

Corporeal Gods, with reference to Plato and Aristotle

(1) The aim of this paper is to explore the idea of corporeal gods as it appears in the cosmologies of Plato and Aristotle. We know from experience that in order to explore an idea in any detail we often have to sympathise with it to some extent, or 'enter into it'. Fortunately, this attitude does not require us to endorse the idea *in propria persona*: it is a stance of the imagination. However, even imagination sinks back from the effort of 'getting inside' an idea which it regards as straightforwardly and obviously incoherent. Consequently, whoever undertakes to explore the idea of *corporeal gods* (whether they are Plato's gods or Aristotle's or someone else's) has already silenced any automatic tendency to reject this notion as nonsense or a contradiction in terms. Likewise for any similar tendency to reject the idea of a *god that came into being through a cause other than itself*. We sometimes find these reflexes at work in contemporary debates on theism, where both sides - theists and sceptics - proceed as if it is analytically true that anything correctly called 'god' is incorporeal and the First Cause. But these are not universal reflexes: their source (for our culture) is biblical monotheism.

(2) The well-known contrast between god as 'transcendent' and god as 'immanent' is also not very helpful for our present discussion. In the context of theology, 'transcendent' means transcendent in relation to everything material and physical. Given the contrast with 'immanent', it might then seem that the idea of a corporeal god is the idea of a divinity immanent in physical matter. But an immanent god is not a corporeal god in the sense that concerns us here. A corporeal god is a god which 'has' its body just as each human being 'has' her or his body. The verb 'has' is misleading, of course: in saying that human beings 'have' bodies we only mean to indicate that our bodies are not *all* that we have. In other words, we stop short of saying that the human being *is* his body because this sounds like an identity-statement. For we want also to be able to say that the human being is his mind or his soul, where by 'mind' or 'soul' we indicate something different from what we indicate by 'body'. The situation as it presents itself to common sense is that the human being (a) is not identical either with his mind or with his body, but (b) equally does not *have* a mind or *have* a body in the way in which he has a computer or a house. Rather, the human being is constituted of mind and body. And so it is with a corporeal god: such a god is constituted of body and soul. Hence the god *itself* is visible if its body is visible, just as we see a human person in terms of her corporeal presence. The point is particularly obvious in the case of Plato's cosmic god in the *Timaeus*. The Demiourgos is shown in separate stages making the cosmic body and making the cosmic soul, but only when he joins this soul to this body has the new god - the

cosmic god – come to be.¹ This god is not *immanent* in the cosmic body, for the language of immanence is the language of location: it implies that the immanent god is present in the host-body without being constituted by it. Thus a god immanent in a body is necessarily an incorporeal god,² even if this god necessarily dwells in the body in question and cannot exist in any other way. Consequently, although the immanent god is in some sense present to us through the host-body, the immanent god is not a possible object of our sense-perception. We may think that the natural world exists just as the manifestation of a single immanent god, but in such a picture, it seems to me, the god is still understood as in some sense ‘behind’ the natural world, whereas according to corporealist monotheism the natural world is *itself* divine because it is the body of divinity.

(3) We should place our topic of Plato’s and Aristotle’s corporeal gods in relation to some *pantheist* possibilities. There are many varieties of these. A view like the one ascribed to Thales suggests a pluralistic pantheism: there are many, perhaps indefinitely many, gods, and they are everywhere in the natural world. Then there is monolithic pantheism such as that of Spinoza, whereby the one god is everywhere since the one god and the one nature are identical. A pantheism may be immanentist or corporealist – that is, it may hold that a every part of nature is a host-location to one or more gods, or it may hold that the entire expanse of nature is the body of a single corporeal god, or it may hold that the entire expanse of nature is made up of the bodies of a plurality of corporeal gods.

(4) But now let us notice a major difference between all these pantheisms and the kind of view we get in Plato and Aristotle. In Plato and Aristotle some parts of the natural universe are, very definitely, *not* divine (even though on Plato’s account their kinds originally came into being in accordance with a divine intelligible ordering), while other parts are corporeal gods. These are all equally parts of the natural world: they all have their own physical nature and their own characteristic type of visible motion. Moreover, if we focus for a moment on Plato, not only the body and visible motion but also the soul and psychic activity of the main corporeal god are very clearly parts of nature: they belong in the subject-matter of natural science, being in this respect no different from the physiology and psychology of non-divine animals.

¹ *Timaeus* reference

² If a corporeal god were immanent in a body, the god’s body and the host-body would be in the same place at once.

(5) This in my view is the aspect of Plato's and Aristotle's corporeal gods³ that is most alien from our modern perspective. According to these philosophers, the corporeal gods are only parts of nature, not the whole of it, and therefore the study of them is meant to unfold alongside the study of other, non-divine, parts of the very same world of nature. The study in each case constitutes a branch of natural science. Consideration of the corporeal gods is not left to religion, poetry, or unscientific myth-making, but is part of natural science just as much as the consideration of mortal animals and plants and the basic inanimate elements and chemical compounds are parts of natural science. This is not altered by the fact that, certainly in Plato and perhaps at times in Aristotle, there is a religious tone to their approach to the corporeal divinities. But the discourse in which they make this approach is of the same general kind as the physicist brings to bear on any parts of the natural world, including the messy and perishable parts which very definitely fall short of being divine. Because, for these philosophers, the physical world includes both divine beings and non-divine beings, their views are not pantheistic. The world includes both divine and non-divine beings because otherwise it would be incomplete.⁴ Correspondingly, the study of nature *as* nature is incomplete unless it tries to give accounts of both these principal kinds.⁵ These scientific accounts will sometimes make theoretical comparisons and contrasts between these kinds, just as science may compare and contrast the structures and behaviours of birds and mammals or of copper and tin.⁶ And scientific methodological reflection will sometimes focus on the comparative difficulties and advantages of pursuing these two branches of science.⁷ All this may seem very strange to us, since for us comparisons and contrasts with god are usually either made just in ethical terms, or else they are comparisons between the infinity of god and the finitude of everything else. The ethical type of comparison with god is important too for Plato, and perhaps also for Aristotle,⁸ but its bearing is perhaps more practical than theoretical. As for the finite *versus* the infinite - well, these philosophers' corporeal gods have very few infinite attributes.

(6) To prevent misunderstanding, I must say a few words about Plato's main cosmic god, or *the divine living being* as it is often called. This god is in a sense the whole cosmos - but only in one sense. It is the whole insofar as all corporeal matter and all corporeal creatures are

³ The use of this phrase in connection with Aristotle will be discussed briefly below.

⁴ References, Plato, Aristotle.

⁵ References, Plato, Aristotle.

⁶ References, Plato and Aristotle

⁷ Aristotle, *PA*

⁸ References, Plato and Aristotle

contained spatially within it. It contains other corporeal gods besides itself: notably the sun, moon, planets and stars. These gods have their own bodies and their own motions (rotation on their own axes)⁹ even though they also share in – because they are moved round by – the motions of the great god’s soul. All living beings, i.e. the great cosmic god itself, the astral gods, and the mortal animals along with the plants, are constituted out of the same basic four elements: fire, earth, air, and water. They are also all constituted in accordance with the same eternal and intelligible paradigm.¹⁰ So all these beings have a common origin, and in a sense divinity is everywhere – since everything either *is* the great cosmic god or *has its existence within* the great cosmic god. But this is very far from being a pantheistic system, since it contains living beings that are not divine and whose lives have a measure of independence from the cosmic god. Mortal animals – which for Plato means primarily human animals – depend for their existence on the larger cosmic environment. But their bodies are not just parts of the body of the cosmic god. Their bodies are, of course, mereological parts of the totality of the physical, and (as has already been said) the inorganic materials of their bodies are portions of all the fire, water, earth, and air that exist. But the mortal bodies considered as the bodies of living beings are not parts of the cosmic god’s body when it too is considered as the body of a living being. That is to say: the bodies of mortal animals are not organic parts of the cosmic god’s body in the way in which organs and limbs are parts of an animal’s body. The cosmic god does not need the mortal animals to exist inside it in order for it to function effectively as the kind of living being that it is. A perfect sphere, it has no external limbs or organs of locomotion and perception, nor internal organs of metabolism, for there is nowhere beyond itself to go, nothing beyond itself to perceive, and it has no need of external food which must then be processed within. All that this god has to do is rotate for ever in accordance with the astronomical motions of its soul; and it would seem that its soul-motions are completely expressed in these cosmic rotations. Thus the lives and existences of the mortal creatures add nothing to the life of the cosmic god itself when we consider this, as Plato’s language invites us to do, as the life of a divine animal. However, let us also consider the cosmic god from the point of view of the Demiourgos, whose perspective governs much of the exposition of the Timaeian cosmology. The Demiourgos, we are told, who set about constructing the cosmic god because: ‘being free of jealousy he wanted to make everything as much like himself as possible ... the god [i.e. the Demiourgos] wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad as far as that was possible’ (*Timaeus* 29e -30a). To fulfill this comprehensive aim it was not enough to make a perfect – and hence divine – living being, for

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when this was done the sum total of physical reality was still incomplete until the production of mortal creatures was added as a further task.¹¹

(7) I have just been pointing out (against a possible pantheistic interpretation of Plato's cosmic god) that even though the world considered as the sum total of physical reality would have been incomplete without mortal animals, the cosmic god itself, that greatest immortal and divine animal, is complete as a living system all on its own, independently of the lives of the mortal animals. I shall now point out that, according to Plato's picture, the lives of the mortal animals are not just parts or expressions of the one life of the cosmic god. Just as our organic bodies are not organic parts of *its* body, so the soul in us, which is a complex thing, is very far from being part of the cosmic soul. Plato makes this clear in his detailed account of the coming to be of the soul of the human animal. This process has several stages. First, after having constructed the cosmic god, both body and soul, the Demiourgos, in a new and separate stage of cosmopoiesis, constructs the rational souls of mortals. He makes them of ingredients similar to those that went into the cosmic soul, but these ingredients are very clearly presented as numerically different from anything that was used for the cosmic soul.¹² These rational souls, destined for mortal bodies, are then taken over by the demiurgic ancillary gods who have the task of constructing the mortal beings. (This is because the Demiourgos himself cannot make anything that is not immortal.) The ancillaries make the mortal bodies, and, as part of the same task, they make the lower parts of the mortal animal's soul, the parts that are necessary for creatures that have to live in an environment and which need to feed, reproduce, and operate in society.¹³ By this narrative Plato shows very carefully that the human soul in all its aspects is neither part of the cosmic soul nor is somehow breathed into us by or from the already existing cosmic soul.

(8) I may seem to have strayed from the main topic of *corporeal gods*, but the aim in this part of the paper has been to show (especially in connection with Plato's *Timaeus*, where misunderstanding might arise) that corporeal gods in Plato and Aristotle are not by any means pantheistic, but are proper parts of the natural domain whose other proper parts are corporeal non-gods. One of the implications of this, as has already been emphasized, is that an important part of natural science – serious, epistemically responsible natural science – takes divine beings as its subject-matter. In Plato's case (it is less clear for Aristotle) this means that the right-minded scientist takes a religious as well as an intellectual risk in

¹¹ Reference *Timaeus*

¹² This is the meaning of his turning *again* to the mixing bowl he has used before; 41d4 ff.

¹³ References

building hypotheses about the natural world. For the account of the cosmos is largely, although not wholly, going to be an account of the life, body, soul, and workings, of a god, and when one names and describes a god it is an offence against the divinity to do it so lightly or without much caring whether one speaks the truth – even though in the nature of the case it may be very difficult to know what the truth could be. Thus Plato at the beginning of the *Cratylus*, which concludes Timaeus's cosmology, has Timaeus pray to the cosmic god to preserve whatever he has said correctly in the preceding discourse, and where he has made a mistake to correct him by giving him better understanding.¹⁴ Although it is not clear exactly how the cosmic god itself is to be the source of further illumination, this passage envisages further scientific discovery developing through a kind of partnership with the cosmic god. Perhaps Timaeus is not far away from the Kantian metaphor of interrogating nature, although the method in this case would almost certainly not be experimental. Many scholars have pointed out that Timaeus's account of the coming to be of the cosmos is a theogony that self-consciously and deliberately places itself in the tradition going back to Hesiod. When Plato has Timaeus call the cosmology an *eikōs muthos*¹⁵ he may very well be alluding to that tradition. It should also, however, be emphasised that the Timaeian theogony *also* constitutes a set of serious and intentionally corrigible scientific proposals about the world of nature as it is today.¹⁶ From our modern point of view such a combining of physics and theology is a strange thing, and even more strange (still from our point of view) is the fact that Plato evidently senses no strain or tension in this combination, nor even the appearance of strain or tension. The calmness of his approach in this respect, as if it is a perfectly natural and obviously rational approach, testifies to the naturalness, for Plato and his early readers, of the idea of corporeal gods.

(9) Broadly, the same can also be said about Aristotle, to whom I now turn. However, there are also well-known reasons for caution here. Clearly, if Aristotle admits corporeal gods at all into his system, those gods in their corporeal aspect will be none other than the heavenly bodies: either the visible heavenly bodies or (more likely) the non-visible, but nonetheless physical, spheres in which the visible ones are set. But unlike Plato, who in the *Timaeus* applies the term *theos* freely to the great cosmic animal and to the sun, moon, planets, and

¹⁴ Ref. Note also that the Demiourgos is NOT addressed in prayer (cf. Cornford). Ref. also language at *Tim.*28b.

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¹⁶ On to *eikos* as a standard to be aimed at, see M. Burnyeat [ref. *Rhizai* paper]; S. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, ch. 2.

stars,¹⁷ Aristotle never, I believe, uses it directly of the heavenly bodies or of the celestial system considered as a whole. Instead, he regularly speaks of these bodies as *theia*.¹⁸ This is of course the weaker term, since it can apply to things which are certainly not gods: for instance, Aristotle says that there is something *theion* about the nature of bees.¹⁹ The question then in relation to the celestial bodies is whether in calling them *theia* Aristotle is deliberately *denying* them the full status of gods, or whether his usage has a different explanation.²⁰ I think that there *is* a different explanation, based on the fact that *theios*, being an adjective, admits of a comparative. Aristotle often applies the explicit comparative to the celestial beings, and to the matter of their bodies.²¹ But I think he has reason to be always (i.e. silently as well as sometimes explicitly) thinking of them in a comparative way. This is because of their place in his universe.

(10) In explaining this, the first point to make is that according to the theory of *Metaphysics* Lambda, movement of the celestial spheres is due to their focus on the Prime Mover (an incorporeal being) as object of love. That is to say: there is a being on which they depend for their movement (which is also their life), and this being, as first cause, is more entitled than they to the title *theos*. Even if they *are* gods they are physically subordinate, and this is perhaps more compactly conveyed by calling them 'divine' (*theia*), with its possibility of 'more and less', than by the full statement that although they are gods they are dependent on a causally higher god. It is important to see that this Aristotelian situation is very different from the one in the Timaeian cosmology. There, the great created cosmic god has a sort of physical independence from any superior god. The cosmic god of course owes its genesis to the Demiourgos - including the genesis of the soul by which it now moves. But in the account as Plato actually gives it (which, as we know, Aristotle interpreted literally²²) the Demiourgos plays no part in keeping the cosmos going once it has been constructed. In fact, when his direct part of the construction-work is over, it is said that he 'took up his abode in his customary attitude' (42e5-6), which seems to mean that he withdrew from constructive activity but maintained his characteristic benevolence towards the cosmos. It is true that the cosmic god would cease to exist if it ceased to please its maker;²³ but this is clearly a

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²⁰ Some reference to the discussion by R. Bodéus.

²¹ References

²² Reference. There is no reason, as I have argued elsewhere, to think that Aristotle did this insincerely or out of perverse hostility to Plato.

²³ Reference

counterfactual conditional. The point is that as things actually are *now* in the having-been-constructed universe of the *Timaeus*, the great cosmic god lives and moves entirely from the power of its own soul. Hence once we consider the physical world as fully now in existence, there is no need (and indeed no place) for directly explaining its current operations by reference to the unembodied mind of the maker. It runs as it does not because he *is* making it run (in any sense of 'making'), but because he has made it to be the kind of thing that, once made, runs of itself. That is why having made it he could retire. All this being so, the great cosmic god of the *Timaeus* is actually the *ultimate* god when it comes to directly explaining *why the physical universe runs as it does today*. By contrast, Aristotle's world is everlasting in both temporal directions. Consequently, if there has ever been any need of an incorporeal *archē* of celestial motion, then there always has been, there always will be, and therefore at every moment there *is*, such a need. We cannot, as in the Timaeian account understood literally, relegate the incorporeal *archē* to the position of having only been actively relevant before the cosmos had come to exist in its full splendour of body and soul. Although the Aristotelian Prime Mover is beyond the domain of physics, the domain of physics is currently and immediately dependent on it in a way in which the cosmos of the *Timaeus* is not now currently dependent on its non-physical maker. Thus from the point of view of Aristotelian physical science *today*, even the outermost celestial sphere is not the ultimate divine *archē*.

(11) Here is the second main point in this explanation of Aristotle's comparative notion of the divinity of the spheres. Not only are these spheres on a lower rung of divinity as compared to the Prime Mover: they are also constituted of a simple corporeal material that is *more* divine than the four sublunary simple bodies. It is a material of a fundamentally different and superior type. In Aristotle's system this is deduced from the difference between the circular pattern of natural celestial motion and the natural motions of the sublunary elements which are rectilinear each to its own region. The greater nobility of circular motion, which goes with its unique suitability to be an *everlasting* unbroken motion, implies the greater nobility of the fifth type of body itself. The same conclusion flows from the necessary everlastingness of the motion: the type of body whose motion is necessarily everlasting must be indestructible, unfaltering, ageless etc. And the motion itself must be perfectly effortless.²⁴ In all this too we see is a big divergence from the *Timaeus*. Just as Aristotle departs radically from Timaeian system by making his world everlasting in both directions, so he also radically departs from it by deducing fundamentally different types of simple body from the different types of unconstrained motion. *Timaeus*, on the other hand, despite the incessant circular movements

²⁴ References

that differentiate his cosmic from almost everything else in the Timaeian universe, is free to say - and he does say - that the body of the cosmic god consists of the same elements as any lesser bodies anywhere. So as far as material constitution is concerned we have an egalitarian world. The matter of mortal animals is 'borrowed from' the body of the cosmos, and when they die the debt is repaid.²⁵ By contrast, when Aristotle thinks of the material of the celestial spheres, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he is always also thinking of its *sui generis* superiority to the materials of things down here. He evidently found it satisfying to draw from his general theory of natural motions the implication that the heavenly bodies are possessed of a material constitution that is every bit as perfect as their perfect spherical form. This must have seemed to Aristotle a great advance on the combination, in Plato's cosmic god, of perfect form with gross and common matter.

(12) I have been defending the view that Aristotle's applying the adjective *theia* to his celestial spheres, and withholding the noun *theoi*, springs less from a refusal to count them as gods at all than from a readiness to see their nature in comparative terms. On this basis I hope not to be presuming too much if, for the remaining purposes of this paper, I treat Aristotle's celestial spheres as falling under its title 'corporeal gods'.²⁶ Well, among the questions we might want to raise about these corporeal gods is: given that Plato has so much to say about the great cosmic soul, and given that Aristotle's spheres are clearly living beings,²⁷ why has Aristotle so little to say about the souls of the spheres? Perhaps the answer is simply that, on this matter at least, he has decided to be much more cautious than Plato. Or perhaps it is because the *De Anima* definition of *psuchē* as first actuality²⁸ is too weak to account for their incessantly actual motion. Or perhaps it is because in *De Anima* the *psuchē* is the principle that holds together the basic materials of the body in a form, and in arrangements, not natural to them (a situation that only arises for beings whose bodies are made of the sublunary elements). Whatever the answer is – these explanations are not mutually exclusive, and others could probably be brought in too - explanations – It is my impression (I wonder, do others share it?) - that Aristotle wants to say as little as possible about the psychology of the spheres.

²⁵ References

²⁶ Further discussion of whether this is justified would address the fact that *theologikē* is Aristotle's name for the branch of theoretical philosophy that would concern itself with incorporeal substance if there is such a thing (*Metaphysics* references). Is this because he does not (or in the relevant passages does not) recognize any corporeal being as divine, or is it because *theologikē* would deal *only* with the divine, whereas physics deals partly with perishable substances and partly with divine ones?

²⁷ References

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(13) However, *Metaphysics* Lambda 7 does imply that the beings moved by love of the incorporeal god are thereby engaged in *noēsis* (1072a26 ff.). Its object or focus is, of course, the incorporeal god whose substance is pure activity. What is left completely unexplained is how this *noēsis* - the *noēsis* in which the celestial spheres are engaged - is related to their movement. (In Plato the parallel question about the cosmic god's intellection and motion is less of a mystery. This is because Plato in the *Timaeus* conceives of the movement of the intellect as itself circular even before there is anything corporeal to be visibly moved by it. But the idea of a movement which is both non-corporeal and circular is one that Aristotle rejects outright.²⁹) One wonders whether Aristotle thinks that the rotations of the spheres are simply, as we might say, perfect *expressions* of their contemplation of the beloved. And, if so, must the spheres even be aware of their own movement? Or is awareness of one's movement necessary only for beings who need to take care to guide themselves through contingent features of a sublunary environment?

(14) Leaving aside the question of the spheres' awareness of their own movement, is it possible that Aristotle conceives of these circular movements as somehow *identical with* the intellection ascribed to the spheres? We might try to motivate this idea (simply as an idea, whether or not we think it feasible to attribute to Aristotle) by the thought that a distinction (in physical beings) between intellectual activity and the physical movement expressing it makes sense only where the beings in question cannot fully express their thought by their physical movement. Our practical thoughts necessarily go beyond anything that anyone else can actually see our bodies doing. These practical thoughts are grounded in changing features of the external environment, which features may not be apparent to outsiders. Likewise, our practical intentions usually - perhaps always - extend to outcomes whose physical constituents, even where they already exist (like the friend whom I mean to help or the object I mean to return after borrowing it) may be impossible to identify simply by observing a given stage of my physical action. Perhaps it is only this sort of fact that grounds our distinction between the external action and the interiority of the thought 'behind' it. And perhaps we can understand this basis for that distinction in such a way that where there is absolutely no room for misinterpreting the thought embodied in a visible action it will seem to us that there cannot be even a conceptual, let alone a real, distinction between the thinking and the action.

²⁹ *Timaeus*, *De Anima* references

(15) Let me return to the topic of the specifically corporeal nature of Aristotle's corporeal gods. We have seen a way in which his theory results in their being *more* perfectly divine than Plato's cosmic god: this is because their bodies consist of the ethereal fifth substance as distinct from the common or garden materials of the Platonic god. But there is a big price to pay for this. It means that Aristotle is left with a curiously *geometrical* as distinct from *physical* notion of the space of the universe. At *Physics* IV, 212b16-18 he says that everything is 'in the world (*ouranos*)', and at 209a31-b1 he speaks of 'place which is common and in which all bodies are'. But his focus here is not really on the fact that everything physical at any given time stands in a spatial relation to everything else physical; it is on the fact, as he conceives it, that the place of an object strictly speaking is constituted by the surface of the body that surrounds it. In other words, the place *strictly speaking* is precisely *not* a common space shared by many things at the same time. And possibly Aristotle thinks of such a shared space as a sort of geometrical abstraction from the shapes and sizes and arrangements of concrete things. However that may be, there is a yet stronger notion of the shared space of the world, one that Aristotle's cosmology positively forbids him to entertain. According to this stronger notion, any physical object could in principle be or come to be anywhere in cosmic space, and any physical object could exchange places with any other of the same size. But in Aristotle's world it is absolutely impossible for anything made of sublunary materials to exchange places with any part of any of the celestial bodies. The idea of something from near the centre of the universe, or something from the supralunary periphery, following a complete upward or downward trajectory from its starting point is, for Aristotle, on the far side of absurd. Because different kinds of substances have their different natural 'homes', the possibilities of exchange of place are extremely narrow, looked from a cosmic perspective. The celestial corporeal gods turn out to be just as untouchable by us as any purely spiritual gods could be. And perhaps this is the right result if we are serious about their being *gods*. But from a modern point of view we may find it difficult to be serious about their also being *corporeal*. If something is really a body, how come it's as impossible that I should kick it or fall into it as (according our present views) that I should move faster than light?

(15) Others have – surely at this conference others have had – much more to say on this topic than I can cover. And the same goes for the point on which I shall end, which is that Aristotle (as it seems to me) is much more effective in doing justice to the unity of the time of the cosmos than he is about common space. On the question of time his corporeal gods come to his aid. They must be corporeal since time depends on movement; they must engage in perfectly continuous and uniform movement since the unity of time depends on this; and

they must be made of a perfect, imperishable, divine physical substance in order to ensure that time is *infinite* duration. The all-containing movement of the outermost sphere is what maintains the temporal coherence of everything else through the whole of time. This all-containing movement would of course be impossible without the incorporeal Prime Mover which moves as an object of love. But without the sphere the incorporeal divinity would not be what it is, namely Prime *Mover* and object of cosmic love. Aristotle's functional pairing of these two so-different entities is his version of the idea of a divine power which at every instant keeps the world from falling into non-existence. This power is actually a kind of duumvirate: one partner does all the divine physical work, and the other is what makes it all worthwhile.