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Daniel Mailick

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The Psychology of Plato's *Republic*: Taking Book 10 into Account

Dan Mailick

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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by

Dan Mailick

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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Three puzzles motivate this dissertation. First, how much does *Republic* Book 10 contribute to the dialogue's main argument? For centuries, commentators have found Book 10 to be a puzzling and disappointing conclusion to the dialogue. The second puzzle is the important and still much debated question of whether Plato considered the parts of the soul to be independent and agent-like (as 'realists' interpret the dialogue) or not (as 'deflationists' argue). The third puzzle regards an issue that is much less discussed in the literature, namely the *Republic's* notion of character. On the one hand, Socrates never launches an explicit inquiry into this subject, and on the other hand, the character types displayed in Books 4, 8, and 9 seem idiosyncratic caricatures—most people seem not to fit into any of them. In considering character, a fourth puzzle arises. Through the end of Book 9, Socrates has focused on perfect virtue and various forms of vice. What has been left open, though, is the question of the moral status of those people who are decent, but are not people of perfect virtue. People such as this are left undiscussed in Books 1-9. At the end of Book 9, on my view, Glaucon and Adeimantus (as well as many readers) should be left wondering about their own relation to justice and their own moral status.

I begin with the second puzzle, namely the nature of soul-parts. It is important to note that a review of the secondary literature reveals that although the debate continues to be active, many of the key commentators completely ignore Book 10 in their accounts. I argue, in Chapter 1, that by the end of Book 9 there is good evidence to settle on a deflationist reading, but the matter is still open and realists have good arguments for their point of view. I claim, though, that when Book 10 is taken into account (as it mostly is not) fresh evidence comes to light to support the deflationist position. Socrates uses tripartition and agent-like parts as a ladder to help the reader take a first look into the inside of the soul, but in the end, I argue that he leaves the explicitly imprecise account of agent-like soul-parts behind. The person, not her parts, emerges as the only agent of action.

If this is the case, though, and we are right to take a deflationist view of soul-parts, then the reader is faced with the third puzzle. How one should refer to the soul as a whole, the true moral agent, in its moral status? The answer, I will propose, is Socrates' notion of 'character'; a matter that is much less discussed in the literature. Book 4 introduces the perfectly just character type, which is refined in books 6-7 in the figure of the Philosopher-King. Books 8-9 introduce the four character types that Socrates says are worth discussing, out of the countless forms of vice. The resulting picture of the nature of character types (e.g. the oligarch, whose soul is dominated by an agent-like money loving part) appears unrealistic and unconvincing. Indeed, this picture is even more unconvincing if we leave behind the notions of tripartition and agent-like soul parts. I thus begin, in Chapter 2, to mine the text of the dialogue for a more plausible reading of Plato's view of character. On my account, by the end of Book

9 we have a good notion of character as something that can be described in terms of character traits and also in terms of its overall degree of virtue. Character traits emerge as dispositions to act in a particular manner, although we may not act according to our dispositions all of the time.

But here the reader is faced with a fourth puzzle. By the end of Book 9 all of the discussion of virtuous character has been about perfect virtue, which seems to be beyond the reach of most of us. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I examine Book 10 in regard to character, arguing that Socrates has quietly lowered the bar for virtue. By the end of Book 10, I claim, Socrates has made clear that a decent life that will be judged as reasonably virtuous is a live possibility for many of us.

Working on the second, third, and fourth puzzles has provided an answer to the first puzzle as well. Although Book 10 both revisits the question of poetry and also opens the question of the nature of the immortal soul, it also provides a critical contribution to the main argument of the *Republic*, namely whether the just or unjust life is superior.

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Introduction

1.0 Problem

Three puzzles motivate this dissertation. First, how much does *Republic* Book 10 contribute to the dialogue's main argument? For centuries, commentators have found Book 10 to be a puzzling and disappointing conclusion to the dialogue.

Somewhere around 1150 C.E., Averroes concluded his commentary on the *Republic* after Book 9, saying:

This then...is the sum of the theoretical statements necessary.... What the tenth treatise comprises is not necessary for this science. For at its beginning he explains that the art of poetry has no <ultimate> purpose...This point has already been completely explained in another place...After that he also produces a rhetorical or dialectical argument in which he explains that the soul is immortal. Then after this there is a tale in which he describes the bliss and delight which the happy, just souls attain and also what the tormented souls attain...But we have made known more than once that these tales are of no consequence.¹

Now Averroes' first claim as to why it is unnecessary to discuss Book 10 (namely, that the subject of poetry has already been completely covered) has not stood the test of time. Many commentators have analyzed Book 10 in order to fill out an account of Platonic aesthetics in the *Republic*. And the last claim as to why Book 10 is unnecessary (that Platonic myths are of no consequence) has also not stood the test of time. Commentators differ widely on how to interpret Platonic myths, but ignoring them is not a typical approach.

¹ Averroes (1966, 250).

But his overall claim, namely, that the dialogue is essentially complete after Book 9, has been echoed by commentators frequently, at least up through the end of the 20th century. One hundred years ago, Shorey held the same opinion, saying that Book 10 was "technically an appendix".² Many of the best-known 20th century commentators feel much the same way. Reeve begins his chapter preface to Book 10 by saying "The main argument of the *Republic* is now complete".³ Annas speaks for many when she says: "Book 9 ends the main argument of the *Republic*, and ends it on a rhetorical and apparently decisive note. We are surprised to find another book added on".⁴ She goes on to characterize Book 10 as "an excrescence", "gratuitous", "clumsy", "full of oddities", and overall, as a "coda" or "appendix...added to a work essentially complete already".⁵

On the other hand, many commentators of note have argued that the *Republic*, like many texts, was composed as a ring composition.⁶ Barney names the inner and outer rings A and A', B and B', etc. She goes on to make the critical point that:

It should be obvious that the recapitulation steps here ((A)–(A')), presented in more or less mirror order, *are a matter of "resolution" rather than mere repetition*. In the case of (B') and (C'), we might say that the relation of exposition to resolution is one of question and answer: How should we face death? Is it advantageous to us to be just or not? And, to state the crashingly obvious, the answers given in (B') and (C') are *informed by the intervening core of the work*. (italics mine)⁷

² Shorey (1933, 248).

³ Grube/Reeve (1992, 264).

⁴ Annas (1981, 335).

⁵ *ibid.* White (1979, 246) similarly calls Book 10 "an appendix...and not a fully cohesive one". Other examples could be cited.

⁶ See, for example, Brann (2004) and Barney (2010), who argue that the *Republic* was composed as a ring composition. Barney (2010, 38) cites many other commentators who have held the same view.

⁷ Barney (2010, 40).

If Barney's reading is accepted, and key topics such as these are resurfaced, refined, and 'resolved' in Book 10 ('informed by the intervening core of the work'), then it seems clear that Book 10 is more than just an appendix.

In addition to the matter of an overall design as a ring composition, Book 10 makes important backward references to Books 2-4 (e.g. 10.603b referring back to 4.436bff, 10.603d-e referring back to 3.387d, 10.612b referring back to 2.359c-360d, and 10.612c referring back to 2.367a-e). These moments in Books 2-4 are certainly central moments in the *Republic*, especially with respect to the superiority of the just life; and the Book 10 references back to them, I will argue in line with Barney's claim, are not simple repetitions of what was previously said. Perhaps, then, Book 10 does indeed have something to add to 'the main argument of the *Republic*' (pace Reeve, et. al.).

The second puzzle that motivates this dissertation is the important question of just how independent and agent-like Plato considered the parts of the soul to be. This issue recently has been perhaps debated more than ever. Some commentators (often called 'realists') argue that Plato considered the parts to be like homunculi, each possessing not only desires, but beliefs and goals as well. Further, on the realist account, the parts possess some measure of capacity to reason about how to achieve their goals, and to act as an agent in pursuit of them. Other commentators (sometimes called 'deflationists') agree that Plato describes internal conflict between different motivations and locates them in different 'parts' of our psyche.⁸ Unlike the realists,

⁸ Just what it means to be a part is discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.1. As will become clear, when I use the term 'part' (with quotes) I'm casting doubt as to whether the 'part' in question is (to Shields' terminology) a compositional part (like each bean in my hill of beans) or rather a conceptual part (like Book 4 which is 'part' of the *Republic*.)

though, on the deflationist account, those parts do not reason, choose, or act—rather the person is the only agent. In line with the previous puzzle, though, Book 10 has mostly been ignored by both deflationists and realists. Thus, a second question motivating this dissertation is whether taking Book 10 into account, instead of ignoring it, will further the discussion. As will become clear, on my view, by the time we get to the end of Book 10 there is good support for the deflationist position.

If this is the case, though, and we are right to take a deflationist view of soul-parts, then a third puzzle arises. How one should refer to the soul as a whole, the true moral agent, in its moral status? The answer, I will propose, is Socrates' notion of 'character'; a matter that is much less discussed in the literature. At many points in the *Republic* Socrates launches into an explicit inquiry into some specific topic. Taking the subject matter of the above paragraph as an example, in Book 4 Socrates launches into an inquiry into the nature of soul parts, saying,

But this now is hard. Do we act in each of these ways as a result of the same part of ourselves, or are there three parts and with a different one we act in each of the different ways? (4.436a B).

By contrast with this and other explicit inquiries, although character is discussed pervasively throughout the *Republic*, Socrates does not go after a definition of character, nor does he launch a localized inquiry into exactly what sort of thing it is. Perhaps this is why there is very little secondary literature on the *Republic's* view of character. Nevertheless, three times Socrates says or agrees to the statement that 'there is one form of virtue and a countless number of forms of vice, four of which are worth discussing'. Those four turn out to be the character types that resemble the timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical polities.

On the surface it may seem that Plato thinks that, as Gerson puts it, “At maturity, whenever this occurs, the person becomes sufficiently like one of the types of soul described by Plato in order to be characterized as such”.⁹ But the perfectly just character type (described in Book 4 and refined in Books 5-7), as well as the four character types depicted in Books 8 and 9 seem to be very different from the characters of a) the people that we see around us, b) the characters (e.g. Thrasymachus, Leontius) within Books 1-7, as well as c) the characters depicted in Book 10 (both those in the first half of Book 10 and those in the Myth of Er).

If the five character types noted above are indeed not the *Republic’s* notion of character, then what is? The deflationist reading of soul-parts that I will argue for (which locates location agency in the soul as a whole and not its parts) along with the textual fact that Plato has Socrates assign “character” to the soul as a whole, motivates me to look back at the entire dialogue from the perspective of what is said about character and character types. Thus, in addition to the puzzle of whether Book 10 is indeed an excrescence, we have puzzles regarding soul-parts and character types.

But one new puzzle arises from the consideration of character and character types. By the end of Book 9, as noted above, Socrates has introduced us to the perfectly just character type and countless forms of vice, four of which are “worth mentioning”. But Socrates’ characterization of the character of the perfectly just man (and, later, of his introduction of the philosopher-king as the paradigm of the perfectly just man) leaves open the question of the moral status of those people who are decent,

⁹ Gerson (2003, 117).

but are not people of perfect virtue. People such as this are left undiscussed in Books 1-9. At the end of Book 9, on my view, Glaucon and Adeimantus should be left wondering about their own relation to justice and their own moral status.

In approaching these problems, I will resist the temptation to attack the first puzzle (regarding the status of Book 10) directly. Rather I think that by attempting to make sense of the other puzzles, we can not only refine our understanding of the *Republic's* view of soul-parts and character, but also develop an overall view of whether Book 10 is a critical part of the overall dialogue, or, rather, an 'appendix', 'excrement', etc.

2.0 Scope

I propose to limit my scope entirely to the text of *Republic* and secondary sources that comment on the *Republic*. Without entering into the so-called unitarian / developmentalist debate, I am content to accept the notion that Plato might well have articulated one view of the soul and its psychology in, say, the *Phaedo* and a very different view in the *Republic*. I will therefore not feel obligated to respond to concerns that some reading of mine is inconsistent with the account of another of Plato's dialogues. I will neither labor to demonstrate consistency with *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Laws*, etc., nor will I appeal to those dialogues to evidence my claims. Rather my approach will be exegetical in nature. My goal is to interrogate the text in order to arrive at a new understanding of the *Republic's* account of psychology. By taking Book 10 into account, I hope to surface additional evidence that will help unravel the puzzles set out in the previous section.

3.0 Thesis

Overall, I argue for four theses. First, in Chapter 1, I claim that a sometimes-overlooked crucial break in Book 4, coupled with an appreciation of the role of Book 10, point to new evidence in support of the deflationist position. I claim that the person, not her soul-parts emerges as the only agent. I argue that Plato divides the soul into ‘parts’ differently at different points in the dialogue, in response to which division best supports the argument at any particular moment. The initial view of soul-parts (explicitly introduced by Socrates as imprecise at 4.345b) is overturned, causing us to look anew at the dialogue for a non-partite explanation of why a person is the way she is and acts as she does.

Second, I argue, in Chapter 2, that Books 1-9, despite the lack of localized inquiry into character, if examined closely give us a good view of the *Republic’s* view of character and character development. Given the view of the soul as the only agent, the notion of character offers an alternative and more realistic explanation than soul parts for why people are the way they are and act as they do. But Books 1-9, I claim, focus almost exclusively on perfect virtue, leaving in question the moral status associated with the life of the many decent people who do not have that perfect virtue of character.

Thus, my third claim (argued in Chapter 3) is that in Book 10 Socrates quietly sets a lower bar for virtue. The decent person (often referred to as the ἐπιεικῆς) is depicted in Book 10 as having a character that is sufficient for living a flourishing life and for being judged favorably by peers and by the gods.

Finally, I claim that at least a significant part of the solution to the first “puzzle” (that of the status and function of Book 10) lies in the several ways in which Book 10

makes decisive contributions to the solutions of other “puzzles.” Book 10 offers decisive evidence for a deflationist reading of soul-parts, and, invoking Socrates’ use of the notion of “character” as it does this, it offers a tacit reevaluation of virtue that accommodates the non-philosopher’s less than perfect virtue, thereby avoiding undermining the decent person’s motivation to pursue virtue as such. Thus, my fourth and overall thesis is that far from being an appendix, Book 10 plays a critical role in understanding the *Republic’s* account of the psyche. In so doing, it plays a critical role in the ‘master argument’ of the *Republic*, namely the superiority of the just life.

Chapter 1: Soul-Parts in the *Republic*

Part 1: Staking out the Problem

1.0 Introduction

Plato's writings present an early and influential account of human psychology, with a special focus on the nature of psychological conflict.¹⁰ Several dialogues address the problem in depth (e.g. the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*), but the picture that emerges is complex, and appears inconsistent, at least across different dialogues. Even if we focus just on the psychology of the soul as presented in the *Republic*, we still have a complex account with discrepancies that are hard to reconcile. For example, although it is clear that Plato is discussing intra-psychic conflict and that he is locating the conflicting motivations in different parts of the psyche, the precise nature and number of those parts are not at all clear.

One important and still much debated puzzle is just how independent and agent-like Plato considered each part to be (irrespective of how many parts there are). Some commentators (now commonly called 'realists') argue that Plato considered the parts to be like homunculi, each possessing not only desires, but beliefs, and goals as well. Further, on the realist account, the parts possess some capacity both to reason about

¹⁰The influence of Platonic psychology extends even to Freud, as pointed out by Murdoch (1998, 418). "Freud's own clear announcement, made several times, of his debt to Plato...Freud also makes a tripartite division of the soul and pictures the health of the soul as a harmony of the parts".

how to achieve their goals and to act as an agent in pursuit of them. In essence, realist commentators insist that “we should not treat as merely metaphorical or read away these attributions of psychological states to parts of the soul. For better or worse, Plato’s moral psychology in the *Republic* is committed to the idea that every person is a compound of agent-like parts”.¹¹ Thus realists are committed to taking as literal the idea that parts can act as ‘external agents’, (i.e. agents of actions that manifest themselves in the world that is external to the person), and, importantly, also as ‘internal agents’ (i.e. communicating with and acting on other parts—one part sometimes ‘compelling’, ‘enslaving’, ‘obeying’, or ‘disturbing’ another part).

Other commentators, usually called ‘deflationists’, agree that Plato describes internal conflict among different motivations, locating them in different parts of our psyche. Unlike the realists, however, deflationists do not hold that those parts reason, choose, or act—rather the only agent is the person as a whole.¹² Diametrically opposed to the realist rejection of metaphor, deflationists hold that “what is as explicit and emphatic as we could wish is the use of metaphors of physical force ... to bring out Plato’s conception of parts of the soul as psychic forces that impel or inhibit action.”¹³

¹¹ Bobonich (1994, 4).

¹² When Plato opens the *Republic* by having Socrates say “I went down yesterday to the Piraeus...”, it seems that the person (Socrates) is the agent of the action. At other times it seems as if the soul is the agent of the action, for example, when Socrates says, “Will the soul ever accomplish its own work well if deprived of its own virtue, or is this impossible?” (1.353e). And at yet other times, it seems as if a part of the soul is the agent of action, such as when Socrates says, at 4.442b, “Then, wouldn’t these two parts also do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies—reason by planning, spirit by fighting, following its leader, and carrying out the leader’s decisions through its courage?”. Now this chapter will concern itself critically with whether, on Plato’s account, soul-parts are or are not agents. But I take it that Plato does not distinguish “the person gets angry” from “the soul gets angry” or from “the person gets angry with his soul”. On my view he uses these three constructions severally as stylistic concerns dictate.

¹³ Price (2009, 5).

Both the realists and the deflationists have good textual support for their positions. For example, there is a key passage in Book 4 (4.435c-441c) that I call 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts'. Although the question is by no means closed, on the whole, the description of soul-parts in this passage seems more in line with deflationist accounts. On the other hand, in another key passage (that I call 'The Inquiry into Character Types', which begins with 4.441c-445d and then, after the interlude of Books 5, 6, and 7, resumes with 8.544a-9.592b) the descriptions of the soul-parts seem more in line with realist accounts.¹⁴ Some commentators, such as Annas, are content simply to charge Plato with inconsistency.¹⁵ By contrast, most commentators try to argue that Plato's picture is consistent. The realists often apply the language and metaphors from the 'Inquiry into Character Types' to the understanding of 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts', while the deflationists do the reverse. Jennifer Whiting, on the other hand, offers a hybrid solution, which starts from the useful methodological perspective that apparent inconsistencies may result from failing to focus on the fact that different parts of the dialogue are in fact discussing different things.¹⁶ Whiting criticizes both realists and deflationists for a "homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency". This, on my view, is a key insight. She focuses closely on the different subjects under discussion at the different points where soul-parts are described. She concludes that Plato held the souls of just people to lack agent-like appetitive or spirited parts (in this

¹⁴ Note that by the above I am identifying what I take to be a crucial break in Book 4, namely 4.441c. This will be discussed in depth. Here I merely note that the division of the Republic into books, or at least the 10 books we currently have, is not thought to have been done by Plato.

¹⁵ Annas (1981, 135-136).

¹⁶ Whiting (2012).

she agrees with the deflationists), but the souls of unjust people to have agent-like appetitive and spirited parts (and in this she agrees with the realists). I argue against this conclusion, though I do follow her closely from a methodological perspective.

What I find extremely surprising, though, is that few commentators have attempted to use Book 10 to help make sense of the discrepancy. Many who write about Book 10 remark upon the fact that in this final chapter Plato introduces what seems to be an entirely new set of soul-parts. I shall argue that Book 10's new soul-parts offer a means of helping settle the question of how we should understand the nature of the soul's parts in the first nine Books. On my reading, both the first half of Book 10 and the crucial break in the argument in Book 4 point toward fresh support for the deflationist position.

Before diving into exegesis, though, some background is needed to provide a heuristic framework against which to consider the text. I will thus begin, in Part 1, by considering just what it means to be a soul-part, just what it means to be a realist about soul-parts, and just what it means to be a deflationist about soul-parts. Then, in Part 2, I will examine the relevant passages in Books 4, 8, 9, and 10, comparing the text to Part 1's framework. I will argue, in this first chapter of my dissertation, that overall the text pushes us toward a deflationist view, especially when Book 10 is not ignored. Adopting the deflationist view, though, poses a problem which needs to be addressed. On the realist view, agent-like parts provide an easy explanation for why we act as we do. When I reason that eschewing a third cup of wine is best, but I drink it anyway, realists explain this as a combat between reason and appetite, where appetite won in this case. Absent the realist notion of agent-like parts, *why* we make the choices that we make

seems under-described. Chapters 2 and 3 of the dissertation will suggest that the notion of character provides answer to this problem, while further supporting the deflationist reading. There is also the question of *why* Plato introduces both the notions of agent-like and non-agent-like parts, on the way (on my account) to the notion of character. This question will be taken up in the conclusion, when all of the pieces of the argument are in place.

1.1 What Does It Mean to Be a 'Part'?

Since Plato's account of the nature of the soul's parts is a central concern of this dissertation, some inquiry is needed into just what, essentially, it means to be a part. We will not dive too deeply into mereology, but will attempt at least to suggest some distinctions that should be kept in mind as we consider Plato's text. In addition, we will need to touch on the specific Greek words and grammatical forms that Plato uses in the *Republic* to refer to soul-parts.

Although mereological concerns have engaged philosophers at least as far back as Plato, much attention has been paid to the topic during the past 100 years.¹⁷ Winston, et. al, distinguish six types of parts, which they call components (the handle is part of the cup), members (the tree is part of the forest), portions (the slice is part of the pie), stuff (the gin is part of the martini), features (paying is part of shopping), and places (the Everglades is a part of Florida).¹⁸ Clearly different types of parts admit of

¹⁷ See, for example, Simons (2013).

¹⁸ Winston (1987, 421).

different types of attributes. Carbon is part of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in a different way than paying is part of shopping. I might go shopping for a shirt and fail to find one that suits me; and so paying would not be part of shopping on that occasion. That carbon is part of CO₂, though, is not contingent. Shields offers the distinction between ‘compositional parts’ (like the beans in a hill of beans, which “are not parasitic on the whole for their identity conditions”), and ‘aspectual parts’ (an aspectual part being essentially a “property or a feature” of the whole, such as the exterior of the Louvre). In an earlier article, instead of ‘aspectual parts’ he used the term ‘conceptual parts’.¹⁹ The contingent nature of conceptual parts is well expressed by Pirsig, who describes a motorcycle as having two parts, namely, a power assembly (which itself breaks down into several parts, one of which drives the bike forward), and a running assembly (which also has sub-parts, one of which holds the bike back). These are conceptual parts. But, as Pirsig points out, “You get the illusion that all those parts are just there and are being named as they exist. But they can be named quite differently and organized quite differently”.²⁰ Similarly, the opening word of the *Republic*, κατέβην (I went down), is part of the *Republic*, in a very strong sense of the word part. If an experienced reader began reading a copy of the *Republic* that did not begin with “I went down” (κατέβην), but rather began “Yesterday to the Piraeus” (χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ), she would say that part of the text is missing, or that the text is defective. κατέβην, though, is not only a part of the *Republic*, but is also a part of Book 1. The Books of the *Republic* are also parts of the *Republic*, but are parts in a much weaker sense. They might better be described as

¹⁹ Shields (2010, 165-166), and (2001, 147).

²⁰ Pirsig (2005, 75).

conceptual parts of the *Republic*. Thus the experienced reader knows exactly what I mean when I write the words Book 4. Waterfield, however, in his translation of the *Republic*, divides the work not into ten Books, but into fourteen chapters.²¹ The section that the experienced reader knows as Book 4 (4.419-445e) is present in his text, but starts in the middle of Chapter 5, and runs through Chapter 6.

As will be seen, realists and deflationists differ in how they interpret the nature of soul-parts in the *Republic*. Realists understand appetite and spirit as parts of the soul in a very strong sense. That these parts are agents, in harmony in just souls and in contention in other souls, is a fundamental premise of the realist position. By contrast, deflationists do not *need* to take spirit or appetite to be parts in a strong sense (though some do). For example, on the account of some quite vigorous deflationists, Socrates sometimes groups together anger, desire for victory, desire for honor, etc., and identifies the group as 'spirit'. At other places in the argument, though, these deflationists take Socrates to identify anger, desire for victory, desire for honor, etc., as 'parts' of the soul in their own right. Other deflationists (who might be called moderate deflationists), interpret Plato's soul-parts to be parts in a strong sense, just as realists do. For these deflationists, though, the parts have no agency, nor any of the other capacities ascribed by realists to soul-parts.

One way the distinction between strong and weak parts matters to the realist/deflationist debate is as follows. Some deflationists argue that a) soul-parts in a strong sense are necessary to the realist position, b) the soul-parts in the *Republic* are

²¹ Waterfield (1993).

not, in fact, parts in a strong sense, and therefore, c) the realist interpretation fails.²² I have sympathy for this line of argument, but will not be directly pursuing it in this dissertation.

More critical, on my view, is the warning inherent in Pirsig's comment. When Socrates uses the term part (or translators insert it), we tend to think of parts in a strong sense. It is important to remember that Socrates might be using the term 'part' in a strong sense, but it is just as possible that he is not. When I want to emphasize that the 'part' of the soul under discussion might be either of these, I will often do so by using quotes around the word 'part'.²³

In addition to mereological concerns, there is the matter of what Greek terms and grammatical forms Plato uses to describe the soul's 'parts'. There are several ways to express the notion of part in Attic Greek. Sometimes, for example, Socrates uses the term αὐτός ('thing') when discussing parts of the soul.²⁴ At other times he uses εἶδος ('form' or 'kind') to refer to soul-parts.²⁵ He also he uses γένος ('type', or 'kind of thing').²⁶ Indeed, Socrates often omits any word for 'part' and will use the substantive,

²² Shields (2010), for example.

²³ As Price (2009), for example, does.

²⁴ For example, Shorey (like Grube/Reeve, Bloom, and others) translates τῷ αὐτῷ, at 4.439b, as 'part': "οὐ γὰρ δὴ, φασί, τό γε αὐτὸ τῷ αὐτῷ ἑαυτοῦ περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἅμ' ἂν τάναντία πράττοι"— "For it cannot be, we say, that the same thing with the same part of itself at the same time acts in opposite ways about the same thing"

²⁵ For example, Grube/Reeve translates εἶδος, at 4.440e, as 'part': "ἄρ' οὖν ἕτερον ὄν καὶ τούτου, ἢ λογιστικοῦ τι εἶδος, ὥστε μὴ τρία ἀλλὰ δύο εἶδη εἶναι ἐν ψυχῇ, λογιστικὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμητικόν;"—"Then is it also different from the rational part, or is it some form of it, so that there are two parts in the soul—the rational and the appetitive—instead of three?"

²⁶ For example, Grube translates γένη, at 4.441c, as 'parts': "ταῦτα μὲν ἄρα, ἧν δ' ἐγώ, μόγις διανεύκαμεν, καὶ ἡμῖν ἐπιεικῶς ὠμολόγηται τὰ αὐτὰ μὲν ἐν πόλει, τὰ αὐτὰ δ' ἐν ἐνὸς ἐκάστου τῆ ψυχῆ γένη ἐνεῖναι καὶ ἴσα τὸν ἀριθμόν."—"We have now made our difficult way through a sea of argument to reach this point, and we have fairly agreed that the same kinds of parts and the same number of parts exist in the soul of each individual as in our city."

speaking of, for example, ‘the better’ to indicate ‘the better part’,²⁷ or uses the partitive genitive.²⁸ Finally, there is the most straightforward word for part, namely μέρος. εἶδος can refer to many different things (including the Platonic Forms), and γένος, αὐτός, and other ways of signifying parts can similarly have many meanings. μέρος, though, simply means ‘part’ and Socrates sometimes (though not usually) does refer to a ‘part’ (μέρος) of the soul.²⁹

What significance should we place on the word choices that Plato puts in Socrates’ mouth? In some dialogues, the different words for ‘part’ are used distinctively and specifically in order to make distinctions.³⁰ However, it is not the case that μέρος is used across the Platonic Corpus exclusively to mean a ‘part’ in a strong sense. For example, in the *Crito*, Socrates speaks of “doing one’s part [μέρος] in endeavoring to destroy the laws”.³¹ Certainly, some commentators point to the fact that Plato seems to avoid the term μέρος as evidence that he is not thinking of the parts of the soul as ‘real’ parts.³² Their opponents, though, could return to the passage quoted earlier in this section (4.436c) and point out that even when Socrates is explicitly discussing parts (i.e. part of the man being at rest and part in motion), he does not use μέρος or any other

²⁷ For example, Shorey inserts the word ‘part’ into the two substantives at 4.431a: “ἀλλ’, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, φαίνεται μοι βούλεσθαι λέγειν οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὡς τι ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ μὲν βέλτιον ἔνι, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον”—“But,” said I, “the intended meaning of this way of speaking appears to me to be that the soul of a man within him has a better part and a worse part”.

²⁸ For example, Shorey inserts the word ‘part’ into the partitive genitive at 4.436c-d, into both of the ‘μὲν/δὲ’ clauses: “τὸ μὲν τι αὐτοῦ ἔστηκε, τὸ δὲ κινεῖται”—“a part of him is at rest and a part in motion”.

²⁹ For example, Shorey translates μέρους, at 4.444b, as ‘part’: “ἐπανάστασιν μέρους τινὸς τῷ ὅλῳ τῆς ψυχῆς”—“the revolt of one part against the whole of the soul”.

³⁰ Thus in the *Statesman*, although εἶδος and γένος are used somewhat interchangeably to mean form or type or kind, μέρος is used exclusively to mean ‘part’. Here I am following Cooper (1997, 297 n8).

³¹ As pointed out by Shields (2010, 166).

³² See, for two among many examples, Price (2009, 1, n1) or Shields (2010, 164).

explicit 'part' word. On the whole, it seems imprudent to me either overly to rely upon or utterly to ignore Plato's word choices for 'parts' of the soul. Therefore, none of the claims of this chapter will rest on Plato's choice either to use or to avoid the explicit word for 'part' in referring to the soul. Nevertheless, as we work through the exegesis of the passages related to soul-parts, we will keep our eyes on the terminology.

Finally, before leaving the subject of parts, let me note that in addition to the nature of parts and the language of parts, the number of parts that centrally comprise the soul will be a key issue. Realists will want to insist that there are three main parts of the soul, even if there may be some others, "in between" (4.443d). For realists, reason, spirit, and appetite as agent-like parts are important in understanding both the city-soul analogy and the character types of Books 4, 8, and 9. Deflationists, on the other hand, interpret Plato to hold that the person (or the soul) is the only agent; and so Socrates is at liberty to sometimes describe the soul as tripartite, while at other times describing it as bi-partite, multi-part, or incomposite, without jeopardizing his account of agency. This issue, however, will best be addressed in Section 2, when we examine the text in detail. I will ultimately argue that the deflationist position seems better supported (and therefore that the three canonical parts are not as prominent as realists contend). I will consequently need to offer an suggestion as to why Socrates introduces tripartition. This, though, will need to wait for the conclusion, where we sum up of the view of Platonic psychology that emerges from this dissertation's reading of soul-parts and character.

1.2 Methodology

This dissertation does not argue for or against alternative methodologies for interpreting Plato, but a few words are in order regarding how I intend to approach the exegesis. First, I choose to remain entirely within the confines of the *Republic*. I do so partly in order to manage scope and partly because I believe that the integrity of a dialogue as a unit permits interpretation of (say) the psychology of the *Republic*, without detailing how that psychology fits with the psychology of the *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, etc. Nothing here relies on an ordering of the dialogues, as insisted on by many so-called ‘developmentalist’ commentators, for example, Vlastos.³³ I do, though, follow Altman (and Vasiliou, Miller, Pappas, and others) in paying careful attention to the distinction between the ‘inner frame’ (i.e. the depicted interaction between Socrates and the interlocutors) and the ‘outer frame’ (i.e. the reader of the *Republic* reading Plato’s writing).³⁴

The words that Plato has Socrates ‘utter’ are absorbed by both the interlocutors in the inner frame and the readers in the outer frame. However, the listener in the inner frame and the reader in the outer frame (especially the careful re-reader, who is reading Socrates’ words having already read the entire dialogue and perhaps the other Platonic dialogues as well) ‘experience’ those words very differently. The reader in the outer frame is aware that she is reading the words that Plato has written, whereas, if we enter into the dramatic spirit of the inner frame, the interlocutors hear Socrates’ words as his

³³ See Vlastos (1991) Chapter 2.

³⁴ I adopt the terms ‘inner frame’ and ‘outer frame’ from Vasiliou (1999, 465 and 2008, 74). See also Altman (2012, 7 n 22) who quotes Miller (1995, 165).

own and hear them as they are 'spoken'. So, for example, when Socrates completes the picture of the just person at 4.444a, he says to the interlocutors: "Well, then, if we claim to have found the just man, the just city, and what the justice is that is in them, I don't suppose that we'll seem to be telling a complete falsehood", to which Glaucon replies, "No, we certainly won't." But, by the time Socrates has finished the 'digression' of Books 5,6, and 7, Glaucon and the other interlocutors have been brought to a different state of understanding. Thus at 8.543c, Glaucon says "you were talking as if you had completed the description of the city. You said that you would class both the city you described and the man who is like it as good, even though, as it seems, you had a still finer city and man to tell us about". Thus, at the moment of reading 4.444a, the careful re-reader in the outer frame is in at (at least) the same epistemic state that Glaucon is in at 8.543c, and for that reason the outer frame reader might interpret Socrates' words at 4.444a quite differently than Glaucon will. In essence, the interlocutors are 'listening' to Socrates in real time, whereas the re-readers in the outer frame are 'reading' Plato, aware of both his silent presence and, at each moment, of the entire arc of the work. This difference opens space for the reader to ask questions of the text and to interpret Socrates' words very differently than, say, Glaucon does.

Another matter of interpretive methodology that will be crucial in this dissertation is the attention I will pay to whether, at any moment in the text, Plato has Socrates employ metaphorical tools or rather has Socrates speak in what I will call 'direct speech'. Plato's metaphorical tools are many, including simile, analogy, image, falsehood, etc. Socrates often relies on metaphor, simile, and/or analogy to describe

many things, including the parts of the soul. For example, at 4.440c-d, Socrates describes spirit in the following way:

does not his spirit ... make itself the ally of what he judges just, and in noble souls it endures and wins the victory and will not let go until either it achieves its purpose, or death ends all, or, as a dog is called back by a shepherd, it is called back by the reason within and calmed. Your similitude is perfect, [Glaucon] said, and it confirms our former statements that the helpers are as it were dogs subject to the rulers who are as it were the shepherds of the city.

Here it is clearly up to us to decide in just which aspects spirit and reason are similar to the dog and the shepherd. And we need to interpret in just which aspects spirit is like its analogue in the city, namely the auxiliaries.

By contrast with simile above and other types of metaphor, though, sometimes Plato has Socrates use what I call 'direct speech' that is to say, places where Socrates (or an interlocutor) says 'X' about 'Y'. For example, sometimes Socrates 'directly' ascribes a particular attribute to a particular soul-part. Thus, at 9.581a, Socrates says "of the high-spirited element, do we not say that it is wholly set on predominance [κρατεῖν] and victory [νικᾶν] and good repute [εὐδοκιμεῖν]?" Of course there is some measure of metaphor at play whenever we describe internal states using the language of the perceptible world. Nevertheless, Socrates, here, without any apparent metaphor, ascribes goals (of predominance, victory, and good repute) to the spirited part. Similarly, at 10.608d, Socrates says that "our soul is immortal" (ἀθάνατος ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ). Certainly even direct speech demands interpretation. Often Plato has Socrates use direct speech to say things that are intentionally inaccurate, are contrary to Socrates' own belief, are ironic, etc. These passages push us to consider alternative interpretations. Nevertheless, although each statement in the argument requires

examination and interpretation, sometimes Plato must mean for Socrates' statements to mean just what he says. Socrates' last words in the *Republic*, at 10.621c, are

we'll always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with reason in every way. That way we'll be friends both to ourselves and to the gods while we remain here on earth and afterwards—like victors in the games who go around collecting their prizes—we'll receive our rewards. Hence, both in this life and on the thousand-year journey we've described, we'll do well and be happy.

It is possible that Plato does not really believe that 'if we practice justice with reason we'll do well and be happy', but given the passage's consistency with so much of the *Republic*, I at least am inclined to interpret this as an example of Plato having Socrates say just what he (Plato) means, in direct speech.

As I move through the exegesis, I will take careful note of where Socrates does and doesn't describe soul-parts as agent-like in direct speech. And I will take note of where the metaphors might invite Glaucon or the reader to ascribe agency to the soul-parts. But I will also leave open the possibility that Plato is making space for the careful re-reader to draw a different conclusion and I will not draw my own conclusions until I have worked through all of the relevant passages in the ten Books of the *Republic*.

1.3 Distinguishing the Realist Position

As noted earlier, in this chapter I argue that Socrates appears inconsistent in his description of the soul (albeit, as I will finally suggest, intentionally and with good reason). Certainly, commentators differ over translation, interpretation, and a host of other matters. Nevertheless, even if there is agreement about the translation of a particular passage, and agreement that it expresses Plato's notion (regarding, say, the

nature of the parts of the soul) we still need to know what precisely counts as realist or deflationist, if we are to make exegetical progress.

Of course, the various realist commentators do not each present the same picture of the nature of soul in the *Republic*. Thus one 'realist' will essentially disagree with another 'realist', on what it takes to count as a realist (and similarly for deflationists).³⁵ Naturally, there is no authoritative definition for what constitutes either position. Notwithstanding these obstacles, in this section I will summarize what I take (for the purpose of this dissertation) the realist position to be.

In distinguishing the realist and deflationist positions, I am going to focus on 'lower soul-parts', namely those 'parts' of the soul other than reason. Certainly the status of reason as a soul-part is problematic and worthy of discussion. Reason appears to be both a soul-part (with a distinctive desire for knowledge [9.581b], and concern for the good of the whole soul [4.441e]), and at the same time it appears to be the essence of the soul as a whole (e.g. in the Glaucus passage (10.611b-e), where reason without other encrusted parts emerges as the true soul, or in the discussions of 'weakness of will' (ἀκράτεια), where whether 'I' do or do not get the better of myself, 'I' am always reason). Fortunately, though, despite the inherent value of an inquiry into Plato's view of reason, it is not necessary for the purposes of the realist/deflationist debate that is the subject of this chapter. If appetite and/or spirit, for example, can be shown to be agent-like, then we must endorse the realist interpretation. But if both appetite and spirit can be shown to not be agent-like, then the arguments of the realists

³⁵ The terms realist and deflationist are becoming fairly standard, as can be seen in Pappas (2013). Kamtekar (2012) uses the term 'personification' in place of realism.

can be rejected, without settling the status of reason, since none of them has argued (nor, I think, would agree) that a realist interpretation is satisfied by reason alone being agent-like. Distinguishing me from my reason is complex and fortunately is not necessary to the argument of this chapter.³⁶

What, then, are the criteria for a soul-part to count as realist? Chris Bobonich offers perhaps the most widely cited realist definition of the nature and attributes of a soul-part.³⁷ For Bobonich, each soul-part “has its own desires (ἐπιθυμῖαι) and can wish and want (βούλεσθαι and ἐθέλειν)”.³⁸ Further, each part “has conceptual and cognitive capacities”, namely, “beliefs”, “practical goals”, “can engage in reasoning”, and “can communicate with the others; one part can persuade another and they can all agree”.³⁹ In essence, the parts are, as Bobonich and others put it, “agent-like”.⁴⁰

While the literature on agency is large, a common view is that a human agent is the agent of an event (E) if he performs an action that is a sufficient causal contributor to E.⁴¹ In simple terms, an agent is one who acts. What, though, does it mean for a soul-part to be an agent? The question is difficult in cases of external agency. Imagine that I have an appetite for a beer. Although part of me wants to eschew the beer, I decide to drink it, and do so. Obviously my appetite is not the agent of the actual drinking, but is it the agent of the overall action in the sense of being a sufficient causal

³⁶ Gerson (2003, 106) offers a persuasive argument that you can easily distinguish a person from his appetites or emotions, but one “cannot so easily distinguish between the person and his thinking, especially in matters related to action”.

³⁷ Bobonich (2002, 219-220, 54).

³⁸ *ibid.*, 220.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 219.

⁴¹ See, for example, Chisholm (1971).

contributor? Even if we take it that the decision to drink is a sufficient causal contributor to drinking the beer, it can be very difficult to distinguish, in Plato's text, whether Socrates presents my appetite or 'me' as the decision maker.⁴² It is correspondingly difficult to distinguish whether 'I' am or 'my appetite' is the agent of the action of drinking. Fortunately, though, Socrates presents us with many easier examples—cases of what I call 'internal agency'. If my appetite acts on (e.g. persuades) some other part of my soul (say, my spirit), then it would seem clear that this counts as my appetite acting as agent. Without extensive discussion, I will take it to be the case that, as Bobonich says, agent-like parts such as this are "treated as the ultimate subject of psychological affections, activities, and capacities that are normally attributed to the person as a whole".⁴³

If we interpret a passage to attribute beliefs to the lower soul-parts, that passage may or may not count as realist depending on what we mean by beliefs. Carone, Bobonich, and Irwin, for example, ascribe to the lower parts what I would call 'strong' beliefs.⁴⁴ For these three commentators, appetite and spirit have beliefs about the good, are concept-possessing, and have a self-conception. A passage that describes lower soul-parts as possessing 'strong beliefs' will count as realist. Other commentators, however, (e.g. Moss and Lorenz), give the lower parts beliefs, but of a very different sort.⁴⁵ For these two, appetite and spirit have cognitive but not rational

⁴² As noted earlier, I do not think Plato distinguishes between 'me' being the decision maker, and 'my soul' being the decision maker.

⁴³ Bobonich (2002, 219).

⁴⁴ Carone (2001, 123). Bobonich (2002, 254). Irwin (1995, 219).

⁴⁵ See Moss (2008, 58-59), and Lorenz (2008, 260-261).

capabilities and lack the capacity to form beliefs about the good or to possess concepts. Moss and Lorenz interpret Plato to mean that certain objects appear good to our appetite or spirit and those parts of us 'believe' that those objects are good just in the sense of accepting the appearance. A passage that ascribes weak beliefs of this sort to the lower soul-parts would not, on my view, count as realist.⁴⁶

Whether or not mere ascription of desires to a soul-part counts as characterizing that soul-part as agent-like is a vexed question. Indeed, even whether Socrates is arguing that soul-parts have desires is unclear. It is difficult to distinguish whether Socrates (for example in Book 4) is arguing, that a) 'I' desire to drink in virtue of a part of me called appetite, or rather that b) my appetite desires to drink—and much ink has been spilled on this question.⁴⁷ Part of the problem stems from a mixing of the physical and psychical. Certainly when the body gets parched, the person and the person's soul are thirsty. But it is hard to tell whether Socrates is saying that a) the soul is thirsty on account of its appetite, b) the soul is thirsty with its appetite, or c) the appetite is itself thirsty. Further, even if we do take it to be the case that Socrates is ascribing desires (say, the desire to drink) to soul-parts (say, appetite), it is unclear whether this should be cited as showing the part to be realist. Certainly some strong deflationists deny that the parts of the soul have their own desires.⁴⁸ Other deflationists are content to ascribe desires to the individual parts, but still deny that those parts are agent-like. Because it

⁴⁶ The question of whether these weak beliefs do or do not exist is important in understanding the relevant literature, but will turn out not to matter to my argument.

⁴⁷ I find Price's discussion in *Mental Conflict*, expanded in his later 2009 article most illuminating. He, Bobonich (2002), Lorenz (2006a), Irwin (1977), Burnyeat (1976) and many others weigh in on the issue of whether 'I' or 'my appetite' is the subject of my thirst.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Moravcsik (2001, 52-54) or Stalley (2007, 75).

is so difficult to assess whether Socrates is giving soul-parts desires and whether this should count toward characterizing a passage as realist, I am not going to count partite desires, on their own, as markers of agent-like soul-parts.

The other attributes in Bobonich's list *are* sufficient, however, and indeed, on my view, any one of them is sufficient on its own. If appetite or spirit is described as a part that: has strong beliefs; sets its own goals; uses means-end reasoning; acts as an agent in achieving their goals; or persuades other parts to go along with their goals—then those descriptions count as realist. Partly, I am pushed toward this view because I think that all deflationist commentators would reject *any* of these attributes as being an attribute that Plato would ascribe to lower parts of the soul. In addition, since I am going to argue for the deflationist interpretation, allowing any of these attributes to count against the deflationist position is the most charitable approach.

Most realists ground their arguments textually by pointing to passages that depict soul-parts as having goals (e.g. 4.442a, 4.442b, 9.581a), concepts (e.g. 4.442a, 4.442c), reasoning (e.g. 4.442b-d, 9.574d-575a, 9.580e), awareness (e.g. 9.571c), persuasiveness (e.g. 4.442b-d, 8.554c-d, 9.589a-b), and agency (e.g. 8.553c, 8.560a-c, 9.571c-d, 9.587a). In addition to textual references, of course, realists also offer other reasons to prefer their interpretation. For example, they can consider Plato to be in line with the Humean view that reason is (at least often) the slave of passion and that an action is always the product of a belief-desire pair.⁴⁹ Other realists tend to argue from perceived Platonic argumentative goals toward an understanding of soul-parts, rather

⁴⁹ See Moravcsik (2001,45), and Davidson (1982, 293-294).

than the reverse. Thus, some realists consider Plato's description of the soul to be an attempt to refute or confirm Socratic Intellectualism.⁵⁰ Others take Plato to be primarily pursuing the isomorphism that exists between city and soul, in an attempt to get at the nature of justice.⁵¹

1.4 Distinguishing the Deflationist Position

Despite the numerous, clear references to soul-parts in agent-like terms, some modern commentators (so-called deflationists) resist interpreting Plato's soul-parts (other than reason) as agent-like. Just as not all realists are alike, there is also variation among the deflationist positions. As noted earlier, at their most vigorous, deflationists deny even that the 'parts' are parts in a strong sense, interpreting them, rather, as aspects or faculties of the soul.⁵² For these deflationists, tripartition is not a central feature of Platonic psychology, but rather a convenient tool for Socrates at a particular spot in the argument. Socrates, they point out, will later prefer to describe the soul as bi-partite, multi-part, or even not partite at all.⁵³ On this view, any attributes of the 'parts' are actually attributes of the soul itself.

More moderate deflationists understand the 'parts' of the soul to be part-like in the same way that realists do. Further, like the realists, they give more credence to the importance of tripartition. However, these more moderate deflationists still deny that

⁵⁰ See, for example, Carone (2001) or Segvic (2007), or Anagnostopoulos (2006, 167). Further references can be found in Lorenz (2006a, 28 n25).

⁵¹ See, for example, Keyt (2006), Lear (1992), or Ferrari (2005).

⁵² Shields (2010) and Santas (2013) are examples.

⁵³ Shields is an obvious example of an interpreter of this sort.

those parts are agent-like.⁵⁴ A moderate deflationist of this type might take Plato to consider a Leontius-type person (with a persistent desire to view corpses) as having a defective appetite.⁵⁵ But, on a moderate deflationist understanding, this would not require that Plato held that the corpse viewer's appetite part (or indeed, appetite in any of us), has its own goals, reasoning powers, etc.

As before, realists tend to point to passages that directly or metaphorically describe soul-parts as agent-like, arguing that they should be taken at face value. The deflationist reading is essentially a critical posture, which presents itself in the form of objecting to realist readings of passages in the text. Thus the deflationist will argue that nothing in a particular section of text demands a realist interpretation. Deflationists tend to interpret many passages describing soul-parts as metaphorical, whereas realists take them literally. For example, consider Irwin's interpretation of Socrates' "symbolic image of the soul" (i.e. the multi-headed beast/lion/man wrapped in the shape of a man 588c-d). Despite the fact that Socrates calls it an image, Irwin takes from the image that the "analogy suggests that each part can be treated as a single agent".⁵⁶ Deflationists, on the other hand, will disagree. On a deflationist interpretation, it is true that the image

⁵⁴ I take Lorenz as an example of a deflationist of this type, though he does not use the terms realist or deflationist. He takes lower soul-parts to lack agency as defined here, and therefore is a deflationist, on my account. But, he denies that soul-parts are merely properties or faculties of the soul as a whole. He says (Lorenz, 2006a, 25 n16) that "if soul-parts are merely properties, we cannot take literally Socrates' talk of the embodied soul as a composite (610 B 4–6), as one thing composed of a plurality of parts (443 E 1–2). And thirdly, Socrates' (direct) attribution to soul-parts of desires and aversions, pleasures (580 D 6–7), beliefs (571 D 2, 603 A 1–2, 605 C 1–2), and emotions (604 D 7–9, 606 A 3–7) sits awkwardly with a conception of soul-parts as properties of the soul (or, for that matter, with a conception of them as capacities or faculties)."

⁵⁵ Socrates distinguishes between people with base appetites (say Leontius), and people who mostly have necessary appetites, saying that "In a few people, [base desires] have been eliminated entirely or only a few weak ones remain, while in others they are stronger and more numerous" (9.571b G).

⁵⁶ Irwin (1995, 217). Also see Keyt (2006, 350).

depicts spirit as a lion and true that a lion acts as an agent. But, the deflationist will say that the agency of the lion is not the salient point about the nature of human spirit intended by Plato's image of the lion. Rather, for a deflationist, the point has to do with the associations we have with lion-like characteristics, such as desire for victory, anger, fearlessness, etc. In support, the deflationist might well point to 4.434d-e where Socrates outlines his method for using the city/soul analogy. Socrates reminds us that the notion that a just soul might resemble the just city was merely a hypothesis. Justice in the city is provisionally agreed to be the condition when the moneymakers, auxiliaries, and guardians each do their own work (4.434c). However, this hypothesis should not be taken as secure just yet (4.434d). Socrates proposes to dialectically test this definition of justice in the city against the soul of the individual. "But if something different is found in the individual, then we must go back and test that on the city" (4.434e G). The notion of justice that is found in the larger item, namely the city, provides a hypothesis for what we may find in the soul. But we should not simply apply what we've found in the city to the soul. Rather we must examine the soul directly. And if we do not find the same thing to be present, we even revise our notion of what we thought to be justice in the city. We can and should form hypotheses regarding which aspects of the city-parts might illuminate the nature of soul-parts. But we should not simply accept them; we must test the hypothesis on the soul part through direct inquiry. The same method applies to how to interpret the metaphor of the beast/lion/man. When we examine the soul, we do find that 'part' of our psyche has to do with desire for victory, fearlessness, etc. In this regard the analogy of the lion works well. But the fact

that the lion is agentic should not convince us that the corresponding ‘part’ of the soul is similarly agentic, until and unless we have examined the soul to test this hypothesis.

In addition to contesting the passages pointed to by realists, deflationists point to other passages, which raise questions as to whether realists can credibly rely on their passages to support a realist psychology. For example, deflationists highlight the conflicting accounts of soul-parts that appear in the course of the dialogue. At first, in Book 4, we seem to have a three-part soul. Book 10, though, on many accounts, presents first a two-part soul, but then later a soul which may be without parts. In addition, as will emerge later (for example, see Chapter 1, Section 2.3.3), at many points the parts seem to proliferate, leading to a many-part soul. So the soul is variously presented as one-part, two-part, three-part, many-part, and even, perhaps, incomposite. Deflationists also point to the avowed inadequacy and imprecision of the account. When Socrates introduces soul-parts in Book 4, he immediately and repeatedly hedges the discussion. The soul-parts are three, but there may be others (4.443e). The notion of soul-parts depends on the principle of non-opposition, but that principle may be incorrect, and if so, any conclusions based on that principle must be discarded (4.437a).⁵⁷ Socrates says that his description of soul-parts is suboptimal and imprecise, merely being sufficient for the argument as it was (6.504a-b). In general, deflationists take very seriously Socrates’ denials of the argument’s precision and accuracy at 4.435d and 6.504a-b, taking it that we have to look to other dialogues for

⁵⁷ In Section 2.1.3 I will discuss the different terms commentators use for this principle, and the implications of those different terms. For now, I simply use this term to refer to the passage in question, without prejudice.

the “longer and fuller way” (4.435d).⁵⁸ The shorter way does not even give a precise answer to the ‘easy question’ of whether the soul has the same three parts as the city (4.435c-d). More importantly, the shorter way falls short of precision about the nature of the virtues (6.504b-d). Since the perfectly just man depicted in Book 4 depends on the nature of his soul-parts and their interactions, by insisting on the inadequacy of the shorter way, and reminding us twice that there is a “longer and fuller way”, Plato invites the reader to rigorously question, examine, and test the description of soul-parts.

One of these tests applied by most deflationists is that if we take Plato to be endorsing realism, then his argument has logical flaws and the psychology he outlines has conceptual problems. These conceptual problems support deflationists in thinking that where Socrates offers realist descriptions of soul-parts, they are to be taken more as metaphor in support of the argument and less as literal psychological discussion. The deflationists take it that Plato would also have seen the flaws and would not have offered a psychological theory so fraught with difficulty. In order to give a flavor of the typical deflationist position, a few such problems will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

The most commonly cited problem raised by deflationists is that taking soul-parts to be agent-like leads to various forms of regress. Thus, for example, if spirit has reasoning power it might simultaneously have desire for and aversion to the same thing. Since simultaneous desire and aversion was the basis on which Socrates partitioned soul-parts, then spirit itself must be partitioned. But, if each of the two new parts also

⁵⁸ Miller (2010) makes this point central.

has reasoning power, then again there may be internal conflict within each of the new parts, leading to further division.⁵⁹

Deflationists also object that understanding soul-parts as agents leads to the view that the person lacks any true unity, without which it may be hard to hold them morally accountable for their actions.⁶⁰ As Price aptly puts it, “if each of Plato’s parts is the psychological subject of mental states, how is the mental life of a man not really like the mental lives of a set of Siamese triplets?”⁶¹ Bobonich similarly argues that “The *Republic’s* partitioning theory commits Plato to denying the unity of the person...What seems to be a single psychic entity is in fact a composite of three distinct and durable subjects”.⁶² If this were to be the case, as Brown and Bobonich point out, Plato’s psychology might even preclude the possibility of holding people morally accountable for their actions.⁶³ Or, to put it in more Platonic terms, it might be hard to hold a person who acts unjustly or immoderately as acting ignobly. If I take Thrasymachus’ rudeness to be due to his spirit (θύμος) acting as agent, or I take Leontius’ sexual perversion to be due to his appetite (ἐπιθυμητικόν) acting as agent, then, as Brown points out, “holding the rational part responsible for such actions seems to blame an innocent bystander or, worse, a victim.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ See, for example, Bobonich (2002, 247-254) or Annas (1981, 142-146). For a different regress problem based on the city-soul analogy, see Williams (1997), and Blossner (2007). Yet another version of the regress problem is that if, say, appetite is seen as a homunculus, (therefore having its own appetite, reason, and spirit), then appetite’s appetite will in turn be a homunculus, and so on, regressively.

⁶⁰ See, among others, Bobonich (2002, 254), or Keyt (2006, 351). (Obviously I am not claiming here that Bobonich is a deflationist, but he raises the point in support of his own argument.)

⁶¹ Price (2009, 8).

⁶² Bobonich (2002, 254).

⁶³ See, for example, Brown (2012) or Bobonich (2002).

⁶⁴ Brown (2012, 4). Davidson (1982, 291) attributes the same point to Sartre, noting that “the notion of responsibility would lose its essential point if acts and intentions were pried loose from people and

A third objection deflationists frequently raise is that if the soul-parts are indeed homunculi, then Socrates' primary argument for partition loses its cogency.⁶⁵ Lorenz's formulation of the objection is typical of many deflationists:

if the nonrational parts of the soul can reason about how best to satisfy their desires, and can form desires and aversions on the basis of such reasoning, there seems to be no satisfactory way for Plato to rule out the simultaneous occurrence within appetite or spirit of both a desire and an aversion in relation to the same thing. For instance, having a burger right now may seem a very pleasant thing to do, but it may also seem an obstacle to one's full enjoyment of the exquisite dinner party one expects to attend in an hour's time. Suppose that appetite, on that basis, forms a reasoned aversion to having the burger now. If the person in question nonetheless continues to have a pleasure-directed desire to have the burger right away, that desire must belong to appetite.

As long as appetite does not have goal setting and means-end reasoning capabilities, Socrates' argument is valid; given the principle of non-opposition (4.436b), it must be some part other than appetite that resists the desire to eat the burger. In this way, Socrates partitions appetite as distinct from the resisting part (which he calls λογιστικόν).⁶⁶ But, if appetite does indeed have the capacity to set goals and engage in some measure of means-end reasoning in order to attain those goals, it is possible that though appetite wants the burger, the part that resists the burger (so as achieve its goal of enjoying dinner) is just the reasoning capacity of appetite. In this case, Socrates'

attached instead to semi-autonomous parts of the mind". Along a similar line, Santas (2013, 178) suggests that attributing reason, spirit, and appetite to each soul-part, "may even commit Plato to the view that there are several just and/or unjust persons within a person, since agents, like parts, can be Platonically just or unjust by his definition of psychic justice".

⁶⁵ See, for example, Santas (2013, 177), or Lorenz (2008, 8), or Gerson (2003, 108), or Stalley (2007, 72).

⁶⁶ 6.539d. Of course, as Lorenz (2006a, 31) points out, it is not clear that we must accept the further claim that the resisting part is reason. Nevertheless, the argument at least succeeds in establishing a partition.

argument fails to distinguish appetite (and in the same way spirit) from reason as separate parts of the soul, and he offers no alternative argument.

Deflationists differ on how seriously to take tripartition, on how 'part-like' Plato thought soul-parts to be, and also on which objections to realism they raise. Overall, though, the terms of satisfaction for a passage to count as deflationist seem clear and mirror the terms of satisfaction for it to count as realist that were delineated in the previous section. Deflationists do not take Plato to be ascribing agency to lower soul-parts. Thus a deflationist would deny that spirit, for example, has goals, is aware of other parts, can communicate with or persuade other parts, possesses concepts, can perform means-end reasoning, etc.

To sum up, then, as we move to examine the text in detail, I've said that whereas realists and some deflationists interpret Plato as taking soul-parts to be parts in the strong sense, other deflationists deny this, interpreting Plato to be describing the parts of the soul simply as aspects or faculties of the soul itself. For a description of a soul-part to count as realist, I've claimed that it is sufficient for the part to be said to have any one of a set of agentic attributes. Conversely, I will require that none of these attributes be present for a description of a soul-part to count as deflationist. With these definitions in place, let us turn to exegesis.

Part 2: Exegesis

2.0 Introduction

Cephalus begins talking about the soul at the very outset of the *Republic* and the soul is under discussion up through and including the last line of Book 10. On my view, though, there are three passages that discuss soul-parts and their nature in detail, namely, 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' (4.435c-441c), 'The Inquiry into Character Types' (4.441c-445d, 8.544a-9.592b), and 'The Effect of Poetry On the Soul' (10.595a-608b). Until very recently, as I noted previously, Book 10 has largely been ignored in the debate about the parts of the soul. Moreover, most commentators have tended to exegetically 'jump around', marrying, for example, an understanding of a few lines in Book 8 to a reading of a line in Book 4, and so forth. As noted at the outset, most deflationists focus on 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts'. This passage seems to fit well with a deflationist account and deflationists leverage the descriptions found there in interpreting 'The Inquiry into Character Types', which comes later. Many of them reach the conclusion that the entire account of soul-parts in the *Republic* is deflationist. Realists tend to do the reverse. They focus on the more realist descriptions found in 'The Inquiry into Character Types' and apply those descriptions backward, to reach the conclusion that the entire account of soul-parts in the *Republic* is realist. I do neither of these. Rather I follow Whiting in viewing it as critical to analyze the different segments of the *Republic* on their own, before putting them together to reach an overall understanding. We need to allow for the possibility that Plato has Socrates intentionally describe soul-parts differently at various moments in the argument because he is

pursuing different philosophical goals. My approach will be to consider each of these three key passages on its own, and see whether each section presents the parts of the soul as agent-like or non-agent-like.

Overall, I will argue that the first of these passages introduces the nature of the soul's parts, and although the metaphors need to be interpreted, in his direct speech, Socrates never once describes those soul-parts as agent-like. In the second passage, though, Socrates does often directly describe soul-parts as agent-like in nature. Finally, I will argue that in Book 10, Socrates again focuses directly on the nature of soul-parts, as he tries to understand how painting and poetry affect the soul. And in that inquiry, on my reading, he returns to an account which again never once directly describes soul-parts in agent-like terms. I will conclude this chapter by claiming that these three passages are sufficient to incline us toward the deflationist view, even if they leave some open questions. To decide fully how we should combine these passages to form an adequate understanding of the nature of the soul, we will need to wait until the dissertation's conclusion, where we sum up the psychological account of the *Republic*.

2.1 The Inquiry into Soul-Parts (4.435c-441c)

I have named this section of the *Republic* 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' with no implication that it is the sole and final word on how the *Republic* views soul-parts and with no intent to beg the question of whether or how subsequent sections (Books 8 and 9, for example) should be incorporated into our understanding of how Plato saw the nature of the 'parts' of our souls. It seems clear that this passage (4.435c-441c) is a discrete section of the *Republic*. Socrates first poses a question, then considers it at

length, before finally pronouncing the inquiry into that question to be complete. Certainly 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' is part of the surrounding analogy of city and soul. Much of the discussion in this passage refers to that surround, either implicitly or explicitly. But we should be wary of either understating or overstating the importance of the city/soul surround. For example, as will be discussed in the paragraph below, we must be mindful that we are *not* here using the parts of the just city to illuminate the parts of the just soul. The subject under discussion, here, is clearly the parts of the souls of people in general, both ones who are just and ones who are not. (Indeed the civil war in the soul, which we will find to be a central feature of this passage, would not even occur in a just soul.) Nevertheless, it seems likely that Glaucon and many readers will interpret Socrates' metaphors in light of the city-soul analogy. Thus, although 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' should be indeed be considered within the context of the just city that we have created, we are using the analogy of the just city to peer into the soul as such—that is to say, the soul as it is found in both just and unjust people. And this suggests that we should be wary of taking more than we should from the metaphor, as opposed to from the argument itself.

Soul-parts are described in this passage in two ways, namely a) via 'direct speech' and b) via metaphor, simile, etc. Regarding the former, my claim is simple. Specifically, within 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' (without prejudice regarding other parts of the *Republic*) Socrates, on my view, never once describes the attributes of soul-parts as agent-like. Interpreting the metaphors, though, is more difficult. Certainly to Glaucon or a reader of the *Republic* the metaphors might indeed give the appearance of attributing agency to the soul-parts. My claim, though is that Plato purposefully leaves

the careful re-reader with space to challenge that appearance, and consider the alternative, deflationist interpretation, which is consistent with Socrates' direct speech. Though the soul has been a topic of discussion throughout the *Republic* up to this point, it is here, in the 'Inquiry into Soul-Parts' that we first move inside the soul to consider in detail how it is structured internally, thereby being the first section in which we are confronted with the alternatives of realist and deflationist interpretation. My approach will be to analyze the six chunks that seem to me natural subparts of the passage. Nothing, though, rests on breaking the section into six or any other number of subsections.

Before diving into exegesis, it is also important to stress that although the city in the city-soul analogy is a hypothetical 'beautiful city' (Kallipolis), the souls that Socrates and his interlocutors are going to examine in this first section (4.435c-441c) are the souls of 'regular' people in 'regular' cities. This may seem unremarkable, however in the context of the *Republic* it is quite unusual. Starting in Book 2, the action of the *Republic* is largely set in a series of idealized cities, populated by idealized characters. The rustics of Book 2's 'City of Pigs' give way to the idealized world of the Kallipolis, populated by guardians and auxiliaries, the like of which would not be found in Athens. And most of the text of Books 2-4 is concerned with the nature and education of these guardians and auxiliaries. This idealized setting with imagined subjects will predominate throughout books 5-7. Similarly, the latter part of Book 4, followed by Books 8 and 9 will dwell on timocrats, oligarchs, and so forth, (which I will argue, in Chapter 2, are idealized types). Here in 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts', though, the inquiry is not into the souls of guardians, auxiliaries, timocrats, or other constructed

types, but rather into the souls of ordinary people like ourselves. Glaucon and Adeimantus' attention will now be shifted away from the Kallipolis, toward Athens, as well as toward non-Greek locales, such as Thrace, Egypt, etc. Socrates asks Glaucon to consider how the soul is "in yourself or anyone else" (4.440b G). Some of the characters are literary figures (such as Odysseus), while others are perhaps historical (such as Leontius), but none of them is constructed in words by Socrates, as auxiliaries and timocrats are. After this section, it is not until Book 10, I will argue, that we return to the ordinary, non-idealized world, populated by non-idealized characters. We will consider just how significant we should take this shift of subject to be when we sum up the account at the end of this chapter. For now, though, as we go through each subsection of the 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts', we will take note of the subject under discussion in that subsection.

2.1.1 Opening the Question (4.435c-436a)

Socrates opens The Inquiry into the nature of the soul with irony ("Then once again we've come upon an *easy* question, namely, does the soul have these three parts in it or not?" [4.435c G, italics mine]). He immediately, though, clarifies that the question is not at all easy and indeed that the ensuing discussion will yield at best an approximate picture of the nature of the partite soul ("we will never get a precise answer using our present methods of argument" [4.435c G]). Socrates says that it is undeniable that we must have "within each of us" the same "parts and characteristics" as Grube/Reeve renders it, or "forms and qualities" as Shorey has it (εἶδη τε καὶ ἦθη 4.435e) as were found in the city. Even if we grant Socrates the likely fact that most or

all people have at least some measure of each of the three qualities (and that we each have within us therefore a 'part' of us that is money-loving) he does not say anything, in answering this 'easy question', to support a claim that we do our money-loving with a money-loving part, rather than with the whole soul.⁶⁷ (In fact, as will be seen in the next section, that is precisely the 'hard question' that follows.)

Realists, though, often do take this passage to mean just that. Keyt, for example, reads this passage to show that "(a) polis and psyche each have three parts (b) of the same three kinds" and that "The wisdom lovers, honor lovers, and money lovers, who compose the parts of a polis, are agents with cognitive powers. If a psyche must have parts of the same kinds, they too must be agents with cognitive powers".⁶⁸ In fact, though, this conclusion is by no means clear.

Certainly Keyt has a point. Justice in the city will turn out to be a matter of each part doing its own work; a matter of the relationships among the parts of the city. And since the auxiliaries, for example, have collective agency, there is an invitation to think of the spirited part of the soul as having agency as well. But this is an invitation which can (and I will ultimately argue should) be resisted. The analogy compares a city and its parts, which are visible and perceptible, to the workings of the soul, which is invisible and imperceptible. The producers make things; and there is certainly agency in making. However, if we have an appetite for something, it is by no means clear that any agency is involved in the having an appetite. When the producer class does its own work

⁶⁷ I do not fault Grube/Reeve for using the word 'part', since the word 'part' often seems needed in English, unlike in Attic Greek, as a helper.

⁶⁸ Keyt (2006, 349-350). See also Lear (1992).

agency is certainly at play. But when our appetite does its own work the same is by no means certain.

What warrants us to say that agency, in particular, is the relevant attribute to take from the city-soul analogy? More importantly, why should we think we are intended to take anything at all about the attributes of the parts from the analogy? The goal of the analogy is to help discover the nature of justice in the human soul, not to discover the nature of soul-parts (2.368e-369a). Further, even if we did wish to draw from the analogy that the parts of the soul resembled the parts of the city in selected respects, agent-like soul-parts, with goals, reasoning power, etc., would be difficult to ascribe. The parts of the city are guardians, producers, and auxiliaries. Individual members of the producer part (doctors, farmers, arms manufacturers, bankers, etc.) have goals, means-end reasoning power, etc., but the producer part as whole does not. Since the analogy is from city-parts (producer class) to soul-parts (appetite), and the producer class does not have goals, means-end reasoning, etc., there is not even analogical warrant, it seems to me, to ascribe such qualities to appetite. Indeed, attempts to get more precise lead to more problems. The appetite part of the soul is said to be hard to name, since it is a collection of manifold (πολυειδίαν 9.580d) sub-parts, namely appetites for food, drink, sex, etc. The producer class similarly comprises sub-parts (producers), each of which is an agent. Thus even if the producer class as a whole has collective agency, the sub-parts (individual producers) even more clearly have agency. Therefore, if we were to ascribe agency to the soul-parts by analogy, on account of the agency in the city, then, the sub-parts of appetite would be entities that had, like the producers, agency. This interpretation of the text, though, suffers from regress

problems, for example, when the agency of my desire for drink came into conflict with the agency of my desire for sex. Keyt and others take from the analogy of city and soul that the posing of the question (4.435c-436a) suggests agent-like parts. But there is nothing in what Socrates directly says, here, that requires us to reach this conclusion. Plato has Socrates use language that is very vague (e.g. ‘forms and qualities’ εἶδη τε καὶ ἦθη as quoted earlier). This vague language coupled with Socrates’ assurance that the picture of the soul will be imprecise, along with the problems that arise from trying to apply the city/soul analogy to understand soul parts gives the reader space to resist the conclusion that Plato is here presenting the parts of the soul as agent-like.

2.1.2 Posing the Hard Question (4.436a-b)

But the matter begins to be difficult when you ask whether we do all these things with the same thing or whether there are three things and we do one thing with one and one with another—learn with one part of ourselves, feel anger with another, and with yet a third desire the pleasures of nutrition and generation and their kind, or whether it is with the entire soul that we function in each case when we once begin. (4.436a-b)

Now Socrates poses a question that is ‘hard to answer’. However, it is also hard to understand the question itself. What does it mean to learn with one part or with the whole soul? And what is the meaning of “when we once begin” (ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν 4.436b)? Partly the question is confusing because on the face of it, different stages of action seem to be named. “Learn with one part”, (as opposed to, say, ‘desire to learn with one part’), sounds like acting on my decision to learn—that is to say, doing the learning. ‘Doing’ the learning sounds very agent-like. “Desire the pleasures of nutrition”, on the other hand, seems to pick out the desiring, but not the eating. It might refer to either the basic feeling of hunger, or to the specific desire to eat something in

particular, e.g. an onion bagel. Either way, though, it speaks of desiring, which we earlier set down as not being sufficient to count as agent-like 'doing'.

Many commentators, though, take the question overall to push us toward a realist interpretation. Burnyeat says that

There [436a] too Plato treats the 'parts' of the soul with which we do such things as themselves the subjects or agents doing them...What Plato is rejecting, then, is the view that the senses have the kind of autonomy that the parts of the divided soul have in the *Republic*"⁶⁹

Kamtekar, similarly, takes it that Socrates distinguishes "these parts as themselves the subjects and agents".⁷⁰ However, on my reading, the posing of the hard question, on its own, does not push us to see the parts as agent-like subjects of psychological states.

Certainly it is important to look at the grammar of the question, in order to clarify the proper subjects who are the agents of the actions. These things are things that we do (πράττομεν 4.436a) either 'with' parts of us or 'with' our whole soul. When I pick up the glass *with my hand*, nothing agentic is ascribed to my hand. The same is the case when I get angry with my spirit, or I desire an IPA beer with my appetite, or I learn with my reason.⁷¹ 'I' am the agent of the action here, irrespective of 'with what' I do the action. Even in the case of learning (although reason is centrally involved) we do not really learn with our reason alone. Just as drinking a specific IPA beer will involve not only a specific appetitive desire, but also deliberation, decision, and then lips, hands,

⁶⁹ Burnyeat (1976, 33-34).

⁷⁰ Kamtekar (2012, 172).

⁷¹ Some IPA (India Pale Ale) beers are more or less hoppy, some more or less fruity, etc. My intent here is to suggest a highly specific desire, such as might come after perusing the beer menu, much as Socrates distinguishes a desire for a specific hot drink from a desire for drink in general.

throat, muscles, etc., so too, learning will involve not only a desire to learn, but also deliberation, decision, and then hands, eyes, ears, calculation, memory, etc.

In posing the 'hard question', Socrates identifies a point in time that is after "we begin", but before we act. Certainly it is not precisely clear which point Socrates identifies that is "when we once begin" (ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν 4.436b). Larson ignores ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν utterly, rendering the passage simply

do we do everything with our whole soul, or does it have different parts, so that we learn with one, feel emotions with another, and desire the pleasures of nourishment, procreation, and so forth with a third?⁷²

Grube/Reeve also avoids the temporal distinction, ending up with "when we set out after something, do we act". Most translators, though, preserve the notion of doing x "after we get started".⁷³ Even, Reeve (in his own, later translation), makes this very explicit: "Or do we do each of them with the whole of our soul, once we feel the impulse?"⁷⁴

On my view, the point in time under discussion, which is 'after we begin but before we act', must attempt to pick out a moment where we have developed a specific, differentiated desire (say an appetitive, or spirited desire to do something), about which we are able to have conflict. Certainly, as Socrates will soon say, sometimes we are simply thirsty, and our thirst at that moment is just for drink. However, in most cases, simply being thirsty will not generate the grounds for psychic conflict. Absent a specific desire, it is unlikely that I will reason that satisfying my thirst is bad, or that I will feel that

⁷² Larson (1979, 103).

⁷³ See, for example, Shorey (1980), Bloom (1968), Ferrari (2000).

⁷⁴ Reeve (2004).

being thirsty is shameful.⁷⁵ Psychic conflict often may get engendered though, once I have developed a specific desire. If I desire to quench my thirst with a cold IPA beer, I may struggle with the thought that I should be working on my dissertation and not getting inebriated. Or, I may struggle with the feeling that it is shameful to order a beer at 9:30am. Thus Socrates' question, on my reading, is as follows: once we develop a specific desire (i.e. once we begin, or ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν), do we have that specific desire with the whole soul or with one part of the soul? Once Odysseus' anger and shame translate into a specific desire to kill the servant girls, does he feel that desire with his whole soul or with his spirit? Cooper takes it that the question at hand is one of the "psychological determinants of choice and voluntary action".⁷⁶ For Cooper, Plato is here asking about a point in time when internal struggle, if any, is complete; when, for example, Leontius has struggled between the desire to look and his feelings of shame and has decided to look. At that point, he is, as Cooper says, ready for "voluntary action". But on my view this misses the point, which is the psychic conflict that enables Socrates to differentiate the soul-parts. Leontius displays a very specific appetitive desire and Odysseus displays a very specific spirited desire, both of which are subject to psychic conflict. The question Socrates asks here (as to whether, say, we get thirsty with our whole soul or with a particular part) regards the moment when we have a specific desire for a particular drink, subsequent to the initial state of simple thirst, and

⁷⁵ There might be exceptions, like the desire to drink anything before an operation when one is supposed to be fasting, but these would be special cases.

⁷⁶ Cooper (1984, 5).

prior to the ensuing psychic conflict, deliberation and then decision that precedes voluntary action.

Note that if I'm correct here (about how to interpret *ὅταν ὀρμήσωμεν*) many concerns about the cognitive resources needed by appetite in order to develop a specific desire go away. Surely I might develop an appetitive desire for a specific IPA after reading the menu; and nobody wants to give menu reading capacity to appetite. However even the worry about how much cognition is required in simpler cases (e.g. I see a bottle of IPA beer on the table and feel an appetitive desire to drink) goes away, if Socrates is asking whether it is with our appetite or with our whole soul that we have the desire for the IPA beer, once that desire is formed (i.e. 'once we begin').

Overall, then, despite the ambiguity of his language, it seems that the 'hard question' that Socrates poses relates to specific, differentiated desires (e.g. the desire to look at a specific group of corpses, and the desire to vent anger on a specific group of servant girls). And since we've established in the previous section that desires are not, on their own, indicative of agent-like parts, there is nothing in this that pushes us toward realism. The seat of our desires, according to Socrates' question, is either the whole soul or a part of the soul, either of which is consistent with a deflationist reading. Indeed, it should be noted, as pointed out by several commentators, a realist reading would need a third, different, alternative, namely, do "we learn, feel anger, and desire the pleasures of nutrition and generation with one part of the soul; we learn, feel anger,

and desire with a second part of the soul; and we learn, feel anger, and desire with a third part of the soul”⁷⁷

2.1.3 The Principle of Non-opposition (4.436b-439b)

It is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we'll know that we aren't dealing with one thing but many. (4.436b G)

The principle of non-opposition also seems, on the surface, to be posed in realist terms. The verbs of doing (ποιεῖν at the start of the statement of the principle at 4.436b, and then πράττειν at the conclusion of the statement at 4.439b) are the paradigmatic verbs of agency. Since we will ultimately conclude that the ‘doers’ of the opposites are different things in our soul, (“For it cannot be, we say, that the same thing with the same part of itself at the same time acts in opposite ways about the same thing” 4.439b), it might seem as if the discussion regards what actions the soul-parts will or will not ‘be willing to do’. This sounds very agentic. Certainly when people, in the sensible world, ‘do things’, they are acting as agents. Is the same true, though, of internal states; of souls or ‘parts’ of souls? Before we form a conclusion we must examine the whole passage.

Although Socrates uses the language of doing, what is actually being highlighted here is conflict within the soul. If we find in our soul true opposites, Socrates suggests, then it is different parts of our soul that simultaneously desire to ϕ and desire to not- ϕ .

⁷⁷ Santas (2013,177). Santas attributes the point to Bobonich (2002, 220).

It is important to take note of the fact that throughout this portion of text, Socrates never mentions appetite, spirit, reason, nor does he make any reference to the city-parts to which those soul-parts are analogized. Nothing in this section explicitly addresses soul-parts, or the nature of those parts. Socrates talks about souls and thirst, but not about an appetitive part. “The soul of the thirsty then, in so far as it thirsts, wishes nothing else than to drink” (τοῦ διψῶντος ἄρα ἡ ψυχὴ, καθ’ ὅσον διψῆ, οὐκ ἄλλο τι βούλεται ἢ πιεῖν (4.439a)). But nothing in that statement talks about appetite having goals, beliefs, or reasoning powers.

Still, as mentioned earlier, we need to consider how to interpret the metaphors and analogies in this passage. The ‘doing’ (ποιεῖν, πράττειν) language of the principle seems to suggest that parts ‘do things’. The passage opens with a discussion of how our internal states (e.g. desire to eat, or spiritedness) operate. Socrates then brings forward examples (hands, tops) which represent loci of action in the world external to the soul. Socrates seems quite attuned to the internal / external distinction, and sums up his explication of opposites by saying “all things like these belong to the class of opposite actions or passions [εἴτε ποιημάτων εἴτε παθημάτων]; it will make no difference which”.

Socrates exemplifies contraries in seemingly agentic terms, such as embracing versus repelling or assent versus dissent (4.437b). However, this is metaphor. Appetite does not *really* embrace; rather we have a desire or appetite has a desire. As we argued in Section 1, desire, as such, does not count as agency. Similarly, spirit does not really assent or dissent; rather we get angry, ashamed, or feel proud. When Socrates uses metaphors of actions in the sensible world to try to describe internal

states, there is inevitably a suggestion of agency, since actions in the sensible world are typically done by agents. Further, Socrates is careful in this passage to keep the discussion at the level of the soul, not its parts. Socrates says that the “soul of one who desires ..., nods assent to itself thereon as if someone put the question, striving towards its attainment” (τὴν τοῦ ἐπιθυμοῦντος ψυχὴν...ἐπινεύειν τοῦτο πρὸς αὐτὴν ὥσπερ τινὸς ἐρωτῶντος, ἐπορευομένην αὐτοῦ τῆς γενέσεως 4.437c). The soul (not its parts) here desires, but it doesn't really nod. Even if we take it that when I desire something sometimes my soul assents, the simile does not here ascribe agency to appetite or spirit. Plato has Socrates use analogies which raise the question of agency by soul-parts, but leaves us room, on careful re-reading, to resist that conclusion. Socrates has established a principle which he will employ to individuate soul-parts, but he says nothing here that explicitly characterizes those soul-parts as agent-like.

One final point before we leave this passage. I have called this section ‘the principle of non-opposition (4.436b-439b)’. Much has been written about whether or not we should take this principle to be an early version of ‘the principle of non-contradiction’ which was fleshed out by Aristotle. Adam and later Shorey, for example, take it that it is.⁷⁸ However more recent commentators, both realists such as Irwin and Bobonich, and also deflationists such as Price, Santas, Smith, and Lorenz, take it that the principle is not a statement of the principle of non-contradiction. Those commentators prefer to refer to it either as the principle of noncontrariety, contraries, contrariety, non-

⁷⁸ See Adam (1902, 246) and Shorey (1980, 436).

opposition, opposites, etc.⁷⁹ Although the distinctions between these English terms for the principle that Socrates states (but does not name) are important, they are not critical to the argument of this chapter. Here I examine how Socrates characterizes the soul-parts, both in metaphor and in direct speech, but do not delve too deeply into the oft-discussed examples of the top and the man who stands still and waves his hands. Thus, for the purposes of this chapter I am content to simply pick one of the more common English versions, and I will follow Lorenz, Fred Miller, and others in using the term ‘principle of non-opposition’. In fact, though, a better name than ‘the principle’ of non-opposition, (or non-contrariety, etc.) would be ‘the hypothesis’ of non-opposition. Note Socrates’ careful disclaimer that we may ultimately need to discard this hypothesis, along with everything that was derived from it (4.437a). And at least some commentators think that this is precisely what happens by the end of the *Republic*.⁸⁰ The principle of non-contradiction would be difficult to abandon. But by avoiding the error of conflating the hypothesis of non-opposition with the principle of non-contradiction, we can potentially accept Socrates invitation to discard the hypothesis, which he says will at best yield an approximate, but imprecise answer, without needing to thus leave behind the principle of non-contradiction.

⁷⁹ See Price (1995,39), Irwin (1995, 204), Bobonich, (2002, 228), Santas (2010, 80), Smith (1999, 34), and Lorenz (2006a, 21). Many other commentators enter into the discussion of what to call the ‘principle’. Irwin switches from ‘Principle of Opposites’ (1977, 327 n 18) to ‘Principle of Contraries’ (1995,204), without discussion the change.

⁸⁰ See White (1979, 260-261).

2.1.4 Distinguishing Appetite and Reason (439c-439d)

Now, would we assert that sometimes there are thirsty people who don't wish to drink? Certainly, it happens often to many different people. What, then, should one say about them? Isn't it that there is something in their soul, bidding them to drink, and something different, forbidding them to do so, that overrules the thing that bids? I think so. Doesn't that which forbids in such cases come into play—if it comes into play at all—as a result of rational calculation, while what drives and drags them to drink is a result of feelings and diseases? (4.439c G)

We'll call the part of the soul with which it calculates the rational part and the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites the irrational appetitive part. (4.439d G)

This sounds very realist and agent-like to many interpreters. Bobonich, for example, interprets this as a conversation between two soul-parts, both of which are aware of each other, can communicate with each other, and are trying to impose their will on the other.⁸¹ Certainly Grube/Reeve's translation quoted above might lead one in that direction. As in the prior passage, though, the metaphors are open to multiple interpretations. When I bid you to drink, or forbid you to drink, those are speech acts; but when something in the soul bids me to drink, or something in my soul forbids me to drink, the bidding could be simply a desire, and the forbidding simply a thought of resisting the desire. As for the "parts" Grube/Reeve put forward, consider rather Whiting's careful and literal translation of 4.439d:

Doesn't that which forbids in such cases come into play -- if it comes into play at all -- as a result of rational calculation, while the <things> that drive and drag them to drink result from feelings and diseases ... We'll call that [part] of soul with which it calculates [the] rational [part] and the [part] with which it lusts, hungers,

⁸¹ Bobonich (1994, 11-12).

thirsts, and gets excited by the other appetites [the] irrational appetitive [part], companion of certain pleasures and indulgences.⁸²

Some things in the soul drag us to drink, eat, lust, etc. These things result from feelings and diseases.⁸³ On those occasions when something opposes them, the opposition is the result of calculating. Socrates distinguishes two things in the soul, one that is arational and something else that is rational and often opposes the former. He names them, but very tentatively. It almost seems like he is trying to assist and advance the argument by identifying and naming two aspects of the soul.

More importantly, even if one does take the passage, as I do, to be individuating two soul-parts (at least at this moment in the argument), namely, reason and appetite, there is no warrant, on my view, to interpret them as in communication with each other, as a realist might. 'I' am (or equivalently, 'my soul' is) the subject throughout. Something in my soul wants to drink. As a result of calculating, though, something else in my soul may resist drinking. There are opposites in my soul, but Socrates makes no mention, here, of interaction between parts housing those opposites.

Singpurwalla wants to apply 6.505d-e to 4.439d in order to show that "the appetitive part is the part of us that is prone to form beliefs or judgments of value on the basis of these appearances of value."⁸⁴ "Socrates states", she argues,

that 'every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake' (505d11-e1). But if we always pursue what we believe is good, then this

⁸² Whiting (2012, 187-188) Both angle brackets and square brackets contain words she has supplied, though she regards the former as uncontroversial and the latter as controversial additions found in many translations.

⁸³ As Whiting (ibid.) points out, taking the passage to refer to 'the appetite part' would result in Socrates claiming that "the part itself comes to be as a result of feelings and diseases".

⁸⁴ Singpurwalla (2011, 13-16).

suggests that even when we are motivated by the appetitive part, we are motivated by beliefs about the good, which in turn suggests that appetitive motivations involve beliefs about the good.⁸⁵

However, although it is clear that when we are motivated by having beliefs about the good, we have beliefs, there is nothing in this passage that directly says that the beliefs reside in a particular part of us called appetite nor that any reasoning we may do about our own good is done by a part called appetite. Similarly, my desire to drink might result in me forming a goal, but nothing here attributes possession of goals to an appetitive part.

2.1.5 Distinguishing Spirit and Appetite (439e-440b)

Then, let these two parts be distinguished in the soul. Now, is the spirited part by which we get angry a third part or is it of the same nature as either of the other two? Perhaps it's like the appetitive part. (4.439e)

Again Grube/Reeve smoothly supplies the helping word 'part', (four times in three sentences), where no such word is found in the Greek. Shorey, typically, offers a translation that preserves the text's ambiguity about 'parts':

These two forms, then, let us assume to have been marked off as actually existing in the soul. But now the Thumos or principle of high spirit, that with which we feel anger, is it a third, or would it be identical in nature with one of these?" "Perhaps," he said, "with one of these, the appetitive. (4.439e)

Socrates begins the process of distinguishing spirit as a separate 'part' of us by bringing forward the story of Leontius, detailing his ignoble desire to look at corpses that were lying by the wall of the Piraeus. I distinguish five moments in this story, namely:

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

- 1) Leontius wants to look, and at the same time feels ashamed of wanting to do so
- 2) At first he forces himself not to look
- 3) His desire persists, and he struggles with himself, with his hands covering his face
- 4) His desire to look wins out, he uncovers his eyes, and runs to look at the corpses
- 5) As he runs, he reproves his eyes angrily

Before digging in to the Leontius passage, though, I need to say something about my decision to characterize the emotion Leontius feels as shame. Socrates is very sensitive both to the existence of shameful (αἰσχρά) actions and to the fact that people sometimes feel ashamed (αἰσχύνω)⁸⁶. These topics are raised frequently throughout the *Republic*. Nevertheless, Socrates does not explicitly mention shame here. Leontius is disgusted (δυσχεραῖνοι) either by the corpses or at himself and speaks to his eyes using a term (κακοδαιμονες) that expresses anger or contempt. Socrates concludes that the story shows that anger sometimes makes war against the appetite. Some commentators, such as Irwin, are careful to keep to the emotion of anger that Socrates mentions.⁸⁷ Despite the lack of an explicit shame word, though, many commentators offer persuasive reasons for taking the emotion described to be shame, and I agree. Cairns, for example, points out that “Greek definitions of anger tend, rightly or wrongly, to stress the reference of that emotion to one’s own honour and status”.⁸⁸ Also suggestive is 3.388d, where Socrates links being ashamed with self-rebuke. The same seems to be the case here. Leontius rebukes himself because he is ashamed.

Let us return, then, to the story of Leontius. Realists take the story to show that spirit is agent-like. Irwin, for example, takes it to show that “The spirited part has

⁸⁶ For αἰδώς as shame, see the detailed treatment in Cairns (1993), especially 381-385.

⁸⁷ Irwin (1995, 211).

⁸⁸ Cairns (1993, 383).

evaluative attitudes, resting on some belief about the goodness or badness of its object”.⁸⁹ Similarly, Bobonich concludes that the example shows that “one agent-like part believes that X is better overall than Y and thus desires to do X while a different agent-like part desires to do Y”.⁹⁰ On my view, though, the text does not support such conclusions.

The Leontius story runs from 4.439e5 (ἀλλ', ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ποτὲ ἀκούσας τι πιστεύω τοῦτω: ὡς ἄρα Λεόντιος) through 4.440a7 (σημαίνει γάρ, ἔφη). However, the first step in interpreting this passage is to consider the sentences that immediately follow, namely:

Besides, don't we often notice in other cases that when appetite forces someone contrary to rational calculation, he reproaches himself and gets angry with that in him that's doing the forcing, so that of the two factions that are fighting a civil war, so to speak, spirit allies itself with reason?" (4.440a-b G)

I agree with Irwin that this sentence refers back to the immediately prior Leontius passage and tells us that Leontius exemplifies very common behavior, even if his particular desires might have been quite unusual.⁹¹ I will discuss the issue of spirit being an ally below, but here I want to consider what this tells us about spirit and reason, and how to properly interpret the Leontius story. In Leontius' case and in many other cases, when our desires (i.e. our appetites) force us 'contrary to calculation' (i.e. contrary to what we reason to be right, which is to say, contrary to reason), our spirit is roused against that in us that does the forcing. The fact that reason, in addition to

⁸⁹ Irwin (1995, 212).

⁹⁰ Bobonich (2002, 240-241).

⁹¹ Irwin (1995, 212). There are many other examples. Even Carone (2001, 138), who wants to argue that reason is not involved in the Leontius case concedes that this is the plain reading of the text here. Note that I need not make any claim here as to whether or not Leontius' behavior exemplifies akrasia of any sort (i.e. belief-akrasia, knowledge-akrasia, etc.).

appetite and spirit, is critically involved in the story helps us understand the five moments of the passage schematized earlier. In moment (1), Leontius sees the corpses lying at the feet of the executioner, and feels some sort of ignoble appetite to look. However, he feels ashamed, either of the desire, or of being the type of person that has those desires, and, in moment (2), he turns his face away. Note that spirit and appetite are not the actors here. It is 'he' who desires (perhaps with his appetite) to look (ιδεῖν ἐπιθυμοῖ 439e), 'he' who was unable to resist (δυσχεραῖνοι 439e) and 'he' who feels ashamed (perhaps with his spirit), which he displayed by speaking angrily to himself and his eyes ('ἰδοὺ ὑμῖν,' ἔφη, 'ὧ κακοδαίμονες 440a). And then, in moment (3), he struggles internally. Though the part that calculates is not mentioned here, based on our understanding of 4.440a-b (which tells us that his appetite will end up forcing him 'contrary to calculation'), we understand that he has reasoned (or calculated) that looking is wrong. Now there is internal conflict between, on the one hand, his desire (which still persists) and, on the other hand, his reasoning that to look would be wrong, along with his feeling ashamed. Appetite says yes, but both reason and spirit (in different ways) say no. Different of 'parts' of Leontius' soul are involved in this, but he is the agent that is struggling. Socrates succeeds in individuating the parts by displaying the struggle, but does not portray the parts as agent-like. Finally, Leontius' struggle comes to an end in moment (4), when his desire wins out and forces him contrary to what he knows to be right. He uncovers his eyes and rushes toward the corpses to look. As he rushes forward, his desire is still strong, but he is angry and ashamed. It is not clear whether he is ashamed of a) the base impulse to look, b) the weakness of his will, c) the nature of his character, or d) some combination of these. He does not say to his

appetite, 'how disgusting of you to want to look at corpses'. Nor does he address himself as a whole, saying to himself, 'how disgusting to be so weak-willed', or 'how disgusting to be the type of person who likes to look at corpses'. Rather the object of the remonstrance is his eyes. His eyes are a stand-in for his appetites and Leontius is expressing contempt for his desires, but he, Leontius, is the agent that needs to get praised or blamed for how he acts. Critical, though, is that his appetite overpowers 'him', not 'his spirit'. If his appetite were aware of his spirit, struggled with it, and overcame it, that would be a very realist story. But for his appetite to be strong, and for him to act on that appetite even against his better judgment, is not. Further, there is no indication that it is his spirit, rather than his reason, that has beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of his appetites.

Now we must return to Socrates' metaphor of spirit being the ally of reason. Socrates tells us that Leontius' story is just one example of the very common situation of appetite forcing us contrary to reason (4.440a-b). In such cases, Socrates says, when it is 'as if' appetite and reason are in a civil war, spirit allies itself with reason. This prompts some, such as Annas, to conclude that the parts of the soul are "aware of one another", and thus "can conflict, producing civil war in the soul".⁹² Certainly 'two parties engaged in civil war' sounds like a conflict that must be pursued by agents, and if spirit is an 'ally' of reason it certainly sounds like spirit is being described as an agent.

The topic of allies (συμμάχων) comes up several times in the *Republic*, and bears some consideration. In trying to illuminate the nature of spirit, Socrates uses

⁹² Annas (1981, 131).

similes to compare spirit / reason to auxiliaries / guardians and also to dogs / shepherds. As realists and deflationists struggle to interpret these similes, paramount is that auxiliaries, guardians, dogs, and shepherds, all exhibit at least some measure of agentic behavior. When the dog rounds up the sheep, or the army attacks enemies, at least some measure of agency seems to be on display. Further, when they do these things in alliance with the shepherds and guardians, the very nature of alliance even more strongly suggests agency. Allies, as we typically think of them, plan together, communicate, and though they act in a coordinated manner, each of the allies acts as an individual. Therefore, when Socrates says that spirit is the ally of reason, there is good reason to consider that he may be implying that spirit has agent-like nature. In trying to interpret the similes, though, it is useful to consider several relevant passages that discuss the nature of spirit.

We will return to 4.441a-b below, but let us begin by noting that even before small children have any significant degree of reasoning capability, “they are full of spirit right from birth” (4.441a). In other words, our spirited nature is not here being portrayed as getting angry at those things that reason declares to be proper objects of anger, rather sometimes we simply get angry at things without the involvement of reason. Note that although this comment is made by Glaucon, Socrates does agree. Indeed, Socrates’ agrees by saying “That’s really well put. And in animals too one can see that what you say is true.” This comparison of the spirited nature of humans to the spirited nature of animals reinforces the above thought. We can imagine a mother lion being angry at a beast that was threatening her young or an alpha male being angry at a

competing male, but in both cases this would seem to be a matter of instinct and not on account of some reasoning by the lion about whether anger is warranted.

But what is it that causes people to get angry at or ashamed of certain things rather than others? Related to our earlier discussion of shame, one important difference between humans and animals is that although both humans and animals get angry at objects external to themselves, since only humans have a conception of themselves as beings, only they have self-directed anger, or shame. Thus for humans, our spirited nature includes both externally directed anger and self-directed anger, or shame. Here it is useful to turn back to Book 3, where Socrates says that a well-trained youth will “rightly object to what is shameful, hating it while he’s still young and unable to grasp the reason” (3.402a G). Although Socrates has not yet introduced reason and spirit as parts of the soul, a fine young person will feel ashamed of a base thing, even without the capacity to reason about why the thing is base. (Again, here, the youth is the actor, not some part of him.) And, Socrates continues, when reasoning does come, there will be an “affinity”, as Shorey has it. On my reading, Socrates is saying that there will be an affinity between the reasoned beliefs and the felt shame about the base.⁹³

With these observations about the nature of spirit, we turn to 3.416b, where we find the first explicit usage of the term alliance (συμμάχων) to metaphorically describe the relationship of spirit and reason.⁹⁴ In this section of text, the guardians have been

⁹³ Irwin (1995, 218) interprets this passage differently. Since Socrates talks about a well-trained youth ‘hating’ the shameful, Irwin takes him to be talking about an affinity between appetite and reason. As noted earlier, though, Irwin’s account misses the relationship between spirit and shame.

⁹⁴ Loeb and Adam have ξυμμαχων where Slings and Burnet have συμμάχων, but note that LSJ says: “for all ξυμμ words see συμμ”

distinguished from the auxiliaries, and the particular roles of each as well as their proper interaction are under discussion. Socrates says that it is critical that the auxiliaries not become “savage masters instead of kindly allies” (3.416b G ἀντὶ συμμάχων εὐμενῶν δεσπόταις ἀγρίοις). And when Glaucon says that their education in music (μουσική) will have taken care of that, Socrates denies that this is affirmable, saying rather that they must have the “right education, whatever it is” (3.416c). The right poetry coupled with the right amount of gymnastic training builds harmony in the soul. A good upbringing and the right education causes spirit to have the right nature and to get angry at or ashamed of the right things (as at 3.402a).

Thus, although being allies in a civil war certainly sounds like it ascribes agency to spirit, Plato leaves us room to interpret the simile differently. Socrates goes out of his way to preface the phrase, at 440b, with ὥσπερ, which as LSJ points out, is used “to limit or modify an assertion or apologize for a metaphor”.⁹⁵ Socrates says that when appetites force a person contrary to what he believes to be right, anger sometimes makes war (πολεμεῖν) against the desires “as one thing against another” (4.440a). Socrates does not say that spirit is aware of and opposes appetite, but rather, as Bloom translates, it is, “*just as though* there were two parties at faction” (4.440b B). Thus, reason and desires are ‘as if’ in a civil war and Socrates asks where spirit fits into this conflict. The language of the simile demands that spirit be on one side or the other; and Socrates says that spirit “allies itself with reason”. But in these passages, ‘we’ and not reason, spirit, or appetite are the actors. An ignoble desire or action prompts thoughts

⁹⁵ See the Full LSJ on the Perseus website.

of wrongness and feelings of shame. In feeling ashamed at what one (also) believes to be ignoble, it just *is* the case that one's spirit just is in 'alliance' or in 'affinity' with reason. Where realists see the agency of allies, deflationists interpret the metaphor to highlight the reinforcing effect of two (not necessarily agentic) things that are aligned.

Leontius illuminates this. Leontius reasons that acting on his base appetite is wrong, and his spirited emotion of shame at the prospect of that action also helps hold him back. It is 'as if' his reasoning and his shame were allies, since both impel him to resist his urges.⁹⁶ Leontius' spirit is not displayed as an agent, rather his spirited feeling of shame is simply aligned with his reasoning, and produces a reinforcing effect, namely, his pause and struggle. Similarly, when I reason that virtue demands that I stand firm in battle and I turn to face my enemy, my adrenaline begins to pump. It is 'as if' my adrenaline is the ally of my reason. The adrenaline is not an agent, but it reinforces the effect of my reasoning. Socrates flags his metaphor explicitly, but outside of the metaphor, both at 3.402a and at 4.440b, Socrates says nothing to directly describe spirit as a soul-part that a) understands reason's commands and b) chooses to align with them.

This discussion of what happens "when desires force someone contrary to calculation" is basically an inquiry into internal conflict. What happens in those cases, Socrates says, is that the person "reproaches himself and his spirit is roused against that in him which is doing the forcing". Indeed, it is not only appetitive desires that might force someone contrary to calculation. Spirited desires and emotions might do the

⁹⁶ Of course in this case Leontius failed to resist; it was 'as if' the allies lost the battle.

same. Consider a person who is generally a decent sort, but who happens to be very competitive. What happens when his desire for victory leads him to cheat (i.e. when his desire to win 'forces him contrary to calculation')? His spirit is roused against 'that in him which is doing the forcing'. On a strongly deflationist reading this is not difficult. He is ashamed of acting ignobly in pursuit of victory. But on a realist reading, this is troublemaking. Since desire for victory and feeling shame or self-directed anger are both said to be things we do with our spirit (or perhaps things that our spirit does), is his spirit aroused against itself? Socrates does not go into this here, perhaps so as not to complicate the argument, but the question naturally arises for the reader.

2.1.6 Distinguishing Spirit and Reason (440c-441b)

And what about when a man believes he's being done injustice? Doesn't his spirit in this case boil and become harsh and form an alliance for battle with what seems just; and, even if it suffers in hunger, cold and everything of the sort, doesn't it stand firm and conquer, and not cease from its noble efforts before it has succeeded, or death intervenes, or before it becomes gentle, having been called in by the speech within him like a dog by a herdsman? Most certainly, it resembles the likeness you make. And, of course, we put the auxiliaries in our city like dogs obedient to the rulers, who are like shepherds of a city. (4.440c-d Bloom)

Having begun the process of distinguishing spirited behavior in response to purely internal events (by considering what happens when appetite forces us contrary to reason) Socrates continues by considering how our spirit behaves in response to external events, such as in cases where we are unjust to others or they are unjust to us. Socrates continues to use language that is obviously metaphorical, however the metaphors still suggest agent-like soul-parts. Again spirit "forms an alliance with what seems just" (συμμαχεῖ τῷ δοκοῦντι δικάῳ). Although Socrates does not preface the

metaphor with ὄσπερ, here, the entire passage is a clear simile. Glaucon, recognizing this, responds by saying: “Your similitude is perfect”.⁹⁷ Spirit ‘stands firm and conquers’, ‘succeeds’, ‘is called back by reason’. But first of all, as Bloom and Adam point out, the Greek here is very hard to interpret, and, as Bloom says, “It is not clear whether the passage refers to spirit or the man with spirit.”⁹⁸ In the latter case, Bloom says, we should translate this as “doesn’t ‘he’ stand firm...until ‘he’ has succeeded”.

If we do take the passage to refer to spirit, we are again confronted with the analogy of allies in battle. The fact that spirit forms “an alliance for battle with what seems just” (4.440c B) impels Moline to take it that Socrates says the spirited part “naturally *heeds* the instructions of the wisdom loving part provided it has not been corrupted”. Moline concludes that “if it *heeds* such instructions ... it must be able to understand them”, and so “is not devoid of sense” (*italics his*).⁹⁹ Yet I see no evidence in this text that one part ‘heeds’ another part. When I believe that I have been treated unjustly (say, I believe that John stole my iPad) anger flares within me. Yet when I become reasonably convinced that it is time to stop pursuing redress for an injustice, (say, I discover I had my iPad all the while) my anger naturally subsides. This in no way implies that my spirit understands and concurs with my reasoning.

But, Socrates asks, is spirit in fact part of our reasoning capacity, or is indeed rather a distinct part of our psyche. To show that the latter is the case, Plato has

⁹⁷ Bloom calls uses the term “likeness”. Shorey says that “καίτοι γε calls attention to the confirmation supplied by the image.”

⁹⁸ Bloom (1968, 457 n31). Adam (1902, 276), also translates 440c with the man, not his spirit, as the subject of the action.

⁹⁹ Moline (1978, 12).

Socrates bring the example of Odysseus, whose anger is aroused but is opposed by his reasoning. Odysseus struggles because on the one hand he is angry at his servants, (whom he believes are dishonoring him), and on the other hand, he does not wish to disrupt his long term plan to avenge himself on the suitors. Now Cairns takes this to show that spirit has beliefs, citing “Odysseus’ belief that the disloyalty of the maid-servants diminishes his honour, and this is not a belief that is supplied by the *logistikon*”.¹⁰⁰ But, what in the text warrants the view that the belief is not supplied by Odysseus’ reason? Why should we not take Socrates to be speaking clearly here? There is that in Odysseus, he says, “that reasons about the better and the worse” (τὸ ἀναλογισάμενον περὶ τοῦ βελτίονός τε καὶ χείρονος 4.441c). In addition, there is “that which feels unreasoning anger” (τῷ ἀλογίστως θυμουμένῳ 4.441c). The maid-servants were indeed dishonoring Odysseus; they were acting quite disgracefully. It seems likely that when Odysseus reasons about the better and the worse, he is reasoning about the rightness of avenging his honor against the maidservants versus the wrongness of acting rashly and frustrating his overall plan for vengeance against the suitors. Thus, the belief-content that the maid-servants were dishonoring him could easily be part of his calculating about the better and the worse, whereas that in him which feels unreasoning anger, (at the dishonor) seems likely to be just that—unreasoning, a feeling, anger. Overall, nothing here logically requires that we situate the reasoning within a spirit part; indeed, the words of the text seem to point us away from that conclusion.

¹⁰⁰ Cairns (1993, 386).

2.1.7 The Inquiry into Soul-Parts: Conclusions

Through these waters, then, said I, we have with difficulty made our way and we are fairly agreed that the same kinds equal in number are to be found in the state and in the soul of each one of us. (4.441c)

Socrates concludes that this inquiry (into soul-parts) is now complete. It is obvious that just as the Kallipolis has within it producers, auxiliaries, and guardians, so too we have within us appetitiveness, spiritedness, and reasoning. On Socrates' view, it is now answered that we, for example, desire to drink, get angry, and calculate with different 'parts' of our psyche. Of course, he says, this answer is still very provisional. There is a longer way that could provide a more secure answer, but this is our current answer—imprecise, but up to the level of the rest of the inquiry.

The discussion of the nature of the soul and its parts will continue, as different character types are considered in Books 4, 8, and 9, as well as in the further discussions of Book 10.¹⁰¹ For now, though, let us sum up what the text of the 'Inquiry Into Soul-Parts' (4.435c-441c), on its own, actually says about soul-parts.

First we should take note of the subject of discussion. The discussion of appetite, spirit, and reason, has been entirely about how they manifest themselves in people in general. There has been no discussion of differences in the nature of soul-parts between producers, auxiliaries, or guardians. Leontius is an example of a person with base desires, but we see the same phenomenon he exemplifies "in many other

¹⁰¹ By Book 4, here, I intend 441c-445d. Books 5, 6, and 7 give some insight into the nature of our reason, but since lower soul parts are not mentioned in these books, they are less relevant to the realist/deflationist debate.

cases". Odysseus is an example of a more noble person, but his struggle between anger and prudence is common in all of us. Overall, we are considering how the psyche and its 'parts' behave, "in [Glaucon] or anyone else" (4.440b).

This brings us to the second summary point, namely the language used to describe the 'parts'. Socrates is clearly talking about 'things' in our psyches, and likely even 'parts' of our psyches, but these aspects of our psyches are never once explicitly called 'parts' using the clear term μέρος, which will be used subsequently, in 'The Inquiry into Character Types'.

Third, and most important, Socrates' characterization of the 'parts' in his direct speech is *uniformly* deflationist. Certainly Socrates often here characterizes soul-parts as agent-like when speaking in metaphor, (such as when he says that it is "*just as though* there were two parties at faction" 4.440b). However, unlike the text that follows, Socrates never says directly that appetite and spirit have their own beliefs, goals, or powers of means-end reasoning. The parts are not characterized as being aware of each other, or of acting on each other. Throughout this text, the actor has been the soul, not the soul's parts. We get angry with a different 'part' of our psyche than the 'part' with which we desire drink, but it is we, not our soul-parts, who are consistently said to be doing the desiring, the drinking, etc.

'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' is the first time that we peer inside the soul and try to understand what is the nature of these parts that our souls have. Plato has Socrates here use language (simile, metaphor, etc.) that at least invites Glaucon and the perhaps the first time reader to understand these parts as agent-like. And there is pedagogical utility to this invitation. We understand what conflict among different parts of the city is

like, so if the parts of our souls are like the parts of the city, then perhaps we can understand the nature of internal psychic conflict. But Socrates also gives us strong hints that we should resist the temptation to see the soul-parts as agent-like. Attending to the contrast between the uniformly non-agent-like description in direct speech and the very agent-like suggestions of the metaphors, though, opens the possibility that we are not required to take the soul-parts as agent-like, even in the first, shorter-way, exposition. Thus Socrates shows us a possible reading of the internal structure of the soul that breaks with the agent-like parts of the city. Further, the subject matter of 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' has consistently been psychic conflict when faced with a single decision. Leontius either will look at the corpses or refrain. Odysseus will either slay the servant girls or refrain. In these cases, although the suggestions (through metaphor and analogy) that the soul-parts might be agent-like are useful, they are not necessary. In understanding why Leontius fails in his resolve and looks at the corpses, it is useful to think of his appetite wanting to look and overpowering his shame. But it is not necessary. For a single action like this, we can easily understand Leontius' behavior with a notion of non-agent-like soul-parts. There is in Leontius a desire to look and a feeling of shame at the prospect. The strength of the desire causes Leontius, who is the only agent, to look. Single actions are easy to explain in terms of soul-parts, but they do not need to be agent-like soul-parts.¹⁰²

¹⁰² The account in Roochnik (2003, 89-90) differs significantly from mine. I do agree with him, though, that a) "The tripartite scheme of book 4, though a useful beginning...was static...It's version of the soul was locked into a single frozen moment of time by the Principle of Non-Opposition", and b) "by the time Socrates reaches book 9, he acknowledges that 'we act with the soul as a whole' [436b] not by means of separate parts.

Overall, if the *Republic* ended here (at 4.441c), or if Book 10 followed next as the conclusion (which I think is an interesting thought experiment), I suspect that many commentators would be deflationists. Even so notable a realist as Irwin, as Whiting puts it, “more or less concedes that ‘for the purposes of Book IV’ a deflationist account will do”.¹⁰³ Certainly some commentators would still believe that the city-soul analogy pushes us to see the parts as agents. And likely other commentators would put forward other reasons to interpret this passage in a realist manner, perhaps because they think Plato needs this to explain the nature of weakness of will and/or to argue against Socratic Intellectualism. As I have highlighted during the exegesis, some have argued that even absent the characterizations of Books 8 and 9, the text here displays parts as agent-like in nature. On my reading, though, the plain sense of the text, here, strongly suggests a deflationist interpretation, but because of the frequent metaphors, leaves the question open. I will argue, however, that subsequent sections will be different.

2.2 The Inquiry into Character types (4.441c-445d, 8.544a-9.592b)

I have named 4.441c-445d, and 8.544a-9.592b, ‘The Inquiry into Character Types’ with no question begging intent. I make no prejudgment as to whether or how the characterization of soul-parts found here should be incorporated into our understanding of how Plato saw the nature of the parts of our souls. Nevertheless, the

¹⁰³ Whiting (2012, 203). Whiting is pointing to Irwin’s *Plato Moral Theory*, where on p.227 he concedes that “It is not clear that [the soul parts of Books VIII and IX] are the same parts of the soul as the parts with the same names in IV”, and p.327, where he says that “for the purposes of Book IV, then, Plato’s general claims about ‘kinds’, ‘parts’, and ‘things’, amount to the claim that there are desires differing in kind in a way unrecognized by Socrates. I have assumed that the archer and the top, with different parts or aspects in different conditions, are meant to be parallel to the soul, which is also one thing with different parts or aspects”.

change of subject matter is clear. Socrates first says that they have completed the difficult inquiry into whether the parts of the soul are like the parts of the city and then turns to the description of different the five character types (“πέντε δὲ ψυχῆς” 445d) that are ‘worth mentioning’.¹⁰⁴ Socrates begins by distinguishing (4.441c-445d) what he calls “the just man” (4.444a). The discussion is then halted while Books 5, 6, and 7 concern themselves with matters of metaphysics, epistemology, and the education of the Philosopher-Kings. Certainly in these ‘middle books’ people are said to have appetites (such as the person who does or doesn’t have an appetite for food at 5.475c) and to be spirited (such as the spirited person at 5.465a). Nevertheless, soul-parts are not mentioned at all in the middle books, so this chapter will jump over them, resuming at 8.544a, where Socrates distinguishes four other character types, namely, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical.¹⁰⁵

Interpreting this section of the *Republic* raises the same tension between realist and deflationist alternatives as was found in the ‘Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ (4.435c-441c). In the last section, I argued (with the deflationists and against the realists) that Socrates, in direct speech, consistently presented soul-parts as not agent-like, throughout ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’. In this section, though, I am more aligned with the realists. I will argue that here, Socrates does often (though not always) present soul-parts as agent-like in direct as well as metaphorical speech. I claim that this is true in both the

¹⁰⁴ Without discussion, I am using the term ‘character’ here, to describe the ‘one just form and the four unjust forms found both in the constitutions of cities and people’. My focus, in this chapter and in this section, remains on the nature of soul-parts. In the next two chapters I will dig into just what I take Socrates to mean by ‘character’.

¹⁰⁵ Socrates does mention soul-parts once, but only to reiterate that “the statements made at that time were, as it looked to me, deficient in precision” (6.504a-b B).

Book 4 portion of the passage (4.441c-445d) and also the Books 8 and 9 portion (8.544a-9.592b). In both portions, I claim, appetite and spirit are sometimes given goals, beliefs, means-end reasoning powers, conversational abilities, and agency.

My approach here will differ from the previous section. In the previous section, because my claim was that the soul-parts were presented as *uniformly* non-agent-like in direct speech, I worked through the text methodically, arguing that each section was best read as deflationist. Further, I used realist interpretations as objections to answer at each point. Here, though, since I am claiming the frequent but not uniform presence of realist depiction of soul-parts in direct speech, I have less need to work through the entire text. I will focus on select passages where Socrates' direct language supports a realist interpretation of soul-parts and will also pick some passages to support the claim of non-uniformity. Also, though I am arguing in line with the realists here, I will not attempt to methodically answer deflationist objections, since I will ultimately be aligned with the deflationist's overall viewpoint, if not their specific objections to this section of Plato's text.

2.2.1 The Just Character Type (441c-445d)

Having made his "difficult way through a sea of argument", Socrates turns to the next topic. The subject under discussion shifts from 'all of us' to the person of just character. Along with this shift in subject comes a shift in language. Whereas in the prior section Socrates discussed 'parts' of the soul without using the term μέρος, he now begins to do so almost immediately (e.g. 4.442b, 4.442c, 4.444b). Further, Socrates, in direct speech, describes the spirit and appetite of the just person as parts that have

beliefs, communications capacity, and goals—that is to say, according to the definition that we have adopted, they are depicted as agent-like.

Socrates, in this section, explicitly ascribes to spirit and appetite the possession of beliefs. Spirit “learns and is educated to do its work” (4.442a) by means of “soothing stories” (Bloom) or “soothing address” (Adam). And most explicitly, spirit, appetite, and reason “have the same beliefs” (ὁμοδοξῶσι 4.442d).¹⁰⁶ Certainly the interpretative tension is still with us. Deflationists can and do argue that Socrates should be taken to be speaking metaphorically, but at the surface level of the text of this passage, this is not the case. Spirit is clearly the subject, and ‘learns’ is clearly the verb. Socrates does not say that spirit is ‘like a child that is educated’ or that it is ‘like the auxiliaries that are educated’. In his direct speech, here, he simply says that spirit is educated and has beliefs.

Along with beliefs, lower soul-parts are explicitly shown as being aware of each other, and communicating with each other. Unlike the earlier references to spirit and reason as allies, which were couched in metaphor and open to the interpretation that spirit naturally acts along the same lines as reason, and thus though acting independently, is in a de facto alliance with it, here spirit is explicitly said to be the ally of reason *because it listens to it and obeys* (ὑπηκόω 4.441e). Of course, spirit cannot truly ‘listen’ to reason since it has no ears, however if it obeys reason, then it must be aware of reason. Again, Socrates speaks directly here. Similarly, at 4.442c, spirit is said to

¹⁰⁶ A great many realist interpreters have pointed out the passages in this section, for example, Bobonich (2002, 220). To cite each interpreter, and for each textual reference, would add little and would consume excessive space.

act in accordance with “the rule handed down by the reason as to what is or is not to be feared”, as Shorey translates, and as seems to me to be the intent of the text. Bloom renders the passage “what has been proclaimed by the speeches about that which is terrible and that which is not”. Shorey’s translation depicts an agent-like spirit in communication with reason. Bloom’s translation is even more realist, showing spirit not only in communication with reason, but able to understand its speeches, directly, about what is and is not to be feared. Either way, the description, as Socrates gives it, is very realist. Spirit (along with reason) will “watch over” (προσθήσεσθον 4.442a) appetite. Certainly there is some metaphor at work here, since spirit cannot actually ‘watch over’ (or, more literally, stand over) appetite. Nevertheless, Socrates is saying that spirit is aware of appetite, which was one of the criteria we set down for agent-like parts. Further, at 4.442c-d the three parts are said to be in a state of friendship (φιλία) with each other. In the prior section, I argued that when Socrates used the metaphor of two parties being ‘like allies’, it might depict two parties independently pursuing the same path, thereby being ‘like allies’. Certainly, despite the fact that Socrates has shifted the discussion to a new topic (‘The Inquiry into Character Types’) the prior section is still fresh in our minds, so ‘being friends’ will likely call to mind the prior picture of the parts being ‘like allies’. In this sense the metaphor may still be said to be operating, and the deflationist will likely argue that it is. Nevertheless, Socrates does explicitly say that the parts will be friends; and to be friends, it seems as if there must be two parties that are aware of each other.

Other examples could be brought forward. Many, for example, have argued that appetite’s desire for money entails goal-oriented behavior supported by means-end

reasoning capability.¹⁰⁷ Overall, Socrates here uses direct speech to depict lower soul-parts as agent-like. Even as strong a deflationist as Shields calls this “indisputable”.¹⁰⁸ Now Shields (and others) still want to claim that these textual references are metaphorical; and the text is certainly open to interpretation. However, what is clear is that in this section, the text itself, in Shields’ words, “does speak in agentive terms of the faculties of soul...indisputably”.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, although I have argued that in parts of this passage the plain sense of the text clearly describes soul-parts in realist terms, it is not uniformly realist, either in how it refers to parts or in how it characterizes them. Though Socrates, as already pointed out, does here introduce the strong term for parts (μέρος) of the soul, he does not entirely abandon his prior practice of referring to them in weaker terms. He still, for example, refers to parts of the soul as ‘classes’ (γένος, e.g. at 4.442b and 4.443d.) And although the parts are sometimes clearly the agents, at other times it is the person, not his soul-parts, who is the agent. Thus it is a person at 4.442b-c who is courageous or wise or moderate, and a just person, like the image of justice in the just city, who, as Bloom translates,

doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other, but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle. And if there are some other parts in between, he binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized. Then, and only then, he acts...he believes and names a just and fine action one that preserves and helps to produce this condition, and wisdom the knowledge that supervises this action; while he believes and names an unjust action one that

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Annas (1981, 130).

¹⁰⁸ Shields (2007, 85).

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

undoes this condition, and lack of learning, in its turn, the opinion that supervises this action. (4.443b-e Bloom)

Overall, it is the individual, not the parts, that is clearly the agent here. He, not his parts acts; he has beliefs, etc. And yet, the realist/deflationist ambiguity is very evident in this passage. Though 'he' is the subject who doesn't let his soul-parts "mind each other's business" or "meddle with each other", minding and meddling seem to indicate that those soul-parts have at least the potential for agentic activity, inter-part interaction, etc. Socrates refers to soul-parts metaphorically as notes in a harmonic scale, and introduces the inter-part interaction in this passage by referring back to the city soul analogy, where an 'image of justice' (εἰδωλόν τι τῆς δικαιοσύνης 4.443c) depicted agentic city parts each doing their own work.

Overall, then, it seems that the transition that Socrates announces at 4.441c is quite significant. Of course, Socrates might shift subject matter without shifting from deflationist to realist description of soul-parts. But Socrates does more than simply shift topic. The subject under discussion shifts from people in general (just like us), to a specific, (and I will ultimately argue idealized) character type. The language shifts from characterizing soul-parts only in very tentative terms, to sometimes calling them 'parts' in a distinct manner. And Socrates' characterization of the soul-parts in direct speech shifts from uniformly non-agent-like to often (though not uniformly) agent-like. Socrates' new practice of describing soul-parts in agentic terms in his direct speech continues when 'The Inquiry into Character Types' resumes in Books 8 and 9.

2.2.2 The Four Unjust Characters (8.544a-9.592b)

As was the case with the just character type, the subject under discussion is not ‘all of us’ but rather specific types of unjust characters. Further, as it was when discussing the just character type, Socrates does not here avoid the strong term μέρος in referring to the soul-parts of the unjust character types. At 9.577d, for example, the tyrannical city is compared with the tyrannical soul. In each case, the “best and most reasonable parts (μέρη) of it being enslaved, while a small part, the worst and the most frenzied, plays the despot”. Similarly, at 9.581a, Socrates refers to the part of the soul (τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ μέρος) that is money-loving or profit-loving. Socrates also refers to our reasoning part as a μέρος, discussing the pleasure of “that part of the soul (τοῦ μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς) by which we learn” (9.583a). Still, Socrates does not abandon his use of weaker terms to describe parts of the soul. He still refers to soul-parts as ‘forms’ (εἶδη), e.g. at 9.572a. He still often avoids the word ‘part’ entirely, though most translators helpfully add it (as at 8.550b, to cite one of numerous instances). Thus, as was the case in the discussion of the just character type, Socrates here sometimes uses and sometimes avoids strong partite language in referring to parts of the soul.

More important than his use of μέρος to describe the parts, Socrates often describes the soul-parts of the four unjust character types in agentic terms in his direct speech, just as he did the soul-parts of the just character type. Appetite and spirit here sometimes seem to have beliefs. In many people, the baser desires can be controlled by an alliance between “the better desires in alliance with reason” (τῶν βελτιόνων ἐπιθυμιῶν μετὰ λόγου 9.571b). As LSJ points out, μετὰ with the genitive points to two

entities working together. There certainly seems to be partite agency highlighted here, and it also seems that each of the two parts (reason and the better part of appetite), on their own, have the belief that the base appetites are wrong and lawless. Some scholars point to 9.586d-e as evidence that reason can persuade appetite and spirit to act according to its judgment and that therefore appetite and spirit must be capable of understanding arguments and holding beliefs.¹¹⁰ Similarly, at 8.554c, Socrates says that the oligarchic soul's base appetites are held down "not persuading them that it 'is better not' nor taming them by reason, but by compulsion and fear". Many take from this that appetite is a part could be persuaded, even if it is not so persuaded in this type of character.¹¹¹ Further, in the tyrannical soul, our appetite has its own beliefs about the honorable versus the base (9.574d) and 'dares' (τολμᾶ) to undertake any act it 'supposes' (οἶεται) to be desirable (9.571c).¹¹²

Also, as in the case of the just character type, the unjust character types are sometimes described as having parts that are aware of one another, can communicate with one another, and can act on one another. As evidence, some commentators point to 8.554c-e, where "his better desires master his worse desires".¹¹³ Further, in 9.589a-b, Shields, among others, points to the fact that the various parts are said to "bite and kill one another rather than accustoming them to each other and making them friendly".¹¹⁴ This certainly appears to depict soul-parts as being aware of each other

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Carone (2001, 126-127).

¹¹¹ See, for example, Carone (ibid.) or Singpurwalla (2011, 14).

¹¹² Moss (2008, 37 n4) points to these passages as implying appetite has beliefs about what is fine and shameful (574d), and also making it "explicit" that appetite has beliefs (571c).

¹¹³ Bloom's translation. See, for example, Singpurwalla (2011, 14), among many.

¹¹⁴ Grube/Reeve's translation. See, for example, Shields (2007, 80) among many.

and acting as agent upon each other. Nevertheless, the same realist/deflationist ambiguity that we noted at 4.442b-e is very evident in this passage. Consider the entire passage, as Grube/Reeve translate:

Then, fashion around them the image of one of them, that of a human being so that anyone who sees only the outer covering and not what's inside will think it is a single creature, a human being. It's done. Then, if someone maintains that injustice profits this human being and that doing just things brings no advantage, let's tell him that he is simply saying that it is beneficial for him, first, to feed the multiform beast well and make it strong, and also the lion and all that pertains to him; second, to starve and weaken the human being within, so that he is dragged along wherever either of the other two leads; and, third, to leave the parts to bite and kill one another rather than accustoming them to each other and making them friendly. (588d-589a)

On the one hand, the parts biting and killing each other, or alternatively getting accustomed to each other and becoming friendly makes the parts sound very agent-like. On the other hand, the human being that contains the parts is very much in evidence as a primary actor as well. Further, the entire passage is a metaphor that admits of alternative interpretations, as opposed to clear and direct speech.

And yet, Socrates seems to speak very explicitly at 9.586e-587a, saying

Then when the entire soul accepts the guidance of the wisdom-loving part and is not filled with inner dissension, the result for each part is that it in all other respects keeps to its own task and is just, and likewise that each enjoys its own proper pleasures and the best pleasures and, so far as such a thing is possible, the truest. And so when one of the other two gets the mastery the result for it is that it does not find its own proper pleasure and constrains the others to pursue an alien pleasure and not the true. (9.586e-587a)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ ἄρα ἐπομένης ἀπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ μὴ στασιαζούσης ἐκάστῳ τῷ μέρει ὑπάρχει εἷς τε τᾶλλα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν καὶ δικαίῳ εἶναι, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς τὰς ἑαυτοῦ ἕκαστον καὶ τὰς βελτίστας καὶ εἰς τὸ δυνατόν τὰς ἀληθεστάτας καρποῦσθαι. κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν. ὅταν δὲ ἄρα τῶν ἐτέρων τι κρατήσῃ, ὑπάρχει αὐτῷ μῆτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἡδονὴν ἐξευρίσκειν, τὰ τε ἄλλ' ἀναγκάζειν ἄλλοτριαν καὶ μὴ ἀληθῆ ἡδονὴν διώκειν.

The subject in the final sentence (*τι*) refers to appetite or spirit. First, at 9.586d (as in many other places), Socrates refers to appetite and spirit as the money-loving (*τὸ φιλοκερδές*) and the victory-loving (*τὸ φιλόνικον*). Then, in the passage above, *ἐτέρων* refers back to them, picking out 'one of the two', i.e. appetite or spirit. Thus 'appetite or spirit' is the subject of the sentence and the doer of the action. And the action that appetite or spirit undertakes is to gain control over the soul (*κρατήση*). Both appetite and spirit are able to compel the other parts (*τά τε ἄλλ' ἀναγκάζειντά ἄλλοτρίαν*) to pursue (*διώκειν*) their distinctive pleasures. To the realist, this passage ascribes agency to appetite and spirit. Carone, for example interprets this passage to show that:

the lower parts of the soul are also capable of means-end reasoning, where the end can be described as valuable in so far as it is the target of aspiration which makes the means instrumentally good to attain the goal.¹¹⁶

In a well ordered soul, where reason leads, each part enjoys its own pleasures, but only pleasures that are good for the person. Appetite, for example, would desire the right kind and the right amount of drink. Left to its own devices, though, appetite is "unable to find its own proper pleasure"; it might, for example, desire to consume four martinis instead of two glasses of water. Further, if appetite gains ascendancy in the soul, it forces the other parts also to pursue, as Shorey puts it, "an alien pleasure". Thus reason will be thinking, say, about how to procure the four martinis instead of reasoning about how to procure the right food and drink. A deflationist, of course, will

¹¹⁶ Carone (2001, 129).

read 9.586e-587a differently. If I am controlled by an appetite for martinis, then I will set about obtaining those martinis; but it may be me, not my appetite, that sets that goal.

Nevertheless, that the soul-parts in Books 8 and 9 have their own goals is evident in other passages as well. Spirit is “wholly set on predominance and victory and good repute” (9.581a), which certainly sounds more like spirit having goals than being attracted to certain distinctive pleasures. As for appetite, many commentators point to 580e to show that it too has goals.¹¹⁷

We called it the appetitive part because of the intensity of its appetites concerned with food and drink and love and their accompaniments, and likewise the money-loving part, because money is the chief instrument for the gratification of such desires. (580e)

That appetite desires money not (or not only) for its own sake, but also instrumentally, seems (as has often been pointed out) to give goals and goal-oriented behavior to appetite (not to mention the capacity for means-end reasoning).

In addition to the often agentic description of the soul-parts of the four unjust character types, the metaphors used to support the argument also pull many to see the soul-parts as agent-like. For example, many commentators take from the man/beast/lion metaphor at 9.588c-d that since the beast and the lion are agents, Socrates must be suggesting that appetite and spirit are also agents.¹¹⁸

Deflationists, of course, will counter-argue (as noted earlier) that the main point of this analogy is the lion-like nature of spirit and the beast-like nature of appetite, not the agentic nature of the soul-parts that are said to be like them. In addition to rejecting

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Bobonich (2002, 246), among many.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, as noted earlier, Irwin (1995, 217), among many.

the lion/beast/man metaphor as showing that soul-parts are agents, deflationists will also point to the many places in Books 8 and 9 where the person, rather than his parts, is the agent of the action.¹¹⁹

2.2.3 The Inquiry into Character types: Conclusion

Overall, on a close reading of the text, there is much here to support a realist reading of soul-parts, although the realist/deflationist question is still open. At the end of Section 2.1, after working through ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ (4.435c-441c), I suggested that “if the *Republic* ended here (at 4.441c) ... I suspect that many commentators would be deflationists”. Now that we’ve worked through the rest of Book 4, and Books 8 and 9, though, the matter is much more complicated. Unlike the picture of soul-parts in ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’, where Socrates used metaphors open to realist interpretation, but in his direct speech gave uniformly non-agent-like descriptions of soul-parts, here Socrates often describes those soul-parts in very realist terms, both in his direct and his metaphorical speech. Although there is still ambiguity, a realist might reasonably argue that Socrates introduced the soul-parts in the first section and then elaborated upon them with more detail in the second. She therefore would feel justified in applying the more well elaborated descriptions from ‘The Inquiry into Character Types’ to the earlier ‘Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ passage, in order fully to understand Socrates’ meaning. Deflationists, on the other hand, want to take much of

¹¹⁹ To cite just one example among many, consider 9.586c-d. As argued, in the ‘Inquiry into Character Types’ τὸ θυμοειδὲς has often been described during in agent-like terms in Socrates’ direct speech, as well as in metaphor. Here, though, it is not the spirit-part, but the person who is the agent. It is he who is envious, violent, and “pursues the satisfaction of his anger and his desires for honors and victories”.

the language of 'The Inquiry into Character Types' to be metaphorical, pointing to the philosophical problems that would emerge if the 'parts' were truly agent-like.

Note also the difference in subject matter between 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' and 'The Inquiry into Character Types'. Whereas the former (as noted in section 2.1.7) focused on single actions, the latter focuses on whole lives and how people are disposed to behave. Agent-like soul parts are a useful pedagogical tool for explaining how particular people are disposed to behave. If we imagine somebody like the oligarchic man, it is easy to understand his behavior in terms of his agent-like appetite part ruling his soul and directing his actions. Thus non-agent-like soul-parts were pedagogically useful and sufficient for discussing single actions in 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts', whereas agent-like soul parts were pedagogically useful for discussing whole lives in 'The Inquiry into Character Types'. But we must keep in mind Socrates' repeated statements that the description of soul-parts in this shorter-way discussion will certainly not be precise or accurate (4.435d), that all of the conclusions must be abandoned if the hypothesis of non-opposition turns out to be inaccurate, etc. It is quite possible that both the agent-like picture of soul-parts and the non-agent-like picture of soul parts are presented because they are pedagogically useful at that moment in the argument, but will need to be abandoned because they are just not accurate pictures of how the inside of the soul functions.

If the *Republic* ended here, at the end of Book 9, the debate between realists and deflationists would seem to be unresolvable. And indeed, as mentioned earlier, until recently most commentators did end their consideration of the psychological theory of the *Republic* at this point. It bears reiterating, I think, that many of the prominent voices

in this debate have ignored Book 10 entirely in trying to understand the nature of soul-parts. Irwin and Bobonich, to cite two examples, never mention Book 10 at all. Annas covers Book 10 in a separate section of her *An Introduction to the Republic*, but does not incorporate it into her argument about the nature of soul-parts. Many others have done the same. I contend that for this reason, it is not surprising that the debate continues to be active.

But Book 9 is not the end of the *Republic*. I suggest that those who regard Book 10 as an excrescence, appendix, afterthought, etc., sell Plato short. Further, it seems to me that Book 10 concerns itself vitally with human psychology, that is to say, the nature of the soul, its putative 'parts,' and the types of character it may develop. I think that Book 10, as some commentators have recently begun to realize, can help us fill out the picture of the psychology that Socrates expounds in the *Republic*, providing, on my view, new evidence to push us toward a deflationist understanding of soul-parts.

2.3 Book 10

Grube/Reeve's introduction to Book 10 offers a typical summary, namely that a) the main argument of the *Republic* is complete, b) Socrates now returns to the subject of poetry, and c) Socrates then turns to the topic of the immortality of the soul.¹²⁰ Overall, this summary is certainly fair, but I do not agree that the main argument is complete. On my view, Socrates is still pursuing the stated project of the *Republic*, namely, to argue for the superiority of the virtuous life. Over the course of the first nine

¹²⁰ Grube/Reeve (1992, 264).

books, the inquiry has suggested that for most people (including Socrates), virtue entails a particular organization of the soul, where your reason (if you are a realist) or your reasoning (if you are a strong deflationist) leads and potentially conflicting desires and emotions follow the dictates of reason (or reasoning). On my reading of Book 10, as Socrates revisits imitation, and delves into the immortal soul, he also continues The Inquiry into psychology. For our purposes, we can consider Book 10 as comprising two, roughly equally sized parts, the first of these being the consideration of poetry and its effect on the city and the soul (10.595a-608b), and the second of them being the Myth of Er (10.608c-621d). This section concerns itself with the former, since the latter half makes no mention of soul-parts.¹²¹

For the purposes of this discussion, the former (Book 10's inquiry into poetry, and its effect on the soul) will be considered in three main sections: 1) 'The Charge Against Painting' (10.602c-603c), 2) 'The Charge Against Poetry' (10.603c-605c), and 3) 'The Greatest Charge' (10.605c-606d). A fourth section, namely 'The Image of Glaucus' (10.611b—612a), is also relevant to our exegesis on soul-parts and will be briefly discussed as well.

Overall, in this section, I argue that just as was the case in Book 4's 'Inquiry Into Soul-Parts' (4.435c-441c), the discussion here concerns the nature of the souls of ordinary people in cities similar to the Athens of Plato's day, where, for example, unsupervised theater is present. Further, at least in direct speech, I will argue that Socrates describes the soul and its 'parts' in uniformly deflationist terms. My approach

¹²¹ We will get to the Myth of Er in Chapter 3, where we will consider all of Book 10 in the context of character.

will be to work through each of the four above mentioned passages that pertain to soul-parts, testing whether the description is realist or deflationist at each point.

2.3.1 The Effect of Poetry On the Soul (10.595a-608b)

Socrates opens Book 10 by asserting that it is clear that they were right, earlier, in excluding mimetic poetry (μιμητική) from the Kallipolis, now that the forms or parts of the soul (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδη) have been distinguished. It is not entirely clear what Socrates is referring to by this phrase. This might be taken to mean ‘now that (having ended Books 8 and 9), the various forms or species of soul have been distinguished’. Perhaps this is Bloom’s intent, when he renders: “now that the soul’s forms have each been separated out”.¹²² Halliwell similarly renders this as “now that the categories of the soul have each been distinguished”.¹²³ This reading seems to connect the discussion strongly to the immediately prior ‘Inquiry into Character Types’. That is to say, now that the various types of soul have been distinguished (timocrat, oligarch, etc.), it is clear that mimetic poetry should be excluded from the Kallipolis. This reading works well with the flow of the text. If this were the case, though, one might then expect Socrates to contrast how poetry affects the austere oligarch as compared with the flighty democrat or the frenzied tyrant, but he does not do so. There is no mention here in Book 10 of any of these character types.¹²⁴

¹²² Bloom (1968, 277).

¹²³ Halliwell (1988, 35).

¹²⁴ Indeed, Book 10’s discussion of εἶδωλα puts us in mind of the images of pleasure that the tyrant experiences in Book 9 (9.587c). The same is true for Book 10’s return to the expulsion of poets and Socrates’ suggestion, at 8.568b, that “we don’t admit [poets] into our city, since they praise tyranny”. These similarities, though, make it even more surprising that Socrates never, in Book 10, once mentions the character types developed in Books 4-9.

Alternatively, since Socrates often uses εἶδη to mean ‘parts’, τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς εἶδη might rather mean ‘the parts of the soul’, as Grube/Reeve renders: “now that we have distinguished the separate parts of the soul”.¹²⁵ This approach seems to connect Book 10 with ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’. However, as will emerge, this reading also entails difficulties. As soon as the inquiry begins, Socrates says that he thinks mimetic poetry “is likely to distort the thought (δianoίας) of anyone who hears it. One might have expected Socrates to say that mimetic poetry feeds the appetite, but though the soul and its parts are explicitly discussed here, throughout Book 10 appetite and spirit are never mentioned at all, at least not by the names we have come to know them in the dialogue so far.

For now, let us put aside the question of what Socrates means by “now that we have distinguished the εἶδη of the soul”. A couple of points should be noted at the outset, though. The Book 4 discussion is heavily referenced throughout Book 10’s argument. At 10.602e, for example, Socrates refers back to the principle of non-opposition. Similarly, at 10.603d, Socrates recalls 4.439cff, saying, “we already came to an adequate conclusion about all these things in our earlier arguments”. Secondly, although Socrates begins Book 10 with a reference to the Kallipolis (10.595a) and ends the section with forward looking comments about the Kallipolis (10.607b-608b), the intervening discussion is not in any manner about the Kallipolis.¹²⁶ Socrates does

¹²⁵ Grube/Reeve (1992, 265). Shorey (1980, 419) Ferrari (2000, 313), and Sachs (2007) are similar. Annas (1981, 336) also takes Book 10’s opening remark to be “the soul’s parts”.

¹²⁶ As noted by Halliwell (2011, 248ff) and others. Verity Harte (2010, 70) for example, writes: “On the view I defend, book 10’s discussion of mimetic art is focused on the prospects of mitigating the harmful effects of mimetic art for those who are not ideally situated, not in the Callipolis,”

reprise a city-soul analogy at 10.605a-b, and this makes us think of the Kallipolis, but the city does not seem to be the Kallipolis. In this city, the people who should rule are not ‘philosophers’, or ‘guardians’ but rather ordinary citizens—simply ones who are the “better sort” (χαριστέρους 10.605b) of citizens. And contrasted with those better sort of citizens are not auxiliaries or producers, but simply “bad” (μοχθηρούς 10.605b) citizens. None of the discussion in this first half of Book 10 is about how mimetic poetry affects the souls of Philosopher-Kings, auxiliaries, producers, or any of the inhabitants of the Kallipolis, but rather how it affects the souls of people in general—the inhabitants of existing cities, who attend the theater, look at sticks in water, suffer losses, and so forth. As Socrates and Glaucon inquire into how people react to poetry, illusion, suffering, etc., they are considering the psychology of people across the board— “the majority of people who know nothing” (10.602b), and also “the best of us” (10.605c). Thus it seems that in Book 10’s inquiry into ‘The Effect of Poetry on the Soul’, like Book 4’s ‘Inquiry into Soul-Parts’, considers the social behavior and psychology of ordinary people in ordinary cities.

2.3.2 The Charge Against Painting (602c-603c)

Now, then, on which one of the parts of the human being does [imitation] have the power it has...What sort of part do you mean... The same magnitude surely doesn’t look equal to our sight from near and from far...And haven’t measuring, counting, and weighing come to light as most charming helpers in these cases...But this surely must be the work of the calculating part in a soul...And to it, when it has measured and indicates that some things are bigger or smaller than others, or equal, often contrary appearances are presented at the same time about the same things...Didn’t we say that it is impossible for the same thing to opine contraries at the same time about the same things...Therefore, the part of the soul opining contrary to the measures would not be the same as the part that does so in accordance with the measures. (602c-603a Bloom)

Lately, this passage has attracted much attention, and I think rightly so.¹²⁷ There is discussion here of a soul-part that ‘opines’ or in some translations, ‘forms beliefs’. If it turns out that appetite and/or appetite and spirit is the part that opines, this might be strong evidence for a realist interpretation, since having strong beliefs (e.g. opinions) was one of the criteria of realist soul-parts.¹²⁸ I am going to spend a significant amount of time with this passage, arguing that the soul-part that opines, here, is not appetite, spirit, or appetite and spirit combined. Further, I am going to argue that even if one does take the soul-part under discussion to be appetite, or appetite and spirit combined, this passage, on my view, still does not support a realist interpretation.

Socrates opens the discussion with a question that is worded vaguely. “What sort of thing in a human being” (10.602c, as Sachs, in typically literal manner, has it) is affected by imitation? And Glaucon seems confused, replying, “What sort of thing are you talking about?” (10.602c). It certainly does appear, despite the vague language, that Socrates is asking ‘which part of the soul does imitation affect?’ But he seems to be almost pointedly avoiding using a word for part, or part-names, like ‘appetite’ or ‘spirit’. At times, Socrates says, we measure two things to determine which is larger and this act of calculation, of course, is the work of the reasoning part of the soul (τοῦ λογιστικοῦ ἂν εἴη τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ ἔργον, 10.602e). However, sometimes, at that very moment, “the opposite appears to it at the same time” (10.602e G). Therefore, as per the principle of non-opposition, there must exist in the soul some part other than reason that forms the opposing belief about the size. But, it is not at all clear what part of the

¹²⁷ By commentators such as Moss, Lorenz, Singpurwalla, and Reeve.

¹²⁸ As discussed previously, see page 19.

soul it is that opposes reason. Is it (a) some inferior part of reason, (b) appetite, or appetite and spirit together, but not possessing beliefs, c) appetite, or appetite and spirit together, with possession of beliefs, or (d) something else altogether? The Greek is certainly unclear, and Adam devotes an entire appendix to discussing alternative ways of understanding the language here.¹²⁹ (In the discussion that follows, for simplicity and with no intention of question-begging, I am going to refer to this part as ‘the opining part’, since repeatedly referring to ‘the part that opines contrary to measurement’ is unwieldy.)

Nehamas, Kenny, and Murphy, among others, opt for alternative (a).¹³⁰ This seems to be a reasonable reading of the Greek, since, as Halliwell points out, “in strict grammar, the rational element is the indirect object of *phainetai*”.¹³¹ It also fits somewhat well with the flow of the argument, in the sense that something is being divided according to the principle of non-opposition, and that something seems to be reason. However the notion of divided reason seems contrary to everything Plato is at pains to argue, as Adam, for one, points out.¹³² There is much that could be argued both in favor of and also against this position, but we need not do so here. If you take Nehamas et. al., to be wrong, holding that Socrates is not here dividing reason into a better and worse part, then nothing further needs to be said about their position. And if you take their position to be right, then appetite and spirit are not involved in the

¹²⁹ Adam (1902, 466).

¹³⁰ Nehamas (1999, 264-266), Kenny (1973, 22), Murphy (1951, 239-243). See also Burnyeat (1976, 34). See also Price’s account of ‘half-beliefs’ (1995, 43-45).

¹³¹ Halliwell (1998, 134). Murphy (1951, 239) also points to the fact the Stallbaum also considers this the strict reading of the grammar. For an alternative reading, see Lorenz (2006a, 66 n16), and Adam (1902, 466).

¹³² Adam (1902, 466). See also Whiting (2012, 183-184)’s argument against divided reason.

passage, in which case nothing in the realist/deflationist debate is affected by this passage. (No beliefs, on this interpretation, would be ascribed to appetite or spirit.)

Moss, Lorenz, and others, opt for alternative (b).¹³³ On Moss' account, the opining part discussed here in 'The Charge Against Painting' is appetite and spirit taken together. On first glance, this represents a strongly realist claim, in that if the opining part is appetite and spirit, and the opining part has beliefs and opinions, then appetite and spirit are capable of forming beliefs. Moss argues, though, that the beliefs are not really beliefs at all and that appetite and spirit do not truly opine.¹³⁴ Rather, according to Moss, sometimes things appear good to us and sometimes we simply accept those appearances of goodness, instead of reasoning about whether what appears to us really is or is not good for us. Indeed, for Moss, this is just what it means to be an inferior part of the soul—to accept appearances.¹³⁵ Again, as was the case with Nehamas and those who argue for divided reason, since we are here focused on the debate between realists and deflationists, we do not need to analyze this matter. If one rejects Moss et. al.'s position, then we need not pursue their argument further. And if one accepts their position, since appetite and spirit are not given strong beliefs, or any of the other attributes defined as indicating agent-like soul-parts, then passage does not support the realist position.

¹³³ See Moss (2008, 40-42), Lorenz (2006a, 59-73), Reeve (1988, 127, 139). I will focus on Moss' account, though the others in this group argue along similar lines.

¹³⁴ I focus on Moss' argument for simplicity. Lorenz and others argue along the same line.

¹³⁵ Moss calls these beliefs 'sub-doxastic beliefs'. Certainly one might argue that the construct of a 'sub-doxastic belief' is inherently problematic, and might question why we should believe that Socrates was arguing for such a construct.

It is important, though, to take some time to understand *why* Moss reads this passage as referring to appetite and spirit. On my view, we should resist this identification of the opining part with appetite and spirit, i) because we don't *need* to do so, and ii) because we shouldn't *want* to do so. Moss claims that we do, in fact, need to make this identification. Her argument, as I understand it, is that (1) καὶ θυμοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν (10.606d) must refer to spirit-part and appetite-part, (2) poetry appeals to this part (10.606d), (3) painting appeals to the opining part (of 10.602c-10.603c), (4) painting and poetry appeal to the same part (10.605b-c), and therefore (5) the opining part is appetite and spirit. Moss sees entailment here, but I see none.

First of all, when we come to 10.606d, I will argue that it is unlikely that 10.606d's ἐπιθυμητικῶν and θυμοῦ refer to the appetite-part and spirit-part, as opposed to simply desires and anger; and if this is the case, then Moss' entire argument that the opining part is equivalent to appetite and spirit fails. Further, even if do we take 10.606d to be referring to the appetite and spirit parts, I deny that this entails that the opining part of 10.602 refers to those same parts. Socrates says that painting appeals to an inferior, opining part of the soul, that, as Grube/Reeve have it, "is far from reason". Socrates asks whether poetry appeals to that same part, concluding, upon inquiry, that it does. But this is all before we get to 10.606d. Socrates might well be saying that I) painting appeals to a part of the soul that wants to opine, II) poetry appeals to that same opining part, and III) poetry also (10.606d) appeals to appetite and spirit, or at least to all of the

passions and appetitive desires within us.¹³⁶ Read this way, the identity between the opining part and appetite or appetite/spirit is not entailed. On this reading we are not *obliged* to equate the opining part with appetite and spirit, and on my view we have good reason not to want to stretch to do so.

First, the plain sense of Socrates' account of appetites, throughout the *Republic* up to this point, is that we have appetites for things that satisfy bodily urges, such as desires for food, drink, sex, as well as for some related items, like money. On the face of it, one wouldn't conceive of having an *appetite* to take a straight stick standing in the water to be truly bent, at least insofar as appetite has been so far described. Socrates' example is powerful just because the belief that the stick in water is bent (or that the lines in the Müller-Lyre illusion are of unequal length) is so affectless that we accept them as examples of appeals to an inferior part of the soul, but not to appetite or spirit. Indeed, Socrates' overall psychological point here seems broader. Even in cases that are less affectless, often we have a desire to follow opinion, even when reasoning dictates otherwise. Imagine that I receive an email with an offer to buy a course for \$800 that will teach me Attic Greek in one week. Part of me wants to follow the belief that the offer is real, even though my reasoning says that one cannot learn Greek in that period of time. The email appeals to an inferior part of my soul, perhaps to the lazy (*ἀργὸν* 10.604d) part, but not to spirit or to appetite, as they've so far been described in the *Republic*.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Though not making precisely the same point, Halliwell's notes on 10.606d1 and 10.602e8 support this interpretation.

¹³⁷ I will argue, in Section 2.3.4, that the new parts of Book 10, such as the laughing part, the weeping part, the lazy part, etc. should not be taken to be part of appetite or spirit.

A second problem arises when we consider Socrates' statement, at 10.603a, that the opining part is "one of the base parts within us" (τῶν φαύλων ἅν τι εἶη ἐν ἡμῖν). Moss, et. al.'s 'things equal to the same things are equal to each other' argument, as schematized earlier (see page 82-83), trades on the notion that appetite, spirit, and reason are an exhaustive list of soul-parts. If this is the case, and appetite and spirit are here referred to together, then how can they be 'one' of the base things within us? It seems that Moss et. al. relies on Socrates' shift to the singular, at 10.603a, when he says that poetry and imitation in general associate with *that* part in us which is far from reason. However, such an interpretation requires simply ignoring the plural, τῶν φαύλων. I suggest we rather take Socrates to be saying just what he says, namely, that painting appeals to the opining part, which is one of the base things in us, and that *that* part, the opining part, is far from reason.

A third problem is that reading 'The Charge Against Painting' as referring to appetite and spirit makes 'The Greatest Charge' (10.605c-606d) confusing. If one reads 10.602c-603c as Moss et. al. do, then the flow of Socrates' argument becomes tangled. Read this way, he argues that a) painting impacts us negatively because it strengthens appetite and spirit at the expense of reason (10.602c-603c), b) poetry appeals to appetite and spirit just as painting does (10.605b-c), and then says that he has not yet brought his greatest charge (10.605c), namely that poetry impacts us negatively because it appeals to appetite and spirit. How, on this reading, is the greatest charge different from the prior charge? We will consider this further when we get to 10.605c, but for now, we can note that reading 10.602c-603c as charging imitation with appealing

to the 'opining part', as opposed to appealing to appetite and spirit, leaves an appeal to appetites and spiritedness as a new and possibly 'greatest charge'.

If the foregoing is correct (that we neither *need* to equate the opining part with appetite and spirit nor should *want* to do so) then how *should* we understand the opining part? On my view Socrates is here discussing just that: the 'part' of us that 'forms opinions' (that is to say, our propensity to form opinions) and our inclination, sometimes, to follow those opinions rather than the voice of reason. Consider 'the summoners' passage, at 7.523a-524c. "Some objects of sensation do not summon the activity of investigation because they seem to be adequately judged by sense." The example that Socrates offers is that each of our fingers "looks equally like a finger" and therefore, "the soul of the many is not compelled to ask the intellect what a finger is". In this case we are prepared to accept the appearance as adequately accurate. This is the case because the faculty of sight "at no point indicates to the soul that finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger". Socrates contrasts this with the case where the opposites appear to the same faculty. The soul then summons reason (λογισμός 7.524b) to sort out the issue. The similarities between this passage and Book 10's argument in 'The Charge Against Painting' are striking. Socrates, at 7.523b, wants to consider sense perceptions that cannot be trusted (οὐδὲν ὑγιές). The opining part is described in the same terms at 10.603b (οὐδενὶ ὑγιεῖ). Socrates asks whether Glaucon understands his meaning, at 7.523b, to which Glaucon replies that Socrates must be referring to "things appearing in the distance and to trompe l'oeil paintings" (7.523b G). Similarly, in 'The Charge Against Painting', the same subjects are discussed, namely the magnitude of things viewed from near and far, and trompe l'oeil paintings. Certainly Socrates' focus

is not on painting, at 7.523b, but rather on the cognitive processes that occur when we are confused, e.g. by painting or by misleading sense impressions. When nothing appears to contradict our sense impressions, we accept them as accurate. But sometimes the opposite appears to us at the same time (έναντίαν αἴσθησιν ἅμα 7.523c). Similarly, here in Book 10, the stick in water, if measured, proves to be straight. Nevertheless, the opposite appears to us at the same time and the stick still stubbornly presents an appearance of being bent.

Now despite these similarities, the passages, of course, have a different intent. In the first, Socrates is trying to help distinguish the intelligible from the sensible, whereas in the second, he is investigating the effect of imitation on the psyche. Nevertheless, in the 7.523c-524c passage, there is no indication that the cognition surrounding sense perception is connected in any way to our appetite, our spirit, or our appetite and spirit together. We see a finger, and recognize it as a finger. This recognition employs perception and thus cognition, but not a lot of calculation. Sometimes, though, we are also moved to employ our powers of calculation and understanding, for example to consider what it means to be a big finger, or what bigness is in itself. Overall, Socrates says nothing in ‘The Charge Against Painting’ (like in the summoners passage) that directly suggests that the cognition surrounding the sense perceptions of sticks in water or near and far objects are connected, in any way, to our appetite, our spirit, or our appetite and spirit together.

Further, the passage immediately preceding ‘The Charge Against Painting’ similarly makes a distinction between knowledge and opinion. The flautist has knowledge (ἐπιστήμην 10.602a) as to what makes a good flute, and the flute-maker, by

listening to the flautist, has the right opinions. The imitator “will neither know nor opine rightly” (10.602a). The distinction between knowledge and true belief has already been raised in the *Republic*, for example at 9.584e-585b, however we wouldn't take it either from the earlier discussions or from this discussion that the flute maker follows his appetite, or his appetite and spirit, in making flutes. The part of the flute-maker that ‘opines’, in making flutes, simply does not seem to be appetite or spirit.

And just as the passage preceding ‘The Charge Against Painting’ suggests that Socrates is addressing a cognitive and not an appetitive or spirited conflict, a glance at the succeeding passages suggests the same. Socrates says that, as in the case just discussed, of sensory impressions versus measurement (“in the domain of sight...contrary opinions” 10.603d), so too in the domain of actions, there is internal conflict. But, Socrates continues (still at 10.603d), those conflicts have already been discussed. This is clearly a reference to the discussion at 4.439cf, as noted by many commentators.¹³⁸ And the discussion at 4.439cf, as we have seen, specifically was intended to distinguish appetite and spirit from reason. So since we don't need to repeat *that* discussion, but did need to inquire into contrary opinions “in the domain of sight”, then we are supported, in my view, in taking ‘The Charge Against Painting’ to be a discussion of cognitive conflicts, rather than conflicts between reason, on the one hand, and spirit and appetite, on the other.

As noted earlier, Nehamas and others come away from this whole discussion of how imitation affects our cognition by dividing reason (λογιστικόν) into a superior

¹³⁸ See, for example, Halliwell (1998, 137), Grube/Reeve (1992, 274), Adam (1902, 409).

(calculating and understanding) part and an inferior (opining) part. But a strong deflationist rather understands Socrates to be indicating that we have many 'parts' of our psyche. Some are appetitive (lust, hunger, thirst, greed, etc.) and some are emotional (anger, pride, competitiveness, sadness, pity, humor, etc.). So too, for the deflationist, more than one aspect of our soul involves cognition (calculation, opinion, dream, fantasy, etc.).

On my reading, 'The Charge Against Painting' argues that imitation harms our psyche in terms of cognitive functions. It makes us more likely to unquestioningly trust sense impressions, lazily follow attractive 'opinions', impetuously reject unattractive 'opinions', etc. Imitation instills in us a character that is less likely, overall, to summon our powers of reason and understanding. Further, when we do summon our reasoning powers, but there is conflict between our reasoning and appearances, imitation makes us more prone to follow appearance rather than better judgment. This is a serious charge, though not yet the 'most serious charge', which will concern imitations impact on our appetites and spirited emotions.

Most important for the purposes of this discussion, I see no support for a realist reading of soul-parts here in 'The Charge Against Painting'. There is no mention, here, of appetite or spirit, or even of appetitive desires or spirited emotions—only the 'opining part'. Those who would interpret the opining part as appetite and spirit together seem to already be abandoning the realist notion of soul-parts, since the entire notion of partite agency seems at odds with such an amalgam. And those who would interpret the opining part as just appetite need to explain why they select appetite over spirit or over appetite and spirit together. Finally, even if you take the opining part to be (say)

appetite, and you take its beliefs and opinions to be strong beliefs, I still do not see a realist description of appetite here. The opining part has no goals and there is no evidence of agency. Appetite does not contend with reason here. Rather an appearance presents itself to *us*, causing 'part' of us to form an opinion about it. And even if we calculate that the appearance is false, *we*, not our opining 'part', may choose to follow the opinion we formed rather than reasoned calculation. 'The Charge Against Painting' argues that imitation appeals to this opining 'part' of us, but I see no evidence in this section of an agent-like appetite-part or spirit-part.

2.3.3 The Charge Against Poetry (10.603c-605c)

let's now go directly to the very part of thought with which poetry's imitation keeps company and see whether it is ordinary or serious...the best part is willing to follow this calculation...whereas the part that leads to reminiscences of the suffering ...is irrational, idle, and a friend of cowardice...the imitative poet ...is like the painter ... by the standard of truth; and he is also similar in keeping company with a part of the soul that is on the same level and not with the best part...he awakens this part of the soul and nourishes it, and, by making it strong, destroys the calculating part...gratifying the soul's foolish part, which doesn't distinguish big from little, but believes the same things are at one time big and at another little. (10.603c-605c Bloom)

Bloom's translation, as usual, follows the text closely and is very readable. Yet it must be noted that in the fragment quoted above, Bloom supplies the word part eight times, despite that fact that Socrates does not once use 'part' words, such as εἶδος, γένος, or μέρος. Again, I do not fault Bloom for inserting the word part, but as always, we should be mindful that the word 'part' in the translation might lead us to overestimate the extent to which Socrates is definitely talking about agent-like soul-parts as opposed to perhaps referring to aspects of our souls. Nevertheless, during the course of this

section Socrates does refer (as Shorey translates) to “the irrational and idle part of us” (10.604d), and “the fretful part” (10.604e), as well as (as Bloom has it above) “the foolish part” (τῷ ἀνοήτῳ 10.605b).

Crucial for this argument is the fact that Socrates never directly describes any of these parts of the soul as having beliefs, goals, reasoning powers, agency, etc. Faced with misfortune, Socrates says that:

We must accept what has happened as we would the fall of the dice, and then arrange our affairs in whatever way reason determines to be best. We mustn't hug the hurt part and spend our time weeping and wailing like children when they trip. (10.604c G)

Although in his direct speech “we”, and not a soul-part are the actors, one might take the simile to imply that it is the foolish part of the soul is the actor. The foolish part of the soul is similar to the child, and a child is an actor, so perhaps the foolish part of the soul is similarly an actor. But the point of the simile, it seems to me, is not to suggest an agent-like foolish part of the soul, but rather to describe the ‘part’ of us to which poetry appeals. Socrates wishes to argue that “like a painter...[poetry] appeals to a part of the soul that is similarly inferior” (10.605a G). Socrates also offers an analogy between city and soul, though different from the one in the earlier Books. He charges that “in just the way that someone destroys the better sort of citizens when he strengthens the vicious ones” (605b G), so too the poet damages the souls of each individual. The person (who does damage in the city) is analogized to the poet (who does damage in the soul) and the better and worse citizens are analogized to the better and worse parts of the soul. One might take it that since the analogy's poet and his targets are agent-like, Socrates is ascribing agency to the ‘worse’ part of us (or perhaps to the foolish part, or the weeping part, the lazy part, the fretful part, etc.). Again,

though, the plain sense of the passage certainly seems to aim at describing the poet and his impact, not the soul parts and their capacities.

Indeed, if one did try to attribute agent-like attributes to soul-parts here, the difficulties for a realist interpretation would multiply, irrespective of whether the realist took the passage to refer to a two-part, three-part, or many-part soul. It is especially hard to find support for a realist interpretation of a three-part soul in this passage. As many commentators have noted, on the surface of the text, as well as in the simile, Socrates is talking about the ‘better’ part of the soul and the ‘inferior’ part of the soul.¹³⁹ How would one fit the ‘better part’ and the ‘weaker’ part of the simile into reason, spirit, or appetite, none of which is explicitly referred to here, or anyplace else in Book 10?¹⁴⁰ But taking the passage to refer to either a two-part soul or a many-part soul also makes difficulties. To take the simile to suggest that the soul does indeed have an agent-like ‘superior part’ and an agent-like ‘inferior part’ would make a mess of the realist’s view that divides the soul into three canonical agent-like parts, namely, appetite, spirit, and reason. That problem is compounded if one takes the passage to pick out a set of agent-like soul-parts, such as lazy-part, weeping-part, etc. In any of these cases, the

¹³⁹ See, for just one example, Belfiore (1983, 50).

¹⁴⁰ In the next section, I will argue against taking θυμοῦ and ἐπιθυμητικῶν in 10.606d to be references to spirit-part and appetite-part. Even the one canonical part explicitly named in Book 10, the λογιστικόν, is hard to reconcile with the λογιστικόν of earlier parts of the Republic. As Belfiore (1983, 53) properly points out, Socrates seems to be speaking seriously, not metaphorically, when he says that poetry destroys the λογιστικόν. The λογιστικόν of Book 4, obviously, is “a necessary part of every living soul”. Further, as Annas (1981, 339) points out, reason, in Book 10, “is said to obey nomos, ‘law’ or ‘convention’, in a way that makes it look like the kind of motivation developed in the Auxiliaries”. If reason, in ‘The Charge Against Painting’ and ‘The Charge Against Poetry’, is the inclination to calculate and the tendency to follow calculation over the lazy acceptance of attractive appearances, then we can see how that could be destroyed, responding to Belfiore’s point. It would also, in agreement with Annas, be the part of us that obeys nomos. However, if reason is indeed here the calculative part of Book 4, we are left with Annas’, and Belfiore’s problems.

realist either needs to simply ignore Book 10, or claim that the psychology of Book 10 is simply unrelated to the rest of the *Republic*.¹⁴¹ Either way, though, a realist view of appetite or spirit is not supported by the simile.

By contrast, the deflationist interpretation fits well with this passage. Faced with life's vicissitudes, part of us deliberates about how to best respond. Another part of us just wants to give free rein to the suffering and misery we feel. Socrates raises the point that in addition to appetites and spirited emotions related to victory and honor, we have within us laziness, silliness, irrationality, and suffering. For the deflationist, these are all 'parts' of our soul that can come into conflict. Socrates does not, here, directly say that the inferior part or parts of us are agents—only we are. Though “a person” is conflicted, and “he” is at war with himself, there is no part on part awareness or action. Similarly, it is the man, not his parts, who is directly displayed as the actor in dealing with grief at 10.603e-604d.

2.3.4 The Greatest Charge (10.605c-606d)

What is by nature best in us, because it hasn't been adequately educated by argument or habit, relaxes its guard over this mournful part...Doesn't the same argument also apply to the laughing part...that in you which, wanting to make jokes, you then held down by argument, afraid of the reputation of buffoonery, you now release...and as for sex, and spiritedness, too, and for all the desires, pains, and pleasures in the soul that we say follow all our action, poetic imitation produces similar results in us. For it fosters and waters them when they ought to be dried up, and sets them up as rulers in us (10.606d Bloom)

¹⁴¹ As discussed previously. Irwin and Bobonich are examples of the former, Belfiore is an example of the latter.

First of all, we should not be deceived into assuming that θυμοῦ and ἐπιθυμητικῶν in 10.606d are explicit references to spirit-part and appetite-part; and most translators do not do so, in their renderings of “καὶ περὶ ἀφροδισίων δὴ καὶ θυμοῦ καὶ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν τε καὶ λυπηρῶν καὶ ἡδέων ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ” (10.606d). Ferrari is quite literal and not at all atypical in rendering the phrase as “also to sex, anger, and all the desires, pains and pleasures in the soul”. Bloom, Sachs, Shorey, Reeve, Grube/Reeve, Grube, Larson, and others follow a similar line. Although unfortunately confusing, θύμος is used in the *Republic* both to mean anger and to mean the soul-part called spirit. Halliwell, in his detailed notes, is especially persuasive as to why we should take the current passage to be referring to anger.¹⁴² Similarly ἐπιθυμητικόν is used to mean both desire and to mean the soul-part called appetite. Here, though, there is strong reason to take τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν to refer desires rather than appetite part. The word order in this passage is striking. First Socrates mentions sex, which throughout Book 4 was one of the three iconic examples named in relation to the appetite-part, and then names anger, which was similarly one of the iconic examples named in relation to the spirit-part. If Socrates had ended the list there, one might have been tempted to take him to be referring to appetite-part and spirit-part through these paradigmatic examples. But he goes on to list other ‘parts’ in the soul, starting with “πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν”. For one thing, though ἐπιθυμητικόν (singular) is used in Book 4 to refer to the appetite-part (or at least to the form in the soul that is analogous to the producer class in the city), here we find ἐπιθυμητικῶν (plural),

¹⁴² See Halliwell (1988, 151).

suggesting appetites, not appetite part. Secondly, the πάντων in “πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν” gives us pause. Since sex was listed first, and in Book 4 sex was certainly part the appetite-part, then listing ‘sex *and* all of the appetites’, especially with anger listed in between points us away from taking the phrase to mean appetite-part. Rather it suggests a list of ‘parts’ or ‘things’ in our soul, not amalgamated into spirit-part and appetite-part, so it is not surprising that the translators take in just that manner.

As was the case in ‘The Charge Against Poetry’, Bloom here inserts the word ‘part’ in rendering the “mournful part” (τοῦ θρηνώδους 10.606a) and the “laughing part” (τοῦ γελοίου 10.606c). Still, though no explicit ‘part’ word is here, Socrates does refer to these ‘parts’ of the soul very similarly to how he has referred to soul-parts throughout the *Republic*. How, then, should we understand these soul-parts? Are we to take the laughing part and the mournful part to be a) perhaps some of the ‘in-between parts’ of 4.443d, b) sub-parts of an appetite/spirit amalgam, c) sub-parts of appetite and spirit respectively, or d) none of the above? The first of these seems highly unlikely. Why would Socrates introduce, here, nearly at the end of the *Republic*, the notion that the soul is in fact mass of agent-like parts (laughing-part, weeping-part, angry-part, etc.)? The second option also seems unlikely. Some take Book 10s ‘inferior part’ of the soul to be a union of spirit and appetite, but why would a union of appetite and spirit want to weep or laugh? Option (c) shares a similar problem; would either appetite (as it has been described up to here) want to laugh, or spirit (as it has been described up to here) want to weep? Further, to slightly adapt Whiting’s example, when I struggle between the desire to laugh (at a pompous and inappropriate eulogy during my grandmother’s funeral), and the desire to maintain my honor by behaving solemnly, which parts are

struggling? If the laughing part at 10.606c is appetite and spirit together, then how does the realist reconcile spirit (desire for honor) struggling with itself (laughing part)? Worse, if the weeping part is part of spirit, we could easily imagine a conflict between my desire to weep (along with the hero in the theater) and my desire to maintain my dignity. This kind of intra-part conflict threatens the entire notion of three canonical parts.

The fourth option seems the most likely. When Socrates talks about that in me that wants to weep or laugh, he is identifying things in me. I am the focus, not my parts. I want to weep at one moment, or laugh at another. This is very consistent with the deflationist reading. It is easy to understand an impulse to just give in weeping and enjoy it, but it is much harder to fit that impulse into a realist story, which wants to find three canonical parts.

Also unclear is exactly what the charge is, here in 'The Greatest Charge'. In 'The Charge Against Poetry', Socrates charged that poetry puts a bad constitution into the soul of the decent and reasonable man (ἐπιεικῆς 10.603e). Here too, the subjects of 'The Greatest Charge' are good and reasonable men (τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς 10.605c). And the charge here too regards imitative poetry's ability to damage (λωβᾶσθαι 10.605c) them, again by nourishing the inferior parts of us, thereby causing us to be controlled by inferior 'parts' instead of reason. Thus there is much that is the same in 'The Charge Against Poetry' and 'The Greatest Charge' and work is needed to tease out what specifically makes 'The Greatest Charge' different and greater. We will take this issue up when we turn to character in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. For our purposes here, though, we simply need to determine whether the part or parts of us to which imitative poetry appeals, are described in agent-like or non-agent-like terms.

On first look, agent-like parts might be described here, when Socrates speaks of inferior parts of us being installed as “rulers in us when they ought to be ruled”. This language is reminiscent of the city/soul analogy, where justice entails that the guardians rule, with auxiliaries and producers willingly following their lead. Here, though, as already argued, we have a list of inferior soul parts that are very hard to reconcile with appetite and spirit.

The deflationist does not deny that we can be controlled by some appetite (say greed, or lust), either on one particular occasion, or frequently, on account of our character. The deflationist simply denies that there is a homunculus-like part called appetite that struggles with reason or spirit to gain control. And no homunculus-like part is displayed here, in 'The Greatest Charge'. The inferior parts are not described as having their own goals, beliefs, means-end reasoning powers, or agency. Parts are not displayed as aware of or struggling with other parts. Rather the person is the actor throughout. This simile images how inferior ‘parts’ of our soul might become installed as rulers. But 10.605c-606b considers how we behave when we hear Homer in public versus how we behave in private. Similarly, it is we, at 10.606d, that want to “become better and happier instead of worse and more wretched” (βελτίους τε καὶ εὐδαιμονέστεροι, in the masculine plural).

2.3.5 The Image of Glaucus (10.611b—612a)

let's not suppose ... that soul by its truest nature is such that it is full of much variety, dissimilarity, and quarrel with itself...It's not easy...for a thing to be eternal that is ...composed out of many things, as the soul now looked to us...we were telling the truth about [the soul] as it looks at present...Just as those who catch sight of the sea Glaucus would no longer easily see his original nature...so, too, we see the soul in such a condition because of countless evils. But,

Glaucon, one must look elsewhere...then one would see its true nature—whether it is many-formed or single-formed, or in what way it is and how (10.611b-612a Bloom)

Some deflationists, such as Shields, argue that this passage strongly supports the deflationist view.¹⁴³ Socrates says that it is not easy for immortal entities to be composite (σύνθετόν 10.611b), and not put together beautifully. And, he says, we will find that the soul in its essential true nature is much more beautiful (πολύ γε κάλλιον 10.611c). Thus he suggests that it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that the soul, when unencumbered by the body, is incomposite. This point comes into focus when set against the souls in the Myth of Er. We will delve into the myth in detail in Chapter 3, but here, note that some souls were said to be deliberative (10.620c, 618d), others craved honor (10.620b), and others were gluttonous or greedy (10.619b). All three characteristics previously assigned to the three canonical parts are present in souls in the Myth of Er, but there, as we will see, parts are not mentioned. Consistent with the Glaucon passage, the soul in the Myth of Er is not depicted as composite at all. It is the soul as a whole, not appetite, that is gluttonous, and the soul as a whole, not reason, that deliberates.¹⁴⁴

The picture of the soul presented by Glaucon and Er presents no difficulty for the deflationist. For the deflationist, 'part' of me may be greedy, but there is no need for an agent-like appetite in order to accommodate greed. For the realist, though, Glaucon and Er may pose challenges. If greediness is the province of an agent-like part called

¹⁴³ See, for example, Shields (2001, 149-151) and Shields (2010, 159-160).

¹⁴⁴ See also Anagnostopoulos (2006, 177-178).

appetite, and disembodied souls are, like those in the Myth of Er, incomposite, then how do they manage to be greedy? These claims are certainly debatable, however what *is* abundantly clear is that the Glaucus passage is consistent with the rest of Book 10. Appetite and spirit are not mentioned at all, and there is certainly no suggestion that they are agent-like. Further, the same continues to be the case throughout the rest of Book 10.

Before leaving the Glaucus passage, we should take note of Socrates' reconsideration of whether the soul is composed of many elements "as now appeared to us" (ὡς νῦν ἡμῖν ἐφάνη 10.611b). Adam takes this phrase to refer back to the "psychology of Book 4, in which the soul was treated as composite".¹⁴⁵ Adam is pointing to the hypothesized Principle of Non-Opposition, which was the basis for soul-partition, and the resulting tripartite picture of the soul. Shorey rather takes ὡς νῦν ἡμῖν ἐφάνη to refer back to 10.603d, where Socrates seems to at least partially reaffirm the principle.¹⁴⁶ Halliwell takes ὡς νῦν ἡμῖν ἐφάνη to refer to both the psychology of Book 4 and the reaffirmation of the principle at 10.603d.¹⁴⁷ I agree with Halliwell. Socrates began his investigation into the interior of the soul by saying that although there was a 'longer way' that would yield a precise answer to the questions about the nature of the soul's parts, they would follow a 'shorter way' that would be imprecise but good enough for the argument they were pursuing. Along that 'shorter way', Socrates hypothesized the Principle of Non-Opposition, which yielded a tripartite soul—though he said at the

¹⁴⁵ Adam (1902, 427).

¹⁴⁶ Shorey, (1980, 480). Socrates says that "in our former discussion we were sufficiently agreed" (10.604d about the Principle of Non-Opposition), but that some things had been "omitted" at that time.

¹⁴⁷ Halliwell (1988, 164).

time that the principle and all that stemmed from it might need to be abandoned further down the road. By the time we get to Book 10, the tripartite soul, on my account, has been left behind, though the soul was still displayed as partite and the principle is at least partially reaffirmed at 10.603d. But by 10.611b, (following Halliwell, Adam, and others), Socrates suggests that indeed even the Principle of Non-Opposition, along with the tripartite psychology that ensued from it, now needs to be left behind. I will argue, in the coming chapters, that they were steps along the way to a better account.

2.3.6 Book 10 Part 1: Conclusion

Each of the four sections of Book 10 that refer to ‘parts’ of the soul are consistent in subject, setting, and deflationist part-description. As was the case in the original ‘Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ (4.435c-441c), the subject is the ordinary person and the setting is the ordinary city. There is no mention here of how poetry affects the guardians or auxiliaries in Socrates’ Kallipolis, despite the detailed descriptions of those actors in earlier books of the *Republic*. There is no consideration of whether poetry affects timocrats differently than tyrants, though one might have expected it, given what came immediately before Book 10. Although much psychic activity is discussed and detailed, Socrates consistently refers to what happens inside us directly, and not as the activity of a soul-part. We, not our soul-parts, opine, lust, lament, etc. And most important for this discussion, the ‘parts’ of us that opine, lust, etc., are never described as homunculi that set goals, make plans, and strive to achieve those plans.

At the beginning of this section, we put aside the question of what Socrates means by “now that we have distinguished the εἶδη in the soul”. Did Socrates mean

that we could finally understand the effect of imitation, now that the different soul-parts have been distinguished, or did he mean that we could finally understand its effect now that the different character types had been delineated? On my view, Socrates, was pointing to both soul parts and character types, but for each of them, he was speaking with what Gregory Vlastos called “complex irony”.¹⁴⁸ Socrates meant that we *have* distinguished the εἶδη of the soul by the end of Book 9 (both in terms of parts and in terms of character types), but that we *have not* yet distinguished either soul-parts or character types adequately. In this section I have argued that Book 10 helps fill out the account of soul-parts. I think that the new and different soul-parts introduced here in Book 10, coupled with the return to the non-agent-like description prevalent in Book 4, indicate that Socrates was signaling that the part-psychology of the soul was not complete at the end of Book 9. Similarly, on my view, the character-psychology of the soul, had also not been adequately distinguished by the end of Book 9. In the next two chapters, I will argue that the remainder of Book 10 helps fill out the account of character types.

The core of Socrates’ dialectic is to posit an answer to a particular question and then put that answer to the test.¹⁴⁹ By the end of the first half of Book 10, it seems that the tripartite picture of the soul has been left behind. Rather the embodied soul seems to be more multi-part (or, as the deflationist might say, incomposite with multiple aspects). And the soul in its truest nature, if we could ‘see’ it, might also turn out in its

¹⁴⁸ See Vlastos (1991, 31). In complex irony, according to Vlastos, Socrates makes a statement that is, in one sense, the opposite of what he thinks; but it also contains an element of truth, if taken correctly.

¹⁴⁹ Here I follow Broadie, article forthcoming.

essence to be without 'parts'. In people, psychic conflict is common. Describing this psychic conflict as a conflict between different 'parts' of us seems very apt. The picture of the embodied soul is one with many 'parts', which can be grouped together descriptively as the argument demands. We do not have 'reason' so much as reasoning, and this is what poetry damages. We do not have 'spirit' and 'appetite' so much as spirited emotions (anger, pride, shame, guilt, laziness, humor, etc.) and appetitive desires (food, drink, sex, etc.). And, most importantly, we, not our psychic parts are the actors in all matters.

The second half of Book 10 (which we will get to in Chapter 3) takes us even farther along the same path. The souls that are described are not described in terms of parts at all, but they are greedy, angry, etc. If it is not a realist money-loving part gaining control that makes us greedy (and I have argued that Book 10 leads us to think it is not) what is it that causes one individual to be greedy and a different individual not to be? This question will be the subject of chapters 2 and 3.

3.0 Chapter 1: Conclusion

Focusing the account individually on the various sections that detail the soul's parts is suggestive of a deflationist reading, on my view, though not conclusive. In 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts', Socrates tries to determine how soul-parts function in real people who live in real cities. Psychic functions and psychic conflict occur between different 'parts' of the psyche and Socrates in his direct speech gives us uniformly non-agent-like descriptions of those soul-'parts'. The Book 10 discussion seems to pick up

the thread of 'The Inquiry into Soul-Parts' and is similar in topic, subject, and characterization. Again Socrates discusses the nature of the soul's parts, though this time the emphasis is how imitation affects the different 'parts' of the soul. Again the subjects seem to be real people in real cities, despite the fact that most of the *Republic* discusses imagined people in imagined cities. And again the soul is deemed to have 'parts', and as before, in direct speech those parts are described in uniformly non-agent-like terms. Notably, the parts seem very different in the two sections, which is just what a deflationist would expect. For a deflationist, the soul can be divided along more than one dimension, so the deflationist is not surprised that one set of 'parts' will be the focus in discussing some things, while other 'parts' the focus in other discussions.

In between, we have 'The Inquiry into Character Types', which seems different in each respect. The primary topic is not how soul-parts are, but how character types are. The subjects are not real people in real cities, but rather character types (or, as I will argue in Chapter 2, archetypes), such as timocrats or oligarchs, in imagined cities ruled by those types. And the soul-parts, which are described in the service of understanding those character types, are often cast in highly agent-like terms, both in direct speech and in metaphor.

If one comes to the end of Book 9 with the conviction that Socrates sees soul-parts as inherently agent-like in nature, then one needs to either ignore Book 10's psychological discussion, as Irwin and Bobonich do, or force Book 10's many 'parts' of the soul into reason, spirit, and appetite, as Singpurwalla, for example, does. The former leaves many of Plato's psychological insights lying on the table, such as Moss' account of what it means to be an inferior part of the soul. But the latter requires a

significant degree of forcing. One might be tempted to try to read the lion-like spirit of 9.588d back into the description of Odysseus' spirit at 4.441b. It is difficult, though, to read it forward into Book 10, where the spirited part does not appear at all, rather we have the weaker part that sees a straight stick as bent and other parts that want to weep and tell jokes. Those who come to Book 10 with a deflationist view of soul-parts, on the other hand, need not struggle.

Overall, on my view, the content of these three sections pushes us toward a deflationist understanding of the nature of soul-parts. Sometimes Socrates is explicitly working to understand soul-parts, whereas at other times his focus is elsewhere. In the former cases, Plato's psychology is best understood on a deflationist account. I think it is also suggestive that Socrates sometimes jumps out of the constructed worlds that populate so much of the *Republic*, and again, when outside those constructed worlds, he avoids direct descriptions of the soul's 'parts' as having agency. Further, I think that Plato's sequencing of the three sections that were analyzed in this chapter matters. After the initial 'Inquiry into Soul-Parts', we are left with the isomorphism between city and soul, yet we have good reason to resist the notion that the parts of the soul are agent-like. 'The Inquiry into Character Types', though, pushes us to reconsider that notion. The agent-like depiction of soul-parts there pushes us to consider that perhaps Socrates first introduced soul-parts with a partial description and then built on that, to detail their agent-like nature. Following this path, one would expect Book 10 to continue to elaborate the nature of those agent-like soul-parts. Building on the first nine Books, Socrates could have described how imitation affects reason, appetite, and spirit, and therefore how it changes or reinforces the character of timocrats, oligarchs, etc. But

Socrates does nothing of the sort. Indeed, he moves in the other direction. On my reading, Book 10 pushes us toward an even more deflationist view than Book 4's 'Inquiry into Soul-Parts'. In Book 4 we seemed to have a tripartite soul, but the parts themselves were not directly described as agent-like. Now, in Book 10, tripartition has been left behind. The first part of Book 10 displays the soul as having either two parts (on some accounts) or many parts (as others claim). Either option is deflationary to the notion of three agent-like parts, especially since the parts are not described as agent-like in direct speech. The second half of Book 10 does not describe the souls as having parts at all, although they are depicted as being greedy, thoughtless, irresponsible, etc. On my account, the soul has many non-agent-like 'parts', which are really faculties or forces within the soul. Only the soul itself acts as agent, that is to say, only the person acts as agent.

Bobonich raises the possibility that Plato describes the parts as agent-like for "explanatory value", but rejects this notion on two grounds. "First, Plato's commitment to agent-like parts of the soul pervades the Republic and he never suggests that such talk is intended as a metaphor or convenient way of speaking and not as a literal truth claim." I hope that this chapter has shown that the first half of this claim is false. Plato does not pervasively describe the soul as agent-like. In the Book 4 'Inquiry into Soul-Parts' and in the first half of Book 10, which I suggest are the most important places to examine in order to understand how Plato saw soul-parts, those parts are consistently described in non-agent-like terms. But Socrates plainly says at 4.435c that the description of the soul is not precise (*ἀκριβῶς*), although there is a "longer way" that would yield such an answer. Indeed, it is in the explicitly metaphorical passages that

the parts are most displayed as agent-like (e.g. 9.588b, where Socrates describes the soul and its parts by “fashioning in our discourse a symbolic image of the soul”).

The ‘parts’ of the soul and the internal struggle between parts are vividly and explicitly in the forefront of the dialogue throughout the majority of the *Republic*. The struggle between ‘parts’ of the soul explains the psychic conflict that we often face. Also, in the virtuous person, the soul must be educated and harmonized such that reasoning leads while all other ‘parts’ willingly follow. Through the end of Book 9, though, whether Plato conceived of those parts as agent-like or non-agent-like parts remains a live question.

Once we emerge from Book 10 with a conviction that the person is the only agent of each of her actions, we are pushed to reexamine the text with a view to finding a vocabulary to better conceptualize the person as a whole. Of course the ‘parts’ are still important. We still have psychic conflict, which even in Book 10 is the result of conflicting desires in different ‘parts’ of the soul. And of course the organization and harmony of the ‘parts’ of the soul are still critical components of virtue. But with the decision that the text favors a view of the soul where soul-‘parts’ can be divided up and grouped in different ways at different times and for different purposes, the primacy of the part recedes somewhat. We no longer think that the whole story of the interior of the soul is a matter of parts in action.

At this point we are moved to interrogate the text once again, trying again to understand Socrates’ main claim that the life of one with a virtuous soul is the happiest life. If this claim is indeed about the whole soul as the only actor, the soul as a whole (not a collection of parts) seems under-described. It seems that we need a vocabulary

to describe the soul that does not fully depend on the language of parts. Over the course of the next two chapters, I'm going to argue that when we read the whole text with a conception of non-agent-like parts in mind, the language of character emerges as a constant, albeit a quiet one, throughout the ten Books of the *Republic* as the way in which the person is described. It is the notion of character that emerges from the text, I will argue, that helps us understand just how we can move forward along the path of virtue and a flourishing life.

Chapter Two: Moving from Parts to Wholes: Character in *Republic* Books 1-9

1.0 Introduction

With our focus shifted from soul-parts to the person as a whole, we continue to consider a central question of the *Republic*: which life is the better one, the just life or the unjust life? In this chapter and the next I am going to argue that teasing out the *Republic's* notion of character is critical to unpacking Socrates' account of the superiority of the just life.

Of course, developing an account of the nature of justice is also critical to the inquiry into whether the just life is superior. Over the course of the early books, Socrates' interlocutors bring forward various views of the many about the nature of justice. We get at least three main claims from them about justice. First, justice is seen as simply a matter of refraining from conventionally unjust deeds (e.g. not cheating, not lying, not failing to render sacrifices due to the gods 1.331b). The many "name the commandment of the law the lawful and the just, and this is the genesis and essential nature of justice" (2.359a).

A second claim that emerges is that injustice is desirable, whereas justice is undesirable. In his prime, Cephalus did not value justice. It is only now, as he reaches old age, that he begins to see justice as something that is desirable, not in its own right, but so as to avoid punishment. This notion is also shared, to some extent, by the other interlocutors over the first two Books. Thrasymachus, for example, says: "Perhaps, you

think I meant pickpockets? Not that such crimes aren't also profitable, if they're not found out, but they aren't worth mentioning by comparison to what I'm talking about" (1.348d G). Glaucon's account also depicts most people as preferring to commit injustice, but afraid that they cannot commit injustice without getting caught. "People value [justice] not as a good but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity." (2.359a G).

Third, and related to the two prior claims, Glaucon and Adeimantus articulate the view of the many that what is important is to have the reputation for justice. Actually *being* just is neither important nor desirable. "No one", says Glaucon, "believes justice to be a good when it is kept private, since, wherever either [the just or the unjust] person thinks he can do injustice with impunity, he does it" (2.360c G). Of course he is careful to assert that this is not his view—it is simply the view of the many (2.361d-e).

Adeimantus makes a similar point about 'the many fathers'. "When fathers speak to their sons, they say that one must be just, as do all the others who have charge of anyone. But they don't praise justice itself, only the high reputations it leads to and the consequences of being thought to be just" (2.362e-363a G).

Thus the view of the many that emerges is that justice consists in obeying law and convention, is undesirable, and that what matters is possessing the reputation for justice. Socrates will turn out to have an opposite view on all three counts. Although obeying the law is important on Socrates' account, for him being just is a matter of developing a particular organization of the soul (ψυχή), or, as we might say, the organization of one's psyche — one's psychology or personality or character. Socrates certainly does not regard being just as undesirable; possessing a just soul is the thing

we should desire above all other things. Finally, although Socrates is not opposed to a good reputation earned on account of fine actions (e.g. 5.468b), the reputation is not what matters; what really matters is whether one's actions are fine or not, and even more, whether one's soul is or is not just.

Plato does not develop a formal technical vocabulary for describing character (as Aristotle does). Rather his notion of character must be gleaned from a close examination of the characters that populate the dialogue, as well as a close reading of the text. On my reading, examining all occurrences of specific terms related to character reveals a significant measure of consistency in how they are used. Therefore, proper translation of the Greek terminology is crucial. Plato uses a variety of Greek terms that are relevant to what we might call character, personality, nature, etc. For example, he uses ἦθος (disposition, character), φύσις (nature, character, constitution, etc.), τρόπος (manner, habit, nature, character, custom etc.), βίος (mode of life or manner of living), ἔθος (custom or habit), κατασκευή (state, condition, or constitution), τάξις (arrangement or order), etc. Translators differ in which English terms they use to render the relevant Greek terms and often render a particular term differently in different contexts. For example, Plato often uses the word ἦθος. LSJ has 'character', as one of its definitions of ἦθος, citing *Republic* 3.400d as the source. At 3.409d Shorey does render ἦθος as character, but at other places he chooses different translations (e.g. 'disposition' (3.400d), 'type' (6.497b), 'nature' (6.496b)). I cannot tell whether Shorey is trying to use what he takes to be English synonyms for the sake of stylistic variation, or rather that he thinks the word has different meanings or valences in the different places. On my view, a close examination of each of the *Republic's* passages in which terms

related to character occur supports the position that Plato used each of them with a fair degree of internal consistency. Overall, I think most of the translators I have consulted obscure our understanding of character by unnecessary variation in how these different key terms are rendered at different spots in the *Republic*.

In addition to the difficulty of deciding how to best translate the Greek terms, another difficulty is that Socrates, surprisingly, never poses the question of precisely what constitutes character. Although character is discussed pervasively throughout the *Republic*, Socrates never goes after a definition or launches an inquiry into exactly what sort of thing it is. Perhaps because of this, the topic of character has been largely neglected in the literature. Nevertheless, over the course of the first nine Books of the *Republic* a picture emerges of a) what it means to have one's own specific character and one's own specific character traits, b) how one develops that specific character, c) how virtuous or vicious one's overall character seems to be, and d) how likely one is to succeed in developing a just character. The picture evolves and gains specificity as the discussion proceeds, but remains consistent in key areas.

Absent a localized inquiry into the nature of character in the *Republic*, then, how should we organize our inquiry into the text in order to tease out this picture of character and character development? It seems to me that two moments in the trajectory of the dialogue are relevant to this question. The first of these moments is the shift from the highly dramatic depiction of Socrates and the discussion in Polemarchus' house in Book 1, to the methodical investigation of the value of living justly in response to the challenges of Glaucon and Adeimantus. This shift involves not only dramatic tone and method of investigation, but also a shift in setting. Book 1 is set in the 'real world',

outside the city of Athens. By contrast, the vast majority of the discussion in Books 2-9 is about cities constructed in speech by Socrates (e.g. the City of Pigs, the diseased city which is gradually purified to become the Kallipolis, and the descriptions of a Timocracy, an Oligarchy, a Democracy, and a Tyranny). It is only in Book 10 that the dialogue returns to the 'real world' to consider how theater affects people in a real city.¹⁵⁰

Accordingly, although there will be some references to Book 1 in this chapter, most of the attention will be on Books 2-9. We will return to Book 1 in the next chapter (whose focus is on Book 10) where the setting is again the 'real world'.

The other key moment occurs at the end of Book 4. Socrates has completed what he (at that moment in the dialogue) terms his description of the perfectly just city and soul and is about to complete the picture by examining four degenerate forms of city and soul. His interlocutors, however, break in, resulting in the long (ostensibly interruptive) digression of the 'middle books' (Books 5-7). Books 8-9 then resume the discussion of the four types of unjust cities 'worth mentioning', along with the types of character that resemble them.

I will organize the discussion in accord with the above two dramatic moments. After laying the terminological groundwork (Section 2) and considering the factors that the *Republic* highlights as contributing to character development (Section 3), I will examine the picture of character in three sections (4.1, 4.2, and 4.3), as delineated by the dramatic breaks outlined above. I will begin by focusing on the initial picture of

¹⁵⁰ This, of course, is followed by the closing discussion of the afterlife, which, although explicitly presented as a myth, purports on the surface to be a description of how the afterlife 'actually is', however paradoxical such a notion might seem.

character that emerges from Books 2-4, then consider how that picture is enhanced by the 'digressive middle books' (Books 5-7), and finally look at character as it appears in the unjust cities constructed in Books 8-9. I will argue that each of these sections enhances our understanding of Plato's conception of character. Nevertheless, on my view, in spite of these various changes and interruptions in Socrates' narration, Socrates' treatment of character will turn out to be remarkably consistent.

Overall, I will argue that character develops as a result of a number of factors, including innate constitution or nature, early rearing, education, one's city of residence, and habituation. As to the nature of character itself, I will argue that from Books 2-4 we can tease out a picture of character as something that can be described in terms of a set of morally relevant traits. Second, character as a whole is described or depicted as being relatively more virtuous/vicious (or, equivalently, in Socrates' usage, healthy/sick). Third, character traits emerge as propensities to act in certain ways (even though these propensities are not actualized all of the time). By the end of Book 4 we have an initial picture of an ideally just character, as well as a great deal of detail on what it means for anybody to have his own character and what factors may have contributed to developing that character. Further, although it is not fully fleshed out in the text, the emerging picture of character suggests an explanation of human behavior in terms of motivation and decision that does not rely on soul-parts as motivators and agents. Chapter 1 rejected the notion that Plato conceived of 'parts' of the soul as agent-like. Rather, I argued, agent-like soul-parts serve as explanatory artifacts that can be presented in different ways as best supports the argument at different points. Therefore, if the argument of Chapter 1 has been persuasive, it is a mistake to attribute

to Plato (some of Socrates' figurative discourse notwithstanding) the view that we can explain our actions as being the outcome of combat between two agent-like parts of the soul (what Korsgaard calls "the familiar Combat Model").¹⁵¹ When the symposium participant wants a fifth cup of wine and he decides to have it (even though he thinks that it is a bad idea), it is not his 'appetite part' that desires and wins the fight with his reason. Rather, both the desire and the action-decision are his and are partly related to the nature of his character. He has a disposition to overindulge, as well as a habitual failure to deliberate and give weight to his reasoning when deciding on which action to choose.¹⁵² All of us reason and desire (to highlight the two terms relevant in the above example), and it is our character that plays the major role in influencing our decision making (along with circumstances and other factors, of course). The above example is not drawn from the text; indeed, I do not think that Socrates articulates a fully worked out theory of action in the *Republic*. Nevertheless, on my view, Plato's portrayal of character and character traits contributes to a partial understanding of how psychic conflict within us gets resolved into action.

But before Socrates' discussion related to character can be continued (by looking at the four unjust character types 'worth examining') Books 5-7 intervene, adding a key layer of metaphysics and epistemology. By the end of Book 7, we have a picture of an "even finer type of man" (8.543d) than Book 4's man of "perfectly just" (5.472c) character. Ultimately, with the whole of the *Republic* in mind, I will argue that Socrates

¹⁵¹ See Korsgaard (1999).

¹⁵² By 'disposition' I do not attempt to read Aristotle's notion of *διάθεσις*, or any of the other Aristotelian psychological components back into Plato. Also, I use the modern terms disposition and propensity as synonyms.

asks us to revise the view that Book 4 man is “perfectly just”. Indeed, ‘Book 4 man’ will be seen to be an explanatory artifact that was helpful at that stage of the discussion but gets replaced by the Philosopher-King. The Philosopher-King, when faced with a decision, consistently reasons about what constitutes the just choice—and then chooses the just action, with his whole soul in harmony. His fifty years of education, training, and testing have given him some measure of knowledge of the Forms, above all, the Form of the Good. His soul will be in harmony not only as a result of his nature, rearing, education, etc., but also by virtue of the fact that he consorts with the Forms and his reasoning will be supported by a significant understanding of which act, in any given situation, truly is or is not good. But even leaving aside the ideally just Philosopher-King, the metaphysics and epistemology of Books 5-7 highlight the importance of knowledge or true belief in enabling any of us to deliberate well—that is, to reach a sound decision. Thus Books 5-7 add important specificity to our understanding of character and its relation to action. Nevertheless, the overall picture we have of character by the end of Book 7, though deepened, remains consistent with the picture from Books 2-4 in the key areas outlined above.

Books 8-9 then resume the discussion of character types (as Socrates had originally planned) picking out four unjust character types “worth mentioning” (4.445c). Again our picture of character is extended and enhanced now, especially in our understanding of how widely character as a whole can vary in terms of its virtue. The overall picture, though, is consistent with that which emerged from the first seven Books.

But one additional fact related to character emerges over the first nine Books,

namely that the vast majority of people are very unlikely to develop a perfectly just character. Perfectly just character is much discussed, as are the limitless number of forms of vice. But where does somebody like Glaucon (who is clearly not perfectly just, but also does not seem to be vicious) fit? Books 1-9 leave Glaucon (as well as many readers of the *Republic*) yearning to live the happiest life, which is associated with developing a truly virtuous character. But the perfect virtue described depends on the early rearing, education, and laws of the purified city, which, as Glaucon points out, “exists in words (λόγοις), since I do not think it exists anywhere on earth” (9.592a R).¹⁵³ On the one hand we are persuaded of the value of this ideal virtue and feel moved to strive for it. On the other hand, people live in real cities such that are filled with very imperfect education, many poor norms, and many lawless citizens. This is a moment of great conflict for the reader of the *Republic*. If we feel too discouraged about the difficulty inherent in our inner resources and social situation we may be unable to muster the endurance to continually strive for virtue; and in that case, Socrates’ answer to Glaucon and Adeimantus would be a failure. Thus it is crucial for Socrates not to stop here at the end of Book 9. Fortunately, there is one Book left.

Consistently, along the course of the first nine Books, it seems that most of us are likely to develop a character which is either some undiscussed form of less than perfect virtue, or one of the “unlimited number of forms of vice” (ἄπειρα δὲ τῆς κακίας 4.445c). Book 10 calls us to revisit that picture, thereby helping Socrates to offer Glaucon (and Plato to offer us) a sense that we might indeed be able to succeed in

¹⁵³ Quoted is Reeve’s rendering. Shorey, Bloom, and Sachs have “exists in speeches”. Grube/Reeve has “exists in theory”. All of these versions make the same point, though.

developing a character which is sufficiently virtuous to yield a reasonably flourishing life. In this current chapter, though, I will focus on establishing the baseline picture of human character that emerges, on my account, from the first nine Books.

2.0 Plato's Terminology

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle inquires into human character in detail. In so doing, he develops a rigorous formal vocabulary. Thus Shorey describes Plato's usage of the word ἔξις at 6.509a by saying: "ἔξις is not yet in Plato quite the technical Aristotelian 'habit'".¹⁵⁴ Similarly, as will be noted subsequently, Irwin asserts that for Aristotle, ἔξις denotes a state, but "is not merely a tendency to behave...that is why 'habit' and 'disposition' are misleading translations of ἔξις".¹⁵⁵ The situation is quite different in Plato's *Republic*. As noted previously, Plato does not develop a formal technical vocabulary for describing character (as Aristotle does). On my reading, though, he does maintain a high level of consistency in the use of each of the terms he employs as a vocabulary related to character. Nevertheless, I think it is critical to avoid the temptation to understand Plato's vocabulary through the lens of Aristotle's precise technical terms.

As noted, Plato's terminology for words related to character needs quite a bit of interpretation. The various translations understandably differ significantly in how they construe these words. Further, they are often not consistent within a single text. For example, I will argue below that ἦθος, when used in the plural and applied to a single

¹⁵⁴ Shorey (1980b, 105 n f).

¹⁵⁵ Irwin (1999,349).

person, signifies character traits. But consider that plural applied to a single person (ἡθῆ) in its appearance at 3.402d. Bloom translates ἡθῆ as ‘dispositions’, which I take to be the same or very similar to my preferred ‘character traits’. Of the twelve translations I examined, seven translate ἡθῆ as a singular (six of them say character, one says disposition)¹⁵⁶, whereas 5 of them translate ἡθῆ as a plural (dispositions, characteristics, mental characteristics, habits, and states of character).¹⁵⁷ Now the term ἡθῆ (applied to a single person) occurs eight additional times in the *Republic*. Unlike Bloom who translates each of the eight as ‘dispositions’, Reeve translates each of them differently, sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural.¹⁵⁸ In the subsections below, I base my understanding of key terms by examining every passage in the *Republic* where those terms appear. Although the procedure may seem somewhat circular, the text gives us a basis for understanding that vocabulary; and that vocabulary is essential in understanding the text. Context gives us the basis since each individual statement in the *Republic* that uses a key term (e.g. ἡθῆς) is clear enough in its particulars (e.g. that character is shaped by acculturation) and the set of those statements reveals a consistency that helps establish the vocabulary. The vocabulary, in turn, is obviously essential in understanding the text, especially since some of these psychological concepts were first articulated in this text.

¹⁵⁶ Those seven being: Shorey (disposition), Grube, Lee, Grube/Reeve, Cornford, Griffith/Ferrari, and RA Allen (character)

¹⁵⁷ Those five being: Bloom, Larson, Waterfield, Reeve, and Sachs.

¹⁵⁸ habits (4.424d), qualities (4.435e), conditions (7.541a), character (8.557c), traits of character (8.558d), characters (8.561e), characteristic instincts (9.571c), and way of life (9.572d).

2.1 ἦθος

In the singular, ἦθος is one of Plato's primary terms for character. At 3.409d, Socrates says that an evil man cannot recognize a healthy character (ἦθος). Similarly, at 8.577a he says that the best judge is the one who can look into the character (ἦθος) of a person.¹⁵⁹ The other occurrences of ἦθος in the singular are consistent with this usage.¹⁶⁰ Most of the footnoted passages will be discussed in the coming sections, so to avoid repetition they are not set out here.

In the plural, ἦθη signifies one of two things. In some cases, it still means character, only in relation to multiple people; one person has her particular character and many people have their particular characters. For example, at 8.544d-e Socrates asks “do you suppose that constitutions spring from the proverbial oak or rock and not from the characters of the citizens?”¹⁶¹ In other cases, Socrates refers to the ἦθη of a single person. When used thusly, on my view, ἦθη means character traits. Consider 3.402c-d. First, Socrates sets the stage by naming several character traits directly (“temperance, courage, freedom of spirit, and magnificence”) and points to others (“their opposites”, meaning intemperance, cowardice, etc.) Socrates then goes on to talk about those character traits using the term ἦθη:

¹⁵⁹ Again, here I am just focusing on the terminology. The import of passages such as these two will be considered in Section 4.

¹⁶⁰ The other occurrences of ἦθος in the singular are at 2.375c, 2.375e, 3.400d, 3.400e, 3.401a, 3.401b, 6.490c, 6.492e, 6.496b, 6.497b, 8.549a, 10.604e, and 10.605a.

¹⁶¹ The other occurrences of ἦθη in the plural referring to the characters of multiple people are at 3.409a, 4.424d, 6.500d, 6.501a, 6.501c, 6.503c, 7.535b, 7.541a, 8.544e, 8.545b, 8.548d, and 8.557c. It should be noted, though, that at 7.541 it is syntactically unclear whether the ἦθῶν adhere to the children under 10 years of age, or rather to their parents. (The eight translators I consulted were split evenly between the two possibilities.) It is also textually unclear as to whether Plato could be saying that children under 10 have stable characters, though it seems unlikely given the rest of what is said about character development in the Republic.

when there is a coincidence in the soul (ἐν τε τῇ ψυχῇ) of fine character traits (καλὰ ἦθη) and corresponding and harmonious beauties of the same type in the bodily form (3.402d translation Shorey with my adaptations).

This is a critical point, on my view, in understanding Plato's notion of human psychology. As noted above, seven of the translators I have examined translate καλὰ ἦθη as beautiful character or beautiful disposition. Casting the plural ἦθη as a singular, on my view, obscures the passage's explicit reference to an array of different character traits. If Plato had wanted to refer to character, he could have used the singular (ἦθος), as he so often does in the *Republic*. Distinguishing the idea that Plato had a notion of both character and character trait helps fill out the picture of how he understood human psychology. Further, on my reading, the other occurrences of ἦθη when applied to one person are consistent with this.¹⁶²

Overall, ἦθος stands as a primary designator for human character. My ἦθη are my character traits. My character can be described in terms of those traits, and/or with

¹⁶² The other occurrences of ἦθη meaning character traits are found at 4.435e, 8.558d, 8.561e, 9.571c, and 9.572d. In the one instance (8.561e) where Plato applies the plural genitive of ἦθος (ἡθῶν) to a single individual, it is very unclear as to whether he intends character traits or not, so it is not surprising that translators differ widely about how to render this passage. It is unclear whether, given the context of the democratic type, the passage is better understood to say that the democratic character type has the largest number of character traits, or the fewest number of stable character traits. Perhaps this is why Shorey translates ἡθῶν here as 'differences', Griffith/Ferrari and Lee as 'characteristics', Waterfield as 'varied, etc. I have argued that a good translation will try for as much consistency as possible, in order to make the Greek as transparent to the reader as possible. In this case there is a legitimate argument to be made for using a different English term because of the contextualization of the passage. This complexity will be raised again in the next section where we consider the plural genitive τρόπων.

Still, we can contrast Plato's rigorous use of ἦθος and ἦθη with Xenophon's in *Memorabilia* 3.10. First, Xenophon uses ἦθος in the singular just as Plato does: "do you also reproduce the character of the soul, the character that is in the highest degree captivating, delightful, friendly, fascinating, lovable?" (τὸ πιθανώτατον καὶ ἡδιστον καὶ φιλικώτατον καὶ ποθεινότατον καὶ ἐρασμιώτατον ἀπομιμῆσθε τῆς ψυχῆς ἦθος; 3.10.3). But the only time Xenophon uses ἦθη, at 3.10.5, he is referring to character or characters, not character traits: "Now which do you think the more pleasing sight, one whose features and bearing reflect a beautiful and good and lovable character" (πότερον οὖν, ἔφη, νομίζεις ἥδιον ὄραν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δι' ὧν τὰ καλὰ τε κάγαθὰ καὶ ἀγαπητὰ ἦθη φαίνεται 3.10.5 Marchant).

respect to its overall goodness or badness. As we will see below, there are other features that contribute to what makes me distinctively me (e.g. habits I've developed, innate characteristics of body or psyche, characteristics that have developed over time and now are part of my second nature, and even things like my social status). By contrast with terms that pick out distinct qualities, ἦθος seems to be the term Plato uses most frequently for the core of who one is; that is to say, one's character.

2.2 τρόπος

According to LSJ, τρόπος has as its primary meanings 'turn, direction, course, way, manner, fashion'. As such, it appears frequently throughout the *Republic*, for example in the first sentence of the dialogue. (Socrates wants to see the 'manner' or 'fashion' in which the festival is conducted.) But, as LSJ also points out, when applied to persons, τρόπος refers to a person's "way of life, habit, custom" or "a man's ways, habits, character, temper". Plato does seem to use the word τρόπος (in the singular) to mean character. This sense of the word first appears at 1.329d when Cephalus says that what counts is the character of a person (ὁ τρόπος τῶν ἀνθρώπων). He goes on to specify a character which is "temperate and cheerful" (Shorey), or "balanced and good-tempered" (Bloom). Socrates replies by using the same term (τρόπος) to refer to Cephalus' character. Thus in several places in the *Republic* the word τρόπος (in the singular) is used as a synonym for ἦθος (character).¹⁶³ The plural, τρόποι sometimes is used not in reference to human beings (e.g. τρόποι μουσικῆς 4.424c) and also, in three

¹⁶³ Other examples of τρόπος in the singular applied to persons include: 1.329d, 1.329e, 3.368b, 3.400d, 4.445c, 8.555b, and 8.558c.

places, in reference to human beings. All three references are in the genitive. At 8.544d, Socrates says that it is inevitable that there are as many forms (εἶδη) of human characters (τρόπων) as there are forms of government. Here τῶν is similar to ἧθῃ in referring to the characters of more than one person.

At 8.561e and 9.575a, on the other hand, τῶν is used in relation to a single individual. Just as the meaning of ἧθος, in the one case where it is used in the plural genitive and applied to a single individual is very unclear (as discussed previously, in section 2.1 note 162), so too the meaning of τρόπος in both cases where it is used in the plural genitive and applied to a single individual is unclear. In the first of the two cases, as discussed above, although it is clear that the democratic character exhibits the greatest variety of behavior, it is not clear whether these should be seen as stable character traits.¹⁶⁴ In the second case (9.575a) ‘character traits’ might fit, though none of the twelve translations I consulted render τῶν as character traits. Here Bloom’s translation that the basest ‘part’ of the tyrant’s soul is “freed by his own bad character” seems to ignore the plural. Most translators render τῶν as “habits”, though Allen has “dispositions”, Sachs has “tendencies” and Cornford and Lee have “practices”.¹⁶⁵ Again, ‘τρόπων’ only appears twice in the *Republic* and given the lack of context, it is hard to determine how to best render it at those two spots.

¹⁶⁴ White (1979, 216), among others, notes this point: “Plato does not treat of the democratic man in two distinct sections, one on his development and another on his characteristics as he has done of the other types of men...his development extends late into life, and he never has any fully fixed pattern of activity”.

¹⁶⁵ Waterfield, Grube/Reeve, Reeve, Grube, Larsen, Griffith/Ferrari, and Shorey all render τῶν as “habits”.

2.3 φύσις

Plato uses the term φύσις frequently in the *Republic* (148 occurrences). He uses the term, though, in four different senses, three of which are relevant to the psychology of a person. The first sense of φύσις is one's 'first nature', described either in terms of a single innate characteristic (e.g. some people are innately faint-hearted [ἄθυμον 3.411b]), or in terms of a set of these innate characteristics (e.g. the person who by nature is both gentle and great spirited (2.375d), or the person who by nature has love of wisdom, quickness, high spirit, strength [2.376c]). Note that these characteristics might be of the soul or of the body.¹⁶⁶ For example, at 9.591b Socrates contrasts the benefits of fine characteristics of the soul, e.g. moderation and justice (σωφροσύνην τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην) with the benefits of fine characteristics of the body e.g. strength of body (as LSJ translates it) and beauty (ἰσχύν τε καὶ κάλλος), while pointing out that "the soul is more precious than the body". Of course soul and body act upon each other and it is the embodied soul that is at issue in Books 1-9. Some practices may lead to the development of characteristics of both soul and body. Gymnastic training builds bodily strength and health (3.404e), but can also lead to the development of savageness (if not mixed properly with musical training 3.410d) or courage (if properly mixed). Unlike character, which as we've seen is describable in terms of character traits, one's first nature may be described in terms of physical or psychic characteristics. Moreover, φύσις, in the sense of first nature, always appears in the singular. Plural references are

¹⁶⁶ Other relevant examples of φύσις in sense 1 include 1.366c, 2.359c, 2.375b, 2.375c, 2.375e, 3.401c, 3.408d, 3.409d, 3.410b, 3.415c, 4.424a, 4.430a, 5.455e-456a, 6.485a, 6.487a, 6.510a, 7.526b, 7.526c, 7.535b, 7.537c, 8.549b, and 9.589d.

always to the first natures of multiple people.

Sense 2 of φύσις is what might be called second nature. Unlike the innate characteristics described above, certain habits, if practiced over many years, become part of one's second nature. For example, if I imitate a liar all of my life (and therefore consistently lie) lying becomes part of my nature (3.395d).¹⁶⁷ In addition to developing a second nature by repeated actions, intrinsic parts of one's nature can be corrupted by poor rearing, poor education, or by living in a city filled with vicious people. This is discussed at 6.489e-492e. Similarly, 6.495a: "these, then, are the many ways in which the best nature—which is already rare enough, as we said—is destroyed and corrupted" (my emphasis). I may start out with a first nature blessed with quickness and strength. But if I adopt a regimen of overeating coupled with no exercise, my nature will develop into one of slowness and weakness. (Habits are related but importantly different. Second nature refers to how we are, not to our habitual actions.)¹⁶⁸ Overall, then, like first nature, second nature (sense 2 of φύσις) is described in terms of physical or psychic characteristics and always appears in the singular, except when referring to multiple people.

Plato clearly establishes the distinction between first and second nature. When Socrates says that "the first thing to understand is the nature that they must have from birth" (6.485a) or discusses the nature (φύσις) of the children born to gold parents (3.415c), he is clearly referring to the first nature with which a child is born. On the other hand, when Socrates says that "imitations, if they are practiced continually from

¹⁶⁷ Other relevant examples of φύσις in sense 2 include 3.410e, 10.611d, and 10.618d.

¹⁶⁸ Habits will be covered in the next section.

youth onwards, become established as habits and nature (φύσις)” (3.495d B), he is clearly referring to second nature. Indeed, Shorey translates φύσις, here, as “(second) nature”. Because the distinction is clearly established in the text and because the notion of first versus second nature will be important in the accounts of later philosophers (notably Aristotle) I will continue to use the terms first nature and second nature. It should be noted, though, that for the purposes of the *Republic’s* account of psychology, the distinction does not play a key role. When Socrates says that “each one man must perform one social service in the state for which his nature (φύσις) is best adapted”, it makes no difference whether the nature in question was inborn or acquired.

Sense 3 of φύσις is the occupational nature of a person. In this third sense, one’s nature is everything about one that makes one suited to a particular role in life, such as character, physical attributes, wealth, status, etc. Physical attributes may or may not be relevant. At 5.454c Socrates compares the nature (φύσις) of bald and long-haired men, noting that baldness would not be relevant to whether one is suited by nature to be a cobbler. The same holds for the natural capacity to bear children. Along with such minor physical attributes as hair on head, childbearing will not be relevant to one’s suitability for being a guardian. On the other hand, somebody who, along with other qualities, was quick with numbers, friendly, weak, and poor sighted might be good tradesperson, but would not have the nature suitable to be warrior (2.376c). This sense

of φύσις is much discussed in book 6, when Socrates considers the nature of a philosopher.¹⁶⁹

The fourth sense of φύσις, of course, is simply the nature of things, such as the nature of 'white' (4.429d) or 'sight' (2.367d) or 'plants and animals' (3.401a). φύσις is often used in this fourth sense, but this sense is not relevant to our discussion of character.

2.4 ἔθος and ἐπιτήδευμα (or ἐπιτηδεύματα)

Plato sometimes uses the term ἔθος to mean simply custom, as at 5.452a: "women exercising naked with men is beyond current custom". But Plato also uses the word ἔθος in relation to character. Sometimes it refers to either a character trait or to the second nature that a person has, while at other times it refers to how he habituated himself to be disposed to that certain behavior. The latter sense is mostly found where Socrates refers to things being produced 'by habit', using the dative. Over time habituation can create character traits or instill some quality into one's second nature. Socrates says, "[virtuous character traits] are not really there beforehand and are later produced *by habits* (ἔθεσι in the dative) and exercises" (7.518e B italics mine). Similarly, at 7.522a, he says that music educated the guardians *by habit* (ἔθεσι, italics mine). Socrates sometimes uses the dative of the related word ἐπιτήδευμα (habit or practice) in a similar manner. Socrates says that a man "becomes tyrannical in the full

¹⁶⁹ Other relevant examples of φύσις in sense 3 include: 2.370b, 2.374e, 3.395b, 4.433a, 4.434a-b, 4.443c, 5.453a, 5.453b, 5.453c, 5.453e, 5.454b, 5.454d, 5.455a, 5.456a, 5.473d, 5.474c, 6.495a, 6.495d, 7.514a, and 10.620c.

sense of the word...when either by nature or by habits (ἐπιτηδεύμασιν) *or by both* he has become even as the drunken, the erotic, the maniacal” (9.573c, italics mine). In other words, one might *not* have a natural predisposition to give in to sensual pleasures, but by habitually over-drinking (for example, at college) still develop the character trait of being a drunk (i.e. by habit). On the other hand, one might have such a natural predisposition, but by habitually drinking, this person might also develop the character trait of being a drunk (i.e. by both nature and habit).

By contrast with the above uses of ἔθος and ἐπιτήδευμα (in the dative) Plato often uses the term ἔθος or ἐπιτήδευμα (in the genitive or accusative) to refer to a character trait or disposition to act in a particular manner. Socrates says that the guardians must imitate:

men who are courageous, moderate, holy, free, and everything of the sort; and what is slavish, or anything else shameful, they must neither do nor be clever at imitating, so that they won't get a taste for the being from its imitation. Or haven't you observed that imitations, if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as character traits (ἔθη) and nature (φύσιν)” (3.395c-d Translation Bloom, modified by me).

Similarly, Socrates says that over time, music inculcates “harmoniousness” and “rhythmicalness” (7.522a B), and other character traits (ἔθη) akin to these. There are additional examples in line with these.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ At 4.424d, Socrates says of music that “establishing itself bit by bit, it flows gently beneath the surface into the characters (τὰ ἔθη) and character traits or practices (τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα)” of people (4.424d translation Bloom, with my modifications). Similarly, Socrates says that if someone with a philosophic nature takes residence in a vicious city he degenerates into an “alien character” (6.497b ἀλλότριον ἔθος). But if he finds himself in an ideal city, we will see that the other “natures and practices” (6.497c τὰ τε τῶν φύσεων καὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων) were inferior and these are superior.

2.5 ἔξις

The term ἔξις has many meanings, only some of which are pertinent to character. Among the definitions given by LSJ, ἔξις can mean “condition”, “state or habit of body” and also “state or habit of mind”. For the latter, LSJ points to 9.591c. On the face of it, this seems a bit strange, since the text in question is “not only won’t he turn the habit (ἔξις) and nourishment of the *body* over to the bestial and irrational pleasure.” (9.591c B). But the ‘habit of the body’ does not here seem to be a bodily habit in the way that we sometimes use it, e.g. “John has the habit of nodding and smiling when people are speaking”. Here ἔξις seems to refer to state or condition, as Sachs translates, “he’s not only not going to live as if he’d entrusted the condition and sustenance of his body to irrational animal pleasure”. There are a few places in the *Republic* where it seems that Plato uses ἔξις not to mean ‘state’, but rather to mean habit, in the sense of something that one typically does. For example:

the city was thought to be just because three natural kinds existing in it performed each its own function, and again it was sober, brave, and wise because of certain other affections and habits (ἔξεις) of these three kinds. (4.435b)

Similarly, at 7.511d, Socrates refers to the “habit (ἔξις) of geometers”.

On the whole, though, Plato seems to generally use ἔξις to mean “having a certain state as a result of practice”.¹⁷¹ This is the sense used by Aristotle. For

¹⁷¹ This could include “being in a certain state” of soul or body. For our purposes, the former is relevant. Hippocrates, on the other hand, uses ἔξις in the latter sense, e.g. “A healthy state (ἔξις) is superior in all” (De Alimento, 34.1).

Aristotle, as Irwin points out, ἔξις denotes a state, but “is not merely a tendency to behave...that is why ‘habit’ and ‘disposition’ are misleading translations of ἔξις”.¹⁷²

2.6 βίος and διαίτῳ

The word βίος is used extensively throughout the *Republic* and although it will be of primary significance in the next chapter, I will discuss its meaning briefly here because it is part of Plato’s vocabulary related to character. βίος can have several meanings, but two are used in the *Republic*. One of these is simply ‘life’ or ‘lifetime’, for example at 3.406c when Socrates says that “no one has the leisure to be sick throughout life and treat himself” (Bloom).¹⁷³

As pointed out by LSJ, though, another meaning for βίος is “a life, biography, as those of Plu[tarch]”. In this sense ‘a life’ refers to the sum total of an entire life and generally takes a backward looking, biographical perspective. This is the meaning that is most relevant to Platonic psychology and also to a central question of the *Republic*. At the beginning of Book 2, Glaucon asks whether it is true ‘as they say’ that ‘the life of an unjust person is much better than the life of a just person. (πολὺ γὰρ ἀμείνων ἄρα ὁ τοῦ ἀδίκου ἢ ὁ τοῦ δικαίου βίος, ὡς λέγουσιν 2.358c). What does Glaucon mean, here, by ‘life’? When Glaucon and all of Socrates’ other interlocutors think about “a life”, they think about things external to the soul—about a lifetime of events, outcomes, possessions, etc. And when they evaluate a life they evaluate it in terms of things

¹⁷² Irwin (1999,349).

¹⁷³ Other examples of βίος meaning simply life or lifetime can be found at 1.328e, 2.344e, 2.360e, 2.361d, 2.374c, 3.403d, 3.404a, 3.405b, 3.407d, 3.410c, 3.411a, 3.412e, 3.417b, 6.486a, 6.498d, 8.549b, 7.515b, 7.534c, 8.557b, 9.578c, 9.579e, 9.586a, 9.599b, and 7.516b.

external to the soul. A good life is a life of success in business, marriage, wealth, etc., as described by Glaucon at (2.362c). This is the “better life” potentially provided by injustice. I refer to this sense of the word life as the ‘external’ sense of the word.¹⁷⁴

By contrast, a careful examination of a concordance reveals that Socrates never, in Books 1-9, uses the word ‘life’ in the external sense.¹⁷⁵ When Socrates uses the term, he invariably is referring to a person with respect to that person’s soul.¹⁷⁶ He looks at internal features rather than external features. His focus is on a person’s character (ἦθος). Socrates speaks of a life as virtuous, or moderate, or courageous, or pious, or just. In crafting a musical education, Socrates wants to “observe what are the rhythms of a life (βίου) that is orderly and brave” (3.399e). By contrast with Glaucon’s description of the happy life in terms of (among other things) wealth—meaning money, Socrates says:

If you discover a life (βίον) better than ruling for those who are going to rule, it is possible that your well-governed city will come into being. For here alone will the *really rich rule*, rich not in gold but in those riches required by the happy man, rich in a good and prudent life. (7.520e-521a B italics mine)

¹⁷⁴ The interlocutors (including Er, whose story is repeated by Socrates) always and only use βίος in this sense, i.e. 1.331a, 2.358c, 2.358d, 2.361e, 2.362c, 2.364b, 2.365b, 2.367d, 5.450b, 10.619b, and 10.620a. Now some might challenge the first of these, namely when Cephalus quotes Pindar on the joys of living a “just and pious life” (1.331a). But since Cephalus cashes ‘just and pious’ out in terms of being rich so you don’t need to cheat men or gods, it is clear that he too is thinking of ‘a life’ in terms of externals, just as the other interlocutors do.

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, 1.347e, 3.399e, 3.400a, 4.425e, 4.442b, 5.465d, 5.466a, 5.466b, 6.484a, 6.495c, 6.496e, 7.518a, 7.520e, 8.561e, 9.575a, 9.581e, 9.583a, and 9.588a. The one possible exception is 2.372d, which will be discussed in the next footnote. The concordances used were Ast (1908) and the Perseus on line toolset.

¹⁷⁶ The sole possible exception to this in the Republic is at 2.372d, where Socrates says that the people of the pure city will ‘live out their lives in peace and health...and will hand down other similar lives to their offspring’. Now the lives are indeed described in seemingly external terms; they make honest cakes, recline on beds strewn with yew and myrtle, feast with their children, drink wine, etc. But this city, Socrates says, is the healthy city, and by analogy, the people are depicted as healthy people. And by healthy, Socrates must mean healthy in soul. Therefore, on my view, even here, Socrates is focused on the internal state of the soul, not the external events that the interlocutors take to constitute a life. Even positing the contrary, this passage would stand as a sole exception.

Thus for Socrates, although a good life might contain good and/or evil external events, it is always a lifetime of a person with good character.

Interestingly, Socrates does have a way of talking about external events. For matters external to the soul he consistently uses the term *δαιτιάω*. Indeed, Socrates is the only speaker in the *Republic* to use this term at all. For example, at 3.372aff

Socrates says:

let us consider what will be the manner of life of men (*δαιτήσονται*) thus provided. Will they not make bread and wine and garments and shoes? And they will build themselves houses and carry on their work in summer for the most part unclad and unshod and in winter clothed and shod sufficiently?

When Socrates wants to talk of matters external to the soul, such as how an athlete eats and comports himself in order to stay fit, he uses the word *δίαιταν* (3.404d).¹⁷⁷

Similar examples can be found at 3.373a, 3.373d, 3.406e, and 3.407c. Although Socrates' term 'way of life' is slightly different from Glaucon's 'a life', both describe the external events in a person's life.

2.7 Plato's Terminology: Conclusion

Although he does not have Socrates raise an explicit inquiry into the nature of character, Plato depicts and discusses it extensively throughout the *Republic*. Further, on my view, he makes distinctive, consistent, and nuanced use of everyday Greek words, offering insight into how he understands human character and the various aspects of what makes for a morally good and wise life. Thus Plato provides a

¹⁷⁷ Socrates also uses *δαιτιάω* to refer to a person's regimen (also external), e.g. at 3.404a, 3.406b, 3.406d, 3.407d, 3.408b, and 5.459c.

vocabulary with which to describe virtuous and vicious characters and character traits. We are born with a first nature (φύσις) consisting of an innate set of physical and psychic qualities. Over time, we develop characteristics (ἔθος or ἐπιτήδευμα or ἐπιτηδεύματα in the accusative or genitive) by performing actions repeatedly. That is to say that we develop these characteristics 'by habit' (ἔθος or ἐπιτήδευμα in the dative). Sometimes characteristics that are part of one's first or second nature are equally character traits (ἦθη or τρόποι). If I have a vicious nature (7.519a) then I have a character that includes the trait of viciousness. But if I am a runner who by the happy gift of nature can outrace all competitors, that characteristic is part of my nature, but not part of my character (ἦθος or τρόπος). Finally, when Socrates wants to argue for which life (βίος) is best, he focuses internally on one's character. When he wants to describe ways of life that are external to the soul he uniformly uses the term διαίτᾳ.¹⁷⁸ Of course these might affect one's character, but in that case he would revert to describing the life (βίος) with respect to character.

3.0 Character Development in the Republic

Socrates' methodology in Books 8-9 is to look first at how a particular paradigmatic polity arises, after which he examines the resulting city. Similarly, he first looks at how the person who resembles that city comes to be, after which he examines the individual himself. Sara Brill argues that this methodology is necessary:

an analysis of the character of city and soul ... would be incomplete without an account of the genesis of this character. Socrates' persistence in providing an

¹⁷⁸ Another important term is κατασκευή. This term is mostly important in interpreting Books 8-9, so we will deal with it later in this chapter when we get to that section.

account of the transformation of character (in addition to a description of the character) identifies causal mechanisms common to city and soul and makes this identification a necessary part of the analysis.¹⁷⁹

I think the same approach is useful in understanding the *Republic's* picture of character. Much of what the *Republic* has to tell us about human character emerges from its account of character development. Therefore, this section will focus on character development, after which, in Section 4, I will turn to how the *Republic* depicts character itself.

In contrast to the vexed issue of how agent-like the 'parts' of our souls are, it seems to me that that Socrates offers a fairly straightforward and consistent picture of how character develops. There are five factors, each of which plays a critical role, namely 1) breeding and first nature, 2) rearing, 3) early and adult education, 4) city of residence, and 5) habituation. Deficiencies in any of these, I will argue, will make it extremely difficult (but not impossible) to develop the fully virtuous character that Socrates describes.

3.1 Breeding and First Nature

Although 4th Century Greeks did not have our science of genetics, they were very aware of breeding and its effects. Socrates frequently raises the issue of breeding, both of animals (e.g. 1.333b, 1.342c, 5.458e-459b) and of people (e.g. 5.459b). Good breeding usually produces offspring with a good first nature ("for the most part you'll produce offspring like yourselves" 3.415a B), though not invariably ("it sometimes

¹⁷⁹ Brill (2015, 9 n 17).

happens that a silver child will be born from a golden parent, a golden child from a silver parent, and similarly all the others from each other” 3.415b B). This is because luck and other factors play a role. Although Socrates does indeed seem to be “playing and jesting with us as if we were children” at 8.545e-546d, the point of the passage seems clear. Whether it is the “whole geometrical number” that “controls better and worse births”, or chance (as suggested here at 8.546d and perhaps also in the Myth of Er at 10.619d), or some other factors, Socrates says that the decline of the Kallipolis begins with children who are born without a good (first) nature (οὐκ εὐφρεῖς 8.546d). When those children become rulers, because of their nature they will begin to neglect music and gymnastics, and develop a character that is less than virtuous.¹⁸⁰

Being born with a good first nature is extremely rare in human beings (6.491a-b). Further, even for such rare people, being born with an excellent first nature is not enough to ensure that they will develop virtuous characters. As will become clear, poor rearing, poor education, or other factors might well corrupt an excellent first nature, resulting in a person with a vicious character. For example, at 6.494b-495b, Socrates describes a boy born with an outstanding first nature— “first among the children in everything”. If he lives in a bad city, though, or has bad parents who do not raise their children properly, his family and the citizenry alike will flatter him, try to make use of him, etc., to the point that he develops a character “brimming with pretension and pride that is empty and lacks understanding”. This is said in relation to what often happens

¹⁸⁰ The term is ἀμουσότεροι, which is literally unmusical, but in the context of the Republic, musical is often used as a synonym for virtuous—e.g. 3.402b)

that causes distrust in philosophers, but as usual, Socrates broadens the point to apply to everybody:

the very qualities that make up the philosophical nature do, in fact, become, when the environment and nurture are bad, in some sort the cause of its backsliding...but a small nature never does anything great to a man or a city (6.494a-b).

Nevertheless, one's first nature is significant and heavily influences the kind of character one will develop. For this reason, in the Kallipolis, "If an offspring of [gold parents] should be found to have a mixture of iron or bronze, they must not pity him in any way, but give him the rank appropriate to his nature and drive him out to join the craftsmen and farmers" (3.415b-c G). Indeed, at 8.558b Socrates suggests that somebody with a surpassingly excellent first nature (ὑπερβεβλημένην φύσιν) might even overcome the results of bad rearing and become a good person. But this is only for somebody with an exceptional first nature. Generally, "the best nature fares worse, when unsuitably nurtured, than an ordinary one" (6.491d G).

In sum, one's first nature appears to be largely a result of one's genetics. Luck and other matters might have an effect, but generally only good stock will produce good offspring. But very few people are born with a good first nature. Thus, although first nature is not sufficient for the development of a good character, one's first nature significantly impacts the character one is likely to develop, for good or for evil, which is why so much attention is paid to this matter in the Kallipolis. Certainly moving back and forth between the city and the soul can sometimes be misleading, but in this case, as Socrates has made clear (e.g. at 6.491a-b) the rarity of good first nature and the impact first nature has on character holds for all of us—not just those in the Kallipolis.

3.2 Rearing

Along with breeding and first nature, rearing is crucial to developing good character. Even before early education, children's characters begin to develop for the better or the worse by virtue of the games they play and the stories and the music that they hear. This is because the soul of the very young child "is most malleable and takes on any pattern one wishes to impress on it" (2.377a G). Therefore, Socrates urges that

we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers. We'll select their stories whenever they are fine or beautiful and reject them when they aren't. And we'll persuade nurses and mothers to tell their children the ones we have selected, since they will shape their children's souls with stories (2.377b-c G).

Similarly, for the games that the young children play:

our children's games must from the very beginning be more law-abiding, for if their games become lawless, and the children follow suit, isn't it impossible for them to grow up into good and law-abiding men? (4.424e G).

Again, it is important to emphasize the universality of the claims in the passages above.

Though said in context of the Kallipolis, Socrates' claim here is that even outside the Kallipolis, it is "impossible" (ἀδύνατον 4.425a) to develop virtuous character without a good rearing.

As they get a bit older and begin their education, first nature and rearing are major factors in determining whether the education will be successful: "because they had the proper nature and rearing, they would absorb the laws in the finest possible way" (4.430a G).¹⁸¹ Rearing comes from many sources, not only mothers and

¹⁸¹ By reference to the laws, this passage also points to the role of the city, which will be discussed in section 3.4.

nursemaids, but also from fathers and from the norms and inhabitants of the city in which one is reared. For example, the account of how the man who resembles the timocratic city comes to be (8.549e-550c) details his rearing and the influence of his mother, father, the family servants, and the people of the city. Each plays a role in the development of his character.

As was the case with breeding and first nature, rearing on its own is not at all sufficient to ensure development of a particular type of character. As noted earlier, even the best natures can become outstandingly bad if subjected to poor rearing (6.491d). Indeed, in any city where “there are thieves, pickpockets, temple-robbers, and all such evildoers”, their presence is partly due to “bad rearing” (κακὴν τροφήν) (8.552d-e G). Overall, rearing emerges as a second critical factor in character development.

3.3 Early and Adult Education (παιδεία)

Along with first nature and rearing, education (both early and adult) plays a key role in character development. Certainly, education in Plato’s Athens was very different from ours. First of all, as Burnyeat points out, “The Greek word παιδεία means both education and culture, because culture is what educates and forms the soul”.¹⁸² In addition, the emphasis on acting out works of ‘poetry’ (μουσική) in early education, as well as the importance of the theater in adult education mattered greatly to the specifics of character development in Plato’s day. In the *Republic*, Socrates discusses at length, especially in Books 2-3, just how early education builds character in the young

¹⁸² Burnyeat (1997, 240).

guardians-to-be. Subsequently, in Books 5-7, we get a detailed account of the adult education which leads to the finest character of all—the Philosopher-King. Finally, in Book 10, we get a picture of how poetry in the theater impacts the character of ordinary people.

Early education is critical, and is considered in the context of the education of the guardians (οἱ φύλακες) of the Kallipolis. Socrates says that “the direction of the education from whence one starts is likely to determine the quality of what follows” (4.425b-c). The future leaders are educated in music so that they might develop the finest possible set of character traits:

they must imitate from childhood what is appropriate for them, namely, people who are courageous, self-controlled, pious, and free. (3.395c G)

But the underlying dynamic is general in nature, applicable to all people:

Or have you not observed that imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into character traits and nature (ἔθῃ τε καὶ φύσιν 3.395c-d translation mine adapted from Shorey)

This pattern of prescribing specifics in the education in the Kallipolis while ascribing the impact of education on character to people at large runs throughout Books 2 and 3.¹⁸³

The specifics regarding the proper content of the music to be used in education are covered at length, since, as quoted above, that content and the style of the delivery of that content build virtuous or vicious character. Also the meter and harmony are discussed in depth, since they too are instrumental in character development (3.400c-e). Content, style, meter, harmony, etc., matter especially since the youths participated in tragedies by taking part in one chorus or another, which involved them in imitation

¹⁸³ To give just three other examples, consider 2.377a, 2.378d, and 3.386a.

more deeply than just watching a play would involve us. These as well as the impact of the proper mix of music and gymnastic education on the development of fine character traits (e.g. 3.410a-412b) are well covered in the secondary literature and do not need to be reviewed for the purposes of this chapter.¹⁸⁴ What is relevant, though, is that clearly, on Socrates' account, childhood education is critical to the development of character traits. Bad education promotes the development of servility (ἀνελευθερίας), insolence (ὑβρεως) and other bad character traits (3.400b), whereas good education promotes courage (e.g. 3.399e, 4.429e-430b), moderation (3.399b, 3.404e), rationality (3.401d-402a), and other good character traits. Overall, good education promotes the development of a "truly good and fine character" (ἀληθῶς εὖ τε καὶ καλῶς τὸ ἦθος 3.400e). Nevertheless, like the developmental factors discussed in section 3.1 and 3.2, it is not sufficient on its own. Even the young guardians who receive an excellent education might still fail to develop virtue of character, for example, the person who acts out of cowardice at 5.468a.

Early education is more formative to one's character than later-stage education, but the latter still plays some role. First of all, just as the imitation inherent in the education of the youth shapes their characters, so too the imitations adults experience in the theater, at symposia, and all around them affect their characters.¹⁸⁵ This is why the 'versatile imitator' (as Belfiore calls him) is not permitted into the Kallipolis at 3.397e-398b.¹⁸⁶ Images that elevate slavery over death, for example, promote the

¹⁸⁴ See Burnyeat (1997) for one example.

¹⁸⁵ Again Burnyeat (1997), for example (p 235ff) goes into great detail on how symposia continue to shape character of the citizens.

¹⁸⁶ See Belfiore (1984, 124).

development of cowardice in adults as well as children (παισὶ καὶ ἀνδράσιν 3.387b). In addition, the continuing education of the guardians is built upon the early education in music and gymnastic and is clearly intended to further shape the character of these young adults. Burnyeat, for example, makes a convincing case that

The mathematical curriculum is part of a long, unitary argument to establish that, if talented men and women with a passion for knowledge are educated in the right studies, they will rule both reluctantly (hence without being corrupted in the manner of the rulers we are familiar with) and wisely (hence to the benefit of the whole community). *The crux of the argument is the claim that true ethical insight presupposes an intense mathematical training, which neither Glaucon nor the reader has had...* Success in this task will be an important test of which Guards are fitted to go on to five years' dialectic, for only someone who can view things synoptically has a truly dialectical nature (7.537c).¹⁸⁷

From age 30-35 they study dialectic, which is prerequisite to gaining knowledge of the Form of the Good and thereby developing philosophic virtue. Then, at age 35, they must go back down into the cave to complete their education through 15 years of ruling in offices suitable for young adults in order to gain experience (ἐμπειρίᾳ 7.539e).¹⁸⁸

During these 15 years they will be tested as to whether will they remain steadfast and faithful (ἐμμενοῦσιν 7.540a) or will “shift their ground” or “change” (7.540a παρακινήσουσι).¹⁸⁹ Thus the testing is about the nature of their character. Socrates does not detail *how* these 15 years develop character; he simply tells us *that* they are intended to do so and that the future leaders will be tested on whether or not the 15

¹⁸⁷ Burnyeat (2000, 64-67). Italics are mine.

¹⁸⁸ The consensus view, e.g. Adam (1902, 153), is that at this point they have not yet gained knowledge of the Form of the Good; rather this occurs when they reach age 50. Vasiliou (2015, 49) argues, to the contrary, that “the philosophical education enables the philosophers to know the Good at about age 35”. My account is consistent with either view.

¹⁸⁹ LSJ points to 7.540a for this rendering.

years succeeded. In other words, the 15 years of practical service will test (at the outset) whether their initial education produced good character traits, as well as (as the years progress) whether their years of practical education have succeeded in further developing their characters in the direction of virtue.

Those who pass the tests will spend most of their time continuing the study of dialectic. But they must also spend part of their time, when their turn comes, using the Form of the Good “as a pattern for the right ordering of the state and the citizens and themselves” (7.540a). They will use their knowledge of the Good to rule the city *and to educate “others of the same sort as them”* (7.540b) for the remainder of their lives.

These others that they are educating are clearly adults (future rulers) and the goal of the education is at least partly to improve their students’ characters, building on the early education that those students received. We see from this account that although primary education has the greater impact on character development, secondary education also strongly affects character. It too, though, is not sufficient to ensure that an individual will develop a virtuous character. These guardians have been a) selected for breeding and excellence of first nature, b) well brought up, and c) excellently educated. Nevertheless, some of those who still fail to ‘survive the tests’ (540a) fail on some weakness of character (e.g. they do not stand firm).

As usual, Socrates gives much of the detail in the context of the Kallipolis, but assures us that character development is the same in Athens and other non-ideal cities.

At the end of Book 9 Socrates says:

Then won’t the man who has intelligence strain all of his powers to that end as long as he lives; in the first place, honoring the studies that will make his soul such [its best nature, acquiring moderation and justice accompanied by

prudence], while despising the rest? (9.9591c B, bracketed material from 9.591a B)

Burnyeat argues that this must apply to the philosopher living in a non-ideal city, since Socrates goes on to apply this to how the man 'who has intelligence' will employ his education for the acquisition of money (at 9.591d) and take part in the politics of the city of his birth (at 9.592a).¹⁹⁰ Perhaps Burnyeat is correct, but coming (as it does) right after the image of the soul (i.e. the multi-headed beast/lion/man wrapped in the shape of a man 9.588c-d), I take this passage to refer as much to the effect of education on human character overall. Each of the three factors we have examined, breeding/first nature, rearing, and education is critical to character formation, but none of them is sufficient on its own.

3.4 City of Residence

Another critical factor in character development is the nature of the city in which one resides.¹⁹¹ This includes its culture, its norms, and its citizens. All aspects of the culture come into play. Even the architecture of one's city of residence is formative to one's character. Architecture admits of being graceful or graceless (3.401a).

Gracelessness in the architecture of one's city of residence (like the other facets of its

¹⁹⁰ Burnyeat (2000, 78).

¹⁹¹ In his influential 1992 essay, Jonathan Lear argues that a key insight of the Republic is that the character of the city's inhabitants affects the nature of the city, and the character of the city affects the nature of its inhabitants. What is needed, as he says on p184, is "a dynamic account of the psychological transactions between inside and outside a person's psyche, between a person's inner life and his cultural environment, between intrapsychic and interpsychic relations".

culture) gradually accustom one to mediocrity and ugliness, forming base character (κακοηθείας 3.401a) whereas gracefulness in architecture has the opposite effect.

More important, in the good city of Book 4, the laws help a person develop good character traits as well as an overall good character. For example, in the good city, one who internalizes the laws in a fine way develops the positive character trait of (civic) courage (4.430a-b). The good laws also promote harmony among the citizens (5.462a-e)—they “bind [the city] together and make it one” (5.462b B). It is just the same in the souls of the individual inhabitants of the good city (“the city with the best regime is most like such a human being” 5.462c B). Further, in the pure city, the norms of behavior (respect for elders, care of parents, “hair-dos, clothing shoes...and everything else of the sort” 4.425b B) will foster fine character development. Socrates argues at length (4.425b-427a) that regarding these matters it is both unnecessary and also impractical to pass laws (in a good city with good people i.e. the future guardians). Regarding these matters, it would not be fitting to dictate to fine and good people (οὐκ ἄξιον, ἔφη, ἀνδράσι καλοῖς κάγαθοῖς ἐπιτάττειν 4.425d).

Of course, the above comments are describing the purified city that can produce the perfectly virtuous person. So it is unsurprising that Socrates says that no city that exists in his time is worthy of the “philosophic nature” (φιλοσόφου φύσεως 6.497b). As quoted earlier, a good first nature typically develops into a bad character if one resides in a city where the inhabitants are of bad character (6.494b-495a). The good nature of a person who resides in such a city is corrupted by the city, shaping a good character into a bad one:

This is just the cause of its perversion and alteration; as a foreign seed sown in an alien soil is wont to be overcome and die out into the native growth, so this

kind does not preserve its own quality but falls away and degenerates into an alien type. (6.497b)

Socrates says that when “lawlessness (παρανομία) has established itself there, it flows over little by little into characters” (τὰ ἥθη 4.424d G). Ostensibly ‘there’ refers to ‘the choice of musical modes’, but the passage seems to also gesture at how in a city where lawlessness reigns, the impact is on the characters of its citizens.¹⁹² As noted earlier, evildoers develop their corrupt character as result of poor education, bad rearing, *and* living in a bad city (ἀπαιδευσίαν καὶ κακὴν τροφήν καὶ κατάστασιν τῆς πολιτείας 8.552e). Along the same lines, Socrates describes (6.492a-c) the corruption of character that happens when a person of good nature and even good education sits in the assembly of a bad city:

what kind of private education will hold out for him and not be swept away...so that he'll say the same things are noble and base as they do, practice what they practice, and be such as they are? (6.492c)

Similarly, in Books 8 and 9, the progressive degradation of city and soul are partly a result of lawlessness.¹⁹³ Living in a bad city is nearly certain to prevent one from developing a truly virtuous character. Socrates himself might seem to represent an exception. For example, he suggests that maybe one who is “a great soul born in a little town scorns and disregards its parochial affairs” (6.496b) might escape corruption. But such a thing is so unlikely, he says, that it might only happen because of divine intervention (6.492e-493a). Of course, both avoiding politics and divine intervention are

¹⁹² As Bloom (1968, 456) notes, παρανομία is “a word that reminds of the musical nomos as well as the political”

¹⁹³ See, for example, 8.550d, 8.555c, 8.563d.

associated with Socrates. Thus, although Socrates might be an exception, he confirms that exceptions would be extremely rare.

Overall, living in a good city is not, on its own, sufficient to developing a perfectly virtuous character. First nature, rearing, education, and city of residence, all matter greatly in influencing character development. Nevertheless, living in a good city is critical to the possibility of developing perfectly virtuous character. Socrates' account persuades us that it is extremely unlikely that somebody can succeed in developing perfectly virtuous character while living in a bad city. What he does not discuss in Books 1-9, though, is whether somebody who lives in a bad city might still develop some measure of decent character that falls short of perfect virtue.

3.5 Habituation

Last, and at least as important as the others, is what Vasiliou refers to as the 'habituation principle'.¹⁹⁴ Habituation is crucial in character formation on its own, but also works in conjunction with other formative forces (such as education). With respect to character formation on its own, habituation operates with effect throughout one's life, irrespective of whether one lives in a good city or a bad city. Socrates, in the *Republic*, is very clear that actions, if done repeatedly, eventually become part of one's second nature and overall character. Somebody who consistently tells the truth over a long period of time (even in situations where telling the truth is uncomfortable or inconvenient) eventually develops the character trait of honesty. Thus habituation, on

¹⁹⁴ See multiple references in Vasiliou (2008), e.g. 17, 136, 213-220, 252-253. Vasiliou points to all of the passages cited in this section.

its own, shapes our character throughout our lives by virtue of the choices we make. Although we are born with innate predispositions in psyche and characteristics of body, most of our physical and psychic characteristics in their actualized forms are developed. As quoted earlier, Socrates says, “[virtuous character traits] are not really there beforehand and are later produced by habits and exercises” (7.518e B). For example, repeatedly doing just actions produces the character trait of justice, whereas repeatedly doing unjust actions produces the opposite (4.444c). “Then”, continues Socrates, “does not doing just acts engender justice and unjust injustice” (4.444c-d). “Of necessity (ἀνάγκη)”, replies Glaucon. Socrates does not waver from this position. When he famously “fashions an image of the soul in speech” (εἰκόνα πλάσαντες τῆς ψυχῆς λόγῳ 9.588b-591c B) he argues that nobody should say “that it’s profitable for this human being to do injustice, and that it’s not advantageous for him to do just things” since, again, doing unjust deeds builds unjust character, while doing the reverse builds character of the opposite sort. Character traits such as stubbornness, bad temper, luxury, cowardice, flattery, and illiberality, result when a person habituates” (ἐθίζη 9.590b) himself from youth onward.

But habituation also works in conjunction with some of the other factors which contribute to character development. For example, education (especially early education) is clearly said by Socrates to be a major factor in character development. Part of how education shapes our character is through habituation. In the very young this may take the form of games (e.g. 4.424e-425a) or, during early education, poetry and imitation (e.g. 2.377a-b, 3.395c-d, 7.522a). Whether playing, imitating, or performing actions, though, the effect is the same. Performing (or imitating) brave

actions (as an example) develops bravery, whereas performing or imitating cowardly actions develops cowardice.

Thus habituation is a fifth critical component of character development. As with the other four, the passages already cited make clear that habituation is critical to the development of fine character, but not sufficient on its own. In the extreme case, it would be very difficult for somebody who was born with a bad nature, badly brought up, badly educated, and who lived in a bad city with bad culture and bad citizens, to find it within himself to simply do just deeds on a consistent basis until a just character was formed.

3.6 Character Development in the Republic: Conclusion

The *Republic* discusses character development at great length. Unlike some topics (e.g. the nature of soul parts, as discussed in Chapter 1) Socrates neither denies knowledge of how character develops, nor hedges the account as partial, an image, or inadequate in any way. And unlike some topics, the account seems quite consistent and straightforward. People are born with a first nature comprising various physical and psychic characteristics. Their rearing and education, as well as the culture, norms, and inhabitants of their city of residence, shape the character traits and character they develop. Finally, practices that people engage in frequently become habits and may become second nature. These too are part of their character.

Importantly, character development is a lifelong process. Certainly people are most impressionable when they are young, so rearing and early education shape their character most significantly. But ongoing education also continues to mold character,

both for philosophers (as described in Books 5-7) and also for people in general (e.g., as noted earlier, the imitations adults experience in the theater, at symposia, and all around them). Further, the choices people make have the power to continue to develop and change their characters throughout the arc of their lives.

4.0 Character in *Republic* Books 1-9

Having first considered the account of character development, we now turn to examine the picture of character itself that emerges in the *Republic*. (Again, following Socrates' methodology in Books 8-9.) As already noted, although Socrates does not raise the issue of character (i.e. ἦθος or τρόπος) as an explicit subject for inquiry, a picture emerges over the course of the *Republic*. My claims in this section are that a) character is consistently portrayed as something that can be described in terms of character traits, b) that character traits are dispositions to act in a certain manner (and people's patterns of action are evidence we use in judging the character traits we take people to have), c) that character as a whole can be described or depicted as being relatively more or less virtuous, and d) that fully virtuous character is portrayed as something that is very desirable, but at the same time, something most readers of the *Republic* are very unlikely to develop. As noted in the introduction, I will first examine the picture of character that emerges from Books 1-4¹⁹⁵, then from Books 5-7, and finally from Books 8-9. On my view, each of these three sections offers a consistent picture of character, but each adds specific detail to the evolving and unfolding picture.

¹⁹⁵ In the main, my focus here in section 4.1 will be on Books 2-4, though I will return to Book 1 in Chapter 3.

4.1 Character in *Republic* Books 1-4

The introduction of human character comes immediately at the beginning of the nightlong discussion at the house of Polemarchus. As the conversation begins, Cephalus claims that the character (τρόπος) of a human being is what determines whether life (both youth and old age) will be troublesome or not (1.329d-e). Cephalus does not go into too much detail regarding his notion of good character, but indicates that good character involves an absence of strong passions and desires. He says that old age causes the “fierce tensions of the passions and desires” to relax. His notion of good character also includes being “well behaved and cheerful” (κόσμιοι καὶ εὐκόλοι 1.329d). By the end of Book 4 we will see that Socrates would have had sympathy with the notion that good character includes not being ruled by strong passions and desires, although he would not endorse Cephalus’ method of waiting until old age causes them to wither on their own. In addition, Socrates’ account of what lies at the core of good character goes far beyond being simply ‘well behaved and cheerful’.

4.1.1 Character Can Be Described in Terms of Character Traits

Socrates’ presentation of character does coincide with Cephalus’ in one respect, though, namely that character can be described in terms of morally relevant traits. Klein points to a key distinction when he says that

“[Plato] considers the qualities necessary in the Guardian—in the broad sense of the term (*Rep* 357a-376c). The Guardian must be spirited; this is the natural

material out of which courage is formed. But spiritedness is related to aggression, and this is, of course, dangerous to the citizens of the community.”¹⁹⁶

Being spirited can be a characteristic of one’s first or second nature, and in either case may be the foundation for the morally good character trait of courage, or equally, for the morally bad character trait of savageness.

Books 1-4 give a long list of positive and negative character traits, as Socrates describes which character traits the Guardians must and must not develop. The Guardians need to have “fine character traits in the soul” (ἐν τε τῇ ψυχῇ καλὰ ἦθη 3.402d), such as gracefulness, soberness, goodness, (3.401a), temperance, courage, freedom of spirit, magnificence(3.402c), bravery (3.399a), and steadfastness (3.399b). On the other hand, they must not develop character traits such as drunkenness, idleness, sloth (3.398e), viciousness, unrestrainedness, slavishness, gracelessness (3.401b), and lawlessness (4.424d). Also, as already mentioned, the mix of gymnastic and music is critical. Too much of the former engenders character traits like brutality, whereas too much of the latter builds character traits like softness; the right mix builds bravery (3.410d). A virtuous person (4.443a) can be described as not being untrustworthy, adulterous, or impious whereas vicious people might well have those traits.

4.1.2 Character Traits Are Dispositions to Act in a Particular Manner

Kupperman suggests that a folk-psychological notion of a character trait is a

¹⁹⁶ Klein (1989, 248).

propensity to act in a certain manner.¹⁹⁷ As he says in an earlier work, “someone’s character may be the engraving of ways of thinking and acting which have become predictable but which do not preclude a person’s acting out of character.”¹⁹⁸ By describing in people or assigning to dramatic characters in the *Republic* dispositions to act in a certain way, Plato has Socrates show us character traits in just this light. It is important to distinguish somebody’s character trait (e.g. Glaucon’s ‘contentiousness’ as Shorey renders φιλονικίας at 8.548d) with somebody else’s judgment of the presence, absence, strength, etc., of that character trait (e.g. Adeimantus and Socrates’ joint judgment that Glaucon is indeed ‘contentious’ 8.548d-e). Both character traits and the judgment of character traits will play an important part in the picture of character that we can mine from the *Republic*, but it is important to keep them separate. Judgments of character traits are complex and often wrong for a variety of reasons. People are fallible, some character traits (e.g. self-restraint) are not always visible, sometimes a disposition is present but will only emerge in a particular situation, etc. Overall, though, our judgment that somebody possesses a particular character trait will often be based on the pattern of their prior behavior and will also influence our expectations as to how they are likely to behave in the future. We would expect the courageous person that Socrates discusses at 4.429a-b to generally act in a courageous manner and the cowardly person to generally act in a cowardly manner.

Similarly, the Guardians must do what they “at any time believe to be best for the state” (3.413c). Socrates says that he, Glaucon, and Adeimantus, as the founders of

¹⁹⁷ Kupperman (2001, 240-241).

¹⁹⁸ Kupperman (1991, 4). Christian Miller (2013, 13) makes a similar claim.

Kallipolis, must select those youths who are '*least likely*' to forget this principle (3.413c). Let us say that these Guardians would possess the character trait of 'faithfulness to the state'. That is to say, they would have a disposition to act in the best interests of state. The evidence of that disposition would be that they would be *likely* to act faithfully; perhaps they would not always do so, but the disposition would always be there.

Importantly, the passage highlights other youths that fail to reach this mark and must be rejected (τὸν δὲ μὴ ἀποκριτέον 3.413d). The best of those youths, though, despite being rejected as not being the *most* faithful, will likely be ones with a weaker but still present disposition to act faithfully. This suggests the notion that character traits may be present in people to a greater or lesser degree. In the section below, when we discuss the overall virtue of someone's character, we will find a similar type of relativity.

This notion of 'likelihood of acting in a certain manner' is often brought forth as evidence of a particular disposition. At 4.421a-b Socrates talks about the ones "least likely to harm the commonwealth" (ποιοῦμεν ἥκιστα κακούργους τῆς πόλεως). Similarly, at 3.412c, Socrates says that the Guardians must be *most watchful* (φυλακικωτάτους) in guarding the city.¹⁹⁹ He then says that "one would be *most likely* to be careful of that which he loved" (3.412d κήδοιτο δὲ γ' ἄν τις μάλιστα τούτου ὁ τυγχάνοι φιλῶν), and that "one would be *most likely* to love that whose interests he supposed to coincide with his own" (3.412d). A character trait like watchfulness or

¹⁹⁹ LSJ translates φυλακικός as "watchful, careful", citing this passage specifically. Bloom retains the notion of guarding, rendering φυλακικωτάτους as "most skillful at guarding". Bloom's translation leaves it to us to consider which characteristics make one most skillful at guarding (watchfulness, carefulness, alertness, etc.). The point does not depend on which characteristics are most relevant.

bravery is a disposition to be attentive or to act bravely. One with that disposition is most likely to act accordingly. The propensity is always there, but will sometimes be trumped by circumstances or bad judgment.²⁰⁰ On balance, though, one's behavior over time often gives us an indication as to one's character.

4.1.3 Character is Illustrated as Being Relatively More or Less Virtuous

Socrates and other figures in the *Republic* often describe a person in terms of the virtue (or vice) of his overall character. 'The just man' and 'the good man', as well as their opposite numbers, are pervasively referred to in the dialogue. These are notions of overall virtue of character. But reference is also often made to the 'most just' or 'best' man as well as to the 'most unjust' and worst man. These are notions of relative virtue of character. As was the case with respect to character traits (discussed in the previous section) it is important to distinguish between the character itself and judgments of that character. Both are important. For example, as noted, Socrates agrees that both Glaucon and the man who resembles the timocratic city-state are victory-loving or contentious (8.548d-e). But the ensuing description of the vicious aspects of the timocrat (e.g. he is stubborn, two-faced, and ultimately, a lover of money), contrasts sharply with the description of Glaucon, who seems to be a fairly admirable character.²⁰¹ Thus, it seems clear that in some manner Socrates is judging

²⁰⁰ Again, it is possible that the guardians may not waver from their bravery, but the text presents us with those slightly less brave. They (and Plato's readers) are likely to act in accord with their dispositions, but sometimes do not.

²⁰¹ Consider the assertion at 2.368a-b that there is "a touch of the god-like in your disposition...I infer this from your general character"

that Glaucon's overall character is more virtuous than the timocrat's. Similarly, in Book 2, Glaucon and Adeimantus imagine a "most completely just" man (who will be judged by all to be the most unjust), and a "most completely unjust" man (who will be judged by all to be the most just). Socrates accepts both the relative virtue of character and the fallible judgment of character as a basis for the ensuing discussion, commenting: "how vigorously you polish up each of the two men—just like a statue—for their judgment" (2.361d B).

Imagine a continuum within which we can situate a person according to the relative degree of vice/virtue of their overall character. In Book 4, Socrates completes his description of the "perfectly just man" (τὸν τελέως δίκαιον 5.472c), who is sometimes referred to in the secondary literature as the 'psychically just person'. With the whole of the *Republic* in mind, the picture of Book 4's 'perfectly just man' (who is reason led with the other parts of his soul following in harmony) must be seen as an interim description of the perfectly just man, one that is relevant at that point in the argument but ultimately must be discarded as an explanatory artifact. The harmony of his soul depends on tripartition, which we have argued needs to be reinterpreted as a stepping stone to a finer understanding. Further, despite his overall harmony, his partite appetite by nature still always threatens to grow large. His epistemic state is also imperfect, because he lacks knowledge of the Forms. Thus he is unlikely to rob a temple—but it is not a matter of certainty. Later, in Books 5-7, we will be introduced to the figure who is truly the 'perfectly just man', namely, the Philosopher-King. Insofar as Socrates describes the Philosopher-King, he or she would sit at the absolute right limit of the continuum. By the end of Book 9, Socrates has fleshed out the character of the ruling tyrant. He would

sit at the absolute left limit of the continuum.

In Book 2, Glaucon and Adeimantus also envision “the most completely just and the most completely unjust man” (τόν τε δικαιοτάτον καὶ τὸν ἀδίκωτατον 2.360e).

Although Glaucon and Adeimantus have a very different conception of what counts as a just or unjust man, compared with Socrates’ conception, nevertheless if they were right, these two men would sit at the left and right limits of the continuum, respectively. Again, Glaucon and Adeimantus’ perfectly unjust man (τῷ τελέως ἀδίκῳ 2.361a) will seem to be just, and their just man will seem to be unjust. Thus, although the perfectly just man would actually sit at the right limit of the continuum, if we were asked to place him we would mistakenly put him at the left limit. But even if we were rarely as completely mistaken as that, we wouldn’t be able to determine an *absolute* location on the continuum where any particular soul (including our own) sits. (The gods, as we will see in the next chapter, will be able to accurately determine the true degree of virtue of an individual, even though we cannot.) In part we might be deceived by reputation or, more generally, appearances (as was the case with the Book 2 people just described) and in part we would be unable to determine an absolute location because one cannot sum up character traits to yield a precise degree of virtue. Nevertheless, we can often infer from the text the apparent *relative* position of two souls. Consider, for example, three of the non-virtuous individuals depicted in Books 1-4.

Cephalus is a colorfully drawn character about whom much has been written. Ruby Blondell’s detailed discussion of his character begins by noting some of the positive aspects of his character:

[Cephalus] is not a *bad* man. He respects the gods, rejects materialism in its more vulgar forms, and emphasizes the superiority of equanimity over

passionate emotion. As someone guided by traditional authorities, he may be thought to embody the unphilosophical virtue of the ordinary citizen (430c).²⁰²

As her analysis proceeds, though, Blondell's picture of Cephalus grows increasingly negative:

Kephalos' bodily feebleness is a trope for moral and intellectual inadequacy...his moral judgments are based not on inquiry but on the authority of tradition, as enshrined in poetry, myth and anecdote...The old man's outlook is indeed, as he says in self-congratulatory fashion, a product of his personality (tropos, 329d3), but Plato represents neither outlook nor tropos uncritically. The rest of the work will validate the implication that the right kind of character is essential to happiness, but in doing so confirm that Kephalos' own character, as well as his version of happiness, beneath its good-natured veneer, is deeply suspect.²⁰³

Cephalus helps typify the conventional virtue that will be described, by the end of Book 9, as one of the unlimited number of forms of vice.

Leontius is even more vicious than Cephalus. Like Cephalus, Leontius is also appetite-led and also law abiding. But Leontius' appetites are perverse and outside the normative behavior for Athenians. He has enough goodness to know that his desires are detestable. He is ashamed of those desires and indeed he chooses to resist his vile behavior, but cannot abide by his choice (4.439e-440a). Although his shame and his choice are admirable, he is still both appetite-driven and incontinent.

Last, consider the temple robber. We don't know much about his character but he is also clearly appetite driven. Unlike Cephalus and Leontius, though, he also contravenes the laws of the city and blasphemes against the gods. On the vice/virtue continuum, Cephalus is to the right of Leontius, who is to the right of the temple robber.

²⁰² Blondell (2002, 169).

²⁰³ *ibid.*, 171-173.

The most important character in Books 1-4 is the already-mentioned psychically just man drawn at the end of Book 4, who sits to the right of Glaucon and Adeimantus. We know quite a bit about him. He was born with an outstanding first nature to good parents. As a youth, he heard noble tales from his mother and nursemaid, and played enriching games. He received the excellent education described in Books 2-3. In addition to fine educational content, he was supervised to blend just the right mixture of gymnastics in with his learning. All of this took place in a noble city, with a good constitution, fine culture, and many excellent citizens. Surrounded by them, he was constantly tested and corrected when he went astray, habituating himself to do the fine. Over time he developed a harmonious soul; when faced with a decision, he either doesn't need to reason (e.g. when offered money to abandon his post he simply refuses) or else he first reasons, after which all other 'parts' of his soul happily follow the path of his reasoning.

Having hammered out the picture of this man, Socrates says: "Then that dream of ours has reached its perfect fulfillment....we have found the just man" (4.443b-444a B). Then, on the next and last page of Book 4, Socrates concludes by saying "it looks to me as though there is *one form for virtue and an unlimited number for vice*" (4.445c B). Socrates makes or affirms this remark three times in the *Republic* (4.445c, 5.449a, and 8.544b), so it seems to be quite significant. As we will see, in Book 5 Socrates refers back to this character as the "perfectly just man" (5.472c B) and casts doubt as to whether he could ever come into existence. This notion that there is one form of virtue, which might well never be realized in a man, gives rise to a significant concern. By the end of Book 4 we may see the "perfect" virtue that Socrates describes as extremely

desirable, but further as something that we are extremely unlikely to be able to develop. In this case, we may not be able to summon the persistence to strive for virtue in the face of temptations like those of the Ring of Gyges.²⁰⁴

4.1.4 Perfectly Virtuous Character Appears to be Extremely Difficult to Attain

Here we need to return for a moment to the beginning of Books 1 and 2. The *Republic* opens with Socrates accompanied by Glaucon son of Ariston. Glaucon is a fine and intelligent youth, “fired with the ambition to help achieve justice on earth, and convinced that it can be done”.²⁰⁵ They meet Polemarchus, Adeimantus, and several other youths. The company persuades Socrates to go to the house of Polemarchus. Though they do not fully state their purpose in so persuading him, their overall intention is clear; they wish to engage in discussion with him (“we’ll be together with many of the young men and we’ll talk” (1.328a B)). They are probably not surprised when he turns the focus of the conversation to his favorite subject, namely virtue. Thus the company includes a variety of intelligent youths, many of whom are already inclined toward virtue and inclined toward Socrates and his views.

At the beginning of Book 2 Glaucon and Adeimantus make clear that most citizens are not in this situation. They are neither inclined toward virtue nor toward the views that Socrates holds. Adeimantus has challenged Socrates to present a defense of justice which will be persuasive to “young men who are quick-witted and capable of flitting, as it were, from one expression of opinion to another and inferring from them all

²⁰⁴ We take up this concern in detail in Section 4.1.4 below.

²⁰⁵ Blondell (2002, 105), quoting Burnyeat (1985, 36).

the character and the path whereby a man would lead the best life” (2.365a-b). I take it that the argument needs to persuade not only the unseen ‘young men’, but also the reader. The main challenge (presented in the story of the Ring of Gyges) is that the delicious temptations of vice, especially if they can be enjoyed undetected by others, may be irresistible, even for people who have grown up ‘knowing’ that it was better to be virtuous.

By the end of Book 4, Glaucon seems ready to end the discussion with the description of the ‘perfectly just person’, saying that inquiring into whether acting unjustly even if one can escape the consequences is profitable “looks to me as though it has become ridiculous by now” (4.445a B). But even if Glaucon is ready to end the discussion at that point, I do not think he is right to do so. I, for one, come to the end of Book 4 feeling even more convinced of the value of pursuing the virtuous life, yet at the same time feeling very pessimistic about my chances of succeeding in developing and sustaining the perfectly virtuous character Socrates has described.

Many commentators seem to have a similar view. Vlastos, for example, asks an “awkward question: justice is mandatory for everyone; how then could it be conditioned on so rare and difficult an attainment as psychic harmony?”²⁰⁶ Subsequently, he continues:

If Plato thought psychic harmony a necessary condition of a morally just disposition, he must have thought the latter attainable only by the people of his ideal state and, in the present world, by Platonic philosophers and their moral dependents (and, on a lower plane, by some of the citizens of the best timocracies); and this would cut out the vast majority of our fellow-men”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Vlastos (1978b, 92).

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* 92-93.

Lear argues persuasively that the Myth of Metals tells us that even such fine people as Glaucon and Adeimantus, having grown up in a bad city, will not have a virtuous character.²⁰⁸ Gill makes a similar point:

communal involvement is an indispensable basis for pre-reflective virtue...however...the only community in which this pre-reflective development can occur properly is one which is shaped by those whose wisdom is based on a combination of proper pre- and post-reflective virtue.²⁰⁹

Vlastos, Lear, and Gill see that Glaucon and Adeimantus will not be able to attain the “perfect justice” of the man in Book 4, but Glaucon and Adeimantus do not seem to see it. If they did, they might press Socrates to describe *their* situation and the situation of many other ‘somewhat virtuous’ people. What kind of less than perfect virtue is possible for them? Socrates refers to the man who is “nearest (ἐγγύτατα) to [perfect justice]” (5.472c). He doesn’t, though, give us any detail on how such less than perfect justice might be developed, or what kind of life such a person will have.

Returning to Glaucon and Adeimantus, then, is the life of the less than perfect virtue they might attain better than the pleasures of the possessor of Gyges’ ring? We will return to this question after the introduction of the Philosopher-King, but for now, even if they do not ask the question, it seems as if the external reader is called to do so. The prospects for attaining psychic virtue do indeed seem discouragingly slim to me (and I suspect to most of ‘the many’ as well). The biological demands (good genes), social demands (good rearing, good education, good city, etc.) and behavioral demands (habitually choosing the virtuous act and accepting correction when errors are pointed

²⁰⁸ Lear (2006, 31-40).

²⁰⁹ Gill (1996, 194).

out) of attaining psychic virtue of character seem extremely challenging. Most of us, rather, live in bad cities and have sub-optimal rearing and education, etc. Socrates draws a very stark picture. There is only one form of virtue, every other character type being one of the unlimited number of forms of vice. Are we likely to develop a character with that one form of virtue? At least for most readers, it seems to me that the answer would be: 'likely not'.

Thus at the end of Book 4 we are at an interesting juncture. The vision of the city is beautiful, as is the picture of the perfectly just man. But I share Glaucon's original challenge to Socrates: convince me that I should eschew the delights of vice in favor of the life of virtue. So far I am not convinced that the latter is a likely live option for me, so tempting as it is to be led by Socrates (whom I admire and love), I may not have the energy not to give in to the former.

4.2 Character in *Republic* Books 5-7

Books 5-7 describe character in a manner which is consistent with the picture painted in Books 1-4. Character is described in terms of traits, character traits are described as dispositions to act in a particular manner, character is described or depicted with respect to its virtue/vice, and the even more perfectly virtuous character described in Books 5-7 seems to be something we are very unlikely to develop. The first three of the above will be argued briefly, since the account here does not significantly evolve over the account of Books 1-4. The fourth of these, the unlikelihood

of developing perfectly virtuous character, is where Books 5-7 significantly extend our view of this matter.

4.2.1 Character is Described in Terms of Character Traits

Books 5-7 continue to describe character in terms of character traits. Socrates describes people in terms of positive character traits such as steadfastness (6.503c), gracefulness (7.522a), etc. Some people are described as steady, courageous, tough, truthful, moderate, magnificent (7.535a-536a), gracious, friendly, truthful, just, brave, sober (6.487a), playful, serious (5.452e), prudent (5.461a), or gentle (5.470e). One key passage is 6.500b-d. The philosopher, whose attention is turned to the “things that *are*” (τοῖς οὖσι 6.500b B), will not have character traits such as envy and hate. Rather he will try to make himself as much as possible like those ‘things that *are*’. If, then, he was to try to mold not only his own character, but also the characters of other people, he would strive to instill character traits such as moderation and justice.

Socrates also refers to people in terms of negative character traits such as incontinence (5.461b), cowardice (5.469d), pettiness (6.486a), lawlessness (7.537e), susceptibility to flattery (7.538a), knavishness (7.519a), etc. Some people are inconsiderate, distrustful, hostile (5.450d), foolish (5.452d), illiberal, greedy (5.469d), boasters (6.486b), uncouth (6.487d), or useless (6.490e). Socrates calls Glaucon “an erotic man” (5.474d B). Glaucon doesn’t seem to like the attribution of that character trait, but lets it go “for the sake of the argument” (5.474d B). These are just samples; the list of positive and negative character traits presented is long.

4.2.2 Character Traits Are Dispositions to Act in a Particular Manner

Again, a character trait is also represented as a propensity to act in a certain manner. For example, a man with the character trait of being quick to anger will be “less likely” to take his anger to an extreme in the good city (5.465a). Similarly, at 7.537e-538d, Socrates describes cases where one is “more likely to honor” parents, and “less likely” to: overlook their needs, do or say anything unlawful to them, or disobey them. Socrates says that in selecting guardians one should seek out the most courageous (ἀνδρειοτάτους 7.535a) people. The passage again exemplifies the important notion of degrees of propensity. Thus, for example, we might say that Achilles and Glaucon are both courageous, but Achilles is the much more courageous of the two. They both have a propensity to respond courageously, but the propensity is stronger in Achilles.

4.2.3 Character is Illustrated as Being Relatively More or Less Virtuous

Again character is described or depicted as fitting somewhere along the vice/virtue continuum, i.e. as being worse or better as a whole. Socrates asks as plainly as he can whether Glaucon thinks that “one man is better and another worse? Or do you believe them all to be alike?” (5.456d). Similarly, at 5.459d, he urges that the “best men” from among the Guardians (all of whom are fairly virtuous) have the greatest number of children. But in reference to people in general, outside of the Kallipolis, Socrates plainly asserts that most philosophers are either useless or “completely vicious” (6.490d B) and as to the non-philosophers, he asserts “the inevitableness of the degeneracy of the majority” (6.489d); “the many” (οἱ πολλοί) are “evil” (κακοί 6.490d).

Of course, the most important individual introduced in Books 5-7 is the Philosopher-King. Referring again to the vice/virtue continuum, the Philosopher-King would sit at the far right limit. The Philosopher-King's harmony and virtue come not only from his nature, rearing, education, etc., but also from keeping company with the Forms (500c-d). Similarly, since he is in touch with the Forms as much as is humanly possible, he is in the best possible epistemic state. Philosopher-Kings will "use [the Form of the Good] as a pattern for ordering city, private men, and themselves for the rest of their lives" (7.540 a-b B). This is why most (if not all) of a Philosopher-King's actions will be objectively good. As she deliberates about each action she takes, she takes the Forms into account. Since her soul is harmonious and reason-led, she rarely (or perhaps, since she is a fictional representative of an ideal of perfect virtue, never) goes wrong.

Books 5-7 suggest other somewhat virtuous character types that are less virtuous than the Philosopher-Kings who have "survived the tests" (7.540a). Consider the prospective Guardians who fail the tests at some point (either in the mathematical studies, the dialectical studies, or the practical service between ages 35 and 50). These individuals would not have advanced to the adult education without some measure of virtue, but as will become clear, Books 1-9 do not seem to provide us with a clear view of how they would fit into the vice/virtue continuum. All of these individuals, though, seem to exist only in the context of the Kallipolis.

4.2.4 Perfectly Virtuous Character Appears to be Extremely Difficult to Attain

The aspect of character that Books 5-7 fill out the most, though, is the difficulty of attaining virtuous character. The genetic challenge of being born with a good first

nature combined with the social challenges of getting a good rearing, getting a good education, and living in a city with a good constitution, good culture, and good fellow citizens seem daunting (at least for most of those who lived in ancient Athens or we who live in modern day New York). As noted, Socrates ends Book 4 by proclaiming that there is one form of virtue only. Book 5 opens with a reaffirmation of that claim:

Good, then, and right, is what I call such a city and regime and such a man, while *the rest* I call bad and mistaken, if this one is really right; and this applies to both governments of cities and the organization of soul in private men. (5.449a B italics mine)

Socrates seems to be reaffirming that only the Kallipolis is a good city and that only the ideal of psychic virtue described in Book 4 counts as virtue. Further, Books 5-7 seem to add a great deal of support to the notion that being born with a nature suitable to developing virtue is very uncommon, as is the likelihood of developing virtue in a bad city (even if one is well-born).²¹⁰

Very few human beings are born with a good first nature (6.491a-b, 6.495a) and even a good first nature can be corrupted without a good rearing (6.510a-b). Indeed, except in a good city, a good first nature is *usually* corrupted (6.494b-495b, 6.489e-492e). And no city in Plato's time, including Athens, qualified as a good city (6.497b). Any person growing up in one of these cities is "likely" to develop a vicious character (6.497b). Outside a good city, almost everybody (including most philosophers) is of vicious character (6.489d, 6.490d) and the few philosophers who are not vicious are useless (6.490e). It is a pretty grim picture and one that Socrates does not try to hide.

²¹⁰ Many of the passages cited here were previously noted in the section regarding character development, but are worth briefly summarizing here.

But then we arrive at a key passage, namely, 5.471c-473e. On the one hand, this passage underscores the point that for most of us, attainment of virtue is extremely unlikely. But on the other hand, it leaves open the door to the possibility of virtue that is less than perfect. First Glaucon says:

And I see all the good things that they would have at home and are left out in your account. Take it that I agree that there would be all these things and countless others if this regime should come into being, and don't talk any more about it; rather, let's now only try to persuade ourselves that it is possible (5.471c B)

Socrates concludes this passage by introducing the third wave of paradox, with a stunning statement that seems to underscore the extreme unlikelihood that Glaucon or the external reader has much chance of developing a fully virtuous character:

Unless, I said, the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place, while the many natures now making their way to either apart from the other are by necessity excluded, *there is no rest from ills for the cities*, my dear Glaucon, nor I think for human kind, *nor will the regime we have now described in speech ever come forth from nature*, insofar as possible, and see the light of the sun. This is what for so long was causing my hesitation to speak: seeing how very paradoxical it would be to say. For it is hard to see that *in no other city would there be private or public happiness*. (5.473c-e B italics mine)

On the one hand this seems to confirm the prior picture; perfect virtue in the individual depends on the pure city and the pure city is very likely never to exist. But on the other hand, in between these two quotes Socrates says the following:

But if we find out what justice is like, will we also insist that the just man must not differ at all from justice itself but in every way be such as it is? Or will we be content (ἀγαπήσομεν)²¹¹ *if he is nearest to it and participates in it more than the*

²¹¹ The verb ἀγαπάω is common in the Republic and LSJ gives both a 'weaker' meaning (i.e. to be content or to be satisfied or to tolerate), as well as the 'stronger' meaning (i.e. to be fond of, prize, desire). Shorey, for example, renders 330b with Cephalus saying "I am content if I shall leave the estate to these

others... It was, therefore, for the sake of a pattern that we were seeking both for what justice by itself is like, and for the perfectly just man, if he should come into being...We were not seeking them for the purpose of proving that is possible for these things to come into being...Then don't compel me necessarily to present it as coming into being in every way in deed as we described it in speech. (5.472b-473a B italics mine)

This is something new! Socrates here introduces the notion a person who is virtuous, but less than perfectly so. He does not give us any detail about the nature of that partially virtuous person. In what way does she differ from the purely virtuous person whose soul is in harmony and who is led by reasoning with the Form of the Good in view? Is she led by her reasoning but lacks that full harmony of her appetites, spirited emotions, fantasies, etc. (which calls to mind Aristotle's continent individual)? Or perhaps all the 'parts' of her soul are in harmony, but although she is mostly led by reason, at other times she is in the grip of her appetites or spirited emotions. Socrates gives no detail and the notion of less than perfect virtue does not reappear throughout Books 5-7.²¹²

Thus Books 5-7 emphasize the question regarding how likely we are to develop a virtuous character. On the one hand there are a great many statements that suggest

boys not less but by some slight measure more than my inheritance". On the other hand, on the same page Shorey translates with the stronger sense: "you appear to me not to be over-fond (*ἀγαπᾶν*) of money". Bloom translates similarly. Shorey and Bloom's translations seem to me to fit. Although all 12 of the translations I consulted choose to render *ἀγαπήσομεν* at 5.472b in the 'weaker' sense, I wonder which is the better choice. In either case, as I argue in what immediately follows, Socrates is introducing a new notion and one which produces hope. The suggestion here is that one might have a character that falls short of the perfect virtue Socrates has been describing, while at the same time such a person might live a flourishing life. We should certainly feel content with that prospect. Even better, I think, is to say that we would be very happy if that turns out to be the case (as I will argue (in the next chapter) is indeed where we end up with the whole of the Republic in mind). We should be happy since in this case the better life afforded by virtue will potentially be available to those of out outside the Kallipolis, as well as to Philosopher-Kings.

²¹² I will argue in Chapter 3 that it does reappear, albeit without a lot of fanfare, in Book 10.

that we will very likely not develop fully virtuous character, as well as statements that suggest that only fully virtuous character counts as virtue. On the other hand, there is this one suggestion that less than perfect virtue also exists, along with the possibility that perhaps it will be sufficient to make us content or live reasonably flourishing lives. At this point in the text, I suspect the ‘quick-witted young men’ (and many readers of the *Republic*) will be unsure as to whether the less than perfect virtue that may be attainable will yield benefits that are preferable to the pleasures offered by the Ring of Gyges—but the question is still live.

4.3 Character in *Republic* Books 8-9

Books 8-9 are critical to the developing story of character in the *Republic*, but not, perhaps, in the manner that many people would expect. Returning from the interlude of Books 5-7, Book 8 resumes the discussion of the timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical cities, as well as the people who resemble them. Many, I think, are misled by Socrates’ comments that “there are four forms of badness” (5.449a B) and “if there are five arrangements of cities, there would also be five for the soul of private men” (8.544e B). I suspect that many agree with Johnstone, who says that Socrates “describes five main kinds of person”.²¹³ Similarly, Gerson takes it that that “At maturity, whenever this occurs, the person becomes sufficiently like one of the types of soul described by Plato in order to be characterized as such”.²¹⁴ This view raises three significant concerns.

²¹³ Johnstone (2013, 143).

²¹⁴ Gerson (2003, 117).

First, on this view, each of the four “is described as in some way relinquishing rule or control to either the spirited or the appetitive part of his soul”, as Gerson puts it.²¹⁵ If the spirited ‘part’ of the timocrat’s soul is in control, then it sounds as if we have returned to the notion of agent-like parts as the explanation for why a person acts as she does. But the notion of agent-like soul-parts was examined in detail in Chapter 1 and rejected (in favor of the view that the soul as a whole is the only agent of action) so we will not revisit it here.

A second problem is that even absent *agent-like* soul-parts, the view expressed by Johnstone, Gerson, and others still recasts the *Republic*’s notion of character from being a matter of dispositional traits into a matter of being dominated by (even non-agent-like) soul-parts. Thus, some might take it that the oligarch, for example, is the agent of all of his actions, but is dominated by the necessary desires that are ‘part’ of the ‘appetite part’ of his soul. In this case we have again returned to soul-parts as the defining feature of character. But at different points in the dialogue, souls are described as three-part, two-part, multi-part, and even non-partite. Indeed, even the language of ‘dominant motivations’ is insufficient to describe the complexity of character as it has emerged from the text. Thus the decent man who reacts to the loss of a son at 10.603e is neither displayed as being dominated by a particular ‘part’ of his soul, nor by a particular dominant motivation. Rather he is described in terms of having the disposition to behave in a certain manner in certain circumstances. The intent of this chapter’s analysis has been to try to see what the text displays as a foundational moral

²¹⁵ *ibid.* 116.

psychology. On my reading, the text of Books 1-7 has highlighted dispositional character traits, rather than soul-parts or dominant motivations, as contributing to an explanation of why we behave as we do.

The third concern is that in Books 1-7 we found character displayed as being extremely complex and varied, comprising an indeterminate number of dispositional character traits. Glaucon's character differs greatly from Cephalus' character, as does mine from yours. But Gerson's notion that every mature person can be characterized as either just, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, or tyrannical presents character as a much simpler matter—that of fitting into one of five categories.

On my view, Books 8-9 do not disturb the notions that a) we are the agent of all of our actions, b) character traits, not soul-parts or dominant motivations, sit at the heart of one's character, and c) character is complex rather than simple. Having already argued (a) in Chapter 1, I will here focus on the other two concerns. I will argue that the four personages are presented as idealized types, but not as a set of mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive categories or types of character, based on a dominant soul-part or motivational source, into one of which each of us must fall. On my view, the reason why these four are idealized in the way that they are is to advance the main argument, namely, that the relatively more virtuous life (or, equally, the relatively less vicious life) is the superior one.

4.3.1 We do not all fit into one of five types of character

A significant portion of the argument against both a) character as domination by a soul-part or class of motivations and b) character as a simple matter of fitting into one of five categories, depends on the statements that caused the misconception, namely, “there are four forms of badness” (5.449a B) and “if there are five arrangements of cities, there would also be five for the soul of private men” (8.544e B). These statements must be interpreted in light of a key assertion that appears three times in the *Republic* (at 4.445c, 5.449a, and 8.544a).

Beginning with the first of these, after describing the good city and the perfectly virtuous man, Socrates invites Glaucon to “see just *how many forms vice*, in my opinion, has; *those, at least, that are worth looking at*” (4.445c italics mine). Thus, we have two quantities to determine: a) the number of forms of vice and b) the number worth looking at. After Glaucon’s reply, Socrates fills in the numbers:

now that we’ve come up to this point in the argument, from a lookout as it were, it looks to me as though there is one form for virtue and *an unlimited number for vice*, but *some four among them are also worth mentioning*. (4.445c italics mine)

Thus, there are (a) an unlimited number of forms of vice and (b) four are worth mentioning. Concerning (a), one might wonder whether by ‘an unlimited number of forms of vice’ Socrates is referring to ‘vices’ (e.g. cowardice, pettiness, lawlessness, flattery). But in the first speech of Book 5 Socrates clarifies that he is referring to “a city, then, or constitution ...and to the corresponding kind of man” (5.449a). The four forms of vice worth speaking of are “concerning the arrangement of the *character* of the soul of the individual” (ἰδιωτῶν ψυχῆς τρόπου κατασκευῆν 5.449a italics mine). Halliwell notes that “the phrase is slightly pleonastic”. It is true that the term κατασκευῆν is used

sparingly in the *Republic* and mostly in the context of these four characters. Socrates will reiterate the point in Book 8, saying that he wishes to “examine the *characters* in politics and then in individual men” (ἐν ταῖς πολιτείαις πρότερον σκοπεῖν τὰ ἥθη ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἰδιώταις 8.545b italics mine).²¹⁶ But Socrates cannot examine all possible character types, since it would be an “impractically long job to go through all regimes and all dispositions and leave nothing out” (8.548c-d B). Therefore, he will examine four particular vicious character types, out of the limitless number of possible vicious character types.

The oft-misunderstood statements quoted earlier must be interpreted in light of the above. When Socrates says that “there are four forms of badness” (5.449a B), he means: four worth discussing for the purposes of the argument. And when he says “if there are five arrangements of cities, there would also be five for the soul of private men” (8.544e B) we should understand that for however many cities he decides to describe, the same number of character types can be described.

Along these lines, we could ask into which category Glaucon would fit. As noted earlier, when Adeimantus suggested that Glaucon was a timocrat, Socrates rejected the characterization because the man resembling the timocratic city has many character traits that Glaucon lacks (e.g. he is stubborn (αὐθαδέστερον 8.548e), two-faced (improperly harsh to slaves but submissive to rulers), and ultimately, a lover of money (549a)). As for Glaucon, Socrates agrees that he is like the man who resembles the

²¹⁶ The word πολιτειῶν is also relevant, as it frequently is because of the pervasive city/soul analogy. At 445c-d, Socrates says that there are as many types of constitutions (πολιτειῶν τρόποι) as of souls (ψυχῆς τρόποι), namely 5 worth speaking about. same at 544d.

timocracy in regard to his love of victory (8.548d-e), but not in many other respects. Certainly Glaucon is “an erotic man” (5.474d B) and a “lover of boys”. But Socrates also says to him that “there must indeed be a touch of the god-like in your disposition...I infer this from your general character” (2.368a-b). McIntyre says that Glaucon is not only a victory-lover, but also “courageous, graceful, a hard worker”.²¹⁷ Blondell says that Glaucon is “unquestionably ‘gentle’ in character”, as well as “good-natured, compliant and cooperative”.²¹⁸ Glaucon, on my view, is not perfectly just, but neither does he fit well into any of the four forms described in Books 8-9. Further, neither do most of us; I cannot really see any of my friends or family members fitting either into the perfectly just category, or into any of the other four.²¹⁹

Although all of the dramatic characters in Books 8-9 are described to some extent in terms of character traits, the timocrat, oligarch, democrat, and tyrant are also described in terms of a particular ‘part’ or ‘part-of-a-part’ or motivation which dominates their behavior. Now this is accomplished by identifying different sub-parts or aspects of the appetitive part (e.g. the appetitive desire for necessary, unnecessary, and base pleasures). But if Glaucon (and, say, my friend Karl) fit into one of the other, unlimited number of categories, we would need to further expand the number of ‘parts of parts’ or ‘aspects of parts’ to follow that paradigm (and so on, *ad infinitum*). The language of

²¹⁷ McIntyre (2007, 213).

²¹⁸ Blondell (2002, 204).

²¹⁹ With some effort, one might find examples of people who do seem to fit well into one of these four forms of vice. Perhaps John McEnroe might seem to exhibit the anger and desire for victory of a timocrat, or Emperor Nero might have seemed to typify the typical tyrant, but those would be exceptions from the norm. Many public leaders seem to have the love of power and honor of a timocrat, the love of money of an oligarch, and some of the uncontrolled sensuality of a tyrant. Even more so, most private citizens seem to exhibit a complex of character traits which would not fit neatly into any of the four categories.

parts, on its own, is insufficient to capture either the number of character types that Plato thrice asserts to exist, or the complexity of Glaucon's particular character (or anybody else's).

Overall, the implications of there being an indefinite number of forms of vice seems consistent with what I take to be common sense: each of the people in the world has a unique character. Some characters may resemble each other in terms of particular character traits. For example, in the good city we will have many different characters, indeed many with some measure of courage. In the democratic city, since it is the freest, we will have the fewest number of similarities; each character will exhibit a great number of different characteristics. Thus Socrates has not extended the notion of character with the claim that there are five (or five main) types, each driven by a dominant motivation. Rather he is going to describe four paradigmatic character types, and in so doing he will advance the argument.

Before we leave the 'unlimited number of forms of vice', one more point should be reiterated. If there is indeed one form of perfect virtue, while all other forms are 'forms of vice', then we are left with a question as to how to regard Glaucon, and many of the people around us, who seem to be neither perfectly virtuous nor to be vicious. A small point in the text here is suggestive. All three of the formulations of 'the unlimited number of forms of vice' express a small hint of uncertainty.

- I *seem to see* as from a point of outlook that there is one form of excellence, and that the forms of evil are infinite, yet that there are some four among them that it is worth while to take note of (4.445c, italics mine)

- Good, then, ...is what I call such a ...man, while the rest I call bad and mistaken, *if this one is really right* (5.449a italics mine)

- the others are aberrations, *if this city is right* (8.544a italics mine)

Now certainly these expressions of uncertainty are rather mild. They might simply amount to something like ‘in my opinion.’ Perhaps, though, Socrates is suggesting doubt as to whether the ‘one form of perfect virtue’ is ever really realized in an actual person, or whether it is rather simply ‘a pattern laid up in heaven’. Overall, though, focusing on the ‘unlimited’ number of forms should assure us that Plato is neither revising the notion of character as a) domination by a single soul-part or motivation, nor b) a simple matter of fitting into one of five categories.

4.3.2 The Characters in Books 8-9 Are Described in Terms of Character Traits

There are various figures described in Books 8 and 9 in addition to the paradigmatic four character types, for example the complaining mother of the timocrat. She, the other figures, and the character types are all described in terms of their character traits. For example, the ruler of the timocracy is described as a money-lover with an appetite for women (8.548a), stingy, and lawless (548b). As already noted, the person who best resembles the timocratic constitution is of course described as a lover of victory, but also as stubborn or self-willed (αὐθαδέστερον 8.548e), two-faced, and ultimately, a lover of money (549a). Among other character traits, the tyrant is “envious, faithless, unjust, friendless, impious, and a host and nurse for all vice” (9.580a B). The other figures in Books 8-9 are also described in terms of character traits.

4.3.3 Character Traits Are Dispositions to Act in a Particular Manner

As in the earlier books, character is also here represented as a disposition to act in a certain manner. But the descriptions of the four main characters of Books 8-9 seem

to be drawn in exaggerated uniformity of action. One gets this sense, for example, when Socrates describes the oligarch as being dominated by the desire for wealth:

he makes the calculating and spirited parts sit by it on the ground on either side and be slaves, letting the one neither calculate about nor consider anything but where more money will come from less; and letting the other admire and honor nothing but wealth and the wealthy, while loving the enjoyment of no other honor than that resulting from the possession of money and anything that happens to contribute to getting it (8.553c-d B)

Similarly, when he describes the timocrat as one who would be harsh to slaves but subservient to rulers (8.548e) and the oligarch as “stingy and a toiler, satisfying only his necessary desires” (8.554a), one gets the sense that the four paradigmatic characters act with a degree of consistency that we do not see in Socrates’ interlocutors, nor, I would suggest, in ourselves. It’s not entirely clear; Socrates never says that these characters ‘always’ act according to their dispositions, nor does he say that they are ‘more likely’ to do something in accord with their disposition.²²⁰ Overall, though, there is nothing here in Books 8-9 that would cause us to revise the prior notion of what a character trait is.

4.3.4 Character is Illustrated as Being Relatively More or Less Virtuous

Again character is described or depicted as relatively more or less virtuous. In Books 8-9 most of the emphasis is on vice (with the exception of one important passage which will be discussed shortly). Most readers and commentators take the four character types to be presented in order of increasing vice. (A few commentators

²²⁰ As noted earlier, the man who resembles the democracy seems to have the fewest stable character traits.

question whether the democrat might not in fact be more virtuous than the oligarch, but as will become clear, this reading does not disturb the claim of the section.)²²¹ 9.580a-c is most commonly cited as evidence for the fact that the types are present in order of increasing vice. Socrates asks Glaucon to judge the just and the four unjust character types with respect to virtue and vice and Glaucon says: it is “easy”; they ‘came on stage’ (εἰσῆλθον) in order of increasing vice. Ultimately, Socrates seems to agree, saying “All right then, I said. That would be one proof for us. Look at this second one...” (9.580c B). Although this seems to be assent, and is so construed by most commentators, Plato does open some ambiguity. One might ask both why Plato puts the assertion into the mouth of Glaucon rather than Socrates, and also why he has Socrates a) begin his assent by saying “Shall we hire a herald” (9.580b B), b) offer to announce that Glaucon decided the order, and c) only mention the king and the tyrant, omitting the three in between.

Further textual support that the four are ordered according to decreasing virtue is also seen at 8.568c. Poets are most esteemed in the tyrannical regime, next most in the democratic, and then the “higher they go on the slope of the regimes” (8.568c B), the less they are honored.²²²

However, despite much consensus among commentators *that* the four are

²²¹ Two examples of commentators who focus on the poor positioning of the democratic regime are Hyland (From Democracy To Oligarchy To Tyranny, forthcoming), and Roochnik (2003). Hyland suggests that we ignore the order of the regimes, but does not comment on the corresponding character types. Strauss (1964, 129-132) and Rosen (2005, 312-321) also focus on the ordering of the democrat and the oligarch, though in the end they agree that the four are presented in order of increasing vice.

²²² This point is made by Scott (2000, 20) who points out that the ranking pertains to the regimes, but If Socrates thought that the character types had a different order, “it would be very strange for him not to even allude to the fact”.

ordered to display increasing viciousness, they have various views about just what it is about the four that *indicates* increasing viciousness. Some commentators suggest that the four are increasingly lacking in unity²²³, while others cite degree of law-like behavior, corruption, moderation, order and instrumental rationality, self-control, rule of reason vs. rule of appetite, or strife and tension.²²⁴ Each of these commentators argues their view in detail and I will not recapitulate those arguments here. The key point, on my view, is that Plato sketches the four character types ‘worth discussing’ with such detail as to permit us to consider the question; is the oligarchic type presented in Books 8-9 more virtuous or less virtuous than the democratic type? Irrespective of how one answers that question, one is left with the conviction that one is relatively more virtuous than the other. The gods will correctly judge each person’s relative virtue or vice in Book 10 when we get to the Myth of Er. People will often judge wrongly, but still need to make judgments of the justness of both actions and of characters as they make their way through life (just as Socrates judges the characters of Glaucon and Adeimantus at 3.368a-b).

None of the commentators mentioned in the footnotes to the above paragraph offer a detailed suggestion as to why *these four* in particular are chosen, understandably, since one can only speculate. My own speculation is that these four are chosen specifically for the purpose of making clear that the countless number of character types *can* be ordered from least vicious to most vicious. Glaucon recalls that

²²³ See Annas (1981, 302) and Scott (2000, 19).

²²⁴ These views, along with the supporting arguments, can be found in Gavrielides (2010, 213), Murphy (1951, 82-83) and Cross and Woosley (1966, 262), Johnstone (2013, 154-156), Santas (2010, 174ff), Pappas (2013, 195), Hitz (2010, 103), and Wilberding (2009,351), respectively.

Socrates has told us that these four polities are the ones that “it is worthwhile to have an account of, and whose mistakes are worth seeing; and similarly with the men who are like these regimes” (8.544a B).²²⁵ Perhaps these four in particular are ‘easy to see’ because we have names for the polities (8.544c) and can therefore envision in common what each polity would be like and also what a person resembling each polity might be like. Or perhaps these four are ‘easy to see’ because they highlight the political options and fault lines in Athens at the time Plato. Overall, though, irrespective of why these four in particular were chosen, they serve to help advance the argument as to whether the just life is preferable to the unjust life by giving us four paradigmatic examples of unjust character types which can be seen in terms of their relative degree of injustice. As Socrates says, “even from a sketch we’ll be able to discern the most just and the most unjust person.” (8.548c G). The timocrat (who is motivated by honor) is clearly the least vicious of the four and the distinction first between necessary and unnecessary pleasures, followed by the distinction between lawful and lawless pleasures makes it possible to judge the relative degree of viciousness of each of the other three. Socrates has staked out the ‘perfectly just man’ (in Book 4) who is replaced by the ‘even finer man’ (the Philosopher-King, in Books 5-7) who sits at the right limit of the vice/virtue continuum. Here, in Books 8-9 Socrates stakes out four vicious character types, with the ruling tyrant at the left limit of the continuum. The character types are described in terms of their character traits, just like Leontius, Glaucon, and the other figures who

²²⁵ Here I agree with Hitz (2010, 105): “The just regime and the bad regimes are explicitly constructed to clarify the argument that a just life for an individual is superior to an unjust one (368c–369a; 445a–d; 544a).”

populate the *Republic*. The starkness with which the four vicious character types are drawn underscores the point that character can be described or depicted as being relatively more or less virtuous. At the same time, the four support Socrates' main argument that each increasingly vicious character is increasingly unhappy.

4.3.5 Perfectly Virtuous Character Appears to be Extremely Difficult to Attain

Although the emphasis in Books 8-9 is on vicious character, at the end of Book 9 Socrates brings back the perfectly virtuous man, offering three proofs that the life of the perfectly virtuous man is the best and happiest, while the life of the most vicious man is the worst and the least happy. One important passage at the close of Book 9 (9.592a-b) brings us back to the question of our likelihood of attaining that perfect virtue along with the attendant happiest life. Like 5.471c-472e (which we discussed earlier) 9.592a-b seems to again address the relative likelihood of developing a character that is virtuous, though this time it is philosophic virtue that is at issue. Socrates says that the Kallipolis is set down in words (λόγοις κειμένη 9.592a), since he does not think that it exists anywhere on earth (ἐπεὶ γῆς γε οὐδαμοῦ οἶμαι αὐτὴν εἶναι 9,592a-b). Again, Socrates seems to offer some comforting words. He says that in heaven, “perhaps, a pattern [again παράδειγμα as at 5.472c] is laid up for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees” (592b B, bracketed comment mine). We have no control over our genes, our parents, and much of our education, but founding a city in oneself suggests the process of developing character through habituation. The juxtaposition of a) doubting that the constitution of the Kallipolis exists on earth with b) the founding of a city *based on* the pattern suggests a character that

strives for the perfection of the Philosopher-King, but although imperfect, is still somewhat virtuous. Just as 5.472c introduced the notion of less than perfect virtue, here too Socrates seems to acknowledge that with eyes on the paradigm, we might habituate ourselves to some degree of less than perfect virtue. However, neither less than perfect virtue, nor the degree of happiness that attends it, is discussed apart from those two references.

4.3.6 Character in Books 8-9: Conclusion

Books 8-9 do not disrupt the understanding of character that we had at the conclusion of Book 4 and again at the conclusion of Book 7. Character can be described in terms of traits and also with respect to its overall relative virtue. Although character with perfect virtue has been described, we are very unlikely to achieve that character; and less than perfect virtue is not discussed. Books 8-9 conclude with a good reason to strive not to be vicious, but leave us with virtually no information about a) how to characterize somebody like Glaucon, who seems to be somewhat virtuous but less than perfectly so, b) how likely we are to be able to develop a character like that, and c) whether that type of character will provide us with a flourishing life.

4.4 Character in *Republic* Books 1-9: Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter 1, the *Republic* often describes souls in terms of their parts. At times, the reason, spirit, and appetite 'parts' dominate the discussion. Also, at times, the parts seem to be described as agent-like, providing a possible explanation of psychic conflict and how that conflict gets resolved into action (i.e. the Combat Model,

as discussed on page 122). As argued in Chapter 1, once we have the whole of the *Republic* in mind, we are pushed to adopt a deflationary view of the status of soul parts. The person as a whole is the only agent of his or her actions. This requires of us that we recognize in the *Republic* a different approach to the description of the person, one that stresses his being as a whole and does justice to the array of behaviors that different people exhibit. In this chapter I have argued that the language of character provides some of that explanation.

Despite the fact that no formal inquiry into character is launched in the *Republic*, the first nine Books paint a consistent picture of human character, both in Socrates' claims about the way people are, and also in the characters presented by Plato. The notion of character moves us toward a more true-to-life appreciation of the complexity of the individual. Building on a deflated view of soul-parts, we can reexamine the prototypes in Books 4-8-9 to see beyond the simplicity of parts or dominant motivations as a method of describing how people act and why they tend to act as they do. We can now consider the prototypes in terms of their character traits, allowing for the complexity we find in your character and mine. Character traits emerge as dispositions to act in a particular manner, although we may not act according to our dispositions all of the time. Further, the same character traits might appear more strongly in one person than another; we might both be generous but you may be more generous than I. Although it is not spelled out in the text, it seems to me that Socrates' overall account calls us to understand psychic conflict in light of the agency of the person with character as a key influence. Jane is a generous person, while Jim is stingy. Both are moved to donate money to victims of a hurricane (i.e. 'part' of their souls so desire). At the same time,

they are both aware that their bank balance is low and that they have financial obligations (i.e. another 'part' of their souls thinks donating may be imprudent). Influencing each of them in their decision making is their respective character. Jane will be more likely to stretch and give because of her character, whereas Jim will be more likely to suppress the urge to donate. Finally, character as a whole can be described as more or less virtuous. The *Republic* begins by discussing justice and virtue in terms of deeds (e.g. returning what is owed). Socrates, over the course of the first nine Books, shifts the focus to the state of character of the agent. Although just and virtuous deeds certainly exist, what counts in terms of living the life that is most flourishing depends on one's character.

But Socrates' focus on perfect virtue and extremes of vice, in Books 1-9, leaves us with a problem. Socrates makes perfect virtue and the attendant health of the soul seem maximally desirable; the perfectly virtuous person lives the life that is truly flourishing. Book 1 begins in the Piraeus, but by Book 2 Socrates has started constructing cities in speech, where most of the action will remain through Book 9. The 'city of pigs' is gradually purified over Books 2-4, such that the perfectly virtuous person described at the end of Book 4 is an analog to the pure city, whose virtue depends heavily on the laws, citizens, and poetic education found in such a pure city. Books 5-7 add detail to the city in speech, ending with the truly virtuous person, namely the Philosopher-King. On the positive side, many outside readers will come to the end of Book 9 convinced by Socrates that perfect virtue, if obtained, will yield a flourishing life.

Yet although perfect virtue has been discussed in detail, less than perfect virtue is only mentioned twice and there is little discussion of whether we should value it for

itself and what, precisely, are the rewards that it offers. Socrates does offer, in Book 9, three arguments to support the claim that each successively more vicious person lives a more unhappy life. But there is no discussion about the degree to which somebody like Glaucon, whose character is 'somewhat virtuous', will be happier than somebody whose character is 'somewhat vicious'—and it would be hard to imagine how such an argument would be structured. Socrates tells us that the tyrant is 729 times more miserable than the Philosopher-King. This number may be tongue-in-cheek, or it may be serious. Grube/Reeve might be right that Plato's math is wrong and the right number should be 125.²²⁶ Either way, the reader is left with a sense that perfect virtue, if we could achieve such a character, would yield the most flourishing life. Thus, Books 1-9 have set a very high bar for virtue. One yearns to live as if one were living in the just city, even if one does this on one's own (since the just city is one 'laid up in heaven' and not a real social possibility for people like us).

The vision is inspiring, but the very inspirational nature makes it distressing for people like us. The reader of the *Republic* who lives (say) in ancient Athens or modern day New York may get to the end of Book 9 disheartened by Socrates' tacit acknowledgement of the near-impossibility that Glaucon (and, so, people like us) will ever enjoy the cultural and social environment that he has described as a crucial support for acquiring perfect virtue. By the end of Book 9, on my view, Socrates may have convinced Glaucon that a life of justice is a good to be desired "both for its own sake and for what comes out of it" (2.357c), though I am not sure that Glaucon would be

²²⁶ Grube/Reeve (1992, 264 n 12).

right to be convinced by the argument so far. Either way, though, I suspect that the young men Adeimantus wanted Socrates to address (2.365a-b) and many readers might well have doubts. Overall, Books 1-9 describe people with characters that range from extremely vicious to somewhat vicious, but people like Glaucon are under-described. Intuitively, virtue (even less than perfect virtue) should make us happier than vice, but we come to the end of Book 9 with many open questions regarding just how we should go about developing 'good' character and achieving a flourishing life.

Echoing the views of many commentators, Grube/Reeve introduce Book 10 with the words "The main argument of the *Republic* is now complete."²²⁷ On my view this is by no means the case. In the next chapter, I will argue that Book 10 continues to fill out our understanding of character. Book 10 turns to the real world, setting aside both the overly realist view of soul-parts and also the idealized constructs of virtue and vice that we get in Books 1-9. I will argue that both the first half of Book 10 (the return to the discussion of poetry) and the second half of Book 10 (especially the Myth of Er) suggest that even less than perfect virtue is worth striving for and offers the potential for a flourishing life. Socrates says that if a person (who I will argue is a person of less than perfect virtue) "philosophizes in a healthy way" (10.619d B), it's likely that that person will be happy, both in this world and the world to come. Thus, on my reading, Book 10 offers hope even to people like us, who are unlikely to achieve perfect virtue. As Socrates says in the closing line of the *Republic*, "both here and in that journey of a thousand years, whereof I have told you, we shall fare well" (10.621d).

²²⁷ Grube/Reeve (1992, 264).

Chapter Three: Character in Book 10

1.0 Introduction²²⁸

Book 10 divides neatly into two sections, the first returning to the discussion of poetry and the second discussing the immortal soul. As previously mentioned, as far back as 1150 C.E., Averroes concluded his commentary on the *Republic* after Book 9, asserting that “What the tenth treatise comprises is not necessary”.²²⁹ This assessment has been oft repeated by notable scholars up through the end of the twentieth century. As should be clear from Chapter 1, though, I have a different view.

The first nine Books of the *Republic*, as I argued in the preceding chapter, give us a good picture of what it means to have a particular character, as well as how one develops that character. Character can be described in terms of character traits, and can also be described in terms of its overall degree of virtue or vice. But in terms of Socrates’ attempt to exhort his interlocutors to strive to develop virtue of character, the first nine Books of the *Republic* still leave at least this reader feeling uneasy. Socrates’ discussion focuses on “the perfectly just man...and the completely unjust man” (5.472c). But perfect virtue does not seem to be a live option for the vast majority of us,

²²⁸ As noted in Chapter 1, unless otherwise specified, all references to the *Republic* will be in the form, for example, (1.133b) and are from Shorey (1980). I have selected Shorey as the standard because of the relative literalness of the translation and for the convenience provided by Loeb Library hardcopy and the Perseus soft-copy. At times, though, Shorey’s translation is awkward, which interrupts the flow of the argument. In these cases, I will typically substitute the English from Bloom or Grube/Reeve (1992). I also will use Halliwell’s 1988 translation of Book 10 which I find very helpful. These will be noted as (1.331b B) or (1.331b G) or (1.331b H), respectively.

²²⁹ Averroes (1996), 250.

so Plato seems to provoke the reader to wonder about virtue that is less than perfect and yet still meets some of the criteria for virtue.

On my account, Book 10 plays a critical role in the overall psychological account by shifting the emphasis away from Book 2-9's pervasive figure of the perfectly just man (first imagined by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2, then re-envisioned by Socrates in Book 4, then refined and re-envisioned as the Philosopher-King in Books 6-7).²³⁰ The focus here in Book 10 is rather on the fact that there are indeed many people of decent character who are recognized and judged as being sufficiently virtuous to merit both the term and the associated rewards. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 2.3.1), although Book 10 begins with a reaffirmation that it was right to plan to banish poetry from the Kallipolis (10.595a) and the renewed attack on poetry closes with comments about the defense of that decision (10.607b-608b), the intervening portion is about the social behavior and psychology of ordinary people. Book 10 shows us people of decent character, both in life (e.g. at the theater) and in death (e.g. at the moment of judgement). Although most of the focus in Books 2-9 was on cities constructed in speech, In Book 10 the focus is on cities much like the Athens that existed when Socrates and Plato lived, where theater thrived, marriages were not in common, and many decent people could hold offices in the city if they chose to do so.

²³⁰ Of course there are references to people who are less than virtuous (e.g. those characters and character traits Socrates objects to in Book 3 as poetry is being refined 3 and the examples of Books 8-9). But the former are stepping-stones to the perfectly just man of Book 4 and the latter are paradigmatic examples of the 'countless forms of vice'; people in various stages of falling away from the perfectly just figure of the Philosopher-King. It is only in Book 10, on my account, is we are shown decent people as having a reasonable degree of virtue.

Thus, my main claim is that by the end of Book 9, although we feel a desire to follow Socrates and to work to develop a virtuous character, many readers are confident that they will never develop into a person of perfect virtue. Book 10 does not give us a lot more detail about character traits, but it does depict the soul and overall character in a more true-to-life manner. On my view Book 10 completes Plato's argument in favor of virtue by quietly setting a lower bar for virtue, namely decency. Many people are imperfect but still decent. These decent people would be likely to follow the laws and customs of the city (they would not be temple robbers) and would also be likely to display other good character traits. The decent or reasonable person of 10.603e (ἀνὴρ ἐπιεικῆς) is a good example. He is not perfectly virtuous; simply a law and custom abiding person with many good character traits.

Both halves of Book 10, on my reading, reassure many readers that even the basic decency we see in our friends, family, and coworkers is worth striving for. This decent character, we see, can lead to a good enough life to be judged worthy of reward not just by one's peers but even by the gods. Socrates thus deflates the challenging notions of perfect virtue introduced in Books 4 and refined in Books 6-7. By revising his hitherto excessive standards downwards, he may provoke these readers to be reassured that they do indeed have the potential to develop decent character and live a flourishing life.²³¹

A second claim of this chapter is that Book 10 highlights the roles of deliberation and habituation within the overall process by which decent people develop their

²³¹ Of course other readers might take the lowering of the bar in Book 10 as a challenge and a provocation to object to the lowered bar and try to recover the higher standards.

character and act with a fair degree of virtue.²³² The few ideally virtuous Philosopher-Kings will gain knowledge of the Forms and will use the Form of the Good as a critical component in distinguishing virtuous from non-virtuous actions. By contrast, the many (including many decent people) will not gain knowledge of the Forms, and therefore will not use the Form of the Good when faced with a choice. Book 10 highlights the role of deliberation in the process by which those many people choose; they can (and must, if they are to act virtuously) deliberate when faced with a decision. They may not always come up with the ‘right answer’, but honest deliberative effort and following the results of that deliberation are minimal requirements for developing decent character and acting reasonably justly. These two claims (i.e. [a] that Book 10 lowers the bar for a virtuous and flourishing life and [b] that Book 10 highlights the roles of deliberation and habituation in developing decent character) are mutually reinforcing. It is through deliberation and habituation (and sometimes some measure of luck) that decent people develop their decent character and act justly. Equally, although in practice most people will never use the Form of the Good or the Form of Justice in decision making, deliberation *is* available to virtually all people.²³³ Because human beings can deliberate, they have the potential to develop decent characters and live reasonably flourishing

²³² Again, I use the term habituation as described in the previous chapter section 3.5. My focus is on formation of character and character traits via deliberation, choice, action, as well as the punishment/reward and/or reflections on that action. I am not using deliberation in the sense that denies deliberation, e.g. ‘I have become habituated to smoking and therefore no longer think before I reach for a cigarette’.

²³³ Strictly speaking, deliberation about which action is right or wrong might not be functionally available to all people. Socrates offers the example of the oligarch, who does not allow himself to deliberate about anything (e.g. right and wrong) except how to accumulate more wealth (8.553d). Similarly, a drug addict or a person with a completely vicious and debased character might be essentially incapable of any moral deliberation. These cases, though, would be rare. Most people can and do deliberate throughout their lives, to a greater or lesser extent.

lives. Book 10 highlights both the role of deliberation and the existence of many decent people in our cities, thereby reassuring us that we have not only a reason to want to be virtuous, but also an opportunity to develop a reasonably virtuous character.

Before moving on, let me stress that although I intend to mine Book 10 to defend some claims about Plato's notion of character and virtue in the *Republic*, I am not in any way claiming that Plato's only or even primary intent in Book 10 is to enlighten us about character. The first half of Book 10 might well be primarily directed at the negative impacts of imitation, as many commentators have taken it to be. The second half of Book 10 might well be primarily intended to advance some notions about the immortal soul, reincarnation, etc. The fact that my intention is to focus on the character related aspects does not at all imply that I insist that this was Plato's goal; simply that the text is rich and can be mined for this purpose.

1.1 ἐπιεικῆς

Now the word ἐπιεικῆς will be important in this chapter, so a bit of linguistic investigation into how Plato uses the term in the *Republic* is in order. According to LSJ, ἐπιεικῆς has primary meanings of 'fitting', 'meet', 'suitable' and can mean 'reasonable or fair' (when applied to statements) or 'able, capable, reasonable, fair, good' (when applied to people). The last three are the ones most relevant to this chapter; LSJ notes

that these three senses are when ἐπιεικῆς is applied to people in a moral sense.

ἐπιεικῆς appears relevantly in 17 speeches in the *Republic*.²³⁴

Commentators differ as to how to interpret ἐπιεικῆς in the *Republic*. Consider the dispute between Adam and Shorey as to how to understand ἐπιεικῆς at 3.404b.

Despite the fact that the Socrates is not referring to people but rather referring to “flexible” or “equitable” or “good” gymnastics, Adam makes a broad claim about the word ἐπιεικῆς: “ἐπιεικῆς is practically synonymous with ἀγαθή”. Shorey disagrees:

[ἐπιεικῆς,] literally “equitable,” if we translate ἐπιεικῆς by its later meaning, that is, not over-precise or rigid in conformity to rule. Adam is mistaken in saying that ἐπιεικῆς is practically synonymous with ἀγαθή. It sometimes is, but not here.²³⁵

I agree with Shorey. Both in relevant and non-relevant uses of ἐπιεικῆς, we find that the term is not simply a near synonym for ἀγαθή. This is at least trivially true. When Socrates refers to the ‘Form of the Good’ (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα 6.505a) ἐπιεικῆς would simply not work. Similarly, when Adeimantus agrees to Socrates’ statement saying “That’s fairly plain” (ἐπιεικῶς, ἔφη, δῆλον 8.555d) we could not easily substitute ἀγαθή for ἐπιεικῆς. Now the former is a term of art and the latter is a case of ἐπιεικῆς applied to a statement not a person. But even when applied to persons, ἐπιεικῆς is used in subtly different senses at different points, but is different from ἀγαθός, which Socrates unsurprisingly uses to describe the perfectly just man at 449a: “To such a city, then, or constitution I apply the terms good [ἀγαθὴν] and right—and to the corresponding kind of man”.

²³⁴ There are eight occurrences of ἐπιεικῆς that are not relevant to this discussion (i.e. 3.397d, 3.398e, 3.404b, 4.441c, 8.555d, 9.577d, 10.602b, and 10.612a).

²³⁵ Shorey (1930, 266 n e).

Sometimes, the meaning of ἐπιεικής is unclear. For example, at 8.568a and 9.577c, when Socrates and Glaucon are referring to the better citizens of an imagined tyranny, it is unclear as to whether they are decent people, or just less corrupt than the other citizens. But there *are* cases where Socrates *does* refer to people outside the Kallipolis as ἐπιεικής, meaning people that are reasonable, or fitting, or, as Bloom translates it, decent.²³⁶ For example, “a decent man will believe that for the decent man— who happens to be his comrade— being dead is not a terrible thing” (3.387d B). Further, in the two instances most relevant to this chapter (the decent man in the theater at 10.603e and the ‘decent men’ at 10.605c) it seems clear that Socrates is talking about real people; people who are decent, but not perfectly virtuous.

1.2 Organization

As was the case with Books 2-9, although the nature of character pervades Book 10, Socrates still does not go after a definition or launch an inquiry into exactly what sort of thing it is. Absent a localized inquiry into the nature of character in Book 10, then, how should we organize our inquiry into the text in order to tease out Book 10’s additions to the picture of character and character development that emerged in Books 2-9 (as argued in the previous chapter)? One of the distinguishing features of Book 10 is that it displays a large number of the decent people that went largely undiscussed

²³⁶ On my reading, Socrates uses ἐπιεικής to refer to people in real cities that are decent people three times in Books 2-9, namely, at 3.387d, 3.398b, and 4.431d. This helps support understanding the term when it is used in this sense in Books 1 and 10, which are set in real cities and peopled with characters that are intended to depict real people. Those decent people are mentioned at 1.347b, 1.347c, 10.603e, and 10.605c.

earlier, where the focus was on people of (perfectly) good character. My plan is to first work through the sections of the first half of Book 10 (the return to the attack on imitation) pointing out the decent people along the way, as well as what we can learn about character from the subsections of this first half. Most of these sub-sections were discussed in Chapter 1, but there my focus was on whether people were described as having agent-like parts or not. Here my focus will be on the characters of the people we meet.

I will then turn to the second half of Book 10 which concerns the immortal soul. I will first pause over the implications of the three subsections that lead up to the Myth of Er and then consider the myth itself. On a straightforward, literal reading, I will argue that the myth assures us that many people will lead decent lives, and by so doing receive a judgement of 1000 years of heavenly reward. I will then consider the oft-cited ‘allegorical reading’, which takes the myth to be an allegory for how we live our lives. I will argue that also on the allegorical reading, the myth promises us a reasonable chance of developing a character which, although not perfect, is decent enough to produce a life which is sufficiently flourishing so to be choice-worthy. Further, I will argue that the allegorical reading gives us a picture of part of how one develops a decent character, namely deliberation and habituation.

1.3 Setting

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Book 10 takes place in a setting that is markedly different from much of the *Republic*. As several commentators argue, the *Republic* is

composed as a ring-composition.²³⁷ The outermost ring, comprising Books 1 and 10, has a distinct setting. In Socrates' narration of the *Republic*, the action begins just outside of Athens and the conversation of Book 1 takes place in the house of a historical family. The discussion focuses on real people in real cities. By contrast, much of Books 2-9 focuses on cities that Socrates explicitly constructs in speech (first the 'healthy' city of pigs; then the diseased city; which is gradually purified to become the Kallipolis; then the constructed cities of the timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny). Book 10 returns to consider real people in real cities. Philosopher-Kings, auxiliaries, producers, and other members of the Kallipolis are never mentioned. Timocrats, oligarchs, and other constructed types from Books 8-9 are also never mentioned. Rather we have people like those that could have been found in 4th century Athens, living (e.g. going to the theater, suffering loss) and ultimately dying. This change from idealized inhabitants of idealized cities helps makes us ready to accept that the perfectly just figure which was pervasive in Books 2-9 is ready to be left aside in favor of more realistic, 'decent' people. That said, let us dive into the text itself.

2.0 Book 10 Part 1: 'The Impact of Poetry on Character' (10.595a-608b)²³⁸

In Chapter One, I skipped over the first section of Book 10 (10.595a-602b), which I will call 'The Charge Against Imitation in General'. I focused only on the other three sections of Book 10's discussion of effect of poetry on the soul, which I named, 'The Charge Against Painting' (10.602c-603c), 'The Charge Against Poetry' (10.603c-605c),

²³⁷ See, for example, Barney (2010) and Brann (2004).

²³⁸ Poetry, here, meant broadly, i.e. imitation or μιμητική, as Socrates calls the subject at 10.595a.

and 'The Greatest Charge' (10.605c-606d). Those three were the sections that were relevant to the realist/deflationist debate that was the subject of Chapter 1. Here I will focus on all four sections, as each sheds light on the matter of decent character.

2.1 'The Charge against Imitation in General' (10.595a-602b)

This section considers imitation in general, touching on painting (and painters), poetry (and poets) and other imitations (and imitators). As noted in Chapter 2, although early influences (e.g. first nature, rearing, early education) are most formative of character, other influences (e.g. habituation, surroundings, continuing education) continue to influence character development throughout our lives. Adult education and its impact on the soul is explicitly the worry here. Socrates says that Homer and the other poets are said to know "all things human pertaining to virtue and vice, and all things divine" (10.598e). Socrates wants to take Homer to task for "the education of men" and question whether in so doing he is "capable of knowing what pursuits make men better or worse in private or public life" (10.599d). Socrates, of course, argues that Homer was in fact not "able to educate men and make them better" (10.600c); that he was not successful at education (παιδείας 10.600e).

'The Charge Against Imitation in General' mostly concerns itself with metaphysics (i.e. with "how things are or how they look" 10.598a). Imitators produce phantoms of virtue (εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς 10.600e) and "the maker of the phantom understands nothing of what is but rather of what looks like it is" (10.601b B). Although it is true that this passage has nothing to do with appetites and spirited emotions, on my

view, its focus on cognitive functions is very much part of the psychological account and very much part of the account of character.

'The Charge Against Imitation in General' argues that imitation harms our character in terms of our reasoning process (and so, by extension, our deliberation). Socrates says that imitations "seem to maim the thought of those who hear them" (10.595b B). It maims our thought by training us in the direction of mistaking appearance for reality and in mistaking untruth for truth. (As Socrates says, "the appearance of them, but not the reality and the truth... his creations are not real and true" 10.596e). The man with the mirror can create everything on earth, as well as the gods and all things in the heavens and in Hades (10.596c). But he is not to be trusted. He produces only shallow imitations that "look like they *are*; however, they surely *are not* in truth" (10.596e B, italics added by Bloom). Again, at 10.596e "[the painter's] creations are not real and true". Reality versus unreality and reality versus appearance are repeatedly stressed throughout the 'The Charge Against Imitation in General' (e.g. 10.597c, 10.598a, 10.598b, 10.598e). The distinction between knowledge, true opinion, and false opinion is also key (e.g. "with respect to beauty and badness the imitator will neither know nor opine rightly" (10.602a B). But it is not just the imitator who is highlighted in this passage; it is not just that Homer is unable to "help human beings toward virtue" (10.600d B). The character of the person who trusts in imitation is also on display.

'The Charge Against Imitation in General' does not deal at all with appetites or spirited emotions. Rather the passage deals only with cognitive functions. Imitation instills in us a character that is less likely, overall, to summon our powers of reasoning

and calculation. Further, when we do summon our reasoning powers, but there is conflict between our reasoning and appearances, imitation makes us more prone to follow appearance rather than our reasoning. This tells us a lot about imitation, but it also tells us something new about character. Certainly virtuous character has consistently been described as reason leading with the rest of the soul harmoniously following. Knowledge too has been at play (e.g. of the Forms), leading to an 'even finer form of virtue', as Glaucon observes at the outset of Book 8. However, through the first nine Books the focus has been on conflicts between reason, appetites, and spirited emotions. Conflict between fine reasoning and lower cognitive functions, we now see, can also lead to poor character.

As discussed in the last chapter, in the Kallipolis, the rulers will refer to the Form of the Good, which will help them correctly identify which act is just, courageous, etc. In 4th century Athens, though, (as in other cities) most people will not have the knowledge required to avail themselves of the Form of the Good or the Form of Justice. If their character is somewhat virtuous, it is such not only as a result of nature, rearing, and education, but also as a result of the extent to which they habituate themselves to deliberate well and follow the path of reason. To the extent that we are "unable to put knowledge and lack of knowledge to the test" (10.598d B), it will be difficult to develop a decent character. Socrates' focus is on how poetry degrades the ordinary person's propensity to use reasoned deliberation. It rather strengthens his propensity to bring other cognitive forces to bear, such as wish, fantasy, hasty acceptance of attractive appearances, etc. This highlights the fact that using reasoned deliberation can lead to virtuous choices. And this is something all of us can do. Even without an ideal first

nature, education, etc., we can (at least some of the time) deliberate about whether a particular act is just or unjust, courageous or cowardly, etc. Thus, 'The Charge Against Imitation in General' provides some support for both of this chapter's two main claims, namely, a) the importance of deliberation in developing decent character, and b) the suggestion that ordinary people in real cities have the potential to develop a character which is sufficiently good to merit the term 'decent. The next section continues these themes.

2.2 'The Charge against Painting' (10.602c-603b)

Like the prior passage, 'The Charge Against Painting' argues that imitation harms our psyche in terms of reasoning. This claim was argued in detail in Chapter 1 Section 2.3.2, so it will not be repeated here. In summary, though, the claim was that painting instills in us a character that is less likely, overall, to summon our powers of reasoning and calculation. Further, when we do summon our reasoning powers, but there is conflict between our reasoning and appearances, painting makes us more prone to follow appearance rather than better judgment. Again, this tells us something about painting, but it also tells us something about character. (In Chapter 1 we were focused on soul-parts, but here we are focused on character, so there are some new pieces of argument to add.) As Socrates said in Book 3, when we are surrounded by good painting, architecture etc., they affect us by instilling good character (ἀγαθοῦ ἦθους 3.401a) whereas bad painting has the opposite effect (3.400e-401a). Note that 3.400e-401a talks about bad painting's promoting bad character, but, similar to this passage in Book 10 (10.602c-603b), the Book 3 passage does not speak in terms of being

appetite-led or spirit-led but rather “κακολογίας καὶ κακοηθείας” (3.401a). Sachs is not atypical in rendering this as bad speaking and bad character, which fits with the notion of bad painting promoting bad character by damaging our ability to lead with our calculative capacity rather than other, lesser cognitive capacities.

As in the previous section, poor character is not simply a state of character where we are led by our appetites or our spirited emotions. ‘The Charge Against Painting’ reminds us that poor character is equally a product of being led by inferior cognitive states. Second, ‘The Charge Against Painting’ suggests some optimism regarding our likelihood of developing a character with some degree of virtue. Unlike the ascent from the cave, where it was knowledge that contributed to virtue, here it is simply the discipline to use our calculative capacities instead of jumping at appearances. And this is something that seems to be within the reach of all of us. Part of how we develop virtue, the passage suggests, is to repeatedly avoid the easy path, employing reasoning when choices are presented or doubts are present. Plato himself did not receive the purified education described in Books 2-4, nor did he live in an ideally good city. But one can imagine him as a man who brought his reasoning to bear in the vast majority of circumstances. This is a notion of virtue that seems accessible to many more people than the ideal virtue of Books 2-9. Thus ‘The Charge Against Painting’ also supports both of this chapter’s two claims, namely (a) the importance of deliberation in developing decent character, and (b) the suggestion that ordinary people in real cities have the potential to develop a character which is sufficiently good to merit the term ‘decent’.

2.3 'The Charge Against Poetry' (10.603b-605c)

Socrates begins by suggesting we examine what part of 'thought', as Bloom has it (τῆς διανοίας 10.603b), poetry appeals to. This seems to be a continuation of 'The Charge Against Painting', focusing on higher vs. lower cognitive functions. Socrates asks (10.603d) whether "just as in the domain of sight" (i.e. painting), so too with respect to deeds (i.e. poetry), does a person suffer inner conflict? Now the conflicts with respect to sight were cognitive conflicts, as argued in the previous section. But Socrates is not willing to trust that poetry will be analogous to painting, that is to say, will be focused on or solely on cognitive conflicts (10.603b). Therefore, Socrates continues to inquire:

just as with respect to the sight there was faction and he had contrary opinions in himself at the same time about the same things, is there also faction in him when it comes to deeds and does he do battle with himself? But I am reminded that there's no need for us to come to an agreement about this now. For in the previous arguments we came to sufficient agreement about all this, asserting that our soul teems with ten thousand such oppositions arising at the same time. (10.603d B)

How we should interpret this backward reference to "the previous arguments", i.e. 4.436bff? In Chapter 1 we focused on 4.436bff simply to improve our understanding of how to interpret the 'parts' of the soul and the associated locus of agency. Here, we can look at this passage with fresh eyes, in light of Chapter 2's discussion of character.

The straightforward (and I will argue correct) interpretation is that Socrates is referring back specifically to the Principle of Non-Opposition established in Book 4,

without reference to the examples to which the principle is applied in Book 4²³⁹. On this reading, Socrates intends to here apply to Principle of Non-Opposition to the different ‘parts’ of us are that are in conflict in this case—between the ‘serious’ part of our thought and the ‘ordinary’ part. In this case, poetry would here be described (like painting) in terms of cognitive conflicts.

Some readers, though, might object that Socrates’ intent is to refer back to both the Principle of Non-opposition and also to the specific types of conflicts described in Book 4, e.g. conflicts involving reasoning and also appetitive desires or spirited emotions. Using Bloom’s translation quoted above, Socrates’ comment that “we came to came to sufficient agreement *about all this*” does seem to leave the question open. If read this way, ‘The Charge Against Poetry’ would be broader than ‘The Charge Against Painting’. Although Socrates’ condemnation of poetry *will* ultimately be broader than his condemnation of painting, this will come in the next section (i.e. ‘The Greatest Charge’). In this section, on my reading, we should understand this backward reference as referring to the former, that is, to the principle itself.

First, appetitive desires are never mentioned in ‘The Charge Against Poetry’. Similarly, although pain and grief are mentioned in this passage, desire for victory, pride, anger, and the other types of spirited emotions discussed in ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ (4.435c-441c) are not present here. Further, although the conflict in question is initially cast (at 10.604a) as one between reasoning and misjudging the size of the loss and therefore giving in to suffering, it is later (at 10.604d) restated and

²³⁹ As discussed in Chapter 1, section 2.1.3.

refined as one between the 'part' that follows calculation and the 'part' that leads to *reminiscences* of the suffering (using Bloom's translation). Both reasoning and misjudging (in the first case) are cognitive facilities, as are deliberating and remembering (in the restated case). Finally, Socrates sums up his argument by casting the conflict as one between rational and irrational behavior, concluding that the irrational (ἀλόγιστόν 604d) person is easier to imitate. Again, both rationality and irrationality are cognitive states. Appetitive desires and spirited emotions will be brought up in the next section, namely 'The Greatest Charge'. Here, though, Socrates only goes so far as to agree the poet is indeed like the painter, which is why Socrates concludes that:

So we would be right now to apprehend the poet and to place him as a match for the painter. For he resembles the latter in making things which *stand in a poor relation to the truth*, and he has also been found similar to him by virtue of *associating with some other part of the soul than the best*. (10.605a-b Halliwell, italics mine).

What part of the soul is it that the poet appeals to in Socrates' reference above (i.e. what part is "other than the best")? First, as previously noted, Halliwell supplies the word part in the above quote, despite that fact that Socrates does not once use 'part' words, such as εἶδος, γένος, or μέρος.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, those who take Book 10 here to be referring to a bipartite soul (and who are still holding on to the primacy of the three canonical parts of the soul) will take the part that is "other than the best" to be appetite and spirit combined. But, as I argued in Chapter 1 Section 2.3.3, on my view this interpretation is mistaken. The soul has many 'parts', just as the *Republic* has many

²⁴⁰ Indeed, the words μέρος and γένος do not appear at all in the first half of Book 10, and εἶδος only rarely and never referring to soul parts except for the unclear reference at 10.595b that is discussed in Chapter 1.

'parts'. The deflationist position argued in Chapter 1 tells us that the soul can conceptually be cut in many ways (i.e. into many different 'parts'). If one takes it that here Socrates is distinguishing the soul as having two parts, namely, calculation on the one hand and everything else on the other (i.e. the 'parts' that want to laugh, weep, dream, drink, etc.) then it is true that all of our appetites and spirited emotions are in the "inferior" part.

But the 'part' of the "inferior part" that is under discussion here is not related to the appetite or spirit parts of the earlier tripartition. The 'part' being distinguished from the calculating part, here, is the part that wants to "dwell in memory on our suffering and impels us to lamentation, and cannot get enough of that sort of thing, is the irrational and idle part of us, the associate of cowardice" (10.604d). This is not a part of us that deals with appetites or anger, desire for victory, etc. On the one hand, it cognizes but does not reason. It dwells in memory of loss, which is cognitive. On the other hand, the loss that it dwells in is suffering, associating with the sad, etc. It is the part of us that literally wants to weep with the hero. But this is not spirit and appetite, as displayed in the tripartite soul of earlier books, The inferior part here is an inferior part of cognition, as previously argued. This is supported by Socrates' characterization of the part as "the soul's foolish part, which doesn't distinguish big from little, but believes the same things are at one time big and at another little" (10.605b-c B). In other words, the poet is like the painter in appealing to the non-calculative part of cognition.

Returning to 10.603d, then, Socrates next makes a second backward reference with a statement that at first reading seems unremarkable, but taken in light of the argument of Chapter 2 now jumps out at us.

But what we then left out, it is now necessary to go through, in my opinion. What was that?" he said. A decent man (ἐπιεικεῖς)," I said, who gets as his share some such chance as losing a son or something else for which he cares particularly, *as we were surely also saying then*, will bear it more easily than other men. (10.603d-e B italics mine)

When Socrates says "as we were saying then" in the quote above, he is referring to the speech at 3.387d. Before we can discuss what was left out at 3.387d that will now be said in Book 10, we need to look again at 'the part that was *not* left out' at 3.387d in discussing how a decent person acts when suffering a great loss. It was not left out that a reasonable man will bear loss more easily than an unreasonable man:

We surely say that a decent man will believe that for the decent man— who happens to be his comrade (ὁ ἐπιεικῆς ἀνὴρ τῷ ἐπιεικεῖ)— being dead is not a terrible thing...Then, he wouldn't lament him as though he had suffered something terrible...Moreover, we also say that such a man is most of all sufficient unto himself for living well and, in contrast to others, has least need of another...Then for him it is least terrible to be deprived of a son, or a brother, or money, or of anything else of the sort...Then he laments the least and bears it most gently when some such misfortune overtakes him. (3.387d-e B)

We should begin by noting that this is in the context of educating and developing fully just guardians—not the many. Indeed, Socrates acknowledges that passages like the ones under discussion (that make us fear death, lament loss, etc.) are

poetic and pleasing to most hearers, but because the more poetic they are the less are they suited to the ears of boys and men who are destined to be free and to be more afraid of slavery than of death. (3.387b)

They might, he says, be "all well and good for other purposes" (3.387c) (i.e. to the less worthy women and inferior men 3.387e-388a)—but not for the guardians. Two things are stressed in the above passage from Book 3. First, death is not bad for a decent person. Second, decent people are the most self-sufficient; they are the least in need of relatives, friends, money, etc. Thus both 3.387c and 10.603d-e affirm that decent

people should not fear death. In a passage too long to be set out here (10.603e-604d) Socrates provides the new information that was left out in Book 3 that must now be said in Book 10.

After affirming that a decent man (ἐπιεικεῖς) will bear loss more easily than other men, Socrates elicits that the decent man will still feel pain at the loss, but will be sensible in the face of the pain. But this is in public. In private he will behave badly; indeed, he will say and do many things of which he would be ashamed to be heard saying or seen doing or do in public. This is one major difference between the Book 3 speech and the Book 10 speech. The Book 3 speech concerns the ‘decent’ young man in the Kallipolis who (although still a work in progress; still an ἐπιεικῆς but not yet fully ἀγαθός) has been selected for the education and testing designed to turn him into the perfectly virtuous person. There is no indication that this youth will speak or behave in private in ways he would be ashamed to be heard saying or seen doing in public. The Book 10 speech concerns the ‘decent’ person in a regular city, who is far less than perfectly virtuous (this particular decent person *will* speak and behave in private in ways he would be ashamed to be heard saying or seen doing) but is still a decent person.²⁴¹ Socrates continues by explaining how an ordinary decent person behaves, namely by deliberating and following the results of one’s deliberation:

being in pain is an impediment to the coming of that thing the support of which we need as quickly as possible in these cases.... *Deliberation about what has happened...* One must not behave like children who have stumbled and who hold on to the hurt place and spend their time in crying out; rather *one must always*

²⁴¹ Note Gill (1996, 212) says, “Plato here seems to have in view a picture of conventional (not ideal) goodness of character, and a conventional conception of what goodness of character consists in”. Ferrari (2007, 178-80) also paints a useful picture of the “decent but still imperfect fellow” (178). He is good, but not ideally virtuous.

habituate the soul to turn as quickly as possible to curing and setting aright what has fallen and is sick, doing away with lament by medicine. (10.604c-604d B, italics mine)

Again, this is behavior which is available to all of us. When we suffer a loss, or indeed are faced with any decision, decent character is formed by habituating ourselves to act according to our deliberation.

Now this long passage about how the decent person will behave in public and in private (10.603d-604d) calls us to compare the decent person with the person who resembles the oligarchy. Like the decent man of Book 10, the oligarch will behave shamefully in private, but in public he “seems to be just” (8.554c B). Indeed, he seems to be just because his base desires are held in check by some ‘decent’ (ἐπιεικεῖ) part of himself. But the similarities only serve to highlight the differences. The oligarch is clearly not a decent person. He is a “squalid fellow” (αὐχμηρός 8.554a) who welcomes ‘opportunities of getting away with injustice with impunity’ (8.554c). Although the decent man of Book 10 also says and does some things in private that he would be ashamed to say or do in public, he is clearly a decent person. His sense of shame does him credit and serves to guide his public behavior. He is a divided, convention and reputation bound individual, but Socrates seems to be giving him a measure of approval. Thus we are reminded that unlike Books 2-9 where the emphasis was on the perfectly virtuous person, here in Book 10 the emphasis is on the many decent people who are not perfectly virtuous, but still exist in cities like the Athens of Plato’s day.

Before concluding our consideration of this passage, note that in describing ‘what was left out’ in Book 3, Socrates uses the strong term ἀναγκαῖος (10.603e) saying that what was left out then, now ‘*must* be said’. The fact that the decent person will be

moderate in giving in to his grief and will resist expressing it in public, does not seem so surprising as to warrant the assertion that it *must* be said now. Certainly we will subsequently (at 10.605a) get to one reason why this must be said now, namely that the mimetic poet will appeal to the weak parts of our cognition. But between 10.603d and 10.605a there is much discussion of the person and how he behaves that informs our notion of character. It seems to me that part of why this ‘must be said now’ is because the passage serves to emphasize that we are here discussing a person who while lacking perfect virtue, still has some reasonable measure of virtue. Unlike many people, who, as we will argue, will be judged subsequently (in the Myth of Er that concludes the *Republic*) as worthy of punishment, he will be judged worthy of heavenly reward. In sum, what was left out at 3.387 which now must be said is that proper education, habituation, and acculturation are not only necessary for developing perfectly just guardians, but also for instilling a measure of virtue in ordinary decent people. Like painting, poetry educates and acculturates adults to develop bad habits which damage character. Both degrade one’s propensity to use reasoned deliberation and strengthens the propensity to bring lesser cognitive forces to bear (to repeat, ones such as wish, fantasy, hasty acceptance of attractive appearances, etc.) This is why, as noted earlier, the passage concludes that we should set up the poet as the antistrophe of the painter. Like the painter, the poet induces a bad character in the soul of individuals (10.605b κακὴν πολιτείαν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστου τῆ ψυχῆ ἐμποιεῖν) by acculturating us to eschew deliberation and good sense for irrationality. ‘The Charge Against Poetry, like the previous two sections, highlights both the role of deliberation in the building of decent character and the fact that decent people do exist in real cities.

2.4 'The Greatest Charge' (10.605c-606d)

As noted in Chapter 1, there is much that is the same in 'The Charge Against Poetry' and 'The Greatest Charge'. As we will see, the same two themes about character (the role of deliberation and the reasonable possibility of attaining decent character) will emerge. The setting is unchanged, remaining in a city populated with both bad and decent people. In the very first speech (10.605c), Socrates makes clear that the concern with poetry here regards its power to corrupt the decent people (τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς) that live in the city. Indeed, it even has the power to corrupt those who are the “best” (note the plural—βέλτιστοι) of those decent people. In fact, it will become clear that we are not to take this phrase (‘the best of us’) too seriously, since there are a few people who will *not* be corrupted in the theater (10.605c). These few, who will not be corrupted, are presumably even better than those who are the ‘best of us’, however odd that may sound. Thus in contrast to Book 2-9’s focus on perfect virtue, Book 10 increasingly takes for granted that there are many decent people in our cities, and further that some are more decent than others. In this passage, for example, we have a) a significant number of decent people that can be corrupted by poetry, b) a group of people that are the most decent among those decent people, and c) an even better group who will not be corrupted by the theater.

The fact that poetry can corrupt decent people, though, does not seem very new. As previously noted, imitation “maim[s] the thought” (10.595b) and instills bad character (10.605b) even in decent people. It is not clear to what *extent* it maims our thought, and just *how bad* a character it instills in us; this will need to be investigated. Still, what

makes this the greatest charge will need to turn out to be something more than just the damage cited above.

The first example, which pertains to poetry in the theater, also seems roughly similar to what has already been said. How does the decent man behave in the face of personal sorrow? He bears up under it: “when personal sorrow comes to one of us, you are aware that, on the contrary, we pride ourselves if we are able to keep quiet and bear up” (10.605e B). Nevertheless, in the theater, we often give ourselves over to the suffering of the hero and praise the poet who most induces us to do so. Most people are incapable of understanding that enjoying the suffering of the stage hero habituates us toward a character that revels in wallowing in suffering in our own lives (“few are capable of reflecting that what we enjoy in others will inevitably react upon ourselves” 10.606b). A person like this is foolish in enjoying the suffering of the hero, because doing so is damaging to his character (“For after feeding fat the emotion of pity there, it is not easy to restrain it in our own sufferings” 10.606b). As of yet, though, there is no indication in the text that he acts shamefully either in public or in private. For this reason, he seems more virtuous than the “decent and reasonable man” described at (10.603d-604d), who *will* act shamefully in private.

Socrates continues, though, with an example about the impact of comedy in the theater:

Well, doesn't the same argument hold for comedy too? Namely, that whenever, at a comic performance *or in private life*, you get keen pleasure from, and *refuse to detest as wicked*, humour which you would be personally ashamed to indulge in, you are doing the same thing as in cases of pity? (606c H, italics mine)

First, let us take note of the phrase “at a comic performance or in private life”. Here Socrates stresses what I have taken to be a key point in interpreting this renewed attack on imitation. The attack here may be directed at comedy in the theater, but the theater is only one of the avenues in which character can be damaged. When we learn about how, say, attending comedic theater habituates us away from virtue, we learn, at the same time, how other temptations (sometimes away from the theater in public or in private) habituate us away from virtue.

To return to the passage on comedy, Socrates stresses that the same argument as the one used against tragedy also applies to comedy. But although the argument is the same, the result is not the same. Socrates highlights the end result that comes from habituating oneself toward vice. Although the man in this example starts out with an appropriate attitude toward buffoonery (as above, he would be “personally ashamed to indulge in” it (10.606d H), ultimately he develops into a buffoon. Socrates continues:

what your reason, for fear of the reputation of buffoonery, restrained in yourself when it fain would play the clown, you release in turn, and so, fostering its youthful impudence, let yourself go so far that often *ere you are aware you become yourself a comedian in private*. (10.606c-d H italics mine)

Enjoying the buffoonery in the theater habituates us toward buffoonery. Before we know it, we develop the character trait of acting the buffoon. This man no longer regards buffoonery as base (as quoted earlier).

It is the same, Socrates says, with spirited emotions and appetitive desires. Poetic imitation “fosters and waters them when they ought to be dried up” (10.606d B). But the passages about imitation, on my view, encourage us to extend Socrates’ main concern (with the constant exposure to theater and Homer) to also apply to the broader

issue of how people behave in the face of public and private temptations. If people habituate themselves to giving in to these, rather than deliberating and then following the voice of reason, they damage their character. Contrariwise, if people habitually deliberate and then decide to follow the course of reason, instead of the temptations of illusion, buffoonery, licentiousness, gluttony, etc., they develop into decent human beings—not perfect—simply, as Socrates says, ‘as virtuous they are able to be’ (10.606e-607a, as discussed below).

Before leaving ‘The Greatest Charge’, one question that we raised earlier must be considered: given that the theater is damaging to character, just how damaging is the theater to people? It has already been made clear that the young are more susceptible to influences than adults. Whether youth or adult, though, it certainly seems that one trip to the theater does not immediately and fully corrupt a decent person, much less ‘the best of us’. Similarly, somebody with a (reasonably) good character, who succumbs to temptation and acts basely on a particular occasion is not immediately and fully ruined. This is perhaps supported by Socrates’ conclusion of Book 10’s renewed attack on imitation when he says:

Consequently, Glaucon, when you encounter admirers of Homer who assert that this poet has been the educator of Greece...you ought to show friendly affection to these people, since *they are as virtuous as they are able* (10.606e-607a H, italics mine)

There are a lot of decent people in the non-ideal city. They are not ideally virtuous, but “as virtuous as they are able”, for which reason they are deserving of our respect and “friendly affection”.

2.5 Book 10 Part 1: Conclusion

Socrates' main thrust in the first half of Book 10 is just what it appears to be, namely, a return to the issue of imitation and the damage it can do. But one can still mine the passage for Plato's views about character and character development broadly.

As Socrates says in his last speech of this section:

Because it's a great struggle, dear Glaucon, I said, though it doesn't seem as great as it is, to become a reliable (χρηστὸν) or worthless person, so *it's not worth it to be enticed by honor or money or any ruling power or even by poetry* into being careless about justice and the rest of virtue. (10.608b Sachs, italics mine)

Note that Sachs' careful translation avoids translating χρηστὸν as "good" (as, for example, Bloom, Halliwell, and Shorey do). Socrates is still talking about the decent person, not the person of perfect virtue. The temptations to eschew deliberation or to act against our deliberations are many. Honor or money imply the entire spectrum of emotions and desires. Two important points about character should be noted. First, although Socrates said more than once in the early Books that early childhood and youth are the times when character develops the most, Book 10 underscores the importance of habituation, as well as the related fact that character continues to develop throughout the course of our entire life. This contest that concerns becoming "a reliable or worthless person", as quoted above, is the most important thing in life. Building a good life is a matter of building a decent character, and building a decent character is a matter for an entire life.

Second, although Socrates does not discuss the relationship between less than perfect virtue and a flourishing life, the first half of Book 10 does make clear that people of ordinary decency are all around us. For example, there are decent people who are or

are not affected by poetry. Also, 'even the best of us' are present in the theater. Along these lines, this half of Book 10 ends with Socrates saying that even now, "we haven't discussed the *greatest* rewards and prizes which await virtue" (10.608c H, italics his). Here, I will argue, Socrates is still referring to decent people and discussing the greatest rewards for their less than perfect virtue. Now Socrates cannot here be referring to the perfect virtue of the Philosopher-King or the guardian raised in the Kallipolis. Those figures are not present or discussed in Book 10. Further, in the speech quoted just before, Socrates says that "it's not worth it to be enticed by honor or money or any ruling power or even by poetry into being careless about justice and the rest of virtue". He must be referring to the virtue of the decent person outside the Kallipolis, for it is only outside the Kallipolis that theater will be present, and that a ruling office will be a possibility for a large number of people. This will be additionally supported in the next section. The rewards Socrates speaks of are the rewards in the afterlife. And, as we will see, the Myth of Er makes clear that roughly half of people get judged to have been sufficiently virtuous to merit and receive these rewards. This group of roughly half the population are clearly not people of perfect virtue, a) because people of perfect virtue are explicitly said to be extremely rare,²⁴² and b) because the description of those judged favorably and sent to the heavens indicates that they were virtuous but imperfectly so while they were alive.

²⁴² Although I stay wholly within the Republic in this dissertation, I am moved to point to the Phaedo 89e-90a: "the very good and the very wicked are both quite rare, and that most men are between these extremes" (Translation G.M.A. Grube).

Thus the first half of Book 10 steps down off the ledge on which we were perched at the close of Book 9. There, perfect virtue was defended as leading to the truly flourishing life, but less than perfect virtue was simply not discussed. Now we find ourselves back in Athens or some similar real city and find that people of less than perfect virtue are all around us. Socrates, on the above reading, asserts that we mustn't be tempted not to strive for justice and virtue, even if we cannot attain perfect virtue. At the beginning of Book 2, Glaucon imagines a perfectly just and perfectly unjust man so as to be able to judge "which of the two is the happier" (2.361d). Although Glaucon and Adeimantus pose their questions in the starkest of terms, the relevant underlying question, on my reading, is: 'will the even less than perfect virtue of the decent person yield a more flourishing life with greater rewards than the apparent pleasures of the Ring of Gyges?' The first half of Book 10, on my reading, answers 'yes'.

Another key takeaway from the first half of Book 10 is the importance of deliberation. This is not new; it has been discussed throughout the *Republic*. Here, though, we see ordinary people engaged in deliberation. Socrates reinforces that deliberation is a key component of developing a decent character. This in turn supports our optimism that we *can* develop decent character, since even if the purified education of the Kallipolis is unavailable to us, we do have the capacity to deliberate. We need to have the discipline to avoid the easy path of temptations, whether they be cognitive, emotional, or appetitive.

Much seems to depend on Book 10's shift of locale, away from cities in speech and toward real cities populated by ordinary citizens. If, as I have argued, in these real cities we find many decent people, then one is drawn to think back to Book 1, which

was also set in a 'real locale'. One would expect there to be many decent people there too. And, indeed, when we look back at Book 1 from this perspective, we find that decent people are often mentioned. Even Thrasymachus, when he talks about the unjust man's exploitation of his fellow citizens (i.e. "those who are simple in every sense of the word and just" 1.343c) acknowledges the conventional goodness of many of those decent people. For example, at 1.343d, "the just man always comes out at a disadvantage in his relation with the unjust." The just man, he says does less well in business, pays more taxes (1.343d), and refuses to show favoritism to his friends when in office (1.343e). Socrates also takes it as obvious that there are decent people in the city, for example insisting that the "finest spirits" will rule so as not to be ruled by somebody worse than them (1.347c). Other examples jump out (e.g. 1.352a). Thus, in Book 1, like in Book 10, the focus is not on the perfectly just person but on the many decent people (who are headed for the heavens in the closing myth) and the many bad people (e.g. temple robbers, kidnappers, housebreakers, defrauders, thieves, pirates, robbers) who are headed for Hades.

3.0 Book 10 Part 2: Character in Book 10's Second Half (10.608c-10.621d)

As the renewed attack against imitation concludes at 10.608b, Socrates turns to examine the nature of the disembodied and immortal soul; a topic that is entirely new and previously undiscussed in the *Republic*.²⁴³ Socrates begins this discussion with

²⁴³ Cephalus raises the issue of postmortem reward and punishment early in Book 1, but the subject is not taken up. Also, Socrates makes a passing reference to the one's "destiny in the other place" (τὴν ἐκεῖ μοῖραν 6.498c), but again, the matter is not taken up.

three short sections, namely a) the defense of the immortality of the soul, b) the image of Glaucus, and c) 'the return of what was borrowed'. These sections are followed by the Myth of Er, which runs from 10.614a to the end of the *Republic* at 10.621d.

My claims about the second half of Book 10 are the same as my claims about the first half. First, although the main intent of the second half of Book 10 is a consideration of the immortal soul, along with how it fares after death and in rebirth, on my view we can mine this discussion so as to better understand the *Republic's* view of character. Second, the same three features about character that were prominent in the first half of Book 10 are prominent, I will argue, in the second half as well. As before, habituation, deliberation, and the reasonable chance we have of developing decent (but not necessarily ideal) character are highlighted in this second half of Book 10.

3.1 The Subsections Prior to the Myth of Er (10.608c-614a)

As noted, three subsections lead up to the Myth of Er, namely, a) the defense of the immortality of the soul, b) the image of Glaucus, and c) 'the return of what was borrowed' (10-612b-614a). I do not have much to say about the defense of the immortality of the soul. It certainly seems to me that the defense is necessary, since the Glaucus image and the Myth of Er depend on the existence of the immortal soul. But it seems an odd defense. Shields calls it a "manifestly lame argument", while Annas calls it "question-begging" and "ridiculous".²⁴⁴ On the other hand, Larivée calls it one of Plato's "sophisticated philosophical arguments in favour of the immortality of the

²⁴⁴ Shields (2001, 143). Annas (1981, 346).

soul”.²⁴⁵ This is not an issue that I need to settle (although it does seem to me that Shields and Annas have the right of it).²⁴⁶

At 10.608d, Socrates asks Glaucon if he has not considered that the soul is immortal. Glaucon looks him: “full in the face in amazement” and replies “No, by Zeus, not I”. Halliwell supposes that many of Plato’s readers would have been skeptical of the notion of the immortal soul.²⁴⁷ Perhaps this passage is a suggestion to the reader to remember that this entire closing section of the *Republic* recounts matters related to the disembodied immortal soul, which is a completely new topic for the *Republic*. Nevertheless, by means of many backward references (to the foregoing account related to embodied souls) and also because of the subsequent rebirth and re-embodiment of those souls, Plato causes the reader to keep in mind the entirety of the *Republic* when considering the disembodied, immortal soul.

I also do not want to make any points about the Glaucus image here. The Glaucus passage was important in Chapter 1 when we were inquiring into the issue of soul-parts, but is not critical to this chapter. As many commentators have pointed out, the hints we get from the Glaucus image about what the disembodied soul might be like are very different from the souls we see in the Myth of Er. But we will return to this conflict later in this chapter when we take up the Myth of Er.

We do, though, need to spend some time on the third section leading up the Myth of Er, which I have named ‘the return of what was borrowed’ (10.612a-614a).

²⁴⁵ Larivée (2012, 247).

²⁴⁶ Annas (1981, 345) raises many objections to the argument, e.g. that the argument depends on the untested assumption that each thing has only one evil.

²⁴⁷ Halliwell (2007, 458).

Here Socrates asserts that it has been proven that “justice in itself is the best thing for the soul itself, and that the soul ought to do justice whether it possess the ring of Gyges, or not” (10.612b). He now asks for the ‘return of what was borrowed’ in terms of the good reputation and rewards enjoyed by just people. Precisely what is the subject and who are the subjects of discussion, here? Is ‘the justice in itself’ perfect justice or ordinary justice? Similarly, are the “just people” who enjoy rewards, the perfectly just people of the Kallipolis or the ordinary decent people we have been discussing so far in this chapter? The answer in both cases clearly seems to be the latter. Socrates says that “the just, when they become older, hold the offices in their own city if they choose, marry from what families they will, and give their children in marriage to what families they please” (10.613d). Clearly this is not a description of the truly just Philosopher-Kings in the Kallipolis, since this is the opposite of how rulers behave in the Kallipolis. In the Kallipolis, holding office is not optional and marriages are in common. Then who are these decent people who do and do not choose to hold offices in their cities? Are they doctors? ship-owners? merchants? We don’t know, but we get the sense that Socrates is talking about a reasonably large number of people of decent character, not one or two people of perfect character. The reader who has read the entire *Republic*, knows that these people of decent character will soon (measured by the timeframe of eternal souls) be judged and rewarded with 1000 years of delight, while the unjust people will be sent below to suffer. For now, though, ‘the return of what was borrowed’ passage moves the argument forward, but along the way, also reminds the reader that in an ordinary city (like Athens) there are lots of ordinary people, some of decent character and some of bad.

This passage implies that there are plenty of decent people (which allows discussion of what they as a group deserve and receive) and asserts that they deserve and receive good reputation and rewards, both from gods and from men. Both of these two points are important, but neither of them are argued. Nevertheless, in this passage Socrates is not only 'taking back what Glaucon and Adeimantus borrowed from him' (10.612c), I will argue that he is here giving back what he took from them, namely their confidence that they know what justice is and that they have the ability to develop just characters.

At the beginning of Book 2 Socrates praises Glaucon and Adeimantus saying, "I had always been full of wonder at the nature of Glaucon and Adeimantus...something quite divine must certainly have happened to you...I infer this from the rest of your character" (2.367e-368a B). Now Socrates is laying on the praise thickly here, since these fine youths have the disposition to aspire to justice, but are certainly neither godlike nor yet of fully developed character. Although they probably began the evening's conversation with confidence in their knowledge of justice and potential to develop just character, Socrates' arguments against Thrasymachus must have shaken their confidence that they know precisely what justice is, hence their demand (in Book 2) that Socrates give a deep account that will be persuasive. Further, as I argued in the previous chapter, the high bar that Socrates sets for justice in Books 2-9 (the perfectly just man) must have further eroded their confidence. Over the course of Books 2-9, Socrates completes the argument designed to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus that they should be just. But along the way, his conclusion that there is one form of virtue and countless forms of vice, along with his exclusive focus on the 'perfectly just man'

(especially the Philosopher-King), does or at least should shake their confidence. They are certainly not just in the manner of the 'perfectly just man'. In the same way, Plato, in having Socrates set this high bar shakes the confidence of the reader. But throughout Book 10 Socrates has lowered the bar, allowing that many decent people in Athens will be judged favorably. Thus, in this passage (along with others in Book 10) Socrates gives back the confidence that he has taken from them, and Plato gives back the confidence he has taken from us. Since a) there are many decent people in Athens, and b) Glaucon and Adeimantus are fine young men, then it must be the case that they can develop reasonably just characters if they work at it. The same holds true for many readers of the *Republic*.

This passage is the last one before the closing myth. If the *Republic* ended here, it would still be a fine ending. Socrates finishes the answer to Glaucon and Adeimantus' original challenge with the assertions that a) they can be just, b) they should be just (because justice will lead to a flourishing life), and c) being just will also win them good reputation and rewards from both gods and men.

Why then is Socrates asserting rather than offering an argument? Perhaps because although he has argued for the high bar for justice in Books 2-9, here in Book 10 he is also confirming the common opinions that a) there are decent people, and b) decency is rewarded by gods and men. In this Socrates is not arguing with the common wisdom, but rather agreeing with it. Certainly he has taken us down a long road, and convinced us that reputation and prizes are not what we should value most highly—psychic harmony and the associated flourishing life is what we should value most highly. The many are wrong about what is most valuable and what leads to a

flourishing life. Socrates has filled in that story. But even though reputation and prizes are not the most important things, the many are right that decent people receive them both from people and from the gods.

3.2 The Myth of Er (10.614b-621d)

The Myth of Er is rich, complex, and full of contradictions. It is tempting to get lost in exegesis, but for the purposes of this chapter we will consider the myth only as it relates to character. On my view, the Myth of Er, like the first half of Book 10, shifts the focus from the 'perfectly just man', thereby reassuring us that we do indeed have the potential to develop decent character. In addition, also consistent with the first half of Book 10, I will argue that the myth highlights the roles of deliberation and habituation within the overall process by which decent people develop their character and act virtuously. As previously noted, these two claims are mutually reinforcing. It is partly through deliberation that decent people develop their decent character and act justly. Equally, although the vast majority of people will not have the knowledge required to make use of the Form of the Good, deliberation is available to all people. Because human beings can deliberate, they have the potential (via habituation) to develop decent characters and live lives which are sufficiently flourishing so as to be choice-worthy.

On a literal reading, the myth describes the post-mortem judgement and reward of the immortal soul, followed by the choosing of a new life and incarnation. Alongside this literal reading, an allegorical reading of the myth has occurred to many

commentators over the past two millennia.²⁴⁸ Interestingly, all of the commentators I have read discuss the same possible allegorical reading, namely:

is Plato, through Socrates, asking us to truly believe in the transmigration of the soul and in the account of Er concerning the process of choice in the afterlife? Or rather, should we interpret the content of the myth simply as a symbolic way of calling to mind the life choices that we make here and now? The reincarnation of the soul, then, would simply represent through allegory the succession of our diverse 'selves' as they result from the choices that we make in the course of our immediate existence²⁴⁹

But despite the fact that pointing to this reading as a possibility has become the norm, none of the commentators has fleshed out either the allegorical reading in great detail or its implications for how we understand the *Republic's* picture of character. That the myth has a literal reading is inescapable. That there is a possible allegorical interpretation that presents itself is evidenced by millennia of commentators. I will argue that the two are necessary, entwined, and support the thesis of this chapter and the claims set out at the beginning of this section. I will consider the two readings in turn, starting with the literal reading.

3.2.1 The Literal Reading of the Myth of Er (10.614b-621d)

One important initial question concerns the setting of the myth. In section 1.3 of this chapter, I argued that Book 1 of the *Republic* is presented as a dialogue among actual historical people in Athens. I subsequently claimed that although much of Books 2-9 takes place in cities constructed in speech, Book 10 returns to a setting where the

²⁴⁸ Examples will be detailed when we get to the allegorical reading.

²⁴⁹ Larivée (2012, 246).

discussion is about 'real' people in an apparently 'real' city. But even if this is true for Book 10 up to this point, is the same true for the Myth of Er? In an odd way, I would suggest that the answer is yes, certainly on the allegorical reading, but even on the literal reading as well. Although Er may be a 'made up' character, just as Leontius and Odysseus may have been, in Socrates' story he is not presented that way. Just as Glaucon, Solon, and Damon are presented in the text as real people (living or dead), so too are the souls described by Er. The Philosopher-King, the timocrat, the auxiliary, the simple person living in the city of pigs are all presented as being constructed in words by Socrates, inhabiting cities he explicitly constructs in words. By contrast, at the surface level of the text in Er's story, we have descriptions of apparently real souls (albeit in between embodied lives and often presented very much as embodied people). Thus, on my view, like the rest of Book 10, the myth can be construed as contributing to our understanding of the nature of souls and characters of people.

The other important note about the setting of the Myth of Er regards the odd temporality that we must constantly keep in mind when interpreting it. Souls (on the literal reading of the lead-up to the myth and the myth itself) are eternal. Souls "that live for a day", as Lachesis puts it at 10.617d, exist on a never-ending cycle of a 'short' embodied life (as if living for just a day) followed by 1000 years of punishment or reward, followed by another short embodied life, and so on, eternally. Thus, when we consider Er's account of the sights he saw at the specific moment described, we must always remember that he is describing souls that have lived countless embodied lives before that moment, and will live countless embodied lives after that moment. Admittedly, if we do focus on this we may detract from the myth's critical focus on our

responsibility for choosing our next lives, but if we do not focus on it we lose some of the important points yet to come, for example the implications of ‘the exchange of good lives for bad’.

Building on that, let me offer a slightly more detailed (but still extremely spare) sketch of the main steps of the process (on the literal reading). Essentially there are eight main steps: 1) Embodied souls live a life and then die. Their souls then 2) get judged by the gods, 3) get rewarded or punished for 1000 years for the life they just lived, 4) gaze upon the universe itself, 5) receive a ‘lot’ which dictates the order in which they will choose their next lives, 6) deliberate (more or less) about which life-paradigm to choose, 7) choose their next lives, and then 8) drink from the waters of Lethe, causing them to forget what has happened to them up to the moment of drinking. The process then repeats over and over, eternally. (Note that because of the eternal cyclical nature of a soul’s existence, it is arbitrary as to which step we take to be the ‘first’. Er’s account actually begins with step 2. I began with step 1, because in step 2 they are being judged based on the life they had just lived.) As a baseline, I include a graphical representation of this process below. This representation will also be useful subsequently, to see how the allegorical reading maps onto the literal reading:²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Note that in the diagram below, as well as in the rest of this section, I omit step 4, namely gazing upon the universe, since on my view it is not relevant to the issue of character.

Eternity

- Live Embodied Life
- Life Judged
- Reward/Punishment
- Get Lot
- Deliberate on Next Life

Choose Life-Paradigm

- Forget Past Life
- Live Embodied Life
- Life Judged
- Reward/Punishment
- Get Lot
- Deliberate on Next Life

Choose Life-Paradigm

- Forget Past Life
- Live Embodied Life
- Life Judged
- Reward/Punishment
- Get Lot
- Deliberate on Next Life

Choose Life-Paradigm



Choose Life-Paradigm

A Soul's
'life'



Er's story begins with step 2, the description of the post-mortem judgment of souls, followed by the associated rewards and punishments (10.614a-616a). Each soul is judged, after which those judged to be just (δικαίους 10.614c) were commanded to go upward and to the right to the heavens, with the signs of their judgement attached to their chests. There they enjoy 1000 years of delight in reward for their justice. But those judged to be unjust (ἀδίκους) were commanded to go down and to the left with the signs of their unjust deeds attached to their backs, to suffer 1000 years of punishment. At the same time, from two other openings, some souls were coming up or down from their 1000 years of punishment or reward. In terms of those coming down, Er says:

and from the remaining chasm other souls were coming down from the sky in a state of purity. The souls that were *constantly (ἀεί) arriving* seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went off happily to the meadow *to encamp there as if at a festival*. Souls which knew each other exchanged greetings...They told their tales to each other, the one group wailing and weeping...but the souls from the sky in turn explaining their happy experiences (10.614d-615a Halliwell, italics mine).

On my reading this passage provides one piece of support for the claim that we have a good chance of developing decent character. The sense of the passage is that both coming up from below, and (more relevantly) coming down from above, we have a throng of people. They were 'constantly' arriving; some knew each other and some didn't; and there were enough of them to encamp 'as if at a festival'. What this means is that 1000 years before the point in time that Er is observing, a great throng of people were judged to be just enough to be sent to the heavens. Not one or two people of perfect virtue, but rather lots of decent people (like the 'decent people in the theater' from earlier in Book 10). Keeping in mind the cyclical and eternal temporality of the

myth described above, it seems likely that just as lots of people were judged as sufficiently good to be sent to the heavens 1000 years before Er's observation, the same was true from the cohort that died 999 years and 364 days before, 999 years and 363 days before, etc. (This hypothesis will be supported by the 'even exchange of good lives for bad', which will be discussed subsequently.) Thus, it seems that this passage suggests that on any given day, the cohort that dies that day contains lots of decent people as well as lots of people of bad character.²⁵¹ In the same manner, among those alive at any point (say in Athens), we are likely to find many people of both reasonably good and bad character. This fact should give Glaucon and Adeimantus (as well as many readers) confidence that despite lacking the knowledge which would allow them to use the Form of the Good in decision making, they may still develop a character which will be decent and will be judged as such by the gods.

The eschatological passage discussed above (comprising steps 2 and 3) is followed by (step 4) a complex cosmological vision (10.616b-617c) which I will not consider, since it does not contribute to the issue at hand. Following that, though, comes the third and final section (10.617d-621b) of the myth (steps 5-8) which describes the process of choosing a new life and being incarnated into that life. This section does contribute to our understanding of character. First, I will sketch the steps in the life-choosing process in slightly more detail.

The process of choosing a life, on a literal reading of the myth, begins with all of the souls together, arrayed in ranks. Each soul gets a 'lot'. A great many 'life-

²⁵¹ Of course it is troubling that somebody who is only slightly vicious receives 1000 years of punishment, but that is simply one of the many eschatological issues Plato does not take up here.

paradigms' (βίων παραδείγματα 10.617d) are arrayed before the souls. Then, in the order determined by their lots, each soul deliberates (to a greater or lesser extent) about which life-paradigm to choose, and then chooses one of them. The choices are sealed by the Fates, and then each soul drinks from the river Heedless. The drink causes each soul to forget what has come before, up to the point of drinking. Thus, on the literal reading, the myth presents us with an odd temporal perspective. The souls, under the influence of both their last lives and the associated reward or punishment, select their next life by considering the events in the life-paradigm (events that have not yet happened but will ultimately happen in that next life). As we will see, both the prior life (especially the training they received) and the reward/punishment are key factors in how well the souls choose.

There are many features of this long description of souls picking their next lives that bear discussion, but I want to focus on a few passages in particular. One such passage is when the Priest assures the people that the 'lots' do matter, but are not fully determinative of one's chance of a virtuous character in one's next life:

Even for him who comes forward last, if he make his choice wisely and live strenuously, there is reserved an acceptable life (βίος ἀγαπητός), no evil (κακός) one. Let not the foremost in the choice be heedless nor the last be discouraged. (10.619b)

This seems quite optimistic. Even for the soul that chooses last 'an acceptable (βίος ἀγαπητός), not evil life is available'. Precisely how to take βίος ἀγαπητός is unclear, as evidenced by the fact that each translator I consulted has a different translation.²⁵²

²⁵² For example, 'a desirable life', 'a satisfactory life', 'a life to content him', 'an acceptable life', 'a life to be satisfied with', etc.

What seems clear, though, is that the available lives are not limited to ‘perfectly virtuous or else vicious’. There are many desirable lives, some more virtuous and some less, but each contrasted with the life that is evil. All of the choosers, this passage seems to say, will have a reasonable chance of having a next life which is somewhat virtuous.

A second passage to focus on begins at 10.619b, immediately following the Priest’s assurance that ‘a satisfactory life is available to all’.

the man who had drawn the first lot came forward and immediately chose the greatest tyranny, and, due to folly and gluttony, chose without having considered everything adequately; and it escaped his notice that eating his own children and other evils were fated to be a part of that life. When he considered it at his leisure, he beat his breast and lamented the choice, not abiding by the spokesman’s forewarning. For he didn’t blame himself for the evils but chance, demons, and anything rather than himself. He was one of those who had come from heaven, having lived in an orderly regime (τεταγμένη πολιτεία) in his former life, participating in virtue by habit, without philosophy. *And, it may be said*, not the least number of those who were caught in such circumstances came from heaven, because they were unpracticed in labors. But most of those who came from the earth, because they themselves had labored and had seen the labors of others, weren’t in a rush to make their choices. *On just this account*, and due to the chance of the lot, there was an exchange of evils and goods for most of the souls. However, if a man, when he comes to the life here, always philosophizes in a healthy way and the lot for his choice does not fall out among the last, it’s likely, *on the basis of what is reported from there*, that he will not only be happy here but also that he will journey from this world to the other and back again not by the underground, rough road but by the smooth one, through the heavens. *He said* that this was a sight surely worth seeing: (10.619b-d B, italics mine)²⁵³

The first to choose was a soul who 1000 years before had been sent to the heavens for reward, since he had been judged to be a decent person. He hadn’t been a man of perfect justice, simply a person who had “lived in an orderly regime, participating in

²⁵³ Bloom calls him a man, but the text simply says “the first in the lot”, as Halliwell renders “τὸν πρῶτον λαχόντα”. Nevertheless, although he is a soul and not a person within the context of the myth, he is depicted in a quite person-like manner. He has folly and gluttony, he laments and blames, etc. Keeping in mind the person-like nature of the souls, I will persist in referring to them as souls (except when quoting) when they are acting within the myth, and as people (or men) when describing their prior lives.

virtue by habit, without philosophy”, as quoted above. This is a very different picture from the one at 5.449a, where Socrates says that he calls the Kallipolis a “good and right” (ὀρθὴν καλῶ) city, along with the corresponding type of person, but the others he describes as “bad and mistaken”. This man whose soul was the first to choose did not live in a city of the supposed excellence of a Kallipolis. A ‘city which is orderly’ (τεταγμένη πολιτεία) is quite different from a city which is ‘good and right’ (ὀρθὴν καλῶ). Nevertheless, his city was not described as ‘bad or mistaken’; simply ‘orderly’. Similarly, the man was not a man of perfect virtue, but he was not ‘bad or mistaken’. He simply participated in virtue by habit. It appears that he was a decent person who followed the laws and norms of a decent city. As Halliwell puts it, he had “a degree of virtue...this soul in some measure had *been* just; it could not otherwise have been sent up to the sky by the judges”.²⁵⁴

Now this soul is not going to have a good next life. The 1000 years of reward have made him careless and the lack of training in philosophical rigor that characterized his last life—the careless way he practiced decency—will also contribute to his hasty choice. Nevertheless, despite the fact that his choice is about to be bad, the myth here gives us confidence that in the real world, there *are* ordinary decent people who live reasonably good lives and are judged favorably after their deaths.

A second important point in the passage above is that “there was an exchange of evils and goods for most of the souls” (10.619d). The exception was a person who, when embodied, “always lived a sound life of philosophy” (10.619d-e H) and whose lot

²⁵⁴ (Halliwell 2007, 451).

was not among the last. First, given the context of selecting next lives, “an exchange of evils and goods” must mean an exchange of evil prior lives for good next lives and vice versa. Second, we must consider who is making this assertion. Now Socrates narrates the Myth of Er, sometimes interjecting his own comments. It is usually clear whether Socrates is retelling what Er said or interjecting his own comments, but is difficult to determine just who is asserting that ‘there was an exchange of good lives for bad for most souls’. In this case, as Halliwell correctly points out, it is Socrates who asserts, based on Er’s account of what he saw, that the souls who were choosing usually went from a prior good life to a future bad life, and vice versa.²⁵⁵ The fact that Socrates is here interpreting Er’s account for Glaucon’s benefit seems to indicate that we should take this statement seriously. And if we do, the mathematical implications seem inescapable. If in this life about half the people are reasonably good and the other half

²⁵⁵ Halliwell (2007, 465) points to “the change of syntax from indirect to direct speech conveying a confident change of voice from reporter to exegete of the myth.” Indirect speech, though, is not the only evidence. Just before this passage Socrates says:

The messenger from the other world reported that on that occasion the priest said as follows: ‘Even for the person who comes up last, there is, if he chooses with intelligence and lives earnestly, a desirable life free from evil. Let not the first to choose be heedless, nor the last be despairing’. After these words Er said... (10.619b H)

Now the “messenger from the other world”, at the start of the above quote, must be Er, but it should be noted that “Er said”, at the close of the quote, is Halliwell’s interpretation of “he said”. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Halliwell has rendered it correctly. Socrates narrates Er’s report, which embeds a quote from the Priest, and then returns to Er’s report of the ‘first to choose’. But although it seems clear that Er is reporting what he saw when the ‘first to choose’ chose, when we look back to the italicized bits in the quote in the body of this text (10.619b-d), it seems clear from the context that Socrates is narrating Er’s report until the words “weren’t in a rush to make their choices” (οὐκ ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς τὰς αἰρέσεις ποιῆσθαι. 619d5). The following phrase, “And, it may be said”, begins Socrates’ interjection, which he makes “on the basis of what is reported from there”. Socrates’ interjection ends with the phrase “through the heavens.” (τε καὶ οὐρανίαν 619e5). Socrates then resumes narrating Er’s report with the words that follow, namely, “He [Er] said”.

bad, then in the next life the same will be true. Even if we take it that (say) sixty percent of the people around us are bad people, then in the next life sixty percent of the people will be reasonably good people. Ultimately the assertion of the exchange between good lives and bad supports the idea that in the real world, many people have the potential to develop reasonably good character; and in fact do develop reasonably good character.

Here, one apparent conflict needs to be discussed. Socrates says that mostly there was an exchange of good lives for bad, as discussed above. This means that one who led a life of even modest virtue (like the first to choose) will generally choose a next life leading to vice. In the very next paragraph (as Halliwell divides the paragraphs), Er says: "They chose in most cases according to the habits formed in their previous existence." (10.620a H). This might seem to imply the opposite, namely, that if in the prior life somebody had habituated themselves to virtue, they would mostly choose a virtuous next life. Now perhaps this is simply one of the contradictions that are rife in the Myth of Er. But perhaps the language employed here can suggest a speculative reconciliation of the two statements. Note that the word that Halliwell and Shorey translate as 'habits' is not ἔθος, which was the description of the first to choose who 'participated in virtue *by habit*'. Neither is the word ἤθος, τρόπος, φύσις, κατασκευή, or any of the other character-related words discussed in Chapter 2. The word is rather συνήθειαν, a word which appears only two other times in the *Republic*, namely at 7.516a and 7.517a. Both of those two are in the context of the metaphor of the cave, and in neither case is the soul the subject of discussion. In both cases the word is used to refer to the amount of light to which the person is habitually accustomed. It is true that LSJ cites 10.620a as the source for συνήθειαν meaning habit, but perhaps the intent

here is closer to the primary meaning cited by LSJ, namely “*habitual intercourse, acquaintance, intimacy*”.²⁵⁶ Sachs seems to endorse this notion with his translation: “Mostly, they chose according to what they were accustomed to in their previous life.” On this reading it was the habitual acquaintance with women that drove Orpheus to choose the life of a swan and with music that drove Thamyras to choose the life of a songbird.²⁵⁷ The same was the case with the last to choose. Odysseus’ habitual acquaintance with a life of honor drove him to seek the life of a private man. Thus, perhaps both claims are true. Perhaps Socrates is right in deducing that for the most part there was an exchange between good lives and bad, because 1000 years of reward or punishment significantly affect the soul that is choosing, the former making the soul sloppy and the latter making the soul careful. Within that, though, Er reports that in general the souls chose according to the people or things with which they had been habitually acquainted in their prior lives.

Most of the impact on how the souls chose came from the punishment or reward that made them careful or sloppy respectively. Still, to a lesser extent, the souls’ past lives also contributed to their deliberation and choice. Socrates seems to endorse this when he makes his exception to the exchange of good lives for bad at 10.619e:

if, whenever he reached life in this world, a person always lived a sound life of philosophy, and if his choice of life did fall by lot among the last, surely, to judge

²⁵⁶ As LSJ points out, this is the sense used by Aristotle in the Politics at 1319b26.

²⁵⁷ Of course, we don’t know whether Orpheus was coming down from the heavens or up from Hades when he made this choice, nor do we know whether the swan-life he chose would turn out to be a virtuous swan life or a vicious swan life, if such a thing is even possible. Similarly, in the next sentence Er reports that he saw a swan choosing the life of a human. We don’t know the same two facts about this swan that we don’t know about Orpheus. The entire matter of animal lives (and the associated virtue/vice, punishment/reward, etc.) is left unexplained in the Myth. Thus we have no reason to think that Orpheus and Thamyras did not choose according to Socrates’ claim that in most cases there was an exchange of good lives for bad.

by what is reported from the other world, he would not only be happy in this life, but would also have a journey from here to there and from there back to here, which would not be subterranean and rough, but smooth and heavenly (10.619e Halliwell).

This passage is difficult to interpret, and translations differ widely, but it does seem that Socrates is saying that always philosophizing soundly in embodied life is a prerequisite to consistently choosing good lives. Now most people (both the bad people who had been sent to Hades and the decent people who had been sent to the heavens) will not have been among the rare few who are named in this exception. Most will not have lived a prior life of healthy philosophizing. And most, in their past lives, will not have found a teacher who can teach them how to choose well (as described at 10.618c).

Overall, then, on the literal reading, both the prior life and the postmortem punishment or reward contribute to the soul's deliberation and choice of a next life. The punishment or reward is the major factor, making the soul careful or sloppy in deliberating and choosing. For a rare few, their prior philosophical lives will have made them able to overcome being sloppy. For most people, though, the prior life will still have some effect. Both the sloppy deliberator and the careful deliberator will mostly choose lives associated with that which had been familiar to them in their prior lives.

Now there is another point needing clarification when considering the various passages cited above. At 10.619b, the Priest says only that the lots determine the order of choosing. Indeed, he stresses that there are good lives available even to the last to choose. Socrates, though, seems to emphasize the importance of the lots. At 10.619e, quoted in the paragraph above, he says that the exception to the exchange comes when somebody always philosophizes healthily in life, *and his lot does not fall among the last*. But this seems to conflict with the Priest's assertion that even the last

in line has a satisfactory life available. Perhaps the two are not in conflict because the Priest is addressing the souls as a group and Socrates is discussing the specific and rare case of the philosopher. As we saw in the passage about the first to choose (10.619b-d), a satisfactory life had been sufficient for him to have been judged as good and sent to the heavens. Perhaps Socrates is simply saying that to reach the consistent happiness of a philosopher, a 'satisfactory' life is not enough. In this case, the lot does matter. In the exceptional case of a philosopher, given a reasonable lot each time, he can always choose an outstanding life, thus living a succession of virtuous and flourishing lives. For most people, though, even if one life is satisfactorily virtuous, it is quite likely that the next life will not be.

There is one more point that emerges from the passage about 'the first to choose'. The first to choose chose badly because of "folly and gluttony" and he "chose without having considered everything adequately". Just as in the first half of Book 10, Plato highlights the importance of deliberating and following the results of one's deliberation. Others among the named choices (10.620a-b) illustrate the same point. The soul that had once been Orpheus and the soul that had once been Agamemnon both chose out of hatred rather than deliberation. The soul that had been Atalanta chose out of a passion for honor. Contrast this with the soul that had been Odysseus in its past life (10.620c-d). This soul remembered its past toils, and searched diligently for a private life. Clearly the example of a good chooser, this soul also seems to exemplify the impact of deliberation on choosing a good life that will lead to the development of reasonably good character.

Socrates supports the importance of deliberation in his longest interjection within

the myth (which I set out in slightly condensed form):

Always to choose the better life in the available circumstances: that is, by calculating (ἀναλογιζόμενον) the relevance to a virtuous life of the combination and separation of all the things mentioned just now, to know what effect of good or evil is produced by the mixture of beauty with poverty or wealth...so that a man is able, on the basis of all these factors, and with his eye on the nature of the soul, to calculate (συλλογισάμενον) and make his choice (10.618c-e H)

In other words, when faced with this choice, we must use our calculative powers to deliberate on the combination of factors in each life-paradigm. We can then choose the best possible next life. Now this passage will be very relevant in the next section when we turn to the allegorical reading, but even here, the importance of deliberation in creating reasonably good character (here, choosing a reasonably good life) is stressed.

One critical issue in interpreting the Myth of Er concerns the nature of the life-paradigms. What was contained in or revealed by the life-paradigms? Clearly things external to the soul were, for example, wealth, poverty, beauty, strength, sickness, etc. But were things internal to the soul (e.g. character traits, overall virtue) also included? This is a complex and vexed issue and is critical for interpreting the myth, which is why commentators have spent much time over it. Either view is consistent with my claim that the literal reading of the Myth of Er supports confidence in our ability to develop a decent character.²⁵⁸

In conclusion, on my view, the literal reading of the myth gives us confidence that we have a reasonable chance to develop decent (even if not completely good)

²⁵⁸ I have argued this point in a different paper, suggesting that even on the literal reading, a life-paradigm containing the externals of a life is chosen, but one's character (either more virtuous or more vicious) is developed during the course of living that life. See "The Character of Book X" (Mailick, 2012, unpublished).

character. Although many passages in the myth support this claim, three stand out in particular. First, many people get judged to be good and go up to the heavens. Second, those people (like the first to choose) were not ideally good people, rather they were simply decent people. Third, the exchange of bad and good lives assures us that there will be lots of decent people on the next cycle as well. In choosing their next life, many people choose a good next life which will lead to (or at least can lead to) the development of reasonably good character.

In addition, the myth highlights deliberation, which is available to nearly all of us, as a key factor in developing decent character. Many commentators take the endless cycle of lives, the description of the choosing, the exchange of good lives for bad, etc. to be a pessimistic view. For example Lear says “Thus while there may be grounds for pessimism, there can never be grounds for despair”.²⁵⁹ McPherran goes farther and thinks that despair might indeed be in order.²⁶⁰ Lear and McPherran might well be right, given their focus on tracking an eternal soul through its never-ending series of lives.

When taken in this light, I regard the myth as pessimistic but exhortatory. For most souls the exchange of good lives for bad paints a depressing picture. Even if the soul is decent during its life, it will be likely to choose badly the next time around and lead a life which is relatively lacking in virtue. But it is exhortatory in that Socrates tells us how to avoid that fate. First you must find a teacher who can impart the necessary wisdom. Then, you must practice philosophy in a healthy way during your life, training yourself with respect to both content and process. With respect to content, you train

²⁵⁹ Lear (2006,42).

²⁶⁰ McPherran (2010, 142).

yourself to be ready to analyze the life tokens and determine which will be a good life. More importantly, with respect to process, you train yourself (during your life) to bring reason and deliberation into each choice you make. If you do, then even 1000 years of delight will not make you into a careless chooser. Now most people will not succeed in finding a teacher who will teach us this, and even those who do will not be able to succeed in following through and practicing philosophy in a healthy way during their lives. Socrates tells us that the philosophers are the few not the many. So in this sense the myth is pessimistic for most, but exhortatory to the few who can succeed.

But my focus is on the embodied lives of people in general, and on the prospects for those lives to be ones of decent character. With this focus, on my view, the literal reading of the myth is highly optimistic and exhortatory. One has good reason to be pessimistic about one's chances of developing the perfect virtue described by the end of Book 7. But the myth, on the literal reading, displays clearly that a great many people develop a sufficiently decent character to be judged favorably by the gods. The myth reinforces the message of the earlier section of Book 10, namely that if we strive to bring deliberation to bear in all of our choices, many of us have a reasonable chance to choose well, develop a decent character, and live a reasonably flourishing life. Thus, from the perspective of (say) Glaucon, the life his soul had in its last embodiment is of little concern to him. The fact that many decent people will exist around him as he matures should make him optimistic that if he deliberates about virtue when making choices, and chooses according to his best reasoning, then he can develop into a decent person as well. Further, as will be argued in the next section, on my view the

allegorical reading of the myth is also optimistic about our chances for leading a reasonably flourishing life.

3.2.2 The ‘Allegorical’ Reading of the Myth of Er (10.614b-621d)

The idea of reading the myth allegorically is certainly not original to me. Indeed, it dates at least as far back as the Middle Platonist Alcinous, 2000 years ago.²⁶¹

According to Bobzien, the view offered by Alcinous

is very much a reinterpretation of Plato. Plato’s formerly “pre-natal” choice of a life is presented as including the choice of individual *actions* in one’s life, and it has become depending on the soul whether or not to *act*.²⁶²

But where Bobzien sees Alcinous as reinterpreting Plato, many commentators point to the allegorical reading as a reasonable way to interpret Plato’s intent in recounting the Myth of Er.²⁶³ As noted previously, all of the commentators that I have read have the same basic view of the nature of the allegory, although none of them have fleshed it out in detail. Further, none of them suggests that the allegorical reading should replace the literal reading; they simply suggest that the allegorical reading should be considered alongside a literal reading. Thus, alongside the literal reading which depicts an immortal soul choosing successive lives in its ‘lifetime’ (which consists of an infinite number of lives), the myth allegorically depicts one person choosing successive actions during the course of a single lifetime (which consists of a very large number of actions limited only by the finitude of one’s lifetime). Among modern commentators, Annas,

²⁶¹ See Dillon’s translation of Alcinous (1995, 34-35).

²⁶² Bobzien (1998, 161). See, relatedly, Gill (2006, 185).

²⁶³ See, among many others, Halliwell (2007, 452), and Gonzales (2012, 260).

Thayer, Halliwell, Johnson, Gonzales, Destrèe, McPherran, Larivée, and others have noted this reading.²⁶⁴ Halliwell, on my view, sums up the allegorical reading accurately and succinctly. The myth, on the allegorical reading, displays the

inescapably self-forming consequences of ethical agency, a magnified image of how at every moment (“always and everywhere”) the individual soul/person is intrinsically responsible for what matters most about its existence. Every action, we might thus say, brings with it its own “afterlife.” Every choice makes us what we are; when we choose, we activate (and become) something, and therefore cannot simply pull back from *ourselves*²⁶⁵

In other words, the allegorical reading of the myth is a picture of that part of character formation that comes by means of habituation. It is not surprising that so many commentators have drifted to this reading. First, the fact of character formation via habituation has been woven throughout the text of the *Republic*. Further, as I have tried to argue, it is especially prevalent in Book 10. Therefore, it should be very much on our minds as we come to the close of the dialogue. Second, many of the myth’s contradictions and confusions melt away on the allegorical reading. There are too many instances to list, but I will give a few examples.

What soul would ever choose the life of a slave in an iron mine? We know that there were a lot of slaves toiling in iron mines, so on the literal reading of the myth, 1000 years previously all of those souls chose the life of a slave toiling in an iron mine. Now perhaps some of those souls simply chose carelessly, but it seems unlikely that many,

²⁶⁴ See Annas (1981), Thayer (1988, 377ff esp. 380), Halliwell (1988, 186) and (2007, 469-470), Johnson (1999,2), Gonzales (2012, 273), Destrèe (2012, 121), McPherran (2010, 143), and Larivée (2012, 246-248, who argues against the allegorical reading).

²⁶⁵ Halliwell (2007, 469).

much less all of them, missed the salient factor. On the allegorical reading there is no problem here. Even slaves have action choices, and those choices express and develop their characters. Consider, for example, the Biblical story of Joseph who was a slave in the house of Potiphar and had to choose whether or not to accept Potiphar's wife's offer "Come to bed with me!"²⁶⁶

Or consider Er's strange comment in describing the judgement and reward/punishment of the souls: some things were "not worthy of record", such as the fate of "those who had just been born and lived but a short time" (10.615c). Certainly in Christian eschatology the status of these souls was of paramount importance. In any eschatology, though, one would think that this subject would be very much worth recounting, as it would shed considerable light on how the gods viewed judgment, reward, etc. On the allegorical reading, though, the comment makes perfect sense. An infant that lives only a very short time has few if any choices to make, and is not a good example of how character develops over the course of a lifetime.

As a final example, consider that the souls in Er's story certainly do not resemble Glaucus stripped of his encrustations. First, they are depicted as practically being embodied. They have hands and feet that can be bound (10.616a), they can wear signs (10.614c), they can talk and listen, walk and drink, etc. Further, they have all sorts of appetites and passions. Plato moves back and forth between calling them souls and calling them persons (e.g. 10.617d-e, 620d-e, 621a).²⁶⁷ The allegorical reading has the

²⁶⁶ Genesis, 39:7 (New International Version).

²⁶⁷ As pointed out by Halliwell (2007, 462).

advantage of avoiding the need to imagine a disembodied soul which is appetitive, passionate, and seemingly somewhat embodied.

Before delving into the allegorical reading, it is worth pausing over Socrates' odd comment that the most critical thing is to "discover *the man who will give him* the ability and the knowledge to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad" (10.618c, italics mine). On the literal reading, the teaching received from this teacher must have occurred during the prior embodiment of the soul, but the choosing of the next life occurs after 1000 years of punishment or reward. On the allegorical reading, no such temporal gap exists. Our teachers are teaching us during our lives, in close temporal proximity to our choice-making activities. Indeed, Socrates' long speech here, on my view, both confirms the literal reading and motivates the allegorical reading. Socrates interrupts his own retelling of Er's report to discuss how a person should act during life and after life. Although the narration has gone back and forth between the language of souls and persons, in this passage Socrates names the subject to be a person (ἄνθρωπῳ). Socrates must be talking about what people should be doing during the life that preceded or will succeed the after-death moment that Er is describing. During that life, one should abandon all studies except those which can help that person find a good teacher. The good teacher, as previously noted, will teach the student how to distinguish the good life from the bad life. In addition, though, Socrates says that with that knowledge, one, *during life*, must endeavor

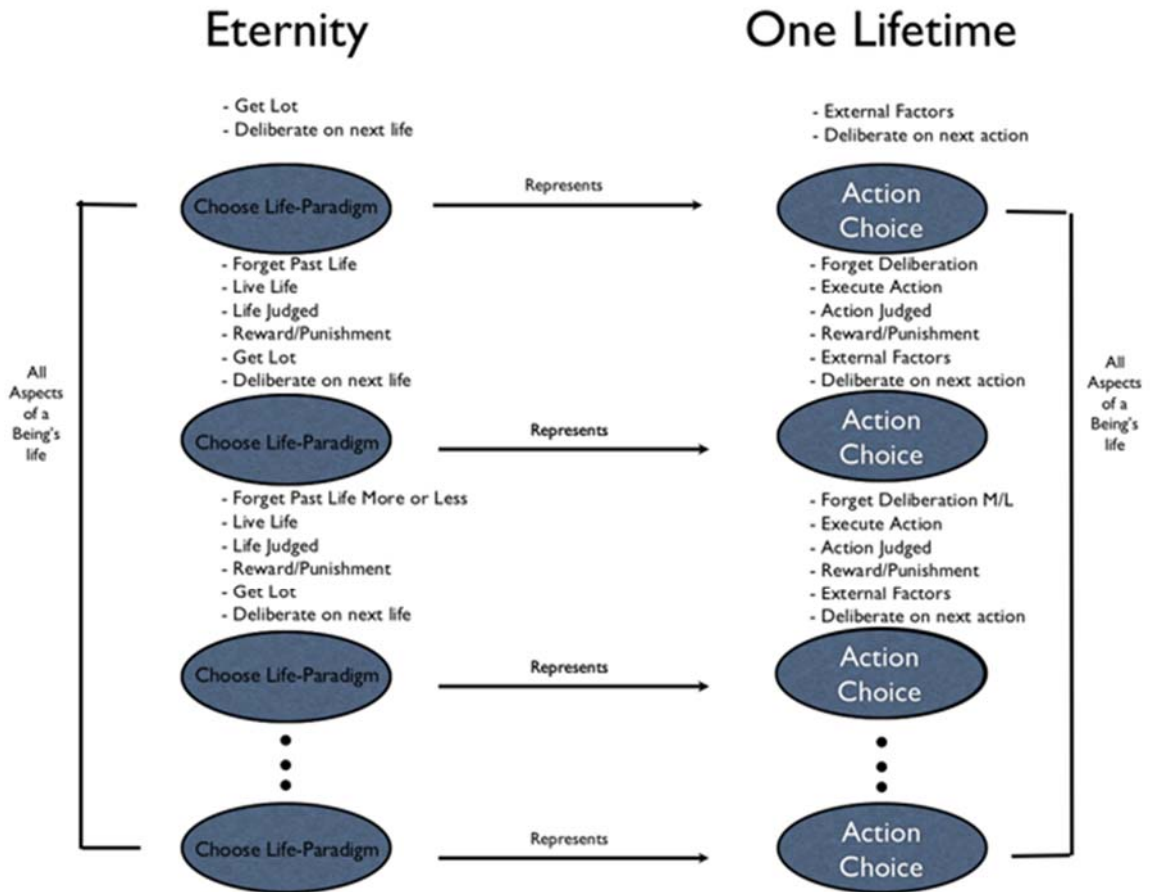
always and everywhere to *choose the best that the conditions allow*, and, taking into account all the things of which we have spoken and *estimating the effect on the goodness of his life* ... so that with consideration of all these things he will be able to make a reasoned choice between the better and the worse life, with his eyes fixed on the nature of his soul, naming the worse life that *which will tend to*

make it more unjust and the better that which will make it more just. (10.618c-e italics mine)

Socrates tells Glaucon and Adeimantus (and Plato tells the reader) to deliberate (think over all the things we have mentioned and how they jointly and severally determine what the virtuous life is like) and also tells us what to aim at: we should choose that which will *tend to* make [the soul] become more just. This, he tells us, is the best way to choose, whether “*in life or death* (10.619a B). We should choose well, “in this life, so far as is possible, and in all of the next life. For in this way a human being becomes happiest.” (10.619a-b B)

Plato has Socrates blend the literal and allegorical reading. He is endorsing the literal reading in telling us how to best choose our next life. He suggests that between lives, we choose a life-paradigm using the education we got during the past life. In the best case, we now have a clear goal (choose a just life) and a process for choosing (consider all the aspects). At the same time, he is endorsing the allegorical reading. He is telling us how we must recognize choice-worthy goals, external circumstances, and choose actions in such a way as to best develop a decent character. During a life, we cannot “choose a character” in a single moment. We cannot wake up one morning and choose to have a disposition to act courageously. We can build up courage by choosing to be courageous one choice at a time. Over time a courageous character is formed. This is what it means to ‘choose the good life during a life’; to choose the good actions which will build good character traits. Thus the literal and the allegorical come together. Building a decent character both builds a decent life during life, but also prepares us with the tools to choose a good next life.

In order to focus on the allegorical reading, let me bring back the diagram of the literal reading (which I will often shorten to LR), with the allegorical reading (which I will often shorten to AR) laid alongside:²⁶⁸



As noted, at the highest level of abstraction, the two diagrams match up very well. A countless series of life choices in eternity is paralleled by a countless series of action choices in a single life. But it is worth digging a little deeper, to see how the

²⁶⁸ The steps are identical to the earlier diagram, although we start at a different point. Since the cycle repeats endlessly, the starting point is somewhat arbitrary. Also, note that this diagram is intended to be an introduction to the argument that follows, as well as a reference tool to which the reader can refer as the argument unfolds. Thus some of the titles might be initially obscure (e.g. how does 'External Factors' align with 'Get Lot', but the argument that follows intends to clarify those obscurities.

steps match up at a more detailed level. The souls (LR) begin by receiving a 'lot' which determines the order in which they will select a life-paradigm. The lot clearly represents an element of luck and, as Halliwell puts it, "all the external circumstances over which a person has no control".²⁶⁹ On the allegorical reading, the lot represents just the same thing. Imagine I am at a dinner party, and am offered a fourth glass of wine. I might end up refusing it because I think it would be intemperate to drink a fourth glass. But perhaps (although I would have accepted a fourth glass of white wine) they have just run out of white wine, so I am only being offered red wine, which often gives me a headache. The external circumstance of them running out of white wine may influence my deliberation about the action to be chosen.

Here we need to pause to consider just what are the life-paradigms (βίωμ παραδείγματα 10.617d). As noted in the last chapter, we don't get much help from the context of who is uttering the word βίος.²⁷⁰ But the text is pretty clear. Many 'externals' are mentioned (poverty, exile, beggary, reputation, [10.618a] wealth, sickness, health [10.618b], etc.) Indeed, Er reports that "There was no determination of the quality of soul, because the choice of a different life inevitably determined a different character. *But all other things were*" (10.618b, italics mine). This statement needs to be interpreted in conjunction with the prior statement that "virtue has no master over her and each shall have more or less of her as he honors her or does her despite"

²⁶⁹ Halliwell (2007, 466).

²⁷⁰ As argued in Chapter 2, Socrates consistently uses the word to indicate the 'internals' of a life (character traits internal to the soul) whereas interlocutors consistently use the word to indicate the 'externals' of a life (e.g. wealth, beauty, success in marriage, etc.) Here the speakers are Er and the Priest, so we don't get much help from the context of the speaker.

(10.617e). Also connected is the Priest's comment that a satisfactory life is available to all "provided that he chooses it rationally *and lives it seriously*" (10.619b italics mine). Now these statements are critical, but are open to multiple interpretations. Clearly, on the literal reading, the life-paradigms contain the external events and attributes of a life, but not the character of the person. But it is unclear as to whether each person will have more or less virtue depending on the life-paradigm that he or she chooses (i.e. the set of external events in the life-paradigm is sufficiently exhaustive that the degree of virtue is predetermined, so to include the character as well would be redundant), or, rather, that the external events in the life-paradigm have some influence on the outcome, but ultimately, each person will have more or less virtue depending on how he or she lives the life that is chosen. Some commentators (e.g. Annas) argue the former view, while others (e.g. Inwood) argue the latter view.²⁷¹ As noted earlier, although I have a view as to which interpretation is superior on the literal reading, it doesn't need to be argued in this chapter to support the claims I have made.

On the allegorical reading, though, the answer is clear. With very few (if any) exceptions, character traits are not formed by a single choice. One excessive fourth glass of wine does not develop the trait of intemperate drinking; rather that trait gets formed by making such choices repeatedly over a period of time. Although the souls in the LR have a good view into the externals contained in the life-paradigm, the character that will result needs to be deduced (as explained at length by Socrates at 10.618b-619a). Similarly, when we are faced with a choice as to whether or not to accept a

²⁷¹ See Annas (1982, 134), and Inwood (2009, 46 option 3).

fourth glass of wine, we have a good view into the externals of that choice (how great is my typical capacity for alcohol, how much is it customary to drink at a party of the type I am attending, etc.) but we have very little insight into how formative that one choice will be on our overall character, or on the character trait of temperance.²⁷²

Resuming, then, we have a set of external circumstances (lots) and alternative life-paradigms (options to choose from in the AR). We then deliberate (whether to flee or stand fast at a particular point in a battle, or in this example, about whether or not to accept the fourth glass of wine). We may deliberate very little (like the first to choose in the LR) or at length (like Odysseus in the LR), but ultimately, we make our choice. Immediately following our choice (LR) we drink from the river Heedless (LR), forgetting what has come before. The same happens in this life (AR). We may deliberate over whether to accept or reject a glass of wine, but after making the choice, we tend to forget the preceding deliberation. We simply do or do not have wine in our glass.

We then live the life we have chosen (LR) or drink (or don't drink) the wine (AR). On the LR the judgement comes immediately after death, is made by the gods, and is directly followed by reward or punishment, the reward being accompanied by much delight and the punishment being accompanied by much suffering. (On the AR the judgment and reward/punishment is not quite the same, as will be discussed in the next paragraphs.) And then the cycle repeats. As the cycle repeats through the countless number of choices we make every day (much less in a lifetime), we begin to habituate

²⁷² Of course, temperance begins with rearing and early education. Thus, Socrates censors poetic passages (e.g. at 3.390aff) that pertain to drinking too much wine, eating too much, etc.

ourselves to certain types of choices in certain types of situations. This is how character traits develop.

But here we need to dig into the details, beginning by returning to the apparent conflict between a) 'the exchange of evils for goods' and b) the claim that 'they chose in most cases according to the habits formed in their previous existence' or 'they chose according to what they were accustomed to in their previous life'. The first matter to consider are two ways in which the allegorical and literal readings differ.

First, on the literal reading, a) each life is accurately judged by the gods, b) the soul is rewarded or punished for 1000 years, and c) the soul feels that reward or punishment keenly. This is not the case on the allegorical reading. Sometimes an unjust action will be rewarded instead of punished (e.g. you go out with your friends and drink intemperately, but everybody thinks you are a wonderful companion, and you wake up with no hangover). At other times an unjust action may go unpunished, or the punishment may go unnoticed.²⁷³

Second, on the literal reading, as previously argued, there are few exceptions to the exchange of good lives for bad. A few might find the right teacher and then live a full life of healthy philosophy but most will not. This is not the case on the allegorical reading. The allegorical analogue to living a healthy life of philosophy is deliberating before making a choice, and this, I have argued, is something most of us are at least capable of doing. Therefore, unlike the many whose 1000 year reward on the literal

²⁷³ Ultimately there are always consequences, since unvirtuous acts damage our souls, but we may never be aware of that damage, or may be aware much later. Similarly, acting virtuously benefits our soul, but again, we may not be aware of that benefit.

reading mostly choose carelessly, many decent people, on the allegorical reading, can avoid the careless choice by deliberating.

How, then, does the allegorical reading of the myth help us understand the manner in which a person develops a virtuous or vicious character trait? We begin with Er's report that in most cases 'they chose according to what they were accustomed to'. This is what we would expect. Somebody with a first nature or a developing disposition to (say) generosity will generally choose to be generous rather than ungenerous, and vice versa, reinforcing the disposition and eventually developing, by habituation, that character trait. But then we come to Socrates' glosses that add three important pieces to the puzzle, namely, a) deliberation is critical because if we deliberate well we tend to choose virtuously, b) that punishment tends to cause us to deliberate²⁷⁴, and c) that reward tends to make us careless in choosing and choosing carelessly without deliberation tends to cause us to choose poorly, but, importantly, that we *do* have the possibility to deliberate. Applying these as we consider what happens when a person with a specific developing disposition acts in a specific manner and is rewarded, punished, or neither gives us a sense of how character traits build up over time.

To play out how this set of assertions and circumstances would result in a person developing a virtuous or vicious character trait would require tracing through many examples.²⁷⁵ Overall, though, the results seem to be to match what we would intuit.

²⁷⁴ Socrates has consistently described deliberation as critical and as leading to good choices (e.g. at 10.604c-d, 10.618c-d. Also, being punished for unvirtuous action is the best thing that can happen to somebody, as Socrates says in multiple places, e.g. at 2.380b.

²⁷⁵ On my view, 20 main cases would need to be traced, 10 concerning an individual with a developing disposition toward a virtuous character trait and 10 concerning the opposite type. For each, 5 cases would need to be considered for a just action and 5 for an unjust (those cases being, 1) punished, 2) rewarded with no subsequent deliberation, 3) rewarded with subsequent deliberation, 4) neither rewarded

Somebody (an ordinary person; not somebody completely corrupt) with a first nature or developing disposition for intemperance tends to choose intemperately and habituate toward developing that trait. The exception is when they deliberate. If they deliberate, they tend to move toward temperance. On the other hand, somebody with a first nature or developing disposition for temperance tends to choose temperately and habituate toward developing that trait. The exception is when they act intemperately, are rewarded for so acting, and do not bring deliberation to bear the next time around.

Thus, as Halliwell and other commentators point out, the allegorical reading highlights the “inescapably self-forming consequences of ethical agency”.²⁷⁶ It highlights the process of habituation by which we form our own character. The cyclical nature of the myth is particularly apt; my character influences my choices and my choices develop my character.²⁷⁷ But like the literal reading, the allegorical reading is optimistic about the possibility of developing decent character. External factors and luck certainly play a role, but we have a countless number of choices to make and we are capable of deliberating and choosing well. Over time, choosing well repeatedly in a particular area will develop a particular good character trait. Somebody with many good character traits will likely be regarded as a decent person by those around her, like the ‘decent people in the theater’. Thus, on the LR we are judged by the gods, but on the AR we are judged by ourselves and those around us.

nor punished with no subsequent deliberation, and 5) neither rewarded nor punished with subsequent deliberation.

²⁷⁶ Halliwell *op. cit.*, 469.

²⁷⁷ This cyclical aspect of character partly driving choice and choice partly driving character may well have been argued on the literal reading as well, but would have required a discussion too lengthy to include.

3.2.3 The Myth of Er: Conclusion

Halliwel's annotated translation of Book 10 does a nice job of summing up the conundrum of the Myth of Er:

It is difficult to see how the notion of pre-natal choice could be interpreted literally without undermining the whole ethical structure of the *Rep.* Yet, equally, if the apparatus of reincarnation were taken as only allegorical of choice within life, what would become of the soul's immortality-the great premise of the entire myth? (Halliwel, 1998, 186).

If we read the myth literally, taking the notion of pre-natal choice seriously, then we have a lot of work to do to explain why Socrates is working so hard to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus to pursue virtue. But if we read the myth only as an allegory, then why does Socrates not simply argue the points he is making, rather than embedding them in an allegory wrapped in a myth? The solution that many commentators have come to is to read the myth both literally and allegorically, taking away from each what it has to offer and also considering a blended reading. On my view, the literal reading assures us that the perfect virtue described in Books 2-7 is not required for a life which is more flourishing than any life of vice. The literal reading assures us that there are people of decent character who are recognized as decent, judged favorably, and are happy in this life and the afterlife. It doesn't, though, tell us much about how those people got to be decent. The allegorical reading, though, does. The allegorical reading pushes us to think in detail about how deliberation and choice serve to develop the positive or negative character traits that we exhibit. Taking the lots, life-paradigms, judgment, reward or punishment, and the other elements of the myth allegorically, help us understand the self-forming nature of character. At any given

moment, we have the character we have developed up to that point, as well as a set of external forces over which we have no control. When we make an action choice, we do so partly because of that character and those external forces, but at the same time, making that choice incrementally changes and further develops our character.

3.3 Character in Book 10: Conclusion

Many commentators agree with Scott that:

the task undertaken in the Republic as a whole, i.e. the defence of justice, which breaks down into the projects of first giving an account of justice and then demonstrating its value. This is what Socrates thinks is needed to reply to Glaucon's challenge²⁷⁸

I agree that these two projects are necessary, but on my view they are not sufficient.

On my view, Socrates must also give the readers some hope that they can achieve a form of virtue that will provide value to them. By the end of Book 9, the first two projects seem complete, which is perhaps why so many commentators call the *Republic* complete at that point, regarding Book 10 as an appendix or an afterthought. But by the end of Book 9, on my reading, Socrates has described several versions of perfect virtue (first, in Book 4, psychic harmony led by reason and next, in Books 6-7, action informed by using the Form of the Good) and has defended the proposition that the perfectly virtuous life provides a more flourishing life than a vicious life, but has not yet fulfilled the third requirement. The careful reader looks at the requirements needed to develop either of the two versions of perfect virtue and concludes that it is unlikely that she or

²⁷⁸ Scott (2015, 47).

her children will succeed in developing such a character. Twice Socrates has hinted at some less than perfect virtue, but has said little about it.²⁷⁹

Book 10 provides the necessary reassurance that there are in fact decent people of less than perfect virtue and that those decent people can have sufficiently flourishing lives so as to be choice-worthy. Both the first half of Book 10 and the second half of Book 10 emphasize the importance of deliberation and habituation in character formation. In the previous chapter we identified five critical factors that go into character development, namely, 1) breeding and first nature, 2) rearing, 3) early and adult education, 4) city of residence, and 5) habituation. In practice, we have no control over our breeding and first nature and virtually no control over our rearing and early education. Some people are lucky enough to have control over their city of residence (after childhood), but all of us have a significant degree of control over two things, namely adult education and ongoing habituation. In Books 2-9, as Socrates described an ideal of virtue and four idealized forms of vice, the first four factors played a very significant role. Outside of the Kallipolis, without its eugenics program, fine and well supervised nursemaids and parents, purified education, and excellent laws, it would be very difficult to develop the perfect virtue described. Similarly, within (say) the four idealized vicious cities in speech, it might be very difficult to develop anything but one of the countless forms of vice. In Book 10, though, the focus is on those two items that are very much under our control; we hear virtually nothing about the first four factors.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ At 5.472b-473b, and at 9.592a-b, as discussed in the previous chapter.

²⁸⁰ The exception, of course, being the comment that the 'first to choose' had lived in a well ordered polity. As argued previously, this comment is critical in understanding who he was in his prior, embodied, life.

The first half of Book 10 focuses on the corruption of character and good judgement caused by adult education (e.g. as it takes place in the theater) and the Myth of Er focuses on deliberation and then choice, which is the process by which habituation proceeds. Thus the allegorical reading of the Myth of Er supports the literal reading in giving us confidence that we can develop decent character and thereby live a flourishing life. We cannot control our genetics, and have little control over our rearing, early education, or initial city of residence, but we can control how we make choices. We can choose to deliberate carefully and we can choose to follow the results of our deliberation. We also can choose how we behave in the theater and how we approach adult education overall. Book 10 gives us the confidence that by doing so, as Socrates says in closing the *Republic*, “both in this world and on the thousand-year journey we have described, we may truly prosper” (10.621d H).

Dissertation Conclusion

Clearly a central question of Plato's *Republic*, if not *the* question, is whether the just life or the unjust life is the superior one. Socrates' quest to answer that question takes us on a journey through diverse interlinked topics including (but not limited to) the normative structures of the soul and the city, being and the knowing of being, the good and the beautiful, etc.²⁸¹ In so doing, he needs to surmount the problem that his conception of a) justice itself, b) the just act, and c) the just person, all differ greatly from the then common views of those items. With respect to the nature of the just person, the many consider the just person in terms of things external to the soul (i.e. a just person is a person who consistently refrains from unjust acts). Socrates primarily regards a just person in terms of 'internal' matters (e.g. reason-led harmony of the soul, knowledge of the Forms). Harmony of the soul implies some notion about the internals of a soul, a topic that was probably undiscussed prior to Plato. Further, discussions of matters internal to the soul necessarily call forth external metaphors, images, and language. When Socrates speaks of one thing in the soul "pulling against" another thing (ἀνθέλκει 4.439b), we are thrust into the world of the physical as we attempt to understand the psychic.

These three problems—a new view on what constitutes a just person, a first inquiry into the internals of the soul, and the inherent linguistic difficulties of discussing

²⁸¹ In modern terms, we would say that he travels through many of the fields of modern philosophy (e.g. metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, political philosophy, and, of course, moral psychology).

psychic matters using ordinary language—pose a significant challenge for Plato. For this reason, on my reading, he starts slowly, introducing provisional accounts of key matters that promote initial understanding, but subsequently get refined, revised, or even subverted. Thus, he famously, and sensibly on my view, starts with the politically oriented notion of the parts of the citizenry.

Instead of running away from the linguistic difficulties inherent in describing psychic matters, Socrates embraces analogy and metaphor, first constructing a city and then testing to see whether a soul has parts that resemble the parts of the city. In the Book 4 passage that I named ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ we get a picture of the soul that has three main parts, focusing on how the internal interplay of those parts results in an action. It is left unclear, at that point, whether the parts are themselves the agents of the actions under discussion, or rather whether the parts lack agentic capacity, all agency residing, rather in the individual. Socrates avoids any direct assertions that the soul’s parts are agent-like, but the metaphors and analogies certainly suggest that this might be the case.

In addition, Socrates insists that the account will be imprecise. And the reader who reads the *Republic* with the entire dialogue in mind knows that Socrates is serious about this. This picture of the soul we have at the conclusion to ‘The Inquiry into Soul-Parts’ (4.441c) is a good first step but not the last word. In addition to our lack of clarity about whether the soul-parts are agent-like, we also don’t know much about how knowledge fits into the picture. In describing soul-parts, Socrates says that calculation (4.439c) is what resists the desire to drink and that calculating about the better and the worse (4.441c) is what pushes back on unreasoning anger, but up to this point we

haven't heard about deliberation (βουλεύω).²⁸² And we certainly don't know anything about knowledge of the Forms. Nevertheless, we have a good first approximation of a philosophy of action. When faced with a decision, often different parts of the soul are in conflict. There is a struggle, and one side 'wins'. But we don't really have any idea as to *why* sometimes we follow our (say) desire and at other times we follow our calculation about the better and the worse. Nevertheless, the partite story and the city soul analogy have given us a good first step in thinking about the soul with respect to single actions.

Building on this initial picture of the soul, Socrates then turns his attention from how the soul behaves in matters of single actions to how the soul is in terms of a person's whole life. This move is necessary if he is to get to the fundamental question of which life is the better one, the life of a just person or the life of an unjust person. The picture that he has painted of a tripartite soul helps Socrates explain the notion of psychic harmony led by reason, which is his initial picture of a perfectly just individual. In painting this picture of the perfectly just individual, Socrates often portrays the soul-parts as if they were agentic. This continues when he describes four paradigmatic unjust individuals. Although partite-agency is still left unclear, it is quite easy to imagine the just person whose appetite-part and spirit-part agree to follow the lead of her reason-part. Similarly, it is quite easy to imagine a specific unjust individual as one whose money-loving part has taken control, causing the reason-part and the spirit-part to do its bidding.

²⁸² The verb βουλεύω occurs eight times before the break at 441c, but not in the sense of deliberative activity.

In between the picture of the perfectly just man and of the four unjust types comes the seemingly digressive interlude of Books 5-7. Of course, though, this interlude is not at all digressive. It is necessary in order to allow Socrates to suggest his new conception of justice itself (the Form of Justice as illuminated by the Form of the Good) and the just act (the act that participates in the Form of Justice). These new conceptions allow Socrates to significantly enhance his picture of the perfectly just individual. Without abandoning the idea of a soul in harmony, Socrates (in Books 5-7) never mentions soul-parts, focusing, rather, on the role of knowledge in acting justly.²⁸³

The picture of the perfectly just and the four unjust individuals represent a refinement and a necessary second step, moving the focus from single actions to the person as a whole. We now have some idea about what often makes one part win in certain kinds of cases, namely that it is the part that largely controls the character of the individual (for example, the timocrat's honor-loving part most often wins). But this seems too simple; even if we thought that John was controlled by his honor-loving part, he doesn't always act consistently. Indeed, the four paradigmatic vicious character types all seem idiosyncratically specific, consistent, and simple—to such an extent that we are left with doubts about how realistic they are meant to be. For this reason, the reader is left questioning Socrates' picture of the person as a whole. Further, although Books 5-7 have given us some idea about how knowledge plays a role in the case of the Philosopher-King, we still don't have a very good picture of how knowledge or deliberation play a role in people who are not Philosopher-Kings.

²⁸³ As previously noted, Socrates does mention soul-parts once, but only to reiterate that “the statements made at that time were, as it looked to me, deficient in precision” (6.504a-b B).

Thus we come to the end of Book 9 with an enhanced notion of a) the nature of the soul, b) the nature of the just life, and c) the superiority of the just life, but also with important unanswered questions about each. With respect to (a), we are still wondering whether the soul is indeed tripartite and whether the person is the agent of all his actions or rather parts of his soul are. With respect to (b) we are still wondering about whether a just life depends on soul-parts and their ordering, knowledge of the Forms, both, or something else that only a 'longer way' discussion can reveal. And with respect to (c), since only the perfectly just person has been discussed, we are left wondering about the extent to which somebody who is not perfectly just, but seems to be a pretty decent person all the same, lives a flourishing life.

Book 10, on my view, offers significant assistance in dealing with these open questions. With respect to (a), I have argued that although Book 10 certainly does not provide a clear and unambiguous picture of the nature of the soul, it does fully undermine both the notion that there are three main 'parts' of the soul, as well as the notion that anything except the person as a whole has agency; the person emerges as the only actor. Along with the deflation of the notion of agent-like parts, though, comes a question. If a person is not the way he or she is because a particular part is dominant, what *does* make a person 'the way he or she is'? On my view, Book 10 pushes us to reexamine the entire *Republic* with a downplaying of any focus on parts, focusing, rather, directly on the person as a whole. And when read that focus, I have argued, the notions of character and character traits emerge as the dominant factors in what makes people 'the way they are'. Both character and character traits are described in relative terms. One person might be described as having a character which is, on the whole,

more virtuous or healthy than another person. Similarly, Glaucon is described as characteristically courageous, but Achilles might be even more courageous.

Along with this reexamination, on my view, comes a better, though still not full, understanding about question (b). A just life need not be a matter of an ordering of the parts; we can talk about character without getting bogged down in the ontology of parts. I have argued that a just life is partly a matter of developing virtuous character traits such as courage, generosity, intellectual energy, etc. As to how knowledge of the Forms fits in, although the picture is still very open (perhaps waiting for the 'longer way' discussion), Book 10's contribution to clearing up question (c) also helps here. Both halves of Book 10 (the renewed attack on poetry and the Myth of Er) give us confidence that although Books 2-9 focus almost exclusively on perfect justice, people of decent character who are less than perfectly just (and who certainly lack knowledge of the Forms) still may be judged to be just by right-thinking people and by the gods. In addition, they can live relatively flourishing lives, thanks to the degree of virtue that they do possess, thereby setting to rest the worry inherent in question (c).

Thus Book 10 pushes us ahead a third step. The emphasis on character, deliberation, and habituation begins to fill out a story which seems reasonable. Character is self-forming. Each time we make a choice, we incrementally build our own character traits, and thus our own character. At any given moment, if faced with a choice, our current character, coupled with external circumstances and other factors (such as our energy for deliberation at that moment, the strength of various desires, etc.), result in a choice. Our character is complex; most of us have some good character traits and some bad character traits. As we saw, however, in our discussion

of the allegorical reading of the Myth of Er, we get assessed by ourselves, the people around us, and perhaps the gods, certainly about our character in respect of specific character traits (we think that John is or is not generous), and perhaps in terms of being 'reasonably good people' or not, overall.

Certainly many questions remain to be investigated, for the story is by no means complete. Plato never puts Socrates to work to inquire directly into the nature of character (as he does with respect to so many other topics). Perhaps Plato himself was working his way through the issue of the nature of the soul and how it fits with his philosophical commitments with respect to being, knowledge of being, the beautiful, etc. Certainly he was a keen observer of human behavior and the psychology of the people around him. As is so often the case with other issues, Plato opened some of the key questions about character. Most modern philosophers who work on virtue and ethics tend to look toward Aristotle as a starting point. On my view, though, mining the *Republic* (as well as *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, etc.) for Socrates' comments on character can offer additional value to those philosophers.

As noted in the introduction, this dissertation was motivated, in part, by several puzzles. Leaving the first puzzle (regarding the status of Book 10) aside for a moment, the second puzzle was the active debate between 'realists' and 'deflationists' about soul parts. By the end of Book 9, both realists and deflationists have ample evidence to point to in defense of their reading; and the major 20th century commentators ignore Book 10. But along the line of Rachel Barney's interpretive strategy, it is natural to look to Book 10 to contribute to this debate.

It turns out, on my view, that Book 10 does indeed contribute to our overall understanding of the status of soul-parts in the *Republic*, and in so doing reveals itself as more than simply an appendix. Both Book 10's aesthetics and the myth, on my view, help push us toward a deflationist view of soul-parts and impel us to look for answers about the nature of the just and unjust life that are not dependent on agent-like soul-parts.

This brings us to the third puzzle, namely, how one should refer to the soul as a whole, the true moral agent, in its moral status? For me, the odd notions of character and character types portrayed in Books 4 and 8-9 did not provide a satisfying answer. Again, Book 10, on my reading, plays a key role in bringing us back to consider the characters of most people; who fit neither into the category of perfectly just nor neatly into any of the four character types "worth mentioning" in Books 8 and 9. We are therefore moved to reexamine the entire text for a more believable notion of character types. The picture of character development, character traits and overall character of varying degrees of virtue, on my view, provides that more believable picture.

But as the reader works through the third puzzle, on my view, a fourth puzzle comes to the surface. By the end of Book 9, only perfect virtue has been discussed; a state of character which most readers will never develop. This leaves one wondering about the moral status of the many decent people who are not perfectly virtuous, but are certainly not vicious. Again Book 10 provides assistance in solving this puzzle. By quietly lowering the bar for virtue, Socrates assures the reader that many people have a reasonable opportunity to develop a decent character, live a flourishing life, and be judged favorably by other people as well as by the gods.

This then brings us to a place where we can address the first puzzle, namely that apart from those with an interest in aesthetics, the nature of the immortal soul, or Platonic myths, Book 10 had been largely ignored in the literature for over 1000 years, up to and including 20th century philosophers, who regarded Book 10 as an ‘excrescence’ or an ‘appendix’. Certainly, on the surface, it seems as if Reeve might have been accurate in opening his introduction to Book 10 with the words: “The main argument of the *Republic* is now complete”.²⁸⁴ On the other hand, I am impressed by the arguments of commentators who argued that the *Republic* is, like a number of Plato’s dialogues as well as other texts, composed as a ring composition.²⁸⁵ This would make Book 10 anything but an appendix. Although none of their accounts of Book 10 are consistent with my own, I am struck by Barney’s comments about structure. She writes that

the recognition of ring-structures, and their methodological functions, can help us to solve interpretive puzzles large and small. This is a weak claim: obviously we need to figure out as much as we can about the design of Plato’s works in order to get their content right...resolution is a complex and variable business. *In philosophical works, we should expect a resolution to answer open questions, correct provisional hypotheses, relocate half-truths and revise earlier arguments on the basis of intervening principles.*²⁸⁶ (italics mine)

It is unsurprising, then, that on my view Book 10 has something to offer on topics in addition to aesthetics and the nature of the immortal soul.

²⁸⁴ Grube/Reeve (1992, 264).

²⁸⁵ As previously cited, Brann (2004) and Barney (2010) argue that the *Republic* was composed as a ring composition. McPherran (2003) argues that the *Phaedo* and the *Apology–Crito–Phaedo* are composed as ring-compositions.

²⁸⁶ Barney (2010, 47-48).

As we worked through the various puzzles, Book 10 emerged as a key part of the evolving story of the human soul and the nature of just character. Therefore, far from being an excrescence, I claim that Book 10 is essential in answering the challenge posed by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2, namely, why should somebody like me choose the just life, if I could act unjustly and not be caught. Socrates' answer, in Book 10, is that we will live the best possible life if we

always keep to the upper road and practice justice with prudence in every way so that we shall be friends to ourselves and the gods, both while we remain here and when we reap the rewards for it like the victors who go about gathering in the prizes. And so here and in the thousand year journey that we have described we shall fare well. (10.621 c-d B)

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