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7 The Three-Part Soul

A full picture of the human soul emerges only gradually from the *Republic*. In Book 4 we come first upon a conventional enough distinction between calculation and desire, which under pressure from the correspondence between the microcosm of the just individual and the macrocosm of the just society, with its three different classes, is complicated by the addition of a third element, the element of "high spirit" (*thumos*). At this stage the three elements in the soul are distinguished principally by their functions: calculation calculates, desire desires, spirit gets spirited. If the text is pressed to assign them an object or goal as well as an activity, the indications would be that calculation is concerned with the good (i.e., with the best course of action); desire is concerned with pleasure; while spirit reacts to perceived slights or wrongs.

When we revisit these three elements in Books 8 and 9, however, they have taken on a different look. In Book 4 they seemed most like faculties; now they seem more like drives.¹ The desiring element is specified as the drive toward material satisfaction; spirit as the drive to win and to amount to something; calculation as the drive to discover truth. They have not shed their characteristic functions, but these have found a new context; and the biggest change is to the calculative element. Previously, it had been unclear whether this

¹ The collective terms chosen by Plato to refer to these elements seem deliberately vague. Most often, in fact, he uses no separate noun at all, but writes of "the calculative," "the spirited," "the desirous." When he does use a distinct noun, his most frequent choice is *eidos*, "form," "character," "kind of thing" (or its near synonym, *genos*). Least frequent is the noun *meros*, "part," which occurs seven times in this connection. "Element" has in English a vagueness that perhaps best matches the Greek.

element even had a goal of its own or was merely a supervisor that placed limits on the interests of the other elements in the interest of the individual as a whole. Now it is assigned an object of desire all its own, and that object is not the good, whether the good of the individual or the good *tout court*, but wisdom. Wisdom is a good, of course; arguably the highest good. But this element seeks wisdom because it is wisdom, not because it is good. It has turned out to be the philosophic element in the soul.²

For this reason we should not be content for the calculative element merely to supervise within us, not if we want to be happy. Its natural passion is directed at something different and better than this. Certainly, it is better that this element in each person should be supervisor than that it should fall under the control of the other elements of the soul and be reduced to a tool in their service, as described in Books 8 and 9. But although it is appropriate that the calculative element should supervise the others (441e), this is not what it loves to do. As the philosophic element in the soul, it takes on the job of ruling the soul with a reserve comparable in some respects to that with which philosophers take on the job of ruling the city. Even within the soul, ruling is *work*. (Philosophy, by contrast, though it takes exertion, is the finest and most serious play.) When he grants himself the license of myth, Plato gets the point across this way: the philosophic element is divine and immortal, the other elements are mortal and animal, and only the necessity of incarnation thrusts them together.

The philosophic element of the soul, then, is underdescribed in Book 4. This is at first sight surprising, since the pages of Book 4 in which the three elements of the soul are distinguished contain one of the most sustained and careful arguments in the *Republic*, and have accordingly attracted the sustained and careful attention of modern philosophers. It is disquieting to some of them that Socrates issues a warning in the preface to this argument not to expect a completely satisfactory outcome from it (435d). But the *Republic* never in fact supplies the “longer route” to resolving such matters that Socrates declares untaken in the Book 4 discussion. Although it

² Christopher Rowe (chapter 2 in this volume, n. 30) sees no inconsistency between reason’s being oriented both toward the good and toward wisdom; indeed, there is none. The question (to be pursued in what follows) is why the text offers no evidence for this double orientation, and what the implications of its silence would be.

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is a route that Socrates insists his philosopher-kings must be made to take (504a–d), he pointedly refuses to take it himself (506b–e, 533a); and no subsequent analysis of the divided soul in the *Republic* has the technicality and apparent rigor of this one in Book 4. So it is small wonder that some have been tempted to anticipate the fuller descriptions of the various elements, particularly of the philosophic element, grafting them retrospectively onto the Book 4 argument wherever they can be of service – as for example in the very exiguous description of the case of the thirsty man. In this way the various discussions of the soul in the *Republic* can be made to yield a unified psychology, whose apogee comes at its most technical point.³

This is a temptation worth resisting. Much of philosophic interest will go unremarked if we fail to ask ourselves why Plato chose to picture the three-part soul so differently at the different stages of his argument in the *Republic*.⁴ In particular, we will fail to understand what it is about the philosopher that makes him the superior even of the just man described at the close of Book 4 – that seeming paragon of virtue.

I

In order to distinguish elements within the soul Socrates appeals in Book 4 to cases where a person experiences internal conflict over some action. There is the case of the thirsty man who holds himself back from quenching his thirst, the case of Leontius who is angry with himself for gawking at the corpses of executed criminals, and the case of Odysseus quieting his heart when it calls out for immediate vengeance on the suitors and their giggling servant girls. If one and the same person holds conflicting attitudes toward the same outcome, Socrates argues, it cannot be in respect of one and the same psychological element that he holds them.

It is a particular kind of mental conflict that the argument of Book 4 trains its eye on: not the dilemma arising from a mere coincidence of desires that cannot be simultaneously gratified, as when an invitation we would like to accept and a performance we would like to see

³ The strategy is well developed in Cooper 1984; Kahn 1987; and in the third chapter of Bobonich 2002 (see esp. pp. 527–28, n. 11).

⁴ The point is well appreciated in Blössner 1997 (the essence of which is distilled into English in his chapter 13 in this volume), and Roochnik 2003 (see esp. pp. 17–18).

fall on the same evening, but rather the wish to gratify a desire and, simultaneously, resistance to that wish; not two inclinations that happen to be incompatible but an inclination toward some action and a pulling back from that same action. If the general principle on which Socrates bases his division of the soul is at first expressed in language that seems as well suited to logical as to psychological application (436b) – language that may remind the modern reader of the logical principle of noncontradiction – it is in fact developed in terms of opposites, not of contradictories: in terms of assent and dissent, desiring and rejecting, pulling in and pushing away, rather than of assent and nonassent, desiring and not desiring, pulling in and not pulling in (437b–c). It would seem better described as a principle of conflict than of (non-) contradiction.⁵ It is not merely through their differences but through their conflicts, then, that the parts of the soul are discovered.

An influential line of interpretation explains this fact as a striking development in Platonic psychology. That people do not want to be unhappy and will not choose a course of action they think will make them unhappy is a claim with much intuitive appeal; but Plato's Socrates in dialogues presumed by most to have been written before the *Republic* exploits this appeal in the cause of a quite counterintuitive insistence that people never act contrary to what they think is best. What actually happens to people who seem to themselves to be suffering weakness of the will, according to Socrates in these dialogues, is that they are mistaken about their good. His argument is helped by the thought that all desires are desires for the good. Accordingly, when our passage in Book 4 puts on Socrates' lips a warning not to be disturbed by the objection that everyone desires good things (438a), this line of interpretation takes Plato to be marking a break with the erstwhile paradox-monger. Here in the *Republic* Plato would be making room for a category of irrational desires that are blind to the good. That would be what Socrates is getting at when he treats thirst, hunger, and kindred appetites in isolation, specifying that we are not to consider whether the thirst is mild or strong or directed at a particular kind of drink, but that we should treat it as "thirst itself" or "thirst as such," which is directed at "drink itself." Just this is the move that prompts Socrates to anticipate the objection that everyone desires good things, with its apparent consequence

⁵ Annas 1981, p. 137; Miller 1999, pp. 92–95; Smith 2001, pp. 118–19.

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that thirst is not for drink alone but for good drink. By dispelling the objection he would be dispelling his former self. The soul whose elements are revealed by a principle of conflict turns out – not unnaturally, it may seem – to be a soul susceptible to the particular kind of inner conflict that is weakness of will, a phenomenon now understood not as the making of an intellectual mistake but, more realistically, as the defeat of one's better judgment when it comes into conflict with a desire that proves the more powerful motivator.⁶

The emphasis in this line of thinking falls on Plato's development and on his theory of action rather than on the purpose of the Book 4 discussion within the *Republic*. The position has been resisted by those who deny that Plato changed his mind on the question of weakness of the will,⁷ as well as by those who deny that a divided soul is either necessary or sufficient to explain weakness of the will.⁸ There are, moreover, several ways to understand the restriction of thirst to "thirst itself" without referring to the Socratic paradox about weakness of the will.⁹ One scholar who accepts the role of a partite soul in the supposed development points out that we need not posit a category of blind, "good-independent" desires to achieve it;¹⁰ another, that the considerations that drove Plato to divide the soul went well beyond weakness of will to embrace for the first time an entire theory of nonrational motivations.¹¹

All should agree that it is the wider concept of mental conflict rather than the narrower concept of weakness of will that Book 4 in fact discusses. Neither Odysseus' thirst for vengeance nor the biological thirst of the thirsty man are permitted to overcome sober judgment; only Leontius is weak. Self-control and endurance are much in evidence in this passage on soul-division, both in its examples and in its generalizations (as at 440b–c). On the one hand, this casts an attractive light on the element that keeps both Odysseus and the thirsty man in check: the calculative part of the soul. On the other hand, it is a merely reflected light: the actions of the calculative part are attractive because the actions it resists are not (they

⁶ Penner 1992, pp. 128–30, gives a concise and straightforward summary of this view. See also Reeve 1988, pp. 131–35; Irwin 1995, pp. 206–11.

⁷ E.g., Ferrari 1990; Carone 2001; Weiss 2006, ch. 6.

⁸ Shields 2001.

⁹ E.g., Lesses 1987, pp. 156–57; Carone 2001, pp. 119–20; Hoffman 2003.

¹⁰ Price 1995, pp. 49–50.

¹¹ Bobonich 2002, pp. 217–18.

are unhealthy, rash, or otherwise stupid). But are the actions of the calculative part attractive in themselves?

Odysseus' uncalculating anger, for example, is held back by that element in him "which has taken into consideration the better and the worse" (441c). The better and the worse being taken into consideration, however, are not the morally good and bad: this is clear from the fact that Odysseus' spirit, which is blind to the better and worse in this form, is intent on the same moral goal – justified revenge – that his calculation is advancing. What Odysseus is weighing against each other are better and worse strategies (the use of comparative adjectives is telling) for achieving this goal. He calculates that an immediate attack on the servant girls would break his cover at an inopportune moment and likely derail the vengeance he has planned for the following day against the whole gamut of his enemies: suitors, servant girls, and any others who are in league with them. (His deliberations are described in Homer, *Odyssey* 20.5–30, from which Socrates at 441b quotes one line, l.17.)

Socrates calls the reaction of Odysseus' spirit uncalculating (*alogistōs*, 441c); he does not call it unreasonable, for it is not unprovoked. The servant girls are brazenly contemptuous of his authority, of his house, of his family. Homer in the lines immediately preceding the one quoted by Socrates at 441b tells how the spirit within Odysseus barked like a dog – like a bitch defending her pups against an interloper. And if the quoted line describes Odysseus beating his chest and criticizing his heart, the discipline imposed on that dog-like organ is of a type that Plato has prepared the reader to see as sternly affectionate; for he had seen fit, less than a page earlier, to compare spirit's indignation at injustice and ardent pursuit of the noble to the behavior of a dog, albeit a dog that reason can restrain from its headstrong pursuit, and to remind us that the soldier-guardians of Callipolis were themselves compared to dogs in the service of ruler-shepherds (440c–d).

If Odysseus' calculative part is superior to his spirit, then, it is superior not morally but only to the extent that the thoughtful are superior to the headstrong. And the value of thoughtfulness depends on the direction of the thought. The thoughtfulness of the cool-headed criminal, Socrates will later point out, only increases the harm he can inflict (Book 7.518e–519a). At this stage, Socrates' argument has shown a distinctness between the parts, but it has not yet

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revealed what is at stake in their distinctness. His argument has not yet revealed that it is their goals, not merely their tactics, that are distinct.

II

The example of the thirsty man, too, is one in which the attractiveness of the calculative part comes to light only when we consider what it resists. In this case no affection attaches to the offending element, as it did to spirit. The thirsty man's appetite is compared to a beast dragging the resistant part to drink – or perhaps (for the text is uncertain) it treats the resistant element no better than a beast (439b).¹² Either way, this appetite is being a brute. Another of Socrates' comparisons makes it a thoughtless sybarite, "consorting with indulgence and pleasure" (439d). Its origins are described in words that smack of medical pathology: "It comes along through feelings/experiences/symptoms [*pathēmata*] and disorders/diseases [*nosēmata*]" (439d). The opposition to such an element would seem to be on the side of the angels.

But let us remind ourselves what it was that the principle of conflict, as subsequently developed, set in opposition to each other: an inclination toward some action and a pulling back from that same action. Nothing about this schema when considered abstractly puts the pulling back in a better light than the inclination resisted. (A boy might, for example, be inclined to do well at school but resist because he is reluctant to seem a teacher's pet.) Accordingly, when Socrates asks as a leading question whether it isn't the case that those who resist their thirst do so as the result of calculation, and Glaucon responds not with a decided affirmative but with a cagier "so it seems" (439d), the reader is invited to ponder how unconvincing an inference this is. For one thing, the resistance might derive from an aversion that is not only uncalculated but downright

¹² The genitive *thēriou* has the better manuscript support and is read by Slings 2003 *ad loc.* On this reading it is the thirst that is the beast, and one could compare the actions of the black horse dragging his charioteer in the *Phaedrus* (254). On the reading *thērion*, familiar from earlier editions, the beast could be the resistant element (and one might then compare *Protagoras* 352b–c); but it could also, once again, be the thirst (if *thērion* were subject, not object, with its verb understood by ellipsis).

unreasonable. (Say, you are very thirsty, find soda generally thirst-quenching, but dislike the smell of Dr. Pepper because it reminds you of the dentist's – and Dr. Pepper is all there is to drink.) Or the resistance might not be unreasonable but nevertheless not be put up by the calculating part.

Consider in this connection how both a person who acknowledges himself to be in the wrong and one who on the contrary regards himself as having been wronged are described at 440c–d as willing to endure the deprivations of hunger and cold that might come their way, in the one case as punishment, in the other as ill treatment – ill treatment that must also be endured while retribution is sought. (The situation is not further specified but could be penal confinement or banishment to some inhospitable place without the means to support oneself.) These people are hungry but conquer their hunger; were they thirsty, too, as they presumably are, they would conquer their thirst. But their cases are intended to show what is characteristic of the spirited rather than of the calculative part.

True, spirit is said to be in alliance with reason here; still, the resistance to hunger and the like derives as much from the one as from the other – so much so that it now becomes unclear whether the spirited part is in fact distinct from the calculative at all (440e). It is in order to distinguish them that Socrates brings up the example of Odysseus quieting his heart; but this example, we saw, was notable for differentiating the conflicting elements not on moral but only on instrumental grounds. It is not well gauged to convince us that the two parts are fundamentally rather than superficially distinct – for their goals are not distinct.

What is more, when Glaucon suggests that some children never grow up to become capable of reasoning and that most attain it very late, remaining instead the spirited creatures they were from the first, and when Socrates adds that one can see the same thing in brute animals (441a–b), their observations open a space into which a counterexample to the account of the thirsty man's inner conflict could fit. (The gap only yawns the wider since these examples would not otherwise apply the principle of conflict at all, despite being brought in to distinguish the spirited and calculative parts.) For if these brutes and these children, small and big, were to endure pain and discomfort in order to fulfill some other need, their resistance could not come from a calculation of which they are, it is claimed,

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quite incapable. Socrates' addition of animals to Glaucon's list helps us to locate just such a counterexample in the nimbus of his citation from the *Odyssey*: the dog that shows fight against a man who has disturbed her whelps does not have her own safety and comfort in mind. (Compare the description of the spirited dog at 375b, "fearless in the face of everything.") So much for Socrates' proposal that those who suffer thirst and the like yet are unwilling to assuage themselves are acting in every case from calculation.

It is worth lingering to ask also why Glaucon responds so emphatically as he does when Socrates asks whether some thirsty people are sometimes unwilling to drink: "Yes indeed. Many of them. Often" (439c). Greek athletes in training might avoid wine and cold drinks (this is mentioned by Epictetus in his *Discourses* 3.15.2-4); Greek soldiers on campaign faced potentially unsafe water supplies (alluded to at 404b); but neither of these situations would be especially common. What stands behind Glaucon's emphatic response is likely the sentiment voiced by Socrates at 389e: that for most people self-discipline consists of two things, obedience to those in control of them, and personal control over the pleasures of drink, sex, and food. Socrates does not stop at this point to explain what enables most people to exercise this personal control, whether it is their own prudence or something different; he is far too busy excising what he regards as invitations to excess from the public poetry that the people of Callipolis will get to hear (389e-390d). (The lines in which Odysseus quiets his heart appear first here, as a text to be recommended rather than censored.) In other words, Socrates is constructing the framework for the social control that will endow his citizens with personal control (cf. 431c), and Plato thereby reveals the true nature of those citizens' personal control. It would be too simple, then, to describe these as cases in which an individual's calculative part is in control of his thirsts and hungers; the source of control is more diffuse.

For another widespread practice of resistance to drink we could look to the importance of dietetics in Greek medicine. This too has been a prominent topic in the *Republic* before Glaucon's emphatic response arrives at 439c. In a lengthy critique in Book 3 (405b-408c) Socrates had taken aim at health-faddists and hypochondriacs, with the aim of restricting medical care to the cure of disease and the treatment of injuries, and not allowing it to stray into the practice of dietetics and of other physical therapies embraced by those who are

anxious about their health. Healthy people, he had suggested in the course of this argument, should not be unduly concerned about what they allow themselves to drink (408a–b). (Notice too that the allusion to unsafe water supplies for campaigning soldiers at 404b comes as part of a proposal that the guardian-soldiers of Callipolis, unlike Athenian soldiers, should be raised to have a physical constitution robust enough to cope easily with changes in their drinking water.) Glaucon had enthusiastically associated himself with this critique, asserting with an oath that excessive care of the body – anything beyond the normal exercises of the gymnasium – is one of the greatest impediments to appropriate participation in civic life (407b).

Here, then, is a realm of cases in which a person might resist drinking as a result of a well-calculated dietary plan, but where the cure would be worse than the disease. Once again we see that the actions of the calculative element are attractive only if they are attractively directed.

In short, Plato takes several opportunities to suggest that resistance to thirst might not be motivated by the best of reasons, and more generally to alert his readers to problems in the authority of the calculative part as presented so far in the *Republic*. Some factor other than one's calculative part may be in equally effective control. Alternatively, calculation may be in control, yet not working to a good end.

III

The calculative part needs a boost in the right direction, it seems; and at this stage of the argument it receives that boost entirely through socialization.

When Socrates begins to apply his threefold division of the soul to an analysis of the virtuous individual, he makes an important proviso. So long as both the calculative and the spirited elements have been properly educated and acculturated, he explains, they will work together to ensure that the desiring element does not grow strong through satisfying bodily pleasures and then attempt to usurp authority and enslave the other elements (442a–b). The young guardian acculturated to virtue will calculate, then, that moderation is the best course. His calculative part, being intelligent, is the locus of forethought on behalf of his entire soul (441e); it has knowledge of

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what is advantageous to each element and to the collective that they form (442c); and its conception of what is advantageous has been carefully formed by exposure to “fine words and studies” (442a).

The fact that Socrates needs to bring in the virtuous person’s civic education in order to achieve this result shows the limitation of his argument at this point. The desiring element, he claims, is not the right “sort” to rule, is not suited by “birthright” to the task (*ou prosēkon . . . genei*, 442b). If it were to seize power it would not be “performing its proper role” and would have ceased to “know its place” – both these are meanings of the phrase *ta hautou Prattēi* (442b). The social and political metaphors are thick on the ground here. Beyond what metaphor can do, it is only because the capacity for forethought and global deliberation belongs to the calculative element that the birthright to rule is given to it and denied to the others. But this being so, what is to prevent the calculative element choosing in favor of bodily pleasures on a regular basis? Socrates describes the appetite for such things, after all, as much the “largest” element in each person’s soul (*pleiston*, 442a); does this not make it odd that in the same breath he should insist that for it to become “big” or “much” (*polu*) would be a breach of its station? A ruling element of a more populist bent might choose to award the appetites satisfaction in proportion to their numbers. In so doing, it could still be described as exercising forethought on behalf of the entire soul, however benighted its thinking might be. Only a particular acculturation, it seems, can prevent it from thinking this way.

The trouble here is caused by the fact that, to the extent that the calculative element as so far described has an interest at all, it is an interest that depends on the interests of the other elements, and depends on them intrinsically, not casually. Its interest is to adjust the interests of each against the other; it is a negotiator. But if it does not have a goal all its own – at least, no goal other than to occupy the negotiating role – the negotiation will in a sense be led by the other parties, despite the fact that the calculative element is in charge of the proceedings. It will be led by them in the sense that theirs are the interests to which it reacts, while it itself has no interest other than to react to theirs.

This gives the calculative part as described in Book 4 an inherently weak grip on power; that is why it needs careful bolstering by education if it is to command virtuous action. And this education

must be of the type that trains the eye of the soul on the horizon of the social and the political rather than permitting it to rest on that of individual satisfaction. When describing this education in Book 3, Socrates tends to use terms that anticipate the emergence of the calculative element from its chrysalis: music and poetry will appeal to the “love of learning” (*philomathes*, 411d) that may be found in a guardian’s soul and to his “philosophic nature” (410e, 411e). But their music and poetry, as is plain from the account Socrates gives of it in Books 2 and 3, will edify rather than educate their philosophic nature, to the extent that they are possessed of one. Its purpose is not to develop their philosophic nature for its own sake but to bend it to the requirements of the other elements in their character and ultimately to the needs of the city in which they must serve (411e–412a). As to the extent of their philosophic nature: we will take its measure when we consider once again the guardians’ likeness to the dog.

A similarly teasing description of the calculative element as the “love(r) of learning” (*to philomathes*) occurs by implication at 435e, where it is attributed collectively to Athenian culture in order to suggest that it exists also in each Athenian. This epithet crops up here only to vanish for the remainder of Book 4, its hint of intellectual alacrity smothered by the long argument that has occupied us so far. In that argument the would-be lover of learning seems to operate only as a strategist. It is not, then, that the love of learning is never attributed to this part of the soul at this early stage of the *Republic*; the telling point is rather that its love of learning is not put to work. It is not directly involved in the control this element exercises over the others, whether, as we have seen, in contexts where this element’s right to rule the others is what is described (441e) or in contexts where what is described is the manner in which it exercises power (442c). There the talk is not of its love of wisdom but of its forethought and ability to calculate what is advantageous to all. Just this is what will change in later books.

IV

It is at this point that a comparison with Freud’s tripartite division of the soul into Ego, Id and Superego (or Ego-Ideal) can be especially illuminating. Comparisons between Freud and Plato come naturally

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because the two thinkers are close kin in some important respects, notably in their attention to the question of psychic health and in their analysis of psychic health in terms of a command structure of desires.¹³

Freud makes the very existence of a differentiated Id, Ego, and Superego depend on a history of the individual's development. (The account that follows has the Freud of *The Ego and the Id*, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, and *Civilization and Its Discontents* primarily in view.) Partitions are put up in the studio apartment of the soul as life becomes more complicated for it. A section of the originally undifferentiated Id develops into the Ego out of a confrontation with the restrictions imposed by the external world on the unrestricted needs of the Id. Later, at the Oedipal stage, the Ego manufactures the Superego in order to master Oedipal desires in the Id.

Equally important in this story is the fact that the partitions went up because of conflict and confrontation and that conflict is what keeps them up. If the tension is released, the walls may entirely collapse, as when the Ego and Superego fuse back together in the condition of mania, which is a complete absence of self-criticism. The pressure exerted on the partitions is inescapable, then; it is the condition of their existence.

Hence the tragic cast to even the ideal Freudian life, the life lived in self-knowledge. Freudian self-knowledge is a matter of accepting the results of our genesis – accepting that we are what we are through repression – and of managing the inevitable tensions between represser and repressed. The very terminology for the divisions of the soul shows this tragic cast: “Ego” and “Id” – or rather, “Ich” and “Es,” “Me” and “It.” To call the It “it” and oppose it to “me” is to withdraw it from identification with me, even though it – *the* “It” – is the locus of deep and authentic needs.

Freud's appeal to conflict in order to distinguish parts of the soul is comparable to the account we find in *Republic 4*. Not that Plato offers a genetic account of how the divisions arise – a fact that makes it easier for him eventually to transcend the Freudian pattern. But he does have Socrates use a principle of conflict as the tool to prise the

¹³ The comparison between Plato and Freud is developed in Santas 1988 and Price 1990.

elements of the soul apart. So it interesting to discover that in Freud too the part that most closely resembles the calculative element in Plato, the Ego, also ends up being cast primarily as a negotiator or manager, without independent goals. To be sure, Freud is capable of describing the Ego as fulfilling a plan: he speaks of it seeking to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the Id and endeavoring to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle that reigns unrestrictedly in the Id (see ch. 2 of *The Ego and the Id*). Later in that same work he will even say that the Ego strives to be moral (ch. 5) – although, since he equates “morality” there with “instinctual control,” he must mean by this only that the Ego’s task is to control the instincts of the Id.

These are in any case the strivings and endeavors of an element that Freud repeatedly describes also with metaphors of impotence: the Ego is a rider who is in the habit of guiding the horse of the Id where *the horse* wants to go and, unlike an actual rider, is using not its own strength but borrowed forces; or it is a servant of three masters: the external world, the libido of the Id, and the severity of the Superego; or it is a merely constitutional monarch. The Ego, like the calculative element of *Republic* 4, does not pursue independent interests; the Ego spends its time either acquiescing in or repressing desires derived from the Id.

V

The Freudian soul, then, is a soul that suffers unremitting internal pressure. And here a contrast rather than a similarity with Plato is immediately apparent. The presentation of the just man that comes as the grand finale to Book 4 (443c–e) is of an individual who is not only ruler of himself but also a friend to himself, whose soul is in perfect harmony, each element attuned to the other like the strings of a lyre or like the intervals of the musical scale to which those strings lent their names. If the Freudian “Ego” and Plato’s “calculative part” are indeed comparable, the condition of the soul over which they preside seems quite different.

This contrast is real, but requires qualification. For if instead of contemplating the portrait of the ideally just man who corresponds to the ideally just city, as we do in Book 4, we lower our gaze a notch to the level of the thoroughly decent but still imperfect fellow described

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in Book 10, whose calculative part successfully restrains the urge to weep at his personal tragedies but lets it loose at performances of tragic drama, we shall encounter a soul closer to the Freudian model – its justice and self-control sustained by pressure. Let us examine this character, in order to locate the justice of the ideally just man with greater accuracy.

The relevance of the decent man's case to our inquiry into the three-part soul is clearly flagged by the recurrence of a version of the principle of conflict (603a) and an explicit backward reference to Book 4: Socrates recalls that their earlier discussion had adequately established that the soul is susceptible to opposition and struggle within itself (603d). The particular internal struggle that Socrates now considers is that of a "decent" or "respectable" man (the word is *epieikēs*, 603e) who loses someone dear to him. Such a man's reactions are conditioned above all by his sense of propriety. In attempting to restrain his feelings of grief and loss, he works hardest at not giving way to public lamentation. He would be ashamed to be seen or heard giving vent to such a display. Yet for that very reason he is likely to lose his grip on himself when alone, and say and do the things that "reason and custom" frown upon (604a).

We next encounter the decent man at the theater (he is again described as *epieikēs*, 605c). Here his inhibitions are removed; he no longer even attempts to restrain his feelings. He is prepared now to accept that real men *do* cry (605d–e), or at least he will not allow the disapproval he would normally feel at the sight of a man dissolved in grief to interfere with the pleasure he gets from sharing in the grief of the tragic hero (606b). So, too, at a comedy he is happy to indulge a delight in buffoonery that he would be ashamed to let govern his own behavior, for fear of the harm it would do to his good reputation (606c).

The key to the respectable man's emotional response in the theater is the likelihood that in his personal tragedies he will lose control of himself when left on his own. For this reveals that his is not true self-control at any time; it is rather a control imposed primarily from without, a pressure exerted on him by society. Reason in him requires the assistance of custom to prevail over his emotion, when it does prevail (604b–c). It is ready to follow custom's lead and give ear to a litany of sentiments on the value of keeping a stiff upper lip and on the ultimate insignificance of human beings, a litany

that our respectable man will have heard in a variety of social contexts, not least among them the poetic performances at which he also finds emotional release from the inhibitions that those sentiments encourage.

Release from inhibitions – that is the pleasure the respectable man experiences in the theater and at other performances of poetry. It is more than just the pleasure of satisfying his appetite for tears, which may be supposed to be the experience of those in the audience more vulgar than he (as is suggested but not made explicit at 605a–b). Rather, he is satisfying an appetite that he has kept down by “force” (*bia*) in his regular life – a part of him that “has been hungry [*pepeinēkos*] for tears” and that he has deliberately starved (606a). In his regular life he is like a thirsty man who is nevertheless unwilling to drink; in the theater he receives temporary relief of a pressure that weighs on him at all other times. This is catharsis in the sense that the term has come to have in popular psychology: not the relief of a tension developed in the audience by the performance itself – say, by the suspense generated in the twists of its plot – but the relief of tensions that accrue in life and are brought to the performance fully formed. For once, our respectable man can allow himself to have a good cry and not feel bad about it.¹⁴

VI

Before applying this analysis to the topic of the ideally harmonious soul, let us consider the light it sheds on the one conflicted soul in Book 4 still to be scrutinized: Leontius (439e–440a). As he is walking to Athens and passing the place where the corpses of executed criminals were left to rot in public view, he feels the urge to take a closer look. At the same time he is disgusted and struggles against the urge, veiling his eyes. Finally, he gives in and runs up to the corpses, forcing his eyes wide open and cursing them: “There you are, you wretches! Take your fill of the beautiful spectacle!” The case proves that anger can fight against desires and so indicates that the spirited is distinct from the desiring part, as the case of Odysseus stilling his

¹⁴ Although this conception of catharsis can be traced to Freud, who employed it in various forms as a therapeutic technique, Freud did not himself make the connection between catharsis and the reactions of a theatrical audience.

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heart bears witness that the spirited is distinct from the calculative part.

With Leontius, it is as if the decent fellow of Book 10 lost his fight against grief not just when alone but also in public. When Leontius finally indulges the urge to feast his eyes, their satisfaction is the more extravagant for having been strongly resisted. The balance tips; where he was covering his eyes now suddenly he is jamming them open. His anger becomes public cursing as he makes a vain attempt to dissociate himself from his eyes, and thereby from his conduct, for the benefit of any who might witness it. (It is much too polished a piece of cursing to count as an involuntary outburst.) And many *did* witness it: not only does Socrates introduce the incident as an anecdote he once heard but Glaucon adds that he heard it independently himself (439e–440a). Leontius is making a spectacle of himself; so his behavior becomes a story.

His reputation would have been safe if only he had instead walked directly to Athens and into the theater of Dionysus, there to gaze to his heart's content upon the bloody corpses that result when tragic heroes perpetrate what they regard as justified revenge on criminal offenders. (Greek tragedy conducted its killings and mutilations off-stage but was quite fond of the *coup de théâtre* afforded by the emergence of the grisly consequences into the light.) For these are not just any corpses by the roadside that Leontius hankers to look at. It is no traffic accident. It is the sight of justice wrought on criminals.¹⁵

Leontius is troubled by the "beautiful spectacle" when he encounters it in the flesh but would not have been had he encountered it in the theater (the word *theama*, like its English equivalent "spectacle," is often used of artistic events). Compare how Glaucon is squeamish about describing in explicit detail the punishments inflicted on criminals (361e–362a) but is perfectly happy to sit through a lengthy description of similarly horrible punishments inflicted on the souls of the criminal dead in a poetic tale, the myth of Er (614a–b, 615d–616a). (Socrates reminds him of his squeamishness just before broaching the myth, 613d–e.) Leontius' mistake, then, in contrast to the decent man whose tear-starved part longs to be "filled" when suffering any painful loss but is only allowed to get

¹⁵ This point, which generally passes without notice, is appreciated and developed in other (not uncomplementary) ways in Bernardete 1999, p. 102, and Allen 2000.

“filled” by the tragic poets (606a), is that he “fills” his eyes with reality, not fiction (440a).

(One sometimes encounters the suggestion that Leontius’ interest in the corpses is sexual, on the grounds that a fragment of fourth century comedy ridicules a person of that name for being aroused by a boy as pale as a corpse. But the grounds are very insecure. The transmitted text neither contains Leontius’ name nor makes the accusation described, but must be extensively emended to do so; and even if the emendation were correct, the joke might make better sense as a consequence of his gawking at corpses than as an explanation of it.)

In the theater Leontius could have lingered and thrilled with impunity over the corpses of offenders; in real life, when the dam of his inhibition finally breaks, it releases a burst of undignified and histrionic behavior. When Odysseus’ nurse Eurycleia gets set to launch a triumphant ululation at the sight of the suitors’ slain bodies littering the hall – another justified revenge haunting the *Republic’s* account of the spirited part – Odysseus “holds her back, eager though she was,” and bids her exult only in her heart, as it is not right to crow openly over slain men (*Odyssey* 22.407–12). Odysseus here takes the role of Leontius’ inhibition, Eurycleia that of his desire – with the difference that Odysseus is successful where Leontius’ inhibition fails. Those, however, who attended a dramatic recital of this very revenge scene from the *Odyssey* – let us say it is the performance the rhapsode Ion describes himself giving of it in Plato’s *Ion* (535b–e) – could permit themselves to be swept up unreservedly by its thrilling and gory details. (Ion declares he would count himself a failure if they did not, 535e.)

VII

Is the kind of internal pressure common to both Leontius and the decent man of Book 10 – as well as to the Freudian soul – quite absent from the man portrayed at the end of Book 4 as ideally just? He is the just man who has been educated in the just city – a guardian. The elements of his soul have been calibrated by the combination of literary, musical, and physical training peculiar to Callipolis (441e–442a). Of such a soul it would not be true to say, as Socrates says of the decent theatergoer in Book 10, that what is best in it has

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been inadequately educated “whether by argument or even by habit” (606a) – an important factor in the theatergoer’s willingness to relax his guard over the urge to grieve. While the decent man’s upbringing has imbued him with many a noble sentiment (rehearsed at 604b–c), it has also tempted him to find ersatz release from these strictures in the theater. But just these, we saw, are the temptations that Socrates rigorously excludes from the poetry, music, and other forms of art to which the guardians will be given access.

That the poetry to which the guardian is exposed does not tempt him to indulge the urge to grieve does not by itself prove that he fails even to feel the pressure of this urge in other circumstances. But Socrates argues that works of art, and cultural artefacts in general, when rigorously and globally controlled, have the power to shape one’s character for all situations (395c–d, 401c, 425a). The ideal of freedom from grief at the death of a loved one presented to the young guardian in the course of his education (387d–388a) – the behavior that “decent” characters display in the poetry he is given (the word is *epieikeis*, again, 387d) – is notably more austere even than the behavior of the decent man in Book 10. In the later book Socrates introduces a note of realism: if, he says, he had been content previously not to inquire whether the man who takes such events most easily will feel grief at all, he now thinks it right to ask whether it is not more likely that the decent man will feel some grief, but be moderate in his emotion (603e). Perhaps, then, we are to suppose that by dint of continual exposure to the most austere of fictional models the young guardian will get as close to immunity from grief as is humanly possible and so escape the pressure experienced by the decent man who is raised in a less exceptional society.

But if grieving at the loss of a loved one is ruthlessly excised from the guardians’ fiction, the spectacle of justified revenge that we imagined Leontius enjoying in the theater is not. These soldiers are being raised to defend their city fiercely against its enemies. Martial music, of a kind to accompany a character bravely enduring wounds and death in battle and in other forms of violence, will be required for their education (399a). After many pages listing poetic passages unsuitable for guardian ears, the first passages to be recommended for them to hear concern obedience in battle (389e). The only other passage that gets a positive recommendation is our old friend, the lines in which Odysseus restrains his anger (390d). Introducing them,

Socrates explains that not only words but also deeds of endurance in the face of everything should be presented to the guardians.

Is there any reason, then, why these soldiers who must learn to fight when outnumbered (422b–c) should not go on to hear the whole story of the punishment inflicted by Odysseus, his son, and his two loyal servants against the throng of offending suitors, the heroic combat of the few against the many, bloody though it was? The castration of Uranus by Cronus will be kept from them, not because of its violence but because it is parricide (378a–b); the ruthless castration of the disloyal goatheard Melanthius by Odysseus' henchmen need not. Nor need they be prevented from hearing how the servant girls were punished for their impudence: by Telemachus stringing them up on a rafter and hanging them. (The episodes are graphically described in *Odyssey* 22.457–477.)

It is not to be expected that a guardian of Callipolis would lose control of himself as Leontius does and exult over the corpses his fierceness has made. The guardian has been raised more strictly; also, his rules of engagement in war explicitly forbid him to continue to treat the bodies of slain enemies in a hostile fashion (469d–e). Nevertheless, the harmoniousness of his soul, genuine though it is, depends after all on the kind of inner tension exemplified in extreme form by Leontius. It is a tension peculiar to those whose spirited element waxes strong.

VIII

The name "Leontius" means "Lion-Man"; in the wax model of the three-part soul imagined by Socrates in Book 9, spirit is a lion (588d). Leontius' spirited anger against his ignoble desire is histrionically fierce.¹⁶ Yet his spirit fails to conquer his desire. Why? Because his desire and his spirit are strangely close in this instance. To be fierce in the cause of just punishment is noble and beautiful in its way, but to succeed in this cause you must have an appetite for the ugliness, even the horror that your fierceness will bring about. Control this appetite, and you can make a soldier; let it control you, and the

¹⁶ If Allen 2000, pp. 136–37, is correct in claiming that Leontius' squeamishness about the corpses is unusual in his society, the sensitivity of his spirited part would seem all the more pronounced.

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result, if temporary, is a breakdown like that of Leontius. If permanent, it could become a madness like that of the tyrant in Book 9, who indulges throughout his life the horrific fantasies most people experience occasionally in dreams (571c–d, 574e).

In the guardian's case this tension is encapsulated in the reiterated comparison between guardians and dogs. The problem arises for the first time in Book 2 (375a–375e), after Socrates has likened the qualities required in a good soldier to those found in well-bred dogs: swiftness and alertness, strength of body, fierceness of spirit. He is immediately stymied by how to prevent men such as these from being aggressive with each other and with the citizens they are there to protect and should be mild toward reserving their harshness for enemies in war. A fierce spirit would seem the opposite of gentleness; how can our guardians be possessed of both? Back to the rescue comes comparison with the dog. Dogs are notable not only for being spirited, but also for being as gentle as could be with those they are used to and recognize, while being the opposite with those they do not know.

How do they manage it? By being "philosophic" as well as spirited (375e–376c). For if dogs are hostile and friendly purely on the basis of whether they *know* the person they encounter, and regardless of whether the one they greet as friend has ever been kind to them or the one they reject as enemy has ever done them harm, they are creatures who put a high value on knowledge indeed. Born philosophers, clearly. So if the guardian is to be gentle to insiders as well as fierce to outsiders, he too must be philosophic as well as spirited.

The evident irony of this passage and the inappropriate application to animals of terms such as "lover of learning" (*philomathēs*) and "lover of wisdom" (*philosophos*) that will not find their true application until real philosophers have made their appearance in the *Republic's* argument, at the end of Book 5, together indicate that the supposedly philosophic element in the guardian's soul is no more than the strategic, calculative faculty that we meet in Book 4. As in Book 4, it sets its sights no higher than does the spirited part: at marking the distinction between self and other, friend and foe. Its farthest horizon is social, not global.

The potential difficulty of this arrangement comes to light, however, in one further characteristic of the dog, which Socrates develops at the end of Book 3 (415e–416c): the dog's potential to turn on

members of its own household if under stress or if improperly bred and raised. Our guardians will have the job of protecting the city from external enemies, who come on the city, says Socrates, like wolves on the fold. But we must take the greatest care to ensure that his own strength does not corrupt the guardian and make him too behave like a wolf to his fellow citizens, much as sheepdogs will sometimes turn on their own flocks. The sheepdog could be driven by malnutrition, by indiscipline, or by some bad habit (416a). It is not, then, the predatory instinct as such that is at fault, but the circumstances or the practice that brought about that instinct's release. The predatory instinct is present in all dogs; it is one of the very features that makes a dog amenable to discipline. Without that instinct the dog would be useless to its shepherd.

(When the passage in which Odysseus quiets his heart appears in our text for the first time, as a passage recommended for guardian ears at 390d, it is two lines, not one line long, and so includes the rationale that Odysseus gives to his heart: "You have endured filthier than this." A closer translation is: "You have endured more 'dog' than this" (*kunteron*). And the incident Odysseus has in mind is when the Cyclops devoured men from his crew, *Odyssey* 20.18–21.)

The transformation of the guardian from dog to wolf would be the easier because a complementary part of the guardian's job is to protect the city from internal rather than external enemies – from those who break the city's laws (415d). Such people are only so-called friends, and may be strategically deceived as one would deceive external enemies (382c). Nor is it always clear what counts as inside, what as outside: demonstrating this is one function of the long discussion in Book 5 on panhellenism in warfare, where Socrates argues for treating all Greeks as friends even if conflicts arise with them, leaving only non-Greeks to be treated as Greeks now treat other Greeks (470a–471c).

We breed dogs for predatory aggression and then must raise them to be attached to their household if they are not also to be aggressive toward it. (Leontius makes it seem that his own predatory eyes are turning on him, and dogs are natural scavengers of corpses – a fact alluded to at 469d–e, the passage in which guardians are forbidden to despoil those they kill.) For similar reasons, the warlike guardians must be educated to identify their personal interest with the interest of the city (412c–d, 416b–c). This is how we must "guard

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against" (*phulakteon*, 416b) their turning on us – in effect, guarding against our own guardians. A few pages before this, in an exchange on the need for guardians to avoid the disorientation of drunkenness, Glaucon had remarked that it would be absurd for a guardian to need a guardian (403e). Now his joke has acquired a serious edge.

At this stage of his argument, then, Socrates has no better remedy for the propensity of the guardians to treat everyone, insider and outsider alike, as a possible enemy than to treat the guardians themselves as possible enemies, and work like the devil to make them friends.¹⁷

Within the guardian's soul the atmosphere is similarly watchful – courteous, but watchful. As the soldiers and their generals guarded against enemies both internal and external, so the spirited and strategic elements in the just man's soul not only "watch" (*tērēseton*, 442a) to ensure that the desiring element does not overstep its bounds and attempt to enslave them, but also "guard against" (*phulattoitēn*, 442b) the man's enemies in the outer world by lending him the wits and boldness to put up a successful fight. The desiring part, if it knows its place, is a friend; but it must always be watched as a potential enemy. The friendship is forever in need of preservation (443e).

Nor can the obedience of the spirited element be taken for granted. If Glaucon, obedient to Socrates' lead, insists with an oath that he has never seen spirit take the side of desire against reason either in himself or in anyone else (440b), that is because Glaucon has true nobility (368a, 548d–e). He is not one of those hypocritical noblemen of the Spartan type whose spirit "fiercely honors" money and the illicit pleasures money can buy, but honors them only in the dark, taking the side of desire against the law to which he pays lip service (548a–c). But Socrates himself is not so naïve: he acknowledges a spectrum in the behavior of spirit – the *nobler* a person is who knows himself to be in the wrong, the *less* his spirit will be aroused (440b–c) – and specifies that if the spirited part is indeed to be the ally

¹⁷ This situation is reflected in a dispute over translation: should we translate the term *phulakes* as the more benign-sounding "guardians" (the traditional choice) or as the potentially more sinister "guards"? The reader who accepts the argument in this section should be less certain than Malcolm Schofield that either translation is quite satisfactory (see his discussion in chapter 6, n. 8).

of the calculative, it must have escaped corruption by poor upbringing (441a).

The harmony within the just man's soul is a lyre's harmony (443d): the strings that represent the parts of the soul are not in tension with each other but stand in mathematical relation to each other. A beautiful proportion pervades the whole. The relationship is not stable, however, but depends on tension at a second remove: on maintaining the correct tension in each string. Notice the difference between this analogy for the soul and that of the archer drawing his bow, an analogy that Socrates used at 439b to describe the conflict between the thirsty man's calculation and his thirst.¹⁸ The tension represented by the drawn bow is a tension directly between parts of the soul: one part pulls and another resists. Nevertheless, the result is harmonious in its way: the archer's hands cooperate in their task.

The harmony of the Freudian soul and of the decent man in Book 10, both of them outwardly successful types, is the harmony of the bow. Conflict is the permanent condition of the Freudian soul: repression, acknowledged or unacknowledged, determines the soul's life – repression of an Id whose very nature is to resist repression. The conflict that determines the course of the decent man's life lies closer to the surface than this, in his constant habit of maintaining a stiff upper lip. Still it is an experience of inner conflict that he can never escape; for his society finds ways to feed what in him resists inhibition, and to keep it active.

The just man described at the end of Book 4 seems to have succeeded in making the elements of his soul sufficiently friendly to each other that he experiences no actual conflicts within. His is the harmony of the lyre. Yet each individual string is under tension; the potential for inner conflict, if not its actuality, is ever present. As the lyre player must work constantly to keep each string tuned in proper relation to the others, so with the just man (443e–444a): each action that he chooses with a view to helping cement his inner condition is by the same token a conscious avoidance of one that could dissolve it.

¹⁸ There may be a quiet development of Heraclitus here, who used bow and lyre indifferently to illustrate what he called a "backward-turning harmony": how something can agree with itself by the very fact of being at variance with itself (see DK fragment B51).

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IX

That this cannot after all be the ideally just soul, the *Republic* will show its readers in Books 5–7, where genuine philosophers are introduced. This chapter has focused on the two key and interdependent factors that keep this soul from perfection: first, that it is based around its spirited part and, second, that its calculative part is not up to serving as an alternative base.

It is the spirited element in the soul, we saw, that both guards and must be guarded. This is the part that deals with enemies and that makes enemies. It is the “middle” tone (443d) standing between a highest and lowest tone that would otherwise form the unison of an octave.¹⁹ A soul might have an easier job of being a unity without it. But in a human world, both city and man, however pacific, must expect to deal with those who will make enemies of them.²⁰ And if the guardian who is to become a judge of criminals cannot be permitted to experience criminality within his own soul but must be a “late-learner” of injustice, even at the cost of naïvete in his youth (409a–b), the same luxury is not permissible when it comes to war. The guardians who are to defend the city from violence must be taken to war as children and allowed, like puppies, to taste blood (537a). In this they would resemble a doctor who draws on his own experience of being ill in order to cure the sick (408d–e). At least half the young guardian’s music is war music (399a–c).

(On the question of a soul’s doing without its spirited part, it is worth considering why Plato has Socrates at 443d mention the intervening notes between the highest, middle, and lowest tones of the scale. He is sometimes understood to be opening the possibility that the soul, like a scale, may contain several more parts than these three.²¹ But he may instead be conceding that a musical scale – *unlike* the soul – does, as it happens, contain more than three elements. He would be saying that a just man tunes the three parts of

¹⁹ On the musical theory here, see West 1992, pp. 219–20. That Plato means the highest and lowest notes (*nēte* and *hypatē*) to cover a full octave, not merely a seventh, is supported by his explicit attribution of eight notes to the scale the Sirens sing as music of the spheres at 617b.

²⁰ For discussion of the possibility of a soul with no spirited element, see §IV of Paul Ludwig’s chapter 8 in this volume. Fuller accounts of this element can be found in Gosling 1973, ch. 3, and Hobbs 2000, ch. 1.

²¹ See, e.g., Murphy 1951, p. 30, and Smith 2001, pp. 127–28.

his soul as a musician tunes those three notes of the scale “and any others that as a matter of fact lie in between.”²² Plato’s point in having him make this concession would not, however, be mere musical accuracy. It would instead be to suggest that as a musician must deal with however many notes there are in the scale or however many strings there are to his lyre, so the man who would be virtuous must deal with however many parts there are to his soul – even if there are fewer than three, not more. The suggestion is further developed when considering what form the soul might take in the afterlife, 612a.)

As for the calculative part, it stands in the same relation to the spirited part of the just man’s soul as the rulers among the guardians do to the guardian-soldiers under their command. For as described in Books 2–4 these rulers are no philosophers but simply those who display to the highest degree the qualities of guardianship already canvassed for the guardian class as a whole (412c, 414b). They will be those who have demonstrated in the course of their training the greatest effectiveness – the greatest intelligence, endurance, and loyalty – when it comes to the task of keeping the city secure. That is why this chapter has so far spoken of “guardians” indifferently, without drawing the distinction between rulers and auxiliaries in the guardian class. For that distinction is a merely instrumental one; both sections of the guardian class are committed by their class membership to one and the same goal, and to no other. And this was the goal acquired by the guardian in his youth, when he was an auxiliary.

So it is too with the just man’s soul in Book 4. If spirit must be the obedient assistant of the calculative part, this is only because the calculative part is better able to work out the steps required to maintain harmony, balance, peace in the soul. But if keeping the peace, punishing infractions, and righting wrongs are the goals of any of the soul’s elements as so far described, they are the goals of spirit. As in the appropriately established city guardian-generals will emerge from the soldiery without losing the soldier’s perspective, so in the appropriately educated soul the calculative part, by directing

²² I owe this understanding of the sentence to David Sedley (who should not, however, be associated with the inference that I draw from it in the remainder of the paragraph – in particular, the inference that there may be an allusion to the soul’s potentially having fewer than three parts).

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the instincts of the spirited part, will in effect promote them. By guarding the guardian it will assist the assistant.

X

The figure of the philosopher overlays and disrupts this pattern in both city and soul. Once it has been revealed that the rulers of Callipolis are not to be mere guardian-generals but philosophers (473d–e), it can also be revealed that the calculative element in the soul is not in fact merely calculative but by nature philosophic (580d–581b). Chapters – in this volume consider in more detail the philosopher’s character and education, and the nature of his understanding. This chapter concludes by giving some sense of how the harmony of the philosopher’s soul differs from that of the just man’s soul as described in Book 4, and of the extent to which it transcends the problems that were found lurking there.

Glaucon is sensitive to the difference between the two. When Socrates is casting about in Book 7 for the kind of study that would draw the soul toward understanding ultimate truth, Glaucon assures him that the musical and artistic education they gave to the guardians does not fit the bill, limited as it is to the achievement not of knowledge but of inner harmony through habituation (522a). And at the opening of Book 8 (543d) he volunteers the insight that when Socrates claimed previously (i.e., in Book 4) that the city he had described and the individual corresponding to that city were both good, he in fact had a still finer individual and city in mind to speak about.

Glaucon’s sensitivity to this development is perhaps a consequence of his being not merely musical (398e), but also an erotic, passionate character (474d). For the development comes about because the calculative part has been recast as itself passionate; compared now to an eye of the soul that is naturally “kindled” by pure study (527e) and whose “flaming ray” (*augēn*, 540a) pure study will elevate and divert from its focus on the soul – for the whole soul must turn with it (518c).

No longer as in Book 4 is the task of the calculative part exhausted in “dragging” other parts or being “dragged” by them (*anthekei*, 439b; *helkonta*, 439d), exhausted in this or in other managerial acts, even less forceful ones. Now what “drags” the calculative part is

study (*helkei*, 533d; *holkon*, 521d), which draws it to higher levels of understanding. Now the person in whom the philosophic element is free to be itself, not enslaved by the other parts of the soul, is led by a true passion, a passion peculiar to this element and not intrinsically dependent on the others. The fundamental basis of its sway over the others is not its aptness for a supervisory role – though it has not lost this aptness – but the strength and nature of its passion. This manifests itself not through internal conflict but through the atrophy of the other elements in the face of an all-consuming interest, as when water is channeled to a single irrigation ditch and the others run relatively dry (485d). Far from focusing on the other elements, it transcends them. That the whole soul must turn with its eye indicates, certainly, that the civic mindfulness imbued either by a musical education of the sort the guardians receive or in some other way is still required to help effect the shift of focus, but it no longer delineates the eye's furthest horizon.

The metaphor of the irrigation ditches and the surrounding discussion of the philosopher's virtues in the opening pages of Book 6 constitute an analysis of the philosopher's nature rather than of his inevitable destiny. So far from there being any guarantee that a soul whose wisdom-loving part has sufficient potential will develop into that of a philosophic paragon, in the immediate aftermath of this analysis the several forms of danger and temptation that such a soul faces in life and that can prevent or distort its development are set forth at some length (489d–497a). The wrong sort of upbringing and education will spur such a character to excesses beyond the compass of a mediocre nature (491e); the wrong sort of political environment, the wrong sort of opportunities for public ambition will gather around a youth of such talent (494b–c). The *Republic* is not starry-eyed about philosophy's capacity to save a soul. That is why in Callipolis the ideal is to combine – in modified versions, to be sure – what we might call a Spartan upbringing with an Athenian higher education.

A passage at the opening of Book 9 (571d–572a) evokes a new relationship between the three parts of the soul, in which the calculative element is described as coming into its own, "entering into meditation [*sunnoian*] with itself." Appropriately, it is a lyrical passage, which Socrates feels the need to excuse as an utterance he has been "carried away" to make (the verb he uses is *exagō*, 572b). The

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term *logistikon*, translated as “calculative” in this chapter in order to highlight its merely instrumental aspect, here turns its other face to the light and is better translated as “apt for reasoning” or the more familiar “rational.”

The passage describes the proper regimen to use when preparing for sleep. Awaken your rational part and “feast” it (*hestiasas*, 571e) on fine discourse and inquiry; but put the other two parts to sleep, neither surfeiting nor shortchanging your material desires, nor dwelling on anything that might rouse the spirited part to anger. (The reader might note how different a feast this is for the eye of the soul than the feast that Leontius bid his eyes take their fill of.) In this way the rational part can be left in peace “to inquire and reach out, alone, pure, itself by itself, toward awareness of what it does not know.”

This is neither the harmony of the bow nor the harmony of the lyre. It is no harmony at all. Yet it is evidently peaceful. Admittedly, it is a description of the meditative person’s sleeping life only, not of his waking life. When it comes to planning a life that must contain days as well as nights, the wise man (in the final vignettes that the *Republic* draws of him, 591c–592b, 618b–619a) will make it his business to care for each element in his soul and to foster the best possible arrangement of those elements.

Indeed, it may seem that he will care for little else. He will choose even his studies with a view to how they affect the condition of his soul (591c). When that soul is between lives and must choose its next life, it will engage in furious “calculation” (*analogizomenon* 618c; *sullogisamenon* 618d) of all the possible factors that interact to make a better or worse life, and its ultimate criterion of judgment will be whether these factors produce justice or injustice within the soul.

How does such a soul differ from that of the just individual described in Book 4, who was eventually judged to fall short of perfection? Will the wise man’s rational part too not engage itself with managing the other members of its community? How much difference does it make that this part now has a desire and a pursuit of its own – the pursuit of understanding for its own sake?

To the wise man’s outward behavior it may make little or no difference. The philosopher who is a just man will show to the world a moderation, courage, and justice the equal but not obviously the superior of that shown by the virtuous man described in Book 4. With regard to his soul, however, he is working to establish and

preserve more than just the harmony of the whole; nor, as the virtuous man in Book 4 does, would he identify “wisdom” (*sophia*) with the knowledge that supervises the preservation of this harmony (443e). Within his soul there is now something worth preserving for itself rather than simply because of its place in the whole, something independently precious: the eye of the soul, whose power of thought is inborn and can for that reason, if properly directed, become a virtue of a different order (more “divine”) than the moderation, justice, and courage that can be imparted only through habit and practice (518e–519a).

The wax model that represents the soul in Book 9 gives an image of this new development by modeling the rational part as an inner man within the outer man that the world gets to see (588d–e). Thus when the person who believes that justice rather than injustice profits a man is said to be promoting those words and actions “which will make the man’s inner man the strongest” (589a), the phrasing alerts us to the fact that such a person is identifying with one element within himself.

It is notable that in these final pages of Book 9 not only is the rational part described in the familiar way as managing the other elements (589b), but the whole person is also described as managing the appropriate balance among all three elements of his soul. This is not merely a loose way of talking; still less need it be a category mistake. It is an excellent way to describe a choice of life. For readers to puzzle over the relation between the outer and the inner man – wondering, perhaps, who is really in charge here and whether the outer man is something distinct from the sum of his parts – would be for them to treat both outer and inner man as pawns in a theory of action, game pieces whose moves on the board must follow a single set of rules, on pain of failure to explain what human action is. If instead we take the shift between the two kinds of description – one where the inner man and one where the outer man controls the whole – as a way of marking the distinction between choices that determine particular actions and choices that embrace a pattern of life, a metaphorical scheme emerges. For it is when Plato wishes to describe one who is looking to the kind of person he will be, not merely to what the situation demands (to drink or not to drink; to approach the corpses or to pass them by), that images in which

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an external agent controls the shape of some complex whole seem appropriate to him. So at the end of Book 9, in the context of the just man's intense focus on how he will live (591c), we read that he will watch over the "regime" within him (591e) or we recall that the just man of Book 4 was said to do everything he does as if he were a musician bringing into attunement three strings of his instrument – the three parts of his soul (443d–e).

(It is interesting that the opposite figure of speech crops up at a moment when a pattern of life is being set, but without conscious deliberation. When the decent man of Book 10 is weeping at the spectacle of tragedy in the theater, unaware of the long-term damage he is doing to his character, it is the best element within him, not he, that relaxes guard over the element that longs to grieve, reasoning that there is nothing shameful "for oneself" in doing so (606b). Rather than the outer man acting independently of the inner, here the inner man takes it upon himself to speak for the outer. It is doubly interesting that the same figure should occur also at 486a²³ in connection with the metaphor of the irrigation ditches, in a context where the philosopher's entire character is being imperceptibly molded by the strength of his rational part's desire to gaze on the spectacle of the cosmos.)

The choice of a less than perfect way of life, however unwise a choice it may be, is still a choice of life; accordingly, in those cases in Book 8 where a degenerate individual makes the decision to allow the desires of a particular element within his soul to shape his entire life (or in the case of the democrat man, to allow the desires of each element in turn to shape his life), Plato again speaks of the whole person as acting on the regime made up by the three elements of his soul. So the timocratic man "hands over political power" to his spirited element (550b), the very element that the oligarchic man then "kicks off the throne," installing his materialistic part as "Great King" in its place (553c–d). The democratic man, after too dissolute and chaotic a youth to permit true choice, brings certain of his better desires "back from exile" and "establishes his pleasures on an equal footing" (561b). (The tyrannical individual never emerges from the dissolute stage; he does not choose his way of life but descends into

²³ See Adam's notes to 486a4 and 606b8 in Adam 1963 [1902], vol. 2.

it, pushed by others; so he is never described as a man who acts on his inner regime.)²⁴

The mistake these degenerate types make is to identify themselves with the wrong element or with the wrong combination of elements. As the imagery of the wax model implies, it is only when a man identifies himself with the goals of reason that the inner and outer man match and that natural integrity can be achieved.

XI

This shining image of integrity would be tarnished, however, if the outer man's identification with the inner entailed that any attention he paid to the other creatures within himself was merely instrumental, worthwhile only to the extent that it promoted the private interest the inner man takes in undisturbed pursuit of understanding. In that case the philosopher would seem to be living his whole life as he is when asleep and dreaming the finest of dreams. Or it would make Farmer Reason seem no better than Thrasymachus' shepherd in Book 1, who takes care of his sheep only to fleece them the more effectively (343b). Socrates has not forgotten that every art is concerned primarily for the interests of that on which it operates rather than for the interests of its practitioner (342a–e). The other elements of the philosopher's soul no more exist for the exclusive sake of its best part than the other classes in the city of Callipolis exist for the exclusive sake of its philosopher-rulers, despite the fact that philosophers are its best people and their activity its best activity.

To explain why reason should occupy itself with its companions in the soul out of more than merely the desire to minimize their disturbance, is it necessary to posit another type of desire that would be native to the rational part, in addition to its desire to understand: the desire to rule?²⁵ In fact, the desire to understand may suffice.

The philosopher, a person in whom reason rules of its own power, independent of social enforcement, makes all his choices in life with

²⁴ Instead it is the mad passion or "*erōs*" within him that brings about regime change (573b). See Ludwig's chapter 8 and Parry's chapter 14 in this volume.

²⁵ That the desire to rule in the soul must be native to the rational part and distinct from its desire to understand is argued by Cross and Woollsey 1964, pp. 118–19, and by Cooper 1984, pp. 6–8. Klosko 1988 contests the claim with an argument different from the one attempted here.

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a view to how they will affect the condition of his soul. (The virtuous man described in Book 4 is also said to make his choices on this basis, at 443e; but he does so, as we saw, from a different motive: because he has been acculturated to regard a self-disciplined, harmonious soul as the attribute of the best type of person, and because he wants – that is, his spirit wants – to make something of himself.) The philosopher does not look to the consequences of those actions in the larger world except to the extent that those consequences have an effect on his soul's good health. But in a soul where reason does indeed hold sway, this means that all the choices such a person makes are entirely within his power. No material inducement, no social ambition, no personal enemy can take that power from him. A better man cannot be harmed by a worse man, as Socrates puts it in the *Apology* (30d), and, by implication, will not be harmed by another good man. The good man is invulnerable.

But if this is so, then the philosopher's choices in life are in a way theoretical rather than practical – despite being effective, if the world will cooperate. He is in life as the disembodied soul is that in the myth of Er must ponder, in complete freedom of choice within the constraints of life's lottery (619b), how each mental and physical attribute, each circumstance of birth and social position, will affect a human being's condition in life, and therefore its own condition in the life on earth to come. Some things that the disembodied soul can directly choose, a living philosopher could not; but when the philosopher chooses, he chooses as freely and as directly as does the disembodied soul.

That some choice must be made is Necessity's decree, not the soul's desire; but the soul that responds to this decree by pondering its options with a philosopher's care is manifesting its desire to understand. It does not choose hastily, heedless of its prior existence, as does the soul that chooses a tyranny (619c); of its own accord, it seeks the best answer to a problem. It treats this problem as theoretical and general, as a study one might conduct at the feet of a master (618c), despite its awareness that much depends on a right answer.

Both this soul and that of the hasty chooser desire to be happy; for what was the hasty chooser grabbing at if not happiness? What distinguishes this soul from the hasty chooser is not the desire to be happy but the desire to understand: the pure desire to understand, which is for that reason also distinct from the profiteering thoughtfulness

of the sharp-eyed criminal. And when the studious soul has chosen, its desire to understand will be ratified by the Fates as a happy life (619b, 620d).

So it is with the philosopher who lives that life. Within his soul, reason is compelled to rule, just as his soul was compelled to choose another life. The philosopher treats all pleasures other than the pleasure of understanding as “necessary in the true sense of the word, since if it were not for necessity he would have no need for them” (581e). Ruling the other parts is not reason’s natural desire nor is it distinctive. Any part of the soul can rule the others, and to the extent that each part has a native desire that it seeks to fulfil, it also seeks to have its way within the soul.

If reason is going to have to rule – as it must, for the philosopher is a human being – it is going to rule right. Why? Because when it comes to this problem, as with any problem, it wants to know the best answer; because it desires to understand. Everyone seeks the good (505d–e), everyone wants to be happy; the philosopher strives harder than everyone else and is better equipped than everyone else to understand how.

Precisely because what the rational part of the soul naturally desires is to understand rather than to rule, it will not rule the other parts merely for its own benefit, as Thrasymachus’ shepherd rules his sheep. And it is because those other parts lack this distinctive desire of reason that, should they come to power, they will treat the rational part as a mere tool of their private desires (as they are most clearly described doing within the oligarchic character’s soul, 553d). The rational part is not seeking to prevail but to understand. And the problem that has been set for it to understand is not how to prevail over the other parts – a practical, merely instrumental problem – but how they all can best live together. This the philosopher will treat as a theoretical problem, one that can best be matched by a concern to discover, for its own sake, the best and most beautiful order of the whole – best and most beautiful because most rational.²⁶

Let it be the case that, should push come to shove, reason will sacrifice the interest of the lower parts to its own interest; still its action in this case would not be selfish. It would be wise and global

²⁶ It is a concern to discover what Aryeh Kosman in chapter 5 in this volume calls “proper difference.”

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action performed under pressure, in recognition of how narrow the parameters of a good answer have become. If the situation demands that the interests of only one part can be satisfied, these had better be the interests of the best part. (Notice how compatible this way of describing reason's place in the soul remains with the descriptions of the calculative element in Book 4, whose capacity for forethought on behalf of the entire soul qualifies it to rule. The account of reason's workings in Book 4 was not false, then; it was only opaque. Book 4 does not permit us to appreciate the true basis of reason's capacity.)

The soul we are considering here is one in which reason is king. Any soul that falls short of this ideal falls short not only because the other parts are strong, but also because reason is correspondingly weak (549b; 560b; 573b).²⁷ Within this little city that the philosopher has founded for himself (591e), reason's word is law. Its thinking is effective; its "expoundings" are felt by the other parts as "commands" – both are meanings of the term *exēgētai* (586d), which occurs in an important passage describing the universal benefits of reason's rule. And this way of putting it provides a bridge between, on the one hand, the apparently automatic results within the philosopher's soul suggested by the image of the irrigation ditches at 485d (or by such a passage as 500c) and, on the other, the deliberate actions of Farmer Reason.

This activity of reason manifests itself at the level of the whole person as a choice. Of course, the world may be uncooperative and may prevent the choice from being effective beyond the confines of the philosopher's soul. But because his approach is in any case theoretical, not practical, this rebuff will not alter his happiness. The Fates give to each soul, just before birth, a "guardian spirit" (*daimona* . . . *phulaka*, 620d), whose job is to ratify in life the choice this soul has made outside it. The philosopher carries within him, as the "best of guardians," his reason (549b); in him it has the power to ratify happiness, a power it lacks in others. If this guardian is ruler of his little city, that is not because it desires to be, but because it was fated to be, and it was fated to be because, in the afterlife, too, this soul desired to understand.

²⁷ This schema leaves room for the possibility that the weakness of will to which such imperfect characters might be subject could continue to be traced to an intellectual mistake, to wrong thinking, as we found Socrates claiming in dialogues other than the *Republic*.

That the guardian rules is due also, let us not forget, to the fact that this soul chose not to drink the water of Lethe, and so remembered more in this life of the choice it had made (621a). It had come a long way across the desert and was very, very thirsty, but because it had pondered its choice and had desired to understand, because it was "saved by its intelligence" (*phronēsei*, 621a) and did not want to forget, it did not drink. Many are the occasions and many the people who, though thirsty, are unwilling to drink – so Glaucon had said. Perhaps his memory was stirring when he said it.

The philosopher's rational part seeks to order those realms whose order is entirely within its rational control. This is what it is to think theoretically. One such realm is his individual soul; another, in a way that everyone but the philosopher might think quite different, is the whole cosmos (486a). As for the human society that lies between these poles: unless it is Callipolis, it may have to wait.²⁸

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