37</sup> For a thorough discussion of Lucian’s approach and tone in *Alexander*, I recommend Thonemann, *Alexander*, 1–36.

<sup>38</sup> Lucian, *Alex.* 26–40, esp. 35. John Kloppenborg’s *Christ Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) presents a great deal of data on the senatorial sponsorship of both formal cultic associations and more entrepreneurial religious actors in the imperial period. On the question of conspicuous patronage among the curial classes, see his section “The Attraction of the Elite to Christ Assemblies,” 332–39.

<sup>39</sup> Lucian, *Alex.* 8–17; Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 44–46.

practitioners and writers seeking popular approval.<sup>40</sup> More directly, Alexander shows us what hitching your star to the moon, so to speak, can get you.

■ “We all shine on, like the moon and the stars and the sun . . .”<sup>41</sup>

That Paul is engaged in authorizing strategies involving the moon should not be a radical thesis. Scholarship has recognized for over a generation that Paul is utilizing the language of substances and forms common to the popular philosophy of his day.<sup>42</sup> He does so in the course of justifying his central claim that Gentiles who share or participate in Christ’s holy, god-given *pneuma* (often translated as “spirit”) will be afforded a rarified status in the afterlife. Implicit in Paul’s discourse is engagement with cosmology; yet, few have drawn the direct connection between Paul and the moon.

One important exception is Stowers who, while arguing for a “new terrain” for Paul, briefly notes the following:

Probably in Alcinoüs and clearly from Plotinus onward, Platonists insisted that the stars and planets had incorporeal minds or souls, but also bodies of pure fire. This solved the problem of their visibility among other things. The fire of which they were composed was like no gross element of the earth. As we have seen, later Platonists also gave bodies or vehicles composed of *pneuma* to daemons and other beings in the region below the moon. All of this shows that Paul’s idea of a pneumatic body for Christ people who will be moving around the region below the moon could also make sense in the new thought inspired by Pythagoras and Plato that included significant elements from Stoicism.<sup>43</sup>

Building from Stowers’s observation, there is substantial reason to understand that the cosmos—the moon, sun, and stars—is well within Paul’s purview in a far more coherent and systematic sense than is traditionally acknowledged. A comprehensive survey of Paul’s references to “the heavens” and extraplanetary bodies reveals a clear materialist cosmology; his multiple references to *doxa/doxai*

<sup>40</sup> Kloppenborg locates little evidence that Christ associations enjoyed sponsorship from the senatorial or equestrian strata until the late 2nd cent.; Kloppenborg, *Christ Associations*, 327. Also consider Thonemann’s analysis of “the widespread ‘renaissance’ of oracles in the Greek world under Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines” in *Alexander*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> “Instant Karma! (We All Shine On)” by Lennon/Ono and the Plastic Ono Band released in February 1970 as a single under the Apple Record label.

<sup>42</sup> Some representative examples include Abraham J. Malherbe, “‘Gentle as a Nurse’: The Lyric Background to I Thessalonians ii,” *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 203–17; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology of the Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Stanley K. Stowers, “Jesus as Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (ed. Tuomus Rasimus et al.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010); Stowers, “Paul and the Terrain of Philosophy”; Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Stowers, “Paul and the Terrain of Philosophy,” 156.

and visible/invisible taxonomies also signal a brand of inflected Platonism that holds significant consequences for those who either share or do not share contiguity “in Christ.” For Paul, the natural and divine worlds synthesize through Christ’s God-given *pneuma*, allowing for a new covenant between God and his people that includes granting the same kind of pneumatic body to Christ followers that Jesus received at his resurrection. That Paul continually offers a cosmic topography for where this radical change from one kind of *doxa* to another will take place (e.g., “ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν” in 2 Cor 3:18) is representative of his “realist ontology.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps obscured by later theological ideas about what constitutes “heaven” and the afterlife, Paul’s astral logic adheres to established first-century philosophy (i.e., theory of mind) and physics (e.g., the hierarchy of substances), placing him in far closer conversation with proximate contemporaries like Philo of Alexandria and Plutarch than later thinkers like Augustine or Dante, who arguably still dominate our afterlife imaginary.

What I describe as Paul’s “cosmic topography” is well represented by one of his earliest references to extraterrestrial life and afterlife in 1 Thess 4:13–18. Advocating that his addressees not be “ignorant” or unknowledgeable (ἀγνοεῖν, 4:13) about “the ones sleeping” (τῶν κοιμωμένων, 4:13)—that is, “the dead in Christ” (οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ, 4:16)—he describes an apocalyptic scenario in which the Lord “descends from [starry] heaven” (καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ) and raises the dead “first” (ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον, 4:16). For the living, however, he describes a far more jolting experience:

ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα: καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα.

Then, we—the living ones still remaining—together with [the dead] will be seized by force [up] into the clouds to a meeting with the Lord in the air: and so we will always exist with the Lord. (1 Thess 4:17)

This passage precedes Paul’s well-known admonition that these events “will come like a thief in the night” (κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ, 5:2) leaving behind destruction (ὄλεθρος, 5:3) for those not snatched up into the atmosphere. What Paul describes is an impending and tremendous event in which the souls of the dead and the living will be supernaturally designated—a kind of assortment at altitude found in contemporaneous literature like Plutarch’s *De facie in orbe lunae* (hereafter, *Fac.*) in which the soul and *nous* of a person are violently ripped away from their *soma* and propelled upward toward the moon either on the path to Elysium or into the interminable liminality of sublunar orbit. Cicero’s *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.43 similarly claims that after death, the soul “makes its escape . . . readily from our air (*animus evadat ex hoc aëre*) . . . and breaks its way through, because there is nothing

<sup>44</sup> On the concept of “realist ontology,” consult Stanley Stowers, “What is Pauline Participation in Christ?,” in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities* (ed. Fabian E. Udón et al.; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

swifter than the soul (*eumque perrumpat, quod nihil est animo velocius*.)” If the soul “survives” this blast-off intact and unchanged in substance (*Qui si permanent incorruptus sui que similis*), it will “pierce and divide” the stormy atmosphere (*ut penetret et dividat omne caelum hoc*) like an arrow until it “reaches . . . and recognizes a substance resembling its own” (*regionem . . . animus naturamque sui similem contigit et agnovit*), at which point it will hover motionless, nourishing itself with the same sustenance as the stars (*quibus astra sustentantur et aluntur*).<sup>45</sup> The soul will then continue to observe and gain knowledge—its true purpose—all the while observing the contours of its new “heavenly country” (*caelestium*, 1.44).<sup>46</sup>

Elsewhere, Paul indicates that living on “in the air” with the Lord is not merely a figurative idea. Rather, he repeatedly invokes extraterrestrial existence, citizenry, and cityscape. In Phil 3:20, for instance, Paul characterizes those not in Christ as destined for “destruction” (ἀλώλεια, Phil 3:19) and then locates the collective fate of those “in Christ” aloft:

ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀλώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες. ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ὃς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξει αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα.

[For those not in Christ] their *telos* is destruction, their god is the belly and their *doxa* is in shame, those whose minds are on earthly things. [Whereas] our citizenship/commonwealth is in [the starry] heavens, out of which we also expect/await a savior, the lord Jesus Christ, who will change the body of our submission,<sup>47</sup> [instead becoming] conformed to the body of [Christ’s] *doxa*, according to the working of his power to [make] subject to himself all things. (Phil 3:19–21)

Those joining Christ in the “heavens” are described as part of a πολίτευμα, signifying a state or formal governmental organization where policy is developed.

<sup>45</sup> A portion of this passage is also referenced in Litwa, “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” 139. Litwa additionally cites Josephus, who claims that the soul, once released from the body, settles “among the stars” (ἄστροις ἐγαθιδρύει); *J.W.* 6.47.

<sup>46</sup> I have borrowed the translation “heavenly country” from the LCL 141:54–55. For additional examples of the “rising soul” motif—including in Plato and Plutarch—consider Alan Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment,” *ANRW* 2: 23.2 (1980): 1333–94, esp. 1346–51.

<sup>47</sup> ταπεινώσεως has the sense of “lowness,” “baseness,” “submissiveness,” or “humble” in terms of stature or morality. Standard English translations of the term—for example, in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)—will often use “humiliation” (i.e., “the body of our humiliation”), which arguably reflects a later (and therefore anachronistic) theological sense of the body as inherently shameful, or mirrors gospel accounts of Christ humiliated at the crucifixion. For more, consult: Chris L. de Wet, “Modelling Msarrqūtā: Humiliation, Christian Monasticism, and the Ascetic Life of Slavery in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia,” in *Social Control in Late Antiquity: The Violence of Small Worlds* (ed. Kate Cooper et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 105–30. On sexual humiliation within late antique asceticism, see Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Thus, Paul and his ilk eagerly await a heavenly Christ to gather his fellow citizens and transform their humble, susceptible, and corporeal bodies into something of a more ethereal stuff suitable for a heavenly polis. Paul indicates throughout his letters that they all will be “conformed” into pneumatic bodies like Christ’s; indeed, he explicitly states that those in Christ will be “raised in a pneumatic *soma* (σῶμα πνευματικόν)” in 1 Cor 15:44.<sup>48</sup>

M. David Litwa argues for a similar reading in his “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” citing numerous examples throughout popular and philosophical literature wherein ancient Mediterranean deities were understood to possess “‘super bodies’ built from superior substances” and were, by extension, of superior size, beauty, and luminosity, as well as superior moral and intellectual disposition.<sup>49</sup> For Litwa, this pneumatic *soma* is in some sense corporeal, albeit “fitted for eternal life (ἀθανασίαν).” Drawing *comparanda* from the Stoics, he demonstrates that the soul (ψυχή) was understood “to be a type of body . . . pneuma . . . the highest ‘part’ of the human being” and thus the proper “eschatological ‘stuff’” to survive in an astral or sublunar polity.<sup>50</sup> To this, Litwa suggests Paul is influenced, in part, by the Platonic notion that the immortal soul is eternal.<sup>51</sup> Thus, like Cicero and others, Paul appears to have adopted a “Platonically modified Stoicism” characteristic of the first century in which the soul, made of *pneuma* and buoyant like aether, rockets toward the stars, retaining a certain sense of materiality, yet metamorphosing into a more refined starlike pneumatic form and, ultimately, finding an eternal home with God.

In 2 Cor 5:1–5, Paul once again augurs the ethereal “home” that God will make for his people “in the heavens,” extending this imagery into a metaphor about shedding the earthly “tent” or tabernacle (τοῦ σκηνῶν) that houses the mortal body and eagerly “putting on” (ἐπενδύσασθαι) God’s eternal heavenly dwelling (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ . . . αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) in its place:

Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκηνῶν καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν, τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες, εἴ γε καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι οὐγυμνοὶ εὐρεθησόμεθα. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκηνῶν στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ’ ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν

<sup>48</sup> Stowers makes a similar, but more elaborate, point in his “Paul and the Terrain of Philosophy” (154) which I will discuss further below. For more on the composition—and survival—of the soul in Greek and Roman philosophical thought: *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (ed. Raymond Martin et al.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) and Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). NB: I transliterate *soma* as body to indicate its distinction in Paul’s thought from *sarx*, or “flesh,” which has significance for my coming discussion of 1 Cor 15:35–58.

<sup>49</sup> Litwa, “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” 121. To Litwa’s catalog of literary and philosophical examples we might add the resurrected hero described in some detail, and to similar effect, in Philostratus’s *Heroicus*.

<sup>50</sup> Litwa, “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” 137, emphasis original.

<sup>51</sup> The Stoics, rather, saw the corporate soul as immortal but not necessarily that of the individual; Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 7.156; Litwa, “Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body,” 139.

ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῆ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζῶης, ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεός, ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος.

For we know that if our earthly house of the tabernacle is destroyed, we have a building from God—a home not made by [mortal] hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>52</sup> For also in this we groan, greatly desiring to put on our home out of heaven [for in] being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For indeed the ones who are in the tabernacle groan, being burdened, since we do not wish to put off but to put on, in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by the life. Now the one having worked this very thing for us is God, the one having given to us the down payment of the *pneuma*. (2 Cor 5:1–5)<sup>53</sup>

Paul engages in a strategy of repetitive rhetorical dualism within this passage that simultaneously emphasizes the earthly and the heavenly, the corruptible and the incorruptible, and, crucially, the visible and the invisible. The epistemic implication of these dichotomies is that true knowledge or the true nature of a material object—that is, correct judgment (*epistēmē*)—is not indicated by what is visible to the eye (its “glory”) but by its innate or divine qualities; for example, in 2 Cor 4:18 he specifies that those in Christ “do not consider the things being seen, but . . . the things not being seen (μη σκοπούντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μη βλεπόμενα), for the things being seen are temporary (πρόσκαιρα), but the things not being seen are eternal (αἰώνια).”

The significance of this contrast is illustrated by means of the new covenant (καινῆς διαθήκης) between God and his people “through Christ” (διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) in 2 Cor 3:1–18. Drawing an extended analogy with Moses at the center, Paul commends his addressees that they themselves are a letter (ἐπιστολή, 3:2) written not in ink (οὐ μέλανι), but by the “*pneuma* of a living God” (πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, 3:3); not chiseled into dead stones (διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις, 3:7), but on tablets of the human heart (ἐν πλαξίν καρδίας σαρκίαις, 3:2).<sup>54</sup> Reflecting on Exod 34:29–35, he claims that the people of Israel, after establishing their covenant through Moses, were unable to fix their eyes upon Moses’s face (μη δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι, 3:7); he was forced to veil himself (ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, 3:13) in the aftermath of speaking directly with God, as “the *doxa* of his face (τὴν δόξαν, 3:7)” was too awesome to comprehend. Paul suggests that this same veil remains (τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα . . . μένει, 3:14) now in the hearts (καρδίαν, 3:15) of those attempting to comprehend and follow the Law.<sup>55</sup> Rhetoric about the Law as an agent of death, sin, or misjudgment is rife

<sup>52</sup> It is possible this passage is invoking the language of the LXX translation of 2 Chron 2.

<sup>53</sup> When Paul speaks of “putting on” a heavenly body, he may have in mind the LXX translation of Isa 61:3 in which a “generation of righteousness” is given “a garment of *doxa* instead of a *pneuma* of neglect” (καταστολήν δόξης ἀντὶ πνεύματος ἀκηδίας).

<sup>54</sup> I have taken some liberties with my translation of “διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις” for clarity; Paul’s invocation of service or “ministry” here parallels his discussion of the new covenant in the previous line.

<sup>55</sup> Oddly, several English translations replace “hearts” with “minds” in this passage.

within Paul's letters and linked to a larger discourse about the passions and moral weakness.<sup>56</sup> While the Law remains "spiritual" or pneumatic—as he plainly states in Rom 7:14<sup>57</sup>—the new covenant through Christ offers greater permanence (πολλῷ μᾶλλον τὸ μένον, 3:11), "freedom" (ἐλευθερία, 3:17), and pneumatic connection to God. It is here that Paul once again uses the language of transformation, stating that with "unveiled faces" (ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ) those in Christ will metamorphose (μεταμορφούμεθα) into "the same image" as the Lord, as though reflected in a mirror (κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα, 3:18).

Throughout this section of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians, and frequently throughout each of his discussions of divine or superterrestrial space and taxonomy, Paul uses the term *doxa* and its variations. As noted above, the traditional translation of this term in Paul's letters is "glory" and with good reason; the LXX uses *doxa* in several instances in the context of wealth, honor, reputation, or beauty (e.g., Gen 1:37; 45:13; Isa 13:19, 16:14, 21:16; Ps 44:14), as well as in direct reference to the visual appearance of God—for example, in Exodus alone, he appears as a cloud in 16:10, in the tabernacle in 40:35, and again on Mount Sinai in 33:18–23. Both Litwa and Troels Engberg-Pedersen interpret Paul's adaptation of the term as another manifestation of his penchant for dualities. *Doxa* variously stands in contrast to "flesh" (σάρξ), or *sarx*, thus the earthly body stands in inferior contrast to the "brilliance of pneumatic bodies." Litwa explains that these "δόξα-bodies [like the] sun, moon, stars—shine according to their purity or 'weight of δόξα' . . . the pneumatic body of Christ and believers show the same brilliance (δόξα) as the heavenly bodies . . . in conformity with the resurrected body of Jesus Christ."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, in Phil 2:15 Paul likens those "in Christ" explicitly to resplendent (φαίνεσθε) celestial objects—"luminaries in the cosmos" (φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ)<sup>59</sup>—albeit not using *doxa* but rather φωστῆρες, a term often reserved for describing the light of the sun and the moon.<sup>60</sup> To the extent that *doxa* retains the notion of reputation and appearances, Phil 3:19–21 (cited above) also stands as a representative example in which those who are fixed on the passions (κολίαι) are tied to a *doxa* of shame,

<sup>56</sup> For instance, Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*; Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*; Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology of the Self in the Apostle Paul*.

<sup>57</sup> "οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστιν: ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν."

<sup>58</sup> Litwa, "Divine Corporeality and the Pneumatic Body," 148. Litwa's reference to "weight of δόξα" is likely indicating the sense of gravity or weight that attends *kabod* (כְּבוֹד) in the LXX, from which *doxa* is often derived.

<sup>59</sup> φωστῆρες has the sense of "light given off by heavenly bodies, primarily the moon and the sun"; see R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 164. Parallels can also be found in Gen 1:14, 16; Qumran IQS 10:3; IQM 10:11; IQH 1:11; 7:25; 9:26.

<sup>60</sup> The NRSV simply translates this as "shine like stars in the world." Of note, φωστῆρες appears in the LXX of Gen 1:14–18, discussed below. Elsewhere, Stowers notes "Greek, wider Mediterranean, and West Asian materials also attest to the idea that gods had very special kinds of bodies characterized by bright splendor"; Stanley Stowers, "The Dilemma of Paul's Physics: Stoic-Platonist or Platonist-Stoic?," in *From Stoicism to Platonism* (ed. Engberg-Pedersen) 234.

dishonor, or confusion (ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ), unlike those who will share citizenship with Christ in heaven (cf. 1 Cor 15:43).

Within Greek and Roman philosophical lines of thought, however, *doxa* retains even more complex and multivalent meaning and is a pervasive concept from at least Parmenides forward.<sup>61</sup> In its broadest sense, *doxa* is an opinion or judgment that can be true or false, although more often in a sense more akin to conjecture or, in some cases, even “unreasoned perception.”<sup>62</sup> Jessica Moss usefully suggests one way to define the term in Plato’s middle dialogues is as “cognition of what seems.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, to the extent that *doxa* makes perception of the material world possible, it also grants a permission structure for obtaining knowledge or ἐπιστήμη (*epistēmē*) about the essential nature of objects, forms, concepts, and so forth. Moss summarizes: “the power of *doxa* puts us into cognitive contact only with perceptibles, but on that basis generates judgments or conceptions which are also about Forms,” as is the case in the *Republic* (506a–c) and the *Phaedo* (66b–67b), in which Socrates describes philosophers possessing *doxa* about the Good.<sup>64</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Stoics share much in common with Platonic conceptions of *doxa*, albeit with concern for the role of the so-called wiseman in acts of discernment and judgment. The Stoic wiseman, for instance, relies upon *epistēmē*—sense-perception supported by reason—to make (correct) judgments about the world.<sup>65</sup> Any mental disposition or cognition short of this kind of verifiable knowledge is considered ignorance, effectively establishing a bifurcation between the wise and foolish; once the wiseman assents to a correct proposition, he will remain neutral, virtuous, and dispassionate, whereas the “fool” will lack the same consistent command of their faculties.<sup>66</sup>

Lack of reason and self-possession render the unwise susceptible to “opinions”—assent to the “incognitive” or that which cannot be securely evaluated by objective

<sup>61</sup> Not unrelated to this discussion is the development of the doxographical tradition within philosophy during the late Republic and imperial periods. For more on this movement, its participants, and its consequences: Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, 217–18.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 28a.

<sup>63</sup> Jessica Moss, “Plato’s *Doxa*,” *Analytic Philosophy* 61 (2020) 193–217, cit. 193. *Doxa* is occasionally presented in scholarship as a diametric foil to the kind of knowledge obtained through reasoned perception, which is considered more reliable, permanent, or “true.” Plato’s well-known concept of the Forms offers a useful illustration; while the Forms are associated with Being and *epistēmē* or knowledge of what is intelligible, *doxa*, by contrast, is associated with the perceptible world or with what is Becoming. The difficulty with this descriptive comparison, however, is that it oversimplifies Plato’s so-called Two Worlds hypothesis and suggests a synthetic definition of *doxa* is possible when Plato also suggests that it is possible to possess *doxa* of Forms. For more on Plato’s usage of the term and contemporary mistranslations of *doxa* in modernity as “belief” or “faith,” see *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>65</sup> For multiple examples of “scientific knowledge” as a result of sense-perception: Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1:41–42.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 1:256–58.



reason.<sup>67</sup> Even the gods risk stoking “opinion”; when Orestes, for example, “seemed to see the Furies, his sensation, being moved by the images (εἰδῶλων), was true, in that the images (εἶδωλα) objectively existed; but in his mind (νοῦς), in thinking that the Furies were solid bodies, he held a false opinion (ἔψευδοδόξει).”<sup>68</sup> In cases such as these, the Stoics caution that one should not allow the mind to assent to “unclear impressions” and, rather, should “suspend judgment” lest they risk error.<sup>69</sup>

With such emphasis on sense perception and experience among the Stoics, critics both ancient and modern suggest that Stoic epistemology is unjustifiably predicated on weakly articulated empiricism “not to mention paradoxes.”<sup>70</sup> At minimum, such positions fostered continued debate about the limits of the observable, natural world, including the cosmos. In the case of the moon, one could assert certain “facts” about its interactions with the earth’s tides or about the portions of the moon that remained visible during an eclipse, thus eliciting reasoned conclusions about its composition.<sup>71</sup> But such conclusions were necessarily based on speculative reasoning, as debates within Plutarch’s *Fac.* demonstrate.<sup>72</sup> Despite these difficulties, Stoic proofs on the moon and other celestial bodies generally agree that all terrestrial and extraterrestrial objects are part of an interdependent whole, constituted by a certain tension, or *hexis* (ἕξις), providing material form.<sup>73</sup> The substance binding all of these objects together is *pneuma*, the proto-atomic theory of matter that Paul adopts with gusto. As for *doxa*, Paul may have much more in common with the Stoics and Platonists—and particularly Xenocrates of Chalcedon—as he wrestles with a series of core ontological claims about Christ, the resurrection, and the afterlife that do not immediately withstand the scrutiny of an observable *epistēmē*.

A member of the Old Academy, Xenocrates proposed an innovative tripartite cosmology at which the moon was the omphalic center. First is the “sublunary region”—the terrestrial realm—characterized by the material world and “the physical entities, which we apprehend through sense-perception (*aisthēsis*),” a theory that surely pleased the later Stoics. Next, the moon, sun, and other celestial objects that are subject to the scrutiny of sight and astronomy (ἀστρολογία) combine with reason to produce *doxa*—opinion—as to their nature and function.

<sup>67</sup> On “opinion”: “a term which covers all epistemic conditions of the non-wise man”; *ibid.*, 1:258.

<sup>68</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 8.63; Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 16, 1:81–82.

<sup>69</sup> Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1056E–F; Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 41E, 1:255.

<sup>70</sup> Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 253.

<sup>71</sup> Plutarch’s *Fac.* is often invoked in such scholarly discussions. In addition to Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, *passim*, Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) 41–43.

<sup>72</sup> As Sambursky states: “Like atomic theory, the continuum theory of the Greeks was essentially speculative, based on theoretical conceptions and developed along purely epistemological lines. Although both theories occasionally refer to experience and use examples and analogies borrowed from the sphere of daily life, there is no question of any recourse to systematic experimentation”; Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics*, 44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

Last, there is a “supercelestial region . . . intelligible only through scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*)” that exists beyond the stars and is home to the Platonic Forms.<sup>74</sup> This middle *doxa*-region is knowable only through the combination of *aisthēsis* (αἴσθησις) and *epistēmē*: “the criterion of [this] mixed existence [the sun, moon, etc] is *doxa* (τῆς δὲ μικτῆς τὴν δόξαν).”<sup>75</sup> Thus, Xenocrates avoids the pejorative dichotomizations that relegate *doxa* to ignorance; rather, he establishes that between what we know from experience and what we can discern from rationality there is a third space for which we must deploy both kinds of cognition. In so doing, we can make proper judgments about what exists between the perceptible and imperceptible.

■ “If you believe they put a man on the moon . . .”<sup>76</sup>

Recognizing Paul’s use of technical and philosophical language has done much over the years to help us sharpen our understanding of his rhetorical strategies. Theological or anachronistic translations of words like *pistis*, *pneuma*, *ekklēsia* take on a certain self-evidentiary quality; translating *ekklēsia* as “church,” for instance, signals a cohesion and institutional stability that is plainly ahistorical to Paul’s moment and activities.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, outside of contemporary Christianity, translating *pneuma* as “spirit” makes little sense as an argument for adherence to Christ without its materialist context. Given Paul’s familiarity with Greek philosophical thought, it is unlikely that he was ignorant of how *doxa* was deployed in these circles.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, it is incongruous that Paul should seek philosophical complexity in his writings in so many other cases, yet remain seemingly content to deploy *doxa*—a term so axiomatic to discussions of epistemology—narrowly as god-like splendor or “glory.” A closer examination of Paul’s use of *doxa*, particularly in passages in which the term is systematically repeated, demonstrates a more dynamic concept that engages Greek philosophical ideas about the nature of knowledge, judgment, and moral psychology.

To be clear, I am not arguing that Paul does *not* have sources like the LXX in view when using *doxa* or that some of his uses of *doxa* are not in reference to LXX passages; certainly, that is unlikely to be the case when he is describing the blinding luminescence of Moses’s face in 2 Cor 3:7, for example. What I am proposing is that the proper translation of *doxa* may not be “glory” uniformly in all instances,

<sup>74</sup> Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 91.

<sup>75</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.147–149; Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 92.

<sup>76</sup> “Man on the Moon” by R.E.M. released on *Automatic for the People* in October 1992 under Warner Bros. Records.

<sup>77</sup> Jennifer Eyl, “Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism: The Case of Paul’s use of *Ekklēsia*,” *MTSR* 26 (2014) 315–39.

<sup>78</sup> Paul may be aware of the use of the term as far back as Parmenides, where “glory” hardly obtains. This is perhaps an area worthy of further comparative research, as Parmenides’s perception of *doxa* is arguably more holistically similar to the ways in which Paul deploys it throughout his letters in the context of perception and forms.

particularly when Paul is arguing about the nature and perception of Christ, resurrection, and so forth. Indeed, if what Paul describes as God's *pneuma* proffers special "cognitive and communicative powers," then it is precisely those powers that allow for superior judgment about both the terrestrial and extraterrestrial world.<sup>79</sup>

Take 2 Cor 4:1–6, in which Paul's repeated references to light and darkness, his own discourse on Moses, and his allusion to the creation of the cosmos are traditionally translated as repeated invocations of "glory."<sup>80</sup> If one understands at least some of these cases to be in reference to ideas of cognition, assent, or correct knowledge, this repetition makes better sense. Traditional translations of 2 Cor 4:4 posit that those without *pistis* (τῶν ἀπίστων) are "blind" (ἐτύφλωσεν) to the proper mental perception (τὰ νοήματα) "of the good news [gospel] of the *glory* of Christ" (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ). However, understanding *doxa* as a more complex term relevant to questions of opinion or perception recasts the passage so that these individuals without faith have failed to properly assent to the *doxa*—the *correct judgment*—on the true nature of Christ.

Similarly, in 1 Cor 15:40, when Paul argues for distinguishing between heavenly/cosmic bodies (σώματα ἐπουράνια) and terrestrial/earthly bodies (σώματα ἐπίγεια), conventional translations have him following this taxonomy with a meditation on the "glory" of the heavens and the earth in the tradition of Genesis and Deuteronomy.<sup>81</sup> To the extent that Paul is also invoking Stoic ideas about the "glowing" properties of aether and *pneuma*, the hierarchies that he establishes between earthly and heavenly objects align those in possession of God or Christ's *pneuma* with the luminosity—*doxa*—of the sun, moon, and stars (1 Cor 15:41).<sup>82</sup> Stoic ideas about the light of the "fiery" heavens, however, understand visibility to be powered by intelligence.

Zeno, for instance, describes the moon, stars, and planets as "rational and wise (νοερὸν καὶ φρόνιμον), burning with designing fire" (*SVF* 1.120); Philo similarly notes that stars in orbit "move in a circle [because this is] the motion most akin to intellect/mind, for each is an intellect (νοῦς) of the purest type (ἀκραϊφνέστατος)" (*Gig.* 8). Philo also suggests that heavenly bodies are only visible—*eikōn* (ἐκεῖνο)—because of their divine *logos* (θείου λόγου) and that the "sun and moon, and all

<sup>79</sup> Stowers, "Dilemma," 235–36. Elsewhere, Stowers makes a convincing case for the Corinthians letters expounding on the notion that the pneumatic bodies of those in Christ "will have qualities similar to or superior to the stars" and, likewise, that their "ordinary consciousness and cognition" will be replaced not simply with "cosmic" *pneuma* (πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου) but with "the *pneuma* of God so that we might understand the things given to us by God (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν, 1 Cor 2:12).

<sup>80</sup> Paul does not cite a specific passage from the LXX on the creation of the cosmos but references phrasing similar to what is found in Gen 1:3; Ps 112:4; Isa 9:2; "Out of darkness, light [is] to shine" (Ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμπει, 2 Cor 4:6).

<sup>81</sup> One representative example is David A. Burnett, "A Neglected Deuteronomic Scriptural Matrix for the Nature of the Resurrection Body in 1 Cor 15:39–42," in *Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in 1 Corinthians* (ed. Linda Belleville et al.; New York: Lexington Books, 2019).

<sup>82</sup> For more discussion of the Stoic and Platonic elements of this language, including further bibliography: Stowers, "Dilemma," 234–36.

other planets and fixed stars draw [light], in accordance with the power (δύναμις) of each; for that unmixed and pure radiance is dimmed as soon as it begins to . . . change [from] the intelligible to the sensible” (*Opif.* 31).

This variability of light according to *dunamis* is analogous to Paul’s description of the *doxa* of the moon (δόξα σελήνης), stars, and other planetary bodies in 1 Cor 15:41, stating: “for star from star differs in *doxa*” (ἀστὴρ γὰρ ἀστέρως διαφέρει ἐν δόξῃ). That Paul similarly distinguishes forms of *doxa* in terms of degree and kind places his thought at the center of an established conversation about physics and ontology, with the innovation of using *doxa* to communicate similar ideas about luminosity and substance, as well as forms of knowledge. These passages add even more specificity to 2 Cor 4:4–6; not only are the unbelieving unable to assent to the proper *doxa* on the nature of Christ, but they are also unaware that Christ is the “image (εἰκὼν) of God” and the “illumination of the knowledge (φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως) of the *doxa* of God (τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ).”<sup>83</sup> Again, the connection in Paul’s thought between *pneuma*, *logos*, and *nous* is well established and need not be rehearsed here, but to our materialist understanding of Paul’s *doxa* as something “glorious,” this illumination is fueled, at least in part, by the possession of divine knowledge about the true nature of objects, including God.<sup>84</sup>

Scholars are frequently bedeviled by Paul’s “systematic ambiguity” and the way he appears to “[combine] . . . Stoic materialism and Platonic mentalism.”<sup>85</sup> He does not easily conform to an established school of Greco-Roman philosophical thought and this seeming eclecticism resists categorization. To refer to his specific brand of philosophy as “popular” accomplishes twin goals: first, it acknowledges his influences and intellectual debts including, and beyond, the LXX; second, it concretizes the “embodied” social context in which he is functioning.<sup>86</sup> To the best of our knowledge, Paul is attempting to render his claims palatable to a “popular” first-century audience, not a gaggle of Stoic wonks. Likewise, his discourse on the heavens/cosmos is not capricious or metaphorical. Rather, it represents a remapping of the natural world with the promise of the transformation of the body through resurrection and continuing existence in a new realm—“the *doxa* of the heavens/cosmos” (ἐπουρανίων δόξα, 1 Cor 15:40).

The stakes for this kind of claim were incredibly high; Paul is not merely a letter-writer but a functioning “divinatory and wonderworking” practitioner or specialist.<sup>87</sup> His expertise as a philosopher cannot be meaningfully distinguished from his

<sup>83</sup> The verse 2 Cor 4:6 ends with τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ. This is often translated as “in the face of Christ,” although προσώπῳ can mean something more akin to countenance or how one perceives the image in front of them.

<sup>84</sup> In addition to the bibliography already cited in this piece from Engberg-Pedersen, Litwa, Stowers, and others, consider John Dillon, *The Platonic Heritage: Further Studies in the History of Platonism and Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Dillon, *The Platonic Heritage*, passim; Stowers, “Dilemma,” 241.

<sup>86</sup> Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, passim.

expertise as a purveyor of “pneumatic” knowledge and power. To this extent, Paul’s focus on the moon and the cosmos represents a tangible afterlife strategy with material consequences, based on the “popular” literature and discourses of his day. Ní Mheallaigh articulates a similar claim about Plutarch’s focus and use of the moon as a “doxographical” symbol of the imperial period:

If . . . Plutarch’s goal . . . was to weld together the metaphysical and physical components of the Middle Platonic curriculum, then we may see the Moon as an icon of Plutarch’s intellectual world. Especially Middle Platonism with its diet of physics and mysticism—and perhaps broadly still of the culture of what used to be called the “Second Sophistic,” with its *enkyklios paideia* that included astronomy as well as linguistic, rhetorical, and literary expertise. This tendency of multiple theories and approaches to converge around the Moon converts it into a doxographical space, an archive of ideas. It is no accident that the selenographic impulse—the desire to collate all theories and write about the Moon—coincides precisely with the globalizing period of the Roman Empire.<sup>88</sup>

Paul adds to this “selenographic impulse” a connection via Christ to a rarefied genealogy and ontological status, a pneumatic body, and “victory” (τὸ νῆκος, 1 Cor 15:57) over death and other enemies (1 Thess 4–5). More than a Thessalian Trick, Paul is not only willing to lasso the moon, he promises his audience a new world order as well.

### ■ “There’s a starman waiting in the sky . . .”<sup>89</sup>

Throughout 1 Cor 15:35–49, Paul invokes the language of *pneuma*, *doxa*, *dunamis*, *eikōn*, and the heavens as a prooftext for claims found throughout his corpus about the nature of a postresurrection reality in orbit. After delineating the *doxai* of the cosmos, he proceeds to explain how those participating in Christ will obtain pneumatic bodies in the afterlife, bearing the image or likeness of their new heavenly co-heir:

The first man [Adam] was out of the ground and earthy (ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός), the second man [Christ] is out of [starry] heaven (οὐρανοῦ). . . . Such [is] the earthy one (ὁ χοϊκός), so too the earthy ones (οἱ χοϊκοί); and such [is] the heavenly one (ὁ ἐπουράνιος), so too the heavenly ones (οἱ ἐπουράνιοι): and as we bear the likeness (εἰκόνα) of the earthy, we will also bear the likeness of the heavenly (ἐπουρανίου). (1 Cor 15:47–49)

He makes allied claims in 1 Cor 15:50–58 and 1 Thess 4:13–5:11 (discussed above) about the “mystery” (μυστήριον) that awaits them when they will transform (ἀλλαγισόμεθα) into heavenly, pneumatic beings, with Christ descending from the clouds at the sound of a trumpet to raise everyone, including the dead, into the

<sup>88</sup> Ní Mheallaigh, *Moon*, 188.

<sup>89</sup> David Bowie, “Starman” released as a single from *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972) by RCA Records.

air (εις ἀέρα). But how this process is to take place seems as mysterious in Paul's extant letters as the so-called mystery itself.

As indicated above, Paul's cursory description of death and transformation shares much in common with more detailed treatises like Plutarch's *Fac.*, offering the possibility of contextualizing Paul's lacunae. A dialogue set between a certain Sulla and Lamprias, *Fac.* establishes the moon as a celestial terrain at the "threshold of life and death" between the material earth (ἡ γῆ) and the ethereal sun (928B). There, refined substances like "light," "fiery bodies," and even mind and souls (νοῦς . . . ψυχῆς) experience a natural buoyancy and rocket into its orbit (927C; 943A). Lamprias explains that mind and soul are intermixed with body (σώματος) and, furthermore, that mind and soul are intermixed with each other; however, mind remains "superior (ἄμεινόν) and more divine (θειότερον) than soul" (943A). Thus, when death occurs, the body remains with the earth that supplied it (the first death), returning to the soil as the soul and mind, intermingled, "swiftly and violently" (943B) extract themselves from the body and ascend toward the moon. In the "aether about the moon" (περι τὴν σελήνην αἰθέρι, 943D), a transformation or second death occurs. The soul and mind are gently disentangled by Persephone—the moon drawing the soul, and the mind returning to its source of creative fire and light: the sun (943B–C). While all souls are "destined to wander [in this] region between earth and moon (τῷ μεταξὺ γῆς καὶ σελήνης)" in order to experience their transformation, those who led less than virtuous mortal lives, or are still attached to the corporeal world, find themselves in a rougher stream of air, forced to withstand an onslaught of purifying celestial winds that strip away *miasma* (μιασμοῦς) as if it were a foul odor (943C). Many of these unfortunate souls attempt to cling to the moon's craggy surface for refuge, but they are quickly swept away. The virtuous, by contrast, find "firm footing" on its surface and, wearing "crowns of feathers," move about freely (943D). Of these latter souls, some will venture to the side of the moon that faces the stars—Elysium—while others will elect to become daimons, oracles, or intercessors in human events (944D; 945B). In all cases, these souls retain the likeness or image of their mortal bodies, like a mold or the imprint of a wax seal (διατηροῦσα τὴν ὁμοίότητα καὶ τὸν τύπον εἶδωλον ὀρθῶς ὀνομάζεται, 945A).

Paul's promise of pneumatic bodies for those in Christ corresponds in important ways with Plutarch's lunar afterlife predictions—from the rapid ascent of luminous souls to meeting other divine and intermediary beings in sublunar orbit. Compellingly Paul, like Lucian, also describes intergalactic military battles, with Paul's God neutralizing (καταργήση) any competing authority or power (πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν, 1 Cor 15:24), until all "enemies" are vanquished "under his feet" (πάντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑπὸ τοῦς πόδας αὐτοῦ, 15:25). Of course, Paul falls short of promising a confrontation with radish-slingers or Puppycorns, but he does augur that God's cosmic warfare will conscript pneumatic Christ people into service, and they will meet Christ "in the *aer*, the region between the earth and the moon, and join him in defeating recalcitrant lower divine beings,

and judge angels.”<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, Christ and his pneumatic brothers (ἀδελφοί) will bring God’s new civilization (τὴν βασιλείαν) into fruition, and a new age will begin (15:30, 24).

As for the issue of the likeness (εἰκόνα) of the heavenly pneumatic bodies (σῶμα πνευματικόν) of God’s cosmic warriors, we only know that they will resemble that of “the starry man” (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ), but to what extent is not clear. Perhaps they will all take on the identical form of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). Perhaps they will be, as Plutarch describes, imprints of their former earthly bodies. Lucian compellingly muses that such incorporeal forms will be seen as “intangible and fleshless, with only shape and figure” (ἀναφεῖς καὶ ἄσαρκοί εἰσιν, μορφήν δὲ καὶ ἰδέαν μόνην ἐμφαίνουσιν), yet they will continue to “live and move and think and talk” (συνεστᾶσιν καὶ κινοῦνται καὶ φρονοῦσι καὶ φωνήν)—“naked souls . . . in the semblance of their bodies” (γυμνή . . . ἢ ψυχῇ), “like upright shadows” (σκιαὶ ὀρθαί), clothed in nothing but “delicate purple spider webs” (ἀραχνίους λεπτοῖς, πορφυροῖς).<sup>91</sup>

As a plain matter of textual and comparative analysis, the status of mortal women in Paul’s afterlife remains murky. While there is ample evidence that women in Christ will be included in Paul’s afterlife scenario, whether their physiological gender will remain the same or also be “transformed” is a subject worthy of further scrutiny.<sup>92</sup> With the reproductive element seemingly obsolete, what would be the need to preserve the popularly understood “lesser,” “deformed” (πεπρωμένα), and “soulless” (οὐκ ἔχει . . . τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρχήν) female body?<sup>93</sup> Plato, too, speaks compellingly about chaste love between men being far superior to procreation with women, as men produce offspring “more worthy and enduring than children, such as poetry, philosophy, and law codes.” Given that Paul follows Plato’s *Republic* in nearly all respects on how to run a utopian collective—from endorsing communal property (*Resp.* 462a9–e3), to envisioning a literal body politic (*Resp.* 462b4–d3), to the destructive effects of marriage and procreation (*Resp.* 462b8–c5; 1 Cor 7)—is he more likely to conform to Platonic thinking for God’s interstellar army and civilization?<sup>94</sup>

With their undercurrents of warfare, destruction, death, and violence, whether it is Paul, Philo, Plutarch, Lucian, or even Alexander, discourses on the moon are ultimately about a promise of freedom. For some, it is the freedom of adventure; for others, it is freedom from the body, suffering, or oppression. In each case the moon represents currency, whether social, religious, or even economic. Philo, meditating on the ignorance and burdens of mortality, muses that “souls that are

<sup>90</sup> Stowers, “Paul and the Terrain of Philosophy,” 154.

<sup>91</sup> Lucian, *Verae historiae*. My profound gratitude to the anonymous peer-reviewer who brought this passage to my attention, along with the translation.

<sup>92</sup> For more on this topic, I recommend Taylor Petrey, *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>93</sup> Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 737a 25–30.

<sup>94</sup> Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 29–30.

without flesh and body (ψυχαι μὲν γὰρ ἄσαρκοι καὶ ἀσώματοι) spend their days in the theater of the universe (ἐν τῷ τοῦ παντὸς θεάτρῳ διημερεύουσαι θεαμάτων)” (*Gig.* 31.266–267).<sup>95</sup> And for a good number of imperial writers and wonderworkers, that theater’s mezzanine is the moon.

<sup>95</sup> I have taken some liberties with “the Theater of All,” given the full context of this passage—i.e., contrasting those “without” flesh to those burdened by it, forced to stare at the ground instead of at the rotating stars and planets above them.