

# 'All human beings are pregnant'

## The bisexual imaginary in Plato's *Symposium*

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'All human beings, Socrates, are pregnant both in body and in soul, and when we come to be of the right age, we naturally desire to give birth.'

*Symposium*, 206c1–2

In recent years the question of the status of sex – that is, sex difference – has become one of the most insistent in feminist philosophy. Does 'sex' name a binary difference discoverable in nature, or is this duality carved out from more complex anatomical and other variations? Is it possible to distinguish between the 'physical' (anatomical, physio-chemical and genetic) aspects of 'sex' and its social inscription? Does sexed identity follow on from biological sex? Or does the social expectation of sexual difference and its concomitant normative demands (for reproductive heterosexuality, most significantly) influence and to some extent determine the category of 'biological' sex difference itself? These and other questions about sex and sexed identity have crystallized on the basis of theoretical work in a variety of disciplines and need to be addressed on a multi-disciplinary front, acknowledging the distinctive transdisciplinary character of the concept of sex. What follows is intended as a philosophical contribution to this communal project, via a reading of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth in Plato's *Symposium*.

The context is the broader claim that these metaphors, and other passages, figures or concepts in Plato's dialogues, catch our attention because of the distance between them and modern presumptions concerning the nature and function of 'sex', leading us to question the latter. This illustrates one of the ways in which the history of philosophy furnishes us with texts through which we may think – and rethink – our contemporary concerns. This does not mean that such texts give us answers or provide us in any straightforward way

with ideas that can be transposed into or put to work for contemporary agendas. What it means must be determined in each instance.

In relation to the questions of sex and sexed identity, Plato's *Symposium* catches our attention in a particularly dramatic way. Metaphors of pregnancy and birth are not uncommon in philosophy, or elsewhere. But the centrality of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth in Socrates' speech to Plato's *Symposium*, their extension and the egregious transpositions of sex they involve are an outstanding feature of the dialogue, whatever one's opinion as to their ultimate philosophical consequence for Plato's philosophy, here or elsewhere. Their effects are compounded, and their interpretation made complex, by the fact that they come from the mouth of a woman who identifies herself as a 'spirit-like man' (*daimonios anêr*) (203a4) and who is – here at least – the product of a man's imagination. Another, overlapping set of metaphors – of sexual excitation, erection, frustration and ejaculation – complicates matters further.

The prominence of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth in Plato's *Symposium* has meant that traditions of commentary which were not otherwise inclined to discuss issues of sex and gender have been forced to confront them, in however small a way. These metaphors also became the focus of some feminist work on Plato in the 1980s and 1990s. That feminist work is implicitly critical of the mainstream literature to the extent that that literature reproduces the same problematic assumptions identified in Plato himself by his feminist readers.

In this article, after setting out the detail of Plato's metaphors and their interpretation in the mainstream literature, I argue that the feminist readings, despite their criticisms, share some of the presumptions of

their predecessors: specifically, the presumption of a certain conception of sex that determines and limits the possibilities for interpretation. Instead, without this presumption, I suggest a reading of the metaphors in terms of a ‘sexual imaginary’ that claims our interest beyond the interpretation of Plato’s philosophy to the extent that it speaks to contemporary formulations of the question or problem of the relation between ‘sex’ and sexed identity.

### Eros: reproduction and immortality

The metaphors of pregnancy and birth in the *Symposium* are central to – indeed to a great extent constitutive of – one of the seven speeches on Eros that constitute the manifest content of the dialogue, the speech offered by Socrates. It is therefore necessary to examine this speech in some detail. The context of the speech and the fictional narrative of Plato’s *Symposium* are well known. Apollodorus recounts, second-hand, how a group of friends, including Socrates, meet at Agathon’s house to celebrate the latter’s victory in a theatrical contest. The friends agree to entertain each other by composing speeches in praise of the god of love, Eros.<sup>1</sup> In brief, the young Phaedrus praises Eros, one of the oldest of the gods, for his benign influence on human beings, for inciting them to the acquisition of virtue and the attainment of happiness. Pausanias distinguishes between the Eros who belongs to Common or Vulgar Aphrodite, born of both male and female, with that belonging to the motherless, male-born Heavenly Aphrodite (181c2–6), praising the latter for enabling the education into excellence and wisdom of the young men loved by their noble, older lovers. The doctor Erixymachus proposes an account of Eros as a governing physio-cosmic principle or lord in relation to which the role of practitioners of all kinds (for example physician, agriculturalist, cook, musician) is that of a kind of matchmaker, bringing elements together into harmonious balance. The speech of the comic poet Aristophanes offers an account of the origin of love, with the famous story of the original three kinds of human beings, each split into two by an angry Zeus and thereafter striving to find and unite with their matching half. Agathon himself then composes an encomium to Eros, according to him (contra Phaedrus) the youngest, the happiest, the most beautiful and best of the gods, responsible for all the good things that happen to gods and men.<sup>2</sup> Socrates’ own speech critically transforms various elements from each of the other speeches, but crucially shifts the discourse on Eros decisively away from praise of the god as lovable to eros as the act of loving.<sup>3</sup>

Socrates begins by interrogating Agathon, getting him to agree that love is always love of something, and something which he lacks – in which case Eros is not himself beautiful and good but love of the beautiful and the good, things which Eros himself does not possess but, precisely, desires. Socrates then changes tack, introducing the account of Eros given to him, many years before, by ‘a woman of Mantinea’, Diotima, describing how she first revealed Socrates’ ignorance on the matter of love (just as Socrates had just revealed Agathon’s) and repeating, so the fiction has it, her mystical, metaphysical teaching. Diotima’s interrogation of Socrates retraces the moves in Socrates’ earlier questioning of Agathon, pushing him towards the central question of what love is and what it does, arriving at the claim that love is love of permanent possession of the good (206a11) and the final question about its operation: What is it to love? What is love’s work? (206b1–3) ‘I’ll tell you’, says Diotima: ‘It’s giving birth in the beautiful, in relation both to body and to soul.’ (*tokos en kalô kai kata to sôma kai kata tèn psuchên*. 206b7–8)

Diotima explains this as follows:

‘All human beings [*pantes anthrôpoi*], Socrates, are pregnant [*kuousin*] both in body and in soul, and when we come to be of the right age, we naturally desire to give birth [*tiktein*]. We cannot do it in what is ugly but we can in what is beautiful. The intercourse of man and woman is a kind of giving birth [*andros kai gunaikos sunousia tokos estin*]. This matter of giving birth is something divine: living creatures, despite their mortality, contain this immortal aspect of pregnancy and procreation [*ê kuêsis kai ê gennêsis*]. It is impossible for this to be completed [*genesthai*] in what is unfitting; and what is unfitting for everything divine is what is ugly, while the beautiful is fitting. Thus beauty is both Fate and Eileithyia for coming-into-being [*tê genesei*]. For these reasons, if ever what is pregnant [*to kuoun*] approaches something beautiful, it becomes gracious, melts with joy, and gives birth and procreates [*tikteî te kai genna*]; but when it approaches what is ugly, it contracts, frowning with pain, turns away, curls up, and fails to procreate [*ou genna*], retaining what it has conceived [*to kuêma*], and suffering because of it. This is why what is pregnant [*tô kuounti*] and already full to bursting [*spargônti*] feels the great excitement it does in proximity to the beautiful, because of the fact that the beautiful person frees it from great pain [*ôdinos*]. For Socrates’, she said, ‘love is not, as you think, of the beautiful.’

‘Well, then, what is it of?’

‘Of procreation and giving birth [*tês gennêseôs kai tou tokou*] in the beautiful.’

‘All right’, I replied.

‘I can assure you it is,’ she said, ‘Why, then, is it of procreation [*tês gennêseôs*]? Because procreation [*ê gennêsis*] is something everlasting and immortal, as far as anything can be for what is mortal; and it is immortality, together with the good, that must necessarily be desired, according to what has been agreed before – if indeed love is of permanent possession of the good. Well, from this argument it necessarily follows that love is of immortality as well.’ (206c1–207a4)

Desire for immortality is at the bottom of love: ‘mortal nature seeks so far as it can [*kata to dunaton*] to exist for ever and to be immortal. And it can achieve it [*dunatai*] only in this way, through the process of coming-into-being [*tê genesei*]<sup>4</sup> (207d1–3). Through reproduction mortal nature – both animal and human – leaves behind something new in the place of the old, a process which Diotima identifies at work in the constant physical renewal of bodies and also, perhaps surprisingly, in the renewal of the soul: ‘its traits, habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, fears – none of these things is ever the same in any individual, but some are coming into existence, others passing away’ (207e4–6). This is thus not the transformation of the mortal into the immortal, but the perpetual becoming-immortal of the mortal, which is not the being-immortal of the immortal.

‘In this way everything mortal is preserved, not by always being absolutely the same, as the divine is, but by virtue of the fact that what is departing and decaying with age leaves behind in us something else new, of the same sort that it was. It is by this means, Socrates’, she said, ‘that the mortal partakes of immortality, both body and everything else; and what is immortal partakes of it in a different way.’ (208a7–b4)

This stretches the metaphor of ‘procreation’ (*tê genesei*) a long way, although this is the micro-detail of Diotima’s explanation for animals’ fervent desire to procreate and to nurture their offspring. The love and pursuit of immortality is the rational explanation for what would otherwise appear to be irrational behaviour, in both animals and humans. For the love of immortality, the weakest animals ‘are prepared to join battle with the strongest on their offspring’s behalf and even die for them, torturing themselves with hunger so as to rear them’ (207b4–6). Similarly, the seemingly irrational desire for honour, for the sake of which human beings are ‘ready to run all risks, even more than they are for their children’ (208c6–d1), is the rational attempt to acquire a name for one’s self, “‘laying up immortal glory for all time to come”” (208 c5–6).

This moves the discussion into an explanation of what Diotima means when she says that all people are pregnant in both body and soul. Those men

‘who are pregnant [*oi egkumones*] in their bodies turn their attention more towards women, and their love is directed in this way, securing immortality, a memory of themselves, and happiness, as they think, for themselves for all time to come through having children [*paidogonias*];<sup>5</sup> whereas those who are pregnant in their souls – for in fact’, she said, ‘there are those who are pregnant in their souls still more than in their bodies, with things that it is fitting for the soul to conceive [*kuêsai*] and to bring to birth [*tekein*]. What then are these things that are fitting? Wisdom and the rest of virtue; of which all the poets are, of course, procreators [*gennêtores*], along with all those craftsmen who are said to be inventive. But by far the greatest and most beautiful kind of wisdom is the setting in order of the affairs of cities and households, which is called “moderation” and “justice”. When someone is pregnant [*egkumôn*] with these things in his soul, from youth on, by divine gift, and with the coming of the right age, desires to give birth and procreate, then I imagine he too goes round looking for the beautiful object in which he might procreate ... For I imagine it’s by contact with what is beautiful, and associating with it, that he brings to birth and procreates the things with which he was for so long pregnant [*ekuei tiktei kai genna*].’ (208e1–209c3)

These spiritual offspring are ‘of a more beautiful and immortal kind’, which everyone would prefer, according to Diotima, to human children (209c6–d2). They are the sort of children procreated by Homer and Hesiod, and by the lawgivers Lycurgus in Sparta and Solon in Athens (209d2, d6–7). The passion of the poets for poetry and of the lawgivers for the law is erotics – that is, the procreation and giving birth in the beautiful for the sake of immortality. They are immortalized through these offspring in a way that no one is through their human children (209e3–4). However, love’s work ascends beyond even this. In relation to a hierarchy of beautiful things, the spiritually pregnant give birth through, and to, philosophy. The love for a single beautiful body enables the procreation of beautiful words [*logous kalous*]. Love of beautiful bodies in general and then beauty of souls enables the birthing of ‘the sorts of words ... that will make young men into better men’ (210c2–3). Love of ‘beauty as it exists in kinds of activity and in laws’, then of ‘the beauty that belongs to kinds of knowledge’ and ‘the great sea of beauty’ thus disclosed enables the lover to ‘bring to birth many beautiful, even magnificent, words and thoughts in a love of wisdom [*philosophia*]’ (210c4–d6). Finally, with the love of beauty in itself,

‘pure, clean, unmixed, and not contaminated with things like human flesh, and colour, and much other mortal nonsense’ (211e1–4) the lover succeeds ‘in bringing to birth, not phantoms of virtue, because he is not grasping a phantom, but true virtue, because he is grasping the truth; and ... when he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue, it belongs to him to be loved by the gods, and to him, if to any human being, to be immortal’ (212a3–7).

### Male pregnancy and the sexual division of images

In the mid- to late twentieth-century anglophone literature on the *Symposium* the meaning and function of the metaphor of ‘spiritual pregnancy’, as it is often called, have become a discrete topic. Two main issues are of most concern: the basic structure of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth, including the distribution of roles, literal and metaphorical, between male and female; and the contribution of these metaphors to the metaphysical argument of Diotima’s speech. Attempts to sort out the basic structure of the metaphors and explain how they work are often motivated by a perceived need to account for the oddity of the idea of male pregnancy, an oddity both for Plato’s contemporaries and his modern readers. And it is specifically pregnancy, and not conception or birth, which is at issue here, for linguistic reasons. The verb translated, mostly, as ‘to give birth’ is *tiktein*, which also means ‘to beget’. In Liddell and Scott’s Greek–English lexicon the first definition is ‘bring into the world, engender; of the father, beget, of the mother, bring forth’. Thus in the first introduction of the theme in the *Symposium* – the definition of love as ‘giving birth [*tokos*] in the beautiful, in relation both to body and to soul’ (206b7–8) – it is not clear that there is any metaphor of birth, since there is no transfer of vocabulary associated exclusively with the female to the male. It could equally be translated as ‘begetting’ or ‘procreating’ in the beautiful.<sup>6</sup> In the next lines, however, the elaboration of this gnomic pronouncement claims that ‘All human beings [*pantes anthrōpoi*] ... are pregnant [*kuousin*] both in body and in soul, and when we come to be of the right age, we naturally desire to give birth [*tiktein*]’ (206 c1–2). The verb *kuoin*, ‘bear in the womb, be pregnant with’ is a verb usually only used of the female,<sup>7</sup> and hence seems to be used metaphorically here. In its proximity to *kuoin*, a metaphorical use of *tiktein* is also suggested, prompting – although not necessitating – its translation as ‘giving birth’.

In itself, a metaphor of male pregnancy, qua metaphor, need not necessarily be odd. However, in the

*Symposium* the repeated use of the verb *kuoin* with *tiktein*, the increasingly explicit shift from ‘all human beings’ to ‘men’ and the insistence on the extension of the metaphor, carrying it through to its end, produce an alienating effect, where one might have expected, instead, the attempt to produce a certain comfort with it. Indeed, its dogged pursuit throughout Diotima’s speech has a strangely literalizing effect, to the extent that it becomes less and less discreet. Its repetition, the casual use of the verb in various ways, its insertion into the discourse as if it were something unremarkable, means that stylistically, it is used as if it were meant literally. The manner of its use is the manner of the literal use of a word.

In 1964 J.S. Morrison offered an explanation for Plato’s use of *kuoin* in relation to the male: ‘his rather peculiar notion of what happens in human generation’.<sup>8</sup> In the *Timaeus* Plato seems to suggest that the generative ‘seed’ that originates in the brain or ‘marrow’ of the male produces a ‘desire for emission ... and so produce[s] the love of procreation’ (91b4–5). This desire for emission, felt at the ‘place of venting’, has its counterpart in the female, in the womb’s desire to bear children (*paidopoiias*). When they are brought together ‘like plucking the fruit from a tree, they sow the seed into the ploughed field of her womb, living things too small to be visible and still without form. And when they have again given them distinct form, they nourish these living things so that they can mature inside the womb. Afterward, they bring them to birth, introducing them into the light of day’ (91c9–d5).<sup>9</sup> Morrison interprets this to mean that the male and female sexual organs ‘have a similar function as receptacle and in due course outlet for this seed’, such that it makes sense to describe ejaculation, as well as actual parturition, as ‘birth’. Indeed, both ‘are births, and both are accompanied (though in varying degree) by pangs. *kuoin* in male and female is strictly parallel, it is the condition of readiness to bear a child; *kuēsai* is the act of producing whether in male or female.’<sup>10</sup>

This leaves us, Morrison admits, with a problem of translation. Although it is ‘strictly correct’ to translate *kuoin* as ‘to be pregnant’ this is bound to seem ridiculous and confusing, he says, unless we bear the proposed biological rationale in mind.<sup>11</sup> Dover reaches the same conclusion, suggesting ‘fertile’ as a ‘less paradoxical translation’, so ‘all human beings are fertile both in body and soul’.<sup>12</sup> For Morrison and Dover, then, *there is no metaphor* of pregnancy in the *Symposium*, in the sense that a word referring to the female is applied to the male, only a metaphorical extension of a physical process in the male to a spiritual process, also

in the male, based on a highly unusual – indeed unique – use of the verb *kuein*. In fact, Morrison’s article implies that any metaphorical transference from female to male would be so grotesque as to need explaining away, as he does with his biological explanation.

Although E.E. Pender broadly agrees with Morrison’s biological explanation for what she calls the ‘male type’ pregnancy (which ‘is simply a metaphor for ejaculation’), she argues that spiritual birth also requires a ‘female type’ pregnancy for the male.<sup>13</sup> If male type pregnancy is the ejaculation of spiritual seed, the female type is the giving birth to the child – the ‘many beautiful, even magnificent words and thoughts’ (210d4–5) – which the lovers will join together in nurturing, ‘with the result that such people enjoy a much greater partnership with each other than the one people have in their children and a firmer affection between them, insofar as their sharing is in children of a more beautiful and immortal kind’ (209c6–7). Granted, Pender says, that this female type pregnancy is obscured – that ‘the whole of the “female” experience of pregnancy and giving birth to a child has been suppressed’, that ‘all reference to the female role is avoided’<sup>14</sup> – it is a necessary part of the logical progression of the metaphor. For Pender, then, despite the extended metaphor of pregnancy, metaphorical female pregnancy is absent from the *Symposium*, although it must be assumed. This is a position that rests, like Morrison’s and Dover’s, on the literal interpretation of *kuein* in relation to the male. For all three commentators, the imagery of pregnancy in the *Symposium* is not, therefore, primarily – for Morrison and Dover, not at all – ‘female’.

If, contra Morrison, other commentators have insisted, in a numbers of ways, on the ‘femaleness’ of the images of pregnancy and birth, this has tended to be in the interest of an explanation of the function of the metaphor, or a broader interpretation of its meaning, rather than an analysis of its precise form. For Paul Plass, for example, arguing on the basis of the usual use of *kuein* and the fact that Plato does not use the verb in the *Timaeus* passage cited by Morrison, ‘pregnancy’ is a ‘genuine transferred epithet’ in the *Symposium*, and is to be understood both as a result of the structure of pederasty (where the younger man plays the ‘feminine’ role) and as a strategy to naturalize pederasty through the transferral on to it of the vocabulary of procreative heterosexuality. Speculating – wildly, it must be said, and on the basis of an implicit endorsement of some dubious and apparently homophobic anthropology from the 1940s and 1950s – on the existence of an ancient Greek

homosexual argot, Plass in fact takes the metaphors for granted. How else, he suggests, would homosexuals represent themselves, except in heterosexual terms? Thus although Plass refers to the ‘confusion’ and the ‘pervasive blurring’ of sexual roles in pederasty, his understanding of the metaphors is based on a clear distinction between what can be said to be feminine and what masculine, according to which homosexual ‘blurring’ is really the consequence of its being a poor copy of heterosexuality.<sup>15</sup>

In a very different vein, a number of Plato’s other readers have insisted on the femaleness of the images of pregnancy and birth from a critical, feminist perspective. On this view, the claim for the male form of pregnancy in Morrison et al., reiterates, rather than explains or interprets, the fundamental discursive gesture or ideological process in the use of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth in the *Symposium*. The strongest statement of this position is Adriana Cavarero’s. According to Cavarero, Western metaphysics – and in particular, here, Platonic metaphysics – is founded on a disavowal of the mother, to the extent that the enduring existential-ontological obsession with which it deals concerns ‘the fact that we must leave life through death, rather than the fact that we enter it through birth’<sup>16</sup> – hence the centrality, for Plato, of the desire for immortality. Western philosophy and the patriarchal social and symbolic order that depends on it exclude women, or the ‘female’ element, ‘female experience’,<sup>17</sup> through the disavowal of the fundamental fact of birth – natality – or, more specifically, the fundamental fact that we are of woman born. This is because of both the unendurable (for the male) fact of the dependency of the male on the female and the ‘blame’ attached to birth – the index of sexual reproduction – for mortality.<sup>18</sup> The ‘matricide’ at the inauguration of Western philosophy is incessantly re-enacted in its history, according to Cavarero, in implicit and explicit fantasies of male self-birth. Socrates’ speech in the *Symposium* is a particularly egregious example of this. Far from valorizing ‘the female’ or proposing it as a model, as some feminist commentators have claimed,<sup>19</sup> the metaphors of pregnancy and birth in the *Symposium*, according to Cavarero, perform a symbolic matricide all the more daring and pernicious in its appropriation of female vocabulary.<sup>20</sup> The matricide is reinforced through the mimetic strategy of the character of Diotima such that, in Cavarero’s view, the female is made to denounce itself:

It is difficult to say that this discourse involves the simple deployment of a metaphor, because the metaphor ends up disempowering and negating the

female experience – of motherhood as power – of which it is itself a metaphor ... The result is an act of expropriation carried out through a woman's voice, namely the voice of someone against whom the expropriation is committed.<sup>21</sup>

We can thus see why, unlike Morrison et al., Cavarero takes it for granted that the themes of pregnancy and birth refer ultimately to the properly female, but this taking-for-granted precludes any further analysis of the metaphors.



In an essay that discusses all of these claims and positions, Angela Hobbs takes on Cavarero, in particular, in proposing an alternative interpretation of the pregnancy image. Hobbs argues, contra Morrison et al., that the use of '*kuousin*' at 206c1 – 'all human beings, Socrates, are pregnant [*kuousin*] both in body and in soul' – means that we are dealing with an image of a specifically female bodily function. The *Timaeus* passage on which Morrison bases his own position only shows, according to Hobbs, that male arousal and orgasm can be thought of as analogous to pregnancy and birth. Given this, is the femaleness of the image

a contingent or integral part of Plato's overall philosophical position and purpose in this dialogue?<sup>22</sup>

Hobbs's answer is that the use of the female imagery is both consistent with Plato's metaphysics and useful to his pedagogic purpose in the *Symposium*. The images, according to Hobbs, reveal something to us about Plato's 'attitude to gender', an attitude based on the metaphysical principle of the reality of the incorporeal, intelligible realm which is 'the ultimate context in which Plato's use of female imagery should be viewed'.<sup>23</sup> That is, gender or sex (Hobbs does not distinguish between the two) is irrelevant in the transcendent realm of the Forms to which we should aspire, but the use of these images has the virtue of suggesting 'to the more reflective and informed reader that it really is ultimately of little consequence whether the philosopher is male or female. Nor is it ultimately of much consequence whether a male or female philosopher is described in terms traditionally associated with the opposite gender.' At the same time, the use of the images acknowledges the importance of gender in the corporeal world of becoming such that they are 'an apt resource for rhetorical and pedagogic purposes'.<sup>24</sup> In response to Cavarero's claims Hobbs then concludes:

The enjoyment of playing with, transgressing and utilizing concepts of gender is possible precisely because, finally, they are of no lasting importance. The *Symposium* is not so much a rejection of the female as gaily cavalier in its attitude towards the embodied. I

submit, therefore, that Plato is chiefly concerned not with 'appropriating the feminine' but with liberating men and women alike from inessential bodily and cultural constraints.<sup>25</sup>

Although Hobbs succeeds in proposing an interpretation of the female imagery that renders its use consistent with Plato's broader philosophical commitments and educative goals, she misses the point of the feminist criticisms completely. For, granted that 'the incorporeal, eternal realm of being manifest in the Forms' is the metaphysical context for the *Symposium*,<sup>26</sup> it does not follow that it should be the

ultimate context of interpretation for those who do not subscribe to this metaphysics. Indeed, the feminist criticisms are partly *criticisms of* this metaphysics, and of the view, precisely, that gender is irrelevant. For mortal readers such as Cavarero the reality of the corporeal world of becoming – the only world there is – is the ultimate context of interpretation, and in this world, as Hobbs herself writes, the significance of gender cannot be denied. Hobbs interprets the *Symposium* in terms of what we might be able to say about Plato's conscious intentions and consequently thinks that Cavarero is concerned with the question of 'whether Plato is morally justified in describing male practices and institutions through the use of a female bodily function'.<sup>27</sup> For Cavarero, however, it is not a question of Plato's intentions. At issue is what the text 'performs', what it reveals about itself despite itself and about the socio-cultural and ideological function of philosophy and its meaning for the contemporary reader. Hobbs has nothing to say about any of this and thus does not, in fact, respond to Plato's feminist critics, as she claims.

### The carnival of 'sex'

Despite differences and disagreements, there is a common presupposition across this range of interpretation: a distinction between what is proper to the male or masculine and what is proper to the female or the feminine. In each of these interpretations, sex difference is the transcendental or a priori ground for the explanation, defence or criticism of Plato or his other interpreters. Further, the common presumption of sex difference grounds the general form and aim of interpretations of Socrates' speech through an implicit articulation of its necessity, in two respects: (i) it is the non-metaphorical origin of the metaphorical terms; understood (ii) as a biological necessity which is not itself amenable to interpretation or open to question. The aim of interpretation is then to convert the meaning of the metaphor into a literal register, reassigning the elements to their proper place or apportioning what belongs to the female and what to the male. From this perspective the structural and other shortcomings of the metaphors are soon revealed. Extended metaphors always run the risk of becoming artificially stretched beyond their point of best functioning, and, as traditionally interpreted, this happens very quickly in Diotima's speech. In pursuing the metaphors their elements become more and more contrived and the structural equivalences – such as they are – quickly break down.

However, the presumption of sex difference as literal ground means that these interpretations do not

do justice to the literary and conceptual specificity and complexity of the metaphors. This specificity lies, precisely, in their *disregard* for any logical correlation with the sequence of physiological processes in human reproduction and their *disregard* for propriety of reference in relation to the male and the female. This disregard is not their failing; it is their content and quite possibly their purpose.<sup>28</sup> To the extent that this is acknowledged by, for example, Hobbs, Plass and Cavarero, it is explained by its pedagogic or apologetic function in the dialogue. For Hobbs it is indicative of Plato's disdain for the reality of *all* things corporeal, his 'playfulness' with gender a consequence of a metaphysics that locates reality elsewhere than the corporeal world and according to which gender is of no significance. For Plass its function is the naturalization of pederasty. But these acknowledgements of the 'confusion of sexual roles'<sup>29</sup> are based on a presumption of the clarity of the distinctions between male and female, masculine and feminine, as the literal basis for the images. The ground of sex difference is presumed as the raw material for the images, in such a way that the images could have nothing to say *about* sex difference (or nothing that would concern us, anyway, for, as Hobbs says, they say nothing about mortal humanity beyond conceding the sociological importance of sex difference in the unreal world of becoming).

But what if the constitutive confusions are interpreted as being *about* sex difference, rather than grounded on the presumption of it? What, in the text itself, suggests that such an interpretation is warranted?

A fresh look at the images of pregnancy and birth suggests that their distinctiveness is precisely in their problematization of the presumption of sex difference as transcendental or a priori ground, in the sense that they open up this ground itself for investigation. This means that the various metaphors should not be treated as an illustrative or explanatory conduit to the 'real' philosophical content of the dialogue (to the recognizably Platonic metaphysics of the being/appearance distinction, for example, or the extracted theory of Forms), but as themselves having philosophical content.

Returning to an analysis of the metaphors of pregnancy and birth, we can identify certain aspects of their forms and presentation as the basis for such an interpretation. First, pregnancy is posited as a universal state for all human beings, male *and* female. One begins by being pregnant, and the work of love is to bring the pregnancy to fruition, to bring to birth. The process of conception, of impregnating or becoming



pregnant, is not part of the metaphorical constellation in the *Symposium*, except in so far as the Greek verb – *kuëin* – implies, simultaneously, to have conceived (*to kuëma* is ‘that which has been conceived’, an embryo or foetus; *ê kuësis* is conception).<sup>30</sup>

Second, there are two kinds of pregnancy – physical (of the body) and spiritual (of the soul). The first introduction of the metaphor – ‘All human beings, Socrates, are pregnant both in body and in soul’ (*kuousin ... ô Sôkrates, pantes anthrôpoi kai kata to soma kai kata tên psuchên*) – suggests that, universally, all are pregnant in both respects. Later, however, in the explanation of this claim, Diotima separates those who are pregnant in their body (*oi ... egkumones ... kata to sômata ontes*) from those who are pregnant in their soul (*oi de kata tên psuchên*), or at least those who are *more* pregnant in their soul than in their body (*oi en tais psuchais kuousin eti mallov ê en tois sômasin*). This complicates the metaphor. It means not that there is a metaphorical, spiritual kind of pregnancy, derived from the literal model of physical pregnancy, but that the physical pregnancy at issue here is also metaphorical. As ‘those who are pregnant in their bodies’ turn out to be men, directing their attention towards women to procreate human children, it seems that actual physical pregnancy is the model for a metaphorical *physical and spiritual* pregnancy for the male. But the furthest extension of the metaphor of procreation, including the renewal of each physical organism, its soul and its knowledge (207d–208b), as well as the first mention of the metaphor, suggests that there is a metaphorical physical pregnancy for women too. Diotima’s pedagogic role in relation to Socrates means that there is at least one example of a woman’s spiritual procreation; Alcestis is another (208d3).

Third, of the two kinds of pregnancy, the spiritual is, unsurprisingly, the higher form. Although the extension of the metaphor of procreation implies that even animals partake of immortality through their offspring, from 208c an at first subtle shift decisively downgrades physical procreation, even suggesting that the immortality it achieves is dubious (those who are pregnant in body procreate physically to secure ‘immortality, a memory of themselves, and happiness, *as they think*’ [*ôs oiontai*]).<sup>31</sup> Although animals are said to be prepared to die for the sake of their children, to secure their immortality that way, in the human example the mythical king Codrus of Athens dies for the sake of his children only because he thereby secures a *spiritual* procreation, the immortal memory of his own courage, immortal virtue and

glorious reputation (208d4–e2). Everyone, according to Diotima, would thus prefer spiritual to human children, for no person ever achieved cultic status through the latter (209d1–2, e3–4). In the final revelation Diotima claims that it is only in the contemplation of beauty in itself, in the Form of beauty, and the procreation of true virtue through philosophical discourse, that one may become beloved of the gods and immortal, to the extent that any mortal can. This being so, the climax of Socrates’ speech achieves a kind of reversal in the form of the metaphor such that it moves from the spiritual to the physical, which is of course consistent with Plato’s metaphysics. (Indeed, the metaphysics requires this reversal.) If what is real and true is the virtue brought to birth in beauty in itself, this – the apex of spiritual procreation – is the model for the achievement of immortality which physical procreation resembles only metaphorically. This perhaps explains Diotima’s otherwise odd claim that ‘[t]he intercourse of man and woman is in fact a kind of giving birth’ (*ê gar andros kai gunaikos sunousia tokos estin*) (206c5–6).

Finally, we should note that Diotima’s speech actually presents the extended discussion of pregnancy and birth as if it were a literal – or at least more literal – explanation of the definition of Eros as ‘giving birth in the beautiful, in relation to both body and soul’. As Socrates cannot understand what this means, Diotima offers to tell him *saphesteron* – more clearly, more plainly: ‘All human beings, Socrates, are pregnant both in body and in soul.’ For Morrison and others, as we have seen, this, and the idea that ejaculation is a giving birth, *are* to be interpreted quite literally. But unless this also means that the seed or seeds in human ejaculate and the beautiful words and thoughts brought to birth by the advanced loving couple are similarly, quite literally, ‘children’, even Morrison et al. would have to concede that there is at least an entwining of the literal with the metaphorical in Diotima’s speech.

Taken together, these four points mean that the metaphors do not work by simply moving from an uncontentious literal ground to a metaphorical image, from the female (literal pregnancy) to the male (metaphorical pregnancy), or from the physical to the spiritual, but by shifting around between and within the distinctions literal/metaphorical, male/female, physical/spiritual in different ways, simultaneously. Furthermore, the imagery of ‘male’ excitation and ejaculation is not a separate or even merely overlapping element in Diotima’s speech; it is fully integrated into the explanation of the claim that all human beings are pregnant



in body and soul, which is itself the beginning of the explanation for the definition of love as ‘giving birth in the beautiful’. No doubt this purposeful confusion is partly explained by the fact that, at the simplest level, it is love between men, the education of boys into men and the spiritual life of men more generally that seem to concern Plato, given the identification of erotic maturity with ‘the correct kind of boy-loving [*orthôs paiderastein*]’ (211b6).

The text does not allow for the separation of one set of metaphors from the other, such that the imagery of ‘male’ sexual excitation and ejaculation could be interpreted as an accommodation to sexual normality, making the imagery of male pregnancy more palatable. The claim that the pregnant ‘desire’ to give birth and procreate already suggests the mutual implication of the two sets of metaphors. With this desire the pregnant man ‘goes round looking for the beautiful object in which he might procreate’, a formulation that highlights that pregnancy *precedes* the sexual encounter. On approaching the beautiful he melts with joy, is full to bursting (*spargônti*, both to be ripe – ready for birth – and swollen with passion) and is freed from the great pain (*ôdinos*, specifically labour or birthing pain). Ugliness, on the other hand, makes him contract, curl up, painfully retaining what he would like to release. As Dover points out, ‘the vivid physical terms in which reaction to beauty and ugliness is expressed

... describe equally the reactions of the male and of the female genitals to sexual stimulation or revulsion.’ Indeed, Dover writes, ‘melting’ and ‘relaxing’ is ‘more appropriate to the female’, but with this he misses his own point. Plato’s carnival of images pays little heed to received wisdom concerning the sequence of events in human sexual behaviour and human procreation. If pregnancy precedes intercourse then detumescence (‘melting’, ‘relaxing’) may as well precede ejaculation. Further, it is only our lack of intimacy with, and lack of tolerance for, the discourses of the experience of pregnancy and birth that motivate the presumption that their association with ‘desire’ and ‘orgasm’ in Diotima’s speech must be metaphorical references to the male – as if pregnancy could not actually be a swelling with desire, and as if birth could not actually be orgasmic. In fact, this presumption is made against the explicit result of the entwining of the two sets of metaphors: an eroticization of pregnancy and birth, however they are understood.

### The bisexual imaginary

Concentrating interpretative effort on these complexities as constitutive of the philosophical content of the metaphors, rather than trying to separate them out into their simpler (notably, male and female) parts, leads to a reading of these famous passages from the *Symposium* as the articulation of what might be called a ‘sexual



imaginary' of considerable interest. I take my concept of the imaginary here from Luce Irigaray's descriptive and speculative metaphysics, rather than Michèle Le Dœuff's more specific concept of the 'philosophical imaginary'.<sup>32</sup> Irigaray's concept of the imaginary is the critical transformation and philosophical deployment of Lacan's specifically psychoanalytical term. In his earlier work, Lacan developed an account of the imaginary identifications that constitute the form of the ego. In the best known of Lacan's essays from this period,<sup>33</sup> he discusses the 'mirror stage' – the early months in the life of the human infant in which he or she first demonstrates the capacity to recognize his or her own image and explore, in play, the relation between the image and the infant's own body, or between the infant's body and its environment. Sunk in its 'motor incapacity and nursing dependence' the infant, according to Lacan, jubilantly assumes an image of its own unity and coherence, an anticipation of 'the maturation of his power'. However, the recognition at the base of this assumption is a *misrecognition*, both because it is precisely in something other than itself (the image) that it recognizes itself, and because the image possesses a unity which the infant does not yet have (the recognition is an anticipation of the experience of unity, but not yet that experience). The important point, according to Lacan, is that

this form [of misrecognition] situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination [as subject], in a fictional direction ... The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of a spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.<sup>34</sup>

Lacan's account of the imaginary structure of the ego condenses various aspects of Freud's account of the genesis and development of the ego, in particular the description of the origin of the ego as a reaction of the organism, through the perceptual and motor systems, to the external environment ('The ego is first and foremost a body ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface'),<sup>35</sup> and the role of identification and incorporation in the ongoing development of the content, as it were, of the ego. With the shift to the emphasis on the constitution of the subject in the symbolic order in Lacan's later work the imaginary is reworked or reinterpreted in relation to the priority of the latter – indeed imaginary

identification is seen as, in part, an attempt to compensate for the constitutive splitting of the subject, an imaginary relation to the real of the body that exceeds the symbolic order.

According to Lacan, 'psychoanalysis involves the real of the body and the imaginary of its mental schema.'<sup>36</sup> In Irigaray's use of the concept of the imaginary the relation between these two is redescribed in terms of imaginary morphology, or more particularly 'ideal morphology':<sup>37</sup> the quasi-phallic 'mental schema' of the body. This imaginary differs from Lacan's in at least three important respects. First, it is generalized at the cultural-historical level, such that it is able to be characterized as either masculine or feminine, meaning that the imaginary is always a 'sexual imaginary'. Second, following on from this, the sexual imaginary determines the form of the symbolic with regard to sexual difference, or is the basis of the symbolization of sexual difference. Taken together, this means, third, that the sexual positioning of the subject in the symbolic is tied up with the sexual imaginary in a more general way than it is for Lacan, for whom the specific role of the imaginary phallus is determining (for Irigaray this emphasis is evidence of the masculine imaginary already at work). Her description of the order of Western metaphysics contends that the imaginary morphology of the male body is a reductive, perhaps metonymic, phallic schema. This imaginary morphology is equated with the metaphysical principle of identity, of the One, of the static or stable – the metaphysical principle which, as foundational for the symbolic order, relegates the female to the not-one, the invisible, the non-individuated, castrated, and so on. The speculative element of Irigaray's metaphysics concerns the possibility of a 'female imaginary', an ideal morphology of the female:

Perhaps it is time to return to this repressed 'female imaginary'? So woman does not have a sex organ? She has at least two of them, but they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed, she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is *plural*. Is this the way culture is seeking to characterize itself now? Is this the way texts write themselves/are written now?<sup>38</sup>

For Irigaray the 'sexual imaginary' is always either male or female, because, terminological emphasis on morphology, rather than anatomy, notwithstanding, the sexed duality of human being is the fundamental postulate of her philosophy. In her reading of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, a 'philosophy in the feminine' (to use Margaret Whitford's phrase) emerges with the figure of the intermediary. In the first part of

Diotima's speech at least, according to Irigaray, the intermediary is the third term that permits a relation between opposites in which neither is dominant and in which the terms are not sublated, particularly the relation of 'the immortal in the living mortal'.<sup>39</sup> For Irigaray, however, there is no third term between 'male and 'female', here in the *Symposium* or anywhere else.

However, if we apply the basic structure of Irigaray's concept of the sexual imaginary to Plato's text, *without* her presupposition of a necessary duality of sex, Socrates' speech in the *Symposium* suggests the possibility of a sexual imaginary that is *neither* male *nor* female, indeed one that is primarily characterized by its refusal of this distinction. This is a *bisexual* imaginary, in the sense that it is both male and female, the exhibition of an ideal morphology constructed from elements of anatomy regardless of sex. A sexual imaginary in the sense proposed here must be a phenomenon at once cultural-historical and individual. We are thus not faced with the necessity of determining whether Plato's (or Socrates' or Diotima's) sexual imaginary is the, or an, ancient Greek sexual imaginary or an individual affair. Rather, we are faced with the task of identifying elements in the relation between the two. I have argued elsewhere against the presumption that the modern concept of sex, generally understood as biological sex difference, is straightforwardly present in ancient texts, more particularly in Plato.<sup>40</sup> An analysis of the function of the concept of *genos* in the discussion on the education of female rulers in the *Republic* suggests that its usual translation as 'sex' is not only crude, but also obfuscates the argument of this part of the *Republic*. Briefly, based on the fact that there is no distinct word for 'sex' in classical Greek (this is far from the primary meaning of *genos*), and on a detailed analysis of the appearance of the concept of *genos* in various of Plato's dialogues, I contend that these texts suggest a view in which the being of men and women is not determined, in the last instance, by what we call 'sex', but by a unified multiplicity of behavioural and other characteristics, including their being-male or being-female, the *totality* of which bears the ontological weight. This, then, would be the cultural-historical condition of possibility for the bisexual imaginary of Diotima's speech, which is, to be sure, still highly specific in its explicit presentation and to that extent speculative.

Its significance lies, I propose, in what it suggests to us about the imaginary (which is not to say unreal) nature of our sexed identifications as male or female. It suggests, as Irigaray claims, that sexed subjectivity, the

assumption of a position in the social symbolic order through sexualisation, owes more to the cultural-historical form of the imaginary than Lacan concedes. However, this does not mean that the, precisely *imaginary*, identifications that constitute the sexual imaginary are either necessarily male or necessarily female, as Irigaray seems to think.

This leaves us with a claim about the nature of our sexed identifications which realizes, theoretically, different radical aspects of both Lacan's and Irigaray's theories of sexual difference. It affirms Lacan's claim that the sexual subject positions of 'man' and 'woman' are distinct from the biological categories of 'male' and 'female'.<sup>41</sup> It also affirms the closer relation between the sexual imaginary and the sexual symbolic articulated by Irigaray, but without her restriction of the sexual imaginary to either a singularly male or a singularly female form – that is, without the determining presumption of a certain conception of sex difference as exclusive binary. Indeed, the idea of the bisexual imaginary problematizes this conception of sex difference in contesting its naturalized right to ground the discursive field of sex in advance. Only when this form of sex is not determined, a priori, as an extra-philosophical presumption, may it become, itself, a philosophical problem.

## Notes

1. Classical Greek forms a verb with *eros* (*erōd*) and participle forms (*erōn* or *ho erōn*) that have no transliterated English equivalents. Many translators therefore choose to render all terms with variants of the English 'love', which does have verbal (to love) and participle (lover, beloved) forms. In this article I use 'eros' when possible; 'love' when not.
2. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Christopher Rowe, Aris & Phillips, Warminster, 1998, 197b7–8. All references to Stephanus numbers refer to this translation, unless otherwise stated.
3. Socrates' is not the final speech. Alcibiades bursts into the symposium after Socrates has spoken and offers a panegyric to Socrates, his beloved erstwhile lover. Alcibiades' speech is crucial to the interpretation of the dialogue as a whole, the central meaning of which probably does not reside in the content of Diotima's teaching. But this article is not concerned with the interpretation of the dialogue as a whole.
4. Or, 'procreation' (*Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton, Penguin, London, 1951); 'reproduction' (*Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill, Penguin, London, 1999).
5. Or 'begetting of children', 'making fruitful'. See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek/English Lexicon*, revised by H.S. Jones, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996.
6. As Hamilton translates: 'The function [of love] is that of procreation in what is beautiful, and such a procreation can be either physical or spiritual.'
7. In fact Liddell and Scott identify a causal sense of a form

- of the verb, *kuô*, ‘of the male, impregnate’, but only in the aorist tense, which is not that used by Plato here. (*Kuein* is the infinitive form, but ancient Greek verbs are often discussed (and are listed in lexicons) using the first person present (here, *kueô*) as this better indicates how it will decline.)
8. J.S. Morrison, ‘Four Notes on Plato’s *Symposium*’, *Classical Quarterly* vol. 14, no. 1, 1964, p. 54.
  9. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, Hackett, Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2000.
  10. Morrison, ‘Four Notes’, pp. 54–5. In the accompanying commentary to his translation of the *Symposium* Rowe adds (p. 183) that this explains the claim that ‘[t]he intercourse of man and woman is in fact a kind of giving birth [*ê gar andros kai gunaikos sunousia tokos estin*]’ (206c5–6): ‘Diotima appears to mean that intercourse literally is giving birth.’
  11. Morrison, ‘Four Notes’, p. 55.
  12. Plato, *Symposium*, ed. Kenneth Dover, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 147, 151. See also Michael C. Stokes, *Plato’s Socratic Conversations: Drama and Dialectic in Three Dialogues*, Athlone, London, 1986, pp. 161–3.
  13. E.E. Pender, ‘Spiritual Pregnancy in Plato’s *Symposium*’, *Classical Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1992, p. 79.
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. Paul C. Plass, ‘Plato’s “Pregnant” Lover’, *Symbolae Osloenses*, vol. LIII, 1978, pp. 48, 50, 51. ‘[T]he use of heterosexual terminology may arise directly from the situation itself, since in homosexual relationships one partner frequently assumes a feminine role ... The distinctive vocabulary which they [homosexuals in ancient Greece] would develop would naturally consist in large measure of words ordinarily used of heterosexual relationships transferred to pederasty’ (pp. 49–50). The essays by Morrison, Pender, and Plass, and the relevant sections of Dover and Stokes, discussed above, are almost always cited as canonical in references to the topic of male or spiritual pregnancy in the literature on the *Symposium*.
  16. Adriana Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato*, trans. Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio and Aine O’Healy, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 105–6.
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
  18. On the latter, see *ibid.*, p. 127 n4. See also Page DuBois, ‘The Appropriation of Reproduction’, in Nancy Tuana, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1994.
  19. Notably, Arlene W. Saxonhouse, ‘Eros and the Female in Greek Political Thought: An Interpretation of Plato’s *Symposium*’, *Political Theory*, vol. 12, no. 1, February 1984, especially pp. 21–2. See also, for a more qualified version of the claim, Wendy Brown, ‘“Supposing Truth Were a Woman”: Plato’s Subversion of Masculine Discourse’, *Political Theory* vol. 16, no. 4, November 1988, reprinted in Tuana, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*.
  20. Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato*, p. 94.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
  22. Angela Hobbs, ‘Female Imagery in Plato’, in James Lesher, Debra Nails and Frisbee Sheffield, eds, *Plato’s Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 2006, pp. 261–4.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
  24. *Ibid.*, pp. 269, 257.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
  26. *Ibid.*
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
  28. Thus it makes no sense to look for a ‘logical progression’ in the image, as Pender attempts (‘Spiritual Pregnancy in Plato’s *Symposium*’, p. 86), or to try and separate out a ‘male type’ from a ‘female type’ of pregnancy.
  29. Plass, ‘Plato’s Pregnant Lover’, p. 50.
  30. Compare 203c2, where, in the story of the birth of Eros, poverty *ekuêse ton Erôta*, ‘became pregnant with Eros’ (Rowe), ‘conceived Love’ (Hamilton), ‘conceived’ (Dover). In his ‘Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration’ (*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 24, 1977) F.M. Burnyeat notes the ‘strange reversal’ in the *Symposium*, according to which pregnancy precedes intercourse (p. 8), and also the absence of any account, metaphorical or otherwise, of the process of conception (pp. 12–13).
  31. 208e5, emphasis added.
  32. See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1985; Michèle Le Dœuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary*, trans. Colin Gordon, Continuum, London, 2002.
  33. Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’, in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Tavistock/Routledge, London, 1977. Hereafter referred to as ‘The Mirror Stage’.
  34. Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage’, pp. 2–4.
  35. Sigmund Freud, ‘The Ego and the Id’, trans. James Strachey, in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 11, Pelican Freud Library, Penguin, London, 1984, p. 364.
  36. Lacan, ‘Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious’, in *Écrits*, p. 302. On Lacan’s concept of the imaginary and its relation to the symbolic, see Philippe Van Haute, *Against Adaption: Lacan’s ‘Subversion’ of the Subject*, trans. Paul Crowe and Miranda Vanerk, Other Press, New York, 2002, pp. 81–100.
  37. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1985, p. 320. See also Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 58.
  38. Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, p. 28.
  39. Luce Irigaray, ‘Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato’s *Symposium*, Diotima’s Speech’, trans. Eleanor H. Kuykendall, in Tuana, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*. Irigaray refers to Diotima’s story of the birth of Eros. Eros inherits contradictory characteristics from his father Resource (Poros) and mother Poverty (Penia), giving him an intermediate nature – neither rich nor poor, but somewhere between the two, neither wise nor ignorant, neither mortal nor immortal (203b1–e5), and an intermediary between gods and mortals.
  40. Stella Sandford, ‘Thinking Sex Politically: Rethinking “Sex” in Plato’s *Republic*’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 104, no. 4, Fall 2005.
  41. Despite this, Lacan continues to employ the concept of sex ‘illegitimately’ in his psychoanalytical theory, failing to account for the relation between ‘sex difference’ and ‘sexual difference’. See Stella Sandford, ‘The Origins and Ends of “Sex”’, in Christian Kerslake and Ray Brassier, eds, *Origins and Ends of the Mind*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2007.