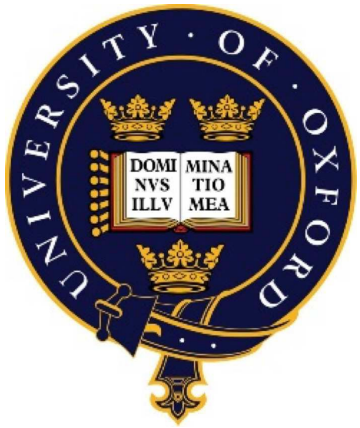
Archaia Phusis

The Original Nature of the Soul in Plato's Middle Dialogues



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Abstract

This thesis investigates Plato's conception of an original nature (*archaia phusis*) of the soul in the middle dialogues *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus.* The originally Hippocratic expression refers to a *temporally prior state* that represents a *normative standard*, and features prominently in Aristophanes's speech in the *Symposium* (191d1–2; 192e9; 193c5; 193d4). In *Republic* X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7, cf. *Tim.* 90d5), it designates the soul's condition of *phronēsis* and true virtue which we possessed at a prior point, are currently deficient in, and desire or should desire to restore.

Looking beyond the mere verbal occurrences of the expression, I argue that the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* feature a remarkably coherent conception of the soul's *archaia phusis*. Its temporal priority explains our capacity for restoration *via* the theory of recollection, while its status as a normative standard of fully realized virtue explains its supreme desirability. *Phronēsis* is the true way of having virtue of character because it purifies the soul from bodily beliefs, desires, and fears (*Phaedo*, *Republic*), a process which the *Phaedrus* depicts as a regrowing of the soul's wings.

Tracing the theme of the soul's *archaia phusis* in these dialogues touches on central questions in the study of Plato: do the soul's lower parts survive in our fully purified condition? How exactly is our state of virtue connected to desirability and *eudaimonia*? What is the relationship between *phronēsis* and virtue of character? What method of investigation is appropriate for discerning the soul's true and original nature? Do we desire our fully realized state because it 'belongs' (is *oikeion*) to us or because it is good? Last but not least, what do we make of the fact that immortality and the theory of recollection seem to play no role in the *Symposium*? By pursuing the question of the soul's *archaia phusis* through these four dialogues, the investigation reveals a rich tapestry of interconnected themes and questions, and some answers.

Number of words

The thesis contains approximately 70,800 words.

To my wife.

ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἡ Σοφία

Symposium 204b2–3

* * *

Und es wurde fertig, das Leidenswerk.
Es wurde vielleicht nicht gut, aber es wurde fertig.
Und als es fertig war, siehe, da war es auch gut.

Thomas Mann, ‘Schwere Stunde’

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τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐγγύς τι φαίνεται τοῦ φύσει
The 'original' seems to be closely related to that which is 'by nature'
Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1387a16

In the *Symposium*, Plato has the character Aristophanes tell a fantastical tale. In the mythical past, our human condition was quite different from the way we experience it today. Each of us was conjoined with another human in one complete and perfect spherical being. This 'original nature' (*archaia phusis*)[1] was almost godlike in its strength and power. However, because of our hubris against the gods, Zeus decided to punish and weaken us by having us cut in two. The result is our current condition, characterized by deficiency and imperfection. We long to be reunited with what originally 'belongs' (is *oikeion*)[2] to us, to become once again whole, dear to the gods, and happy. The name of the force that draws us toward the *oikeion*, and may one day in the future restore us to our *archaia phusis*, is '*erōs*'.

Aristophanes's story (189c2–193d5) is remarkable for a number of reasons. It contains some of the most comical passages in Plato's dialogues. At the same time, it speaks to many modern readers as Plato's account of human desire that most properly 'hits a nerve', rooting it in our deficiency and our wish to be made whole. Arguably the most remarkable feature of the poet's story, however, is its relationship to Plato's own

[1] Ἀρχαία φύσις, 191d1–2; 192e9; 193c5; 193d4.
[2] Οἰκεῖον, 193d2.

account of the human soul's fate and desire, as it is first developed in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. According to this account, there is a perfect, fully realized state which the soul once possessed but has since lost. Currently, it is in a condition of deficiency, hovering between complete lack and full realization. As a consequence of its situation, the soul desires, or should desire, to return to its original state.

Remarkably, Plato uses the exact expression '*archaia phusis*' in two places outside the Aristophanic story to refer to our original state of perfection. In an intriguing passage in *Republic* book X (611b1–612a7), the soul's current condition is likened to the sea-creature Glaucus, who has been drifting in the sea for too long. Glaucus's original limbs have become mutilated and he has amassed foreign accretions, to such an extent that his '*archaia phusis*' (611c7–d1) is no longer discernible. Like Glaucus, the soul is disfigured by the presence of foreign accretions and by the absence of proper parts. It can restore its 'true' or 'truest' nature[3] by following its desire for wisdom. In the culmination of the later *Timaeus* (90a2–d7), the aim of the ethical life is described as the rational soul's restoration in accordance with its '*archaia phusis*' (90d5). To bring about this return, we must identify ourselves with our spherical heads and restore the rational soul to its ordered and proper state of circular motion by engaging in contemplation.

The origins of the expression '*archaia phusis*' probably lie in Hippocratic medical literature, where it denotes the healthy state of a body.[4] In his *Collection of Hippocratic Words*, Erotianus defines it as the state 'before the illness and in accordance with nature'.[5] This definition reveals two aspects of the term. On the one hand, the *archaia phusis* is the *temporally prior* state that has obtained before a current illness. On the other hand, the *archaia phusis* is a *normative standard*: the correct, normal, or healthy condition whose

[3] Ἀληθέστατα φύσις, 611b1; ἀληθὴς φύσις, 612a3.

[4] Cf. Carvalho 2009, 30–1 with n. 8, as well as his *Anhang* I, which extensively explores the terminological use of ἀρχαία φύσις in Hippocratic medical literature.

[5] 'ἀρχαία φύσις· ἡ πρὸ τοῦ νοσεῖν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν οὖσα'. Cited after Nachmanson, 1918, 41.

restoration is the medical practitioner's aim.[6] When Plato adopts the notion of the '*archaia phusis*' and adapts it to make claims about the soul in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, it retains both its temporal and normative aspects.

In this thesis, I take the striking lexical recurrences of the term '*archaia phusis*', as well as its significance in Hippocratic medicine, as my justification for using the label '*archaia phusis*' to denote the general underlying concept in Plato's thought of the soul's perfect, fully realized condition that has obtained at a temporally prior point and serves as a normative standard—even where other terms and metaphors are used to refer to it. If we look beyond the actual lexical occurrences, two dialogues are particularly relevant. In the *Phaedo*, the soul in the state of *phronēsis* can fruitfully be analysed as having the character of an '*archaia phusis*'. We have once possessed *phronēsis* but are currently lacking it. Because *phronēsis* is our state of 'true virtue' (69b3), we should do everything in our power to return to it by recollection, the 'rediscovering of what belonged to us before' (76e1–2). The other place is the *Phaedrus* palinode (243e9–257b6), which integrates the central ideas of the middle-period dialogues into a full-blown, philosophically informed Aristophanes-type tale of loss and restoration of what we might call our '*archaia phusis*'. In its original state of full cognitive contact with the forms, the soul is likened to a chariot that is 'perfect and winged' (246b7–c1). In its current, deficient state, the soul has lost its wings and fallen to earth. Aided by *erōs*, the soul can engage in recollection of its previous knowledge, regrow its wings and return to its fully developed original condition.

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[6] Manuwald 2012, n. 10, and Carvalho 2009, 29–36. Cf. Aristotle *Rhet*. 1387a16: τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐγγύς τι φαίνεται τοῦ φύσει.

This thesis investigates the way Plato conceptualizes the soul's original nature in the middle dialogues *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus.* The questions it considers include: how is the soul's original nature soul characterized in these dialogues and how does it differ from its current, deficient condition? How does the main interlocutor Socrates think we can achieve epistemic access to this original state? How are the normative claims about the soul's *telos* and proper object of desire grounded in its original nature? What roles do the concepts of kinship (*sungeneia*) with the divine, and assimilation (*homoiōsis*) to the divine, play in Plato's account? Last but not least, how can comparison with Aristophanes and his account of our original nature and its desire for perfection help to reveal what is distinctive about the Platonic position?

The picture that emerges is a remarkably consistent underlying conception according to which the soul in its *archaia phusis* is characterized by its full possession of wisdom (*phronēsis*), which coincides with its state of 'true virtue' (*Phaedo* 69b3, *Symposium* 212a6–7).[7] The middle dialogues at the same time supply sophisticated reflections explaining why this condition of fully realized virtue is intrinsically desirable and renders us happy (*eudaimōn*). *Republic* I's function argument makes a compelling

[7] Thus the *Phaedo* contrasts the philosopher's 'true virtue' (ἀληθὴς ἀρετή, 69b3), which is the direct result of *phronēsis* but comprises the whole of human virtue, with the mere 'shadow-painting' (σκιαγραφία, 69b7) of 'popular and civil virtue' (δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή, 82a12–b1) achieved 'from habit and practice without philosophy and intelligence' (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης … ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ, 82b2–3). *Republic* VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6) contends that the pursuit of wisdom leads to a 'drying out' of other desires. The other virtues follow wisdom like the chorus follows its leader (489e4–490c10). In book VII, we arguably meet once again the *Phaedo*'s distinction between the true virtue attained by the philosopher—identified here entirely with the virtue of *phronēsis* (ἡ … τοῦ φρονῆσαι [ἀρετή], 518d11–e1)—and what are described as mere 'so-called virtues of the soul' (αἱ … ἄλλαι ἀρεταὶ καλούμεναι ψυχῆς, 518d9) acquired by non-philosophers from 'habit and practice' (ἔθεσι καὶ ἀσκήσεσιν, 518d11). In the *Phaedrus*, too, the philosophical lovers are described as 'enslaving that by which vice enters the soul, but liberating that by which virtue enters' (δουλωσάμενοι μὲν ᾧ κακία ψυχῆς ἐνεγίγνετο, ἐλευθερώσαντες δὲ ᾧ ἀρετή, 256b2–3). This virtue is revealed to be the soul's true virtue by the later remark that the acquaintance of the non-lover gives rise to a condition that is merely 'praised by the majority as a virtue' (ἐπαινουμένην ὡς ἀρετὴν, 256e6). While Diotima's account presents us with a difficulty because it does not portray the ascent to full self-realization as a return to a prior state, her description of this state is remarkably similar to the other middle dialogues: when the soul of the philosopher has achieved *phronēsis* and is in contact with the truth, it will give birth to 'true virtue' (ἀρετὴ ἀληθής, 212a6–7). This is opposed to the mere 'images of virtue' (εἴδωλα ἀρετῆς, 212a4) produced by the disciples of the lower mysteries.

case that the soul in its state of ontological excellence, its 'proper virtue' (*oikeia aretē*),[8] becomes what it essentially is and flourishes. From the *Republic*'s middle books (books V–VII), we get a better idea of why anything desires, or should desire, to realize its nature in this way. By attaining ontological excellence and instantiating its essential nature—in the soul's case, acquiring true human virtue and restoring its *archaia phusis*—an entity at the same time most fully participates in the good, which is the universal goal of our erotic desire (*Republic* 505e1–2). Similarly, Diotima points out that *erōs* is directed at the *good* (*Symposium* 205a1–4, d1–3, e7–206a1), and it is the impression that the missing object is good that causes and explains our desire for it (205d10–206a1). When Aristophanes in the *Symposium* identifies the cause and explanation of erotic desire in the impression that the missing object 'belongs' (is *oikeion*) to us, he is therefore mistaken. Nevertheless, the poet is onto something even with his introduction of the *oikeion*. Since it helps us to become what we are and realize ourselves as good, *phronēsis* and virtue are that which most properly belongs to us, our true *oikeion*.[9]

Characterizing our soul in its state of wisdom and true virtue as our *archaia phusis* preserves the two aspects of the Hippocratic '*archaia phusis*'. It is the correct, normal, or healthy condition with respect to which the non-virtuous soul is deficient. This characteristic of being a normative standard explains the desirability of restoring the *archaia phusis.* But what is the role of its second aspect, temporal priority? For Aristophanes, temporally prior union in the *archaia phusis* grounds our missing part's 'belonging' to us, and in this way causes and explains our desire for the object. For Plato,

[8] Οἰκεία ἀρετή, 353c1 *et passim.*

[9] In the *Phaedo*, the soul's virtuous state brought about with the reattainment of *phronēsis* is the 'order proper (rather than foreign) to the soul' (κοσμήσας τὴν ψυχὴν οὐκ ἀλλοτρίῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῆς κόσμῳ, 114e4–5, evoking the *Gorgias*'s definition of a thing's virtue as its state of 'proper order', οἰκεῖος κόσμος, 506e1–4). In the *Republic*'s function argument (352d2–354a11), a thing's state of full functional development is called its state of 'proper virtue' (οἰκεία ἀρετή, 353c1, 6, e2, for its opposite οἰκεία κακία see 353c7, with 609d1, 610e6). Indeed, Diotima's remark that we do not embrace what is our own unless we call the good 'οἰκεῖον' and the bad 'ἀλλότριον' (205e5–7) expresses a deeper insight into goodness as the source of true belonging (cf. further *Rep.* 586e2: τὸ βέλτιστον ἑκάστῳ, τοῦτο καὶ οἰκειότατον).

this function is taken over by the missing part's *goodness*. However, prior possession explains a different aspect of the relationship to our original nature, for which Aristophanes does not have a satisfying account. According to Plato's theory of recollection, prior possession accounts for our capacity for restoration of the *archaia phusis*.[10] It is telling that the *Symposium*, the one middle dialogue that lacks reference to temporally prior possession of our fully realized state, presents us with an alternative account of our innate capacity for the acquisition of wisdom and virtue—although, as I shall argue, this account is at the very least compatible with prior existence and recollection.

*

While the middle dialogues are consistent in their characterization of the soul's *archaia phusis* as its state of fully realized *phronēsis* and true virtue, they are equally consistent in disclaiming complete dialectical knowledge of what the soul in its true nature would look like. This methodologically self-conscious insistence on the preliminary character of what has been achieved can already be observed towards the end of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates cautions his interlocutors that the underlying hypotheses have not been proven from first principles and must be examined 'more clearly' (σαφέστερον) in the future (107b4–9).

The methodological reservations become more explicit in the *Republic*, with the introduction of tripartition and the question of whether the fully purified and truly virtuous soul would still exhibit parts. Just before tripartition is introduced in book IV,

[10] In the dialogues we shall be concentrating on, cf. esp. *Phaedo* 72e1–77d5 (recollection argument), and *Phaedrus* 243e9–257b6 (palinode), esp. 249d4–250e1. Cf. the *Phaedo*'s 'rediscovering of what belonged to us before' (76e1–2).

Socrates states that the current methods are adequate for present purposes, yet there is a 'longer and fuller road' (μακροτέρα καὶ πλείων ὁδὸς) that will 'exactly' (ἀκριβῶς) describe the soul's nature and whether it has the proposed tripartite structure (435c4–7). In book VI, Socrates explains that the education of the guardians requires more 'exactness' (ἀκριβεία) than the previous investigation if they are to develop true knowledge of the soul and its virtues. They must follow the 'longer road' (μακροτέρα περίοδος), grounding their hypotheses in knowledge of the good (504a4–b8). Although the middle books go beyond the main argument (books II–IV and VIII–IX) and make radically new suggestions about the soul's function and virtue—*phronēsis* is the only virtue that properly belongs to the soul (518d11–e1), and 'true life' is found only in the contemplation of the forms (490b6)—they remain on a 'middle route' (Scott 2015, 54–60) and do not advance to true knowledge based on first principles. Book X's Glaucus passage (611b1–612a7), which picks up the distinction between the current investigation and a higher method, similarly only announces this dialectical psychology without carrying out its programme. The discussion remains on the middle route and retains its preliminary character.

The *Phaedrus* palinode (243e9–257b6) likewise starts on a note of caution. Describing the soul as it truly is would require a 'divine and long exposition' (θεία καὶ μακρὴ διήγησις, 246a5). Instead, the simile of the winged chariot represents a 'human and shorter one' (ἀνθρωπίνη καὶ ἐλάττων, 246a5–6). It is impossible to assign to the palinode a 'level of argument' (Scott, *ibid.*), since it represents less a methodical investigation than a rhetorical display availing itself of outcomes from various discussions in the middle dialogues. However, the dialogue's later reflections on dialectical psychology (269d2–274b6) envision a science of the soul, whose practitioner follows the 'long and rough road' (πολλὴ καὶ τραχεῖα ὁδός, 272c2) rather than the 'short and smooth one' (ὀλίγη καὶ λεία, 272c2, cf. also ῥᾴων καὶ βραχυτέρα ὁδός, 272c1). This

in turn requires going the long way around (272d3), relating everything to first principles, and would reveal whether the soul is simple or complex (270c9–d7).

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The scope I have set myself for this investigation are four dialogues commonly associated with Plato's 'middle period'.[11] The *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, whose relative order of composition is not securely determinable, are usually placed close together at the beginning of this period, introducing the characteristic metaphysical outlook and the psychological, epistemological, and ethical implications that form the background of our discussion.[12] They most certainly predate, and prepare the way for, the *Republic*, with which Plato's middle-period thought reaches its culmination. The *Phaedrus* in many ways looks toward the later dialogues, but its centrally important palinode (243e9–257b6) is decidedly backwards-looking in its presentation of a whole range of the characteristic features of Plato's middle period.[13] These four dialogues, then, look towards and illuminate each other in a way that warrants bringing them together to explore my chosen topic.[14]

[11] I do not intend to delve too deeply into discussions of the relative ordering of the dialogues. I accept the consensus view (cf., for instance, Kraut 1992a, 4–20, and Irwin 1995, 11–3) which separates the dialogues into three periods: (1) an 'early period' maintaining a relatively faithful adherence to interests, methods, and tenets of the historical Socrates (although Plato 'develops, extends, and defends' these in his own way, Irwin 1995, 13; for a discussion of the 'Socratic' dialogues' specific character, cf. Vlastos 1991, chs. 2 and 3); (2) a 'middle period' in which Plato moves beyond the historical Socrates in all three respects, most notably for our purposes with the introduction of the theory of forms and a whole range of ontological, epistemological, psychological and ethical corollaries; and (3) a 'late period' in which middle-period doctrine is subject to alterations, expansions, and criticisms, in which Socrates is often not the main interlocutor, and in which we find distinct stylistic features that set them apart from the dialogues that precede them (for a good summary of the stylometric and statistical evidence in the relative dating of the dialogues, cf. Brandwood 1992).

[12] Cf. Bostock 1986, 2–3: 'there is no firm ground for saying which of the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* comes before the other … On all accounts they are near contemporaries, and it is also universally agreed that both come before the *Republic*, which in turn comes before the *Phaedrus*.'

[13] Cf. Nehamas and Woodruff 1995, *Introduction*.

[14] I will, however, give indications as to what we can expect from an expansion of the investigation to the later *Timaeus* in my concluding outlook.

My treatment will concentrate on those parts of the dialogues that are most relevant to my investigation. In the case of the *Symposium*, I shall confine myself to Aristophanes's speech (189c2–193d5, chapter 1) and Socrates's account of Diotima's teachings (201d1–212c3, chapter 6). Given the direct relevance of the *Phaedo*'s main themes to my thesis, the chapter on the *Phaedo* will draw on the entire dialogue, although the focus will be on its three central arguments (70c4–84b7, chapter 2). Because of its richness of themes and its importance for understanding Plato's middle-period thought, the *Republic* takes up two chapters. After a short brush with book I's function argument, the first of these will investigate the middle books (books V–VII, chapter 3). The second will focus on book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7, chapter 4). The chapter on the *Phaedrus* will centre on the palinode (243e9–257b6), but also look at the ensuing discussion of dialectical psychology (269d2–274b6, chapter 5).

Given that this thesis is focused on Plato's conception of our original nature, why start with the negative foil of Aristophanes's story, rather than with Plato's positive discussion of the topic in other dialogues? I have chosen this structure for three reasons. The first and least substantial is chronology. Aristophanes's story is almost certainly the first occurrence of the term '*archaia phusis*' in the Platonic corpus. If there is an *archaia phusis* theory in these texts, the poet's story can be seen as the prelude that introduces the term and its underlying concept, although in a comical and distorted fashion which requires later correction by Diotima. Starting with Aristophanes's speech in the *Symposium* then allows me to trace the concept in roughly chronological order through the other middle dialogues (*Phaedo—Republic—Phaedrus*).[15] The only exception from the chosen chronological structure is my treatment of Diotima's response to Aristophanes in the *Symposium*. Her speech raises some difficulties for the supposition of a consistent

[15] However, since my argument does not assume substantial doctrinal development on the topic of the *archaia phusis*, it does not depend on a precise chronology of these dialogues.

theory of the original nature of the soul in the middle dialogues. As these difficulties are best addressed in the light of the accounts found in the other middle dialogues, my discussion of Diotima will form the final chapter of the thesis.

The second reason to start with Aristophanes is the sheer expressive power of his account. Even though Aristophanes gets central things wrong in his repurposing of the *archaia phusis*, his story is more effective in bringing out features of humanity's relationship to its *archaia phusis* and the erotic desire to return to it than the passages in which Plato treats the topic in serious, positive terms. Aristophanes's story achieves this clarity by focusing on a few core elements and representing these in an exaggerated, even grotesque fashion. The third reason is the other side of the same coin. Aristophanes's account also *mis*represents central aspects of Plato's positive treatment of our original nature and the desire for its restoration. Rather than being a hindrance, these shortcomings and inconsistencies of the poet's story prove useful for discovering what is distinctive about Plato's position.

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My reading of Aristophanes's speech as a foil for middle-period Platonic doctrine is similar to, yet also crucially different from, the approach taken in David Sedley's 2017 article 'Divinization'. Sedley characterizes the Aristophanes story as a 'tragi-comic perversion'[16] of the late-period *Timaeus*. In particular, he points out the close parallel to the account of the individual and its journey from physical sphericity and psychic circular motion into disarray, identifying our ethical goal with the restoration of our *archaia phusis*. Since my project shares with Sedley's approach the view that the Aristophanes

[16] Sedley 2017, 89.

story is fruitfully compared to positive Platonic doctrine, but differs in where it looks for an expression of that doctrine, I shall briefly justify my chosen focus on the middle dialogues rather than the later *Timaeus*.

Sedley acknowledges that the *Timaeus* 'postdated the *Symposium*, probably by decades'.[17] He defends his approach by arguing that the *Timaeus* 'has a very special place in the Platonic corpus, as the only text to set out what looks like a Platonic *system*'. The *Symposium*, he argues, already presupposes 'in its readers some degree of knowledge of that system' and its doctrines, sometimes on the basis of the presentation of isolated themes in earlier dialogues, sometimes from 'previously unwritten' doctrines.[18] Refuting Sedley is not a declared aim of my thesis. Nevertheless, I hope my investigation will show that the middle dialogues *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, in close conversation with Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, already develop a fairly systematic and consistent account of the soul's original and true nature and its drama of loss and restoration.[19] The much later *Timaeus* builds on the systematic thought of the middle dialogues, developing its position and considering it from the perspective of physics and cosmology. If the middle dialogues caution us of the preliminary character of their findings and disclaim ultimate dialectical knowledge of the soul's original and true nature, a similar reservation is in fact shared by Timaeus, when he presents his account as a 'likely story' (*eikos muthos*),[20] rather than as a 'complete philosophical system'.[21]

A detailed investigation into how the *Timaeus* develops the subject of the *archaia phusis* of the soul in the middle dialogues and gives it a distinctive physicalist and

[17] *Ibid.*, 94.
[18] *Ibid.*, 95.
[19] Sedley fails to point out that this original and true nature is likewise called '*archaia phusis*' in *Rep.* 611c7–d1. The middle dialogues do, of course, lack the *Timaeus*'s special physicalist take on the subject matter, but they oftentimes employ physical similes for the soul not unlike Aristophanes's proto-humans.
[20] Εἰκός μῦθος (29d2; 68d2).
[21] Sedley 2017, 95.

cosmological spin would be a worthwhile continuation of this project, and in my concluding outlook of the thesis I give an outline of the kinds of developments we may expect from such an investigation. Yet the deliberate focus on the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* in the present study has the virtue of demonstrating that we do not have to wait for the *Timaeus* to find a fairly developed and consistent account of the soul's *archaia phusis*.

*

A final word is in order on the gender of the philosopher. Regrettably, both the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* see philosophical reflection begin only after the expulsion of female characters from the scene. With the exception of the fictitious spokeswoman Diotima in the *Symposium*, all middle dialogues represent conversations that take place exclusively among men, and picture by and large male individuals as the subject of *erōs*, the life of philosophy, and of the potential attainment of human perfection and true happiness. Yet famously, Plato in the *Republic* makes Socrates argue that there is no difference in nature that would justify excluding women from philosophy and from the office of guardianship of the *polis*.[22] It would be artificial and out of place in the concrete communicative contexts described in these dialogues to include female philosophers in the direct translations where we find none in the Greek text. At the same time, I see no problem in taking Plato and his character Socrates at their word, supposing that what is being said about the philosopher, our human nature, its function, virtue, and happiness, does not exclusively apply to men. Wherever I am not directly quoting Plato's text, the philosopher

[22] Cf. *Rep.* 456c1–3: 'Then we're not legislating impossibilities or indulging in mere wishful thinking, since the law we established is in accord with nature. It's rather the way things are at present that seems to be against nature.' Trans. Grube and Reeve 1992.

will for this reason be referred to in the feminine gender. All philosophical souls are meant to be included by this.

Chapter 1

Story of the Body:

Aristophanes's Account of *Erōs* in the *Symposium*

yes, yes,
that's what
I wanted,
I always wanted,
I always wanted,
to return
to the body
where I was born.

Allen Ginsberg, 'Song'[23]

Introduction

The *Symposium*[24] narrates a series of speeches exploring and praising *erōs*. The first three participants—Phaedrus (178a6–180b8), Pausanias (180c1–185c3), and Eryximachus (185e6–188e4)—each in their way contribute insights to a developing understanding of this subject.[25] Yet the final speaker, the character Aristophanes, criticizes his

[23] Ginsberg 1956, 39–41.

[24] For the Greek text of the *Sympoisum*, I use Burnet's 1901 OCT edition. Translations are Rowe 1998, with emendations.

[25] The role of the speakers before Socrates has been the subject of changing evaluations in the literature. On what may be called the 'classical interpretation', these stylized representations of expert views prevalent in various strands of Greek popular and scientific thought at Plato's time should be read as irrelevant or at least fundamentally mistaken. They would thus be mere negative contributions in need of refutation and correction by Socrates/Diotima, who finally presents the truth of the matter. For a characterization of this interpretation, cf. Horn 2012, 1. We can still find it expressed in Rowe 1998, 8. More recently, the view that each of the previous speakers contributes some insight to a developing account of *erōs* has gained support in the scholarship and can by now be counted as the prevalent reading. Prominently, this is argued in Sheffield 2006a and in particular 2006b, where she compares Plato's representation of the previous speakers' expert opinions to Aristotle's endoxic method. Her article also contains an account of the contributions made by each of the earlier speeches. Cf. further Sedley 2006a.

In chapters 1 and 6, I argue that Aristophanes unwittingly presents an account of human nature and desire whose central structural elements are not too far from Plato's actual position. These chapters can be seen as a contribution to the scholarship that argues for a developing view of *erōs* in the dialogue's various speeches. For other such studies asserting a philosophical role of Aristophanes's account for the development of *erōs* (albeit with widely varying views as to what that role is), cf. Nussbaum 2001 (1986), 171–6, Carvalho 2009, Manuwald 2012, Destrée 2015, Obdrzalek 2017, and Sedley 2017, on which I comment in the introduction. *Pace* Bury 1932, Dover 1966, 1980, and more recently Rowe 1998, 9.

predecessors. In his speech (189c2–193d5) the poet explains that like most people they do not recognize the true power of *erōs*. *Erōs* is in fact 'the most philanthropic of gods, helper of humankind, and doctor of those ills whose cure would bring happiness to the human race on the largest scale' (189c8–10).[26] Understanding the healing power of *erōs*, however, first requires an adequate account of human nature and its ailment:

> 'First, you need to learn about human nature and what has happened to it; for our nature as it was, once upon a time, was not the same as it is now, but of a different kind.'
>
> δεῖ δὲ πρῶτον ὑμᾶς μαθεῖν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν καὶ τὰ παθήματα αὐτῆς. ἡ γὰρ πάλαι ἡμῶν φύσις οὐχ αὐτὴ ἦν ἥπερ νῦν, ἀλλ' ἀλλοία.
>
> *Symposium* 189d5–7

Aristophanes clearly contrasts his speech with the previous ones, characterizing his contribution as an 'anthropological turn' to the discussion.[27] As we shall see, *erōs* is for him the result of human deficiency. It draws us toward that which naturally belongs to us and would complete us. The focus on human nature and its deficiency is an important contribution to the developing understanding of *erōs* in the *Symposium*. It introduces a theme we shall find to be of central importance in Socrates's later report of Diotima's teachings.[28] At the same time, the above passage announces the peculiar way in which

[26] ἔστι γὰρ θεῶν φιλανθρωπότατος, ἐπίκουρός τε ὢν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἰατρὸς τούτων ὧν ἰαθέντων μεγίστη εὐδαιμονία ἂν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ γένει εἴη.

[27] The gesture of introducing a fundamentally new dimension which will facilitate true appreciation of the phenomenon under discussion is repeated in the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates begins his palinode by announcing a 'psychological turn' in remarkably similar language: δεῖ οὖν πρῶτον ψυχῆς φύσεως πέρι θείας τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἰδόντα πάθη τε καὶ ἔργα τἀληθὲς νοῆσαι, *Phaedrus* 245c2–4. Cf. chapter 5.

[28] I shall discuss this in chapter 6. On Socrates' account, *erōs* is rooted in our current deficiency in *goodness*, and can help us to perfect ourselves by leading us all the way to the production of true virtue in the contemplation of beauty. Two claims in particular confirm the close connection of the characteristic activity of *erōs* with human nature. Firstly, Diotima states that it is in this state, 'if anywhere, that life is worth living for a human being' (211d1–2). Secondly, Socrates claims that for bringing about this state, 'one could not easily get a better co-worker with human nature than *erōs*' (212b3–4).

Aristophanes is going to conceptualize human nature's deficient and complete conditions. His anthropology takes the form of a temporally structured aetiology. From primordial integrity in the mythical past, human nature first falls to its current condition of deficiency. If all goes well, it may one day be restored to its original completeness.

In the first section of this chapter, I introduce Aristophanes's account of *erōs*, analysing its central structural elements. I characterize Arstophanes's narrative as a 'story of the body' that identifies human nature with the body and its physical condition. I give an account of our prelapsarian 'original nature' (*archaia phusis*) and explain the Hippocratic background of this concept. I then consider our postlapsarian condition, where the original nature is split into our current, deficient nature and the part which belongs (is *oikeion*) to us. I conclude the first section with an account of Aristophanes's underlying view of 'belonging' as the cause and explanation of *erōs* (section 1). Next, I turn to some problematic issues in Aristophanes's account. I comment on the questionable choice of the body as the subject of his account, the unclear explanation of erotic desire by the fact that the object 'belongs' to us, as well as its limited success in accounting for our capacity for restoration of the *archaia phusis*. I also problematize Aristophanes's questionable choice of philosophical and cultural model for his account, Empedocles's zoogony. I thus demonstrate that Aristophanes's anthropological story raises a number of questions which render it an unsatisfying account of our original nature and our desire to restore it (section 2).

By indicating how Plato in his own positive treatment is going to present more satisfactory answers to each of these questions, the second section prepares the transition to our examination of Plato's account of the soul's *archaia phusis*, starting with the next chapter on the *Phaedo*.

1 Aristophanes's Account of *Erōs* (189c2–193d5)

1.1 Humanity's Bodily Nature

The protagonist of Aristophanes's account is human nature (ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις, 189d5; 191d3) as it moves from primordial integrity to its current state of deficiency and, hopefully, back to restored integrity in the future. However, what is here referred to as 'human nature' is almost exclusively the human body and its physical appearance. The states of completeness and deficiency, as well as the experiences or sufferings (παθήματα, 189d6; 191a5) that lead from one to the other, are all by and large physical.[29] Insofar as the account of humanity's fate is a narrative of physical completeness, subsequent deficiency, and restored completeness, its narrative may be described as a 'story of the body'.[30]

1.2 The *Archaia Phusis*

In its complete state, human nature is referred to quite consistently as the '*archaia phusis*', our 'original nature' (191d1–2; 192e9; 193c5; 193d4). It is characterized by wholeness and oneness, physically represented by spherical shape and circular movement.[31] The

[29] There is one reference to 'soul' (ψυχή, 192c7) in Aristophanes's speech, when the lovers' souls are confused about what they want. This does not seem sufficient to me to warrant ascribing an important explanatory role to the soul in the poet's story. Indeed, the passage that immediately follows makes this abundantly clear. Anybody would accept Hephaestus's offer to fuse our bodies back together, as our lost (physical) wholeness and the resulting lack are what explains *erōs*. Aristophanes's focus on the human body will, of course, be a crucial difference to the way in which Plato presents his own version of the *archaia phusis*—as the human *soul*'s original and true nature. Cf. subsection 2.1 below. Despite the difference, there is still a structural similarity between the two accounts, in that both root the phenomenon of *erōs* in human nature and its deficiency.

[30] This is, of course, to contrast it with the 'story of the soul' which Plato develops in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere. I take the expression 'story of the soul' from Nightingale 2021, 116–7, who in turn locates the origin of this sort of 'soul-narrative' in Orphic myths: 'for the Orphics, the soul is divine but falls into bodies and gets reincarnated as a punishment for an originary crime. Once it purifies itself and gets initiated, the soul goes to dwell everlastingly with the gods. Plato's story of the soul follows this same narrative arc: after a divine beginning, it falls into the prison of the body and reincarnation; it can return to an incorporeal life in the divine realm of the Forms if it purifies itself by practicing philosophy.' I comment on Plato's use of the Orphic myth as a model for his own account in subsection 2.4 below.

[31] Aristophanes describes the *archaia phusis* as 'completely spherical' (189e5–6), and language of circularity abounds in its characterization (189e6; 190a1; 190a7; 190a8; cf. also the revolving or round

expression '*archaia phusis*' probably originates in the Hippocratic tradition. In the extant medical texts, we find it used to refer to the healthy state of a body.[32] Erotianus in his *Collection of Hippocratic Words* defines 'ἀρχαία φύσις' as the state 'before the illness and in accordance with nature'.[33] Erotianus stresses two aspects of the concept. As the state 'before the illness', it carries the sense of *temporal priority*.[34] As the state that is 'in accordance with nature' (*kata phusin*), it represents a *normative standard*.[35] This latter aspect makes the *archaia phusis* the correct, normal, or healthy condition which the medical practitioner aims to restore.[36]

The *archaia phusis*'s double sense of temporality and normativity corresponds with our ordinary language conception of 'healing'. If we reflect on this expression, we find that it usually carries the restorative sense of returning to a previous state.[37] However, for such a return to qualify as a 'healing', it must at the same time be towards a state of health and proper order—making a broken foot whole again is an example of healing, while returning the healed foot to its broken condition is not. Indeed, the sense of establishing a state of proper order or health seems to be more central, as we can apply

shape and movement, 190b3–4). The connection of circularity with completeness is present already in Empedocles (DK B27–9) and can be found in a number of Platonic texts. The movement of the divine procession and the view of true being in the *Phaedrus* is circular (245c5–249d3, cf. chapter 5). The *Timaeus* explains that the sphere is the most perfect shape (33b1–7). The goal of the ethical life consists in re-identifying ourselves with the intellect located in our (spherical) head, and restoring the circular motions as far as possible (90a2–d7). Cf. Sedley 2017, 92, with whom I engage in the introduction to this thesis.

[32] Cf. Carvalho 2009, 30–1: 'Als terminologischer Ausdruck [der hippokratischen Medizin; HK] bezeichnet ἀρχαία φύσις das Naturgemäße bzw. den Normalzustand, d. h. das maßgebliche gute Befinden: das Vollkommene, Unverletzliche, Unversehrte.' Ἀρχαία φύσις bezieht sich auf diejenige Verfassung, in der alles unbeschädigt, am Platze und in Ordnung ist. Die Wendung nennt das Heile, Gesunde als solches. Der ἀρχαία φύσις wird insofern das Gestörte und Beschädigte, das Angeschlagene, Lädierte und Leidende bzw. Das Leistungsunfähige und Verdorbene entgegengestellt. Im Gegensatz zur ἀρχαία φύσις steht also nichts anderes als die νόσος – das Kranke, Verletzte, Versehrte oder Verwundete.' The terminological use of ἀρχαία φύσις in Hippocratic medical literature is documented in *ibid.*, n. 8, and in his *Anhang* I.

[33] 'ἀρχαία φύσις· ἡ πρὸ τοῦ νοσεῖν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν οὖσα'. Cited after Nachmanson, 1918, 41. Found in Carvalho 2009, ch. 3 n. 8. Cf. further the entry in Hesychius of Alexandria's *Lexicon* s.v. ἀρχαία φύσις as found in Latte 1953, A 7572. Listed in Carvalho 2009, ch. 3 n. 8.

[34] This sense is intended in the alternate expression 'previous nature' (ἡ πάλαι ἡμῶν φύσις, 189d6).

[35] For this sense, cf. Aristotle *Rhet*. 1387a16: τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐγγύς τι φαίνεται τοῦ φύσει.

[36] Manuwald 2012, n. 10, and Carvalho 2009, 29–36.

[37] Thus the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'to heal' as '[t]o make whole or sound in bodily condition' and 'to free from disease or ailment, *restore* to health or soundness' (my emphasis). The Cambridge dictionary has 'to make or become well *again*, especially after a cut or other injury'.

'healing' even to cases where temporal priority is missing, and a person has never been 'healthy' in the relevant respect before. In such a case, 'healing' describes a development to the state that *would* obtain for a healthy human being, given its nature.

Given that Aristophanes sets out to praise *erōs* as the 'healer' of human nature, we should not be surprised to find him employing medical terminology such as that of the '*archaia phusis*'. The account presents itself as the medical record of human nature, as it moves from health to illness and hopefully back to health. Aristophanes thus picks up and develops the theme of medical expertise from his predecessor, the doctor Eryximachus. One particular episode in the *Symposium* may be seen as comically enacting the rough structure of his account. Originally, by the symposiasts' seating order, Aristophanes is supposed to speak after Pausanias and before Eryximachus. However, a fit of hiccups prevents the poet from speaking at his allocated point (185c4–e5), and his speech instead follows that of Eryximachus. After other attempts to cure his condition have failed, he is finally 'healed' by the doctor's prescribed 'sneeze treatment'.[38] This has an obvious comical effect, and also places the poet in closer vicinity to Agathon and Socrates, adding to the sense of heightened importance of Aristophanes's contribution (cf. Obdrzalek 2017, 70–1). At the same time, the progression from an original state of order and health which is temporarily upset and finally restored may be seen as anticipating the narrative structure of Aristophanes's temporally structured account.

1.3 Our Current Condition and the *Oikeion*

In Aristophanes's account, humanity's primordial strength and power, in the absence of moral orderliness, renders it insolent, unrestrained, and unjust.[39] In their hubris, our ancestors attempt an 'ascent to heaven'[40] and threaten the gods. In response, the gods

[38] On Erximachus as Aristophanes's doctor, cf. Trivigno 2017, 59–60.
[39] Ἀσελγαίνειν, 190c6; 190d4; ἀκολασία, 190c8; ἀδικία, 193a2.
[40] Εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνάβασις, 190b8.

punish them by cutting them in two, resulting in our current condition of deficiency. Our current, postlapsarian condition is characterized by halfness and lack of oneness. By dividing each original proto-human in two, the gods have made us weaker (190c8). We are missing our other half or '*sumbolon*' (191d4, 191d5), the tally that would complete us. Our unique *sumbolon*, whose absence separates the deficient from the complete condition of our nature, is described as '*oikeion*', as 'our own', 'belonging', or 'proper' (193d2) to us.[41] The quality of 'belonging' together is grounded in the fact of prior union in the *archaia phusis*.

The power of *erōs* as a healer of human nature (189c9; 191d3; 193d5) consists in its drawing us to the *oikeion* and helping us to restore ourselves in our *archaia phusis*. If we manage to become orderly (κόσμιος, 193a4) and lead a life in piety (εὐσέβεια, 193a8; 193d4) towards the gods, we are allowed to rejoin our other half, and can thus 'bring love to its perfect conclusion' (193c4).[42] In this state, we would be blessed (μακάριος, 193d5) and happy (εὐδαίμων, 189c10; 193c3; d5) and would gain friendship and reconciliation with the gods (193b3–4). For the opposite case of increased hubris, Aristophanes raises the possibility of a physical state of human nature being punished a second time. In a particularly comical remark, he explains that we might be split again and be forced to hop around on one leg (190d4–6).

1.4 The Cause and Explanation of Erotic Desire

Aristophanes does not present us with a fully developed theory of *erōs*. As we shall see in chapter 6, Socrates's Diotima is later in the *Symposium* going to attempt to reconstruct the general theory of erotic desire underlying the poet's account on his behalf—with the

[41] The Greek adjective 'οἰκεῖος' originally just means 'in or of the house'; of things, it expresses (a) personal property in the sense of 'one's own'; of persons, it denotes (b) kinship, someone of the same household or a close friend; it can also stand for something that is (c) proper, fitting or suitable to something. The opposite is 'ἀλλότριος': 'alien', 'foreign', 'strange'. Cf. LSJ s.v. οἰκεῖος.

[42] ἐκτελεῖν τὸν ἔρωτα.

ultimate aim of criticizing it and contrasting it with her own theory (205d10–206a1). By contrast to this general '*oikeion* theory of *erōs*' (as I shall call it), Aristophanes's account remains more specific, especially on two counts. (1) Aristophanes considers a limited scope for the phenomenon of *erōs*, which for him comprises only interpersonal love. The notion of the *oikeion* is for him confined to the person that is our unique matching counterpart, not to a general object of erotic desire more broadly conceived. He would thus not consider his account to cover, for instance, our desiderative attitudes towards the limbs of our bodies, as Diotima will. (2) The poet is moreover quite specific in what grounds the 'belongingness' of our object of desire. What renders our matching tally '*oikeion*' to us is the fact of temporally prior physical union in the *archaia phusis*.[43] Diotima will generalize this aspect, too, characterizing the *oikeion* as what 'belongs' to us because its possession would make us whole—whether we have actually possessed it in the past or not.

Even if Aristophanes has not worked out a general theoretical account of *erōs*, he has a clear view as to why we erotically desire our missing counterpart. What causes and explains *erōs* is the fact that we consider the missing object as 'belonging' (*oikeion*) to us. Because our 'belonging' together is intimately tied up with prior union in the *archaia phusis*, we can also say that it is our sense of lost wholeness that causes and explains *erōs.* Aristophanes sums up his theory of *erōs* in the following way:[44]

> 'The cause is as I have said, that this was our original nature (*archaia phusis*), and that we were wholes; and so the name "*erōs*" belongs to the desire and pursuit of the whole.'

[43] Obdrzalek 2017 expresses this rather contingent basis for 'belonging' to each other rather fittingly: 'the quality which occasions love is simply the physical-historical quality of being one's other half' (86).

[44] Rowe 1998, 159 identifies in this sentence the key to understanding the philosophical importance of Aristophanes's speech.

> Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ αἴτιον, ὅτι ἡ ἀρχαία φύσις ἡμῶν ἦν αὕτη καὶ ἦμεν ὅλοι· τοῦ ὅλου οὖν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ διώξει ἔρως ὄνομα.
>
> *Symp.* 192e9–193a1

While this particular passage presents the *archaia phusis* (the 'whole') as the object of *erōs*, other passages suggest that *erōs* desires the *oikeion*, the missing part that belongs to us by virtue of the original union. Overall, it is fair to say that Aristophanes does not care much about any sense of primacy here. He presents our desire for the *archaia phusis* and for the *oikeion* as two sides of the same coin. And indeed, this seems perfectly reasonable. After all, the *archaia phusis* is nothing other than the full possession of the *oikeion*, while what it is for something to be *oikeion* is precisely the fact that it belongs to us *qua* prior union in the *archaia phusis*. As we shall see in chapter 6, Diotima's later generalizing moves (205d10–206a1) do not take away, but rather distil what is distinctive about Aristophanes's account of 'belonging' as the cause and explanation for erotic desire, reconstructing the general theory underlying the poet's account.

2 Questions Raised by Aristophanes's Account

In the previous section, we have seen how Plato makes his character Aristophanes present an account of the phenomenon of *erōs* that utilizes the Hippocratic concept of the *archaia phusis*. In its *temporal* sense, the *archaia phusis* is a state we have once been in but have since lost. Our current condition is confined to incompleteness and deficiency. In its *normative* sense, the *archaia phusis* is our state of full realization, the state we all desire, or should desire, to return to. The cause and explanation of this desire is that the missing object is *oikeion* to us: it 'belongs' to us by virtue of prior union in the *archaia phusis*.

In this section, I turn my attention to a number of questions raised by the poet's account of our original nature and of *erōs*. Firstly, has Aristophanes picked the right subject of his account by identifying 'human nature' and its condition of happiness with the body and its state of wholeness, independently of its epistemic or character development (subsection 2.1)? Secondly, is the purely contingent fact that we once formed a union with our other half in the *archaia phusis* sufficient to ground its 'belonging' to us, and to thus make it the appropriate cause and explanation of our erotic desire (subsection 2.2)? Thirdly, how good an account of erotic desire is Aristophanes's story if it can tell us little or nothing about our actual capacity to find and reunite with our *oikeion* and to restore the *archaia phusis* (subsection 2.3)? Lastly, Aristophanes models his account clearly not only on the medical model discussed here, but fills in this narrative frame with other philosophical and cultural ideas, particularly as they are found in the zoogony of Empedocles. But has the poet chosen the right model on which to fashion his account of *erōs*? By indicating how we can expect Plato to give different answers to these questions in his own positive treatment of our *archaia phusis*, I hope that this section will be a suitable preparation for our investigation into Plato's positive treatment of these issues in the middle dialogues, starting with the *Phaedo* in the next chapter.

2.1 Subject of the Account

If the *archaia phusis* is supposed to be the state of perfection and full development in which we lack nothing and are blessed and happy, then it is unclear whether Aristophanes has picked the correct subject in his purely physical 'story of the body'. To establish his desired conclusions about our *telos* and happiness would require that who we are at core coincides fully or primarily with our bodies and their physical states. Yet being in physical health seems to be far from the only thing, or even the main thing, that is required to constitute self-realization and a flourishing human existence. We may surmise that a happy life requires certain mental qualities, such as epistemic and character virtue. After all, it is hard to picture a person happy who is frustrated by unchecked desires or constantly overcome with fear. Happiness also seems at odds with cognitive dissonance, mistaken evaluations, and confusion about what concerns the overall goal and good in life.

If we look at Aristophanes's story, we find that it is precisely the full physical development and strength of humanity's *archaia phusis*, in the absence of character qualities such as self-restraint and piety, that has led to its initial hubris and fall. This should make us wary of whether being in this state really guarantees our blessedness and happiness. My concern here is not that Aristophanes's *archaia phusis* is necessarily connected with, and leads to, badness of character, in which case its restoration would necessarily lead to a 'relapse', a repetition of the original sin and attendant punishment. At least in Aristophanes's presentation, it is perfectly conceivable for the *archaia phusis* to exist without being condemned to repeat its ancient wrong. Humanity can avoid this fate if it undergoes sufficient character improvement. The end of his account presents us with just such a restored *archaia phusis* that is also morally improved and reconciled with the gods.

The problem with the poet's account is rather that the *archaia phusis* lacks a necessary connection to virtue of character. Yet it is precisely character development in the form of orderliness and piety which is depicted as a necessary condition for restoring the *archaia phusis*.[45] As we shall see in the remainder of this thesis, what I argue to be Plato's positive account of the *archaia phusis* takes the opposite extreme by fully identifying the self with the soul and its mental life. The soul in its *archaia phusis* has fully realized the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, whose full possession coincides with fully realized, true virtue of character. For this reason, it can avoid the frustrations, fears, and pains of a life that is mistaken about its good and suffers from cognitive dissonance. By establishing a necessary connection between our *archaia phusis* and its excellence of intellect and character, Plato can tell a more sophisticated story of why our *archaia phusis* is our state of happiness.

2.2 The Cause and Explanation of Erotic Desire

As we have seen, Aristophanes identifies the cause and explanation of erotic desire in the object's property of being *oikeion*, 'belonging' to us by virtue of our prior union in the *archaia phusis*. However, it is not at all clear why something exhibiting the 'physical-historical quality of being one's other half'[46] should exert this attractive force on us. As Diotima points out in her speech (205d10–206a1, cf. chapter 6), restoring oneself to a temporally prior state of quantitative wholeness is desirable if, and only if, the state and what we are lacking appears *good* to us. Historically belonging to another person only prompts an attempt to get back together if at least something about this union appears

[45] Of course happiness itself, on Aristophanes's purely physical account, is not inherently connected with the possession of virtue of character, which is imposed as an external condition for restoration by the gods. In viewing the display of a virtuous character merely as a means to obtaining what they want from the gods, Aristophanes's humans are characterized as infantile, not yet capable of understanding the intrinsic happiness resulting from a virtuous disposition.

[46] Obdrzalek 2017, 86.

good to us. On Plato's middle-dialogue account, it is precisely the object's *goodness* that causes and explains its desirability.

2.3 Capacity for Restoration

A third unanswered question concerns humanity's capacity to restore itself in its *archaia phusis*. Even if there is a unique matching part out there for each and every one of us, the poet's account remains silent on how we should ever hope to find our 'other half'. For its activity of 'leading us to the *oikeion*',[47] Aristophanic *erōs* seems to provide only half of what is required. It instils in us the desire for our missing counterpart, without furnishing us with the means to bring about the desired restoration. For an account of the *archaia phusis* not merely as an unattainable ideal, he would have to demonstrate how we can hope to retrieve our missing partner, without being dependent on sheer luck.

In the following chapters, I shall show that Plato's conception of our *archaia phusis* and of *erōs* entails a convenient explanation of our capacity for restoration. While he dismisses temporally prior possession as a way of explaining the 'belonging' of what we are lacking, he repurposes it to explain our in-principle capacity to return to our *archaia phusis*. This is because *phronēsis*—the soul's state of intellectual virtue which coincides with our state of true virtue of character—is a cognitive state. Having been in this state before, we can recollect our prior knowledge and recover what we have lost. While actually recollecting is a privilege of the few, Plato thus provides a mechanism for the restoration of our *archaia phusis*.

[47] εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἄγων, *Symp.* 193d2

2.4 Philosophical and Cultural Models

Finally, we may wonder whether Aristophanes has picked the right philosophical and cultural model on which to fashion his account. While the *motif* of a medical *restitutio ad integrum* supplies the general framework of his account with its centrally important notion of the *archaia phusis*, he fills in this frame by drawing on other sources.[48] Most prominent are echoes of Empedocles and his zoogony: Aristophanes's account of the division of an original state of wholeness which yields humanity's current condition, together with the mention both of further division in the future and the prospect of eventual reunion, clearly relies on Empedocles. In his zoogony, the pre-Socratic philosopher similarly refers to originally 'whole-natured' creatures (οὐλοφυεῖς, fr. B 62) who are torn apart to form humanity's current condition and will be further divided under the influence of Strife—until a recombination under the influence of Love puts them back together to ultimately return to their whole-natured origin.[49]

If we reflect on Aristophanes's choice of this zoogonical model, a problem becomes apparent for his account's ability to explain erotic desire: the poet mixes up humanity's phylogenesis with the individual's ontogenesis, brushing over the fact that everyone from the second generation onwards will never have experienced original union in the *archaia phusis*. Thus neither the existence of one unique matching counterpart, nor the desire to be reunited can properly be explained for these later generations.[50] What

[48] For a general account of possible Presocratic sources and models for the speech, see Dover 1966. But see the criticism of his treatment of Empedocles in O'Brien 2007, 80–1.

[49] The case is argued in detail in O'Brien 2007, with a concise summary on p. 75, n. 31: 'Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (189c2–193d5) tells of two successive divisions of mortal creatures, one real (190d1–191d5), one a threat (1933a3–7; cf. 190d4–6), with the hope of possible reunion (192d2c–193a1). Those three features I would claim are Empedoclean in origin, looking back to Empedocles' two zoogonies. In a zoogony of increasing Scrife, whole-natured creatures are divided into men and women, who will one day be torn apart into separate limbs. In a zoogony of increasing Love, separate limbs are joined together as monsters, and then as men and women, who will one day blend as whole-natured creatures. Aristophanes' two divisions, or so I would claim, are taken from the zoogony of increasing Strife. The hope of possible reunion reflects a final stage in the zoogony of increasing Love.'

[50] Dover 1966, 44, speaks of a 'gay indifference to the distinction between individual and species' characteristic of folktales (but not of a philosophical account that is to hold any water). If Aristotle is correct in reporting that Empedocles himself identified in the tearing apart of male and female the cause of the

makes the choice especially perplexing is that Aristophanes could have found a more fitting narrative to fill in the general framework in the very work of Empedocles himself: in the '*Purifications* (*Katharmoi*)',[51] Empedocles relates the fate of a *daimōn*, a long-lived being which, after an original self-inflicted pollution is banished from its divine origin, forced to transmigrate through a series of incarnations for three times ten thousand years of exile, before it can return to its divine origins after sufficient purification (B 115). The reason why this narrative is better suited for an *archaia phusis*–based account of desire is that an identical underlying subject experiences the various stages and can thus meaningfully be described as having 'lost' a condition which it possessed *itself* at a prior time and which serves as the normative standard it desires, or should desire, to restore.[52]

As we turn to Plato's 'story of the soul'[53] as it is first developed in the middle dialogues,[54] we find an account of the soul's fate that is much closer to Empedocles's *Katharmoi* than to his zoogony, Aristophanes's *Vorlage*. Where Plato *does* invoke images of bodily integrity and deficiency to account for the soul's original state of wholeness, its current deficiency, and its future restoration (*Republic* X, *Phaedrus*), we are less in fantastical zoogonical than in medical territory, where once again the identity of the subject experiencing health, disease, and healing is preserved. Beyond this medical frame, which is shared with Aristophanes, Plato's narrative is much closer to Empedocles's eschatological work. Thus in the *Phaedo*, *phronēsis* is characterized as a *katharmos*

desire (ἐπιθυμεῖν) for intercourse (*De Gen. An.* 764a36–b8), the questionable move might go back even to Empedocles (cf. O'Brien 2007, 78–9).

[51] It is a matter of debate whether the two titles sometimes mentioned in testimonies, '*On Nature*' and '*Purifications*', denote two separate works or refer to two parts of a single work. For an up-to-date overview of the debate, on which I do not intend to take a stance, see Kingsley and Parry 2024, §4.

[52] Of course it becomes much harder with this kind of narrative to account for specific *erōs* (interpersonal love) rather than generic erotic desire, the main topic of Diotima's later speech. At the same time, we may wonder whether any sensible *archaia phusis*-based account of interpersonal love can ever get off the ground.

[53] On my use of this term, see n. 30 above.

[54] The parallels and implicit and explicit references do of course not stop here. It is certainly not by accident that the protagonist of Timaeus's version of the story of the soul, our rational and divine soul, is referred to as a *daimōn* (90a3–4) that god has given to each of us. For Empedoclean influences on the *Timaeus*, see O'Brien 1999 and 2003, his general influence on Plato is further discussed in O'Brien 1997.

(69c3) that frees the soul from its current state of pollution and restores it to a primordial condition of purity, perfection, and divinity.[55] The *Phaedrus* palinode similarly shows many parallels to Empedocles's narrative. But it exhibits verbal and conceptual recurrences, too: thus, it has been argued that the idea of cycles of ten thousand years,[56] the mention of *daimones*,[57] and the idea of Socrates's speech as a *katharmos*[58] all may refer back to Empedocles, making it likely that the story of the *daimōn* is present in the background of the palinode. While attention to Plato's choice of Empedocles's story of the *daimon* as a model for his own story of the soul reveals a nexus of interrelated concepts that will be important over the course of this investigation (temporal priority, perfection, purity, divinity, transmigration, *etc.*), my main point here is that this choice—especially because of the identity of the subject experiencing the original condition, the current deficiency, and the desire for restoration—allows Plato to make a more coherent philosophical use of the concept of the *archaia phusis*.

What is more, Aristophanes's recourse to a zoogonical story aggravates an aforementioned problem connected to his choice of the account's subject—the body, rather than the soul.[59] Choosing a piece of biological speculation for its model leads to an account that does not feature *moral* improvement as part of the restoration of our original nature. As we shall see over the course of this investigation, Plato instead chooses models that put ethical perfection front and centre. Besides Empedocles, the *Phaedo*'s central concept of purification relies on Orphic ideas which ultimately also inspired Empedocles. Indeed, there is a soul-narrative that is sometimes associated with Orphism, some version of which is also likely to be in the background of the *Phaedo* and Plato's own story of the

[55] For these Empedoclean echoes in the *Phaedo*, see Ebrey 2023, 102–3.
[56] Thus already Thompson 1868 *ad* 248e6.
[57] See Rowe 1986 *ad* 246e6.
[58] 243a4. See Ebert 1993, 216. Ebert makes an overall convincing case for the central importance of Empedocles and his thought in the palinode (243e9–245c4).
[59] Subsection 2.1 above.

soul.[60] According to this anthropogony, humanity was born from the ashes of the Titans, who had dismembered and eaten Dionysus and been killed by Zeus with a thunderbolt. Because of this, human beings exhibit a mix of divine, Dionysian, and sinful, Titanic elements. The eschatological goal is to follow our inner divine being and its kinship with the gods, purifying ourselves by expiating for the Titans' crime and securing a better afterlife with the gods.[61] This is sometimes connected with the idea that we are caught in cycles of rebirth as expiation for this ancient sin, until our purification is complete and we can escape the cycle.[62] As we shall see, Plato in the *Phaedo* develops a 'story of the soul' that does not only share a similar narrative structure to the Orphic Dionysus myth, but like its model puts the necessity of purification front and centre. In Plato's philosophical adoption and adaption of the Orphic myth, purification (*katharsis*) consists precisely in the acquisition of true virtue of character (see especially the argument about true virtue at 68c5–69e4), brought about by the purifying rite (*katharmos*) of attaining *phronēsis.* Thus the very difference in choice of philosophical and cultural model reveals decisive differences between Plato's account and that of his character Aristophanes.

[60] It is a matter of scholarly debate how to define and demarcate 'Orphism' and its relation to other religious cults and movements, such as the Pythagoreans or Dionysian/Bacchic cults. Burkert 1985, 300 maintains that 'Bacchic, Orphic, and Pythagorean are circles each of which has its own center, and while these circles have areas that coincide, each preserves its own special sphere.' More recently, it has been maintained that even speaking about fixed sets of beliefs and practices to define such 'circles' in an essentialist manner may be problematic (Betegh 2014, 153). Thus it is perhaps better to speak of Wittgensteinian 'family resemblances' between communities that broadly belong within a given group (Edmonds 2013, 7). I have no intention here of settling what 'Orphism' consisted in or what teachings (if any) may be counted to its core doctrine. I rely on the much narrower point that the ideas I discuss here played a role in some Orphic communities, and that Plato took them to be associated with Orphism (see for instance Betegh 2022, n. 41). At any rate, Nightingale's (2021, 116–7) ascription of these teachings to 'the Orphics' seems a bit too simplistic in the light of recent scholarship.

[61] On this Dionysus myth and the evidence for it, see Graf and Johnson 2013, chapter 3. For more sceptical approaches to the role of the myth in orphism, see Brisson 1992 and Edmonds 2013, 296–391.

[62] The clearest evidence for this stems from a gold leaf from a tomb in Thurii, which contains the words to be spoken by a soul that arrives in the underworld (OF 488): the soul reaffirms its divine kinship and origin ('I am also of your blessed race (*genos*)'), states that it arrives in a purified state ('I come pure (*kothara*) from the pure (*kotharōn*)'), and relates that it has left the cycle of rebirth behind ('I flew out from a difficult circle of grievous woes (*kuklou barupentheos*)'), trans. Petrovic and Petrovic 2016.

Conclusion

Looking at Aristophanes's story before turning to Plato's positive treatment of the *archaia phusis* has two opposed yet complementary merits, both of which make it a useful foil for Plato's own positive account of our *archaia phusis*. On the one hand, the account's expressive power, with its vivid imagery and memorable narration, enables us to single out the central elements which are going to feature in Plato's own theoretical reflections. These include the *archaia phusis*, our current deficient nature, the *oikeion*, and *erōs* as the force that draws us towards the *oikeion* and towards the *archaia phusis*. On the other hand, there is a propaedeutic benefit from identifying the points where the story goes wrong and raises important questions about the role the various elements would play in a more successful account of our original nature, our current condition, and our desire for restoration. As we shall see, keeping these questions in mind will help us understand where Plato's positive treatment of the *archaia phusis* differs from that exhibited by his character Aristophanes, and what problems his answers manage to solve more satisfactorily. In the next chapter, we turn to this positive treatment by looking at the *Phaedo* and its implicit characterization of the soul in its state of *phronēsis* and 'true virtue' as our *archaia phusis.*

Chapter 2

Story of the Soul:

Phronēsis as the Soul's *Archaia Phusis* in the *Phaedo*

γένοι᾽ οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών
Learn and become who you are
Pindar, *Pythian* 2[63]

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that the *Phaedo*'s[64] conceptualization of *phronēsis*[65]—the soul's full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms, which coincides with the possession of true virtue of character (69b3)—can fruitfully be analysed as Plato's own positive candidate for our *archaia phusis*, although there is no *verbatim* reference to the latter concept in the *Phaedo*. Over the course of the three central arguments (70c4–84b7), one coherent 'story of the soul'[66] emerges according to which *phronēsis* exhibits both aspects of the Hippocratic concept of the '*archaia phusis*'. *Phronēsis* has been in our full possession at a *temporally prior* point, before embodiment. Currently, we are impure and deficient. As the soul's correct, normal, and healthy state of true virtue, *phronēsis* is the desirable *normative standard* that the philosopher hopes to restore.[67]

[63] Greek from Race 1997, translation Arnson Svarlien 1991.

[64] For the Greek text of the *Phaedo*, I use Strachan's OCT edition in Duke *et al.* 1995. Translations are Sedley and Long 2010, with emendations.

[65] Φρόνησις. To mark the pervasive character of the concept, I shall transliterate '*phronēsis*' and its adjectival cognate '*phronimos*' (φρόνιμος) throughout. I favour the translation chosen by Gallop 1975, and Sedley and Long 2010, who use 'wisdom' and 'wise' throughout. This marks the special role of *phronēsis* not only as a cognitive state, but as a virtue, or better *the* true virtue, of the soul. Translating 'wisdom' and 'wise' moreover harmonizes well with our usual practice of translating 'φιλοσοφία' as 'love of wisdom'. Cf. subsection 1.3 below. As to my reasons for supposing one stable and roughly uniform sense throughout the dialogue, cf. subsection 1.1 below.

[66] For my use of this term, see n. 30 above.

[67] I discuss likely philosophical and cultural models (the Orphics and Empedocles) for this narrative in chapter 1, subsection 2.4 above.

In the first section of this chapter, I demonstrate the pervasive presence of '*phronēsis*' in the *Phaedo* and clarify the dialogue's underlying conception of the expression. To facilitate a better understanding of what is to come, I include a summary of Socrates's defence (63e8–68c4) (section 1). In the second section, I turn to the *Phaedo*'s story of the soul in the central arguments—the cyclical argument (70c4–72d10), the recollection argument (72e1–77d5), and the kinship argument (78b4–84b7). I argue that these arguments implicitly present *phronēsis* as the soul's *archaia phusis*, as the key element in a temporal narrative describing the soul's journey from past perfection, through current deficiency, and possibly back to restored perfection in the future. I show how the *Phaedo*'s implicit choice of our *archaia phusis* fares much better when we consider the questions raised by Aristophanes's account (section 2).

As I demonstrate, the *Phaedo*'s characterization of our *archaia phusis* as our state of virtue, goodness, and proper order is better than Aristophanes's account at explaining why its restoration is desirable and confers *eudaimonia*. Yet the dialogue lacks systematic reflections on the relationship between virtue, goodness, and *eudaimonia*. This question will lead us into the next chapter of this thesis and into the *Republic*.

1 The Basic Conception of *Phronēsis* and Socrates's Defence (63e8–68c4)

1.1 The Pervasive Presence of *Phronēsis* in the *Phaedo*

'*Phronēsis*' and its adjectival cognate '*phronimos*' have a pervasive and central presence in the *Phaedo*.[68] Indeed, given the dialogue's central ethical message—that we should become as *phronimoi* as possible (107d1–2, 114c7–8, *et passim*)—we may say that

[68] Overall, I count 15 occurrences of '*phronēsis*' (65a9, 66a6, e3, 68a2, 7, b4, 69a10, b3–4, 6, c2, 70b4, 76c12, 79d7, 111b4, 114c8) and 8 occurrences of '*phronimos*' (62d4, e6, 80d7, 81a5, 94b5, 107d2, 108a6, 118a17).

phronēsis and the necessity to acquire it *is* the central topic of the dialogue.[69] To illustrate this point, I am going to give a short summary of the dialogue from the perspective of the topic of *phronēsis.* This approach will have the added benefit that it introduces the rough structure which I shall be assuming for the dialogue in the remainder of the chapter.[70]

The topic of *phronēsis* is present right from the start of the dialogue. In the early discussion of suicide (61d3–62e7), Cebes asks Socrates to show why the *phronimos* (62d4, e6) person should not resent dying.[71] In response, Socrates delivers his defence (63e8–68c4). He characterizes *phronēsis* (65a9, 66a6, e3, 68a2, 7, b4) as the desired aim and pursuit of the philosopher. Because *phronēsis* is not fully attainable during our embodied existence but can be completely realized by the philosopher after death, the philosopher should not resent death but rather be readily willing to accept it. In the argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4), Socrates adds that possessing *phronēsis* (69a10, b3–4, 6, c2) is the only way of truly possessing the virtues of temperance, courage, and justice, a state he refers to summarily as 'true virtue' (69b3).

In Cebes's challenge (69e5–70b4), Socrates is asked to substantiate his defence by proving that the soul (1) continues to exist after death and (2) is capable of possessing power and *phronēsis* (70b4) in that state. At the end of the recollection argument (72e1–77d5), Socrates claims that he has proven that the soul has existed apart from the body and has possessed *phronēsis* before embodiment (76c12). The kinship argument (78b4–

[69] In foregrounding the ethical dimension of the dialogue, I agree with Ebrey 2023, 2, who underlines that 'Socrates' ultimate concern in the dialogue is with how to live'.

[70] I claim no originality in dividing the dialogue into what I assume to be its logical components. A survey of recent treatments of the dialogue (Gallop 1975, Bostock 1986, Frede 1999, Ebert 2004, Ebrey 2023) shows that the dialogue is so clearly structured that there is little disagreement as to its components.

[71] Given the defence's reservations regarding the full attainability of *phronēsis* in this life, we may wonder if there *can* be any *phronimoi* in real life, except for the gods who indeed exhibit it as a characteristic attribute (80d7, 81a5), and disembodied souls who have managed to escape the wheel by becoming fully orderly and *phronimoi* (108a6, 111b4). I propose that what is referred to as the '*phronimos*' person in this context is somebody who has progressed very far, or perhaps even as far as possible for an embodied individual, towards the ideal of *phronēsis*, without however attaining full possession. This, I submit, is also the person that Socrates refers to when arguing that in the *phronimos* person, the soul is the ruler (94b5). I shall return to the question how far we can advance towards *phronēsis* in 2.3.b below.

84b7) characterizes *phronēsis* (79d7) as the soul's state of virtue, proper order, and goodness, and thus as universally desirable. After the final argument (102a10–107b10), the dialogue concludes with the exhortation that we should become as good and *phronimoi* as possible (107d1–2) and that we should do everything we can to participate in virtue and *phronēsis* (114c7–8). In the final line, Socrates is praised as the most *phronimos* (118a17) man known to Phaedo and his friends, a paragon to be emulated by everyone.[72] As this summary of the dialogue has shown, the concept of '*phronēsis*' and its adjectival cognate '*phronimos*' have a pervasive and central presence in the *Phaedo*, constituting the central ethical concept and structuring the argument at critical junctures.

1.2 The *Phaedo*'s Conception of *Phronēsis*

Outside the *Republic*'s line passage (509c1–511e5), Plato's middle-dialogue epistemology does not provide a taxonomy with stable, clearly differentiated meanings. The concept of '*phronēsis*' is a case in point. Unlike his student Aristotle, Plato does not give it a specialized sense of 'practical' wisdom, to distinguish it from a supposed 'theoretical' counterpart (*sophia*).[73] Rather, the term forms part of a range of expressions relating to a superior epistemic state which consists in a deep understanding of essential

[72] My supposition of a single more or less consistent sense of '*phronēsis*', which may roughly be translated as 'wisdom', follows interpreters such as Gallop 1975, and Sedley and Long 2010. However, their interpretation consciously deviates from an interpretative tradition found in Fowler 1914, Burnet 1911, and Loriaux 1969, who maintain that '*phronēsis*' in Cebes' challenge (70b4) and the recollection argument (76c12) must be translated differently than in the remainder of the dialogue. They argue that in these passages, it carries a popular sense of 'intelligence' or 'wits', rather than the more specialized sense supposedly underlying the other passages of the text. Similarly Ebert 2004 argues, against Gallop, that in 70b4 and 76c12, the sense is not the highly demanding sense of *phronēsis* found in the rest of the dialogue, but the sense, found in the Hippocratic corpus, of 'soundness of mind' (On which cf. 2.3.a below).

I submit that this interpretative choice would be fatal to understanding the progression of the *Phaedo*'s argument. The supposition of distinct senses of '*phronēsis*' destroys the larger argumentative coherence of the dialogue which I have just sketched out. In Cebes's challenge, the reference to *phronēsis* clearly picks up *the* central concept of Socrates's defence and prepares the way for the seamless transition to the central arguments, in which the concept retains its central role. Assuming a different sense at this critical juncture would tear apart the argument's coherence for no good reason. A similar point is made by Gallop 1975, Note 14: 'if the φρόνησις possessed by the soul in its previous existence were different from that which philosophers hope to attain in the afterlife (66e–67a, 68a–b), the cyclical and recollection arguments would support that hope by mere equivocation.'

[73] Cf. Rowe 1971, 77–78.

reality, represented by the forms. This is contrasted with expressions such as '*doxa*' and '*pistis*', which relate to an inferior epistemic state resulting from attention to, and reliance on, shifting empirical appearances.[74] Overall, these two groups of epistemological terms track the middle dialogues' ontological divide between 'two worlds', the intelligible realm of forms and the sensible realm of particulars.[75] Among the superior class of epistemic concepts outlined above, *phronēsis* and the closely related '*sophia*' and '*nous*' are distinguished from expressions such as '*epistēmē*' or '*gnōsis*' by the fact that the former group carries the connotation of a virtue, a state of dispositional realization of our cognitive capacities, and not just these capacities or their resulting cognitions.

The designation 'forms' occurs late in the dialogue (εἴδη first occurs at 102b1, ἰδέαι at 104b9), but earlier discussions clearly refer to the same class of objects. In what follows, I shall follow the general convention of referring to them as 'forms' throughout. A form in the *Phaedo* is a reified essence, the intelligible entity that is picked out by an adequate and correct response to the question 'What is *F*?' (τί ἐστι;).[76] The class of forms comprises members such as the just (65d4–5), the beautiful and the good (7), largeness, health, strength, and others (12–13). A form is the formal cause of any sensible particular's carrying the property in question.[77] For instance, something is beautiful insofar as it satisfies the standard represented by the form or essence of beauty (100d8–e3, 105b7).[78] The beautiful particular thing is then said to 'participate' (μετέχει, c5) in the form. It is left open whether this implies the form's presence (παρουσία, d5) in or in communion (κοινωνία, 6) with the particular, or some other relation between the two.

[74] Cf. Crombie 1962, 35.
[75] Cf. Moss 2021, 26–35.
[76] Cf. especially 65d13–e1, 75d2f. with Gallop 1975 *ad loc*. and 78d1–2. For a recent proponent of the interpretation of forms in the *Phaedo* as essences, cf. Ebrey 2023, 2–3. For a more global defence of the claim that Platonic forms simply are essences, cf. Politis 2021, along with Strobel 2017. For earlier accounts of forms as essences, cf. Cherniss 1957, esp. 258–62, and Frede 1988, esp. 37–8.
[77] Cf. Strobel 2017, 295.
[78] Cf. Vlastos 1981d.

Although *phronēsis* is a central and pervasive concept that structures and unifies the dialogue,[79] the *Phaedo* lacks a precise definition of the term. I contend that, in what comes closest to a dedicated characterization, *phronēsis* is portrayed as the state in which the soul is turned fully towards the forms. It is contrasted with the soul's condition as it primarily attends to and relies on sense perception (79c2–d7).[80] I shall assume this characterization of *phronēsis* as *full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms* to be the dialogue's basic conception from which its other characterizations derive. Cognitive contact with the forms is only achievable when the soul inquires as far as possible by itself, through reasoning (*logismos*, 66a1, 79a3, cf. 65c2–3) or thinking (*dianoia*, 65e3–4, 79a3). By contrast, cognitive contact with sensible particulars occurs through the body and its senses. Since the senses are neither accurate nor clear (65b5), the latter type of contact leads to an inferior type of cognition. The distinction between the two cognitive capacities involved here, one of essential being, one of empirical reality, anticipates that between *epistēmē* and *doxa* in the *Republic* (474c–480a), which likewise differentiates the two by their respective objects, intelligible forms and sensible particulars.[81] Although this terminology is not pervasive in the *Phaedo*, cognition of forms is sometimes referred to as *epistēmē*.[82] Some remarks furthermore allow for an identification of cognition of particulars with *doxa*.[83] To facilitate continuity with the *Republic*, I shall use these two

[79] Cf. subsection 1.1 above.

[80] I shall have more to say on this central passage in 2.3.a below.

[81] Although a later discussion may lead us to suspect that the two are expressions of the same capacity of cognition. Cf. 518e2 and my discussion in chapter 3, 2.1.c. I justify my interpretation of the *Republic*'s powers argument in subsection 1.2 of the same chapter.

[82] Ἐπιστήμη, *passim*.

[83] Δόξα. The soul has *doxa* (δοξάζουσαν, 83d6) of those things to be real that the body says are real. As a consequence, it has the same *doxa* (ὁμοδοξεῖν, 8) as the body. By contrast, the philosopher strives for contact with that which not the object of *doxa* (ἀδόξαστον, 84a9). Cf. Moss 2021, 34, and Gallop 1975 *ad* 82a2–b8: 'The phrase 'not the object of opinion' applied to the Form world at 84a8 glances at the important Platonic contrast between 'opinion' and 'knowledge'. These are differentiated in the *Republic* (476d–480) according to their 'objects', Forms being the only objects of true knowledge, and sensible things being the objects of opinion. The distinction is not drawn in these terms in the *Phaedo*. But its essence is everywhere present in the contrast between philosophers and other men–e.g. 82a11–b3.' I comment on the issue of straightforwardly equating '*doxa*' and '*epistēmē*' straightforwardly with 'opinion'/'belief' and 'knowledge' in chapter 3, subsection 1.2 below.

concepts to refer to the cognitive capacities distinguished in the *Phaedo*. The characterization of the *phronimos* soul as possessing *epistēmē* (66e3, 76c12) and grasping the truth (65a9, 66a6) is a direct corollary of the basic characterization of *phronēsis* as full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms.

I submit that there is a further aspect of *phronēsis* at play in the *Phaedo*, which likewise results from this basic conception. This aspect is intimated in the concluding myth (107d5–114c6). There, the inhabitants of the true earth are said to exhibit superior sight, hearing, and *phronēsis* (111b4). The fact that *phronēsis* features next to these dispositional states which facilitate good sensory perception points to a conception of *phronēsis* as a dispositional state allowing us, presumably, to engage in the activity of intellectual contemplation, just as sight facilitates vision and hearing audition. Thus, only if the soul is fully turned towards being and truth will it be able to optimally perform its cognitive function.[84] To summarize these characterizations, I would characterize '*phronēsis*' in the *Phaedo* as the state in which the soul is fully turned towards the forms. As a result of their full and exclusive presence, it has *epistēmē* and grasps the truth, and is capable of cognition of essential being in a clear and unobstructed fashion.

1.3 Summary Characterization of Socrates's Defence (63e8–68c4)

Before we can turn to the three central arguments, over the course of which Socrates develops his story of the soul—the narrative of past possession, current deficiency, and hopefully future restoration of *phronēsis* as our *archaia phusis*—it is necessary to give a quick summary characterization of Socrates's defence (63e8–68c4). The defence contains

[84] This aspect of the soul's virtue as a state of dispositional realization will become more pertinent in chapter 3, subsection 1.1 on the *Republic*'s function argument (352d2–354a11). Interestingly, the function argument likewise discusses sight and hearing as virtues of the eyes and ears (352e6–9 *et passim*). In chapter 3, 2.1.b, we shall see that the soul's cognitive gaze is explicitly likened to an eye that needs to be turned from sensible reality to the forms in *Republic* VII (518b7–519b6).

Socrates's justification of the claim that the philosopher should be readily willing to die.[85] It supplies the context required to understand Cebes's challenge and with it the questions to which the central arguments and their story of the soul provide an answer.

The key to understanding Socrates's claim that the true philosopher is readily willing to die lies in the concept of *phronēsis*. The desire and pursuit of *phronēsis* is the philosopher's defining characteristic, and being a true *philosophos* (somebody attracted, '*philo-*' to wisdom, '*sophia*') is in the *Phaedo* used interchangeably with being a lover ('*erōn*') of *phronēsis* (68a7–b3).[86] Considerations of the philosopher's character, characteristic activity, and the object of this characteristic activity confirm that her pursuit of *phronēsis* goes hand in hand with an increasing purification and release of the soul from the body and its detrimental influences—inaccurate cognitions and distracting pleasures and pains (64c10–66a10). During embodiment, however, a completely separate and purified condition of the soul remains an unattainable ideal because of the body's continued harmful presence (66b1–67b5).[87] Fully realized *phronēsis* can only be attained after disembodiment, when the soul is no longer distracted and impeded by the body:

> But we really have shown that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of something, we must be separated from the body and view things by themselves with the soul by itself. The time when we will have that which we desire and whose lovers we claim to be, namely *phronēsis*, will be when we are dead, as the argument indicates, and not while we are alive. For if it is impossible to have pure knowledge of anything when we are in the company of the body, then either knowledge cannot be acquired anywhere, or it can be acquired when we are dead. For then the soul will be alone by itself, apart from the body, whereas before then it will not.

[85] 62c10 *et passim*. Cf. n. 89 below.

[86] Similarly, in the speech of the philosophers (66b1–67b5) they refer to themselves as 'lovers of *phronēsis*' (φρονήσεως … ἐρασταί, 66e2–3). A true *philosophos* is attracted not to the body, to money, or honour, but to wisdom (68b8–c3), the standard expression for which in the *Phaedo* is *phronēsis.*

[87] Frede 1999, 33 calls it a *Grenzbegriff* (limit concept).

> ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι ἡμῖν δέδεικται ὅτι, εἰ μέλλομέν ποτε καθαρῶς τι εἴσεσθαι, ἀπαλλακτέον αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα: καὶ τότε, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡμῖν ἔσται οὗ ἐπιθυμοῦμέν τε καί φαμεν ἐρασταὶ εἶναι, φρονήσεως, ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσωμεν, ὡς ὁ λόγος σημαίνει, ζῶσιν δὲ οὔ. εἰ γὰρ μὴ οἷόν τε μετὰ τοῦ σώματος μηδὲν καθαρῶς γνῶναι, δυοῖν θάτερον, ἢ οὐδαμοῦ ἔστιν κτήσασθαι τὸ εἰδέναι ἢ τελευτήσασιν: τότε γὰρ αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν ἡ ψυχὴ ἔσται χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος, πρότερον δ᾽ οὔ.
>
> *Phaedo* 66d7–67a1

In summary, then, the philosopher has an overwhelming desire for *phronēsis*. Yet the full realization of *phronēsis* is only attainable at the time of death, after a lifetime of purification through both abstention and philosophy. The philosopher has the best hopes for attaining *phronēsis* upon disembodiment because she has engaged in both stages of purification.[88] It follows that she should not resent death, but be readily willing to accept it when it comes to pass.[89]

[88] I shall have much more to say on these two stages of purification in 2.3.b below.

[89] The conclusion is expressed in a variety of ways. Anyone worthy of the claim to be a philosopher would be willing to follow someone who is dying (61d4); philosophers would be readily willing to die (62c10); Socrates (as a philosopher) does not resent death (63b9, cf. also c5); somebody who has genuinely spent her life in philosophy should reasonably be confident about her imminent death (63e10); it would be laughable for someone who spent her life philosophizing to resent death when it comes to her (67e2–3). I take it that the conclusion is deliberately formulated more carefully than stating that the philosopher simply desires death. Even if, for the philosopher, death is a necessary and sufficient condition for the full attainment of *phronēsis*, and the philosopher desires *phronēsis* above everything else, the intensional context introduced by any notion of desire means that a straightforward desire for death does not follow. What may follow is rather that the philosopher does not resent death, but is readily willing to accept it, given her overruling desire for *phronēsis*. An additional reason for the careful formulation of the defence's conclusion may be the strict prohibition of suicide at the outset of the defence. If it is categorically forbidden to bring about death even if it is the only way of attaining what one desires most, then the only proper attitude is to not resent, but to willingly accept death when it occurs—not to actively pursue it. *Pace* Ebrey 2023, who entitles his chapter on the defence 'Defense of the Desire to Be Dead' (54–87).

2 The Story of the Soul in the Central Arguments (70c4–84b7)

As we have seen in the previous section, Socrates characterizes the philosopher as desiring and pursuing *phronēsis*, the soul's full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms. Given that this state is only fully attainable after death, the philosopher should willingly accept death when it comes to her. However, the interlocutor Cebes is not satisfied with the defence and challenges Socrates. His challenge gives rise to the central arguments, which form the context in which Socrates develops his 'story of the soul'.[90]

In this section, I first present Cebes's challenge and the questions which structure the ensuing discussion (subsection 2.1). I then turn to the cyclical and the recollection arguments. I argue that these make *phronēsis* a suitable candidate for the *archaia phusis* in its temporally prior sense, while also explaining our capacity for restoration (subsection 2.2). After this, I show that the kinship argument, along with some other passages, characterizes *phronēsis* as coinciding with the soul's virtue, goodness, and proper order, the normative standard that anybody should desire to restore (subsection 2.3).

2.1 Cebes's Challenge (69e5–70b4) and the Central Arguments (70c4–84b7)

Cebes is not satisfied with Socrates's defence. In his challenge (69e5–70b4), he points out that Socrates's argument rests on unproven assumptions:

> For if it [the soul, HK] really did exist somewhere alone by itself, gathered together and separated from these evils you just described, then there would be much hope, and a noble hope at that, Socrates, that what you say is true. But this very point doubtless requires no little reassurance and proof, that (1) the soul exists when the human being has died, and (2) has some power (*dunamis*) and *phronēsis*.

[90] On this expression, cf. n. 30 above.

> ἐπεί, εἴπερ εἴη που αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν συνηθροισμένη καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένη τούτων τῶν κακῶν ὧν σὺ νυνδὴ διῆλθες, πολλὴ ἂν εἴη ἐλπὶς καὶ καλή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὡς ἀληθῆ ἐστιν ἃ σὺ λέγεις: ἀλλὰ τοῦτο δὴ ἴσως οὐκ ὀλίγης παραμυθίας δεῖται καὶ πίστεως, ὡς ἔστι τε ψυχὴ ἀποθανόντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καί τινα δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ φρόνησιν.
>
> *Phaedo* 70a7–b4

Cebes makes two demands. Socrates has to show that (1) the soul will continue to exist after death, and that (2) it is capable of attaining *phronēsis* in that state.[91] In addition, I contend that if Socrates wants to vindicate the philosopher's life and confidence in the face of death, he faces a third task, which transcends the question of the defence's soundness and touches upon its *relevance*. In order to show that the philosopher's desire for *phronēsis* is not just a contingent inclination but warrants life-long devotion and practice, Socrates must show that (3) *phronēsis* is in fact desirable for *any* human being.

As I argue in the next two subsections, the three central arguments (70c4–84b7) are best understood as addressing these three tasks. Over their course, Socrates develops a coherent story of the soul, according to which the soul is immortal and undergoes cycles of reincarnation until it restores itself to its original nature, its fully realized state of *phronēsis*. I demonstrate that *phronēsis* satisfies both aspects of the Hippocratic conception of an *archaia phusis*. We have possessed it at a *temporally prior* point, something explaining the soul's capacity for restoration by the process of recollection. As our condition of virtue, goodness, and proper order, *phronēsis* moreover constitutes a *normative standard* whose attainment is universally desirable.

[91] If my suggestion at the end of subsection 1.2 has been correct and *phronēsis* is a state of dispositional realization, then it is the state in which our capacity (*dunamis*) for cognition is fully or correctly developed. In *Republic* VII we learn that cognition is the only *dunamis* which the soul never loses. It is for this reason that *phronēsis*, the correct orientation of this *dunamis* toward the forms, is the only virtue that properly belongs to the soul (518d11–519a1, cf. chapter 3, subsection 3.3). For our current purposes, this means that Cebes need not worry that the soul could lose its *dunamis*. What Socrates needs to show, however, is that we are capable of returning this *dunamis* to its correct orientation.

2.2 *Phronēsis* as a *Temporally Prior* State: The Cyclical (70c4–72d10) and Recollection (72e1–77d5) Arguments

The cyclical argument (70c4–72d10) is introduced as addressing Cebes's first demand, to show that the soul exists after death.[92] Cyclical reincarnation, the idea that the soul continuously exists and moves through cycles of embodied and disembodied existences, exceeds what Cebes has asked Socrates to demonstrate, and what is required to support Socrates's defence. However, as I shall show, this idea proves to be more than an overpowered attempt to address this specific demand. Rather, we shall see that cyclical reincarnation provides the base layer on which the recollection and kinship arguments build the second dimension of the soul's condition with respect to *phronēsis*. It is only with the addition of the soul's past possession, subsequent loss, and quest for future restoration of *phronēsis* that the cyclical argument's basic conception is transformed into a full-blown story of the soul.

The recollection argument (72e1–77d5) is first invoked to corroborate disembodied post-existence (72e1–73a3). However, it also addresses the second of Cebes's demands by showing that the soul is capable of attaining *phronēsis*. Both demands are approached indirectly, by first arguing for disembodied *pre*-existence and *past* possession of *phronēsis.* I present the argument in the broadest outline:[93] we can arrive at an understanding of intelligible essences, or forms, on the basis of deficient sensible particulars, and recognize that and how these particulars fall short of the

[92] 'Let's see whether or not it turns out that when people have died their souls exist in Hades…' (70c4–5). Reconstructing the argument in detail would exceed the scope of this thesis, which is mainly interested in the concept of *phronēsis* and not in Plato's argumentative support for immortality. For recent discussions of the argument, cf. Gallop 1975, 103–13; Bostock 1986, 42–59; Frede 1999, 38–47; Ebert 2014, 163–98; Ebrey 2023, 92–9. For dedicated studies, cf. among others Greco 1996, as well as the exchange between Barnes 1978 and Gallop 1982.

[93] Again, my concern is not going to be the validity of the argument but the role of *phronēsis* as the soul's original nature in the emerging story of the soul. For discussion of the details and problems of the argument, cf. Gallop 1975, 113–37; Bostock 1986, 60–115; Frede 1999, 47–63; Ebert 2014, 199–249; Ebrey 2023, 100–30. For dedicated treatments of the argument, cf. Ackrill 1973, Scott 1995, 53–7, as well as Sedley 2006b and 2007a.

perfection, purity, and stability of the essence. The fact that all particulars fall short of the essence, yet we are nevertheless prompted to conceive of it when we encounter these imperfect instantiations, is taken as evidence that we must have been acquainted with the essence from elsewhere and before the sensation. Indeed, Socrates argues that our cognitive acquaintance with essential being must have preceded *all* sensation, and thus, our birth. The cognitive contact with the forms which must have obtained before to explain our capacity to recollect them precisely is *phronēsis*.

We can see that this argument establishes more than pre-existence. The soul must also have possessed *phronēsis* at a temporally prior point. In a clear echo of the dual structure of Cebes's challenge, Socrates sums up the argument: 'In that case, … (1) our souls existed earlier as well, separate from bodies, before they were in human form, and (2) they had *phronēsis*' (76c11–12).[94] This shows that *phronēsis* exhibits the first of the two aspects of the Hippocratic concept of the *archaia phusis*. It is a *temporally prior* state of completeness from which we are currently deficient. To fully address Cebes's challenge by supporting (1) disembodied *post*-existence and (2) the capacity to attain *phronēsis* in the *future*, this is however only 'half of what is needed' (77c2). To establish the former, Socrates once again invokes the cyclical argument. If it can be shown that our souls have pre-existed in a disembodied state, then, by the cyclical argument, this is where they have to return (77c6–d5). I submit that for establishing the latter, recollection itself provides a way of connecting past possession and future attainment. We have the capacity to advance toward a cognitive grasp of the forms because we have been in this state before and can recollect it. Recollection, the mechanism by which we attain *phronēsis*, is a 'rediscovering of what belonged to us before' (76e1–2).[95]

[94] Ἦσαν ἄρα, ὦ Σιμμία, αἱ ψυχαὶ καὶ πρότερον, πρὶν εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώπου εἴδει, χωρὶς σωμάτων, καὶ φρόνησιν εἶχον.

[95] ὑπάρχουσαν πρότερον ἀνευρίσκοντες ἡμετέραν οὖσαν.

I think that recollection clearly puts the *Phaedo* in a better position to answer one of the questions which Aristophanes's account left open. As I have argued, one issue with the poet's *archaia phusis* was that past possession of, or union with, a physical entity (my 'other half') does not explain or entail a capacity for future restoration. *Erōs*, praised by Aristophanes for 'leading us to the *oikeion*' (*Symposium* 193d2), only leads us half the way, providing us with desire while leaving the actual attainment entirely up to chance.[96] The *Phaedo*'s implicit account of *phronēsis* as our *archaia phusis* gives us more reason to hope that our desire for restoration will be satisfied. Precisely because it is a state in which we have full *knowledge* of essential being, having been in this condition before is relevantly connected with the capacity for its restoration. When we inquire into the essential realities whose full cognitive grasp would constitute our restored state of *phronēsis*, we are in fact activating knowledge which is already latently present in the soul, by virtue of its prior acquaintance with essential reality in its *archaia phusis*.[97]

Admittedly, Cebes's characterization of recollection makes clear that successful restoration of our *archaia phusis* is not guaranteed. It depends on being activated, for instance by being asked the right questions, or by encountering the right sensible particulars.[98] But even if the encounter of such external instigators remains a matter of contingency, the fact remains that all the resources required for restoration are located *within* the individual, waiting to be actualized. Our missing *oikeion*, the intellectual virtue we lack in order to restore our nature to its original state, is already present potentially. In Aristophanes's account, by contrast, restoration depends on the discovery of another half which is plainly located *outside* of ourselves. Like a stolen bike, the poet's missing

[96] Cf. chapter 1, subsection 2.3.

[97] Cf. Scott 2006, 75–91 (who of course makes no reference to the prior condition of *phronēsis* as our *archaia phusis*).

[98] As we shall see in chapter 3, the middle books of the *Republic* add further restrictions. Only people with a certain philosophical nature will manage to endure all the way to the activation of our latent potential for *phronēsis* (Cf. chapter 3, subsection 2.1).

part is quite literally an external object we hope to retrieve. The fitting physical simile for the *Phaedo*'s account of recollection would instead be a lost part of ourselves which we have the capacity to regrow from out of ourselves. As I shall show, this is precisely the story we are going to find in the *Phaedrus* palinode in chapter 5 of this thesis. For now, however, we still lack an account of why restoring ourselves in our *archaia phusis* is something desirable. To understand this, I now turn to the kinship argument.

2.3 *Phronēsis* as a *Normative Standard*: The Kinship Argument (78b4–84b7) and Beyond

2.3.a *Phronēsis* as a Cognitive Normative Standard (Intellectual Virtue): The First Part of the Kinship Argument (78b4–80c1)

The kinship argument (78b4–84b7) falls into two parts. The first part (78b4–80c1) is introduced as further corroborating post-existence. It develops the earlier claims about forms and particulars into a full-blown metaphysical framework which divides reality into two classes of beings (δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων, 79a6), the intelligible (78d1–9) and the sensible (78d10–e4). While the forms are incomposite, stable, unchangeable, uniform, and immune to change, particulars are composite, unstable, changeable, multiform, and subject to change (78b4–79a11). Rather than proving the soul's indestructibility by ascribing outright membership in the class of forms to it, the soul is classified merely as 'more similar' (79b4) and 'more akin' (79b5) to that class (79b1–80c1). Hence the soul is 'altogether incapable of being destroyed, or nearly so' (80b10–11).

This argument in particular has attracted much criticism for its failure to establish the soul's immortality.[99] If we evaluate it merely in terms of its success in answering Cebes's first demand, we find that it supplies at best circumstantial evidence for this

[99] Again, for discussion of the details and problems of the argument, cf. Gallop 1975, 137–46; Bostock 1986, 116–121; Frede 1999, 63–76; Ebert 2014, 251–79; Ebrey 2023, 131–61 on the first part and 162–83 on the second part of the argument. For dedicated studies, cf. Elton 1997 and Woolf 2004.

conclusion.[100] In what follows, I shall bracket this issue and instead concentrate on the argument's contribution to the emerging story of the soul and its characterization of *phronēsis* as our *archaia phusis*. From the cyclical argument, we have learned that the soul undergoes cyclical reincarnations. The recollection argument adds that it must once have been in the state of *phronēsis*, from which it is currently deficient but which it can in principle restore. As I shall show now, the kinship argument characterizes *phronēsis* as the soul's *normative standard*, the second of the two aspects of the Hippocratic concept of the *archaia phusis*. *Phronēsis* is the soul's correct, proper, and healthy state of virtue and goodness, and is for this very reason universally desirable. The first part of the argument supports this conclusion only with respect to the soul's cognitive activity, characterizing *phronēsis* as the soul's state of intellectual virtue. Most notable for our purposes is the following passage, which as I said earlier contains what comes closest to a definition of *phronēsis*:[101]

> 'Now weren't we also saying some time ago that whenever the soul additionally uses the body for considering something, whether through seeing or through hearing or through some other sense—for to consider something through the body is to do so through sense-perception—at those times it is dragged by the body into things that never stay in the same state, and the soul itself wanders and is disturbed and giddy as if drunk, because the things it is grasping have the same kind of instability?'
>
> …
>
> 'But that whenever the soul considers alone by itself, it gets away into that which is pure, always in existence, and immortal, and which stays in the same condition; that the soul, because it is akin to this, always comes to be with it whenever alone by itself and able to do so; that the soul is then at rest from its wandering, and in relation to those entities stays always in

[100] Cf. Frede 1999, 73.
[101] Cf. subsection 1.2 above.

the same state and condition, because the things it is grasping have the same kind of stability; and that this state of the soul is called "*phronēsis*"?'

Οὐκοῦν καὶ τόδε πάλαι ἐλέγομεν, ὅτι ἡ ψυχή, ὅταν μὲν τῷ σώματι προσχρῆται εἰς τὸ σκοπεῖν τι ἢ διὰ τοῦ ὁρᾶν ἢ διὰ τοῦ ἀκούειν ἢ δι' ἄλλης τινὸς αἰσθήσεως—τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ διὰ τοῦ σώματος, τὸ δι' αἰσθήσεως σκοπεῖν τι—τότε μὲν ἕλκεται ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὰ οὐδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντα, καὶ αὐτὴ πλανᾶται καὶ ταράττεται καὶ εἰλιγγιᾷ ὥσπερ μεθύουσα, ἅτε τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένη;

...

Ὅταν δέ γε αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν σκοπῇ, ἐκεῖσε οἴχεται εἰς τὸ καθαρόν τε καὶ ἀεὶ ὂν καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον, καὶ ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα αὐτοῦ ἀεὶ μετ' ἐκείνου τε γίγνεται, ὅτανπερ αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν γένηται καὶ ἐξῇ αὐτῇ, καὶ πέπαυταί τε τοῦ πλάνου καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, ἅτε τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένη· καὶ τοῦτο αὐτῆς τὸ πάθημα φρόνησις κέκληται;

Phaedo 79c2–d7

In this passage, the soul's state of *phronēsis* is contrasted with its opposite condition, which with an earlier expression we may call '*aphrosunē*' (67a7).[102] The two states are the soul's cognitive contact with intelligible forms and sensible particulars, respectively. Sitting on the horizon between these two ontological realms, the soul can turn its cognitive gaze in either direction. Cognition of sensible particulars through the body and its senses bestows on the soul the changing and unstable characteristics of its objects. As a result, the soul 'wanders and is disturbed and giddy as if drunk'. Cognition of intelligible forms, achieved by the soul by itself through reasoning, bestows on the soul the characteristics of these perfect, pure, and stable entities. It comes to be 'at rest from its wandering, and in relation to those entities stays always in the same state and condition'. As I have argued

[102] '*Aphrosunē*' is also the name of the conditition of the cave-dwellers in *Republic* 515c5.

before,[103] '*phronēsis*' is the name of the condition when the soul has completed this reorientation and is in full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms.

The description of the *aphrōn* soul as 'disturbed and giddy' seems to me to suggest a cognitively deficient condition compared to the clarity, sobriety, and stability of *phronēsis*. Only the *phronimos* soul functions properly and cognizes reality as it truly is. Another way of putting this is that *phronēsis* is the full realization of the soul's cognitive disposition, a state of intellectual virtue. This would fit well with a remark in the concluding myth (107d5–114c6) which I have mentioned before.[104] There, the inhabitants of the true earth are described as exhibiting superior sight, hearing, and *phronēsis* (111b4). As *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11) confirms, sight and hearing are dispositional states facilitating the successful functioning of the eyes and ears, seeing and hearing. Just as these conditions bring about good sensory perception, *phronēsis* is a dispositional state facilitating good cognitive functioning.[105]

I submit that a healthy and proper cognitive condition of clarity, sobriety, and stability is something which is inherently desirable. Presumably, nobody would want their soul to be in a state of cognitive deficiency, but would rather prefer to see things clearly and without disturbance. There is of course an aspect of instrumental benefit to this. Even for the pursuit of non-intellectual goals such as pleasure or honour, it is important to correctly evaluate what will be most conducive to our chosen end. If it is moreover true that we desire what is *really* good for us, then we all have an interest to know whether our chosen end *is* in fact good (cf. *Rep.* 505e1–2). But beyond this, most people would value being intellectually sound and in contact with reality as something desirable in

[103] Subsection 1.2 above.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] What distinguishes *phronēsis* from sight and hearing is that the latter two represent the full development of their respective organs, while *phronēsis* is characterized an already functioning organ (our 'cognitive gaze') that is oriented correctly. Cf. *Republic* 518b7–519b6, and my analysis in chapter 3, subsection 2.2 below.

itself. Like being healthy and capable of exercising our bodily functions in an unimpeded way, having a sound cognitive faculty seems inherently desirable.[106]

Incidentally, a terminological use of '*phronēsis*' in the sense of 'normal cognitive functioning' is attested in the Greek medical tradition.[107] In the Hippocratic literature, '*phronēsis*' in the soul plays a role analogous to that of physical health in the body.[108] Although nothing in my argument hinges on this, it is an intriguing possibility that Plato may play on this terminological sense in the *Phaedo*. This would once more strengthen the connection between Plato's psychological reflections and the Greek medical tradition.

2.3.b *Phronēsis* as an Overall Normative Standard (True Virtue): The Second Part of the Kinship Argument (80c2–84b7) and Beyond

As I shall show next, the kinship argument's second part (80c2–84b7) goes beyond the first by characterizing *phronēsis* as coinciding with the soul's *overall* state of virtue, proper order, and goodness. It thus more fully responds to the third task I formulated at the outset of this section, to show that *phronēsis* is universally desirable.[109] I shall argue that in its presentation of *phronēsis* as an overall desirable normative standard, the argument confirms that *phronēsis* is an apt choice for our *archaia phusis*. *That* the state of *phronēsis* is universally desirable is indicated by the claim that in it, we are happy (εὐδαίμων, 81a6). Similarly, Socrates announces that he will go to a happy state fit for the blessed (εἰς μακάρων δή τινας εὐδαιμονίας, 115d4). But *why* is this the case? As I shall demonstrate, Socrates establishes this point by comparing the fate of the impure and the pure soul.

[106] Cf. Moss 2021, 240, citing Nozick 1989, 106.
[107] Cf. Hüffmeier 1961.
[108] *Ibid*., 63.
[109] Ebrey 2023, 162–83 fittingly calls this part of the kinship argument the 'Return to the Defense'.

Alien Accretions: The Impure Soul

Undue reliance on sense experience to determine the truth, as well as exposure to bodily pleasure and pain, instil in the soul the false belief that the only thing that is real is the sensible class of beings, most notably the body. As a result of such false beliefs, the soul develops mistaken desires for bodily pleasure, and it fears death and the invisible, associated in the *Phaedo* with the forms (81b3–c1). These beliefs, desires, and fears make the soul more impure and 'bodily':

> each pleasure and pain rivets and pins it to the body as if with a nail, and makes it bodily, since it believes to be real the very things that the body says are real. Since it has the same beliefs as the body and enjoys the same things, it is forced, I think, to come to have the same ways and the same sustenance…
>
> ἑκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερονᾷ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ, δοξάζουσαν ταῦτα ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῇ. ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοδοξεῖν τῷ σώματι καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χαίρειν ἀναγκάζεται οἶμαι ὁμότροπός τε καὶ ὁμότροφος γίγνεσθαι…
>
> *Phaedo* 83d4–9

Given the rich metaphorical context, I contend that it would be rash to conclude that the body itself is here considered the subject of mental states. I take it that the upshot is rather that the soul becomes corrupted by beliefs and desires that come to it 'by way of the body' (κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, 82c3, 94b7).[110] After all, the soul remains interspersed with 'bodily' beliefs, desires, and fears even after disembodiment, leading to the position that these are

[110] Notable exponents of the view that the body is in the *Phaedo* considered the subject of mental states include Bobonich 2002, 28 and 486 n. 26, Lorenz 2008, and Vasiliou 2012, 26–7. On the other side see Gallop 1975, 89, Bostock 1986, 26–7, Woolf 2004, 107–8, and especially Ebrey 2023, 180–2. Especially the fact that the impure soul can retain its 'bodily' beliefs after separation from the body seems to me evidence that the soul, not the body, is subject to these mental states.

located in the body *ad absurdum*. As a consequence of pleasure and pain, the soul increasingly *identifies itself* with the body, rather than with its own true intellectual being. I submit that the most reasonable way of interpreting the characterization of these beliefs, desires, and fears as 'bodily' is that they do not properly belong to the soul, not because they could be held by a subject other than the soul, but because the soul would not hold them in its most natural, proper, and healthy state. This is how we should understand the claims that the *aphrōn* soul is 'impure' (ἀκάθαρτος, 81b1) and 'interspersed' with the 'bodily' (διειλημμένη … ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς, c4), which has attached itself to the soul as an alien 'accretion' (σύμφυτον, 6).[111]

As we shall see now, these alien, bodily accretions are used to add a new dimension to the metaphor of impurity, that of weight and vertical spatial movement:

> 'And one must suppose, my friend, that the bodily is heavy, weighty, earthy and visible. That's what this sort of soul actually contains, and so it is weighed down and drawn back into the visible region by fear of the unseen and of Hades, drifting, as it is said, around monuments and tombs, the very places where certain shadowy apparitions of souls really have been seen. Such apparitions are presented by souls like these, those that have not been released in a pure way but have something of the visible—which is why they are seen.'[112]
>
> ἐμβριθὲς δέ γε, ὦ φίλε, τοῦτο οἴεσθαι χρὴ εἶναι καὶ βαρὺ καὶ γεῶδες καὶ ὁρατόν: ὃ δὴ καὶ ἔχουσα ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεταί τε καὶ ἕλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον φόβῳ τοῦ ἀιδοῦς τε καὶ Ἅιδου, ὥσπερ λέγεται, περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη, περὶ ἃ δὴ καὶ ὤφθη ἄττα

[111] Cf. *Rep.* 519b2, 611d3, with chapter 4 below.

[112] The notion that an impure soul contains a 'visible' aspect because it is interspersed with the body may be seen as a bit of comic relief, as Plato's humorous explanation of ghosts and other apparations. However, the passage does point to an intuition which is going to be developed further in *Republic* X's Glaucus analogy (611b1–612a7, cf. chapter 4 below). There, Socrates claims that impure, embodied souls are examinable by more 'empirical' methods of investigation than pure souls, which can be examined through reasoning alone (611c2).

> ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα, οἷα παρέχονται αἱ τοιαῦται ψυχαὶ εἴδωλα, αἱ μὴ καθαρῶς ἀπολυθεῖσαι ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὁρατοῦ μετέχουσαι, διὸ καὶ ὁρῶνται.
>
> *Phaedo* 81c8–d4

The passage introduces a vertical spatial metaphor to characterize the *Phaedo*'s two classes of being, intelligible forms and sensible particulars.[113] Perhaps confusingly, the forms' non-spatial realm receives in this metaphorical language a spatial location, which is up above sensible reality, while the sensible, (properly) spatial realm of particulars is located down below.[114] The notions of weight and earthiness then are used to express the fact that the impurities consisting in beliefs, desires, and fears associated with the body keep the soul fixed to the sensible and unable to turn to the intelligible. After death, the persistent desire for bodily pleasure and the fear of the unseen drag the impure soul back down. It is trapped in cycles of reincarnation by its own desires and fears, resulting from its 'bodily' beliefs. Such a soul is condemned to remain forever 'deprived of the company of the divine and pure and uniform'.[115]

What should we make of the characterization of the impure soul as beset by 'human badness' (ἀνθρωπεία/ἀνθρωπίνα κακά, 81a7–8, 84b3)? I maintain that this is best understood not as moral badness, but as ontological deficiency. Somebody with an impure soul is characterized not only by false beliefs about what is most real and desirable. Such a person will also, as a consequence, exhibit false attitudes towards things such as

[113] This metaphor will prove to be incredibly pervasive throughout the middle dialogues and beyond. Cf. the *Republic*'s cave (514a1–518b6) and Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7), to name but two, the *Phaedrus* palinode (243e9–257b6), and the *Symposium*'s ascent passage (209e5–212c3). By contrast to Aristophanes's spherical proto-humans, the soul in its acquisition of wisdom performs a true 'ascent to heaven', εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνάβασις, *Symposium* 190b8 (Aristophanes). Cf. chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 below.

[114] The soul is described as, after death, going to a 'different place' (εἰς … τόπον ἕτερον, 80d5). The metaphor is paradoxical, yet on the other hand quite common: modern parlance still assigns 'heaven', a non-spatial realm beyond the physical world, a spatial metaphorical position relative to our own situation *ici-bas*.

[115] ἄμοιρος εἶναι τῆς τοῦ θείου τε καὶ καθαροῦ καὶ μονοειδοῦς συνουσίας (83e2–3).

pleasure and pain—she will have mistaken desires and fears. The lack of a correct disposition towards these things ultimately means that such a person is bad at realizing that which is truly good for her as a human being. The correct disposition would be virtue of character, which at an earlier stage has been characterized as a purification (*katharsis*) from bodily beliefs, desires, and fears (69b8–c2). The *Phaedo* remains less than clear on the precise connection between virtue, goodness, desirability, and happiness.[116] I contend that there is nevertheless an underlying assumption that the virtuous disposition described here—this time the varieties of virtue of character: temperance, courage, and justice—is something which is intrinsically desirable and has an intimate connection to our happiness.

Phronēsis as the Soul's True Virtue

How is virtue of character acquired? Already at an earlier stage in the dialogue, in the argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4), Socrates makes a stunning claim. The true way of acquiring virtue of character is to acquire *phronēsis* (68c5–69e4). While virtue of character is a purification (*katharsis*) from bodily impurity, *phronēsis* is the true purifying rite (*katharmos*) that brings about this purification (69c3).[117] To understand just why *phronēsis* coincides with the true way of possessing virtue of character, we must read the second part of the kinship argument together with the earlier argument about true virtue.

The earlier argument contrasts the 'shadow-image' (*skiagraphia*, 69b7) of virtue pursued by ordinary people with the 'true virtue' (*alēthēs aretē*, 68b3) pursued by the philosopher. Popular virtue is characterized as overcoming one kind of fear because of a greater one (68d8–e1), and one type of pleasure for the sake of a greater one (68e2–

[116] Cf. the conclusion to the chapter below. As we shall see in chapter 3, these issues are explored more fully in the *Republic*, starting with the function argument (352d2–354a11).

[117] For the likely Empedoclean and Orphic sources of this terminology, see chapter 1, subsection 2.4.

69a5).[118] Thus, for instance, a soldier may stand firm in battle because of a feared loss of honour, or a dinner guest may resist the temptation of having another portion of the main course in order to have enough space for dessert. I would argue that the opening remarks of the discussion (68c1–3) indicate that the argument is concerned with *anybody* pursuing not *phronēsis* but honour or pleasure as the good, describing the bind all such people find themselves in as far as the possibility of attaining virtue is concerned. Whether somebody is motivated by the desire for pleasure or the fear of pain, by the desire for honour or the fear of social reprimand, her virtue will, precisely because of its incorrect motivation, remain an impure and self-contradictory image of true virtue.

The second part of the kinship argument adds that 'popular and civil virtue' (82a12–b1)[119] comes about 'from habit and practice without philosophy and understanding' (82b2–3).[120] Although this is disputed in the literature, I think that it makes the most sense to assume that this passage picks up the distinction between two qualities of virtue from the argument about true virtue.[121] One clear connection to the earlier argument is established by the immediately succeeding remark that the lovers of money and of honour, respectively, exhibit a 'temperance' resulting from fear of poverty or loss of property, and a 'courage' resulting from a fear of dishonour or a reputation for immorality (82c5–8). The lovers of honour and pleasure are once again contrasted with

[118] In a disputed metaphor, Socrates calls *phronēsis* the only 'correct exchange' (ὀρθὴ ἀλλαγή, 69a6–7) for virtue. A convincing account of this passage has been developed by Weiss 1987, 62: 'The *Phaedo*'s definition of *aretē* is that it is a certain purification (κάθαρσίς τις) from pleasures, pains, and fears. The *Phaedo*'s means to the achievement of *aretē* (the καθαρμός) is *phronēsis*; and *phronēsis* is that for which one can exchange one's commitment to pleasures, pains, and fears. By being the alternative value to which one can give one's allegiance, it provides the only means to *aretē*, to freedom from commitment to pleasures, pains, and fears.'

[119] δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή

[120] ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης … ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ

[121] Unlike Vasiliou 2012, 17–8, I do not think that Socrates's remark about the 'slavishness' (69b6) of the earlier argument's inferior type of virtue implies that he values it less than the later argument's inferior type, about which he says that people who achieve it are the happiest among those who lack *phronēsis*. I agree with Reed 2020, 125 that these two claims are perfectly consistent. Although interpreters are often prompted by the talk about 'slavishness' to invoke a passage in *Republic* IV about the difference between the auxiliaries' demotic virtue and a lower kind that is found in beasts and 'slavish' people (ἀνδραποδώδη, 430b8) (Irwin 1995, 194–5, Kamtekar 1998, 318), I am not sure we can and should import internal distinctions between varieties of non-philosophical virtue into the *Phaedo*.

the philosopher, whose sole motivation is purification for the sake of *phronēsis* (82b10–c5).

I do not think that the fact that habituation and practice are not explicitly mentioned in the earlier argument can show that its inferior type of virtue is *not* acquired in this way, and must therefore be different from that found in the later one.[122] It is more plausible to assume that Plato omits reference to habituation and exercise in the first argument because he comes back to it in the second anyway. It must have made as much sense for Plato as it does for us today that the temporary delay of gratification, as well as the deliberate selection of a small, concrete evil over a greater, more abstract one, are precisely behaviours which are acquired over time by habituation and practice, and for this very reason only gradually appear as we mature from small children to adults.[123]

Popular morality's motivation for, and acquisition of, virtue is contrasted with that exhibited by the philosopher. Although she too engages in a form of habituation and practice, relying on sense experience in her inquiries only where necessary and avoiding pleasure and pain as far as possible,[124] this is done explicitly as a preparatory *katharsis* for the sake of *phronēsis*. Such 'stage-1' *katharsis*, as I shall call it, removes beliefs, desires, and fears that tie the soul to sensible reality and keep it away from the intelligible realm of forms.[125] Compared to the concerns of popular morality, which fears that a lack of virtue may lead to illness or a waste of money (83b9–c1), the philosopher does this because she understands that these impurities entail a far greater, indeed the 'greatest and most extreme of evils' (1–2). They can lead to a fundamental misconception of what is ultimately real, what the soul is in its truest nature, and where it truly belongs.

[122] On this I agree with Reed 2020, 125–6.

[123] On this cf. Mischel, Shoda, and Rodriguez 1992.

[124] With Ebrey 2017, and against Woolf 2004 and Russell 2005, Ch. 3, I see in this as a serious exhortation to an ascetic attitude towards bodily pleasure and pain.

[125] My proposal of two stages of *katharsis* follows very roughly an idea about cognition developed in Moss 2021, 67–79.

Understanding that the point of becoming virtuous is not conventional morality's instrumental considerations, but the soul's attainment of true life and goodness, the philosopher purifies herself as far as possible during embodiment.

This is followed by the second, *phronēsis*-induced stage of *katharsis* (henceforth 'stage-2' *katharsis*), which we find described in the argument about true virtue. While stage-1 *katharsis* is a necessary precondition for the attainment of *phronēsis*, the philosopher ultimately acquires true virtue of character not by habituation and practice, but through philosophy and understanding, as a *consequence* of the attainment of *phronēsis*, which is like a purifying rite (*katharmos*, 69c3).[126] *Phronēsis* expels false beliefs and their attendant desires and fears on the basis of true insight into the essence of the virtues, leading to a condition of true virtue (68b3).[127] Contrary to popular morality's 'virtues' which are held 'without philosophy and understanding' (82b2–3), the philosopher possesses the whole of true virtue 'with *phronēsis*' (μετὰ φρονήσεως, 69b3). I take this expression, which in other places too is used to refer to the special way in which we hold true virtue, to mean that true virtue coincides with, and is held *by means of* or *alongside phronēsis*.[128]

Given the dialogue's insistence that full *phronēsis* is not attainable during our embodied existence, we may of course wonder to what extent virtue of character can be realized in this life. If we assume the analysis of virtue of character as a purification from the beliefs, desires, and fears of the body (69b8–c2), while also accepting that full purification and knowledge will only be achieved after the soul's separation from the body (66e1–67a1), then it seems clear that virtue of character cannot be fully realized before the soul's separation from the body. Only then will the *katharmos* that is *phronēsis*

[126] We shall encounter the thought that the philosopher has a special way of acquiring virtue of character in chapter 3, 2.1.a below when I discuss *Republic* VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6, with 489e4–490c10).

[127] Cf. *Symposium* 212a6–7, *Republic* 554e5, *Theaetetus* 176c5, *Laws* 731a7.

[128] Cf. *Republic* 591b5, 621c5, *Theaetetus* 176b2, *Laws* 906b1.

run its full course and establish full purity and thus virtue of character.[129] At the same time, we have to consider just how pessimistic the *Phaedo* is about the extent to which we can attain *phronēsis*, and with it true virtue of character, during embodiment. Here, we find that we can actually go quite far within our embodied existence, even up to the point of knowledge of the forms (74b2). What is denied is that the embodied soul can fully or purely attain *phronēsis*, the full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms, with every last bodily belief, desire, and fear entirely removed from the soul.[130] The limit to our efforts of self-purification consists in the tendance of bodily desires which are necessary for our embodied existence (64e1).[131]

If the philosopher can attain quite a high share in *phronēsis*, that is, live a life in which her cognitive gaze is turned largely towards the essential being of the forms and achieve a high level of *epistēmē* of forms, then her insight into the essence of the virtues and her high level of purity from the beliefs, desires, and fears of the body will mean that she will achieve a high level of true virtue of character. Here it is important to realize that 'true virtue' need not be taken to mean 'fully realized virtue', but is rather characterized as the *quality*, the true or genuine way of being virtuous, as opposed to its shadow image of popular virtue. While the philosopher will never fully bring about the condition of true virtue in her soul, she will display a great share of true virtue rather than apparent, popular virtue.

[129] In this point I disagree with Weiss 1987, 62–3, who insists that the philosopher in *aiming* for the truth will *attain* fully realized true virtue.

[130] Cf. Bobonich 2002, 34 with n. 40, where he gives a useful list of instances where the unattainable *phronēsis* in the afterlife is qualified as 'adequate' or 'pure', thus making room for less demanding stages of realization during embodiment.

[131] The distinction between necessary and unnecessary bodily desires is going to be developed further in *Republic* 558d8–559c12. I shall discuss these in chapter 4, subsection 1.2.

Phronēsis as the Soul's State of Proper Order

Closely associated with the idea that *phronēsis* is the soul's state of true virtue, the *Phaedo*'s final protreptic passage introduces the idea that it is the soul's state of proper order:

> these are the reasons why a man should be confident about his own soul if he is one who in his life ignored the other pleasures, namely the bodily ones, and the body's adornments (*kosmous*), as belonging to something else, because he believed that they bring about more harm than good, but pursued the pleasures of learning, and adorned/ordered (*kosmēsas*) his soul not with an adornment/order that belongs to something else (*allotriōi [kosmōi]*), but with the soul's own adornment (*tōi hautēs kosmōi*), namely temperance, justice, courage, freedom and truth, and thus awaits the journey to Hades as one who will make it whenever destiny calls.
>
> τούτων δὴ ἕνεκα θαρρεῖν χρὴ περὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῇ ἄνδρα ὅστις ἐν τῷ βίῳ τὰς μὲν ἄλλας ἡδονὰς τὰς περὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τοὺς κόσμους εἴασε χαίρειν, ὡς ἀλλοτρίους τε ὄντας, καὶ πλέον θάτερον ἡγησάμενος ἀπεργάζεσθαι, τὰς δὲ περὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἐσπούδασέ τε καὶ κοσμήσας τὴν ψυχὴν οὐκ ἀλλοτρίῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῆς κόσμῳ, σωφροσύνῃ τε καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, οὕτω περιμένει τὴν εἰς Ἅιδου πορείαν ὡς πορευσόμενος ὅταν ἡ εἱμαρμένη καλῇ.
>
> *Phd*. 114d8–115a3

Why is *phronēsis* not featured in this curious list of 'adornments', 'temperance, justice, courage, freedom and truth'? I submit that the previous analysis of the relationship between *phronēsis* and true virtue has an attractive answer to this question: all members of this group are features of the condition we reach when we attain *phronēsis*.[132] This

[132] In this, the present passage is quite close to the description of the string of good qualities, including the three virtues of character, that follow the philosophical nature's pursuit of truth in *Republic* VI's recapitulation of the channel argument (489e4–490c10). Cf. chapter 3, 2.1.a below.

chimes well with the statement that these adornments are attained by the person who has pursued the 'pleasures of learning'. Someone who practises philosophy, and thus pursues *phronēsis*, *eo ipso* adorns her soul with the (true form of the) character virtues, freedom, and truth. I have already shown how the *Phaedo* conceptualizes the connection between *phronēsis* and knowledge of the truth,[133] as well as that between *phronēsis* and virtue of character.[134] I maintain there is also a plausible way of showing that *phronēsis* is our soul's state of freedom. In this condition, our soul is not ruled and imprisoned by something alien (the body) but engages in the activity in which it is most truly itself. True freedom, in this picture, consists in full and unimpeded activity in accordance with one's true nature.

At the same time, I submit that the talk about the lover of learning establishing a *kosmos* that is not alien but belongs to her soul carries a deeper meaning beyond that of 'adornment'.[135] The virtue which results from the pursuit of philosophy is the soul's proper '*order*', another core meaning of the Greek '*kosmos*'.[136] The idea that an entity's virtue is its proper order (*oikeios kosmos*) is familiar already from the *Gorgias* (506e2–4). Implicit in this is the thought that there is a condition or configuration in which an entity most properly realizes its nature, and is what it is to be that entity to the fullest degree.[137] As I shall show, this idea is more fully developed in *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11), in which this condition is referred to as a thing's proper state of virtue (*oikeia aretē*, cf. chapter 3, subsection 1.1 below). The soul that attains *phronēsis* thus reaches the state in which it is most fully what it is to be a soul, and in this way realizes its own nature.

[133] Subsection 1.2 above.
[134] This subsection.
[135] However, this deeper meaning does not consist in the verbal connection between *kosmos* and the adjective *kosmios*, which is sometimes in the *Phaedo* used to describe the condition of being temperate, as Sedley and Long 2010, 112 n. 67 would have it. Cf. on this point Ebrey 2023, 297 n. 43.
[136] Cf. LSJ s.v. κόσμος.
[137] On the *Gorgias*'s notion of virtue as *oikeios kosmos*, cf. Krämer 1959, 65–70.

Phronēsis as the Soul's Normative Standard

As I have demonstrated, the kinship argument characterizes *phronēsis* as the only way to become truly virtuous (both in intellect and character), good, and happy, making its attainment paramount. We find confirming evidence for this in a protreptic passage between the final argument (102a10–107b10) and the concluding myth (107d5–114c6), in which Socrates underlines the need to care for the soul. There is no other way of escaping the evils which trap the soul in its current condition than to become 'as good and *phronimos* as possible' (107c1–d2). Insofar as becoming *phronimos* is the only way of becoming good, we should read the conjunction 'as good and *phronimos* as possible' as describing one and the same process, not as two distinct requirements. Becoming truly good coincides with becoming *phronimos*.

Since it is the soul's state of true virtue, proper order, and goodness, *phronēsis* proves to be a suitable candidate for the soul's *normative standard*, one of the two aspects of the *archaia phusis*. *Phronēsis* is a state which we all should desire to attain, given the kinds of beings we are. I submit that the *Phaedo*'s account of *phronēsis* makes it more successful at answering a second question raised by Aristophanes's account. The poet explains our desire for our missing half by virtue of its 'belonging' (being *oikeion*) to us, grounding the notion of 'belonging' in a prior union in the *archaia phusis*. I have argued that it is not clear how the mere 'physical-historical quality of being one's other half'[138] should cause and explain desire.[139] We can now see that with its characterization of our *archaia phusis* as our state of virtue, goodness, and proper order, the *Phaedo* opens up a more promising route to account for why this condition is desirable and should make us happy.

[138] Obdrzalek 2017, 86.
[139] Cf. chapter 1, subsection 2.2.

2.3.c *Sungeneia* and *Homoiōsis Theōi* in the *Phaedo*

Besides presenting the condition of *phronēsis* as the soul's intrinsically desirable normative standard, the affinity argument introduces a further, independent explanation why the soul is drawn to its *archaia phusis*: the soul 'comes to be with' the divine forms and, in moving towards *phronēsis*, assimilates itself to them whenever it investigates by itself and in accordance with its own nature, *because* it is 'akin' (*sungenēs*) to the metaphysical class of the unseen (79d3–4). This theme of the soul's kinship (*sungeneia*) as an independent motivating force is a recurring *motif* which we shall track in the coming chapters. In what follows, I shall briefly comment on the meaning of *sungeneia*, its role in our return to the *archaia phusis*, and the relationship of the *sungenes* with the earlier discussed concept of the *oikeion*. I shall also explain how, given our kinship with the divine, the restoration of our original nature relates to the recurring idea in Plato's ethics that the goal of life consists in assimilation to the divine to the greatest extent possible (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, *Tht.* 176b1).

The Meaning of Sungeneia

What does it mean for the soul to be 'akin' (*sungenēs*) to the unseen? According to Ebrey, the soul's *sungeneia* with the forms in the *Phaedo* should be roughly understood as the sharing of a common *genus*, along with a difference in *species*.[140] That the soul, even though its original nature exhibits a great deal of similarity to the objects in the intelligible class, is different in nature to them, is well taken.[141] However, especially in light of the *Phaedo*'s fundamental metaphysical distinction between two classes of beings (δύο εἴδη

[140] Ebrey 2023, 153.

[141] This constitutes a difference between the *sungeneia* discussed here and that between men and women discussed in *Republic* V: women rulers are akin by nature (συγγενεῖς … τὴν φύσιν, 456b3) to their male counterparts. They should thus be treated equally since the same way of life must be assigned to *the same natures* (ταῖς αὐταῖς φύσεσιν, 5–6).

τῶν ὄντων, 79a6), it seems less clear what it would mean for the soul and the forms to share a *genus* above and beyond that of the unseen of which the forms are members, even if 'roughly speaking'.[142] After all, the *Phaedo*'s characterization of the soul builds precisely on the fact that it belongs to *neither* of the two fundamental categories, but instead hovers between them and can take on their characteristics, without ever becoming a *bona fide* member of either class. The soul is 'more similar and akin' (ὁμοιότερον … καὶ συγγενέστερον, 79e1) to the unseen and intelligible class in the sense that it becomes more and more form-like as it becomes and acts 'itself according to itself' (αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν, 79d4).[143] At the same time, the soul will never *become* a form, if only because it cannot reach the forms' condition of permanently 'staying in the same condition' (ὡσαύτως ἔχον, 79d2).[144] This indeed is a respect in which the soul is more similar to the visible class, and accounts for the soul's capacity for being affected.[145] As we shall see later, the soul's capacity for change is not an odd or accidental feature of it: in the *Phaedrus* (245c–246e), Plato makes self-motion the soul's essential and defining characteristic. Plato's move towards a clearer consideration of the metaphysical status of the soul, even if not as a third, *sui generis* metaphysical class, eventually leads to a changed conception of its true kinship: that with the divine souls at the *Phaedrus*'s heavenly procession, and with the *Timaeus*'s world soul.[146]

[142] Ebrey 2023, 4.

[143] I here follow Ebrey 2023 in his interpretation that 'when the soul is itself *kata* itself, all its features and activities are *kata* itself – that is, in a manner determined by its true self' (155)—or, we may add, its original nature.

[144] The claim that the soul 'in relation to those entities stays always in the same state and condition' (79d5–6) is governed by the preceding 'whenever' (ὅτανπερ, 4) condition. Cf. Ebrey 2023, 156 n. 54.

[145] See Betegh 2018, 123.

[146] See chapter 5, subsection 1.4, as well as the concluding outlook to the *Timaeus* below.

Although the *Phaedo* does not make this mechanism explicit or give an explanation of it, the dialogue seems to rely on a principle that entities are naturally drawn towards what is *sungenes* to them.[147] The soul, when it follows its own nature, and in the process purifies itself from alien bodily accretions, comes to be with the unseen *because* it is akin to it (ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα αὐτοῦ).[148] The opposite is the case in the polluted soul. I have earlier described the process by which the soul gets corrupted in terms of beliefs, desires, and fears.[149] However, the language of the 'heavy, weighty, earthy, and visible' (81c8–9) nature of the bodily, which weighs down the soul and draws it towards the visible region, introduces a second, quasi-physical explanation of the soul's inability to turn toward the intelligible realm, and its consequent entrapment in cycles of reincarnation: the alien, bodily accretions pull the soul towards what is *sungenes* with *them*. Only as the soul shakes these off and becomes increasingly 'itself according to itself' does it 'come to be with' (79d3) the divine forms.

Besides the motivational role just outlined, the soul's *sungeneia* with the forms contributes an independent explanation for a second running theme of our investigation: the soul's capacity for restoring its original condition. I have earlier argued that the *Phaedo* develops a promising way of explaining our capacity for restoration by recollection of a knowledge we previously possessed. What the concept of *sungeneia* adds to this is the idea that the forms are the soul's *proper* object of cognition. They are what the soul encounters when it employs its cognitive power *kath' hautēn* (79d1), in accordance with its own nature, rather than with that of the body. Given that the *archaia phusis* of fully realized *phronēsis* is characterized by the cognition of its naturally fitting

[147] As I shall explain in the conclusion's outlook to the *Timaeus*, it is only in this later dialogue that we find something approaching a general explanation of this principle.

[148] The construction ὡς + participle in the case of the subject marks the reason or motive of the action, see LSJ s.v. ὡς C III 1.

[149] 2.3.b above.

objects (rather than of objects unrelated to its own essential being), we can be more confident that we have within ourselves the capacity to reach this condition.

Another possible explanation for the soul's capacity for self-restoration by reference to the concept of *sungeneia* remains underexplored in the *Phaedo*: would not being akin to the paradigmatically perfect forms also be a good explanation for its capacity to emulate them and thus return to its original nature? A potential reason why this is not explored further is that Plato does not make it entirely clear just in what respects the soul is similar to the forms and precisely in what way it may assimilate itself to them. This unclarity increases our suspicion that something is askew about the identification of the soul's kinship and its proper paradigm(s) of perfection.[150]

The Sungenes *and the* Oikeion

How is the *Phaedo*'s notion of the *sungenes* related to the *oikeion* introduced by Aristophanes? I cannot possibly enter here into a systematic account of Plato's conception of the two terms and their relationship (although such an account would be a *desideratum* in Plato scholarship). Generally speaking, we can distinguish two philosophical uses of the concept of the *oikeion* in Plato: the first relates an entity to the activity, state, object, *etc.* that by its nature (*phusis*) belongs to it in its state of integrity, goodness, and flourishing (and which, when taken away, constitutes genuine lack, deficiency, and badness). Thus, the state in which each element of soul or state fulfils its function is '*oikeiopragia*' (*Rep.* 434c8), the disposition bringing such functioning about is its '*oikeia aretē*' (353c1) or '*oikeios kosmos*' (*Gorg*. 506e2–4); the correct treatment for each thing is to provide it with its '*oikeiai trophai kai kinēseis*' (*Tim*. 90c6–7), recollection restores the soul's '*oikeia epistēmē*' (*Phd.* 75e5–6), *etc.* As I shall argue in chapter 6, Diotima's

[150] See chapter 5, subsection 1.4, as well as the concluding outlook to the *Timaeus* below.

criticism of Aristophanes is precisely that he fails to ground our *oikeion* (understood in this first sense) in our *agathon*, which however is the only way of explaining its 'belonging' to us in the first place.

Plato's second philosophical use of the *oikeion* is to relate two entities with a shared or closely related *phusis* to each other. It is this latter sense of '*oikeion*' which is often interchangeably labelled '*sungenes*'. Thus somebody who is by nature erotically inclined must also love what is *sungenes te kai oikeion* to his object of desire (*Rep.* 485c6–8); the dialectitian must investgate the *koinōnia* and *sungeneia* of various subjects and draw conclusions about what makes them *oikeia* (531c9–d3). The philosopher, too, is variously said to be *sungenēs* (487a5) and *oikeios* (340c2) to the forms.[151] While the *oikeion* in the first sense is on Diotima's revisionary analysis desirable because it is part and parcel of our fully realized state of goodness, the *sungenes* carries normative force by itself: it is proper for an entity to emulate, and be with, other entities it is *sungenes* with. Indeed, while Aristophanes is wrong to posit that the *oikeion* in the first sense is desirable because it is *oikeion*, entities seem to just be drawn to what is *sungenes* simply because it is *sungenes* to them.

Sungeneia *and* Homoiōsis Theōi

While the soul's kinship with the divine forms, and its desire to be with and emulate them, instils in the philosopher a desire to fully restore the soul to its *archaia phusis* after disembodiment, the corresponding ideal *within* this life falls under the general heading of what is elsewhere called 'assimilation to the divine as far as possible' (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, *Tht.* 176b1).[152] The *Phaedo* does not explicitly discuss the idea, but it

[151] On this sense of *oikeion* and its relationship to the concept of the *sungenes*, see Glaser 1935, 60–1, as well as Dimitrakopoulos 1982, 201–2.

[152] In keeping the full return to our *archaia phusis*, which can be achieved only after this life, from the ideal of *homoiōsis theōi*, I follow Sedley 1999: 'The goal of "becoming like god so far as is possible"

certainly implicitly advocates it:[153] the soul can only fully realize the condition of *phronēsis* and thus restore its *archaia phusis* by being with and more fully emulating the forms when the human being has died and purification has run its full course. During this life, the philosopher can only endeavour to get closest to knowledge (ἐγγυτάτω … τοῦ εἰδέναι) by keeping himself pure from the bodily as much as possible (ὅτι μάλιστα, 67a2–4), except where it is absolutely necessary (66b1–67b5). Although we have earlier seen that even in its disembodied, purified condition of the *archaia phusis* the soul will never fully become a member of the divine it seeks to emulate, the limitation within this life, which is also expressed in the ethical ideal of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, is thus greater still and puts the embodied soul twice removed from its ideal of emulating the divine. Nevertheless, following the ethical ideal of *homoiōsis theōi* in this life brings with it the greatest hope of attaining *phronēsis* and restoring the *archaia phusis* in the disembodied state, thus coming at least one step closer to the divine.

Conclusion

In the second section of this chapter, I have shown how the three central arguments (70c4–84b7) of the *Phaedo* are best understood as addressing a number of tasks. The first and second, formulated by Cebes in his challenge, demand that Socrates show that (1) the soul is immortal, and that (2) it is capable of attaining *phronēsis*. The third, concerning the general relevance of Socrates's defence, demands him to show that (3) *phronēsis* is in fact universally desirable. Over the course of these arguments, a coherent 'story of the soul' emerges. According to this narrative, *phronēsis* is the soul's original nature which it once possessed, is currently deficient in, and desires or should desire to restore in the

falls strictly within the confines of an incarnate life, and governs the way in which that life is to be led' (310).

[153] See Bordt 2017, 258.

future. *Phronēsis* exhibits both characteristic aspects of the Hippocratic concept of an *archaia phusis*. It is a state that has obtained at a *temporally prior* point, and it is a *normative standard* whose restoration is intrinsically desirable.

I have demonstrated that the choice of *phronēsis* as our *archaia phusis* is in many ways a better candidate than Aristophanes's *archaia phusis*. The theory of recollection gives an account of why we are in principle capable of restoring ourselves in our original nature. The analysis of *phronēsis* as our state of true virtue, proper order, and goodness is more successful than Aristophanes's explanation of the desirability of such a restoration. We may ultimately not want to go all the way with Plato on the worth of the body, sensible reality, and pleasure, but we can certainly see that a focus on the soul and its mental life adds a crucial dimension that is neglected by Aristophanes in his 'story of the body'. An account of human happiness that makes little to no reference to our cognitive and moral being seems certain to end up in disaster and frustration, rather than divine happiness.

The picture of the soul's *archaia phusis* that emerges from the *Phaedo* is that the soul's original nature is its state of *phronēsis*, full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms and complete purification from the beliefs, desires, and fears associated with the body. It is a condition that we can only fully attain after disembodiment, after a life of purification and philosophy—even though the philosopher can get quite far in her pursuit of *epistēmē* and attain a great deal of 'true virtue' even in this life. In its fully purified condition, the soul has fully realized its cognitive disposition and is capable of unhindered and direct contemplation of the forms. At the same time, such a soul will exhibit fully realized, true virtue of character. The soul's condition of true virtue is its state of goodness, the condition of order proper to it given its nature, in which it is freely active and happy. The soul's status as *sungenēs* with the forms serves as an independent, additional motivation to return to its *archaia phusis*, which at the same time contributes

a further explanation for our capacity to bring about this restoration. The kinship with the divine at the same time relates the eventual (transcendent) restoration of our original nature to the (immanent) ethical ideal of *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton* (*Tht.* 176b1).

While the *Phaedo* presents us with this whole nexus of concepts that can help explain why the *archaia phusis* is our desirable condition of happiness, little of these concepts are in the *Phaedo* explicitly defined or systematically analysed. Why is our state of virtue our state of goodness? Why is such a state desirable and how is it related to our happiness? If we want to see how Plato conceptualizes their connection in a more systematic fashion, we have to turn to the *Republic* in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Contemplation as the Soul's True Life:

The Middle Books of the *Republic*

Gloria enim Dei vivens homo; vita autem hominis visio Dei.
For the glory of God is the living man; but the life of man is the vision of God.
Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.7[154]

ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή
for the activity of the intellect is life
Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072b26–7

Introduction

In the first section of this chapter, I show how the *Republic* provides novel ways explaining the desirability of virtue. I do so by first briefly discussing *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11), which provides a novel conceptual framework that connects our function, virtue, and happiness. In this way, it explains why our proper virtue is our desirable state of goodness and happiness. I then show that the *Republic*'s middle books (V–VII) provide a metaphysical underpinning to the functional-perfectionist framework. Socrates builds on the *Phaedo*'s central distinction between two classes of beings, namely intelligible forms and sensible particulars, but adds the form of the good, which reigns supreme and causes the other forms' being and knowability (509b5–9). For any particular entity, realizing its nature is its way of maximally participating in its form. Since the forms in turn derive their perfect, pure, and stable nature from participation in the good, the particular entity's participation in the form is its way of participating in the

[154] Latin from Harvey 1857, translation Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe 1885, with emendations.

good. Besides its ontological and epistemological functions, the good has the teleological function of being the *terminus* of all desire. If our *archaia phusis* is our condition of *phronēsis* and true virtue, then its realization is our way of fully participating in the good, rendering this condition supremely desirable. Contrary to Aristophanes's account, it is *goodness*, not 'belongingness' (being *oikeion*) that causes and explains the desirability of the *archaia phusis* and of what we are missing (section 1).

In the rest of the chapter, I show how the middle books shift the balance on the question of the soul's proper virtue. While the *Republic*'s main argument (books II–IV and VIII–IX) can be seen as a way of completing the function argument by characterizing justice as the soul's proper virtue—justice is characterized as the 'regulatory principle of difference'[155] in the complex, functionally differentiated system of the tripartite embodied soul—, book VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6) and book VII's discussion of true education (518b7–519b6) once again put the virtue of *phronēsis* front and centre, characterizing true virtue of character, including justice, as inextricably bound up with the possession of *phronēsis* (cf. also 500b8–d10). Just like in the *Phaedo*, the philosopher acquires true virtue in the process of acquiring *phronēsis* (section 2).

Considering the middle books together with the evidence from book IX's three creatures image (588b1–592b5),[156] I show that we have reason to believe that even in this life, our true self resides not in the complex whole of reason, spirit, and appetite, but in the rational part alone, our 'inner human being' (589a7–b1). If we consider the question of our function, virtue, and *eudaimonia* from this perspective, we find that a number of remarks in the middle books make more sense. The description of the philosopher engaged in contemplation as 'truly living' (490b6) can in the light of the functional-

[155] Kosman 2014b, 198.

[156] I shall justify my treatment of this image along with the middle books in the introduction of section 3 below.

perfectionist framework be interpreted as implying that her rational soul exercises its function of self-activity to the greatest degree possible. This explains why such a person should be deemed *eudaimōn* (εὐδαιμονίζειν, 516c6, 518b2) when compared to the non-philosopher. The final verdict on the soul's proper virtue is found in the discussion of true education. Only *phronēsis* can properly be called the soul's virtue because it optimizes the only capacity (*dunamis*) which the soul never loses: that of the rational part (518d9–519a1) (section 3).

The remark that only the rational part necessarily retains its *dunamis* raises the possibility that the other two parts are not in fact immortal but can lose their function and be destroyed. But what would a soul look like when it has not only tamed but entirely shaken off its lower parts, restored to its *archaia phusis*? And what would justice, temperance, and courage look like in such a soul? These questions lead us into the next chapter and book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7).

1 The Desirability of Virtue

1.1 *Republic* I's Function Argument (352d2–354a11)

Republic I's function argument (352d2–354a11) introduces a novel framework that allows Plato to systematically reflect on the relationship between our soul's nature and its function, virtue, and *eudaimonia*. It comes as the final of three arguments—following the *pleonexia* argument (349b1–350c11) and the argument from internal conflict (350d5–352d2)—produced by Socrates to counter Thrasymachus and his claim that justice is 'another's good' and 'one's own harm'.[157] Socrates argues against Thrasymachus's claim that injustice is more beneficial to the individual than justice and makes its possessor *eudaimōn* (343c8, 344a5, b7). He introduces a general conceptual framework (which I label the 'functional-perfectionist framework'[158]), according to which an entity's 'proper virtue' (*oikeia aretē*)[159] is its state of full dispositional realization, what makes it good at performing the 'characteristic activity' or 'function' (*ergon*)[160] that manifests its essential nature.[161] Because it makes the entity good at doing what it does *qua* thing of its kind, proper virtue is the entity's state of ontological excellence, the normative standard that determines goodness for entities of this kind and is intrinsically desirable for entities *qua* members of their kind. At the same time, proper virtue is an intrinsic part, and the primary cause and explanation, of an entity's good, which consists in its full actual realization. An entity's proper virtue belongs (is *oikeia*) to this entity because it makes the entity what it (essentially) is or should be, and enables it to do what it (essentially) does or should do.

[157] τὸ ἀλλότριον ἀγαθόν / ἡ οἰκεία βλάβη, 343c3–5.

[158] In this I follow Santas 2001, 67, who talks about a 'Functional-Perfectionist Theory of the Good'.

[159] Οἰκεία ἀρετή, 353c1 *et passim.*

[160] Ἔργον, 352e1 *et passim*.

[161] Cf. Irwin 1995, 252, who also states that 'function' refers to the 'natural and necessary' activity of a thing given its nature. Annas 1981, 54, similarly argues that 'ἔργον' is here best understood as 'characteristic behaviour'. Cf. further Murgier 2017, 72.

Socrates applies this functional-perfectionist framework to the soul, to establish that its proper virtue leads to *eudaimonia* (353d3–354a11). In short, the argument goes as follows. The soul has a function. In fact, there is a whole range of activities (caring, ruling, deliberating, *etc*.) that we could class as characteristic of the soul (353d4–7). Living, too, can be said to be the soul's function (353d9–10). Having a function, the soul must also have a virtue, by which it is a good thing of its kind and performs the aforementioned list of activities (caring *etc.*) well (353d11–e3). As has been agreed previously,[162] the soul's virtue is justice (353e7–9). So the just soul will live well (353e10–12). But living well is nothing other than being *eudaimōn* (354a1–3). So the just soul and the just person will be *eudaimōn* (354a4–5).[163]

With its novel functional-perfectionist framework, *Republic* I can thus give a sophisticated explanation of the claims, implicit in the *Phaedo*, that virtue is our state of goodness, which is intrinsically desirable and brings about *eudaimonia*. On the function argument's conception, *eudaimonia* is characterized as a life that is successful and flourishing by objective standards: it is nothing other than the actual realization of the function of 'living', by a soul in its state of proper virtue. However, coming to the function argument from the *Phaedo*, we are left with one worry: there is a discrepancy between the function argument's characterization of justice as the tripartite soul's proper virtue and what we found in the *Phaedo*. The *Phaedo* argued that the soul reaches its state of full realization when it attains *phronēsis*, which coincides with true virtue of character. How do we square the *Phaedo*'s characterization of the soul's state of full realization in

[162] Several commentators point out that the introduction of justice as the soul's virtue is not warranted by the earlier *pleonexia* argument (349b1–350c11), which only establishes that justice is a virtue, not that it is the proper virtue of the soul (cf. Krämer 1959, 54 n. 28, Annas 1981, 55, Blößner 1991, 65, and Santas 2001, 68). While the argument may thus show how the functional-perfectionist framework can establish that our proper virtue leads to *eudaimonia*, it will take another three books to clarify the nature of the soul and of justice, to demonstrate how exactly justice as the soul's proper virtue enables it to successfully fulfil its functions.

[163] On the merits and weaknesses of the argument, which I cannot discuss in detail here, see Blößner 1991 and Santas 2001, 66–75.

contemplation with the *Republic*'s main argument, for which *eudaimonia* coincides with cognitive health in the properly ordered fulfilment of the various parts' differentiated functions under the rule of reason? As we shall see in the rest of this chapter and the next, the main argument as developed in books II–IV and books VIII–IX of the *Republic* does not have the last word on the soul's true nature, its function, virtue, and *eudaimonia*. As we turn to the middle books (books V–VII) and the Glaucus story (book X, chapter 5), we find that our true self is only the rational part, whose *phronimos* condition is the soul's true and original nature. Viewed from this perspective, there is an alternative way of completing the function argument, as the (rational) soul properly realizes its function of living in the activity of contemplation, by attaining its proper virtue of *phronēsis*. Only here is true *eudaimonia* reached. The well-ordered condition of the embodied tripartite soul advocated by the *Republic*'s main argument is not its *archaia phusis.* Just as the *Phaedo* maintains, this state is only reached after disembodiment and a life of purification and philosophy.

1.2 The Powers Argument (474c8–480a13): Two Classes of Beings, Two Cognitive Capacities

In chapter 2, we saw that the *Phaedo* distinguishes sensible particulars and intelligible forms in a metaphysical framework with two classes of beings, the visible and the intelligible (δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων, τὸ μὲν ὁρατόν, τὸ δὲ αἰδές, *Phd.* 79a6–7).[164] The *Republic*'s middle books assume the same distinction between sensible and intelligible being (διττὰ εἴδη, ὁρατόν, νοητόν, *Rep.* 509d4). While the *Phaedo*'s kinship argument (78b4–84b7) uses the ontological distinction between forms and particulars to distinguish the two cognitive dispositional states of *aphrosunē* and *phronēsis*, the *Republic*'s powers

[164] Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.a above.

argument (474c8–480a13) instead distinguishes the two cognitive capacities ('powers', *dunameis*, 477b6 *et passim*) associated with each class: *doxa* (477b4 *et passim*) and *epistēmē* (6 *et passim*).[165] The two are differentiated by what each is 'set over' (*epi*, 477d2–6 *et passim*). While *doxa* is 'set over' that which 'participates in both being and not being, and cannot correctly be called purely one or the other' (478e1–3), *epistēmē* is 'set over what is, to know it as is' (478a7).

The correct interpretation of 'being' in this passage is debated, and at least three possible readings suggest themselves. 'Being' could be interpreted as carrying an existential ('existing'), a veridical ('being true'), or a predicative sense ('being *F*').[166] The truth is probably more complex than making a simple choice from this three-item menu at the exclusion of the others, given that even more senses of 'being' suggest themselves and that a combination of various aspects might be at play in many places.[167] Yet I submit that there clearly is a *focal* sense underlying the discussion, the predicative sense of 'being *F*'. What stands out in the powers argument is the fact that sensible particulars never instantiate their property in a pure, perfect, and stable manner. Instead, they always in some respect, at some point in time, or to some person, exhibit the opposite to their property, and are therefore ambiguous (ἐπαμφοτερίζουσιν, 479b10).[168] If we suppose this interpretation of 'being', then the distinction between 'what is' and 'what is and is not' in the powers argument is between forms, which purely, perfectly, and stably instantiate their properties, and particulars, which do so only in a qualified way (they 'do and do not'

[165] The notion of a *dunamis* in this context is discussed in Moss 2021, ch. 2, and Szaif 2007.

[166] A general discussion of the philosophical uses of the Greek verb 'to be' can be found in Kahn 1981. For exponents of the existential reading, cf. Cross and Woozley 1964, Ch. 8. The most famous case for the veridical use is Fine 1978, followed by Fine 1990. The predicative reading is defended in Vlastos 1981b and 1981c, as well as Annas 1981, ch. 8.

[167] For a discussions of such further options and interpretations in the literature, cf. Moss 2021, 94.

[168] This becomes especially clear in the example of the children's riddle involving the eunuch who both is and is not a man, the bat that both is and is not a bird, *etc*. (479b10–c5 with the n. in Grube and Reeve *ad loc.*). The characterization of sensible particulars should be read in contrast to the characterization of the form in *Symposium* 210e6–211b5, which instantiates its property fully and in an entirely stable manner, in all respects, at all times, independent of any particular relation, place, or beholder, *etc.*

instantiate their properties). Accordingly, the most straightforward understanding of the characterization of *doxa* and *epistēmē*—which I think is the correct one—is that they are capacities with distinct objects, sensible particulars and intelligible forms.

While it has been commonly accepted until the 1960s that Plato is serious in distinguishing *doxa* and *epistēmē* by their objects, a number of scholars have since advanced the view that, in one way or another, this straightforward reading cannot be true. Mostly, the dissatisfaction with a 'distinct objects reading' is grounded in the conviction that what Plato is talking about here must be the distinction, omnipresent in contemporary epistemology, between 'knowledge' and 'belief'.[169] Since knowledge and belief can be about the same objects, interpreting Plato as distinguishing *doxa* and *epistēmē* by their objects has become unattractive to scholars aiming to save Plato from such an obvious mistake.[170] Such readings, then, insist that there can be *epistēmē* of particulars as well. An enormous amount of ink has been spilled on the powers argument in recent years, and a detailed discussion that would do justice to all possible nuanced positions on it would fill a thesis of its own. Since my argument does not depend on the question whether there can be *epistēmē* of particulars, I am not going to dwell on the issue. I shall her only reiterate Moss's recent plea that the most straightforward reading of the argument may simply be the most adequate one.[171]

[169] I am not denying that in many respects they are very much like knowledge and belief, for example in the fact that *epistēmē* is factive (it is a true cognition) while *doxa* is not. This does however not change the fact that in other respects they are not like knowledge and belief, most notably in Socrates's claim that they have distinct objects.

[170] For recent exponents of the 'distinct objects' reading, cf. Vlastos 1981c, Gonzalez 1996, Kahn 1996, Gerson 2003, 2009, Sedley 2007b, Carpenter 2013, Woolf 2013, Schwab 2016. For scholars who maintain that in one way or another, the objects of *doxa* and *epistēmē* 'overlap', cf. Gosling 1968, Fine 1978, 1990, Baltzly 1997, Smith 2000, 2012, and 2019, Szaif 2007, Kamtekar 2009, Vogt 2012, and Harte 2018. I am quite sympathetic to the reading offered by Moss 2021, who offers an overview of the discussion up to this point (and to which I owe most of the above references) and makes a convinving case for the former, 'distinct objects' reading.

[171] 'I cannot hope to establish that claim decisively, and I will not try: so much has been written in recent years questioning the Distinct Objects reading, and so many strategies found for re-interpreting the texts that seem most to support it, that I am sure further strategies can be found to undermine whatever further evidence I provide. Nonetheless it may be helpful to remind ourselves just how obviously right the Distinct Objects interpretation can seem when we are not already convinced that it must be wrong' (Moss 2021, 27).

1.3 The Sun (506d1–509b9): The Sovereignty of the Good

Book VI's sun analogy (506d1–509b9) picks up the two classes of beings familiar from the *Phaedo* and book V. It distinguishes the many particular *F* things from the *F* itself, which is the one form (ἰδέα) and essence (the 'what it is', ὃ ἔστιν) of *F*. While the many *F* things are visible but not intelligible, the form or essence of *F* is intelligible but not visible (507b1–9). Next, however, Socrates moves significantly beyond the *Phaedo*'s and book V's metaphysical framework.[172] He makes one intelligible object, the good, stand out from the forms, and illustrates its function by an analogy. In the visible realm, the sun is the visible object which bestows upon other particulars their visibility and coming-to-be (509b1–3). Analogously, in the intelligible realm, there is an intelligible object that causes the other forms' knowability and being (5–9). This is the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν).

How are we to understand the epistemological and ontological function of the good? Here it is helpful to draw on our earlier discussion of the powers argument (474c8–480a13). In that argument, sensible reality was characterized as exhibiting compresent opposite properties. Something that appears beautiful always (in some respect, at some point in time, to somebody, *etc*.) also appears not beautiful. Sensible reality's status as 'both being and not being' means that it never perfectly, purely, or stably instantiates a given property. This is contrasted with the 'being' of the forms, which do instantiate their

[172] In the *Phaedo*'s ontology, the good does not occupy the exalted position envisioned by the *Republic*. Nevertheless, traces of it are present in the dialogue's discussion of explanation in Socrates's intellectual autobiography (95e8–99d3) and the ensuing account of the method of hypothesis (99d4–102a10). In his discussion of Anaxagoras and his theory of *nous*, Socrates explains that he was first amazed by the prospect of explaining all things teleologically with reference to what is best (97c5–6). However, he soon became disappointed when he learned that Anaxagoras in fact made elements such as air, ether, and water the causes in his system (98c1–2). It is telling that Socrates introduces his own hypothetical method by reference to the observation of the sun through its reflections in the water (99e4–6). The theory of ideas in the absence of reference to the good (the *Republic*'s 'sun') remains a 'second sailing' (δεύτερος πλοῦς, 99d1) which for its ultimate justification would require grounding the hypotheses in something that is 'sufficient' (ἱκανόν, 101d8). The notion of the 'sufficient' ultimate and final cause is elsewhere connected with the good (cf. *Philebus* 21d, 67a, with Horn 2017, 167).

property in a perfect, pure, and stable way. Sensible particulars gain increasing perfection, purity, stability, *etc.* the more they participate in the relevant form.

A plausible way of interpreting the role of the good in this picture has been provided by Santas. Any form perfectly, purely, and stably exhibits the 'proper attribute' *F* whose form it is. The form in turn shares with all other forms the very way in which all of them exhibit their respective proper attributes: perfection, purity, stability, *etc.* By the logic of the theory of forms, these common 'ideal attributes' which are shared by the many forms must themselves be due to participation in one common form. This 'form of forms' in which all forms fully participate is the good.[173]

Sensible particulars become more perfect, pure, and stable the more they participate in their respective form. By increasingly instantiating their proper attribute, they also come to exhibit the forms' ideal attributes, and in this way participate in the good. Insofar as the good formally causes the forms' perfect, pure, and stable instantiation of their respective proper attributes, it is the cause of all essential being. Insofar as the essential being of the forms in turn formally causes the instantiation of any proper attribute in sensible reality, the good is ultimately responsible for anything being what it is ('being *F*'). Here we can see with particular clarity how a predicative reading of 'being' entails many other senses discussed in the literature. By directly or indirectly causing anything's 'being *F*', the good is the source of any claim's 'being true' (thus causing all knowability). Supposing that 'being' in an existential sense requires being something or other, the good may also be called the source of all existential being.[174]

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[173] Santas 2001, 185–7.
[174] Cf. Moss 2021, 94.

How do the middle books' reflections about particulars, forms, and the good provide a metaphysical underpinning to book I's functional-perfectionist framework? In subsection 1.1, I have characterized 'function' as an entity's characteristic activity, what it does insofar as it is an entity of its kind. Virtue, on this account, turned out to be an entity's state of dispositional realization, its state of goodness-of-kind by which it successfully manifests its essential nature in activity. The middle books' metaphysical framework supplies another way of conceptualizing this state of ontological excellence. An entity's goodness-of-kind is the state in which it fully participates in its form or nature. Participation in its form or nature is at the same time participation in the good.[175]

The function argument used its reflections on the relationship between function, virtue, and *eudaimonia* to argue for the intrinsic desirability of virtue and of activity in accordance with virtue. The same intrinsic desirability is mirrored in the metaphysical framework when it ascribes a *teleological* function to the good:[176]

> Every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake. It divines that the good is something but it is perplexed and cannot adequately grasp what it is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things, and so it misses the benefit, if any, that even those things may give.
>
> ὃ [τὸ ἀγαθόν, HK] δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἱκανῶς τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν οὐδὲ πίστει χρήσασθαι μονίμῳ οἵᾳ καὶ περὶ τἆλλα, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ ἀποτυγχάνει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἴ τι ὄφελος ἦν.
>
> *Republic* 505e1–5

[175] Cf. Santas 2001, 187–91.
[176] Cf. Horn 2017, 166.

The claim that 'every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake' adds an important point to our analysis. It is not just that the good is *desirable*, but that it is desirable *because* it is good. If restoring our *archaia phusis*, our state of true virtue, is our way of realizing our nature, then this is desirable precisely because in realizing our nature we come to fully participate in the good. As we have seen in subsection 1.1, it makes sense to characterize virtue as 'belonging' (*oikeia*) to us, since it enables us to become what we (essentially) are or should be, and do what we (essentially) do or should do. The current argument makes it clear that it is nevertheless goodness, not, as Aristophanes would have it, 'belongingness', that causes and explains its desirability.[177]

At the same time, the passage opens up a new dimension which neither book I's functional analysis nor the middle books' metaphysical framework have considered. From the question of desirability, it turns to actual desire by introducing the possibility of being mistaken about what is truly good. If becoming wise and virtuous is our true good, then most people clearly do not pursue this goal and 'do whatever they do for its sake'. How can we square the fact that most people desire the wrong things, which appear good to them without being so, with Socrates's claim that everybody wants what is *really* good for them? Would not the fact that most people are mistaken about the good imply that these people desire the apparent, not the true good? As I shall argue, Plato has sophisticated answers to these questions. In Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (201d1–212c3), which we turn to in the final chapter of this thesis,[178] we find an account of human desire for the good. In this speech, we also get an explanation of how this desire, in the best cases, can lead us all the way to the most fully realized state of wisdom and virtue achievable in our embodied existence.

[177] This will be a central contention of Diotima's critique of Aristophanes in *Symposium* 205d10–206a1, which we shall turn to in chapter 6 below.

[178] Chapter 6 below.

2 *Phronēsis* and True Virtue in the *Republic*

Republic's main argument (books II–IV and VIII–IX) can be seen as a way of completing book I's function argument (352d2–354a11). With its sophisticated analysis of the embodied soul as a complex, functionally differentiated whole, and of justice as the soul's 'regulatory principle of difference',[179] it puts the function argument's claim that justice is the soul's proper virtue (*oikeia aretē*)[180] on more secure foundations. However, the characterization of justice as the soul's proper virtue is in tension with the *Phaedo* and its view of *phronēsis* as the soul's state of full realization. If true justice is part of the excellent condition brought about by the purifying rite of *phronēsis*, then surely it would be more apt to call *phronēsis*, not justice, the soul's proper virtue. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore two ways in which the *Phaedo*'s reflections on *phronēsis* experience a comeback in the *Republic*'s middle books. In this section, I show that the *Republic* like the *Phaedo* reserves for the philosopher a special way of acquiring true virtue of character alongside the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*. In the next section, I consider how the identification of our true self with the rational soul suggests an alternative way of completing the function argument, with the virtue of *phronēsis* once again front and centre as the soul's proper virtue. But first, I examine the philosopher and her special way of acquiring and possessing the virtues.

Book VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6) characterizes the pursuit of *phronēsis* as leading to a 'drying out' of nonrational desires. Like a chorus follows its leader, a whole string of virtues, including justice, follows the philosopher's pursuit of truth (489e4–490c10). Because of her special insight into the forms, the philosopher will moreover realize virtue of character as far as this is possible for a human being, while the

[179] Kosman 2014b, 198.
[180] Οἰκεία ἀρετή, 353c1 *et passim.*

virtue she will fashion in the souls of her fellow citizens will only be a 'popular' (δημοτική) form of virtue (500b8–d10). In the first subsection, I show that both the special way in which the philosopher acquires character virtue, and the special quality of that virtue, are very similar to what we find in the *Phaedo*'s argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4) and the second part of the kinship argument (80c2–84b7) (subsection 2.1). I then look at book VII's discussion of true education (518b7–519b6), which once again suggests that in true education, intellectual and character development go together. I argue that we should read this passage as involving both stages of *katharsis* familiar from the *Phaedo*. Besides preparatory 'stage-1' *katharsis*, which is necessary for the acquisition of *phronēsis*, the completion of the soul's reorientation crucially involves the *phronēsis*-induced 'stage-2' *katharsis* outlined in the channel argument, without which true virtue cannot be acquired (subsection 2.2).

2.1 The Philosopher's Way of Acquiring Virtue: The Channel Argument (485a10–487a6, 489e4–490c10)

As we have seen,[181] the *Phaedo* distinguishes two ways of acquiring virtue. Most people attain a condition commonly considered virtuous 'by habit and practice without philosophy and intelligence' (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης… ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ, 82b2–3). However, in the absence of true *phronēsis*, their state of 'popular' and 'civic' virtue (δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή, 82a12–b1) must remain a 'shadow-painting' (σκιαγραφία, 69b7) of true virtue. The philosopher acquires virtue in a different way. *Phronēsis* is a 'purifying rite' (καθαρμός, 69c3) which expels false belief and, with it, the desires and fears that render the soul intemperate, cowardly, and, in general, lead to a condition of human badness (ἀνθρωπεία κακά, 81a7–8, ἀνθρωπίνα κακά, 84b3). While

[181] Chapter 2, 2.3.b.

the exponent of 'popular' and 'civic' virtue is made courageous because of greater fears, and temperate because of greater desires, the philosopher's pursued condition of *phronēsis* is revealed to be not only the soul's intellectual state of virtue, but its overall condition of 'true virtue' (ἀληθὴς ἀρετή, 69b3).

While the *Republic*'s main argument in books II–IV and VIII–IX makes no mention of such a privileged and true way of attaining the whole of virtue by pursuing *phronēsis*, we witness its comeback in the middle books. An especially clear expression of this process is found in book VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6) and its recapitulation a few pages later (489e4–490c10). In the channel argument, Socrates claims that the philosopher's desire for the truth, which is pursued from the time of childhood, leads to a 'drying out' of her bodily desires and makes her temperate:[182]

> Now, we surely know that, when someone's desires incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened for others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another channel. … Then, when someone's desires flow towards learning and everything of that sort, he'd be concerned, I suppose, with the pleasures of the soul itself by itself, and he'd abandon those pleasures that come through the body.
>
> Ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτῳ γε εἰς ἕν τι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι σφόδρα ῥέπουσιν, ἴσμεν που ὅτι εἰς τἆλλα τούτῳ ἀσθενέστεραι, ὥσπερ ῥεῦμα ἐκεῖσε ἀπωχετευμένον. … Ὧι δὴ πρὸς τὰ μαθήματα καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐρρυήκασιν, περὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς, οἶμαι, ἡδονὴν αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτὴν εἶεν ἄν, τὰς δὲ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐκλείποιεν.
>
> *Republic* 485d6–12

[182] Cf. further 500b8–d10 and 581b5–8, both of which stress that the mind of somebody concerned with learning and the higher things will be less occupied with, or drawn toward, material wealth and social reputation. Cf. on this point Scott 2007a, 152.

It has been argued that we should not interpret the metaphor of 'rechannelling' too literally, as this would imply that there is one single 'pool' of desire which can be directed either towards the objects of sensible reality or towards those of intelligible, essential being.[183] This in turn would run counter to the received wisdom according to which the *Republic* introduces three fundamentally distinct desiderative drives with distinct objects, as defined in 580d2–581c8.[184] Taking the lower desires as brute and good-independent, this reading suggests that such desires cannot simply be 'sublimated' and converted into higher desire for knowledge and the good.[185] However, in the light of passages such as 505e1–5 ('Every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake…'), the point has been made that even after the *Republic*'s introduction of tripartition, it is possible to view all desire as at core directed at a single intended object, the good. This single drive may still pursue different classes of actual objects (bodily pleasure, honour, or knowledge) which are taken to be good.[186] The claim about thirst being for nothing but drink (439a4–7), often taken as evidence for the existence of good-independent desires, may instead be interpreted as a more 'academic' point about different *dunameis* being set over different objects—all of which may nevertheless be taken to be good.[187]

If we adopt the latter reading , we may plausibly identify the *Republic*'s 'parts' of the soul as groups of beliefs, desires, and fears classed around incommensurable valuations about what is good, which 'stand in relations both of strong contrariety, and of confrontation, with members of any other family, but not of their own.'[188] If the desires

[183] Kahn 1996, 276–7. He argues that such a 'literal' reading of the channel argument is 'strictly incompatible with the psychology of the *Republic*' (276).

[184] On which, cf. Penner 1990, 55.

[185] Kahn 1996, 277.

[186] Cf. Carone 2001, 116–21. The distinction between the actual and intended object of desire is from Santas 1964. I shall return to the crucial discussion of desire for the true and the apparent good in chapter 6 below.

[187] Barney 2010, 45.

[188] Cf. Price 1995, 51.

of the lower parts can indeed be interpreted as good-directed (even though in part mistaken), then a 'hydraulic model' of erotic desire is not after all such a bad image.[189]

Let us start by considering what such a 'rechannelling' would look like in the opposite direction to the one described by the channel argument, from the intelligible to the sensible. We found something like this in *Phaedo* 83d4–9, where the pursuit of bodily pleasure leads to an increase in beliefs suggesting that what is reported as real and good by the body is in fact so (83d4–9). Around these mistaken beliefs about the true and the good, desires and fears form which drag us further toward sensible reality and away from intelligible essential being, thus reinforcing the initial downward movement.[190] Giving in to one class of desires grouped around the evaluation of one class of beings as good changes our cognitive makeup and ultimately reinforces this class of desires.

The channel argument describes this process when it leads us in the right direction, from sensible reality to intelligible being. As the philosopher pursues *phronēsis*, her increasing insight into the essential being of the forms eradicates false beliefs about the true and the good, thus reinforcing her desire toward the intelligible and decreasing that toward the sensible. While the hydraulic metaphor does not by itself reveal what mechanism underlies its dynamic, we see that we are on the right track as we turn to the philosopher's acquisition of courage, where the cognitive dimension once again becomes more prominent. As a result of her single-minded pursuit of wisdom and the eternal forms, the philosopher will not consider human life to be important. As a consequence, she will not consider death to be a terrible thing, and possess true courage (*Republic* 486a8–b5).

Given that the pursuit of *phronēsis* entails in the philosopher the development of the virtues of temperance and courage, along with certain other traits, Socrates concludes

[189] Cornford 1950, 71, has no such quarrels as Kahn: The parts of the soul are 'manifestations of a single fund of energy, called Eros, directed through divergent channels towards various ends.' Cf. further Guthrie 1971, 241.

[190] Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.b.

that such a person cannot but acquire the virtue of justice as well (486b6–9). Hence a whole 'string of virtues',[191] the moral virtues of temperance, courage, and justice, follow the philosopher's desire and pursuit of *phronēsis*. This is confirmed in a later recapitulating section (489e4–490c10), where truth is likened to a chorus-leader in whose trace all of the other virtues follow (490c2–7).

Similar to the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* distinguishes not only the way in which the philosopher and the non-philosopher acquire virtue of character, but also the quality of their virtue. In this, it echoes the *Phaedo*'s distinction between true virtue and popular virtue (*Phaedo* 68c5–69e4 and 80c2–84b7). The philosopher, whose mind is fixed on the forms, will not be preoccupied by human concerns. Associating with the divine and orderly, she will herself become orderly and divine insofar as a human being can. At the same time, she will fashion temperance, justice, and all the forms of civic virtue (δημοτικὴ ἀρετή) in her fellow citizens (*Republic* 500b8–d10). In considering the possibility of non-philosophers being educated by philosophers who have the relevant insights into the virtues, the *Republic* of course introduces a case not considered in the *Phaedo*'s reflections of popular virtue. It is a matter of much scholarly debate how the varieties of non-philosophical virtues within and between the dialogues relate to each other.[192] As I am mainly interested in philosophical virtue, I shall not be engaging with this debate. The following two points however seem to me to be uncontroversial:

(1) Throughout the dialogues, we find a fundamental difference between virtue of character in somebody who does possess *phronēsis*,[193] and in somebody who does not.

[191] Cf. Scott 2020, 36.

[192] For an early list and discussion of various places in the dialogues where Plato discusses such 'civic' virtue, cf. Archer-Hind 1883, *Appendix* I (181–6). Contemporary discussions include Weiss 1987, Irwin 1995 section 163 (234–5), Kamtekar 1998, esp. 334–8, Bobonich 2002 ch. 1, Wilberding 2009, Kraut 2010, Vasiliou 2012, and Reed 2020.

[193] They are held 'with *phronēsis*' (μετὰ φρονήσεως): *Phaedo* 69b3, *Theaetetus* 176b2, *Republic* 591b5, 621c5, *Laws* 906b1. Of course if attaining full *phronēsis* is only possible, this means that true virtue will similarly be unattainable in its fullest or purest form.

The former type is true virtue (ἀληθὴς ἀρετή, *Phaedo* 69b3, *Symposium* 212a6–7, *Republic* 554e5, *Laws* 731a7, ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή, *Theaetetus* 176c5), and results from true insight into the virtues. The latter must remain a semblance ('shadow-painting', σκιαγραφία, *Phaedo* 69b7, 'images', εἴδωλα ἀρετῆς, *Symposium* 212a4) of this privileged type.[194] (2) Closely related to these two kinds of virtue are two distinct ways of acquiring them. The former is said to result 'from habit and practice without philosophy and understanding' (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης … ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ, *Phaedo* 82b2–3, cf. *Republic* 518d11). The latter is intimately bound up with the acquisition of *phronēsis*. While it does also include a preparatory phase of character formation (stage-1 *katharsis*), the later, decisive phase of virtue acquisition is a consequence of the increased understanding afforded by *phronēsis* (stage-2 *katharsis*).[195] Stage-1, preparatory *katharsis* makes the soul receptive for *phronēsis*, making sure the process of its acquisition can get going in the first place by removing distractions and exposure to bodily pleasure and pain as far as possible. Stage-2, *phronēsis*-induced *katharsis*, is the result of the gradual acquisition of wisdom by the philosopher. I submit that the dynamic of this latter stage is what is described by the channel metaphor.

[194] For an example from outside my chosen scope of investigation, cf. the following passage from the *Theaetetus*: 'That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with *phronēsis* (μετὰ φρονήσεως). But it is not at all an easy matter, my good friend, to persuade men that it is not for the reasons commonly alleged that one should try to escape from wickedness and pursue virtue. It is not in order to avoid a bad reputation and obtain a good one that virtue should be practiced and not vice; that, it seems to me, is only what men call 'old wives' talk'. Let us try to put the truth in this way. In God there is no sort of wrong whatsoever; he is supremely just, and the thing most like him is the man who has become as just as it lies in human nature to be. And it is here that we see whether a man is truly able, or truly a weakling and a nonentity; for it is the realization of this that is wisdom and true virtue (ἡ μὲν γὰρ τούτου γνῶσις σοφία καὶ ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή), while the failure to realize it is manifest folly and wickedness.' (176a8–c5. For the Greek text I consulted Hicken's OCT edition in Duke *et al.* 1995. Translation is Levett and Burnyeat 1997, with emendations).

[195] Chapter 2, 2.3.b.

2.2 True Education as a Turning of the Whole Soul (518b7–519b6)

The topic of the soul's reorientation towards *phronēsis* and true virtue is taken up again in the discussion of true education immediately after the cave allegory (514a1–518b6). Socrates explains that, contrary to common conception, intellectual education does not consist in putting knowledge into the soul, as if one were putting sight into blind eyes (518b7–c3). Taking for granted that such 'sight' is already present, but may be oriented the wrong way, true education instead takes it as its task to turn the soul's cognitive gaze in the appropriate direction, from sensible to intelligible reality (d3–8). More so than the channel argument, this image has a distinct *Phaedonic* ring to it, for two reasons. Firstly, we once again meet the idea that the soul sits on the horizon between the sensible and the intelligible, and needs to be turned from the former to the latter.[196] The goal of intellectual education as portrayed in our passage is thus nothing other than the *Phaedo*'s *phronēsis*, the soul's full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms (*Phaedo* 79c2–d7, with 66a6). Secondly, we are reminded of the mention of *phronēsis* along with the sensory dispositional states of sight and hearing in the *Phaedo*'s concluding myth (111b4). When I discussed this myth in chapter 2, I argued that this points to a conception of *phronēsis* as a state of full cognitive dispositional realization, in which the soul is fully capable of intellectual contemplation.[197] This is confirmed in the present passage, where the soul whose gaze is correctly oriented is described as 'able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good' (*Republic* 518c9–d1).[198] The metaphor of vision moreover reminds us of book I's function argument (352d2–354a11), where the eye and vision are used to illustrate the relationship between function, virtue, and flourishing. Although we are cautioned that the soul's cognitive gaze differs from the

[196] With the difference that the latter is enriched with the supreme presence of the good, the highest object of study which the soul must above all comprehend, 518c9–d1.

[197] Chapter 2, subsection 1.2.

[198] And, just below: when a suitable soul is turned towards 'true things' (τὰ ἀληθῆ, 519b4), it sees these 'most sharply' (ὀξύτατα, 5).

eye in that it can never lack 'sight', but can only be falsely oriented, its correct orientation is very much like an organ's full dispositional realization, enabling it to successfully perform its function of intellectual vision. As we shall see,[199] this status of *phronēsis* as the rational soul's state of dispositional realization will be key in the middle books' alternative way of completing the function argument.

True education is the reorientation from the sensible to the intelligible and, ultimately, to the good. However, our intellectual gaze cannot be turned towards being and the good in isolation from the rest of the soul. It is 'like an eye that cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul' (518c6–8). What is the sense of priority here? Does the acquisition of *phronēsis* require character development as preparatory, stage-1 *katharsis*? Or does it entail character development as its consequence, as stage-2 *katharsis*? I submit that we should read the claim about the relationship between *phronēsis* and character development in this passage as implying both stages, and thus as a kind of temporally extended biconditional. If we consider the development of a soul from childhood all the way to the vision of the good, such a soul can attain (greatest possible) *phronēsis* if, and only if, it undergoes fundamental character development.

The two stages of this development come out best if we consider two 'twin' passages, one from our current discussion, one from book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7), on which I shall have more to say in chapter 5. Here is the passage from our discussion in book VII…

> However, if a nature of this sort had been hammered at from childhood and freed from the bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures and which, like

[199] Cf. section 3 below.

leaden weights, pull its vision downwards—if, being rid of these, it turned to look at true things, then I say that the same soul of the same person would see these most sharply, just as it now does the things it is presently turned towards.

Τοῦτο μέντοι, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, τὸ τῆς τοιαύτης φύσεως εἰ ἐκ παιδὸς εὐθὺς κοπτόμενον περιεκόπη τὰς τῆς γενέσεως συγγενεῖς ὥσπερ μολυβδίδας, αἳ δὴ ἐδωδαῖς τε καὶ τοιούτων ἡδοναῖς τε καὶ λιχνείαις προσφυεῖς γιγνόμεναι περικάτω στρέφουσι τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ὄψιν, ὧν εἰ ἀπαλλαγὲν περιεστρέφετο εἰς τὰ ἀληθῆ, καὶ ἐκεῖνα ἂν τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο τῶν αὐτῶν ἀνθρώπων ὀξύτατα ἑώρα, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἃ νῦν τέτραπται.

Republic 519a7–b5

…and here the book X passage:

[If we want to see the soul's true or original nature (*archaia phusis*), we must look, HK] to its love of wisdom (*philosophia*). We must realize what it grasps and longs to have intercourse with, because it is akin[200] to the divine and immortal and what always is, and we must realize what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being, and if the resulting effort lifted it out of the sea in which it now dwells, and if the many stones and shells (those which have grown all over it in a wild, earthy, and stony profusion because it feasts at those so-called happy feastings on earth) were hammered off it.

Εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται καὶ οἵων ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα τῷ τε θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι, καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιούτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἑστιωμένῃ, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἑστιάσεων.

[200] On the role of kinship (*sungeneia*) in this argument, see chapter 4 subsection 1.4 below.

I contend that these passages are clearly closely related. They characterize the soul's education as a liberation from alien and heavy accretions,[201] grown onto (προσφυεῖς, 519b2) or around (περιπέφυκεν, 612a2) the soul as a result of the pursuit of bodily pleasures, here in both cases likened to feastings and other indulgences. These drag the soul or its cognitive gaze downwards and prevent it from being in contact with or contemplating the true being of the divine, immortal, and eternal forms. Without a doubt, what is established at the end of this development is the soul's purified condition of *phronēsis*, its full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms. But the passages are of course not only remarkably close to each other—they also have a striking similarity to the imagery employed in the *Phaedo*. Especially at 81b1–d5, Socrates describes the fate of a soul that has been indulging in bodily appetite. Such a soul will be interspersed with the bodily which has attached itself to the soul as an alien 'accretion' (*sumphuton*, 81c6),[202] and which is likewise characterized as 'heavy, weighty, earthy, and visible' (81c8–9), pulling down the soul to the sensible realm.

There is, however, one crucial difference between the *Republic*'s twin passages. The book VII passage considers the 'hammering free' (περιεκόπη, 519a8) that is necessary to cut off the soul's attachment to becoming 'from childhood' (ἐκ παιδὸς, 519a7–8), in order to enable the soul to turn its gaze towards true being. The book X passage, by contrast, describes the 'hammering' or 'striking free' (περικρουσθεῖσα, 611e4) of the soul that occurs as a consequence of its 'effort' or 'impulse' (ὑπὸ ταύτης

[201] Scott 2020, 22, remarks that the Greek word for the 'leaden weights' dragging down the soul in the former passage, μολυβδίς, refers to the kind of weight attached to a fishing net to submerge it under water. This of course further connects the present passage to the Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7, cf. chapter 4), from which the second passage is taken.

[202] As we shall see, the three creatures image will likewise characterize the tripartite soul as 'grown together' (συμπεφυκέναι, 588d5–6), consisting of the true self of the inner human being and the two other parts which are alien to it.

τῆς ὁρμῆς, 3), that is, its pursuit of *phronēsis* in the activity of philosophy, which will ultimately lead to the fully restored state of the soul's true or original state. The twin passages thus illustrate the two stages of purification distinguished in our reading of the *Phaedo*. The former emphasizes the necessity of stage-1, preparatory *katharsis* as a precondition for the turning around of the soul to the forms, while the latter emphasizes the stage-2, *phronēsis*-induced *katharsis* occurring as a consequence of the pursuit and gradual attainment of *phronēsis*. I shall have more to say on book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7) in the next chapter.

3 An Alternative Way of Completing the Function Argument

In this section, I consider how book IX's concluding three creatures image (588b1–592b5)[203] introduces an idea that throws new light on the question of the soul's function, virtue, and happiness in the middle books. Initially drawing on the main argument's analysis of the tripartite soul, the passage surprises us by suggesting that even in this life, our true self resides not in the complex whole of reason, spirit, and appetite, but in the rational part alone, called our 'inner human being' (589a7–b1). This identification of our true self with reason alone suggests that there is an alternative to the main argument for completing the function argument. And indeed, viewing the rational part as our true self, we can make better sense of a number of claims in the middle books, such as that the philosopher engaged in the activity of contemplation 'truly lives' (490b6) and that in this condition, she should be deemed *eudaimōn* (εὐδαιμονίζειν, 516c6, 518b2) (subsection 3.1). The strongest evidence that the reevaluation of our true self must lead to a reconsideration of our true function, virtue, and *eudaimonia* comes once again from the discussion of true education (518b7–519b6). In this passage, *phronēsis* is characterized as the only virtue that properly belongs to the soul because it belongs to the only part which never loses its *dunamis*: the divine rational part (518d9–519a1). I argue that the virtues of character are dismissed only in their habituated, popular form and still belong to the soul as part of true virtue. Nevertheless, these virtues, including justice, can be called 'proper virtues' of the soul only in a derivative fashion, as part of its condition of *phronēsis* (subsection 3.2).

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[203] I justify my treatment of this passage along with the middle books at the end of the introduction to this section.

Why include a discussion of book IX's three creatures image (588b1–592b5) in a chapter mainly concerned with the middle books (books V–VII)? A convincing case can be made that, by contrast to the immediately preceding second pleasure argument (583b1–588a10), no middle-books metaphysics is required for this argument to work as a way of convincing the uninitiated sceptic.[204] At the same time, this does not rule out that the argument, to the person that *has* witnessed the discussion of the middle books, contributes to an understanding of certain developments within the middle books and book X. As such, we cannot help but read this passage as referring and contributing to a particular strand of the *Republic*'s discussion which first appears in the middle books, and is continued in book X's Glaucus passage (611b1–612a7). This discussion, which we have already been tracing in the previous section and shall continue investigating into the next chapter, makes heavy use of *Phaedonic* terminology and imagery. It suggests that our true self, the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1), resides not in the complex whole of the tripartite soul, but in the divine rational part alone, whose capacity is never lost (518d9–519a1). True happiness and life (490b6, 516c6, 518b2) consist in identifying ourselves as much as possible with this part, realizing its proper virtue of *phronēsis* (518d9–519a1) as far as possible, in order to maximally exercise its function of living in the activity of contemplation. The acquisition of *phronēsis* coincides with the true way of acquiring the whole of virtue (485a10–487a6, 489e4–490c10, 518b7–519b6). However, the impurity consisting of bodily belief, desire, and fear (519a7–b6, 611d8–612a7) which has grown onto the rational soul (519b2, 588d5–6, 612a2) cannot be fully removed while we are still embodied (611b11–c1). It can only be reduced to a necessary minimum (implied in

[204] Cf. Scott 2015, 78–83. I agree that the argument certainly does not *require* reference to middle-book passages in which the connection between the rational part and divinity is established in order to work rhetorically and dialectically on such an individual.

589b1–3, referring to the distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites of 558d8–559c12). Our true and original nature (*archaia phusis*, 611c7–d1) can only be restored after death and is only discernible to a higher method of investigation than the one employed so far in the *Republic*'s main argument (611b1–612a7).

The three creatures image, with its depiction of reason as the true 'inner human being' (589a7–b1), the divine within (e4), which is only 'grown together' (588d5–6) with the other parts that however remain alien to it, fits too clearly with these other passages to not interpret it as an integral part of this particular strand of the *Republic*'s discussion. It thus works both as an argument for the necessity of justice to the uninitiated sceptic, and as an integral part of a strand of the *Republic* where the dialogue points beyond its main argument, and ultimately, beyond itself entirely, towards a new dialectical psychology that would give a full account of the soul in its *archaia phusis*.[205] I shall for this reason rely on evidence from both the middle books and the three creatures image in the remainder of this chapter to characterize the strand of the discussion outlined just now, turning to book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7) in the next.

3.1 The 'Human Being Within': The Three Creatures Image (588b1–592b5)

Books VIII–IX return to the *Republic*'s main argument after the digression of the middle books (V–VII). After three arguments concerned with comparing the just and unjust lives by the standard of conventional *eudaimonia* (543c4–580c9, 580c10–583a11, and 583b1–588a10), we find a concluding argument that is quite different in character from the preceding ones. This argument is the three creatures image (588b1–592b5). Socrates proposes to analyse the soul in the form of an image that draws on the main argument's analysis of the embodied tripartite soul. Like in the fantastic creatures found in ancient

[205] Adam 1902 *ad* 611c rightly points out that the Glaucus passage (611b1–612a7) announces a 'new psychological standpoint' from which the nature of the soul, its parts, and its virtues, is to be evaluated.

myths (μυθολογοῦνται παλαιαὶ … φύσεις, 588c2–3), in which many forms are grown together (συμπεφυκυῖαι, 4) into one,[206] the interlocutors picture the soul as three creatures that are grown together (συμπεφυκέναι, d5–6) into one. Appetite is likened to a beast with many heads that it can grow at will, some of gentle and some of savage animals. Spirit is pictured as a lion, while reason is represented by a human being. The three are then enveloped into the image (εἰκών, 588d8) of a single human being, giving rise to the impression that they are really just one creature (588b10–e3). Employing this image, Socrates argues that the proponent of injustice advocates nothing other than giving free rein to the multi-headed beast, leading to a starving of the human being within and an overall condition of internal conflict. This is contrasted with the condition of justice: the human being, with the help of the lion, tames the inner beast, cutting of its savage heads while cultivating the tame ones. Justice leads to an overall condition of community and friendship among the parts (588e4–589b6).

While this image obviously relies on book IV's analysis of the soul as tripartite, updated with book VIII's distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites (558d8–559c12), it nevertheless contains an idea that is foreign to the main argument's analysis of the soul as one functionally differentiated whole. The main argument seemed to suggest that who we are at core—and thus, what grounds our function(s), virtue(s), and happiness—is the whole of the tripartite soul, including appetite and spirit. The image of the three creatures suggests otherwise. In calling the rational part the 'human being within' (ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος, 589a7–b1), and even the inner divine principle (589c9–d2, 590c7–d6), while the form wrapped around the compound of the three parts is only an 'image' (εἰκών, 588d8) of the human being, this argument suggests that our true self

[206] Socrates's remark in the *Phaedrus* passage on rationalizing myth (229c6–230a7), that he does not even know himself and for this reason investigates whether he himself is a complex and wild beast or a tamer and simpler creature which has a share in a more divine portion (230a3–6), almost certainly refers to this image.

consists not of the compound whole, but of the rational part alone. Our true self is 'grown together' (συμπεφυκέναι, 5–6) with the other parts, which however remain alien to it. Because of the outer human image, the three 'appear to be one living being, man' (ἓν ζῷον φαίνεσθαι, ἄνθρωπον, e2), but only 'to someone unable to look within' (e1). Their nature has not become one as they are only grown together 'in a way' (πῃ, d5). In reality, they are three (τρία ὄντα, *ibid.*).

This radical reevaluation of our true self of course has consequences for the question of our true function, virtue, and happiness. In subsection 1.1 on the function argument, we have seen that Socrates ascribes to the soul the function of 'living' (τὸ ζῆν, 353d9). The soul is a characteristically self-active principle and source of agency. Interestingly, the open list of activities which I argued are expressions of this self-activity (ruling, caring, deliberating, *etc*., 353d4–7) are all activities of the rational part in the embodied, tripartite soul. This may be seen as early evidence for the identification of our true self, and the soul's true nature, as rational. In any case, once the analysis of books II–IV suggested that the embodied soul is not the simple rational soul, but has two lower parts, these also received characteristic activities which may be seen as additional ways in which the soul expresses its essential function of 'living'. The consequence for an application of the functional framework to the resulting complex, functionally differentiated whole, was the identification of four dispositional properties, the virtues. These enable each part to fulfil its function properly, and lead to an overall condition of flourishing or *eudaimonia*.

With the identification of the true self not as the functionally differentiated whole but as the rational part alone, we may wonder if there is another, alternative way of considering our true function, virtue, and happiness. In the middle books' recapitulation of the channel argument (489e4–490c10), we find a passage that seems to reflect precisely such an alternative way of considering our highest form of self-realization:

> It is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship[207] with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and—at that point, but not before—is relieved of the pains of giving birth?
>
> πρὸς τὸ ὂν πεφυκὼς εἴη ἁμιλλᾶσθαι ὅ γε ὄντως φιλομαθής, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιμένοι ἐπὶ τοῖς δοξαζομένοις εἶναι πολλοῖς ἑκάστοις, ἀλλ᾽ ἴοι καὶ οὐκ ἀμβλύνοιτο οὐδ᾽ ἀπολήγοι τοῦ ἔρωτος, πρὶν αὐτοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἑκάστου τῆς φύσεως ἅψασθαι ᾧ προσήκει ψυχῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι τοῦ τοιούτου—προσήκει δὲ συγγενεῖ— ᾧ πλησιάσας καὶ μιγεὶς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως, γεννήσας νοῦν καὶ ἀλήθειαν, γνοίη τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ζῴη καὶ τρέφοιτο καὶ οὕτω λήγοι ὠδῖνος, πρὶν δ᾽ οὔ;
>
> *Republic* 490a8–b7

In language that closely resembles the *Symposium*'s description of the culmination of the ascent (209e5–212a7),[208] the philosopher engaged in contemplative activity—the cognitive grasp of and interaction with the forms—is described as 'truly living' (ἀληθῶς ζῴη, 490b6).[209] Contemplation, on this conception, is the highest expression of 'living', as the soul's most unobstructed, direct, and resonant expression of its characteristic self-activity, exercised on that which is most truly real and akin to it. It is the full actual

[207] On the role of kinship (*sungeneia*) in this argument, see chapter 4, subsection 1.4 below.

[208] Cf. chapter 6, subsection 2.3.

[209] Cf. *Symposium* 211d1–3: 'It is here, … if anywhere, that life is worth living for a human being, in contemplation of beauty itself' (ἐνταῦθα τοῦ βίου … εἴπερ που ἄλλοθι, βιωτὸν ἀνθρώπῳ, θεωμένῳ αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν). Against the popular conception (cf. *Phaedo* 64a9–b6), according to which the life of the philosopher is like being dead, it is the most heightened form of existence and of life. On this point, Cf. Guthrie 1971, 241: *Psyche* is the vital principle, it is the energy of life itself. The soul of the philosopher, or of God, does not lose that life when it turns to contemplate reality. On the contrary the philosophic souls "have life, and have it more abundantly", ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή [for the activity of mind is life], as Aristotle wrote in truly Platonic mood.' The reference is to *Metaphysics* 1072b26–7.

realization of our true rational nature. If we suppose that contemplation realizes our nature in this way, we can moreover make sense of two instances in the cave passage (514a1–518b6) where the philosopher in this condition is said to be *eudaimōn* (εὐδαιμονίζειν, 516c6, 518b2) when compared to the non-philosopher. If the true self is indeed our rational soul, then our flourishing, the unhindered and full exercise of our function of living consists in contemplation. By the functional-perfectionist account developed in the function argument, this is nothing other than our condition of *eudaimonia.*

3.2 *Phronēsis* as the Soul's Proper Virtue (518d9–519a1)

If our true self consists in the rational part, and our state of actual self-realization is contemplative activity in the full presence of the forms, then this reinstantiates *phronēsis* as our proper virtue. Indeed, a passage from the discussion of true education suggests that it is the only virtue that properly belongs to the soul:

> Now, it looks as if the other so-called virtues of the soul are closely related to those of the body, for they really aren't there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice. However, the virtue of reason seems to belong above all to something more divine (θειοτέρου τινὸς), which never loses its power but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned.
>
> αἱ μὲν τοίνυν ἄλλαι ἀρεταὶ καλούμεναι ψυχῆς κινδυνεύουσιν ἐγγύς τι εἶναι τῶν τοῦ σώματος—τῷ ὄντι γὰρ οὐκ ἐνοῦσαι πρότερον ὕστερον ἐμποιεῖσθαι ἔθεσι καὶ ἀσκήσεσιν—ἡ δὲ τοῦ φρονῆσαι παντὸς μᾶλλον θειοτέρου τινὸς τυγχάνει, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὖσα, ὃ τὴν μὲν δύναμιν οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυσιν, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς περιαγωγῆς χρήσιμόν τε καὶ ὠφέλιμον καὶ ἄχρηστον αὖ καὶ βλαβερὸν γίγνεται.
>
> *Republic* 518d9–519a1

There are two schools of thought on how to interpret and translate θειοτέρου τινός in e1, which have helpfully been contrasted by Scott.[210] I agree with Grube and Reeve in their interpretation of the genitive as a genitive of possession (as in the translation above), *contra* interpreters like Shorey, who takes it as a genitive of quality: 'the excellence of thought, it seems, is certainly *of a more divine quality*, a thing that never loses its potency'.[211] My reason for preferring the former interpretation is that its alternative would plainly contradict the preceding discussion. If we go for the Grube and Reeve reading, the relative pronoun ὅ refers to the rational part[212] to which the virtue of *phronēsis*[213] belongs, stating that this part never loses its *dunamis*. If we go for the Shorey reading, it refers to the virtue of *phronēsis*, stating that *it* never loses its *dunamis*. Clearly, Plato does not mean to suggest that *phronēsis* itself is something which is always present and is useful when rightly directed and harmful when wrongly directed. Rather, *phronēsis* is the correct orientation of the mind's cognitive power which is always present in the soul. Cognition is the *dunamis* (518c5) which is present in the soul of everyone. It is useful when *phronēsis* is present and harmful when *phronēsis* is absent.

The claim that this part has a *dunamis*, a power or capacity, which it never loses, connects this passage with two other discussions: earlier on, in book V's powers argument (474c8–480a13), we found a distinction between two *dunameis* of cognition, *doxa* and *epistēmē*, which are distinguished by whether the soul cognizes sensible particulars or intelligible forms.[214] When Socrates now talks about one *dunamis* which may be turned towards either realm, he seems to imply that there is one general capacity of cognition at

[210] Scott 2015, 81 n. 25. Besides the two readings which I cite here, Scott lists further exponents of either camp. While I share his preferred reading, my reasons are different, as I shall explain presently.

[211] Shorey 1935, my italics.

[212] This reading moreover renders the passage consistent with the three creatures image (588b1–592b5), which likewise refers to the rational part as divine (589c9–d2, 590c7–d6).

[213] I take ἡ τοῦ φρονῆσαι [ἀρετή] to be nothing other than the virtue of *phronēsis*—the latter being the abstract noun of action based on the verb φρονεῖν, of which φρονῆσαι is the aorist infinitive active. The aorist here may be resultative, i.e. denoting the state of having thought out and thus being wise.

[214] Cf. subsection 1.2 above.

the root of both, which takes the form of *doxa* when it considers sensible reality and of *epistēmē* when it is turned towards intelligible being.[215] What is perhaps even more surprising than the notion of a general cognitive capacity is the claim that the rational part never loses its *dunamis*. This remark, along with the reference to the virtue of *phronēsis*, calls to mind the second demand of Cebes's challenge (69e5–70b4) in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates is tasked to show that the soul in its disembodied state still has some *dunamis* and *phronēsis*.[216] The present passage tells us that, of the three parts of the soul distinguished in the *Republic*'s main argument, only the rational part always retains its *dunamis*, implying the possibility that the other parts may lose theirs.

When we are talking about the possibility of the lower parts losing their *dunamis*, we clearly cannot be considering the fate of the embodied soul anymore. As the three creatures image (588b1–592b5) with the beast's tame and savage heads illustrates, the *Republic* introduces an upper bound for the purification of the soul from appetitive desires achievable during embodiment: the previously drawn distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites (558d8–559c12). Necessary desires are defined precisely as desires which we cannot desist from because of our embodied nature (558d11–559a2), while unnecessary desires are the ones we could rid ourselves of if we practiced from youth on (3–7). This distinction is prefigured in the *Phaedo*'s claim that the philosopher will not care for the adornments of the body, 'except in so far as it is absolutely necessary for him to take an interest in them' (καθ' ὅσον μὴ πολλὴ ἀνάγκη μετέχειν αὐτῶν, 64e1). With its distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires, the *Republic* specifies the natural limit we can face in our attempts to purify the soul from the 'bodily' during our embodied

[215] A similar idea is discussed in Szaif 2007. On his particular position, cf. Moss 2021, 50 n. 1. The idea that there must be a common root of both sensibility and understanding in a single cognitive faculty also intrigued Kant: 'Nur so viel scheint zur Einleitung, oder Vorerinnerung, nötig zu sein, daß es zwei Stämme der menschlichen Erkenntnis gebe, die vielleicht aus einer gemeinschaftlichen, aber uns unbekannten Wurzel entspringen, nämlich *Sinnlichkeit* und *Verstand*, durch deren ersteren uns Gegenstände gegeben, durch den zweiten aber gedacht werden.' (*KrV* A15/B29). Cf. further A835/B863.

[216] Cf. chapter 2, subsection 2.1.

condition. The appetite retains a function even in the embodied soul's well-ordered state, and with it the spirited part that is necessary to keep appetite in check and preserve the commands of reason when confronted with pleasure and pain (442b10–c3). As we shall see in the next chapter on book X's Glaucus image (611b1–612a7), these functions and desires of the lower parts only become unnecessary after disembodiment, when the soul can become fully purified (καθαρόν, 611c2), and is no longer 'maimed by its association with the body and other evils' (b10–c1).

*

If the soul in its *archaia phusis*, its disembodied and fully purified condition, retains only its cognitive *dunamis*, then only the virtue that optimizes this capacity can properly be said to belong to the soul. Does this mean that virtue of character does not properly belong to the soul? This depends on how we understand the statement about the 'so-called virtues of the soul' (αἱ ἄλλαι ἀρεταὶ καλούμεναι ψυχῆς, 518d9) which 'aren't there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice' (οὐκ ἐνοῦσαι πρότερον ὕστερον ἐμποιεῖσθαι ἔθεσι καὶ ἀσκήσεσιν, 10–1). If we take the distinction between these 'so-called virtues of the soul' and *phronēsis* to amount to the distinction between virtue of character and intellectual virtue, then the passage claims that virtue of character does not belong properly to the soul: it is only a 'so-called' virtue of the soul, but in truth almost closer to a virtue of the body.

Such a view makes a certain amount of sense if we suppose the characterization of the virtues as developed in book IV's analysis of the tripartite soul. Indeed, *all* virtues (including that of the rational part) as characterized in the main argument depend on there being parts which can be their seats or whose interaction the virtues govern. According to book IV's analysis, courage is the spirited part's preservation of reason's commands

about what is and what is not to be feared in the face of pains and pleasures (442b10–c3), wisdom (τὸ σόφον) is knowledge of what is beneficial for each part and the whole that enables this part to rule (4–8),[217] temperance is the shared belief of all parts that the rational part should rule (9–d4), while justice is each part confining itself to its function (d5–7 *et passim*). Even *phronēsis* must be redefined once the other parts drop out of the picture, to optimize the rational part's activity not in its role in the tripartite soul, but on its own as a cognitive principle. For the other virtues, the question poses itself whether they simply become obsolete in the absence of the lower parts, or if here too, the fully purified soul has another, higher way of conforming to them in its *archaia phusis*. I think that the latter is precisely right.

As we shall see in the next chapter, there are two places (435c4–d7, 504a4–b8) where Socrates cautions his interlocutors that their investigation into the parts and virtues of the soul, while adequate to their present investigation, may not have been completely exact. Instead, another, longer route of inquiry is required to investigate the true nature of the soul and its virtues. This worry is taken back up in the Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7), which suggests the soul's true nature might be quite different from what they found, and can be discovered only by a higher, reasoning method. Only then, Socrates explains, would they be able to 'see justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've discussed far more clearly' (611c3–4).[218] If there is a higher, more perfect, pure, and stable way in which the *phronimos* soul in its *archaia phusis* conforms to the virtues of character, then this will not be accessible to the current 'shorter route' of inquiry, which investigates the soul in its embodied, tripartite, and impure condition.

[217] Interestingly, the open list of activities comprising the soul's function of living according to the function argument (352d2–354a11)—caring, ruling, deliberating, *etc.*, 353d4–7—turn out to be the functions not of the whole soul, but of the rational part in the embodied, tripartite soul.

[218] Cf. Adam 1902 *ad* 611c: 'The theory of Justice and Injustice in Book IV rested on a psychology which explained soul not as καθαρόν, and by itself, but present in body (cf. 612 a). Plato hints that the new psychological standpoint will give us a new and higher conception of Justice. I agree with Hirzel (der Dialog I pp. 237 f.) in holding that this higher conception can only be the Idea.'

While the *Phaedo* in its argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4) does not give us precise definitions of the individual virtues of character, its characterization of these virtues as a *katharsis* which is brought about by the *katharmos* of *phronēsis* (69c3) suggests, as I have argued, that the *phronimos* soul in its *archaia phusis* (and not before) will fully attain the condition of true virtue (68b3).[219] Rather than making character virtue obsolete, the fully purified condition of *phronēsis* realizes it in its true form. What, then, about the claims in our present passage about the 'so-called virtues of the soul' (αἱ ἄλλαι ἀρεταὶ καλούμεναι ψυχῆς, 518d9) which 'aren't there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice' (οὐκ ἐνοῦσαι πρότερον ὕστερον ἐμποιεῖσθαι ἔθεσι καὶ ἀσκήσεσιν, 10–1)? Conveniently, the *Phaedo* in its argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4), and the second part of the kinship argument (80c2–84b7) suggest a different way of interpreting the distinction between the 'so-called virtues of the soul' and *phronēsis*. On this alternative interpretation, the distinction here is not between virtue of character and intellectual virtue, but between the popular variety of character virtue and *phronēsis*, the possession of which entails true virtue of character. The 'so-called' virtues of the soul are not 'so-called' because they do not belong to the *soul*, but because they are not really *virtues* of the soul—they are, as the *Phaedo* would have it, a mere shadow-image (σκιαγραφία, 69b7) of true virtue. The connection with popular virtue is strengthened by the claim that these so-called virtues of the soul are acquired 'by habit and practice' (ἔθεσι καὶ ἀσκήσεσιν, 518d11)—in the *Phaedo*, popular virtue is acquired 'by habit and practice without philosophy and intelligence' (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης… ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ, 82b2–3). If my interpretation is correct, then the virtues of character, including justice, are not outright discarded in our passage as not properly belonging to the soul. Insofar as *phronēsis*, the soul's proper virtue, is at the same time the soul's true way of

[219] Chapter 2, 2.3.b.

possessing the virtues of character, these can still be said to be proper to the soul.[220] However, they will be so only in a derivative fashion, as part of the soul's condition of *phronēsis*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I briefly discussed *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11) and the way in which its novel conceptual framework, connecting our function, virtue, and happiness, explains why our proper virtue is our desirable state of goodness and happiness. I argued that the *Republic*'s middle books (V–VII) provide a metaphysical underpinning to the functional-perfectionist framework. According to the metaphysics of the middle books, an entity's self-realization is its way of increasingly participating in its form, and in this way, in the good. Besides its ontological and epistemological functions, the good has the teleological function of constituting the ultimate *terminus* of all desire. This adds an important dimension to our desire to restore our *archaia phusis*. It suggests that this state is not merely desirable because it realizes our nature and 'belongs' (is *oikeion*) to us—as Aristophanes would have it. Rather, it is desirable because it is our way of fully participating in the good. However, the simultaneous claims that desire is for what is really good, and that most people in fact fail to grasp the good, seem to be in tension and require further elucidation.[221]

I also showed how the middle books, contrary to the function argument (352d2–354a11) and the main argument (books II–IV and VIII–IX), reinstantiate *phronēsis* as the soul's proper virtue. Book VI's channel argument (485a10–487a6) and book VII's discussion of true education (518b7–519b6) confirm the position, familiar from the

[220] *Pace* Adam *ad loc*. Szlezák 1976, 51–2 likewise maintains that the 'other' virtues are simply lost when the lower parts are discarded.

[221] Chapter 6 on Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* (201d1–212c3),

Phaedo, that true virtue of character is acquired along with the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, following in its train like a chorus follows its leader (489e4–490c10). The philosopher, thanks to her privileged insights into the essence of the forms, realizes true virtue of character in her soul as far as possible for a human being, while the other citizens are confined to 'civic virtue' (500b8–d10).

Finally, I argued that book IX's three creatures image (588b1–592b5) with its identification of the true self with the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1) of the rational part suggested an alternative way of completing the function argument. I showed that this is indeed borne out by the characterization of the philosopher at the height of contemplation as 'truly living' (490b6) and being *eudaimōn* (516c6, 518b2). I interpreted the discussion of true education (518b7–519b6) as confirming, in line with this alternative function argument, that *phronēsis* is the soul's proper virtue.

As we have seen, the conclusion that only *phronēsis* properly belongs to the soul is established by arguing that the rational part is the only part that retains its *dunamis* (518d9–519a1). I interpreted this remark as implying that after disembodiment, the lower parts of a sufficiently purified soul may lose their function and capacity entirely, as even the necessary desires of this life (558d8–559c12), illustrated in the three creatures image by the beast's tame heads, are no longer necessary. This raises the question what the soul in its completely purified condition would look like, after it has left behind any traces of the body and its desires. As it happens, Socrates turns to a consideration of the soul in this condition, which he calls its *archaia phusis*, in book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7).

Chapter 4

The New Psychological Standpoint:

Republic X's Glaucus Simile

> ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν· ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται … βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.
>
> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away… For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
>
> 1 *Corinthians* 13.9–10; 12[222]

Introduction

Book VII's remark that only the rational, divine part of the soul never loses its *dunamis* (518d9–519a1) raises the question whether a soul that has sufficiently purified itself during its embodied condition may be able to rid itself even of the desires necessary for embodied survival after its separation from the body, shedding its lower parts entirely and leaving only its true rational self, the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1). Does the *Republic*, like the *Phaedo*, have a conception of the soul's *archaia phusis* as completely purified of any bodily desire, in its state of fully realized *phronēsis* and true virtue? If so, what kind of investigation could gain epistemic access to this state?

Book X's Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7), which is located after the immortality argument (608c2–611b1) and shortly before the concluding myth (614a5–621b7), addresses these very points. Socrates argues that the soul's 'true' or 'truest' nature[223]

[222] Greek from Nestle-Aland. Translation KJV.
[223] Ἀληθέστατα φύσις, 611b1; ἀληθὴς φύσις, 612a3.

differs from the way it has so far appeared to the gathered company. The current method of investigation has only grasped the soul's current appearance, which is likened to the sea-creature Glaucus. This mythical creature, originally a human being, has been drifting in the sea for too long, and is now so utterly disfigured by mutilations and alien accretions that his original nature (*archaia phusis*, 611c7–d1) is no longer discernible. The original nature of the soul when it has become pure (*katharon*, 611c2), and is no longer 'maimed by its association with the body and other evils',[224] is accessible only to a higher-level, reasoning method (*logismos*, c2). This superior method of inquiry would be able to determine whether the soul in its true nature has many parts or one (612a3–4). It would also afford a clearer view of justice and injustice, and all other things Socrates and the interlocutors have been discussing (611c3–4). Within less than one Stephanus page, Socrates has thus called into question whether central findings of the main argument, regarding the soul's nature, its parts, functions, and virtues, still apply to the soul in its restored *archaia phusis*, when it is disembodied and fully purified.

In the first section of this chapter, I look at the distinction between the soul's current appearance and its *archaia phusis*. I argue that the soul's current appearance is best understood as referring to the soul's impure tripartite condition resulting from embodiment. This is contrasted with the soul's *archaia phusis*, which is its fully purified disembodied condition of fully realized *phronēsis* and true virtue. Although Socrates refrains from making a definitive pronouncement about the identity of the soul's *archaia phusis*, I show that the evidence supports the view that in this condition, the soul no longer has its lower parts and consists of the rational part alone. I argue that we should understand the characterization of the soul's *archaia phusis* as its 'true nature' not in the sense that this state actually (truly) obtains contrary to opposite appearances. Rather, it is

[224] λελωβημένον … ὑπό τε τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας καὶ ἄλλων κακῶν, 611b10–c1.

best interpreted as the state of ontological excellence in which the soul is what it essentially is, or should be, given its nature. The soul's *archaia phusis* in its aspect as normative is its true nature in this sense. I also look at how the theme of kinship (*sungeneia*) with the divine from the *Phaedo* is developed here and in the *Republic* at large (section 1).

In the second section, I turn to the announcement of a method of investigation superior to the one currently employed. I show that this distinction has been prepared earlier in the *Republic*. It picks up on two previous passages of methodological reflection, 435c4–d7 and 504a4–b8, in which the current investigation was contrasted with a 'longer route'. This longer route proceeds by reasoning alone and ideally gains dialectical knowledge based on the first principle of the good. I argue that the discussion in 611b1–612a7 should be read in the context of the distinction between the shorter and longer routes developed in these two previous passages. Connecting the two methods with the *Phaedo*'s distinction between two methods of inquiry (79c2–d7 *et passim*), I argue that the soul becomes more and more form-like as it approaches its *archaia phusis*. For this reason, only the reasoning method of inquiry (*logismos*) connected with the forms is adequate for studying the soul's *archaia phusis* (section 2).

In the third section, I discuss what we should make of the apparent open-ended nature of Socrates's concluding remarks on the multiformity or uniformity of the soul's *archaia phusis*. I argue that we need not necessarily read this as an expression of genuine openness regarding possible outcomes of the investigation into the soul's original nature. Rather, the passage expresses a methodological humility, based on an epistemic dependence relation: without pursuing the longer route and anchoring a psychological account in the essential being of the forms and the first principle of the good, we shall lack dialectical knowledge about the soul's true nature and virtues. Socrates's concluding statement underlines the necessity of a certain epistemic vantage point for conclusively

ascertaining the question at hand, even though he is portrayed as having clear expectations about the outcome of such an investigation.

As I demonstrate, my interpretation of this particular point contributes to a better understanding not only of our passage, but of the structure and project of the *Republic* as a whole. The position of these methodological considerations at the very end of the *Republic*'s argument places them in a parallel position to the methodological misgivings uttered by Socrates at the end of book I. Just as these have necessitated a methodological fresh start to satisfactorily answer the question about the relative benefits of justice and injustice, the present passage critically reflects on the method employed in this second attempt at answering the original question. While the shorter route is deemed adequate to the task at hand, the book X passage stresses the need for a 'new psychological standpoint'[225] to gain certain knowledge about the soul's *archaia phusis* and its associated states of virtue, goodness, and *eudaimonia*. However, the ascent to this standpoint lies in the future and beyond the discussion narrated in the *Republic* (section 3).

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As the passage does not lend itself to a treatment segment by segment, I will give the passage in its entirety.[226] As for all passages from the *Republic*, the Greek is Slings's *OCT* edition, the translations are Grube and Reeve, with emendations.

> [611b] '[N]or must we think that the soul in its truest nature is full of multicolored variety and unlikeness or that it differs with itself.' 'What do you mean?' [5] 'It isn't easy for anything composed of many parts to be immortal if it hasn't been furnished with the finest composition, yet this is

[225] Adam 1902 *ad* 611c.
[226] Slings 2003. Grube and Reeve 1992.

how the soul now appeared to us.' 'It probably isn't easy.' 'Yet our recent argument and [10] others as well compel us to believe that the soul is immortal. But to see the soul as it is in truth, we must not study it as it is while it is maimed by its association with the body [c] and other evils—which is what we were doing now—but how it is when it has become pure, that's how we should study the soul, sufficiently by means of reasoning. We'll then find that it is a much finer thing than we thought and that we can see justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've now discussed far more clearly. What we've [5] said now about the soul is true of it as it appears at present. But the condition in which we've studied it is like that of the sea god Glaucus, whose original [d] nature (*archaia phusis*) can't easily be made out by those who catch glimpses of him. Some of the original parts have been broken off, others have been crushed, and his whole body has been maimed by the waves and by the shells, seaweeds, and stones that have attached themselves to him, so that he looks more like a wild animal than as it [5] was by nature. The soul, too, is in a similar condition when we study it beset by countless evils. That, Glaucon, is why we have to look *there* in order to discover its true nature.' 'To where?' 'To its love of wisdom (*philosophia*). We must realize what it grasps and [e] longs to have intercourse with, because it is akin to the divine and immortal and what always is, and we must realize what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being, and if the resulting effort lifted it out of the sea in which it now dwells, and if the many stones and shells (those which have now [612] grown all over it in a wild, earthy, and stony profusion because it feasts at those so-called happy feastings on earth) were hammered off it. Then we'd see its true nature—whether it has many parts or just one, or whatever its condition and form is. But now [5] we've given a decent account, I think, of its sufferings and what parts it has when it is immersed in human life.'

[611b] μήτε γε αὖ τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει τοιοῦτον εἶναι ψυχήν, ὥστε πολλῆς ποικιλίας καὶ ἀνομοιότητός τε καὶ διαφορᾶς γέμειν αὐτὸ πρὸς αὑτό. πῶς λέγεις; ἔφη. [5] οὐ ῥᾴδιον, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἀίδιον εἶναι σύνθετόν τε ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ μὴ τῇ καλλίστῃ κεχρημένον συνθέσει, ὡς νῦν ἡμῖν ἐφάνη

ἡ ψυχή. οὔκουν εἰκός γε. ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ἀθάνατον ψυχή, καὶ ὁ ἄρτι λόγος καὶ οἱ [10] ἄλλοι ἀναγκάσειαν ἄν· οἷον δ᾽ ἐστὶν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, οὐ λελωβημένον δεῖ αὐτὸ θεάσασθαι ὑπό τε τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας [c] καὶ ἄλλων κακῶν, ὥσπερ νῦν ἡμεῖς θεώμεθα, ἀλλ᾽ οἷόν ἐστιν καθαρὸν γιγνόμενον, τοιοῦτον ἱκανῶς λογισμῷ διαθεατέον, καὶ πολύ γε κάλλιον αὐτὸ εὑρήσει καὶ ἐναργέστερον δικαιοσύνας τε καὶ ἀδικίας διόψεται καὶ πάντα ἃ νῦν διήλθομεν. νῦν δὲ [5] εἴπομεν μὲν ἀληθῆ περὶ αὐτοῦ, οἷον ἐν τῷ παρόντι φαίνεται· τεθεάμεθα μέντοι διακείμενον αὐτό, ὥσπερ οἱ τὸν θαλάττιον Γλαῦκον ὁρῶντες οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ῥᾳδίως αὐτοῦ ἴδοιεν τὴν ἀρχαίαν [d] φύσιν, ὑπὸ τοῦ τά τε παλαιὰ τοῦ σώματος μέρη τὰ μὲν ἐκκεκλάσθαι, τὰ δὲ συντετρῖφθαι καὶ πάντως λελωβῆσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν κυμάτων, ἄλλα δὲ προσπεφυκέναι, ὄστρεά τε καὶ φυκία καὶ πέτρας, ὥστε παντὶ μᾶλλον θηρίῳ ἐοικέναι ἢ οἷος [5] ἦν φύσει, οὕτω καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμεῖς θεώμεθα διακειμένην ὑπὸ μυρίων κακῶν. ἀλλὰ δεῖ, ὦ Γλαύκων, ἐκεῖσε βλέπειν. ποῖ; ἦ δ᾽ ὅς. εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται καὶ οἵων [e] ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα τῷ τε θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι, καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιούτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν [612] αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἐστιωμένῃ, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἑστιάσεων. καὶ τότ᾽ ἄν τις ἴδοι αὐτῆς τὴν ἀληθῆ φύσιν, εἴτε πολυειδὴς εἴτε μονοειδής, εἴτε ὅπῃ ἔχει καὶ ὅπως· νῦν δὲ τὰ [5] ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ βίῳ πάθη τε καὶ εἴδη, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, ἐπιεικῶς αὐτῆς διεληλύθαμεν. παντάπασι μὲν οὖν, ἔφη.

Republic 611b1–612a7

1 The Soul's Current Appearance and its *Archaia Phusis*

The passage clearly distinguishes two states of the soul, the soul's current appearance and its *archaia phusis*. The soul's current appearance—'how the soul now appeared to us', 611b6–7; 'what we were [studying] now', c1; 'as it appears at present', c5—is 'full of multicolored variety and unlikeness [and] differs with itself' (b2–3), and is 'composed of many parts' (b5), yet not 'furnished with the finest composition' (b6). It is 'maimed by its association with the body and other evils' (b10–c1), 'beset by countless evils', d5. This is contrasted with the soul's *archaia phusis*—it is the soul 'in its truest nature', 611b1, 'as it is in truth', 611b10, 'its true nature', 612a3; from the Glaucus analogy we can moreover infer that this is the 'original nature', 611c7–d1, as it was 'by nature', 611d5). In contradistinction to the current nature, it is *not* full of variety, unlikeness, and self-difference (611b2–3). It is also not maimed by association with the body and other evils (611b11–c1); rather, it 'has become pure' (*katharon*, 611c2).

In this section, I argue that the soul's current appearance is best understood as the impure condition resulting from embodiment. This condition includes not only the soul's unordered embodied state, but also its well-ordered embodied state (which is still impure because of the presence of necessary appetites), and its impure disembodied state (subsection 1.1). I then argue that, although Socrates deliberately keeps short of making decisive statements to this effect, the passage supports an interpretation of the soul's *archaia phusis* as the completely purified, disembodied rational part, without its lower parts (subsection 1.2). I also maintain that the characterization of the *archaia phusis* as our 'true nature', rather than relying on a distinction between apearance and reality, denotes the soul's state of ontological excellence as opposed to its deficient condition. As such, the *archaia phusis* in its aspect as a normative standard expression is our 'true nature', the state in which the soul realizes its essential nature and becomes what it

essentially is or should be—hence what it 'truly is' (subsection 1.3). I conclude by discussing how the idea of kinship (*sungeneia*) with the divine, familiar already from the *Phaedo*, is developed here and relates to the restoration of our *archaia phusis* (subsection 1.4).

1.1 The Identity of the Soul's Current Appearance

Although, as we shall see, most controversy surrounding this passage concerns the question whether the soul in its true or original nature is simple or tripartite, the identity of its counterpart is also not entirely clear. What condition does Socrates refer to as the one in which the soul 'now' (νῦν, 611b6, c1, 4, 5, e4, 612a4) appeared to the gathered company? The reference to the soul's multicolored variety, unlikeness and self-difference (611b2–3) may at first make it seem as if we are talking about the embodied soul's states of increasing disorder as analysed in the preceding books VIII–IX, thus excluding the soul's well-ordered state from what we have 'now' observed.[227] However, it has been shown that this would require us to make two rather awkward interpretative decisions.[228] Firstly, we would have to read εἴδη in the concluding remark that 'now we've given a decent account … of [the soul's] sufferings and εἴδη when it is immersed in human life' (612a4–6) as referring to the four *forms* of injustice under discussion in these books. This interpretation of εἴδη would be in tension with the sense of εἴδη we must suppose in the immediately preceding sentence and its question 'whether it has many *parts* or just one' (εἴτε πολυειδὴς εἴτε μονοειδής, 4). Secondly, we would have to read the remark that it 'isn't easy for anything *suntheton* of many parts to be immortal if it hasn't been furnished with the finest *sunthesis*, yet this is how the soul now appeared to us' (611a5–7) in a similarly awkward manner. While *suntheton* undoubtedly refers to the soul's *composition*

[227] Thus, for instance, von Arnim 1913, 124 and Graeser 1969, 37.
[228] Both are pointed out by Szlezák 1976, 36–9.

from three parts, its finest *sunthesis* would (unidiomatically and by contrast) have to refer to the fact that the soul in books VIII–IX was not *ordered* in the finest way.[229] For both reasons it makes more sense to suppose that the investigation conducted 'now' refers to the entirety of the main argument, centering on book IV's analysis of the embodied soul as and its parts, and its resulting account of the functions, virtues, and *eudaimonia* of the soul.

I submit that this reading is preferable as it would be in line with the way we must read the other occurrences of 'now' in this passage: *now* we have studied the soul 'maimed by its association with the body and other evils' (611b11–c1). Clearly, the soul's embodied condition has been the topic of the *entire* main argument, not just the analysis of books VIII–IX. With the higher reasoning method we would 'see justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've *now* discussed far more clearly' (c4). Again, the entire main argument and especially book IV prominently featured a definition and discussion of the virtues, although it has only advanced to the level of a 'sketch' (*hupographē*, 504d6) of them. Similarly, the other occurrences of 'now' (611c4–5, e4, e4), seem to me to refer to our current condition of embodied existence as it has been observed by the entirety of the *Republic*'s main argument.

However, if we think about the conceptual distinction that is ultimately drawn in this passage, I submit that we should include the impure disembodied soul as described in the immortality argument (608c2–611b1) in the soul's first condition of its 'current appearance' as well. Since such a soul has not sufficiently purified itself from the accretions amassed during embodiment, it will presumably retain the structure and the disfigurements resulting from the soul's embodied condition and will not be able to restore itself to its *archaia phusis*. The analysis of the soul as it 'now appeared to us' *etc.*

[229] There is another problem with reading *suntheton* here as 'order' rather than 'composition', which I shall come to in subsection 1.2 below.

therefore still applies to the immortality argument's unjust soul. Indeed it has to if the immortality argument is to have any traction. Otherwise, it would not be able to rely on the earlier psychological reflections to establish its point.[230] While the main argument has only analysed the soul in its unjust and just embodied conditions, the relevant condition contrasted with the *archaia phusis* in the Glaucus simile is the soul as long as it exhibits any impurity resulting from embodiment, whether embodiment still obtains or not. Thus properly speaking, the soul as it 'now appeared to us' *etc*. is the *impure* soul, including its unordered and ordered embodied states, as well as its unordered disembodied state, contrasted precisely with the *archaia phusis*, the soul as it has 'become pure' (611c2).

Of course one might object that the description of the embodied soul *including its well-ordered state* as full of multicolored variety, unlikeness and self-difference (611b2–3) *etc.* seems overly negative in the light of the harmonious and organic image of the well-ordered soul we get in the description of justice in book IV. However, we have to remember that the three creatures image (588b1–592b5) depicts a much more hostile and tense relationship between the various parts than book IV.[231] Perhaps the two possible viewpoints on our true self entertained over the course of the *Republic*, the complex tripartite whole or the rational part alone, entail different levels of optimism as to just how harmonious and serene the condition of psychic order described in book IV really is. The former stresses that this is the best possible condition from the viewpoint of the embodied tripartite soul, in which each part fulfils its necessary function. The latter emphasizes that from the perspective of our true rational self, we are still grown together (588d5–6) with parts that remain alien to ourselves, and that for this reason full purification remains impossible as long as we are embodied.

[230] For an analysis of this argument, cf. Brown 1997.
[231] This has been noted by Szlezák 1976, 42, although the next point is my own.

1.2 The Identity of the Soul's *Archaia Phusis*

Socrates refrains from making a definitive assertion about the exact identity of the soul's *archaia phusis*. Given that one of the main points of our passage is that certain dialectical knowledge about the soul's *archaia phusis* depends on an epistemic vantage point presently unavailable to Socrates and his interlocutors,[232] everything else would amount to a performative contradiction. Despite this, I am going argue that the passage with its background in the middle books and the *Phaedo* make it highly unlikely that Socrates expects the soul's *archaia phusis* to still contain its lower parts.

Scholarly opinion is divided on the identity of the disembodied and purified soul in this passage. On the one side there are those who maintain that, even in its completely purified condition, the soul retains its tripartite structure.[233] The apparently open-ended conclusion that only the new psychological standpoint would enable us to conclusively ascertain 'whether it has many parts or just one' (612a3–4) may be taken as Socrates leaving open this possibility.[234] However, proponents of a tripartite *archaia phusis* in the *Republic* feel most encouraged by the remark that it 'isn't easy for anything *suntheton* of many parts to be immortal if it hasn't been furnished with the finest *sunthesis*' (611b5–6). Robinson takes Plato's proviso that a *suntheton* thing which has the finest *sunthesis* may in fact be indestructible as evidence for a 'radical change of view' between the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.[235] Allowing for the indestructibility of composite things explicitly denied in *Phaedo* 78b4–c5, Plato on this view opens a door for the indestructibility of the soul—namely, when it achieves the best possible *sunthesis* by purifying itself in this life and completing this purification after disembodiment.[236]

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[232] As I shall discuss in sections 2 and 3 below.

[233] This view has been taken by von Arnim 1913, Graeser 1969, 29–40, as well as Robinson 1967, 147–51.

[234] On which cf. section 3 below.

[235] Robinson 1967, 149.

[236] *Ibid.*, 149–50.

Along with a number of scholars, I think that the evidence of the passage points to a conception according to which the soul's *archaia phusis* is not tripartite.[237] Firstly, the proviso that something which is *suntheton* but has the finest *sunthesis* can be indestructible simply does not give us what we need. Like an earlier analysed position,[238] this interpretation has to awkwardly assume that *suntheton* refers to the soul's tripartite *composition*, while *sunthesis* refers to its state of internal *order*. Yet even if we bite the bullet and accept this tension, I submit that interpreting *sunthesis* in this way leads to insurmountable problems. *Either*, we say that only the philosopher's soul, which has sufficiently purified itself in this life, attains full *katharsis* after disembodiment.[239] In this case, only the philosopher's soul would be immortal. But this is hard to accept. It directly contradicts the immediately preceding immortality argument (608c2–611b1), according to which its proper vice of injustice cannot destroy the soul. It seems doubly incredible, since the present argument explicitly relies on the immortality argument ('Yet our recent argument and others as well compel us to believe that the soul is immortal', 611b9–10). *Alternatively*, and perhaps even more problematically, we may posit that *all* souls are fully purified after disembodiment and for this reason immortal. This once again contradicts the immortality argument's claim that souls are immortal no matter how vicious they are. In addition, it runs counter to its assumption that souls in the hereafter retain their impurities. Assuming that souls are simply 'let off' after disembodiment would indeed go against what seems like a central Platonic conviction, which we find reiterated across his eschatological myths: souls have to face the consequences for their behaviour after disembodiment.[240]

[237] For instance, Adam 1902 *ad loc.*, Guthrie 1971, 232–3, Szlezák 1976.

[238] Cf. subsection 1.1 above.

[239] While inexplicably retaining its parts, on which see below. This seems to be the interpretation favoured by Robinson 1967, 149–50.

[240] Cf. the following lines just before the *Phaedo*'s concluding myth (107d5–114c6): 'For if death were separation from everything, it would be a godsend for wicked people to die, and thus be separated both from the body and at the same time, by also losing their soul, from their own vice. As it is, however,

A second factor that points to an underlying conception of the *archaia phusis* as excluding the lower parts is that what is said in our passage about the soul's true nature is far from neutral and open-minded. Instead, everything points to the conception that the soul in its purified disembodied state will be the rational part in its fully developed condition of *phronēsis*, completely purified from all bodily beliefs, desires, and fears and thus exhibiting true virtue of character. As I have argued, the soul's current appearance as full of multicolored variety, unlikeness and self-difference (611b2–3) and as a *suntheton* yet not furnished with the finest *sunthesis* (b5–7) should be understood as referring to the tripartite impure soul in general, whether in its well-ordered state or not.[241] If we accept this, then the passage in the very first sentence denies that this is how the soul will be in its *archaia phusis*: 'μήτε γε αὖ [οἰώμεθα]…' (b1).[242] I have also argued against the interpretation of the finest *sunthesis* as a state of order the soul might reach by self-purification.[243] If this is the case, then the first lines of our passage do not in fact leave open a window for indestructible tripartition, but rather *deny* that the soul is a composite thing which is furnished with the finest possible composition. This reading, which seems to me the more natural reading of the passage, precisely claims that the soul is subject to dissolution in its current state (cf. *Phaedo* 78b4–c5). Only the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1), likened in our passage to Glaucus the man, survives this dissolution.

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since the soul is evidently immortal, it could have no means of safety or of escaping evils, other than becoming both as good and as wise as possible. For the soul comes to Hades with nothing other than its education and its way of life, which are said to confer the very greatest benefit or harm upon one who has died, as soon as his journey there starts.' (107c5–d5)

In the light of these problems, Szlezák 1976 presents an interesting alternative interpretation of the remark about a finest *sunthesis*. This remark may not refer to the tripartite composition of the soul at all (since, as the three creatures image (588b1–592b5) shows, this is far from the finest composition imaginable), but to the composition of the rational part itself. According to the *Timaeus*, the rational soul is mixed from the same, different, and being. The demiurge, talking to the younger gods but no doubt also referring to the soul's composition, remarks that everything that is bound together can be dissolved, but that which is put together in a beautiful way (τό γε μὴν καλῶς ἁρμοσθὲν) will, by the will of the demiurge, not be dissolved (*Tim.* 41a8–b3).

[241] Cf. subsection 1.1 above.

[242] Cf. Szlezák 1976, 42.

[243] As I have just argued.

The reflection on the dissolubility of the *suntheton* has introduced a *Phaedonic* ring to the discussion. This impression intensifies with the juxtaposition between the soul's state of 'association with the body and other evils' (*Republic* 611b11–c1) and its state when it has 'become pure' (c2). We completely enter the language and conceptual framework in lines 611d8–612a3, which are already familiar from chapter 4 as the second of the two 'twin passages' in books VII and X.[244]

> [If we want to see the soul's true or original nature (*archaia phusis*), we must look, HK] to its love of wisdom (*philosophia*). We must realize what it grasps and longs to have intercourse with, because it is akin[245] to the divine and immortal and what always is, and we must realize what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being, and if the resulting effort lifted it out of the sea in which it now dwells, and if the many stones and shells (those which have grown all over it in a wild, earthy, and stony profusion because it feasts at those so-called happy feastings on earth) were hammered off it.
>
> Εἰς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται καὶ οἵων ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα τῷ τε θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι, καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιούτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἑστιωμένῃ, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἑστιάσεων.
>
> *Republic* 611d8–612a3

I have in chapter 4 already given an analysis of the close connection between this passage and its 'twin' in book VII (519a7–b5), as well as their close relationship with the analysis

[244] Cf. 519a7–b5 and 611d8–612a3, cf. chapter 3, subsection 2.2.

[245] I shall comment on the role of the soul's kinship (*sungeneia*) with the divine in subsection 1.4 below.

in *Phaedo* 81b1–d5 of bodily beliefs, desires, and fears as alien accretions that drag the soul to the visible and away from the intelligible. What I would like to underline at this stage is is how clearly Socrates connects our *archaia phusis* outright with the condition of fully realized *phronēsis*. It is the desire for *wisdom* (our *philosophia*) which draws us toward our true nature (611d8). As a consequence of this impulse, our soul casts off the impurities and accretions which it has amassed as a consequence of the pursuit of pleasure (611e2–612a3). At the endpoint of this development stands a state of direct contact and interaction ('intercourse') with the divine and immortal and everlasting realm of forms, to which it is akin (611d8–e2). As has been noted many times,[246] this is remarkably close to the passage from the *Phaedo* where the very condition of *phronēsis*, the soul's full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms, is characterized most clearly:

> 'But that whenever the soul considers alone by itself, it gets away into that which is pure, always in existence, and immortal, and which stays in the same condition; that the soul, because it is akin to this, always comes to be with it whenever alone by itself and able to do so; that the soul is then at rest from its wandering, and in relation to those entities stays always in the same state and condition, because the things it is grasping have the same kind of stability; and that this state of the soul is called "*phronēsis*"?'
>
> Ὅταν δέ γε αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν σκοπῇ, ἐκεῖσε οἴχεται εἰς τὸ καθαρόν τε καὶ ἀεὶ ὂν καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον, καὶ ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα αὐτοῦ ἀεὶ μετ' ἐκείνου τε γίγνεται, ὅτανπερ αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν γένηται καὶ ἐξῇ αὐτῇ, καὶ πέπαυταί τε τοῦ πλάνου καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει,

[246] Thus e.g. Guthrie 1971, 233. Contrast this with Woolf 2012, 160, who cautions us that 'we should be wary of reading too much into this language. Socrates is entitled to regard the soul as everlasting and immortal. He has, after all, just inferred from an argument for its indestructibility that it is everlasting and so immortal (610e10–611a2). Only its divinity adds something new, but to call it akin to the divine may itself be no more than an acknowledgement that its immortality puts it in that category, even if the language of divinity suggests something more substantive.' Given the abundance of *Phaedonic* references and vocabulary in this passage, I think that this approach rather reads too little into the passage.

ἅτε τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένη· καὶ τοῦτο αὐτῆς τὸ πάθημα φρόνησις κέκληται;

Phaedo 79c2–d7

Thus the passage itself as well as its clear connection to earlier discussions in the *Republic* and in the *Phaedo* strongly indicate that the soul's *archaia phusis* is the rational part in its state of *phronēsis*, which coincides with fully realized true virtue of character. To round off this subsection, I would like to conclude by reflecting what an inquirer on the shorter route may reasonably expect of this state, given her current viewpoint.

The soul's true nature is realized when its desire for *phronēsis* has run its full course and has led to a complete *katharsis* from alien accretions in the form of bodily beliefs, desires, and fears. The Glaucus passage stays true to the *Phaedo*'s *caveat* that fully realized *phronēsis* and its corresponding state of *katharsis* is attainable only after disembodiment. While this completely purified condition is inaccessible to the current method of inquiry,[247] it is clear that the upper limit for purification is necessary appetitive desire, which we found featured in the *Phaedo* (64e1) and, more developed, in the *Republic* (558d8–559c12). Necessary appetitive desire arises as a response to our embodied condition, and is what gives appetite its vital function in this life. There is no need for such desire in our disembodied condition, and consequently, presumably, no comparable limit on the purification from bodily beliefs, desires, and fears. If this is the case, then it is hard to fathom what function or *dunamis* there should be left in an immortal appetitive part in the *archaia phusis*. Given the role of spirit as intermediary and as the mechanism to control appetitive desire, it seems natural that spirit should lose its function and *dunamis* with the appetitive part.[248]

[247] Cf. section 2 below.

[248] On this point cf. further Woolf 2012. Woolf argues that, while spirit is 'marked off as the subject of courage and cowardice', its relation to courage and cowardice is 'understood with reference to one's relations with the body' (155). Spirit's proper virtue of courage is after all defined as the disposition

1.3 'True Nature' as Ontological Excellence

What does Socrates mean when he calls the soul in its *archaia phusis* our 'true' (612a3) or 'truest' (611b1) nature? Initially, our passage may be taken to imply that this state is 'true' in the sense of actually obtaining yet concealed by contrary appearances. Just now the soul has 'appeared' (ἐφάνη) to us as something 'composed of many parts' yet not 'furnished with the finest composition' (b5–7). However, it becomes clear quite soon that the soul's current appearance is a state that actually obtains, just like the *archaia phusis* will actually obtain once the soul has become pure. What underlies the distinction between the soul's current appearance and its true or original nature therefore is not that between appearance and reality. Rather, I claim, it is the distinction between an entity's states of deficiency and ontological excellence. Why call the latter state our 'true nature'? The underlying idea seems to me to be that the full realization of an entity as good reveals its true or essential nature, what it essentially is or should be, given its nature. This is way Glaucus's *archaia phusis* in the simile is once also described as the state 'as he was by nature', 611d4–5.

In chapter 1, we have encountered precisely this idea in the Hippocratic reflections on the *archaia phusis* in its aspect as a *normative standard*, a state which is 'in accordance with nature' (*kata phusin*).[249] If we want to heal an eye, returning it to its true nature and proper function, we have to look not at its deficient but at its correct, normal, or healthy condition as a standard. We can read 'true nature' in our passage as referring to the *archaia phusis* in this aspect of being a normative standard. As I have argued in chapter

to preserve the commands of reason when confronted with pleasure and pain (442b10–c3). Brennan 2012 likewise argues that spirit is needed as an intermediary to control the appetite, which in turn is the soul's necessary yet harmful response to embodiment: 'spirit is a necessary response to something worse than spirit, namely appetite' (102).

[249] Cf. Erotianus, *Collection of Hippocratic Words*: 'ἀρχαία φύσις· ἡ πρὸ τοῦ νοσεῖν καὶ κατὰ φύσιν οὖσα'. Cited after Nachmanson, 1918, 41. I discussed this definition in chapter 1, subsection 1.2.

3, subsection 1.1, *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11) and its conception of an entity's 'proper virtue' (*oikeia aretē*) explores the same idea in a more systematic manner with its functional-perfectionist framework.[250] As an entity's desirable state of goodness and full dispositional realization, proper virtue is the state which enables the entity to successfully perform its characteristic function and realize its true nature. *Eudaimonia* is nothing other than a soul's, or an ensouled entity's, flourishing in the sense of actual realization of its true nature in activity. Later in the same chapter, I have shown that the *Republic*'s middle books supply a metaphysical underpinning to this account, analysing the state of ontological excellence as an entity's full participation in its form or nature, and in this way in the good. Because the good is the *terminus* of all desire, desire draws, or should draw, all ensouled entities to their true nature.[251] This analysis explains why Socrates thinks it is illuminating to look at the soul's desire if we want to understand the true nature of the soul. If our desire is rightly directed, then examining this desire and its aim reveals what our true nature is.

If the soul's true or nature is its state of ontological excellence, then our findings from the *Phaedo* in chapter 2 and from the middle books in the chapter 3 can moreover explain why Socrates in our passage thinks *philosophia* (611d8), the desire for *phronēsis*, is what gets us to this state. Both texts confirm that *phronēsis* is not only our intellectual virtue, the state of full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms which allows the soul to successfully engage in contemplation. It also purifies the soul from alien 'bodily' accretions in the form of bodily beliefs, desires, and fears. In being a *katharmos* (*Phaedo* 69c3) from these impurities, *phronēsis* brings about the *katharsis* of true virtue of character (69b3). Fully realized *phronēsis* coincides with fully realized true virtue and

[250] Οἰκεία ἀρετή, *Republic* 353c1 and throughout the function argument.

[251] Chapter 3, subsection 1.3. I say 'should draw' because desire may be falsely directed, drawing us instead to what merely appears to be good. I shall come back to this in chapter 6.

thus with a condition of complete purity (cf. the *Phaedo*'s argument about true virtue (68c5–69e4) and the second part of the kinship argument (80c2–84b7), as well as the *Republic*'s channel argument (485a10–487a6) and the discussion of true education (518b7–519b6)). Our passage's remark about the soul following its desire 'with its whole being' (πᾶσα, 611e2) echoes book VII's insistence that acquisition of *phronēsis* and of true virtue of character go hand in hand (518b7–519b6).[252] All of these passages portray the soul's state of *phronēsis* as its state of overall ontological excellence: our true nature.

I have argued earlier that the accretions we find mentioned in *Phaedo* 81c6, but also in *Republic* 519b2 and 612a2 are alien and 'bodily' not because they are held by a subject other than the soul, but because they would not be held by the soul in its most natural, proper, or healthy state.[253] With the analysis of our state of ontological excellence as our true nature, we can now say that they are alien to the soul because they do not belong to it in its *true* nature. On the other hand, we have also seen that the function argument characterized our state of proper virtue precisely as 'belonging' (*oikeia*)[254] to us because its possession enables us to become what we essentially are or should be—our true nature. The *archaia phusis* in its aspect of normative standard is our true nature because in this condition, we would be completely clean from alien accretions and would be in the full possession of our true *oikeion*: *phronēsis* and true virtue. Like Glaucus, our soul is separated from its true nature both by the presence of alien accretions in the form of bodily beliefs, desires, and fears, and by the absence of its state of *phronēsis* and true virtue.

[252] *Pace* Szlezák 1976, 44, who argues with reference to 581b6 that we should read πᾶσα as referring to the soul's whole rational being. Of course at the end of the turning of the 'whole' soul stands nothing other than the fully realized condition of *phronēsis* and complete purity from the soul's lower parts.

[253] Chapter 2, 2.3.b.

[254] Οἰκεία, *Republic* 353c1.

1.4 *Sungeneia* and *Homoiōsis Theōi* in the *Republic*

How does the *Republic* develop the *Phaedo*'s reflections on *sungeneia* and *homoiōsis theōi* with respect to our *archaia phusis* and its restoration? To start with, book X's Glaucus passage (611b1–612a7) echoes the affinity argument almost *verbatim* in its attribution of an independent and robust explanatory role to the soul's kinship (*sungeneia*) with the divine forms in its desire to return to its *archaia phusis*. The soul 'grasps and longs to have intercourse' with the 'divine and immortal and what always is' *because* it is akin to it (ὡς συγγενὴς οὖσα, 611e2, cf. *Phd.* 79d3). The soul's *philosophia* and its longing (ὁρμή, 3) are thus in part explained not by the goodness of its resulting condition, but by kinship with the divine forms which the soul longs to be with and emulate. In the passage's discussion of the earthy and stony accretions which currently drag the soul in the opposite direction, we moreover find a clear echo of the *Phaedo*'s description of the soul as interspersed with the bodily. And indeed, the 'twin' to our passage in book VII (519a7–b5) describes the process of releasing the soul as a hammering free from the 'bonds of kinship with becoming' which are like 'leaden weights' (τὰς τῆς γενέσεως συγγενεῖς ὥσπερ μολυβδίδας, 519a8–b1)—thus once again attributing an opposite attractive force to the kinship of these alien elements with the realm of becoming.

Where we find a development or actualization of the *Phaedo*'s ideas for the *Republic*'s tripartite framework is book VI's discussion of the philosophical nature: beyond the *soul's* essential *sungeneia* with the forms as it is maintained in book X, the *philosopher* is characterized as somehow particularly akin (*sungenēs*) to the truth and to the virtues of character (487a5). How is this special kinship to be explained? A possible answer is that book X's soul in its true and original nature, which reveals its kinship with the divine, immortal, and everlasting, is not the whole tripartite soul but only the rational

part, which in the philosopher is the ruling and defining part.[255] This would at the same time explain why very shortly after our book VI passage, it is the rational part that is described as alone fitted to grasp the forms because of *its* (rather than the whole tripartite soul's) kinship with it (προσήκει δὲ συγγενεῖ, 490b4). In the idea that the rational part because of its kinship with the forms is naturally fitted to cognize them, we find the other side of the *Phaedo*'s idea that the forms are the appropriate cognitive object of the soul when it investigates by itself in accordance with itself. I submit that the natural fittedness of the rational part to cognize the forms is another part of the independent explanation which *sungeneia* can supply to account for the soul's capacity to attain *phronēsis* and restore its *archaia phusis*.

When in chapter 2 I discussed the concept of *sungeneia* in the *Phaedo*,[256] I remarked that the *Phaedo* cannot very well account for how being akin to the paradigmatically perfect forms could explain the soul's capacity to emulate them: to do so, it would have to say more about just in what respects the two are similar and in what respects the soul can emulate the divine paradigms. Although the *Republic* does not fundamentally re-evaluate the soul's true kinship, it finds a better way of accounting for at least the capacity for *homoiōsis theōi*, the emulation of the divine forms as far as it is possible in this human life: because the forms are a paradigm of internal order (*kosmos*), the philosopher, who associates with the orderly and divine, becomes as orderly and divine as is possible for a human being (κόσμιός τε καὶ θεῖος εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γίγνεται, 500d1–2).[257]

[255] On this point see also Betegh 2018, 125.

[256] Chapter 2, 2.3.c.

[257] In 613a7–b1, Plato confirms that such an ordering, which consists in becoming just and virtuous, is the way in which a human being can assimilate itself to the divine as far as possible (εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ). For the relationship between virtue and proper ordering, see the earlier discussed *Phaedo* 114d8–115a3, as well as *Gorgias* 506e2–4. For a discussion, see Sedley 1999, 314. The passage is of course closely parallel to *Theaetetus* 176a5–c3.

Still, the *Republic* does not resolve the fundamental problem of clarifying what precisely constitutes the kinship between the soul and the forms, as it does not go further than the *Phaedo* in giving to the soul a clearly defined place in its two-class metaphysical framework.[258] As we turn to the *Phaedrus* in the next chapter, we shall get closer to a clarification of the soul's true kinship.

2 Shorter and Longer Routes Towards the Soul's Nature and Virtues

In the last section, we have seen Socrates distinguish two states of the soul: its current appearance and its *archaia phusis*. I argued that we should understand the two states as the soul's state of impurity resulting from embodied existence, and of purified disembodied existence, respectively. Although Socrates refrains from making a definitive assertion about the identity of the soul's *archaia phusis*, I showed that the evidence points to a conception of this state as consisting only of the rational part, freed from the alien accretions of appetite and spirit. Finally, I made the case that we should understand the soul's 'true nature' as its state of ontological excellence, in which it becomes what it essentially is or should be, given its nature. The *archaia phusis* in its aspect as a normative standard is our true nature.

However, the Glaucus simile distinguishes not only two states of the soul, but also two methods of investigation. The tripartite and impure condition is how the soul has appeared to Socrates and his interlocutors 'now', during their current investigation. The soul in its purified *archaia phusis* can by contrast only be studied sufficiently by the higher method of 'reasoning' (*logismos*, 611c2). In this section, I first analyse these two methods of investigation and the insights they are capable of (subsection 2.1). In a second

[258] See Betegh 2018, 125.

step, I show that this methodological distinction has been prepared earlier in the *Republic*, in the distinction between the shorter and longer routes found in books IV and VI (435c4–d7 and 504a4–b8). I show that we are indeed confronted with the same methodological distinction (subsection 2.2). Finally, I connect the two methods of inquiring into the nature of the soul with the *Phaedo*'s two methods of inquiry (79c2–d7 *et passim*). I argue that the reason why the lower method is adequate to the soul in its deficient state and the higher to the soul in its perfected state is that the soul in its deficient state resembles a sense-perceptible thing insofar as it imperfectly instantiates its nature and the forms of the virtues. In its *archaia phusis*, it perfectly instantiates its nature and the forms of the virtues. Only the method of inquiry connected with the forms, reasoning (*logismos*), is adequate for discerning the soul in its *archaia phusis* (subsection 2.3).

2.1 Two Methods of Inquiring into the Soul

Our passage contrasts two methods of investigation, the current method and a higher, 'reasoning' method (*logismos*, 611c2). The former method represents the way in which the *Republic*'s investigation has so far been conducted. In particular, the subject matter of the soul, its 'justice and injustice' and 'all the other things we've discussed' (611c3–4) indicates that we are talking about the entirety of the main argument since the methodological fresh start marked by book II of the *Republic*. Socrates has at the end of book I expressed methodological qualms about book I's arguments, as these made pronouncements about certain properties or effects of justice on its possessor without first giving an account of what justice is (354a12–c3). Books II–IV remedy this shortcoming by giving a sophisticated account of the soul's nature as tripartite and by explaining how justice manifests itself in the tripartite soul, as its proper virtue and 'regulatory principle

of difference'.[259] These books, supplemented by books VIII–IX, show that the embodied soul is in its state of justice is more *eudaimōn* than the unjust soul.

The current investigation into the soul and 'what its condition is and what parts it has when it is immersed in human life' (612a5) is contrasted with a higher method, which is here only referred to as 'reasoning' (*logismos*, 611c2). It is also directed at the soul, its states of virtue and vice, and the other topics of the investigation (611c3–4), but affords a different, superior understanding of these in their true nature. In contrast with the current method, this reasoning method is oriented not towards the sensible and at the soul in its embodied form, but 'there' (611d6), that is, towards the soul's desire for wisdom, its intelligible objects (the forms), and to 'what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being' (611d8–e2).

Only the reasoning method is capable of determining the soul's true nature, and 'whether it has many parts or just one' (612a3–4). It will provide a clearer view of 'justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've discussed' (611c3–4). However, these remarks do not completely devalue the preceding discussion. While only the reasoning method gives a sufficient account of the soul's true nature, Socrates emphasizes that they have given a 'decent' (612a5) account of 'what its condition is and what parts it has when it is immersed in human life' (612a4–6). This optimistic sentiment about the current method is mirrored earlier on, when Socrates states that what they have 'said about the soul is true of it as it appears at present.' (611c4–5). The reasoning method no doubt will throw further light on the soul in its current nature, just as knowing Glaucus' original nature will at the same time lead to a better understanding of the complex encrusted sea-creature. Yet the current method employed in the main argument of the *Republic* has been

[259] Kosman 2014b, 198.

adequate to the task of showing that justice as analysed in book IV is more beneficial to us in our embodied, human life, than injustice.

2.2 The Shorter and Longer Routes in the Republic[260]

Book X's announcement of a higher-level method, capable of a more exact understanding of the soul's truest nature, does not come as a surprise. At two earlier points of the investigation, Socrates has announced a 'longer route' of inquiry, explicitly setting it apart by stressing its capacity to attain an exact understanding of the soul's true nature and its state of virtue. Firstly, at the very moment when tripartition first appears on the scene in book IV, Socrates warns Glaucon about the limitations of their current method of inquiry:

> 'Then once again we've come upon an easy question, namely, does the soul have these three parts in it or not?' 'It doesn't look easy to me.' 'Perhaps, Socrates, there's some truth in the old saying that everything fine is difficult.' 'Apparently so.' 'But you should know, Glaucon, that, in my opinion, we will never get a precise answer using our present methods of argument—although there is another longer and fuller road that does lead to such an answer. But perhaps we can get an answer that's up to the standard of our previous statements and inquiries.' 'Isn't that satisfactory? It would be enough for me at present.' In that case, it will be fully enough for me too.'
>
> Εἰς φαῦλόν γε αὖ, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ὦ θαυμάσιε, σκέμμα ἐμπεπτώκαμεν περὶ ψυχῆς, εἴτε ἔχει τὰ τρία εἴδη ταῦτα ἐν αὐτῇ εἴτε μή. Οὐ πάνυ μοι δοκοῦμεν, ἔφη, εἰς φαῦλον· ἴσως γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ λεγόμενον ἀληθές, ὅτι χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά. Φαίνεται, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ. καὶ εὖ γ᾽ ἴσθι, ὦ Γλαύκων, ὡς ἡ ἐμὴ δόξα, ἀκριβῶς μὲν τοῦτο ἐκ τοιούτων μεθόδων, οἵαις νῦν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις

[260] My analysis of the shorter and longer routes in the *Republic* draws substantially on Scott 2015, chs. 1–5. My contribution is the explicit integration of the Glaucus passage into this discussion, which is only adumbrated (53) but not fully discussed in Scott. The connection is of course noted by others as well. Cf. Adam 1902 *ad loc.*, Szlezák 1976, 40–1, Woolf 2012, 167.

> χρώμεθα, οὐ μή ποτε λάβωμεν· ἄλλη γὰρ μακροτέρα καὶ πλείων ὁδὸς ἡ ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἄγουσα· ἴσως μέντοι τῶν γε προειρημένων τε καὶ προεσκεμμένων ἀξίως. Οὔκουν ἀγαπητόν; ἔφη· ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἔν γε τῷ παρόντι ἱκανῶς ἂν ἔχοι. Ἀλλὰ μέντοι, εἶπον, ἔμοιγε καὶ πάνυ ἐξαρκέσει.
>
> *Republic* 435c4–d7

The current inquiry has been based on a *potpourri* of methods, featuring the parallelism of state and soul, the functional method for finding a thing's virtue, the methods of hypothesis and analogy, and appeal to observation.[261] These methods are now deemed to be only provisional and not exact, and are contrasted with a 'longer route' (μακροτέρα … ὁδὸς, d3) that would get to true nature of the soul and, presumably, of the virtues. Yet immediately after mentioning this superior method, Socrates and Glaucon declare themselves content with the shorter route—in fact, the argument of the remainder of book IV, and its continuation in books VIII–IX, shows no change in methodology as a consequence of Socrates' methodological qualms.

Nevertheless, this is not the last we have heard about the longer route. In book VI, just before the discussion of the form of the good, Socrates reminds Adeimantus of his previous methodological worries:

> 'Do you remember when we distinguished three parts in the soul, in order to help bring out what justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom each is?' 'If I didn't remember that, it wouldn't be just for me to hear the rest.' 'What about what preceded it?' 'What was that?' 'We said, I believe, that, in order to get the finest possible view of these matters, we would need to take a longer road that would make them plain to anyone who took it but that it was possible to give demonstrations of what they are that would be up to the standard of the previous argument. And you said that that would be satisfactory. So it seems to me that our discussion at that time fell short

[261] Cf. Scott 2015, ch. 1.

of exactness, but whether or not it satisfied you is for you to say.' 'I thought you gave us good measure and so, apparently, did the others.'

Μνημονεύεις μέν που, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ὅτι τριττὰ εἴδη ψυχῆς διαστησάμενοι συνεβιβάζομεν δικαιοσύνης τε πέρι καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ σοφίας ὃ ἕκαστον εἴη. Μὴ γὰρ μνημονεύων, ἔφη, τὰ λοιπὰ ἂν εἴην δίκαιος μὴ ἀκούειν. Ἦ καὶ τὸ προρρηθὲν αὐτῶν; Τὸ ποῖον δή; Ἐλέγομέν που ὅτι, ὡς μὲν δυνατὸν ἦν κάλλιστα αὐτὰ κατιδεῖν ἄλλη μακροτέρα εἴη περίοδος, ἣν περιελθόντι καταφανῆ γίγνοιτο, τῶν μέντοι ἔμπροσθεν προειρημένων ἑπομένας ἀποδείξεις οἷόν τ᾽ εἴη προσάψαι. καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐξαρκεῖν ἔφατε, καὶ οὕτω δὴ ἐρρήθη τὰ τότε τῆς μὲν ἀκριβείας, ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐφαίνετο, ἐλλιπῆ, εἰ δὲ ὑμῖν ἀρεσκόντως, ὑμεῖς ἂν τοῦτο εἴποιτε. Ἀλλ᾽ ἔμοιγε, ἔφη, μετρίως· ἐφαίνετο μὴν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις.

Republic 504a4–b8

Once again, the methods of book IV's inquiry are contrasted with a longer route (μακροτέρα … περίοδος, 504b2) surpassing them in fineness, clarity, and exactness. Socrates again raises the question of the adequacy of the shorter route, and Adeimantus affirms it in the name of those gathered. However, Socrates now states that the guardians cannot rest content with a mere sketch (ὑπογραφή, 504d6) of the virtues: they will have to take the longer route (τὴν μακροτέραν [περίοδον], 504c9) to the greatest object of study, the form of the good (505a2–4). Despite Socrates' misgivings about the shorter route, the completion of the main argument in books VIII–IX, which continues to proceed almost exclusively on the basis of book IV's tripartite psychology,[262] shows that the shorter route remains an adequate and worthwhile method in Socrates' eyes, even if second-best by comparison with the longer route.

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[262] For an argument to this effect, cf. Scott 2015, ch. 4.

As I have shown, the book X passage shares with these two previous methodological passages the central features of two methods of inquiry into the nature of the soul and its virtues. All three passages reflect on the methodology of investigating the nexus of the nature of the soul, its virtues, and related issues. All three contrast this current method, which is based in empirical observations and in analogical and hypothetical reasoning, with a higher, more rational method which looks not at empirical reality but to the abstract reality of the forms and grounds knowledge in first principles. The higher method promises greater clarity, exactness, and fineness of observation. If we want to get to the true nature of the soul, and acquire knowledge of its pure state free from corruption of the body, there is no alternative to the longer route. Only this route will reveal whether the original nature of the soul is really tripartite,[263] and how the virtues manifest themselves in it. Yet the current method is deemed adequate for present purposes in all three passages. And indeed, given the fact that only few people are cut out for the epistemic career of the philosopher-rulers, and given the length of time it takes to complete the journey up to the form of the good and back, the shorter route retains a crucial role in answering the urgent challenge of immoralism set by people like Thrasymachus.

2.3 The Method of *Logismos* in the *Phaedo*

Why is the current method of investigation adequate to the soul in its current condition, but not in its *archaia phusis*? Here, it is useful to bring in another methodological distinction we have met in the course of this investigation.[264] In the *Phaedo*, Socrates at various places distinguishes the philosopher's preferred way of investigation into essential reality called *logismos* (66a1, 79a3, cf. 65c2–3, sometimes paired with the

[263] 435c5–6: εἴτε ἔχει τὰ τρία εἴδη ταῦτα ἐν αὑτῇ εἴτε μή. 612a3–4 εἴτε πολυειδὴς εἴτε μονοειδής.
[264] Chapter 2, subsection 1.2.

notion of thinking, *dianoia*, 65e3–4, 79a3) from an inferior way of investigation through sense-perception (*aisthēsis*, *passim*). In the passage where he distinguishes the soul's dispositions of *phronēsis* and *aphrosunē* (79c2–d7), he characterizes the two precisely as the result of the result of engaging in these two types of investigation. *Aphrosunē* is the result of soul investigating the nature of reality through the body and its *aisthēsis*, while *phronēsis* comes about as a result of the soul investigating things 'alone by itself' (αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν, d1). When we first looked at this passage,[265] I argued that the cognitive capacity involved in the former is the *Republic*'s *doxa*, that involved in the latter *epistēmē*: *aisthēsis* investigates the class of sensible objects which participate only imperfectly in the forms, while *logismos* investigates the intelligible and perfect forms themselves.

What the *Phaedo* passage describes is that, by engaging in *logismos* and turning its cognitive gaze more and more towards the intelligible and perfect forms (that is, by acquiring *phronēsis*), the soul *itself becomes more and more form-like*.[266] Insofar as being in this state is its *archaia phusis*, its original and true nature, we can now understand the notion that the soul is akin (*Phaedo* 79d3, *Republic* 611e1) to the forms. This is not because the soul is always like them, but because it is most like them when it is in its state of ontological excellence, when it is most truly itself and realizes its nature. In this condition, the soul takes on many of the properties of a form, which is 'divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, and incapable of being disintegrated, and … always stays in the same condition and state as itself' (*Phaedo* 80b1–3),[267] whereas when it becomes more and more impure, it takes on the properties of the body, which is 'human, mortal, resistant to intelligence, multiform, able to be disintegrated, and never in the same state as itself'

[265] *Ibid.*

[266] Cf. Ebrey 2023, 4. See my discussion in chaper 2, 2.3.c.

[267] τῷ … θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ.

(b3–5).[268] We can thus see that the artificial distinction between a uniform soul in the *Phaedo* and a multiform soul in the *Republic* rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of the kinship argument's characterization of the soul as 'akin' to the uniform (μονοειδές): the soul only attains this quality in its state of ontological excellence, in its restored *archaia phusis*. If my reading of the *Republic*'s Glaucus image in this chapter is correct, then the *Republic* maintains virtually the same position. Of course the *Republic* has a much more sophisticated and detailed account of the soul in its impure, multiform (πολυειδές) state, possibly in order to make room for the phenomenon of mental conflict,[269] but it does not substitute an originally monoeidetic conception of the embodied soul with a polyeidetic conception.

Although the soul's interpenetration with the 'bodily' should not be seen as a literal mixture with material particles, there is a sense in which the impure soul becomes more and more like a sensible particular. It less and less instantiates its own nature and the forms of the virtues,[270] making clear and exact cognition of both in its impure state more difficult. Cognition of the soul in this state becomes more *doxa*-like, and requires a different manner of investigation.[271] By contrast, cognition of the soul as it fully instantiates its nature and the forms of the virtues requires *logismos*, the manner of investigation adequate to cognition of the forms.

As I have shown, the *Phaedo* passage helps to illuminate why the Glaucus passage characterizes *logismos* as the method of investigation that is proper for investigation into

[268] τῷ … ἀνθρωπίνῳ καὶ θνητῷ καὶ πολυειδεῖ καὶ ἀνοήτῳ καὶ διαλυτῷ καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ.

[269] For a typical account of this development, cf. Price 1995, 34–70. But cf. Carone 2001.

[270] In the words of the powers argument (474c8–480a13), its ontological status moves from full participation in 'being' (478a7) to participation in 'both being and not-being' (478e1–3). Cf. chapter 3, subsection 1.2.

[271] The intuition that the impure soul is discernible by a different cognitive capacity and becomes like a sense-perceptible thing in certain respects is played at in the *Phaedo*'s remark about the 'visibility' of impure souls (81c8–d4), which at first seems like Plato's humorous account of ghosts and other apparitions. Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.b.

the soul in its *archaia phusis*, when it has 'become pure'. In this state, the soul is most form-like as it fully instantiates its true nature, and it perfectly instantiates the forms of the virtues within itself. Thus the only appropriate method of investigating the soul in this state is the one which investigates the forms. As the *Phaedo*'s discussion makes clear, investigation through *logismos* at the same time moves us closer and closer to the state of *phronēsis*. Thus attaining knowledge of the soul in its *archaia phusis* coincides with our own restoration in this state.

As I have argued, reading the passage's statements about the soul in its *archaia phusis*, as well as about the proper method of investigation to attain secure knowledge of it, shows that Socrates has a clear view about a number of features of the soul in its true nature, which the higher method of *logismos* would discern more clearly and exactly. Why, then, does the passage end in what may be interpreted as genuine openness as to the expected outcome of such an investigation?[272] In this section, I argue that there is an alternative interpretation of the claim that only by employing the method of *logismos* we would 'see its true nature—whether it has many parts or just one' (καὶ τότ᾽ ἄν τις ἴδοι αὐτῆς τὴν ἀληθῆ φύσιν, εἴτε πολυειδὴς εἴτε μονοειδής, 612a3–4). This alternative interpretation at the same time allows us a better appreciation of the structure and project of the *Republic* as a whole.

Socrates is not only convinced that the soul in its *archaia phusis* is very different from its current composite, impure, and conflicted nature, but is also clear that its true nature is revealed when we consider its desire for *phronēsis* for and interaction with the forms. These findings, paired with earlier indications such as the three creatures image (588b1–592b5), according to which the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1) of reason is only 'grown together' (588d5–6) with the other parts such that they appear to be one while really they are three, and that the rational part is the only part that retains its *dunamis* (518d9–519a1), make it seem unlikely that Socrates's final remark should be read as overtly agnostic, without firm ideas about what the superior method of *logismos* might find out about the soul in its *archaia phusis*.

[272] Woolf 2012, 159 speaks of an 'overt agnosticism' in this passage. The most extreme interpretation of the passage as open-ended is that Plato himself simply has not decided the issue yet. Cf. Robin 1923, 238.

I submit that there is another way of reading our sentence, according to which it is not primarily the expression of Socrates's own lack of expectations, or Socrates's or even Plato's genuine cluelessness about the soul's *archaia phusis*, but rather as expressing a certain methodological humility based on an epistemic dependence relation. Independently of Socrates's own cognitive state and his beliefs about the *archaia phusis*, he explains that there is a certain epistemic vantage point, a 'new psychological standpoint',[273] that would be required to have certain knowledge of the soul's true nature and rigorously answer the question whether it has parts or not. Reading Socrates's claim in this way removes the tension with the indications we find regarding his firm conviction regarding the question of the fate of the lower parts in the purified soul. In stressing that a new, higher epistemic vantage point is necessary to satisfactorily answer certain whether-or-not questions, the passage moreover connects in interesting ways to the end of book I of the *Republic*.

Like the Glaucus passage, the final page of book I concludes the preceding investigation by critically reflecting on its method, expressing the need for a methodological fresh start:

> 'I seem to have behaved like a glutton, snatching at every dish that passes and tasting it before properly savoring its predecessor. Before finding the answer to our first inquiry about what justice is, I let that go and turned to investigate whether it is a kind of vice and ignorance or a kind of wisdom and virtue. Then an argument came up about injustice being more profitable than justice, and I couldn't refrain from abandoning the previous one and following up on that. Hence the result of the discussion, as far as I'm concerned, is that I know nothing, for when I don't know what justice is, I'll hardly know whether it is a kind of virtue or not, or whether a person who has it is happy or unhappy.'

[273] Adam 1902 *ad* 611c.

> ὥσπερ οἱ λίχνοι τοῦ ἀεὶ παραφερομένου ἀπογεύονται ἁρπάζοντες, πρὶν τοῦ προτέρου μετρίως ἀπολαῦσαι, καὶ ἐγώ μοι δοκῶ οὕτω, πρὶν ὃ τὸ πρῶτον ἐσκοποῦμεν εὑρεῖν, τὸ δίκαιον ὅτι ποτ᾽ ἐστίν, ἀφέμενος ἐκείνου ὁρμῆσαι ἐπὶ τὸ σκέψασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ εἴτε κακία ἐστὶν καὶ ἀμαθία, εἴτε σοφία καὶ ἀρετή, καὶ ἐμπεσόντος αὖ ὕστερον λόγου, ὅτι λυσιτελέστερον ἡ ἀδικία τῆς δικαιοσύνης, οὐκ ἀπεσχόμην τὸ μὴ οὐκ ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἐλθεῖν ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνου, ὥστε μοι νυνὶ γέγονεν ἐκ τοῦ διαλόγου μηδὲν εἰδέναι: ὁπότε γὰρ τὸ δίκαιον μὴ οἶδα ὅ ἐστιν, σχολῇ εἴσομαι εἴτε ἀρετή τις οὖσα τυγχάνει εἴτε καὶ οὔ, καὶ πότερον ὁ ἔχων αὐτὸ οὐκ εὐδαίμων ἐστὶν ἢ εὐδαίμων.
>
> *Republic* 354a12–c3

Socrates in this passage expresses severe misgivings about his refutation of Thrasymachus in book I. Over the course of his discussion with Thrasymachus, Socrates has come up with a variety of arguments designed to refute the thesis that justice is another's good and one's own disadvantage. Socrates now criticizes all preceding arguments, on the grounds that their claims about the nature of the soul and its function, and about the nature of justice as the virtue of the soul, remain without a justificatory epistemic foundation. Satisfactorily determining questions such as whether justice is a kind of virtue or not, or whether the just person is *eudaimōn* or not, would require a certain epistemic vantage point, based on a satisfactory account of the nature of soul and justice. All of this does not mean that Socrates has no firm convictions regarding the outcomes to these whether-or-not questions, only that he is yet lacking the adequate epistemic foundation to argue for his view in a rigorous way.

The main argument of the *Republic*, as it is developed in books II–IV and supplemented by books VIII–IX, presents a methodological fresh start, remedying book I's shortcoming by basing its argument on its account of the tripartite soul and its states of virtue and vice. This time, Socrates and his interlocutors do base their assessment of the value of justice for the *eudaimōn* life on an account of the nature of justice and the

soul. However, the methodological reflections in books IV and VI, reiterated in the book X passage, indicate yet again that the main argument of the *Republic* does not represent the whole story. That is because, although it is based on an account of the nature of the soul and of justice, this foundation itself seems to be not sufficiently grounded in first principles to yield knowledge about the true nature of the soul and of true virtue.

There is of course a difference between the methodological worries expressed at the ends of books I and X: according to the former, the preceding investigation has been deficient to such an extent that its results are not secure at all. Without an account of the soul and of justice, there cannot be an account of the status or benefit of justice vis-à-vis the soul. The results of the *Republic*'s main argument, by contrast, may lack a clear and exact understanding of the true nature of the soul, but they have given a sufficient account of the soul's current appearance in embodied human life. The shorter route may not correspond to Socrates' ideal of true understanding, but it gives a satisfactory and convincing answer to the core question of the investigation.

Yet there are also striking similarities. Both passages criticize what has come before for failing to attain a certain epistemic vantage point that is necessary to determine certain other issues, here in both cases phrased as whether-or-not questions. Just as at the end of book I, we should interpret book X's statement as expressing methodological humility rather than the lack of a firm conviction on Socrates' part.

*

How should we interpret this parallelism between the end of book I and book X's Glaucus passage with a view to the *Republic*'s structure and project? At the end of book IV, when the account of the soul has been finished and Socrates and Glaucon feel they have given a satisfactory argument for the desirability of justice as the soul's state of health, Socrates

says that they have now ascended to a vantage point from which they are able to survey both the soul's state of virtue and its states of vice (445c).[274] Having reached this position, the question whether justice or injustice is more desirable is satisfactorily decided: they are at a point at which they 'can see with the utmost clarity that these things are so' (445b).[275]

Yet as the two methodological discussions in books IV and VI make clear, this vantage point can only be a base camp for the person seeking true knowledge of the soul's *archaia phusis* and its virtues. We receive a first glimpse of the journey up to the vantage point of unhypothetical knowledge based on first principles in the middle books of the *Republic*. The book X passage, drawing on the earlier distinction between two methods of investigation, reminds us that the inquiry into the soul's true nature, and along with a proper understanding of 'justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've now discussed', is still outstanding. Like the concluding remarks of book I, it sees us off to a fresh methodological start and a new investigation. In contrast to the investigation announced by the book I passage, this investigation is not one Plato will describe for us in the *Republic*.[276] From what we learn in the middle books, it is one which not all of us will be suited for, and which will take years to conduct. At the end of the *Republic*, a properly dialectical science of the soul in its *archaia phusis* still lies ahead.

[274] ὥσπερ ἀπὸ σκοπιᾶς μοι φαίνεται, ἐπειδὴ ἐνταῦθα ἀναβεβήκαμεν τοῦ λόγου.

[275] σαφέστατα κατιδεῖν ὅτι ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει.

[276] Nor will he, *pace* Sedley 2017, do so in the *Timaeus*, which prefaces its account as a 'likely story' (εἰκός μῦθος). It seems like the practice and outcomes of a properly dialectical psychology are only announced in the dialogues, but not carried out. I shall come back to the *Timaeus* in the conclusion.

Chapter 5

An Aristophanes-Style Tale of Loss and Restoration:

The *Phaedrus* Palinode

Listen to this reed flute as it tells its tales
Complaining of separations as it wails:
'Since they cut my stalk away from the reed bed
My outcry has made men and women lament
I seek a breast that is torn to shreds by loss
So that I may explicate the pain of want
Everyone who's far from his own origin
Seeks to be united with it once again.'

Jalal al-Din Rumi, 'The Song of the Reed'[277]

Introduction

With the *Phaedrus*[278] in this chapter and our return to the *Symposium* with Diotima's speech (201d1–212c3) in the next, we reach two dialogues that thematize *erōs* as the force that draws us to self-perfection[279] and the realization of our true or original nature.[280] As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the *Phaedrus* presents this development in the form of a full-blown, Aristophanes-style tale of loss and restoration: the palinode (243e9–245c4). The soul is likened to a winged chariot with a charioteer and two horses. In its original state, the chariot has fully developed wings, and is capable of participating in the heavenly procession and the contemplation of the forms. In its current condition, the soul has lost its wings and is fallen down, where it is incarnated and separated from its proper state.

[277] *Masnavi* I, 1–4, trans. Holbrook 2011.

[278] For the Greek text of the *Phaedrus*, I use Burnet's 1901 OCT edition. Translations are Rowe 1986, with emendations.

[279] Cf. Frede and Lee (2023), subsection 3.3.

[280] I discuss in how far the *Symposium*'s ascent passage can be said to treat the restoration of our *archaia phusis* in chapter 6.

Aided by *erōs*, the soul can engage in the activity of philosophy and bring about recollection of its previous knowledge, thus regrowing its wings and returning to its original nature. Overall, the palinode appears like a great panoramic vision back on the middle dialogues and their teaching,[281] availing itself freely of many of the main elements such as the tripartite soul, the theory of forms, the theory of recollection, and *erōs*.

In the first section of this chapter, I consider the way in which the *Phaedrus*'s story of the soul picks up on central structural elements of the story of the soul as we found it developed in the *Phaedo*'s central arguments (70c4–84b7) and the *Republic*'s Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7). I consider the simile of the chariot's wings and argue that they are, as it were, the other side of the coin of the *Phaedo*'s and the *Republic*'s bodily accretions. As our overall condition of true virtue, the fully developed wings of the soul denote the absence of bodily beliefs, desires, and fears. They are nourished by the view of true being in the *huperouranios topos*, and by the presence of beauty in the beloved. I then characterize the comparison of rewards passage (255a1–257a2) as once again featuring the distinction between true and demotic virtue. Only the genuine, philosophical lovers are fully rewarded with true virtue and the regrowth of wings. I compare the differences between the *Phaedrus*'s story of the soul and that found in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, raising the question of whether we should take serious the notion that the soul that reaches full contemplation still retains its lower parts. I also explore how the *Phaedrus* develops the themes of *sungeneia* and *homoiōsis theōi* and how its conception of these relates to the restoration of our *archaia phusis* (section 1).

By way of a response, I argue that we have more than one reason to take what we hear in the story about the soul's *archaia phusis* with a grain of salt. From the very outset, we are reminded of the *Republic*'s distinction between a shorter and a longer route, with

[281] Cf. Nehamas and Woodruff 1995, *Introduction*.

Socrates cautioning us that the ensuing exposition will not present findings in line with the latter (246a4–6). The later discussion of dialectical psychology (269d2–272b6) moreover explicitly raises the epistemic dependence relation, familiar from the *Republic*'s Glaucus simile, between longer-route dialectical knowledge of the soul and the ability to answer the question whether the soul has only one or many parts. More fundamentally, I discuss the status of the palinode as a rhetorical display designed to change Phaedrus's allegiance and win him over to the life of philosophy. Especially Socrates's explicit admission that the palinode was a playful discourse containing deceptions by somebody who knows (262c10–d6) means we should be careful before we cite it as a place in which Plato announces major revisions of his doctrine on the *archaia phusis* of the soul (section 2).

1 The *Phaedrus*'s Story of the Soul

1.1 Socrates's 'Psychological Turn' (245c2–4)

As I underlined in chapter 1's analysis,[282] Aristophanes characterizes his speech in the *Symposium* as marking an anthropological turn to the discussion of *erōs*. His predecessors have all been unable to understand the true power of *erōs*. To appreciate the benefit bestowed upon us by this 'healer of human nature' (*Symposium* 189c9; 191d3; 193d5), it is crucial to understand human nature:

> 'First, you need to learn about human nature and what has happened to it; for our nature as it was, once upon a time, was not the same as it is now, but of a different kind.'
>
> δεῖ δὲ πρῶτον ὑμᾶς μαθεῖν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν καὶ τὰ παθήματα αὐτῆς. ἡ γὰρ πάλαι ἡμῶν φύσις οὐχ αὐτὴ ἦν ἥπερ νῦν, ἀλλ' ἀλλοία.
>
> *Symposium* 189d5–7

In the *Phaedrus* palinode (243e9–245c4), Socrates likewise characterizes his speech as a turning point. Contrary to the two previous speeches, the fact that the lover is mad need not mean that *erōs* is detrimental to lover and beloved. Rather, *erōs* is a beneficial form of divinely bestowed madness (243e9–245c4). Ultimately, it has the power to lead us to true happiness both within this life and thereafter (256a7–b7). In order to appreciate the supreme benefits which *erōs* can bring about in lover and beloved, however, it is necessary to understand the nature of the soul:

> 'First, we must comprehend the truth about the nature of soul, both divine and human, by observing experiences and actions belonging to it.'

[282] Chapter 1, introduction.

> δεῖ οὖν πρῶτον ψυχῆς φύσεως πέρι θείας τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἰδόντα πάθη τε καὶ ἔργα τἀληθὲς νοῆσαι.
>
> *Phaedrus* 245c2–4

This passage is remarkably parallel to Aristophanes's 'anthropological turn' in the *Symposium*.[283] By stressing that we need to understand the nature of the soul if we want to understand *erōs* and its benefit, Socrates marks his speech as a 'psychological turn' to the *Phaedrus*'s discussion of *erōs.* But with this latter expression, we already start to see the differences between the two statements. In line with what we have observed especially when comparing the *Phaedo*'s 'story of the soul' to Aristophanes' account, the protagonist of the story we are going to hear now is the *soul* rather than the body.[284] Secondly, we must learn about both human *and* divine souls.[285] Thirdly, we have to know about both experiences *and* the characteristic activities of these souls. In every respect, it seems, Socrates's philosophically informed story of loss and restoration is going to one-up Aristophanes.

But what *is* the nature of the soul? To this question, we get two very different answers that work on different levels. First, Socrates provides quite a technical and dense definition of the soul as principle of self-movement, to prove that the soul is immortal (245c5–246a2). The soul's essence (*ousia*) and definition (*logos*) is self-movement (245e3–4). Its essential characteristic of being a principle of movement is then used to argue that it can never be destroyed. For our purposes, it is important to note that self-

[283] I have not found anybody remarking on this similarity in the literature.

[284] Cf. chapter 2.

[285] Although the divine featured in Aristophanes's account, the relations between humans and gods are there portrayed as hostile, especially when humanity attempts its ascent to heaven (εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνάβασις, 190b8). As we shall see, the palinode envisions a much more friendly coexistence between the gods and humanity, with the gods admitting those who have achieved self-perfection to the heavenly procession.

movement is equated with 'life' (*zōē*, c7). This of course connects to our discussion of the soul as source of activity and life in the *Phaedo*'s final argument (102a10–107b10) and the *Republic*'s function argument (*Republic* 352d2–354a11). In both, the soul is analysed as essentially alive, which I have earlier interpreted as being a source of self-activity. Given that Plato lacks a distinction between self-movement and self-activity as we find it in Aristotle,[286] I think the underlying idea is still the same as what we find in the *Phaedo* and the function argument. In all cases, the soul is aptly characterized as 'the vital principle, the energy of life itself.'[287] In the *Phaedrus*, as before, the soul's characteristic activity will reach its most heightened form when it engages in the contemplation of the forms with the divine procession (247c3–e6).

However, these technical considerations are not what is going to do the explanatory work in Socrates's account of the divine benefits of *erōs*. To understand these, I am next going to consider Socrates's second characterization of the soul, in which he turns from the soul's essence (*ousia*) and definition (*logos*) (245e3) to its 'form'[288] or 'structure'[289] (*idea*, 246a3). He does this in the the chariot simile.

1.2 The Chariot Image and the *Phaedrus*'s 'Story of the Soul'

At the beginning of the *Phaedrus*'s 'story of the soul' stands a primordial state of completeness, our 'winged' condition, in which the soul happily joins the gods in their procession to the contemplation of the forms in the superheavenly place (*huperouranios topos*, 247c3). In a tragic turn of events, the soul loses its wings and falls down to earth. It is currently in a deficient and wingless state, separated from its fully developed existence and its true home. *Erōs*, if rightly directed, has the power to aid the regrowing

[286] On which cf. Stone 1985.
[287] Guthrie 1971, 241.
[288] Rowe 1986's translation.
[289] Nehamas and Woodruff 1995's translation.

of wings in the joint exercise of philosophy and recollection of our previous knowledge. If all goes well, it will enable us to eventually restore ourselves fully in our original condition. Surpassing the *Phaedo*'s underlying account of the soul's fate and the *Republic*'s Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7) in detail and narrative flourish, we find here a fully-fledged, philosophically informed 'story of the soul' to rival Aristophanes's 'story of the body'.

In this subsection, I present the central structural elements of the palinode and its resulting account of the working of *erōs*. I start with our 'winged' (246c1) condition, arguing that this state is best interpreted as resembling the by now familiar Platonic account of our *archaia phusis* insofar as it is our state of excellence of intellect and character (1.2.a). I then turn to our current condition of deficiency and *erōs*'s role in our struggle for restoration, arguing that, once again, our self-perfection takes the form of the acquisition of *phronēsis* by recollection, which goes hand in hand with the acquisition of true virtue of character (1.2.b).

1.2.a The Soul's 'Winged' State

To illustrate the form or structure (*idea*, 246a3) of the soul, he likens it to a winged chariot with a team of two horses and a charioteer (246a6–7).[290] Of the horses, one is good and one is bad (246b1–4). There can be little doubt that the three elements of this chariot are to be identified with the three parts of the soul familiar from *Republic* IV, reason (charioteer), spirit (good horse), and appetite (bad horse).[291] In its *archaia phusis*, the soul's integrity is represented by its possession of wings (246b7–c1). I contend that these

[290] I comment on the remark about divine souls, which according to this simile exhibit internal structure as well, below (246a7–b1).

[291] Cf. Rowe *ad* 246b1–3. An alternative interpretation that would explain why all three members of the chariot get to participate in the contemplation of the forms has been proposed by Robin 1908, following Hermias: the three members of the chariot are not the *Republic*'s three parts of the soul, but the *Timaeus*' three ingredients of the rational soul (134–7). For a critical engagement with this position, cf. Szlezák 1976, 57 n. 70.

are best interpreted as the soul's condition of true virtue. In general, they seem to stand in for the soul's capacity to elevate itself beyond sense-perceptible reality and attend to being. The 'earthy body' (σῶμα γήϊνον, 246c7), which the soul settles in when it has lost its wings and is drawn down, reminds us of the *Phaedo*'s kinship argument, where the presence of bodily beliefs, desires, and fear is described as the 'heavy, weighty, earthy (γεῶδες), and visible' (81c8–9) which weighs us down and draws us towards the body. We saw a similar image again in the 'twin' passages 519a7–b5 and 611d8–612a3 in *Republic* VII and X, where these alien accretions were likened to 'leaden weights' (519b1) and to 'wild, earthy (γεηρά), and stony' (612a1–2) ballast. If we managed to 'hammer' (519a8, 611e4) the soul free from these weights, as a preparation for, and ultimately as a result of, the pursuit of philosophy, the soul would shoot out of the sea and could once again achieve full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms.

The principal directions of movement (upwards = towards ever increasing contact with the forms, downwards = towards ever increasing contact with the body and physical reality) and the forces involved (desire for the state of *phronēsis*, desire for embodied existence and its pleasures) thus seem fairly stable in the various accounts, only the imagery differs. In the *Phaedo* and *Republic* the soul is like a naturally buoyant submarine kept under water by the ballast of bodily beliefs, desires and fears—these directly counteract our natural desire, and thus upwards pull, towards *phronēsis*. This image can also be found in the *Phaedo*'s concluding myth (107d5–114c6), where our current existence is entirely placed at the bottom of the sea, contrasted with the inhabitants of the true earth which live above the surface. Likening our bodily ballast to the leaden weights used for submerging fishing nets under water thus seems particularly apt.[292]

[292] Cf. Scott 2020, 22.

In the *Phaedrus*, the image is not one of a weight working against a natural upwards pull, but rather of the absence or presence of our natural capacity to overcome gravity, the downwards pull towards bodily pleasure.

> The natural property of a wing is to carry what is heavy upwards, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods resides, and in a way, of all the things belonging to the sphere of the body, it has the greatest share in the divine, the divine being noble, good, and everything which is of that kind; so it is by these things that the plumage of the soul is most nourished and increased, while the shameful, the bad and in general the opposites of the other things make it waste away and perish.
>
> πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθὲς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ᾗ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ, κεκοινώνηκε δέ πῃ μάλιστα τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ θείου [ψυχή], τὸ δὲ θεῖον καλόν, σοφόν, ἀγαθόν, καὶ πᾶν ὅτι τοιοῦτον· τούτοις δὴ τρέφεταί τε καὶ αὔξεται μάλιστά γε τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πτέρωμα, αἰσχρῷ δὲ καὶ κακῷ καὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις φθίνει τε καὶ διόλλυται.
>
> *Phaedrus* 246d6–e4

Once again, we found the notion of the 'heavy' (τὸ ἐμβριθές, 246d6) already used in the *Phaedo*'s description of our bodily accretions as 'heavy (ἐμβριθές), weighty, earthy, and visible' (81c8–9). The wing and the impurity images seem to be two sides of the same coin. Indeed, we have already seen that the Glaucus image mixes metaphors by including not only alien accretions but also the lack and mutilation of body parts that properly belong to the soul—arms and legs that Glaucus could use to actively swim towards the surface. In chapter 4,[293] I have argued that Glaucus's 'missing limbs' are best interpreted as the absence of *phronēsis* and true virtue in the soul. This fits well with the analysis, in

[293] Chapter 4, subsection 1.3.

chapter 3,[294] of the fully developed condition of *phronēsis*, which coincides with fully developed true virtue of character, as the soul's 'proper virtue' (*oikeia aretē*) in the sense developed in the function argument. With its characterization of our condition of ontological excellence (*phronēsis* and true virtue) as the wings which the soul has lost but which properly belong to it, the *Phaedrus* palinode is particularly close to the *pathos* characteristic of Aristophanes's tale of loss and restoration.

Reading the *Phaedrus*' growth of the wings in close parallel especially to the *Phaedo*'s (and *Republic* X's) purification[295] from earthy ballast also enables us to compare the theme of nourishment in the three dialogues: in the *Phaedo*, the philosopher's soul is said to refrain from the pleasures of the body, making instead the true and divine which is ἀδόξαστον its only nourishment (84a–b). In the Glaucus passage from *Republic* X, the earthy accretions are a consequence of the soul's feasting on earth.[296] Earlier on, in Book VII's discussion of correct education, turning the soul up towards being is described as involving striking the soul free from the leaden weights which have grown onto it as a result of 'feastings and its pleasures and gluttonies' (αἱ ἐδωδαὶ καὶ τοιοιούτων ἡδοναὶ καὶ λιχνείαι, 519b1–2). At the height of his perfection, the philosopher will truly live, be nourished, and be relieved of the pains of giving birth (490b).

Likewise, Phaedrus, who has spent his morning at the (earthy) banquet of speeches (227b6–7) in the house of the glutton Morychus, spends his noon hearing about

[294] Chapter 3, subsection 3.2.

[295] Note that Socrates numbers among the divine forms of madness a kind that comes about in certain families beset by the greatest maladies and sufferings, acting as an interpreter that finds the correct purifications (καθαρμοί, 244e2) and mystic rites. A bit later, Socrates describes himself as in need of purification and calls his palinode itself an 'ancient rite of purification' (ἀρχαῖος καθαρμός, 243a4). I do not have a good explanation for this curious form of madness. Instead, I can only point to the interesting connection this bears to the *Phaedo* and its portrayal of *phronēsis* as *katharmos* that brings about the *katharsis* of *phronēsis* (69c3).

[296] περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἐστιωμένη, γεηρὰ καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἑστιάσεων. *Rep.* X 611e4–612a3. Earlier on,

the procession of divine or divinized souls to the heavenly banquet (247a9). In this place, the souls of gods and winged souls receive their proper nourishment:

> Thus because the mind of a god is nourished by insight and knowledge unmixed, and so too that of every soul which is concerned to receive what is appropriate to it, it is glad at last to see what is and is nourished and made happy by gazing on what is true, until the revolution brings it around in a circle to the same point. In its circuit it catches sight of justice itself, of self-control, of knowledge—not that knowledge to which coming into being attaches, or that which seems to be different in each different one of the things that we now say are, but that which is in what really is and which is really knowledge.
>
> ἅτ᾽ οὖν θεοῦ διάνοια νῷ τε καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ ἀκηράτῳ τρεφομένη, καὶ ἁπάσης ψυχῆς ὅσῃ ἂν μέλῃ τὸ προσῆκον δέξασθαι, ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὂν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τἀληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ, ἕως ἂν κύκλῳ ἡ περιφορὰ εἰς ταὐτὸν περιενέγκῃ. ἐν δὲ τῇ περιόδῳ καθορᾷ μὲν αὐτὴν δικαιοσύνην, καθορᾷ δὲ σωφροσύνην, καθορᾷ δὲ ἐπιστήμην, οὐχ ᾗ γένεσις πρόσεστιν, οὐδ᾽ ἥ ἐστίν που ἑτέρα ἐν ἑτέρῳ οὖσα ὧν ἡμεῖς νῦν ὄντων καλοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν τῷ ὅ ἐστιν ὂν ὄντως ἐπιστήμην οὖσαν·
>
> *Phaedrus* 247d1–e2

It seems clear that the winged soul is here characterized as capable of experiencing the full and exclusive cognitive contact with the forms characteristic of *phronēsis* in the *Phaedo*. The difference introduced by the imagery of the divine procession seems to be that the souls, divine and divinized, need to regularly renew their nourishment, which introduces the possibility of a failure to attain the correct nourishment and the intrusion of merely apparent nourishment (τροφὴ δοξαστή, 248b5) and vice (κακία, 248c7):

> whichever soul follows in the train of a god and catches sight of part of what is true shall remain free from sorrow until the next circuit, and if it is always able to do this, it shall always remain free from harm; but whenever through inability to follow it fails to see, and through some mischance is weighed down by being filled with forgetfulness and incompetence, and because of the weight loses its wings and falls to the earth…
>
> ἥτις ἂν ψυχὴ θεῷ συνοπαδὸς γενομένη κατίδῃ τι τῶν ἀληθῶν, μέχρι τε τῆς ἑτέρας περιόδου εἶναι ἀπήμονα, κἂν ἀεὶ τοῦτο δύνηται ποιεῖν, ἀεὶ ἀβλαβῆ εἶναι· ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπέσθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, καί τινι συντυχίᾳ χρησαμένη λήθης τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῇ, βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πτεροῤῥυήσῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ…
>
> *Phaedrus* 248c3–8

1.2.b The Wingless Soul

In its current, deficient state, the soul has lost its wings (246c2), fallen down to earth and taken (temporary) residence in a body. Depending on how much the soul has seen in the heavenly procession and in previous incarnations, there are various degrees by which we may be separated from the ideal of the philosophical life in pursuit of regrowing our wings. Like in the *Phaedo*, every human soul is in principle capable of recollecting what it has seen in the *topos huperouranios*, as a soul that has not once been in the fully winged state would not have incarnated into a human body to start with (249b5–6). Recollecting is the process of restoring ourselves in the original state of perfection, a process that can be aided by the correct use of 'reminders' (ὑπομνήματα, 249c7): because of the privileged way in which beauty can directly remind us of divine beauty, it can nourish us directly and contribute to the development of the soul's plumage in a way similar to the contemplation of the form in the *topos huperouranios*. In turning the soul, through the beloved, away from its customary context, and towards the higher reality of which the

beautiful object is a reminder, a reality characerized by a pure light in which the soul itself was pure (ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ, καθαροὶ ὄντες, 250c4–5).

The Palinode ends with an extended comparison between the benefits received from the pretended and the genuine lover (255a1–257a2). As his own beauty is reflected back from the eyes of the lover, the beloved, too, begins to be nourished and starts to regrow his own wings. If the better parts of his soul win out in their quest to tame the unruly horse, the lover and beloved can hope to attain wings and lightness, and if they manage to do so in three successive lives to be released and rejoin the heavenly procession. In such a pair, the unruly part is kept under control and the understanding which makes them virtuous is set free (δουλωσάμενοι μὲν ᾧ κακία ψυχῆς ἐνεγίγνετο, ἐλευθερώσαντες δὲ ᾧ ἀρετή, 256b2–3).[297]

Lovers who instead give in to their passions and are not guided by philosophy but by a love of honour seem to have an intermediary lot: while they will give in to the urges of the unruly horse every now and then, they will do so sparingly. They will die wingless, but with the impulse to grow them (256d4–5). On the lowest level are those who are mere pretended lovers, such as the ones praised in Lysias' and Socrates' first speech. These acquire merely a mortal form of temperance, a mortal and miserly economizing (of pleasures) which is by the majority praised as virtue (256e3–257a2). We are here, no doubt, on the level of the *Phaedo*'s *skiagraphia* of virtue.[298]

What this discussion makes clear is that the true lovers who engage in philosophy can hope for the acquisition of true virtue, brought about by their joint activity of philosophy, the pursuit of *phronēsis.* That we are indeed witnessing the develoment of

[297] This image of self-control as an internal struggle fits well with the three creatures image (588b1–592b5) and once again the Glaucus simile's description of (argueably) the tripartite soul in any condition, well-ordered or not ('full of multicolored variety, unlikeness and self-difference', 611b2–3), cf. chapter 4, subsection 1.1.

[298] The virtue attained by the honour-lovers, while it is also not the true virtue attained by the philosopher, is to be located instead on the level of the lower mysteries in the *Symposium*. Cf. Yunis *ad loc.* I shall discuss this in the next Chapter.

true virtue as the result of direct contact with truth and being is attested by the fact that the growing of wings is accompanied by 'birth-pangs' (ὠδῖνες, 251e5): in the *Symposium* similarly, the delivery of pregnancy (which in the case of the soul is with *phronēsis* and the rest of virtue) is described as a being freed from birth-pangs (ὠδῖνος ἀπολύειν, 206e1), while in the *Republic* the philosopher at the height of the ascent is described as released from birth-pangs (λήγοι ὠδῖνος, 590b6–7).

1.3 Playful Variation on Familiar Themes: Novel Developments in the Palinode

In keeping with its playful, extended presentation of Plato's middle-dialogue 'story of the soul' the palinode contains not only novel ways of presenting familiar themes (such as the wing image instead of the *Phaedo*'s and the *Republic*'s weights counteracting natural buoyancy). It also exhibits a number of genuine novelties that either address questions that have simply not been answered by other versions of the Platonic story of the soul yet—I am thinking in particular of the question why the soul falls down from its original nature in the first place (248a1–249d3), or the question whether in their original nature, all souls are identical—here, the account of different souls following in the trains of different gods is a detail that adds variety (246e4–247c2). A further novelty in the *Phaedrus*'s account is the use of so-called 'reminders' (ὑπομνήματα) to aid the process of recollection (249c7, but cf. 276d3). However, what may seem particularly significant in the light of our earlier discussion of the *archaia phusis* and Plato's story of the soul is the fact that souls arrive at the divine banquet still as tripartite chariots (246e4–247c2). In this way, we may take the palinode as evidence of a changed position with regards to the one which I argued for earlier for not only for the *Phaedo* but also for the *Republic*, namely that the rational part is separated from the lower parts when it is fully purified, and alone of the three parts attains full *phronēsis* and true virtue in the full presence of the forms.

1.4 *Sungeneia* and *Homoiōsis Theōi* in the *Phaedrus*

In my comments on the two concepts of *sungeneia* and *homoiōsis theōi* in their relevance to the soul's *archaia phusis* and its restoration in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*,[299] I remarked that the two dialogues are vague about the soul's precise place within their two-tier ontological framework; consequently, they leave it unclear just how exactly we are to understand the soul's kinship with the forms. In particular, I pointed out that there is one respect in which souls differ quite significantly from the forms: their capacity for self-motion. As we saw now, the *Phaedrus* makes self-motion the soul's essence (*ousia*) and definition (*logos*) (245e3–4). Indeed, this emphasis on the soul's cosmic role as a principle of motion brings with it a changed conception of its place within the overall ontological framework, and its true kinship. Even though the word '*sungeneia*' is not used in this context, the soul is presented as similar to, even though less perfect than, the souls of the gods in the heavenly procession (246a7–b1). The peculiar way in which the *Phaedrus* conceives of *homoiōsis theōi* confirms that these traditional Olympian gods, not the forms, are the relevant divinities to which we are akin and which we should seek to emulate within this life and beyond: when the lover educates his beloved, both approximate to their leading (particular) divinity (252c3–253c6).[300] The divine character of the forms is not disputed: on the contrary, it is through being nourished by the divine forms that the gods ultimately derive their own divinity (249c6), and assimilation to the gods consists in getting as close as possible to securing for the rational part this very same intellectual nourishment (d1). Nevertheless what the soul aims to emulate in its attempt to restore its *archaia phusis* is no longer the forms, but the paradigmatically perfect souls of the gods in the heavenly procession.[301]

[299] Chapter 2, 2.3.c and Chapter 4, subsection 1.4.

[300] See Sedley 1999, 315: 'Here the emphasis is on assimilation to this or that god.'

[301] See Betegh 2022, 260: 'The *Phaedrus* brings a new understanding of the nature of the soul, and correspondingly a novel interest in a class of divine beings distinct from the Forms, whose characteristic activity is intellection, to contemplate and have full knowledge of the Forms; now these are the divine

Given that some of these novelties would constitute significant deviations from the *Phaedo* and *Republic*'s position on our *archaia phusis*, we may wonder what the status of the palinode's account is. Is its mythical tale of loss and restoration on a par with the *Phaedo*'s argument-heavy investigation into the soul's immortality and quest for salvation through *phronēsis*? How does it compare to the shorter and middle route investigations into the nature of the soul, its virtues, and its *eudaimonia* in the *Republic*?

In this section, I argue that we should not take the palinode as gospel on revolutionary new academic teachings on the *archaia phusis* of the soul. The entire palinode stands under the explicit proviso uttered in its prefacing remarks that its chariot simile will remain on the shorter, human side rather than giving a divine and long exposition (246a5). It thus echoes the *Republic*'s introduction of a 'longer route' of inquiry, explicitly stating that its exposition stay short of 'longer-route' and its findings, which seem beyond its reach. What is more, the later discussion of dialectical psychology has a passage which resembles a central theme of the Glaucus simile: there is a longer route and a corresponding longer exposition to true knowledge of the soul; this knowledge would among other things enable its practitioner to determine whether the soul is simple or complex (269d2–271c4) (subsection 2.1). Additionally, we have to remember that the palinode is not a philosophical argument or inquiry into the nature of the soul at all, but a piece of rhetoric, which even professes to be in parts deceptive. The palinode presents itself as the playful written discourse of someone who knows (2.2). In the light of these

beings to which our souls are presented as "akin," serving as paradigms for the proper, highest activity of our souls, and whose company it is our final goal to rejoin'.

findings, I conclude that we should not press the palinode too hard on the exact shape or structure of the soul in its disembodied and purified state.

2.1 A Longer Route Towards True Knowledge of the Soul

Just before he introduces the chariot image, we find Socrates clearly alluding to the methodological reflections we found at various points of the *Republic*.[302] In so doing, he self-consciously limits the degree of accuracy to be expected from the ensuing description. He states that explaining what the soul is like (οἷον … ἐστι) would require a 'divine and long account' (θεία καὶ μακρὴ διήγησις, 246a5), while to say what it resembles (ᾧ … ἔοικεν) requires a 'human and shorter' one (ἀνθρώπινη τε καὶ ἐλάττων, a5–6). This distinction of course relates to the *Republic*'s distinction between the main argument's investigation and a 'longer route' (μακροτέρα ὁδὸς, 435d3, μακροτέρα … περίοδος, 504b2, μακροτέρα [περίοδός], c9) that would lead to exact knowledge of the true nature of the soul and the virtues.

This does however not imply that we should expect another 'shorter-route' investigation into the nature of the soul as we found it in the *Republic*. Firstly, what Socrates is about to deliver is not philosophical investigation at all, but a rhetorical display meant to draw Phaedrus from his infatuation with the speechwriter Lysias to the life of philosophy. Socrates is going to deliver a διήγησις, not pursue a ὁδός. Secondly, insofar as the speech is a philosophically informed panoramic vision of Plato's middle-period thought, it draws on outcomes of investigations of various 'levels of argument',[303] including the tripartite analysis of the main argument's 'shorter-route' investigation, but also the reference to forms and immortality. The latter are more characteristic of *Republic* V–VII and X, as well as the *Phaedo*, all of which operate on a higher level of investigation

[302] 435c4–d7, 504a4–b8, 611b1–612a7. Cf. chapter 4, section 2.
[303] Cf. Scott 2015.

but still lack firm dialectical knowledge of the forms or the good (that would be, precisely, 'the longer route'). By denying that we are going to hear a 'longer account', which would presumably relate the outcomes of a 'longer-route' investigation, Socrates clearly rules out that we are going to hear about the soul's 'true nature' in the sense used in the Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7).

Later on, in the discussion of dialectical psychology (269d2–274b6), Socrates returns to the *Republic*'s distinction of two methods for attaining knowledge of the soul's nature. If true rhetoric is to be an art of leading the soul, it needs to have an understanding of the nature of the soul (269d2–271c4):

> Shouldn't one reflect about the nature of anything like this: first, is the thing about which we will want to be experts ourselves and be capable of making others expert simple or complex? Next, if it is simple,we should consider, shouldn't we, what natural capacity it has for acting and on what, or what capacity it has for being acted upon, and by what; and if it has more forms than one, we should count these, and see in the case of each, as in the case where it had only one, with which of them it is its nature to do what, or with which to have what done to it by what?
>
> πρῶτον μέν, ἁπλοῦν ἢ πολυειδές ἐστιν οὗ πέρι βουλησόμεθα εἶναι αὐτοὶ τεχνικοὶ καὶ ἄλλον δυνατοὶ ποιεῖν, ἔπειτα δέ, ἂν μὲν ἁπλοῦν ᾖ, σκοπεῖν τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, τίνα πρὸς τί πέφυκεν εἰς τὸ δρᾶν ἔχον ἢ τίνα εἰς τὸ παθεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ, ἐὰν δὲ πλείω εἴδη ἔχῃ, ταῦτα ἀριθμησάμενον, ὅπερ ἐφ᾽ ἑνός, τοῦτ᾽ ἰδεῖν ἐφ᾽ ἑκάστου, τῷ τί ποιεῖν αὐτὸ πέφυκεν ἢ τῷ τί παθεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ;
>
> *Phaedrus* 270d1–7

I submit that this is very close to the discussion of the true nature of the soul as we find it in the *Republic*'s middle books and the Glaucus simile. True rhetoric needs to have knowledge of whether the soul is simple or complex, and what its or, in the latter case, its

parts', *dunamis* is (270c9–d7)[304] in each case. To write with accuracy about the essence of the soul would require addressing both these points, but also the various shapes that souls take on in life, and which type of speech is appropriate to which type of soul (271b1–5).

To such an accurate knowledge there is no alternative or short cut if one wants to engage in the envisioned art of philosophy scientifically (272b7–274b6): the practitioner has to go the long and rough road (πολλὴ καὶ τραχεῖα ὁδός, 272c2)[305] rather than the short and smooth one (ὀλίγη καὶ λεία, 272c2, cf. also ῥᾴων καὶ βραχυτέρα ὁδός, 272c1). This in turn requires carrying things up (to first principles), going the long way around (272d3), and relating them to knowledge of the just and the good. Together with the Glaucus passage's question whether the soul has many parts or just one, we here find its remark that determining the issue with certainty depends on pursuing a 'longer-route' type investigation into the nature of the soul. As in the *Republic*, Phaedrus does not learn what such a longer-road treatment with reference to first principles would say about the true nature of the soul.

2.2 Socrates's Speech as Deceptive Rhetoric

Quite in parallel with the *Republic*'s Glaucus simile, then, the discussion of true rhetoric as requiring scientific knowledge of the soul again establishes an epistemic dependence relation between an arduous dialectical ascent all the way up to first principles, and the ability to successfully determine whether the soul in its true nature has parts or not. Even if we take this passage just as expressive of outright agnosticism on the question of the soul's true nature, it significantly relativizes the palinode and what it has to say on the

[304] The notion of the *dunameis* of parts of the soul, taken together with the remark that there may be just one part with one *dunamis*, invokes, of course, *Republic* VI's claim that the rational part never loses its *dunamis* (518d9–519a1)

[305] In the *Republic*'s cave (514a1–518b6), the way out of the cave is described as 'rough and steep' (τραχείας τῆς ἀναβάσεως καὶ ἀνάντους, 515e5–6).

question whether the soul which manages to participate in the heavenly banquet, as well as the gods, really exhibit internal structure.

The second point we have to keep in mind is that the palinode is not an investigation, but a rhetorical speech.[306] Socrates is not mainly attempting to bring Phaedrus the latest teachings of the academy, but attempts to change his allegiance from the gluttonous company gathered at the Morychean house in the morning, interesting him more in the life of philosophy and the prospect of participating in the divine banquet of the gods. The question is whether the inclusion of subtleties that reflect finer points of academic doctrine would not spoil the effectiveness of the speech. But the problem with rhetoric as it is analysed in the *Phaedrus* runs deeper. We have to be prepared that rhetoric may not simply be inaccurate, but actively misleading. When Socrates and Phaedrus examine the speeches for their scientific or unscientific character (262c5–266d4), Socrates makes the following remark:

> What is more, by some chance—so it seems—the two speeches which were given do have in them an example of how someone who knows the truth can mislead his audience by making play in what he says. I myself, Phaedrus, blame the gods of the place; and perhaps too the interpreters of the Muses who sing over our heads may have breathed this gift upon us—for I don't think I share in any science of speaking.
>
> καὶ μὴν κατὰ τύχην γέ τινα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐρρηθήτην τὼ λόγω ἔχοντέ τι παράδειγμα, ὡς ἂν ὁ εἰδὼς τὸ ἀληθὲς προσπαίζων ἐν λόγοις παράγοι τοὺς ἀκούοντας. καὶ ἔγωγε, ὦ Φαῖδρε, αἰτιῶμαι τοὺς ἐντοπίους θεούς· ἴσως δὲ καὶ οἱ τῶν Μουσῶν προφῆται οἱ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ᾠδοὶ ἐπιπεπνευκότες ἂν ἡμῖν εἶεν τοῦτο τὸ γέρας· οὐ γάρ που ἔγωγε τέχνης τινὸς τοῦ λέγειν μέτοχος.
>
> *Phaedrus* 262c10–d6

[306] Thus cf. Scott 2011.

Which two speeches is Socrates speaking about here? Hackforth and de Vries both take this to refer to Lysias's speech, and Socrates's two speeches taken together as one. More recently, Rowe and Yunis both opt for Socrates's two speeches.[307] To justify this point, Rowe rightly points out that the speeches are said to have been delivered by 'someone who knows the truth' (d1). Clearly, Lysias for Socrates does not fit the bill (263d5–6).[308] However, no matter which of the options we choose, the fact is that Socrates classes the palinode as an example where somebody who knows the truth 'can mislead his audience by making play in what he says' (262d2). Here, then, we have another piece of evidence that the palinode should not be taken as gospel. In line with the later discussion of speech-writing (275c5–278b6), it is a kind of playful written discourse.

[307] Hackforth 1952 *ad loc.*, de Vries 1969 *ad loc.*, Rowe 1986 *ad loc.*, Yunis 2011 *ad loc.*
[308] Rowe 1986, *ibid.*

Chapter 6

Oikeion and *Agathon*:

Diotima's Response in the *Symposium*

Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist's getan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* II[309]

The Story So Far…

In chapter 1 of this thesis, I characterized Aristophanes's account of *erōs* in the *Symposium*[310] as based on the idea that we have an original nature (*archaia phusis*)—an expression borrowed from Hippocratic medicine which originally denotes a body's *temporally prior* state which is a *normative standard* for its restoration. We are currently separated from this state, whose restoration would be eminently desirable and make us happy. The name of the desire that draws us to what belongs (is *oikeion*) to us and would restore us in our *archaia phusis* is *erōs*. I also showed that Aristophanes's account faces difficulties, including the choice of the subject experiencing erotic desire, the question of our capacity for restoration, as well as his idea of the cause and explanation of desirability.

In chapters 2–5, I demonstrated that Plato's middle-period dialogues *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* all implicitly, and in one case explicitly (*Republic* 611c7–d1),

[309] *Faust* II, V, 12104–11.

[310] As in chapter 1, I use Burnet's 1901 OCT edition for the Greek text of the *Symposium*. Translations are Rowe 1998, with emendations—unless otherwise noted.

rely on the idea that there is an *archaia phusis* of the soul which we have once possessed, are currently deficient in, and desire, or should desire, to restore. This I identified with the condition of *phronēsis*, our state of intellectual virtue which is at the same time the only way of possessing true virtue of character (*Phaedo* 69b3), which is only fully attainable in our disembodied, fully purified state. I showed that this account of our *archaia phusis* fares much better at answering the questions raised by Aristophanes's account. Instead of Aristophanes's 'story of the body', we get a Platonic 'story of the soul'. The choice of the soul as the subject of his account renders Plato far better at explaining how its condition of excellence is connected to *eudaimonia*. With his theory of recollection, Plato connects past possession of our *archaia phusis* with our capacity for restoration. What is more, Plato over the course of these dialogues develops a sophisticated account of the soul's state of ontological excellence—*Republic* I's functional-perfectionist framework, underpinned by the middle books' metaphysical framework and its account of virtue as participation in the good. These frameworks make him far more successful at explaining the intrinsic desirability of the restoration of our *archaia phusis*.

I have argued that the *Phaedo* and *Republic* are in fact consistent in their identification of the soul's *archaia phusis* as uniform and rational, and that the status of the *Phaedrus* palinode as a rhetorical and potentially deliberately deceptive speech means that we should probably not press its presentation of the *archaia phusis* too hard as evidence for a changed conception on this point. At the same time, I demonstrated that especially the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* are characterized by self-conscious methodological humility regarding exact knowledge of the *archaia phusis*. Such knowledge is relegated to a 'longer-route' (*Republic* 435d3, 504b2, c9, *Phaedrus* 246a5, cf. 272c2) dialectical psychology which would investigate the true nature of soul and the virtues by pure 'reasoning' (*Republic* 611c2).

In this final chapter, I turn back to the *Symposium* and Diotima's response to Aristophanes in Socrates's fictionalized report of her teachings (205d10–206a1). Her response to Aristophanes raises questions: should we read it as an outright dismissal of Aristophanes and his interest in the *oikeion*, or does it suggest a revision of his insights in the light of Diotima's own theory? What is the relationship between *oikeion* and *agathon*, and which of the two explains the desirability of our state of self-perfection?

In many ways, Diotima's account and her general theory is consistent with what we have found in the other middle dialogues. If it is rightly directed, *erōs* can indeed lead us all the way to our state of perfection (at least in so far as this is possible for a human being). This state is our condition of *phronēsis* and true virtue of character, and *eudaimonia* is once again identified with contemplation of the forms. In presenting *erōs* as a general desire for the good, Diotima also answers the question how it can take misguided forms and pursue pleasure or honour as the good.

The elephant in the banquet room is, of course, the absence of the concept of an *archaia phusis* in Diotima's account. The attainment of self-perfection at the end of the ascent is not characterized as the restoration of a temporally prior state, and our capacity for its attainment is explained not by recollection but by the theory of psychic pregnancy. Is the *Symposium* evidence of Plato entertaining the idea of what self-perfection and our capacity for its attainment would look like in the absence of an *archaia phusis*? This is the question on which I shall end my discussion.

* * *

Introduction

When it is Socrates's turn to give his speech on *erōs*, he presents it as a fictionalized report of teachings delivered to him by a wise Mantinean woman called Diotima. Following a structuring principle formulated earlier in the dialogue by the poet Agathon (195a1–5), he expounds her teachings by first clarifying the nature (*phusis*, 204b7: 201e8–204c6) and then the characteristic activity (*ergon*, 206b3: 204c7–212a7) of the subject matter. The latter discussion starts with a reflection on the *object* of *erōs* (204c7–206a13), culminating in the conclusion that *erōs* desires the permanent possession of the good (206a11–12).[311]

En route to this conclusion, we find the following passage, in which Diotima engages with an alternative conception of the object of *erōs*:

> 'Now there's a certain story that's told,' she said, 'that it's those who seek their other half that are in love. But my story says that love is of neither half nor whole, unless it turns out, my friend, to be *good*: for people are willing to have even their legs and arms cut off if they think they're in a bad state. For it's not, I think, what is their own that either group embraces, unless one calls the *good* "belonging" and "one's own", and the bad "alien". For there is nothing else that people love except the good.'
>
> Καὶ λέγεται μέν γέ τις, ἔφη, λόγος, ὡς οἳ ἂν τὸ ἥμισυ ἑαυτῶν ζητῶσιν, οὗτοι ἐρῶσιν· ὁ δ' ἐμὸς λόγος οὔτε ἡμίσεός φησιν εἶναι τὸν ἔρωτα οὔτε ὅλου, ἐὰν μὴ τυγχάνῃ γέ που, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ἀγαθὸν ὄν, ἐπεὶ αὐτῶν γε καὶ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ἐθέλουσιν ἀποτέμνεσθαι οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἐὰν αὐτοῖς δοκῇ τὰ ἑαυτῶν πονηρὰ εἶναι. οὐ γὰρ τὸ ἑαυτῶν οἶμαι ἕκαστοι ἀσπάζονται, εἰ μὴ εἴ τις τὸ μὲν ἀγαθὸν οἰκεῖον καλεῖ καὶ ἑαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἀλλότριον· ὡς οὐδέν γε ἄλλο ἐστὶν οὗ ἐρῶσιν ἅνθρωποι ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.
>
> *Symp*. 205d10–206a1[312]

[311] I shall discuss the claim that *erōs* desires the good in section 2 below.
[312] Own translation.

This alternative 'story' or 'account' (*logos*), which is very transparently related to Aristophanes's earlier speech,[313] relies on what I shall call an '*oikeion* theory of *erōs*'. According to this theory, *erōs* desires not the good but that which 'belongs' (is *oikeion*) to us. If we are deficient in something we consider *oikeion*, we pursue that thing with the aim of becoming whole and complete. It is this impression that the missing object 'belongs' to us that causes and explains our desire for it.

Diotima is unequivocal that the cause and explanation of desire must be sought in the fact that we consider the object *good*—what I shall call the '*agathon* theory of *erōs*'. However, it is not clear how we should best interpret her claims about the relation between *oikeion* and *agathon*. This is especially the case for her statement that we do not embrace what is ours, 'unless one calls the good (*to agathon*) "belonging" (*oikeion*) … and the bad (*to kakon*) "alien" (*allotrion*)' (205e6–7). One interpretation, which I shall refer to as the 'dismissal reading of Diotima's response', would view it as a mere turn of phrase, a way of restating her ultimate lack of interest in the *oikeion* as making no positive contribution to the developing understanding of *erōs*. On an alternative interpretation, Diotima here acknowledges the importance of the *oikeion* and its contribution to the discussion, making room for a corrected account of the *oikeion* in light of her *agathon* theory—I shall refer to this as the 'revision reading of Diotima's response'.

In this chapter, I present Diotima's account of the *oikeion* theory as the general theory underlying Aristophanes's account of *erōs*, as well as her own *agathon* theory. I compare the two theories and explain the interpretative problem raised by Diotima's response. I also deal with a possible objection to my reconstruction of the *oikeion* theory (section 1).

[313] Cf. chapter 1, as well as my recap in subsection 1.1 below.

I then turn to the question how to best interpret Diotima's response to Aristophanes. To that end, I present and contrast the dismissal and revision readings of Diotima's response. I explain why I think the revision reading is the correct interpretation of our passage, even though explicit reference to the *oikeion* is absent from the remainder of the speech. My argument is, in short, that Diotima's characterization of the ascent reveals the state of *phronēsis* and true virtue to be the true *oikeion* that realizes our nature. This connects well to our findings from the other dialogues (section 2).

Third, I turn to the previously identified curious fact that the *Symposium*, in which Plato has Aristophanes explicitly introduce the concept of an *archaia phusis* and deliver an account of *erōs* as leading us to the *oikeion* and to the restoration of the *archaia phusis*, lacks implicit or explicit reference to an *archaia phusis* of the soul in the presentation of its positive teachings. The perfected state at the end of the ascent seems to only exhibit the feature of being a normative standard while lacking temporal priority. As a consequence, our capacity for attaining self-perfection requires an alternative account, the theory of psychic pregnancy. I argue that, while Plato in the *Symposium* indeed presents a complete account that works without reference to prior possession, it makes more sense to view Diotima's account as presenting a smaller subsection of the wider picture of Plato's middle-dialogue thought (section 3).

1 The *Oikeion* and *Agathon* Theories of *Erōs*

1.1 The *Oikeion* Theory of *Erōs* and Aristophanes's Speech

According to Diotima's presentation of the *oikeion* theory of *erōs* in our passage, desire comes about because the subject feels incomplete ('half') and pursues what it considers as 'belonging' to it (its other 'half'), with the aim of becoming whole and complete. The theory suggests that a subject *a* desires an object *b* if, and only if, the following two requirements are met:

> (O1) the subject does not possess its object (and is aware of this lack); and
>
> (O2) the subject considers the object as 'belonging' (*oikeion*) to it.[314]

Moreover,

> (O3) it is this very appearance of 'belonging' that causes and explains its desirability.

How exactly we are to understand the notion of 'belonging' is not further explained in our passage, except by its relation to some unspecified state of wholeness.

This theory of course sounds suspiciously similar to the conception of desire underlying Aristophanes's earlier speech (189c2–193d5), and we have good reason to suspect that the 'certain *logos*' in question is his.[315] I have already analysed the central

[314] For the following analysis of desire as based in lack, cf. *Lysis* 221d6–e5.

[315] The literature is unanimous in identifying the 'certain *logos*' in question with Aristophanes's speech: cf. Bury 1932, Fowler 1914, Dover 1980, Nehamas and Woodruff 1989, and Rowe 1998 *ad loc.*, Sheffield 2006, 111, Sier 1997, 104.

structural elements of this account in chapter 1,[316] and am going to recapitulate it only in outline here. In the poet's story, human nature is described as moving from primordial integrity to incompleteness and, hopefully, back to integrity in the future. In its complete state of wholeness and completeness it is called our 'original nature' (*archaia phusis*, 191d1–2; 192e9; 193c5; 193d4). The *archaia phusis* is contrasted with our current state, exhibiting deficiency, halfness, and lack of oneness. We miss our other half, the matching tally (*sumbolon*, 191d4, 5) that would complete us and restore our wholeness. Our missing part 'belongs' (is *oikeion*, 193d2) to us precisely because it formed part of the same original nature. *Erōs*, the healer of human nature (189c9; 191d3; 193d5), promises restoration of our original nature by leading us to the *oikeion*. Desire for the *oikeion* is at the same time desire for the wholeness characteristic of the *archaia phusis*.

Diotima's presentation of the *oikeion* theory in our passage clearly captures central features of Aristophanes's account of *erōs*. At the same time, it marks a generalization of his account in two important respects.[317] The first concerns the scope of *erōs*: Aristophanes is concerned solely with the phenomenon of interpersonal love ('specific *erōs*'[318]) and limits the *oikeion* to the person that is our unique matching counterpart. Diotima, on the other hand, discusses the *oikeion* theory as an account of all classes of desire falling under her revisionary 'generic *erōs*' (205a5–d9), presenting the general theory of desire underlying Aristophanes's account. Her example of diseased limbs clearly shows that we have left the narrow confines of interpersonal love behind.[319] The second respect in which Diotima's presentation marks a generalization of Aristophanes's account concerns the question what grounds the *oikeion*'s state of

[316] Chapter 1, section 1.

[317] I present the other side of the coin, the less general character of Aristophanes's account, in chapter 1, subsection 1.4.

[318] I take the terminological distinction between 'specific' and 'generic' *erōs* from Bury 1932, xiii.

[319] There is a possible alternative explanation for Diotima's aim in generalizing Aristophanes's account, which I shall discuss in subsection 1.4 below.

'belonging' to us. Aristophanes views prior union in the *archaia phusis* as that which causes and explains our missing part's 'belonging' to us. Diotima does not explicitly specify that 'belonging' in each case requires such a prior union. The *oikeion*, on her presentation of the theory, 'belongs' to us because its possession would be constitutive of our wholeness and completeness—whether we have been in this state before or not.[320]

These generalizing moves aside, it is clear that the *oikeion* theory underlies Aristophanes's account of *erōs*, and that Socrates intends his remarks as direct comments on the poet's speech.[321] Given that Diotima cannot have witnessed the prior speeches, this means that Socrates breaks character to make reference to Aristophanes—something that does not go unnoticed, as the poet himself later attempts to reply to the mention which 'Socrates' (*not* 'Diotima') has made to his speech (212c5–6).[322] Although Socrates's speech, like the ones that precede it, picks up and develops elements of *all* previous contributions, the pretence of Socrates merely reporting the teachings of Diotima is nowhere so blatantly called into question as here, focusing our attention on the particular point made.

1.2 Diotima's *Agathon* Theory of *Erōs*

But what *is* the point Diotima is making? Let us start with what is uncontroversial. Her conclusion that 'there is nothing else that people love except the good' reiterates what has been established in the speech up to this point: the good (and not, as Aristophanes would

[320] As I shall discuss in section 3 below, the omission of reference to a state of temporally prior possession is a general feature of Diotima's account.

[321] This receives further confirmation by the fact that Socrates establishes direct verbal connections between the speeches by using key terms that we have also found in the poet's speech: besides the recurrence of key structural terms—whole (205e2; cf. Aristophanes *passim*) and half (205d10, 205e1; cf. Aristophanes *passim*), as well as the crucial notion of the *oikeion* (205e6; cf. Aristophanes 193d2; also οἰκειότης 192c1)—there is also the conspicuous use of ἀσπάζομαι (205e6, just before; cf. Aristophanes 192a6, b5 with Dover 1980 and Rowe 1998 *ad loc*.).

[322] Hence it seems apt to characterize the passage as 'Socrates' rebuttal of Aristophanes' (Sheffield 2006, 111)—although, as I shall argue, the comment is better understood as an 'acknowledgement and correction' (O'Brien 2007, 76), rather than an outright rebuttal, of the poet's analysis of *erōs*.

have it, the *oikeion*) is the true object of *erōs*. In fact, we can summarize her main points in a schematic '*agathon* theory of *erōs*'. This theory suggests that a subject *a* desires an object *b* if, and only if, the following two requirements are met:

(A1) the subject does not possess its object (and is aware of this lack); and

(A2) the subject considers the object to be good (*agathon*).

Moreover,

(A3) it is this very appearance of 'goodness' that causes and explains its desirability.

Requirement A1 is a central theme already in the *elenchus* of Agathon (199c3–201c9), and developed in the beginning stages of Socrates's discussion with Diotima. *Erōs* is a kind of desire. The subject experiencing any kind of desire must be deficient in its object. The deficiency that gives rise to *erōs* can at the same time not be total, since in that case we would have no desire for that which we lack. Human nature is best characterized as 'in-between' (*metaxu*)—neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither ignorant nor wise.[323] We are erotic beings precisely in the sense that we desire the state of full possession of these qualities, longing for the divine happiness associated with them (201e8–204c6). Requirements A2 and A3 have been the subject of the discussion immediately leading up to our passage. Socrates fails to come up with an explanation why *erōs* desires the possession of beautiful things. He is better placed to answer when

[323] Cf. Frede 1993, *passim*.

Diotima proposes to substitute the *good* (*to agathon*) for the beautiful: we desire good things because their possession is constitutive of happiness. The attainment of happiness, in turn, is a final explanation of our desire: there is no point in asking for the sake of which further end we desire happiness (204c7–205a4).

Diotima adds that, while *erōs* in its ordinary-language sense is confined to interpersonal love, this is only a specific, not the generic sense of the concept. Generic *erōs*, by contrast, covers the whole range of human goal-oriented pursuits, including money-making, the love of exercise, and philosophy (205a5–d9). People pursuing all these ways of life are driven by *erōs*, 'the whole of desire for good things and for happiness' (205d2). When our passage claims that 'there is nothing else that people love except the good' (205e7–206a1), it thus seems to reaffirm, against the *oikeion* theory, what has been established earlier in the discussion.

*

There is, however, a notable difference between the preceding discussion and our passage: while the earlier claims about the things agents pursue to attain happiness talked about them as 'good things' (τὰ ἀγαθά) in the plural, the present passage shifts to talking about *erōs* as directed at 'the good' (τὸ ἀγαθόν). I think that it makes most sense to suppose that, when our passage moves from 'possessing good things' in the plural to 'possessing the good' in the singular, this focuses the discussion from the individual objects taken to be goods, and from the competing conceptions of the good under discussion, to the formally identical object sought by each of these existences in their pursuit of happiness.[324]

[324] Cf. Sier 1997, 217.

At the same time, this shift leaves it unclear whether Diotima is here still discussing the *apparent* good—albeit on a higher level of abstraction—or if she is now considering the *true* good as the object of *erōs*. Parts of Diotima's speech suggest that *erōs* pursues whatever the agent considers to be good, even if this evaluation is in fact mistaken. Thus, the preceding discussion of generic *erōs* at 205a5–d9 contrasts a variety of competing ways in which people pursue 'good things and happiness', including the love of money, the love of exercise, and the love of wisdom (205d1–9). The culmination of the ascent then reveals that honour-lovers, who attain mere images of virtue (212a4), fail to fully realize their human nature because they are not in contact with the truth[325]—while pleasure-lovers do not even feature as serious contenders. This must mean that many apparently 'good things' pursued by *erōs* only appear to be so, and are not in fact constitutive of true happiness.

However, there are also indications that *erōs* somehow relates to the *true* good. Human nature's intermediate status as in-between (*metaxu*) the bad and good is clearly a statement about humanity's situation with respect to the objective good, and would be nonsensical as a claim about our collective status regarding various subjective evaluations of the good. The culmination of the ascent moreover suggests that *erōs* only properly comes into its own and fulfils its function when we attain the true good: *phronēsis* and virtue. If *erōs* was simply a desire for what appears good to us, it would seem odd that it is described as the best coworker in bringing about specifically the state of true virtue, in which alone consists the true fulfilment of our human nature.

Here we reach a question that I already raised in the context of the *Republic*'s presentation of the good as the *terminus* of all desire (*Republic* 505e1–5). As I argued in chapter 3,[326] there is a tension between the claim that every soul pursues the (true) good

[325] Cf. subsection 2.3 below.
[326] Chapter 3, subsection 1.3.

and the observation that most people are mistaken about what the true good actually consists in. The *Symposium*'s discussion of *erōs* reveals more clearly than the *Republic* how the two can be reconciled. The *Symposium*'s conception of desire is characterized by a fundamental realism: there is an objective good for us which we try to obtain *even where we end up getting it wrong*.[327] The 'intended object'[328] of *erōs* is thus the real good, even if the 'actual object'[329] which we pursue because it appears good to us is in fact not good.[330] By illustrating how *erōs* drives us toward the apparent good as its actual object, Diotima's *agathon* theory can accommodate a wide variety of human goal-oriented pursuits. By maintaining that in all these pursuits, the intended object is the real good which would bring us true happiness, she can explain why *erōs* has such a force on us, and how it can motivate us to try and get things right in this most important question. This explains *erōs*'s function as coworker in the pursuit of the true good.

1.3 Comparison of the Two Theories

When we compare Diotima's *agathon* theory with the *oikeion* theory, we can see that they share what may be called a 'deficiency requirement': both O1 and A1 state that the subject does not possess its object (and is aware of this lack). Her account of *erōs* differs from Aristophanes's in the identification of the property that constitutes and grounds

[327] Barney 2010.
[328] Santas 1964.
[329] *Ibid.*
[330] The claim that we always desire the good is usually identified with the intellectualism of the Socratic dialogues (cf. *Protagoras* 358b–d, *Meno* 77a–78c, *Gorgias* 466a–468e), and has led interpreters to group the *Symposium* more closely with these: cf. Irwin 1995, 303. Price 1989, 254–255 maintains that this is a conscious deviation from the 'middle dialogue' Platonic psychology Plato had come to hold by the time he wrote *Symposium*, while Rowe 2006 locates the *Symposium* after the advent of forms but before the psychological advance to tripartition. However, we have seen in chapter 3, subsection 1.3 that even in the *Republic*, in which Plato according to common lore becomes 'Platonic' by introducing the tripartite soul with nonrational desires, we find the claim that 'every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake' (*Republic* 505e1–2; cf. also *Philebus* 20d). In that chapter, I have argued that there are good reasons to reject the characterization of the lower parts as good-independent. With the distinction between the intended and the actual object of desire, we can now see that even the pursuit of pleasure and honour can be classed under the pursuit of the good. Cf. Carone 2001 *passim* and Barney 2010, 45.

desirability:[331] according to the *oikeion* theory, *b* is desirable to *a* if, and only if, *a* considers *b* as 'belonging' to it (O2). Moreover, it is this very appearance of 'belonging' that causes and explains its desirability (O3). According to the *agathon* theory, *b* is desirable to *a* if, and only if, *a* considers *b* to be *good* (A2). Moreover, it is this very appearance of 'goodness' that causes and explains its desirability (A3).

We are now in a better position to understand Diotima's precise criticism of the *oikeion* theory. She points out that the *oikeion* theory on its own cannot account for the very thing it is supposed to explain: the *desirability* of the object in question. Why should the mere fact that something appears to belong to me cause and explain my desire for it when I am lacking it? This becomes all the more pertinent if the notion of 'belonging' is insufficiently grounded in the mere fact of prior temporal union in the *archaia phusis*, as in Aristophanes's case. Yet although Diotima clearly rules out the *oikeion* as cause and explanation for *erōs*, the way in which she frames her criticism leaves it open whether she dismisses the concept of the *oikeion* wholesale or whether she has some place for a revised *oikeion* in the light of her *agathon* theory. In particular, she makes two claims about the relation between the *agathon* and the *oikeion* that require further interpretation. These are the claims that

> (C1) 'we desire neither half nor whole unless it turns out to be good' (205e2–3); and that
>
> (C2) we do not embrace what is *oikeion* 'unless one calls the good "*oikeion*" … and the bad "*allotrion*"' (205e6–7).

[331] Here and in what follows, I understand 'desirability' not as an intrinsic property of a given thing, but as a relation that a given thing bears to a given agent. The consideration of the object as desirable, and a state of deficiency (and awareness of this deficiency) with regard to the object, are separately necessary and jointly sufficient for actual desire for the object. Where a state of deficiency (and awareness of this deficiency) obtains, desirability is necessary and sufficient for actual desire for the object.

Should we interpret Diotima's remarks as a wholesale dismissal of the *oikeion* (subsection 2.1), or is there evidence for a revision of the concept, which acknowledges some scope to a revised notion of the *oikeion* (subsection 2.2)? I shall turn to this question after dealing with a possible objection to my reading (subsection 1.4).

1.4 A Possible Objection to my Reading

In subsection 1.1 above, I assumed that Diotima generalizes Aristophanes's account to a theory encompassing all classes of desire falling under her revisionary conception of 'generic *erōs*'. On my reading, this '*oikeion* theory of *erōs*', which underlies Aristophanes's account, is then compared to her own '*agathon* theory'. But is it really the case that Diotima is attempting to reconstruct and discuss the general theory of desire underlying Ar<istophanes's account? Might it not rather be the case that Diotima, having just presented her revisionary account of *erōs* as a universal drive for happiness and the possession of the good, simply points out that Aristophanes's account has missed this wider scope of the phenomenon, and does not generalize well from specific to generic *erōs*? We could then interpret her response as highlighting the problems his account faces when generalized beyond interpersonal love, even for the most uncontroversial examples of things we consider *oikeia*: our own arms and legs. Diotima, on this reading, never seriously intends to discuss a general '*oikeion* theory of *erōs*' as underlying Aristophanes's account, but instead dismisses his account for its failure to generalize.[332]

Diotima's example of diseased limbs indeed moves the discussion of the *oikeion* as cause and explanation of desire beyond Aristophanes's originally envisioned context—specific *erōs*—, acting as a counterexample to his account as a theory of generic *erōs*. If

[332] I thank the anonymous reviewer at *Apeiron* for pointing out this possible interpretation of Diotima's response to Aristophanes.

Aristophanes's assumptions about the role of the *oikeion* were suitable for a general account of desire, then they would have to apply, for instance, to the limbs of the body, which seem like a generally accepted case of something 'belonging' to us. Yet there are cases (i.e. when their continued possession would be bad for us) in which we would prefer even to actively get rid of our arms and feet. Hence, there must be something wrong with Aristophanes's assumptions about the role of the *oikeion*: in such cases at least, it is not belonging but goodness that causes and explains desire (205e3–5). But is the problem here really a failure of his account to generalize from specific to generic *erōs*? I submit that Diotima's point is a different one: she generalizes his account to the underlying theory to demonstrate that something is not quite right with the theory *in general*, *including* the case of specific *erōs*. This can be seen from the fact that, in the very next sentence (205e5–6), Diotima claims that *neither* group (that is, neither the people who would prefer to have their limbs amputated, *nor Aristophanes's lovers*[333]) embrace what belongs, unless the good is what belongs.

To illustrate how the point of Diotima's diseased-limb objection similarly applies to interpersonal love, we may construct a parallel 'toxic-relationship objection': imagine we lived in a universe where each of us 'belonged' to one particular other person, for instance because of a prior union with that person in the mythical past. In such a universe, Diotima would maintain, we still should and would not desire to be together with this person if we were of the impression that such a union was *bad* for us. 'Belonging together' would neither result in mutual desire nor, after reunification with our 'other half', in the happiness promised by the account. If, as Diotima's remark about 'either group' (205e5–6) suggests, Diotima thinks the *oikeion* theory is bad at explaining the original context of specific *erōs*, then the problem is not failed generalization but general failure.

[333] Cf. Rowe 1998 *ad loc.*

2 Diotima's Case for a Revised Conception of the *Oikeion*

As I pointed out in subsection 1.3 above, it is not clear how we should interpret Diotima's response to Aristophanes. Does it represent a wholesale dismissal of Aristophanes's interest in the *oikeion* or does it suggest a revision of the *oikeion* in the light of Diotima's *agathon* theory? In this section, I contrast the dismissal (subsection 2.1) and revision (subsection 2.2) readings of Diotima's response, and explain why I think the latter is correct. I argue that, even though Diotima does not explicitly refer to the *oikeion* in the remainder of her speech, the ascent passage with its characterization of *phronēsis* and true virtue as the realization of our nature reveals virtue as our true *oikeion* (subsection 2.3).

2.1 The Dismissal Reading of Diotima's Response

Even if Diotima is seriously willing to consider the *oikeion* theory as a general theory of *erōs*, this does not imply that she thinks it is a good one. Indeed, a dismissal reading of Diotima's response maintains that our passage raises the subject of the *oikeion*, briefly discusses it, and rejects it as irrelevant. Aristophanes's speech and its underlying *oikeion* theory of *erōs* turn out, on this reading, to be nothing but a negative contribution, a 'target for Diotima's fire.'[334] In this subsection, I present what I take to be the main reason for adopting the dismissal reading, and discuss its strategy of interpreting Diotima's claims about the relationship of *oikeion* and *agathon*.

As we have seen, Diotima's counterexample shows that the class of things we consider *oikeia* and the class of desirable things are non-coextensive. Even for objects almost anybody would accept as naturally 'belonging' to us, body-parts such as arms and

[334] Dover 1966, 50.

legs,[335] we do not necessarily desire their possession—not, that is, if they are diseased and we no longer consider their possession a good thing. The *oikeion* theory's claim that something is desirable if, and only if, we consider it *oikeion*, is straightforwardly refuted by pointing to the existence of something that is considered *oikeion* but is undesirable. At the same time, the passage suggests another class of things that in fact *is* coextensive with that of desirable things, and is appropriately connected to desire as its cause and explanation: things we consider *agatha*. The reason why the limbs in the counterexample fail to be desirable is precisely that they are no longer considered good.

How does the dismissal reading interpret Diotima's claims about the relationship between the *oikeion* and the *agathon*, *viz.* that 'we desire neither half nor whole unless it turns out to be good' (C1), and that we do not embrace what is *oikeion* 'unless one calls the good "*oikeion*" … and the bad "*allotrion*"' (C2)? C1 seems to play right into the hands of the dismissal reading and its observation that the things we consider *oikeia* and the things we consider *agatha*—and thus desirable—are non-coextensive. After all, C1 states that, where something seems to be *oikeion* to us because we consider it a part we lack to become whole, it is desirable if, and only if, it also happens to be in the class of things we consider *agatha*.[336] What about C2? This claim does not draw on, or imply, non-coextensivity between things we consider *oikeia* and *agatha*. Rather, it proposes a revised conception of what is *oikeion* and *allotrion* to us, aligning them with what we consider *agathon* and *kakon*, respectively. The significance of this claim depends on whether this revised extension of the *oikeion* and the *allotrion* is intended to reflect a deeper conceptual connection between *agathon* and *oikeion*, and *kakon* and *allotrion*. The dismissal reading

[335] Thus my translation '*even* their arms and legs' for αὐτῶν καὶ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας (205e3), following both Nehamas and Woodruff 1989, and Rowe 1998. The fact that our limbs are especially *oikeia* to us is reflected in Greek usage when one speaks, for instance, of one's οἰκεία χείρ, Soph. *Ant*. 1176.

[336] This reading, which claims that desire for something *oikeion* is entirely contingent on whether or not it happens to be good, is suggested by Dover's commentary *ad loc*.: 'που connotes "… as may be the case in given circumstances."' Dover 1980, 146.

precisely denies this. Accordingly, its best interpretative strategy seems to be reading Diotima as contemplating a potential change in linguistic convention that is not based in a conceptual connection between the *oikeion* and the *agathon*. As such, the exponent of the dismissal reading could interpret C2 as a mere turn of phrase, to the following effect: 'people only desire what they consider *agathon*; if somebody claims that we all pursue the *oikeion*, this is fine by me, as long as what they refer to by "*oikeion*" is the *agathon*—that is, if they call what they consider *agathon* "*oikeion*" and what they consider *kakon* "*allotrion*"'. Such a reading of C2 can invoke the fact that the *oikeion* is not mentioned anymore after this passage, making it almost seem as if Diotima loses all interest. If she introduced a substantial claim here, then surely the *oikeion* would have some role to play in what follows!

Yet even if Diotima does not explicitly refer back to the concept of the *oikeion* in the rest of her speech, we might feel uneasy about interpreting her as simply stating that the good and the *oikeion* are non-coextensive. Indeed, as we shall see in subsection 2.3 below, the description of the culmination of the ascent as realization and fulfilment of our human nature suggests that in achieving *phronēsis* and true virtue as our true good, we at the same time attain that which properly belongs to us. It is the intuition that the true good is at the same time the only thing that truly belongs (is *oikeion*) to us which motivates a revision reading of our passage.

2.2 The Revision Reading of Diotima's Response

Like the dismissal reading, a revision reading of our passage accepts that Diotima is unequivocal in proclaiming perceived *goodness* as the cause and explanation of desire. Unlike the dismissal reading, it maintains that she does not as a consequence discard the *oikeion* as irrelevant to the analysis of desire. Rather, it interprets Diotima's response as acknowledging the importance of the concept and its contribution to the discussion, while

proposing a corrected account of the *oikeion* in light of her *agathon* theory.[337] How can this interpretation of our passage make sense of Diotima's claims about the relationship between the *oikeion* and the *agathon*—that 'we desire neither half nor whole unless it turns out to be good' (C1) and that we do not embrace what is *oikeion* 'unless one calls the good "*oikeion*" … and the bad "*allotrion*"' (C2)?

The revision reading takes C2 not as contemplating an unsubstantial change in linguistic convention, but as suggesting a radically revisionary account of the *oikeion* based on a deep conceptual link between the good and the *oikeion*: only what is good is truly *oikeion* to us, as goodness is the cause and explanation of true 'belonging'.[338] Neither Diotima's prospective amputees nor Aristophanes's lovers desire the *oikeion qua oikeion*. Like every human being, they are driven by a desire for the good, and it is the consideration of an object as good that causes and explains their desire. However, if only the good truly belongs to us, this entails that they will *eo ipso* also pursue the (revised) *oikeion*. It is interesting to observe that Diotima here reserves the verb connected to *erōs* (ἐρῶσιν, 206a1) to our relationship to the good, which is desired *qua* good, whereas the pursuit of the revised *oikeion*, which is desired not *qua oikeion* but *qua* good, is described using a different verb (ἀσπάζονται, 205e6).[339] This fits nicely with an interpretation according to which, *in a way*, we desire the *oikeion*, but only in a derivative manner, by virtue of its connection to goodness.

How does the revision reading interpret C1, the claim from which the dismissal reading draws its justification and force? The dismissal reading argued that Diotima discards the *oikeion* precisely because of C1 and its resulting claim that what we consider

[337] Cf. O'Brien 2007, 76, who characterizes Diotima's response as 'both an acknowledgement and a correction' of the oikeion theory, which he however associates mainly with Empedocles and his ideas. Exploring the extent to which Aristophanes's account relies on Empedoclean ideas would exceed the scope of this thesis.

[338] I shall explore how this idea plays out in practice in the next section.

[339] I thank Ursula Coope for alerting me to this.

oikeion and *agathon*—and thus desirable—is non-coextensive. The revision reading does not deny that what we consider *oikeion* often fails to be or appear good. As the diseased-limb objection shows, even generally accepted cases of things we consider *oikeia* may turn out bad, in which case their possession is no longer desirable for us. However, taking its cue from C2 and its radically revisionist conception of the *oikeion*, this reading concludes that such cases simply reveal the object in question as not truly *oikeion* to us. The person with the incurably diseased limb or the lover trapped in an unfixable toxic relationship should seek separation from the bad appendage that is revealed to be an *allotrion*. C1's 'half' and 'whole', where they do not turn out to be good, should thus not even properly be called 'half' and 'whole'.

Such a revisionary account of the *oikeion* entails that the true good, which is the intended object of *erōs*, is at the same time our true *oikeion*. In the state of full possession of the good, which is constitutive of true *eudaimonia*, we would be separated from anything that does not truly belong to us, as we would no longer be in-between the good and the bad (characterized by a presence of both *oikeia* and *allotria*). Fully possessing that which is properly ours, and free from that which is alien to our nature, we would be whole and complete.[340] If this is indeed Diotima's position, then Aristophanes was onto something when he praised *erōs* for 'leading us to the *oikeion*' (193d2). The revision reading does, however, face a major obstacle: as I have mentioned in the preceding section, the *oikeion* is not mentioned anymore after our passage. Do we have any evidence that the revision reading is nevertheless preferable, and the good is characterized as properly belonging to us? In the next subsection, I shall argue just that.

[340] In *Republic* X's Glaucus image (611b1–612a7), this would correspond to the sea-creature's restored state in which its alien accretions are hammered off and its mutilated limbs have been restored. Cf. chapter 4, subsection 1.3.

2.3 *Erōs*, the Coworker of Human Nature

As I remarked in the Introduction, the reflections on the object of *erōs* (204c7–206a13), which form the context of our passage, constitute a preface to the discussion of the characteristic activity (*ergon*) of *erōs* (204c7–212a7). Almost like an afterthought, this prefacing reflection ends with an important addition: we do not only want to possess the good, we want to do so permanently (206a11–12). Whether the move is legitimate or not,[341] Diotima later transforms this into the dual goal of attaining the good and attaining immortality (206e8–207a4).

When the discussion finally turns to the *ergon* of *erōs* (206b1–212a7), we learn that *erōs* is not merely a desire for some perceived good we lack, but brings with it the productive capacity to attain this object. This confirms the earlier account of the *phusis* of *erōs* as the child of Poverty and Resource, characterized simultaneously by resourcelessness (*aporia*) and resourcefulness (*euporia*, 203a9–204c6). Our productive capacity comes in the form of a metaphorical[342] physical or mental 'pregnancy' which is delivered in the presence of[343] a suitable beautiful medium (206b7–8, 206c1–5). The concrete manifestation of this productive activity depends on the perceived good one pursues, and whether one is more pregnant in body or in soul. Three manifestations in particular are discussed.

[341] Cf. for instance Dover *ad* 204c7–206a13: 'Naturally, as long as the alternative possibilities of having good and having bad exist, we wish to have good, but it does not follow from that that we ourselves wish to exist for ever.' Sier 1997, 107, following Allen 1991, 61 n. 99, raises the possibility that, if we accept the identity of 'possession of the good' with 'being good', then the wish to realize the good in this way might be seen as implying a desire to exist always. However, he too ultimately remains sceptical of the move.

[342] I am calling even the physical pregnancy 'metaphorical' as Socrates is here almost exclusively talking about male ejaculation into the female, which is (problematically) likened to the delivery of a pregnancy. Cf. Pender 1992, 74. Both in the case of physical and mental 'pregnancy', the focus of Diotima's speech is firmly on the male, cf. Hobbs 2006, 254.

[343] The formulation τόκος ἐν καλῷ is ambiguous as to whether the 'birth' occurs within or in the presence of the medium (cf. Nehamas and Woodruff 1989 n. 79 *ad loc.*). As it turns out, the latter is the more universal sense, as even in cases where the 'pregnancy' is delivered into the beautiful medium, that medium first and foremost must act as an external stimulant, providing the 'beautiful environment' (Rowe 1998 *ad* 204d1–209e4) that facilitates the delivery. Cf. further Sheffield 2006, 87 n. 14.

On the level of the 'lower mysteries'[344] (208b7–209e4), *erōs* manifests itself as *philotimia* (208c3), taking honour to be the good, and comes in two forms: people more pregnant in body give birth to children and rear them, while people more pregnant in soul deliver, to some extent, their mental capacity for '*phronēsis* and the rest of virtue' (209a3–4), expressed in poems, laws, acts of heroism, *etc.* In both cases, the product of the delivery contributes to the agent's honour and to lasting fame and memory. On the level of the 'higher mysteries' (209e5–212a7), *erōs* manifests itself as love of *phronēsis*. After an ascent through the production of various levels of philosophical *logoi*, the agent successfully delivers her mental capacity for *phronēsis* and true virtue, finally producing true virtue (212a4) and attaining the highest form of immortality achievable for a human being (212a6–7).[345]

As we can see, all three groups under discussion thus produce something which brings them closer to their respective perceived good (honour/*phronēsis* and virtue) and to some approximation of immortality. However, there are clearly quantitative and qualitative differences. Firstly, the honour-lovers who are more pregnant in soul are said

[344] Thus, for instance, Sheffield 2006 *passim*.

[345] Vlastos 1981a famously criticizes Plato's characterization of *erōs* and its culmination in the ascent to the form as instumentalizing other people, and consequently not viewing them as worthy of love for their own sake. This has led to decades of back and forth in the literature, for an overview of which see Sheffield 2006, 154–82. I cannot possibly do justice to this debate within the remits I have set myself in this chapter, but shall make two points here. Firstly, whether or not it appeals to our own sentiments, Diotima is very clear that *erōs* first and foremost aims at the permanent possession of the good of the agent, which she takes to be constitutive of her *eudaimonia*. This claim, which is never taken back, must be the baseline for any further discussion of the issue. Fundamentally, *erōs* is 'auto-erotic' (Kosman 2014a, 28). It is an interesting question in how far *erōs* in the *Symposium* can *also* accomodate concern for other people and interpersonal love, but it is not the question I have set myself in this chapter. The second point I wish to make here is that the 'true virtue' (ἀρετὴ ἀληθής, 212a6–7) produced in contact with the truth (212a4) is not the point where we should try to settle the question of concern for others by making Diotima propose that this true virtue is produced not in the philosopher, but in another person (cf. Price 1989). There is simply no indication that the true virtue is anything other than a direct consequence of the vision of the truth *in the soul of the philosopher*. If it was not, or was not primarily, the philosopher's own soul that achieved true excellence at the height of the ascent, the whole argument would not work. Moreover, the by now familiar connection with other discussions throughout the dialogues where Plato reserves a condition of 'true virtue' (ἀληθὴς ἀρετή, *Phaedo* 69b3, *Symposium* 212a6–7, *Republic* 554e5, *Laws* 731a7, ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή, *Theaetetus* 176c5, cf. chapter 3, subsection 2.1) for the philosopher as a result of her insight into essential being would make it odd if the true virtue birthed in the presence of the truth was another condition.

to produce 'children' that are 'more beautiful and more immortal' (209c6–7) than those of the ones more pregnant in body. They thus seem better at achieving both aims of honour-loving *erōs*, the perceived good of honour and the expected 'immortality' of lasting fame and memory. Comparing both types of honour-lovers with the wisdom-lovers, we can observe that in the former case, there is a gap between the product they deliver and the good aimed at by their erotic activity.[346] Neither the children nor the various ways of displaying *phronēsis* and virtue are identical with the perceived good of honour—rather, they are produced *for the sake of* honour and lasting fame, which then have to be accorded by other people. The case of the wisdom-lovers is different: what they produce at the culmination of the ascent, by attaining *phronēsis*, simply *is* their desired good. Insofar as their cognitive grasp of the truth moreover coincides with the production of true virtue, the product of their erotic activity is *themselves*, realized as good. There is thus no gap between the philosopher's activity and the pursued end, rendering this activity more final and the good achieved more secure than that of the honour-lovers. While these considerations show that the philosopher's good better satisfies certain immanent criteria (finality, self-sufficiency, *etc*.) for the attainment of *eudaimonia*, we shall now see that the culmination of the ascent moreover reveals his good to be qualitatively different, the objective and true good in which human beings realize their nature and attain supreme happiness.

The philosopher undergoes a cognitive progression towards a full comprehension of the form of beauty (211a1–5), in which state her contemplative virtue of *phronēsis* is fully developed. The grasp of the truth achieved at the height of the ascent in turn coincides with the production of 'true virtue' (*aretē alēthēs*, 212a6–7), which is contrasted with mere 'images' (*eidōla*, *ibid.*) of virtue. I think that the formulation of this

[346] Cf. Sheffield 2006, 91–2.

distinction is too close to the *Phaedo*'s discussion of true virtue (68c5–69e4)[347] to be incidental. There, we found a distinction between the 'true virtue' (*alēthēs aretē*, 69b3) of the philosopher and the shadowpainting 'shadow-painting' (69b7) attained by those who lack *phronēsis* and only exchange pleasures for pleasures and fears for fears. Only *phronēsis* is the 'correct exchange' (69a6–7), the purifying rite (*katharmos*, 69c3) that brings about the *katharsis* that is true virtue. The fact that the production of this true virtue occurs in cognitive contact with the truth (212a5), that is, with forms rather than sensible things which are their 'images', confirms that it is precisely the condition of *phronēsis* that brings about this birth.[348]

The idea that only the philosopher acquires true virtue while all others acquire mere 'images' of virtue (212a4) chimes well with the way in which the virtue achieved by people in the lower mysteries is characterized ('virtue of all sorts', 209e2–3) and the motivations that are cited for its acquisition (for the sake of its 'attendant glorious reputation', 208d7–8). These people cannot be on a much higher level than the *Phaedo*'s exponents of popular and civic virtue, who refrain from bodily desires 'because they fear dishonour and a reputation for immorality' (82c6–7), or the non-lovers in the *Phaedrus* who merely produce that which is 'praised by the majority as a virtue' (ἐπαινουμένην ὡς ἀρετὴν, 256e6). Once again, the 'demotic' virtue distinguished from the true virtue of the philosopher in the *Republic* (500b8–d10) may be a special case since it is based on true

[347] Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.b.

[348] What does it mean that the 'offspring' of true virtue has to be 'nourished' (θρεψαμένῳ, a6)? In the light of what we have learned about the divine banquet in the *Phaedrus*, it makes sense to interpret this as implying that the condition of true virtue requires constant cognitive contact with the forms. In the *Phaedrus*, the minds of the gods are nourished (τρεφομένη, 247d1) with insight and knowledge, especially into the forms of the virtues, and this contact with what is true (τἀληθῆ, d4) and what really is (τὸ ὄν, d3, τὰ ὄντα, e3) is what nourishes the soul's wings, whose nature it is to lift the soul up (248c1–2)—the wings which we earlier identified with the soul's condition of true virtue. If, by contrast, the soul does not receive this proper nourishment, it is forced to resort to nourishment by *doxa* (τροφὴ δοξαστή, 248b5) and vice (κακία, 248c7).

doxa, but it will still be an 'image' because it is not based on understanding in its possessor.[349]

The true virtue attained at the end of the ascent is our specifically human virtue since it realizes our human nature as good. The connection with human nature becomes particularly clear in three expressions: the culmination of the ascent is the proper state for human beings to be in, in which alone 'life is worth living *for a human being*' (211d1–2). It belongs to the person who has completed the ascent, 'if to any human being, to be immortal' (212a6–7). In helping to bring this state about, there is 'no better coworker (*sunergos*) *to human nature* than *erōs*' (212b3–4). All of these point to the fact that what is being most fully realized and perfected here is not any particular trait, but our shared human nature, in reference to which the notion of *aretē* must necessarily be read.[350]

Erōs, the coworker of human nature, enables us to achieve true virtue and realize our nature. While the idea that virtue properly belongs to us is in the *Symposium* not explicitly framed in terms of the notion of the *oikeion*, I have shown earlier that Plato uses the concept elsewhere to express just this point. In the *Gorgias*, *aretē* is characterized as an *oikeios kosmos* (506e1–4), the state of order proper to a being *qua* member of its kind. The idea seems to be that there is a condition in which an entity's nature is most fully manifested—in which it becomes what it truly is—, and which for this reason is that entity's normative standard—what it is supposed to be by nature.[351] Although the *Phaedo*'s discussion of virtue as the soul's proper state of order does not literally feature the this term, it talks about vice as an *allotrios kosmos* and virtue as 'the soul's own kosmos', *hautēs kosmos* (114d8–115a3).[352] We found the clearest evidence for the idea

[349] Cf. chapter 3, subsection 2.1.

[350] Cf. Sier 1997 *ad* 205d10–206a2. For an argument in recent scholarship that *erōs* works (has its *ergon*) through realizing our nature in the sense of actualizing natural inborn potentialies, cf. Sheffield 2006, 83–110, and *passim*.

[351] Cf. Sier 1997, 217.

[352] Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.b.

that an entity's *aretē* is *oikeia* to it in *Republic* I's function argument (352d2–354a11). The disposition by which an entity fulfils its function well is its proper virtue (*oikeia aretē*, 353c1 *et passim*). *Aretē* is the state that is supremely *oikeia* to an entity, insofar as in it, that entity is fully itself, capable of and engaging in the activity that expresses what it is to be an entity of its kind.[353]

Relying on the fact that Diotima herself considers limbs a prime example of something that is 'proper' (*oikeion*) to us, we may moreover point to the fact that in two places, despite Diotima's diseased-limb objection, Plato uses precisely the simile of a mutilated physical organism for the soul's state of lack with respect to its state of virtue. In the *Phaedrus*, the soul has lost the wings that have originally allowed it to travel with the gods and participate in their procession to the super-heavenly place. In *Republic* X, the soul is likened to the fisherman Glaucus, who has been drifting in the sea for too long, mutilating his original limbs. Like Glaucus, the soul is currently mutilated by the absence of parts that originally belonged to it (611d1–6). The *Phaedo*, which lacks a physical simile to describe the soul's condition with respect to virtue, describes recollection, the process by which we restore ourselves in our state of *phronēsis*, as a process of 'rediscovering of what belonged to us before' (76e1–2).[354]

Although Diotima does not mention the *oikeion* explicitly after our passage, our findings from the ensuing discussion of the *ergon* of *erōs* (206b1–212a7), together with our findings from the other middle dialogues and the *Gorgias*, bode well for the revision reading. The state of *phronēsis* and true virtue achieved at the culmination of the ascent

[353] Cf. Kosman 2014a, 39: '[V]irtue is, as we know, ontologically like goodness and beauty; it is the mode of an entity's *being itself well*. So cosmically love is that principle that draws the world toward itself, not just, as Erixymachus claimed, toward something else, but toward its own good and beautiful being.'

Cf. further Krämer 1959, 51: 'Arete ist nicht weniger als *Seiendheit* einer jeden Sache. … *Im Grunde ist es nur die einfache Besinnung auf den Arete-Begriff, das angespannte Erdenken dessen, was Arete eigentlich ist, welches auch diese besondere Arete als ein unveräußerliches* οἰκεῖον *erweist*.'

[354] ὑπάρχουσαν πρότερον ἀνευρίσκοντες ἡμετέραν οὖσαν.

represents our state of self-realization and therefore most properly belongs (is *oikeion*) to us. Referring to virtue in this way makes perfect Platonic sense if we consider the explicit evidence of the *Gorgias* and the function argument, as well as his illustration of the state of full virtue with the use of intact physical organisms.

3 Self-Perfection without *Archaia Phusis*?

One curious fact remains to be discussed at the end of this thesis on the *archaia phusis* in Plato's middle dialogues. If I am right that the *Symposium*'s Aristophanes story for the first time introduces the idea of explaining *erōs* with reference to an *archaia phusis*, a temporally prior normative standard which is currently lost and which we desire, or should desire, to restore in the future; and if indeed we find, in the *other* middle dialogues *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, ideas about an *archaia phusis* of the soul that are remarkably consistent and display fairly stable terminology and conceptual patterns: suggesting that the soul's *archaia phusis* is its state of *phronēsis* and true virtue, a state which can only be fully attained in the soul's disembodied and fully purified state, in which the soul would be engaged in full and unimpeded contemplative activity, thus realizing its characteristic function of life—the exercise of its self-active or self-moving essence—to the highest degree and attaining true happiness and godlikeness; if all of this is the case, what do we make of the fact that Diotima later on in the *Symposium* refrains from explicitly or implicitly utilizing the concept of an *archaia phusis* of the soul in her account?

What makes this situation even more perplexing is the fact that in other respects, the *Symposium* fits in neatly with the fairly consistent picture presented by its fellow middle dialogues. It shares their conception of a state of perfection which is characterized by the achievement of *phronēsis* and true virtue of character, and of a type of virtue which lacks *phronēsis* and is for this reason a mere semblance of true virtue. It shares their view that *phronēsis* is central to this condition, as it is that which brings about true virtue in the soul, and that it is the proper virtue by which we can engage in the activity in which 'life is worth living' (211d1–2), suggesting that here the soul's function of living is maximally realized. From the earlier discussion about *eudaimonia* as the end-point of *erōs* (204e5–

205a4), it is also clear that this state is bound up with the highest level of happiness a human being may hope to achieve. By reaching this state of *phronēsis* and true virtue, we attain the good, by realizing ourselves as good. What the *Symposium* lacks is the concept of a disembodied pre- or postexistence of the soul. In the light of our previous discussion of the Hippocratic concept of the *archaia phusis*,[355] we might say that the *Symposium*'s account of human perfection only has one aspect of the *archaia phusis*, that of being a desirable normative standard, while lacking the other, that of being temporally prior. Given that the role of temporal priority in Plato's 'story of the soul' was explaining our capacity for restoration, which it did *via* the theory of recollection, it is no wonder that Diotima's account presents precisely another account for this purpose, the theory of psychic pregnancy. Psychic pregnancy is nothing other than an account of potential knowledge that does not make reference to actual prior possession, instead starting out with embryonic knowledge that waits to be actualized.

No proof can be given that the soul's immortality and its prior possession of a fully developed state of intellect and character in an *archaia phusis* is 'present' in the background of Diotima's teachings. But neither, I submit, is Diotima's account necessarily inconsistent with the existence of an *archaia phusis* before this life. Firstly, the remark that it 'belongs' to the philosopher at the height of the ascent, 'if to any human being, to be immortal' (212a6–7) need not imply that the soul is not immortal in a more *Phaedonic* sense of actually pre- and postexisting.[356] Thus we may take the 'human being' in this statement and the claim that it is 'here, … if anywhere, that life is worth living for a human being' (211d1–2) to refer only to our embodied existence, leaving it open that after its existence as a human being the immortal soul continues to exist.[357] In

[355] Cf. especially chapter 1, subsection 1.2.

[356] As, for instance, Rowe 1998 *ad loc.* seems to imply.

[357] For such a use of ἄνθρωπος, cf. for instance the following sentence out of Cebes's challenge in the *Phaedo*: 'the matter of the soul causes people to have strong doubts and to worry that once separated from the body it no longer exists anywhere, but is destroyed and perishes on the day when the human being

light of the first part of the *Phaedo*'s kinship argument (78b4–80c1),[358] the *Republic*'s Glaucus simile (611b1–612a7),[359] and three creatures image (588b1–592b5),[360] we might thus interpret the 'immortality' in question here as identification with that part of us which is in fact divine and immortal, which never loses its *dunamis* (518d9–519a1) and is for this reason indestructible.[361] We approximate an 'immortal' way of being in the world most when we approximate as far as possible that part's excellence of *phronēsis* and true virtue, which is the soul's way of becoming as form-like—divine, unchanging, and immortal (*Phaedo* 80b1–3)[362]—as possible.[363] Qualifying the 'life' and the immortality achievable by souls in their embodied state would render these two claims compatible with a higher, more pure existence of the soul in which it 'lives' even more fully and immortalizes itself to an even greater degree.

Secondly, Diotima's account of psychic pregnancy is not incompatible with recollection. It is true that the *Symposium* presents us with an account of potentiality that does not make *reference* to prior possession and recollection, but rather describes certain innate dispositions that enable it to develop into a state of self-perfection if realized.[364] However, as long as we do not have an *explanation* for the existence of the soul's potential for *phronēsis* and the rest of virtue, this theory is not really an alternative to recollection, but rather a less complete theory that requires a further theory such as recollection to account for the existence of the potential. While it is theoretically possible that Plato when

(ὁ ἄνθρωπος) dies' (70a1–4). Overall, it there is a certain ambiguity in Plato's use of ἄνθρωπος, which may denote the compound of body and soul, the entire soul, or the 'inner human being' (589a7–b1) of the rational part.

[358] Cf. chapter 2, 2.3.a.

[359] Cf. chapter 4.

[360] Cf. chapter 3, subsection 3.1.

[361] Cf. chapter 3, subsection 3.2.

[362] Cf. chapter 4, subsection 2.3.

[363] I do not think that the philosopher's immortality should in any way be identified with the virtue instilled in others or with the memory by future generations. This kind of vicarious immortality, which contingently depends on external factors, seems to me utterly out of keeping with the divine character of the philosopher's eudaimonia.

[364] Cf. Sheffield 2001, drawing on *Leibniz: New Essays*, 52 and its memorable description of dispositional innatism.

writing the *Symposium* considered alternative possible explanations for this potential, the question remains whether we should read his silence on this point as evidence that he did not endorse pre-existence and recollection in the *Symposium*. This touches upon a more general point in the interpretation of Plato: when Plato in a given text does not mention or utilize a given doctrine, should we take it as evidence that he does not hold it in the text, or that he for some reason or other merely refrains from using or mentioning it?

Even from our considerations of the middle dialogues in this thesis, we have seen that Plato has his speaker Socrates employ a variety of registers and levels of argument—shorter-route argumentation without references to forms and immortality in the main argument of the *Republic*, middle-route argumentation that contains reference to the forms and immortality in *Republic* V–VII and X as well as in the *Phaedo*, philosophically informed rhetoric that mixes and matches insights from various levels of argument and even confesses to deceive on certain points in the *Phaedrus*, *etc.* With the different communicative situations, the philosophical capabilities of the interlocutors, and the envisioned purpose of the philosophical exposition come different levels of exactness and completeness, depending on what account is deemed sufficient or satisfactory for present purposes (*Republic* 435c4–d7, 504a4–b8).

Given that psychic pregnancy is compatible with temporally prior possession and recollection, and that the two theories represent two levels of completeness of explanation rather than two alternative theories properly speaking, I am inclined to conclude that we should not read the *Symposium* as denying, or exploring an alternative to, an *archaia phusis* of the soul at a prior point in time. While the *Symposium* self-consciously limits itself to *erōs*'s power of leading to immanent self-perfection, this does not exclude that after disembodiment, it will lead us all the way to our restored *archaia phusis.*

3.1 Sungeneia *and* Homoiōsis Theōi *in the* Symposium

Given the *Symposium*'s self-conscious limitation to our embodied human existence and its bracketing out of the question of our true provenance and *archaia phusis*, it is no wonder that the concept of *sungeneia* does not play an explicit explanatory role in Diotima's speech. Nevertheless, the kinship between the soul, and in particular the intellect, and the forms is implicitly at play. Once again, we find the notion that something in us (our intellect) is naturally fitted to cognize the forms: the expression that we grasp the form with that 'with which we should' (ᾧ δεῖ, 212a1) parallels similar remarks in the *Phaedrus* (247c7–8) and the *Republic* (490b4). At the same time, it is in the presence of the forms alone that the soul realizes its true nature by giving birth to its true condition of excellence (212a2–5). This once again characterizes the forms as the soul's proper objects of cognition in whose presence alone it can flourish.

The idea of assimilation to the divine (in its aspect of immortality) already appears at 207d1 when Diotima explains that mortal nature seeks to become immortal 'insofar as this is possible' (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) by procreation. However, as I discussed in this chapter, her closing remark that it belongs to the philosopher, 'if to any human being, to become immortal' (εἴπέρ τῳ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἀθανάτῳ [γενέσθαι] καὶ ἐκείνῳ, 212a5–7) may point to a different way of becoming immortal: if Plato has not temporarily abandoned the belief in the disembodied pre- and postexistence of the soul and in the possibility of a return to its *archaia phusis* in the *Symposium*, then Diotima's closing remark may in fact be consistent with the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* in advocating *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton* as the closest possible approximation to a restored *archaia phusis* we can hope to achieve in this life. As I shall show in my concluding outlook on the *Timaeus*, we

there find an interesting way of relating the immanent ideal of *homoiōsis theōi* to the transcendent ideal of full restoration of the *archaia phusis.*[365]

Conclusion

In this final chapter of the thesis, I have argued that the speech delivered by the character Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* is not a mere negative contribution and a 'target for Diotima's fire.'[366] Diotima criticizes his underlying *oikeion* theory of *erōs* as mistaken and greatly inferior to her own *agathon* theory of *erōs*. Nevertheless, she does not dismiss his focus on what 'belongs' (the *oikeion*) wholesale. Rather, she acknowledges his contribution and proposes a revised conception of the *oikeion* in the light of her *agathon* theory. While Diotima does not explicitly employ the concept of the *oikeion* in the remainder of her speech, her account betrays a conception of *phronēsis* and true virtue, the good attained at the height of the ascent, as *oikeion* to us. This is the state in which we fully realize our nature and become what we truly are. Granted, Diotima does not make use of an *archaia phusis* of the soul to explain our capacity for self-perfection through the acquisition of *phronēsis* and true virtue. Nevertheless, we need not interpret this self-conscious limitation to immanent self-perfection as denying the middle dialogues' theory of an *archaia phusis* of the soul.

[365] See the conclusion below.
[366] Dover 1966, 50.

Conclusion and Outlook at the *Timaeus*

I have already given a fairly comprehensive summary of chapters 1–5 at the beginning of chapter 6,[367] and am not going to repeat it here. Instead, I wish to conclude my investigation with a look back to where we started, and with another look ahead, beyond the scope of this thesis. Turning our attention once more to Aristophanes and his fantastical 'story of the body', it is striking to observe just how similar it is in many respects to Plato's middle-dialogue accounts of the soul's journey from an original state of integrity, through a current condition of deficiency, and hopefully back to restored integrity in the future. Beside the narrative parallels, we have observed verbal recurrences. In *Republic* X's Glaucus simile, the *archaia phusis* plays a role that is quite similar to that of the complete proto-humans in Aristophanes's account. For the *oikeion*, we can discern a potentially even greater significance in Plato's reflections about the relationship between an entity and its fully realized state of goodness. This we saw exemplified in the function argument's notion of a proper virtue, an *oikeia aretē.*

At the same time, Aristophanes does not quite seem to have found the right way of connecting the various elements in his account. He gets across the *pathos* of loss and restoration with skill that is only parallelled in Socrates's palinode in the *Phaedrus*—but he lacks the right *logos* of how it all can be connected into an account that explains why we should desire the *archaia phusis* or our *oikeion*, how we can hope to achieve restoration, and why the resulting condition would be our state of *eudaimonia*. In figuring out where Aristophanes goes wrong, we started to understand Plato's own way of linking up the various elements at play, in his theory of an *archaia phusis* of the soul.

[367] Chapter 6, *The Story So Far…*

I hope to have shown in this thesis that, by focusing our attention on the middle dialogues as a group of texts that look towards and illuminate each other in remarkable ways, we can distinguish coherent reflections on the soul's *archaia phusis* which make sense in their own right. However, the systematic coherence of the concepts and issues explored in this thesis is not limited to the middle dialogues. In particular, the *Timaeus* describes the aim of the ethical life as restoring the divine rational part, which alone is immortal, in accordance with its *archaia phusis* (90d5), something that is achieved when it is furbished with its proper nourishment and movement (*oikeia trophē kai kinēsis*, 90c7). Although a full investigation of how the *Timaeus* develops these issues is beyond the scope of this thesis, I would like to end with some thoughts on how future study of the *Timaeus* would develop these themes and could in fact be used to corroborate my overall interpretation.

To start with, the *Timaeus* corroborates the impression we get from the middle dialogues that the soul's *archaia phusis* consists in the perfected rational part alone. This part alone is immortal and divine, made by the demiurge from the same materials (although less pure) as the world soul (41d4–42b2). The lower two parts, fashioned by the lower gods, are by contrast mortal (69c3–d6). In an echo of Empedocles, our divine true self is said to have been gifted to each of us by god as our *daimōn*,[368] and true happiness (*eudaimonia*) consists in the tending this part and keeping it well-ordered (90b1–c6). Thus even if the *Phaedrus*, contrary to what I have argued in chapter 5, is seriously suggesting that the soul in its *archaia phusis* is tripartite, then the evidence of the *Timaeus* at least reveals this to be a mere temporal deviation rather than a genuine development of Plato's position.

[368] See my remarks in chapter 1, subsection 2.4 above.

A full investigation into the concept of the soul's *archaia phusis* in the *Timaeus* would have to addres the intricate questions of whether the soul in the *Timaeus* can ever escape the cycle of rebirth, whether after its return to its native star it is there embodied or not, and how radical a break with the middle dialogues the *Timaeus* therefore represents.[369] However, what I would like to concentrate on here is a more straightforward and yet fascinating point that sets the *Timaeus*'s discussion of the *archaia phusis* apart. By contrast to *Republic* X, the *Timaeus* does not talk about the rational soul's disembodied and complete restoration *to* its *archaia phusis*, but rather its restoration *within this life* to a state that is *in accordance with* its *archaia phusis* (κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν, 90d5). In this way, the *archaia phusis* is invoked in a discussion of the *immanent* goal of *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton*,[370] but not as a state that is achievable in this life, but as the normative standard in accordance with which embodied self-perfection is to be pursued.

These considerations could moreover corroborate the interpretation of the *Symposium* offered in the last chapter, and illuminate how precisely Diotima's account may be said to harmonize with a correctly conceived version of Aristophanes's concept of the *archaia phusis*. If we allow the *Timaeus* to inform our reading of the ascent passage, then the description of the philosopher at the height of the ascent, whose wording is curiously similar to the *Timaeus*,[371] could be fruitfully interpreted in a similar way to the culmination of the *Timaeus*: as a restoration of the (rational) soul κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν (90d5). The soul's original nature and its disembodied fate are on this reading not merely compatible with the ascent: as the soul's normative standard that is not fully attainable in

[369] On this question, see Ostenfeld 1982, 253–8, Robinson 1990, Mason 1994, and Campbell 2022, 659–65.

[370] The philosopher can in no way fail to partake of immortality 'to the extent that human nature can': καθ' ὅσον … μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, 90c2–3; he does so in a process of *homoiōsis* to the divine world soul: d4–5, see below.

[371] It belongs to him, 'if to any human being, to become immortal': εἴπερ τῳ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ [ὑπάρχει γενέσθαι], 212a6–7.

this life, they alone truly *explain* why the soul's aspiration to a life in the presence of the forms and in community with the gods does not constitute a transgression of its proper place, but is rather the only suitable goal given its own divine and rational origin.

Besides providing a useful way of relating the ethical ideal of *homoiōsis theōi* and the concept of the *archaia phusis* which would profit from further research, the ethical culmination of the *Timaeus* and the dialogue as a whole give us further insight into the nature of *sungeneia* and its role in the restoration of the *archaia phusis*. As has been remarked in the secondary literature, the *Timaeus* for the first time properly clarifies the metaphysical status of the soul: it is a mixture of the *Phaedo*'s and *Republic*'s two fundamental classes of being (35a1–b3), and does therefore not constitute a third, *sui generis* class. Because of its mixed nature, it can interact with and take on characteristics of members of either of the two classes.[372] Even more than the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus* makes it clear that the soul's principal kinship is not with the forms, but with the divine paradigm of a perfect soul.[373] The difference is of course that this paradigm is identified not with the Olympian gods but with the world soul. The now clarified intermediate status of the soul means, just as before in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, that the soul can increasingly become like the mortal or the divine, depending on where it turns its attention.[374] Because of its clearer conception of *sungeneia*, there are two ways in which the *Timaeus* can give a better account of the process of *homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton*, which is here identified as restoration of the soul in accordance with its *archaia phusis*. The first concerns our *capacity* for restoration. by making it clear in what way we are *sungeneis* to the divine paradigm, the *Timaeus* can give an account in what respect we can hope to emulate it: by

[372] See for instance Betegh 2018, 126. For contrary positions, see Carone 2005, who maintains that the *Timaeus* makes the soul a body, and Fronterotta 2007, for whom the soul is a third, independent *genus*.

[373] The soul has an ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένεια, 90a5, in the world soul; in particular, there is a kinship between the motions in our divine rational part and those of the world soul: τῷ δ' ἐν ἡμῖν θείῳ συγγενεῖς εἰσιν κινήσεις αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφορα, c7–d1. See Bordt 2017, 259.

[374] See Sedley 1997, 331–2.

orienting itself on the visible revolutions of the world soul, we can restore the order of the revolutions within our rational part, which have been thrown into disarray at birth, and come to think the world soul's divine thoughts (90d1–5).[375] The second way in which the *Timaeus* offers a clearer account concerns the dynamics of movement towards restoration of the *archaia phusis* or away from it: the aforementioned independent motivating force of *sungeneia*[376] is in the *Timaeus* made explicit and explained by a universal cosmic principle. *Sungeneia* is in the *Timaeus* an omnipresent explanatory principle for the movement of bodies. At one point, Timaeus explains the movement of blood through the veins by appeal to the universal principle 'that every kindred substance moves towards its kind' (ἢν τὸ συγγενὲς πᾶν φέρεται πρὸς ἑαυτό, 81a4). Similarly, heat, 'by Nature's law, goes out into its own region to its kindred substance' (τὸ θερμὸν δὴ κατὰ φύσιν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ χώραν ἔξω πρὸς τὸ συγγενὲς ὁμολογητέον ἰέναι, 79d6). The very explanation of 'heaviness', which in *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* was made responsible for dragging the soul down to the visible realm and preventing it from rising to the forms, is identified in such movement to the *sungenes*: 'it is the passage of each kind to its kindred mass which makes the moving body heavy' (ἡ μὲν πρὸς τὸ συγγενὲς ὁδὸς ἑκάστοις οὖσα βαρὺ μὲν τὸ φερόμενον ποιεῖ, 63e5).

As should be clear from these initial thoughts on the *Timaeus*, further research on how the soul's *archaia phusis* and its restoration are conceptualized in this later dialogue can corroborate and clarify what we have found in the middle dialogues in the course of this thesis. I hope to have demonstrated even in this short outlook is that a unitary conception of the *archaia phusis* promises to receive strong confirming evidence from the later *Timaeus*, even though there are clear developments regarding such questions as

[375] In this way, 'the cosmic soul is a much better role model for the individual soul than the Forms' (Betegh 2018, 128).

[376] See my discussion above at chapter 2, subsection 2.4.

the soul's true kinship. What remains to be seen is in how far the *Timaeus* is correctly interpreted as Plato's clearest expression of a 'complete philosophical system'[377] that clarifies and resolves the issues raised in the middle dialogues, or in how far it is rather a development of their reflections with a distinct physicalist and cosmological spin. At least Timaeus's characterization of his account as a 'likely story' (*eikos muthos*)[378] should serve as a reminder that this dialogue, too, shares some of the middle-period dialogues' reservations about presenting ultimate dialectical knowledge of its subject matter.

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[377] Sedley 2017, 95, see the introduction to this thesis.
[378] Εικός μῦθος (29d2; 68d2).

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