

Departed Souls?

Tripartition at the Close of Plato's Republic

Abstract

Plato's tripartite soul plays a central role in his account of justice in the *Republic*. It thus comes as a surprise to find him apparently abandoning this model at the end of the work, when he suggests that the soul, as immortal, must be simple. I propose a way of reconciling these claims, appealing to neglected features of the city-soul analogy and the argument for the soul's division. The original true soul, I argue, is partitioned, but in a finer manner than how we encounter it in our everyday lives.

Introduction¹

For much of the *Republic*, Plato² defends a tripartite model of the soul. Near the end of the dialogue, however, he seems to back away from this claim, fearing that it conflicts with the simplicity required for the soul's immortality. The tension between these two claims is serious, and cannot be resolved through the popular suggestion that the soul becomes simple after death. Instead, we should rethink what is going on in the peculiar passages from book X concerning the soul's immortality. Properly understood, I claim, they are consistent with the earlier tripartite account. By reflecting on these issues, we will arrive at a better understanding of the nature of the Platonic soul.

In defending my account, I distinguish three states of the soul: first, its true or original nature, prior to any corrupting influences; second, the soul as it appears to us in our everyday lives, corrupted by many lives of embodiment; and third, the disembodied soul that is partly rehabilitated between its repeated earthly lives. I will argue that the soul remains tripartite in all three states, albeit not in precisely the same manner.

Much of my account is grounded in a close examination of key passages from the *Republic*. I should acknowledge up front, however, that I will also be making a few claims that are more speculative in nature. This is unavoidable, given how little Plato reveals about the true soul in the *Republic*—or elsewhere. Nonetheless, I hope to convince you that the account is at least a likely

1 Drafts of this work were presented at the University of Chicago Society of Fellows' Weissbourd Conference (May, 2011) and the Lehigh University "Last Chapter" conference (October, 2013). I thank the participants of both sessions for their valuable feedback. Special thanks are due to Jana Schultz, David Svolba, James Wilberding and two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on earlier drafts.

2 I will sometimes refer to claims made by Socrates in the *Republic*, but I will be assuming throughout that he is the mouthpiece for views that Plato himself is entertaining in this work.

story, in that it resolves the above puzzle and makes the best sense of Plato's various claims about the soul in this work.

A Puzzle Concerning the True Nature of the Soul

Let us begin with justice, the central topic of the *Republic*. Plato investigates its nature by drawing an analogy between city and soul, where both are seen as having the same tripartite structure. So, a virtuous city will have three distinct classes: the guardians will rule it wisely; the auxiliaries will protect it courageously; and the producers will show moderation or self-control. Likewise, a virtuous soul will have wisdom via the rational part of the soul; courage via the spirited part; and moderation via the appetitive part.³ Justice emerges on this model as the presence of harmony in this tripartite structure: basically, each part⁴ sticking to its proper function.

This tripartite model of the just soul has been immensely influential, and it continues to attract some philosophers.⁵ It is thus surprising to find Plato apparently abandoning tripartition in the final book of the *Republic*. After arguing for the soul's immortality—from the fact that it is not killed by its evil, injustice—the discussion continues as follows:

And we must not think, either, that the soul in its truest nature is full of variety [ποικιλίας], dissimilarity [ἀνομοιότητός] and disagreement [διαφορᾶς] with itself. ... It

3 Strictly speaking, moderation is a virtue that applies to the entire city or soul, in that it is a shared agreement about which part should rule. (See 432a, 442c-d.) Given, however, that moderation is the only virtue that actively involves the lowest class, Plato often associates this virtue with the restraint shown by the producers or the appetitive part of the soul. (See, for example, 389d-e, 485e and 555c-d. I thank an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify this point.)

4 Plato rarely uses the Greek term μέρη (parts) in this context, generally preferring εἶδη (forms or kinds). Often he uses no term at all, referring at 411e, for example, to τὸ φιλόσοφον ('the wisdom-loving [element]'). This Greek construction is not easily captured in English, encouraging us, perhaps misleadingly, to add the word 'part' where it is not present in the original text. There is a good discussion of this point in Woolf 2012, 155–7.

5 A notable example is Burnyeat 2006.

is not easy for something to be immortal when it is composed of many elements and is not composed in the finest way, as the soul now seemed to us.” (611b)⁶

Socrates goes on to liken the human soul to the sea god Glaucus (611c-612a). With this striking metaphor, the tripartite soul discussed in the earlier books is now seen as a hideous distortion of the soul’s true nature, just as the divine majesty of Glaucus is obscured by his barnacle and seaweed-encrusted appearance.⁷

This leaves us with a significant interpretive challenge: given that the earlier tripartite account seems at odds with Plato’s closing remarks on the soul, can we find an acceptable reading that resolves this inconsistency? There are three main strategies for reconciling the two claims. First, Plato might be saying that the embodied soul is tripartite, but that it becomes simple and purely rational after death. Second, we might deny that the earlier account of the soul is actually tripartite—at least in any sense inconsistent with its ultimate unity. Finally, we might seek a reading of Plato’s remarks in book X that is consistent with the earlier tripartite account. I will defend a version of the third view. Before doing so, however, I will critically examine the first two options.

First Option: Dead Souls as Simple

Among those scholars who have addressed this issue, the first option is, by far, the most common. It is standardly held that Plato takes the soul to become a partless, purely rational entity when it leaves the body after death. This option fits with Plato’s general emphasis on the primacy of reason, and it anticipates Aristotle’s later account, in which he suggests that the soul sur-

6 I generally follow the translation in Plato 2004 (Reeve), with modifications. I have also consulted: Plato 1991 (Bloom), 2000 (Griffith) and 2013 (Emlyn-Jones and Preddy).

7 In fact, as noted above, Plato remains somewhat non-committal about the true nature of the soul. Nonetheless, he is quite clear that the earlier account in book IV falls short as a depiction of the soul (611a-b, 611c-d). This is sufficient to generate the interpretive puzzle that drives my account.

vives the body by having a rational activity that does not require body.⁸ So, for example, Richard Bett writes:

...the argument for immortality in Book X seems to imply that, as in the *Phaedo*, the soul *in its true nature* is noncomposite and changeless ... [and] that the division argued for in Book IV pertains only to the soul as embodied. To be sure, the tone is tentative; but the view being expressed seems clear enough.⁹

On this reading, we abandon the tripartition of book IV, returning to the simple soul of the *Phaedo*, at least as a characterization of the soul's ultimate nature.¹⁰

Having mentioned the *Phaedo*, it is worth noting that looking elsewhere within the Platonic corpus does not help us settle the issue. Instead, we find the same dilemma in Plato's various depictions of the soul after death. In the *Phaedrus*, for example, every soul, even that of an immortal god, is tripartite, represented by charioteer and two horses (246a-b). In the *Timaeus*, by contrast, immortality applies only to the rational soul, located in the head, which is carefully kept apart from the perishable appetitive and spirited souls in the torso (69c). The difference between these two accounts is puzzling, at least if one is inclined to reconcile the views of Plato put forward in these works.

What is clear, however, is that the shift to a simple soul in book X of the *Republic* raises two significant problems: it leaves the true nature of justice mysterious, and it is at odds with Plato's depiction of dead souls in the closing Er myth.

8 *De Anima* 3.4-5.

9 Bett 1986, 346-7.

10 Among the many scholars who defend this reading are the following: Brennan 2012, 103; Crombie 1962, 152, 349, 353-4; Gerson 2003, 127, 141; Guthrie 1971, 232-4; and Sorabji 2008, 115-17. The reading is frequently endorsed in passing by scholars addressing other topics in the *Republic*.

Beginning with the first problem, it is evident that the account of justice presented in the *Republic* is closely tied to tripartition. Justice, after all, is identified as a harmonizing relationship between the parts of the soul. A just person, claims Socrates:

...harmonizes the three elements, just like the three defining [ὄρους]¹¹ [notes] of a harmonic scale—lowest, highest and middle—along with any others that may lie in between. He binds all these together and, from having been many, becomes entirely one, temperate and harmonious. (443d-e)

To state the obvious, a partless soul could not have a harmonious arrangement of its parts. As Christopher Rowe notes, “The account of justice ... will after all be in terms of the divided soul; take away the partition of the soul, and we shall evidently need a different kind of account of justice.”¹² Unfortunately, Plato does not provide the new account. And the earlier one, with its essential reliance on a partitioned soul, provides us no hint as to what true justice would be in a partless soul. Given that justice is the core topic of the *Republic*, this is a peculiar and unsatisfying way to end the dialogue.¹³

Advocates of the simple soul might respond to this problem in several ways. First, they could deny that justice applies to the true, partless soul. Perhaps it is a virtue merely of embodied

11 In general use, the term ‘ὄρος’ simply means boundary. In this musical context, however, it refers to the notes that define the intervals of the scale. See: Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1940, entry for ‘ὄρος’. This suggests that the three identified parts have a privileged role in determining the nature of the soul, even if there might also be other parts. It thus speaks against Jennifer Whiting’s claim that the enumeration of the parts of the soul is radically contingent. See: Whiting 2012, 175–6. Of course, I do not claim that this evidence settles the issue. Part of the problem is that it is often difficult to relate the details of Plato’s musical analogies to what we know of Greek musical theory.

12 Rowe 2007, 169 fn. 15. The problem is also acknowledged by Woolf 2012, 161.

13 In some ways, it would resemble the early dialogues, which typically end in aporia. This skeptical result, however, would be at odds with the optimistic tone of the closing passages of the *Republic*. Moreover, the dialogue ends by showing us that the just will be rewarded (and thus that justice is good not simply in its own right but also for its consequences). (Cf. 612b-d.) But if the old account of justice has been abandoned, then we would be in no position to establish anything about the just—let alone to recognize its rewards!

souls, during their earthly, tripartite existence. However, this response will not work, for Socrates is quite clear that justice is also present in the true soul:

But it must be seen as it is in truth, not mutilated by association with the body and other evils, as we now see it. But what it is like when it has become pure we can adequately see only by means of reason. And you will find it to be a much more beautiful thing than we thought and get a much clearer view of justices and injustices¹⁴, along with all the other things we have so far discussed. (611b-c)

Evidently, we need an account of justice in the true soul.

A second response involves appealing to the book IV characterization of justice as harmony. As we saw above, Plato portrays the parts of the soul as being bound together, so that it “becomes entirely one” (443e). If tripartite justice is a unity of parts, could true justice be the simple unity of a partless, purely rational soul? Though a tempting response, this notion of justice leads to a further problem, for it ceases to look like a virtue at all. The tripartite justice of an embodied soul represents a kind of excellence: the achievement of an order among the soul’s parts that could otherwise be absent. By contrast, there is nothing excellent about the unity of a simple soul, since it is capable only of unity. This does not seem especially virtuous. (Plato’s musical analogy might be helpful here. We are impressed when a series of notes fit together, avoiding dissonance. There is nothing excellent about one note avoiding dissonance.)¹⁵

Ultimately, however, there is a more basic problem with the claim that dead souls are simple. If tripartition applies only to embodied souls, then the souls of the departed should really be

14 Plato’s use of plurals here is odd. Reeve translates it as ‘cases of justice and injustice’ (2004, 316); Bloom sees this—too hastily, in my view—as ‘implying that there are a plurality of forms’ (1991, 471, en. 8).

15 A similar problem arises when we consider Plato’s other characterization of justice in book IV—as each element in the soul doing its own (443a-b). If the soul is simple, then a single element is responsible for all soul-functioning. Such an element would be incapable of meddling or interfering with another element’s work (444b), and justice would again seem trivial and unimpressive. I thank an anonymous referee for encouraging me to address this characterization of justice.

lacking in parts. However, we have a vivid account of the souls of the dead at the end of the *Republic*, in the myth of Er, and their depiction suggests that these souls are not simply rational in nature. The sufferings inflicted on the unjust seem appetitive or spirited in character, as we witness in the painful and shameful public flaying of the tyrant Ardiaeus (615c-616a). Moreover, the dead, when choosing their next lives, are often swayed by non-rational impulses. So, for example, Orpheus picks the life of a swan, since—out of spite for the Thracian women who had slaughtered him—he refused to be conceived by woman again (620a). Likewise, the soul with the first lot picks the life of a tyrant, out of greed (619b-d). These are surely not the decision-procedures of pure rational souls. As Halliwell notes, in discussing the myth of Er:

If Socrates' remarks at 611b–612a might have created an expectation that the myth would project an image of the 'pure' soul, disentangled from the body (Glaucus without the barnacles), it leaves us after all with souls that apparently have much the same features as those posited elsewhere in the dialogue, whether or not we think of them as tripartite.¹⁶

In short, these departed souls behave as though still parted.¹⁷

In presenting the above problem, I am assuming that the myth that closes the *Republic* should be taken seriously as a story—not as a literally true account, but as an evocative description of roughly how things must be after death. That is, once we accept the above account of justice, along with the beliefs that the soul is immortal and resides in a well-ordered, divinely-ruled cosmos, then some sort of system of reincarnation and cyclical justice follows naturally. Some

16 Halliwell 2007, 462–3.

17 Some defenders of the simple soul, aware of this problem, refer to the 'traces' and 'stains' left on the rational soul (Crombie 1962, 349); or to its 'scars' (Gerson 2003, 141). It is certainly plausible that a rational soul could be damaged by its former tripartite life, leading it to hold false beliefs. The souls depicted in the Er story, however, seem to go far beyond this in their outright embrace of clearly appetitive and spirited motivations. Including these under the general umbrella of reason seems to undermine the whole point of rejecting tripartition.

scholars have downplayed the significance of this myth.¹⁸ I cannot fully address such skepticism here, but I will make two brief points. First, the Er myth plays a significant role in the larger argument of the *Republic*. In book X, Socrates is fulfilling his promise to Glaucon, made back in book II (358a), to show that justice is valuable both for its own sake and for its consequences. Taking the intrinsic value as already established, book X focuses on the latter. After identifying the consequential rewards of justice for the living, Socrates introduces his final myth as follows: “Well, [these rewards], I said, are nothing in number or size compared to those that await each man after death. We must hear about them, too, so that, by hearing them, each of these men may get back in fully what he is owed by the argument.” (614a) That is, Er’s story is meant to show that being just is also valuable after death. It is hard to see how this myth can secure the consequential value of justice if it does not represent at least a roughly accurate story of the afterlife. Thus, the depiction of the souls there as still partly irrational should be taken seriously.

Moreover, even if one disagrees with the above point, the myth still poses a problem for the proposal that the soul becomes purely rational after death. On this reading, Plato argues that disembodied souls must be simple and purely rational, and then immediately launches into a detailed story involving disembodied souls behaving irrationally. It would be bizarre of Plato to juxtapose such contrasting depictions of the soul, regardless of how literally he meant the Er story to be taken—and this again speaks against the interpretation.¹⁹ Given these problems, I believe we need to look elsewhere for a solution to our interpretive puzzle.

18 See, for example, Annas 1981, 349 ff. However, see her 1982, 129 ff. for a partial reassessment of the myth’s value.

19 I thank an anonymous referee for helping me clarify my position on the relevance of this myth.

Second Option: The Soul is Always Simple

In recent work on this topic, the most promising strategy for resolving the book IV and X accounts of the soul is that defended by Christopher Shields.²⁰ Shields argues that we have misread the earlier account of the soul, taking it to involve a tripartite division of the soul that is incompatible with the simplicity required for immortality. In fact, the soul is always simple, both in life and in death, and there is thus no conflict between the two accounts.

The key to Shields' reading is his distinction between two senses in which the soul could be divided: into either compositional or aspectual parts. A compositional part is one that can exist independently of the larger whole to which it belongs. (For example, a brick can exist independently of the wall to which it belongs.) Aspectual parts, however, are parts in a broader sense, for they include parts that could not exist independently of the whole. Following Shields' own example, "being-a-museum" is an aspectual part of the Louvre, but not a compositional one.²¹

Shields' basic point is that we often talk about the parts of things without committing ourselves to the ontological independence of these parts. If I say that it is part of my character to be easily scared, I need not be identifying an actual component part of my mind. Likewise, when Socrates presents his tripartite account of the soul in book IV, he could simply be distinguishing three important aspects of the soul, rather than dividing it into separate compositional parts.

Shields' proposal would certainly provide a better fit with Plato's later remarks on the immortal soul. But does it adequately represent the earlier tripartite account? In support of his reading, Shields argues that Plato's defense of tripartition does not depend on the stricter notion of

20 As defended in Shields 2001 and 2010. I will focus mainly on the latter, although what I say will also apply to the earlier work.

21 Shields 2010, 165.

compositional parts. Plato argues that the soul often experiences conflicting desires at the same time, and that, on pain of contradiction, it must have distinct parts experiencing each desire.²² Shields argues that a division into aspectual soul parts is sufficient to avoid contradiction.²³ Moreover, he believes we have good reason to doubt that Plato is insisting on a division into compositional parts. To see this, consider his example of applying the general principle: a spinning top, which is both moving and not moving. We avoid contradiction in this scenario by distinguishing the moving edge of the top from its stationary center, and, as Shields notes, these are clearly aspectual rather than compositional parts.²⁴ If we are distinguishing merely aspectual parts of the soul, this account is perfectly consistent with the compositional unity demanded in book X of the *Republic*.

There is much that is attractive about Shields' proposed solution. In particular, it is a useful guard against common misreadings of Plato's tripartition of the soul: that the soul must have exactly three parts, and that these parts must be homunculi or discrete psychological subjects.²⁵ Nonetheless, I am not convinced that the tripartite soul can be merely aspectually divided.

For the sake of argument, I grant that the principle of dividing a thing into parts to avoid opposing properties need not involve compositional parts. Still, it is less clear that Plato is actually considering an aspectual division of the soul. Shields' main evidence for this is the example of the spinning top. But this is problematic. Even if the circumference and center are aspectual parts, their having opposing properties is dependent on the top having compositional parts. After

22 Plato is often taken to be defending a forerunner of the principle of non-contradiction. Shields disputes this, calling it a synthetic principle rather than a logical one (154). For my purposes, I do not need to address its exact status.

23 Shields 2010, 167.

24 Shields 2010, 167.

25 Shields 2010, 159-163.

all, in order for the circumference to be affected differently by the spinning, it must be at a distinct location from the center. And for the top as a whole to include both circumference and center, it must be composed of spatially extended parts connecting them. It is these compositional parts that make it possible for the top to have aspects with opposing properties. Indeed, it is telling that we could not make the same argument using Shields' example of an object having only aspectual parts: namely, a point.²⁶

Before we delve too deeply into the mereology of tops, it is worth noting that there is also significant textual evidence that speaks against Shields' reading. One problem is that it is in tension with the overarching harmony metaphor that Plato employs in discussing the soul. A harmony is composed of distinct notes, which can exist on their own but come together to form a unified sound. That is, Plato is comparing the soul's division to something which clearly has compositional, not merely aspectual parts. Likewise, the city that serves as Plato's analog for the soul is divided into compositional rather than aspectual parts: the classes of people within it. These points, while not decisive, do speak against the proposal.

More significantly, Shields' account leaves it unclear why Socrates, at the end of the Republic, declares that the earlier account must be revised to be compatible with the soul's newly proved immortality. Shields does refer to "Glaucón's justifiable surprise" at the turn of events in book X²⁷, but it is Socrates himself who declares the inadequacy of the earlier account. As he puts it, "It is not easy for something to be immortal when it is composed of many elements and is not composed in the finest manner, which is how the soul now seemed to us." (611b) That is, Socrates himself believes that the earlier tripartite account of the soul is in tension with the soul's

26 Shields 2010, 167.

27 Shields 2010, 148.

immortality. Since a division of the soul into aspectual parts would not pose a problem for immortality, Socrates evidently believes that the earlier account involved compositional parts. In short, if Socrates was originally dividing the soul into merely aspectual parts, then the dilemma in book X about whether this account is compatible with the soul's immortality would never have arisen!

Third Option: Back to Tripartition

Given the problems with Shields' proposal, I suggest we pursue the third option for resolving how the tripartite soul of book IV relates to the immortal soul of book X. Where Shields sought to deny the compositional division of the soul in order to make book IV consistent with the unity required for immortality, I will argue that the immortal soul described in book X remains partitioned.

It is worth taking a moment to clear out some conceptual space for my proposed reading. To begin, recall that Plato is open to the idea that something can be immortal while still being composed of parts. Indeed, he provides several examples of such beings. Some I have already mentioned: the tripartite souls of the Gods in the *Phaedrus*. Another is the world soul of the *Timaeus*, which mixes different kinds of being, sameness and difference, but is nonetheless immortal due to its careful design (35a-36d). Turning to the *Republic*, the elaborately constructed cosmos of book X, composed of a spindle of necessity and various nested spheres (616b-617c), is presumably also immortal, since it is responsible for sealing the fate of the soul in each new life in the unending process of reincarnation (620d-621a).²⁸ Evidently, we should not simply assume that an immortal soul must be simple.

28 Unlike the eschatological myths of the *Gorgias* and (perhaps) the *Phaedrus*, there is no suggestion in the *Re-*

Moreover, Plato does not actually deny that the soul has parts in introducing its immortal nature. Rather, he says that “*It is not easy* for something to be immortal when it is composed of many elements and is not composed in the finest manner...” (611b, my emphasis).²⁹ This is maddeningly ambiguous, but it offers hope of a solution to our difficulties. Perhaps the true soul is partitioned, like the soul of book IV, but in a finer manner—one consistent with its immortality.

This possibility is often overlooked in the literature. Gerson, for example, is too quick to assume that Plato is critiquing tripartition in general, rather than the particular kind of tripartition described in book IV. He writes:

Socrates does not, however, go on to describe the soul in its true nature. Yet three times in this entire passage he refers to the soul’s ‘true’ nature’, which is evident only apart from the body. [...] This insistence by Socrates must mean that the soul’s true nature is revealed or recovered by it when it is disembodied. And that entails that its embodied form is somehow defective. It is defective when, as tripartite, it exists in a ‘human life’.³⁰ (127)

The fact that the soul examined in book IV is a deformation of its true nature does not mean that tripartition itself is the deformation. It is at least possible—and, as I will go on to argue, likely—that the problem with the earlier soul is that it is tripartite in a deformed manner.

public that the process of being judged after each new life will come to an end. The Isle of the Blessed, the final, eternal abode for philosophers in the *Gorgias*, is twice mentioned in the *Republic*, but only briefly and in a complicated way. At 519c, it is used metaphorically to characterize the envious situation of those who are allowed to devote their entire lives to education. Later, at 540b, it is identified as the place where philosophers retire after serving as guardians—while still alive. Nothing is said about it being an escape for philosophers from the cycle of reincarnation.

29 This resembles the proof of the soul’s immortality in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates does not rule out that composites can be immortal, but simply says that this is less likely (78c, 79e). Shields is careful to acknowledge this point: see Shields 2010, 148.

30 Gerson, *Knowing Persons*, p. 127.

The True Original Soul

What really worries Plato in book X, I claim, is not partition in general, but rather partition in which the parts of the soul are not properly put together. However, a problem quickly arises for my proposed interpretation. Plato is quite clear that the true soul must be just in a different and better way than the account offered in book IV, but he does not specify what this finer arrangement of the soul might be. To avoid leaving the ultimate nature of justice mysterious, we need an account of what this “finest manner” of composition would be, and how it improves upon the earlier model.

Plato offers little help here, but there are some clues to guide us toward such an account. To see this, we must focus on what he now finds unsatisfactory about the earlier depiction in book IV. Recall that, after asserting the immortality of the soul, Socrates adds: “And we must not think, either, that the soul in its truest nature is full of variety [ποικιλίας], dissimilarity [ἀνομοιότητός] and disagreement [διαφορᾶς] with itself.” (611b) This is clearly meant as an indictment of the previous account of the soul. Notice, however, that the focus is not on partition in general, but on partition into different and opposing parts. (After all, one can imagine a soul composed of homogenous parts, like the identical bricks in a wall, without dissimilarity.) The problem, then, with the earlier tripartite model is that the parts are in some sense at odds with one another. Indeed, this feature of conflict was essential to the discovery of these parts in the first place. As we saw in examining Shields’ account, Socrates appeals to the principle that the same thing cannot have opposing properties in respect to the same element within it. He then infers from the presence of conflicting psychological intentions that the soul is not unitary (436b-441c). So, *conflict* between the parts of the soul is fundamental to the book IV proof of its tripartition.

Given this method of inquiry, harmony can appear in the soul we are examining only as something enforced. The appetites, in particular, must be ruled by reason, with the latter curbing the natural excesses of the former. This applies even to the *just* soul, which Plato likens to a farmer (reason) caring for his beasts (the appetites): feeding the tame ones, but culling the wild ones (589a-b). The appetites are naturally insatiable for money, and thus inevitably tempted to overstep their proper roles (442a). This means that the harmony of a just soul can be maintained only by force—by the rule of reason (aided by spirit) over the appetites. It is not surprising that Plato would find this unstable, forcibly-maintained arrangement of opposing parts ill-suited for immortality.

This notion of a *forced* harmony might sound peculiar. James Wilberding (2012) argues that Plato's characterization of moderation as harmony must involve more than just the better part of the soul ruling the worse parts. It should be a kind of friendship, where the worse parts endorse being ruled by the better (129-30). My appeal to force might seem at odds with this friendly harmony. However, I do not see a serious disagreement here, for a forced harmony need not involve continuous, active resistance by the appetites. The idea is simply that the appetites have an inevitable tendency to fall into conflict with reason, for, if left unchecked, they will eventually grow wild and unruly. Reason must constantly monitor the appetites, intervening when necessary to correct them. Depending on the circumstances, this intervention might range from light persuasion (taming the wild appetites) to more confrontational tactics (culling them). When reason acts effectively, intervening before the appetites grow too wild, their relationship might well re-

main quite friendly. Even in such cases, however, the resulting harmony involves a kind of force in the sense that it is the product of reason's power over the rest of the soul.³¹

If the forced character of the earlier account is the problem, then a better alternative suggests itself. When Plato maintains that the true soul is put together in the finest manner, perhaps what he is denying is not the partition of the soul but, rather, its partition into conflicting parts that must be forcibly brought into harmony. Conflict might be a psychological fact about the soul as we encounter it in our everyday lives. But the soul in its true, original nature must have an *unforced* harmony of its parts—one in which the appetites do not need to be ruled or even persuaded by reason. Here we might think of the soul as being partitioned not into opposing desires, but instead into different functions or powers, each with its own object. The appetites care for the bodily needs of a person, the spirit addresses its social standing, and reason pursues knowledge and wisdom. Each part of the soul can be identified by its unique area of concern.³²

To avoid misunderstanding, it is worth emphasizing the difference between the book IV account of justice (in the soul as we know it in our everyday lives) and justice as it appears in the soul's true nature. Both involve a harmony of parts, but they are not equivalent. In the earlier account, the appetites of a just soul successfully submit to the commanding or persuasive force of reason. In the true soul, by contrast, the appetites naturally do what is in accord with the wishes of reason—with no need of hierarchical control to maintain this harmony. A political analogy might be helpful here. I might decide that I need to be ruled by another person because I no long-

31 I thank an anonymous referee for helpful comments that helped me clarify this notion of forced harmony. For an insightful examination of how reason uses both command and persuasion to control the other parts of the soul, see Annas 1999, 134-6. Annas argues that both roles are present in Book IV, although she clearly prefers persuasion as an account of Platonic virtue.

32 These concerns can be retroactive and prospective as well. Even if the souls of the dead do not have bodies between lives, the appetitive parts of their souls still dwell on the bodily pleasures of their previous life (either fondly or with regret), while looking forward to (or fearing) the pleasures of their next life.

er trust my own decisions. Maybe I suspect I do not know what is best for me, or perhaps I fear that my decision-making skills have been corrupted somehow. This is what justice looks like in book IV. The appetites can be tamed to some degree, enough to submit willingly to the rule of reason, but Plato is quite clear that they are always tempted by the exigencies of bodily life. You will inevitably find yourself craving more of that delicious cake, even as you know you should not eat it. Given this characteristic of bodily life, virtue must be enforced by reason, and justice will involve the appetites recognizing their own untrustworthiness. This is quite different from true justice, where the appetitive soul does not need to be ruled or persuaded by reason.

There are several advantages to understanding the true soul as an unforced harmony of parts. First, and most obviously, it shows why it is more finely put together. A soul in which the parts do not fight or resist one another, but instead pursue their complementary goals together, is less likely to come apart. It is thus more naturally fit for immortality than the conflicted soul depicted in book IV. Nonetheless, we can still see why the earlier account is useful. The forced harmony we identify in certain just souls still bears some resemblance to the harmony of the true soul—just as the crudely circular shapes we draw in constructing geometric proofs bear some resemblance to the true form of circularity. We need no longer see the closing arguments of the *Republic* as a wholesale rejection of the earlier account of the soul. This is a second advantage of the proposed account of the true soul.

It should be acknowledged that there is no direct textual support for this proposed reading. This is not surprising, for Socrates himself provides only a few tantalizing hints regarding the soul's true nature. Nonetheless, we do find an indirect clue earlier in the *Republic*. The problematic relationship between the book IV and book X accounts of the soul has been widely dis-

cussed. Less commonly examined, however, is a parallel problem on the other side of the soul-city analogy. For, as it turns out, the just tripartite city examined in book IV is not the true city either. Socrates begins his account by depicting a very different kind of city, one that is not divided into distinct classes. Glaucon, however, dismisses it as a city fit for pigs, evidently shocked by the lack of couches and the poor quality of the desserts (372d). It is only in response to these complaints that Socrates turns to a luxurious or feverish city, which ends up forming the basis of his account of the civic virtues. He maintains, however, that "...the true city is the one we have just described: the healthy one, as it were." (372e).

So, just as the true soul is not the conflicted soul of book IV, the true city is not the feverish city that forms the basis of Plato's account of the virtues.³³ Here, however, we are given more material to work with in understanding what distinguishes the two cities. The original true city is divided into distinct parts, with citizens specializing in various crafts. What it notably lacks, however, is a hierarchy of ruling and ruled classes. The guardians are introduced only when we turn to the feverish city. There the demand for greater luxuries requires more people, land and resources, which leads inevitably to conflict with other cities. By contrast, the true city avoids luxury, and thus the harmonious relationship of its parts does not need to be enforced by ruling guardians. This neatly matches the account of the true soul that I have proposed above: an unforced harmony of its parts. This common structure of the true city and soul provides further support for my reading.

33 My interest in the distinction between the true and feverish cities was triggered by a conversation with a former student, Samuel Wigutow. The best discussion I have found of the parallel problems in understanding how the true city and soul can be just is in Rowe 2007, 168ff. Rowe, however, believes that the tripartite account of justice cannot be salvaged, and that Plato is instead returning to the account of justice in earlier dialogues, where it is knowledge of the good (181).

At this point, one might question how an unforced harmony of parts would work. In the conflicted soul (or the feverish city), we have an explanation for how this harmony is secured: reason (or the Guardian class) secures this harmony by restraining the activity of the parts it rules over. By contrast, it is unclear what would prevent the un-ruled parts of the true soul or city from coming into conflict. It would be quite unsatisfying simply to assert the cooperation of these parts by fiat. Some sort of explanation is called for.³⁴

Presumably, the answer must have something to do with the rationality of the soul as a whole. After all, Socrates notes that, in order to understand the nature of the true soul, we must look to “its love of wisdom” (611d) We are asked to consider what the soul “...would become if it followed with its whole being this longing”—namely its longing to associate with the divine and immortal things known through philosophy (611d-e).

This passage is often taken as support for the idea that Plato is returning to the simple, purely rational account of the soul, but I believe this is too narrow a reading. To see this, consider the context of Socrates’ remark. He has just compared our corrupted souls to Glaucon, whose true divinity is obscured in his current disfigured state. This presents us with a problem: how can we grasp the true nature of the soul, given that the souls with which we are familiar are all corrupted? Plato then offers his solution: look to its love of wisdom. This does not mean that the true soul must be entirely wisdom-loving and philosophical. Rather, it means that we should focus our attention on the parts of these familiar souls that have not been corrupted: the rational, wis-

34 On the city side, this problem is raised in Barney 2002, 212–21. Barney argues that Socrates’ endorsement of the city of pigs must be ironic, given its obvious impracticality for real, appetitive human beings. As she puts it: ‘...the [first] City is not a genuine possibility at all: for it embodies the hypothesis that a city without rational rule could be moderate in its appetites, and that hypothesis is false.’ (220) In what follows, I hope to address this concern. I will argue that the true or original city and soul remain valuable, even if they do not accurately describe our current situation.

dom-loving parts. Since the rational part remains true to its original state, it is the best place to begin looking when we investigate the entire soul's true nature. Plato then asks us to imagine what it would be like if the entire soul followed (ἐπισημομένη) this longing for wisdom. This need not mean that the entire soul actually has the desire for wisdom. Rather, it follows this desire, which can mean attending to it, keeping up with it, agreeing with it, and so on. That is, Plato urges us to conceive of the true soul as one in which all of its parts have desires that are consistent with the desires of reason.

On this model, the lower parts of the soul can still be associated with wisdom and divine things, even if they are not themselves employing reason. It would suffice if they are rational in the sense of acting in accord with their original rational design.³⁵ For such a soul, reason still pursues wisdom, but it does not need to enforce its rationality on the other parts of the soul. The appetites and spirit pursue their own rationally-designated ends, following the natures they have been given by their divine designer.³⁶ This true soul has a natural, unforced harmony of its parts, and this is the sense in which it is just.³⁷

35 Plato frequently appeals to this notion of an indirect, derived rationality. It comes out most clearly in the *Phaedo* (97b-99d), where Socrates complains that the cosmology of Anaxagoras does not properly invoke intellect (νοῦς). Then, in the *Timaeus*, Plato provides an alternate account of a world that displays the rationality of its designer. (See, for example, 29a and 30c.) Likewise, in the *Statesman*, he depicts the orderly-moving cosmos as '...having had intelligence [φρόνησις] assigned to it by the one who fitted it together in the beginning.' (269d). The non-rational parts of the soul can still be wisdom-loving in precisely this sense. On cosmic rationality in Plato, see Menn 1995.

36 One might object that the true soul, on this account, actually ends up looking less unified than the soul as depicted in book IV. If the appetites are not regulated in any way by the rational part of the soul, then why think that they come together to form a unified object at all? This strikes me, however, as too demanding a criterion for unified objecthood. The appetites in the original soul do not just coincidentally agree with what reason wants. Rather, their agreement is the deliberate result of the rational design of the soul. In this sense, the parts of the soul are still unified, even if an external designer is the source of this unity. I thank an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

37 Earlier, I criticized the interpretation of the true soul as purely rational for making justice seem unvirtuous, given that a simple soul cannot lack unity. One might raise the same objection to my account. After all, the true, original soul is naturally well-ordered and has done nothing to achieve this harmony. However, there is a crucial difference between the two cases. For a composite soul, it makes sense to say that there is something

Life After Embodiment

I have been discussing the true and conflicted souls as if they are two distinct things. Of course, it is really just one soul, considered either in its true, original nature or as we encounter it in our everyday lives.³⁸ This requires us to consider how the true soul is led to its impure state.

On this transition, the crucial passage is in book X of the *Republic*:

So far, what we have said about the soul is true of it as it appears at present. But the condition we have seen it in is like that of the sea Glaucus³⁹, whose original nature cannot easily be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because some of the original parts⁴⁰ of his body have been broken off, others have been worn away and altogether mutilated by the waves, and other things—shells, seaweeds, and rocks—have grown into him, so that he looks more like any wild beast than what he naturally was. Such, too, is the condition of the soul when we see it beset by myriad evils. (611c-d)

excellent and impressive about it being put together finely, for we can distinguish it from composites that lack this order. By contrast, there is no excellence in the unity of a simple soul, for it is incapable of being otherwise. Of course, we can still ask the further question: who deserves credit for this excellence of the original soul, since it did nothing to achieve this harmonious structure? Presumably, the credit goes to whatever being created the soul with this rational design. But this is still consistent with identifying the soul itself as excellent or virtuous, in the same way that a beautifully crafted shoe is still excellent, even though it was the shoemaker who made it that way.

- 38 I have repeatedly associated the ‘true’ soul with the soul in its ‘original’ state, and my account depends on this reading. In support of this association, notice that Plato refers to the first or original city as the “true city” (372e). Likewise, the true soul is likened to the “original nature” of Glaucus, before he became disfigured by life at sea. (611c-d)
- 39 Our fullest account of Glaucus comes from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (end of book XIII, start of book XIV). (Plato would surely have known the lost play by Aeschylus, *Glaucus Pontios*.) It is tempting to look for further significance in Plato’s choice of this figure. Glaucus was a mortal man who, by eating a sacred grass, became an immortal sea God. He also suffered for his excessive erotic desire for Scylla. But whatever else Plato has in mind, he is mainly appealing to the monstrous appearance of Glaucus, which obscured his divinity and repulsed Scylla.
- 40 Notice that Glaucus’s original or true nature also involves multiple elements [μέρη]. This could be seen as offering further evidence against the view that the true, original nature of the soul is simple. Admittedly, it is unclear how much weight the details of the metaphor are meant to bear.

Just as life beneath the sea distorts and obscures the appearance of the sea god Glaucus, the conditions of embodied life corrupt the soul. If the soul begins as an unforced harmony of parts, living a human life tends to disfigure this structure.

The reason for this is not hard to find. Not surprisingly, the problem with embodied life can be traced to our appetitive soul. For, "...by being filled with the so-called pleasures of the body it becomes big and strong, and then, no longer doing its own job, attempts to enslave and rule over that which it is unfit to rule..." (442a-b). Succumbing to the temptations of life, the appetites no longer adhere to the proper, rationally-designed nature they originally possessed. They now often oppose the rational part of the soul. As we saw above, it was the development of this conflict that first allowed us to distinguish the appetitive and rational parts through Plato's principle of opposites (436b-c).

Once again, the city analogy is helpful here. Recall that the city presented in books III and IV emerges from the true city first depicted in book II. Just as the embodied soul is a deformed version of the true soul, the feverish city is a deformed version of the original, healthy city. As before, the temptations of material life are to blame. Initially, the citizens have no need of rulers. Though distinguished by their functional specialties, they all work toward the common good of the city. They are content to live simple, modest lives.⁴¹ It is only when Glaucon demands material luxuries for these citizens that things begin to go awry. Once they expect couches, fancy deserts and other perks (372d-e), the city becomes inflamed. The part of the city concerned with its material needs grows too large, and, from this point on, justice will appear only as a harmony

41 The fit with my reading of the original soul would be even closer if the harmony of the true city could be traced back to an externally-imposed rational design. Socrates does not say this, but perhaps we find a hint of such a view in the following. He is confident that, if we assign jobs to people based on what they are best at doing, we will end up with a well-functioning city (with the right number of farmers, shoemakers, and so on). This suggests that there is a rational design guiding the distribution of people's natural talents.

enforced by the now-required guardian class. This virtue will be merely an imperfect approximation of the city's original, unforced state of harmony.

Like the city, the corrupted human soul now experiences justice in terms of obligation. The appetites must be controlled and regulated by reason. The soul is marked by conflict between these parts, or at least the constant threat of conflict. Harmony, when it is achieved, must be enforced, and is thus always somewhat tenuous.⁴²

The situation is vividly captured in Socrates' description of the soul in book IX as a hybrid animal: savage, multi-headed appetites; a lion as spirit; and a human as reason. Significantly, the rational part must gain mastery over the whole, and must:

...take care of the many-headed beast—like a farmer, feeding and domesticating the tame heads and preventing the wild ones from growing—making the lion's nature an ally and, caring for all in common, raising them in such a way as to make them friendly with each other and himself... (589a-b)

The appetites will always threaten to overstep their natural bounds. It is only through the constant efforts of reason that a just harmony of the soul can be maintained.⁴³

42 The view resembles Kant's point, in the *Groundwork* and elsewhere, that, for imperfectly rational beings, swayed by desires, the notion of a good will must be understood in terms of duty. We experience morality as something demanded of us, often in opposition to our own desires. This can be contrasted with a hypothetical holy will, which, like the true city or soul, would pursue what is morally good wholeheartedly. See Kant 1996, Ak. 4: 413–14, 439.

43 Plato makes a similar point about the contrast between the original and embodied soul in the *Timaeus* (41d-42d). There he describes the soul as originally being assigned to a star, following its harmonious, celestial orbits. Once given a body, the soul becomes disturbed, shaken by various perceptions and emotions. Its perfect circular motions are now replaced by violent rectilinear motions. To become just, we must master these disturbances:

“And he would have no rest from these toilsome transformations until he had dragged that massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth into conformity with the revolution of the Same and uniform within him, and so subdued that turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason. This would return him to his original condition of excellence” (42c-d; cf. 90d).

Obviously, the *Timaeus* account of the soul is different in many respects from that of the *Republic*. But one thing they hold in common is the idea that the unruly appetites must be forcibly governed, in the hope of returning the soul to its original harmonious state.

This feature of the embodied soul—the unceasing tension between its parts—helps us understand why Socrates believes his earlier account of the tripartite soul is inadequate. As he notes:

We will never grasp this matter [the account of the soul’s structure] precisely from the methods we have been using in our discussion. However, there is another longer and more time-consuming road leading to it. But perhaps we can proceed in a manner worthy of our previous statements and inquiries.” (435c-d)

He does not state why the methods employed here are inadequate, but a suggestion now presents itself. The tripartition of the soul has been established by identifying instances in which parts of the soul are opposed to one another. That is, it appeals to conflicts that arise only in the soul’s fallen state and that do not reflect its true or original nature. We need not entirely reject the resulting account, but we should recognize that it is incomplete and potentially misleading. If the soul was fundamentally characterized by conflict and opposition, then it could not be immortal. For a proper understanding of the soul, we must recognize these conflicts as the inevitable but unfortunate products of its embodied experiences.⁴⁴

Although the soul is corrupted by material life, this corruption is never total. Just as Glaucon remains essentially a god, even if he no longer resembles one, the human soul remains essentially or naturally harmonious. We should think of injustice as a kind of accident: a straying from the soul’s true nature due to the temptations of bodily life. Even the most corrupted appetites re-

44 When Plato again mentions this untaken longer road of inquiry, starting at 504b, he likens the account of the true virtues to a finished portrait, with the account in book IV being a mere sketch (504d). This reinforces the idea that embodied justice should be an imperfect likeness of true justice, not something radically different. An advantage of my account is that it preserves this likeness, for the enforced harmony of the parts of the embodied is an imperfect likeness of the unforced harmony of the original soul.

main somewhat responsive to reason, and they can be brought back closer to their original harmony: if not in this life, then at least in the next one.⁴⁵

Indeed, the story in book X of the soul's cyclical reincarnation now emerges as an essential feature of this account of the embodied soul. The intricate system of rewards and punishments is designed to ensure that the soul never veers too far from its original state. A glutton, for example, will be punished for his or her excessive hunger, and will then avoid such temptations when choosing the next life.⁴⁶ Over their many lives, souls will fall away from their true nature and then return closer to it, as the karmic wheel of justice turns.⁴⁷

To defenders of the view that the soul becomes purely rational after death, my claim that the soul remains tripartite even in the disembodied stages between earthy lives may look odd. Given that the appetites are so closely tied to the needs and wants of the body, why would the soul retain its appetitive part when the body is gone? What purpose would it then have? We can now address this concern. If this disembodied state of the soul was final and permanent, it would certainly make no sense for it to retain appetites, since they would be hopelessly vestigial. On my account, however, the appetites still play a crucial role in this disembodied state. Rather than lying dormant, they are being vigorously punished or rewarded, and they are responding to this treatment in a manner that shapes them for their next embodied life. Indeed, all three parts of the

45 We are now in a position to address Barney's concern about the psychological implausibility of the original, healthy city (see note 34 above). While the souls with whom we are familiar, corrupted by many lifetimes of embodiment, could not thrive in such a city (thus the complaints of Glaucon at 372c-e), the original, unconflicted souls would have flourished there. Moreover, the idea of such a city (or soul) remains valuable as an ideal model of justice, one that we can still approximate to some extent in our current fallen condition.

46 The exceptions to this process are certain tyrants. The worst of these souls appear to be irredeemably broken, incapable of restoration to justice. Their punishments never cease, for, instead of choosing new lives, they are thrown down into Tartarus (615c-616a).

47 As I noted earlier, we need not be committed to the truth of every detail of Er's tale. What is essential is only what is required to ensure the immortality of a tripartite soul: some sort of cyclical system of justice that keeps the soul from straying too far from its original harmonious structure.

soul will be active in this disembodied state, for it is during this stage of its existence that these parts are brought back closer into harmony. Through this rehabilitation, the tripartite soul is prepared for its next life.

Once the soul has embarked on this cycle of embodied and disembodied existence, it may never return fully to its pure, original state. As we saw, the disembodied souls depicted in the myth of Er bear the scars of their earthly lives. But the original soul still functions as an ideal to strive for and approximate, and this is the (appropriately Platonic) sense in which it represents the true nature of the soul.⁴⁸

Here, one might object that my account of the true soul faces a problem involving Plato's immortality argument. After all, Plato introduced the true soul precisely because the conflicted soul described in book IV seemed unfit for immortality. My characterization of the true soul as its original state might seem to leave this problem unaddressed. After all, it does not matter if the soul originally had a structure fine enough for immortality if that structure has now been corrupted by many lifetimes of embodiment. In other words, my account might seem to leave it unclear why our actual embodied souls remain immortal.⁴⁹

In fact, however, there are limits on how far the embodied soul can become corrupted. The elaborate reward and punishment mechanism that occurs between each embodied life of the soul ensures that it can never stray too far from its original nature. As a result, the soul, despite the presence of some conflict, always retains a structure sufficiently fine for immortality. By con-

48 One issue I have not addressed is whether the true, original soul is embodied or not. Based on what Plato tells us in the *Republic*, we are in no position to know. What we can safely say, however, is that the true soul was designed for embodied life and given the parts it will need for such a life. Moreover, given this design for embodiment, the inevitable mutilations that come with embodiment are also part of its nature. This is why Socrates can refer to the appetites as, “*by nature*, the most insatiable for money” (442a) or as naturally ruled by reason (444d). Such language is consistent with the broader reading I am defending.

49 I thank an anonymous referee for raising this thoughtful objection.

trast, if there were no limits on how far the embodied soul could stray from its original harmony, then nothing would prevent it from becoming too conflicted to remain immortal. This is the sense in which the original state of the soul continues to function as its true model.

Conclusion

I have argued that the immortality argument at the end of the Republic should be seen not as a rejection of the earlier tripartite account of the soul, but as a clarification of it. On my account, Plato is reasoning roughly as follows. We know, on independent grounds, that the soul is immortal. We also know that composite objects can be immortal only if they are very finely put together. However, the souls we encounter in our everyday lives do not seem finely put together: their parts are characterized by conflict and opposition, even in the best cases. Given what we already know, this conflict cannot be part of the essential nature of immortal souls. Instead, the true or original soul must be unconflicted, with a natural, unforced harmony of its parts. Over repeated phases of earthly life, the non-rational parts tend to succumb to temptation, coming into conflict with reason. Justice can then appear only as an enforced harmony, an imperfect likeness of the original. But, again, given what we know, there must be a mechanism ensuring that these conflicts can be contained without irrevocably damaging the soul. Since we find no such mechanism at work in our embodied lives, it must operate after death. While disembodied, the soul is restored and returned closer to its true, original state—close enough to meet the requirements for immortality, even if it can never fully repair the scars of earthly existence.

This interpretation of the Platonic soul brings a number of advantages. First, it reconciles the earlier account of the soul with the immortality argument of book X. The latter is opposed not to tripartition itself, but simply to composition that does not occur in the “finest manner”. Second,

the interpretation shows why the earlier account of justice is still valuable, since it remains a likeness of true justice, with the same tripartite, harmonious structure. At the same time, it shows why the book IV account of justice is flawed and incomplete: because it is based on the contingent conflict and opposition that characterize the fallen, embodied state of the soul, rather than its true nature. In this way, the reading is consistent with the striking comparison of our embodied soul to Glaukus, who remains godlike despite his disfigured appearance under the sea. Third, the interpretation motivates the elaborate punishment and reward system in Socrates' vision of the afterlife, since this is essential to keeping the soul's parts closer to their original harmony, as is required for immortality.

To my mind, however, the biggest advantage of the proposed reading is that it reveals a neglected and significant aspect of Plato's elaborate city-soul analogy. Many commentators have questioned why Plato bothers to introduce the true city only to immediately abandon it, turning to the feverish city that would become the focus of his account. Some scholars have worried that the true city is superfluous, with no apparent role in the larger argument of the work.⁵⁰ Others have insisted that Socrates could not have been serious in saying that he preferred the true city.⁵¹

On my reading, however, the true city is restored to its rightful place in the argument of the *Republic*. Like the true soul, it represents an original harmonious state, prior to the corruptions

⁵⁰ See, for example, Annas 1981, 78-9, as discussed in McKeen 2004, 74-5.

⁵¹ For examples of this widely held view, see the critical discussion in Jonas et al 2012, 33. Reeve 1988 argues that the first city is psychologically unstable, since it contains only producers satisfying their appetites (176-8). I disagree, for, even in Socrates' brief and truncated description of the original city, we find the citizens singing hymns to the God (372b), and thus showing interests that go well beyond the bodily appetites. Nonetheless, Reeve is right to note that there is no philosophy in the first city, and this point is instructive. Philosophy, for Plato, is a therapeutic practice. It helps restore us to our proper state. The true soul, in its original, uncorrupted condition, would not yet have a need for philosophy. I thank James Wilberding for drawing my attention to this issue.

resulting from material temptation. Its vision of an unforced harmony of its citizens functions as a valuable ideal and model for the enforced harmony of the later city. In this way, the true city is essential to preserving the analogy with the soul. Indeed, it functions as a valuable clue for identifying the true nature of the latter.⁵²

Nonetheless, there remains one crucial disanalogy between soul and city. Unlike the soul, the ideal city is not immortal. Socrates is quite clear about this: “It is difficult for a city composed in this way to be disturbed [κίνηθηναί]. However, since everything that comes in to being decays, not even one so composed will last forever. On the contrary, it, too, must face dissolution.” (546a) This difference in their fates might seem surprising, given how much he relies on the analogy between soul and city. However, the reason for this is clear. The city is a human creation. It lacks the divine mechanism of reincarnation, with its system of rewards and punishments, that keeps the soul from straying too far from its original state. When the city’s rulers make poor decisions, as they inevitably will, there is nothing to ensure that it stays close to its proper structure. Over time, it will inevitably drift away from justice and then collapse.

Fortunately, the soul is saved from this fate. Our task, then, is to resist the corrupting influences of embodied life as best we can. Here a proper education from childhood is key. Through it, a soul will be “...struck free of the leaden weight⁵³, as it were, of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by eating and other such pleasures and indulgences, which turn the soul’s gaze downward...” (519a-b). Should we achieve the life of a philosopher, we will re-

52 To be clear, this analogy between the true city and soul is at most a clue. Socrates never explores the longer path (435c-d, 504b) that would lead to a full account of the true soul’s nature, so any account of it must remain tentative. Still, I hope to have shown that my approach best explains why the book IV account of justice is inadequate, but still valuable.

53 As many have noticed, this is a peculiar image. Plato may have in mind the heavy weight used to sink a fishing line or net. (See Homer, *Iliad*, 24.80, a passage quoted in Plato’s *Ion*, 538d.) This is in keeping with the nautical imagery that pervades the *Republic*.

main as close as possible to the original state of the soul. We will choose our next life well, keeping always to the upward path on our thousand-year journey (621c-d).⁵⁴

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54 I hesitate to add any qualifications to Plato's triumphant conclusion, but a final note is in order. Ferrari cautions us that this process of repeatedly living the life of a philosopher cannot be so straightforward. As he points out in Ferrari 2008, 132, the life of a philosopher is conspicuously absent from the lots available to the dead choosing their next lives. This is because one is only truly a philosopher if one's soul is in the right order (ruled by reason), and the order of one's soul is explicitly not included in the lottery (618b). But what gives the philosopher an advantage over others is that he or she will choose a way of life that is most likely to end in philosophical wisdom, thus leaving them well-positioned for the next lottery. This is the best possible outcome, in that it maximizes the likelihood of keeping to the upward path over many lifetimes, but it is not quite a guarantee. Further complicating things, it is not easy to see how we should distinguish the factors included in the lottery from the internal soul-ordering that is one's own responsibility. For example, how could becoming a tyrant—the first life chosen in the tale of Er—have nothing to do with the latter? Here we have an appropriate aporia on which to end this account.

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