

# SPEAKING WITH THE SAME VOICE AS REASON: PERSONIFICATION IN PLATO'S PSYCHOLOGY

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Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or  
am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle  
nature?  
(*Phaedrus* 230 A)<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

CONTEMPORARY readers of Greek ethics tend to favour those accounts of the virtuous ideal according to which virtue involves the development of our non-rational—appetitive and emotional—motivations as well as of our rational motivations. So our contemporaries find much of interest and sympathy in Aristotle's conception of virtue as a condition in which reason does not simply override our appetites and emotions, but these non-rational motivations themselves 'speak with the same voice as reason'.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Stoic

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<sup>1</sup> This and all subsequent translations of Plato are from J. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (eds.), *The Complete Works of Plato* (Indianapolis, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *NE* 1102<sup>b</sup>14–29; this and other translations from the *Nicomachean Ethics* are by W. D. Ross, rev. J. O. Urmson, in J. Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton, 1984). For an exemplary contemporary discussion favouring this conception of virtue see R. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford, 1999), chs. 4–7.

ideal of 'apathy', the result of the extirpation of the emotions,<sup>3</sup> and the Stoic analysis of the emotions as defective impulses of reason, have few contemporary fans: our contemporaries tend to reject 'defective' as an evaluation of emotion and so to reject extirpation as a goal; most also reject the Stoic analysis of emotion as a modification of reason, maintaining that emotions have distinctively non-rational elements.<sup>4</sup> And it seems right that if our emotional and appetitive natures do have distinctively non-rational elements, then a good condition for us should, if possible, involve the proper development of these as well as of our reason.<sup>5</sup> So contemporary philosophical enquiries into the rationality (or non-rationality) of the emotions, and the sort (if any) of development of which they are capable, seem well motivated.

Aristotle's own optimism about the cultivability of our non-rational motivations rests on substantial psychological commitments which he inherits from Plato, and it is worth thinking about whether we can accept those commitments or whether the ideal of virtue is available to us with some other psychology. Following Plato, Aristotle divides the human soul into rational and emotional and appetitive 'parts', and then describes the non-rational 'part' of the soul concerned with appetites and emotions as itself partly rational, capable of obeying although not of issuing rational commands. Aristotle likens this part of the soul to a child, and its relationship with reason to a child's relationship with its father.<sup>6</sup> Now the conception of our appetites and emotions as capable of agreeing with, obeying, or being persuaded by reason suggests that the

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. M. Graver (trans. and comm.), *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> An exception is M. Nussbaum, who points out that one may accept the Stoic analysis of the emotions without accepting their recommendation that emotions be eliminated from one's life. See e.g. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton 1994), 318.

<sup>5</sup> J. Cooper argues that this idea motivates the shift from Socratic virtue (perfection of reason) to Platonic (perfection of both our rational and non-rational aspects). Rather than denying that our psychology includes non-rational motivations, Socrates denied that these could motivate action by themselves or that they could be relevant to the evaluation of a person. See 'The Unity of Virtue', in his *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory [Reason]* (Princeton, 1999), 76–117.

<sup>6</sup> *NE* 1102<sup>b</sup>12–1103<sup>a</sup>3. For illuminating discussion of this comparison, see S. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford, 1991), 62–7. Broadie distinguishes between reason's persuading the desiderative part (perhaps at the beginning of moral cultivation) and reason's simply commanding a desiderative part that is ready to do its bidding (at the end).

appetites and emotions themselves involve belief-like items which can be modified in the light of expanded considerations, new evidence, and so on. This cognitively rich characterization of emotions and appetites raises the question: why suppose that these are independent sources of motivation rather than, as the Stoics maintain, modifications of reason? Why not allow that the child within can grow up into an adult, instead of insisting that it can at best be an obedient child? A further question is whether, in attributing rationality to the non-rational, Aristotle has not undermined the explanatory value of analysing our mental attitudes into rational and appetitive and emotional components. If the explanandum is a person's decision to eat, what could be the value of an explanans such as 'appetite's desire (or even decision) to eat'?

Of course, Aristotle may have available to him various local responses to these criticisms, but my interest in this paper is in the sort of global response suggested by his claim that the student of ethics and politics, as opposed to the student of natural philosophy, need study the soul only to the extent required for addressing the types of question under discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 'for to be more precise may be more laborious than matters before us require' (1102<sup>a</sup>22–5, cf. 1094<sup>b</sup>13–27). According to Aristotle, the conception of the soul he is working with in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is somehow especially suited to the concern of this work, namely, the concern to 'make citizens good and obedient to the laws' (1102<sup>a</sup>8–10, cf. to 'become good', rather than to know what virtue is, 1103<sup>b</sup>26–8). Aristotle determines that for these purposes, he can set aside disagreements with Plato about such issues as whether the parts of the soul are separable and spatially distant as are the parts of the body (1102<sup>a</sup>27–32). Yet those disagreements are at the forefront of *De anima*, where Aristotle complains that the Platonic conception of the soul as having parts is inadequate to understanding thought (407<sup>a</sup>3 ff.); that a soul composed of parts, one to think and another to desire, could not be held together—a particularly serious dif-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Cooper, 'Some Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology', in Cooper, *Reason*, 237–52. Cooper stresses independence; the problems I focus on have to do with the attribution of rationality, agency, and person-status to the independent motivations. Given the high status enjoyed by the idea of the modular mind nowadays, the independence of the parts may not be thought so much of a problem. For a high-level but accessible introduction to modularity, see I. Appelbaum, 'Modularity', in W. Bechtel and G. T. Graham (eds.), *A Companion to Cognitive Science* (Oxford, 1998), 625–35.

faculty if the soul is meant to be the principle of the unity of the body (411<sup>b</sup>5–12); and that a tripartite soul requires the division of desire into three parts (432<sup>b</sup>5–8).

The indifference of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to these difficulties in the psychology it assumes raises the question: just what are the standards of precision for ethics? It is not very informative to say only that they are lower than for physics; one wants to know: what is the kind or degree of precision appropriate to the project of becoming good? For example, could Aristotle endorse the Kantian idea that even if theoretical reasoning leads us to conclude that we are entirely determined, nevertheless from a practical standpoint we must think of ourselves as free?<sup>8</sup> In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle discusses such topics as our capacities for and limits on realizing an ideal of virtue given our human nature, the motivations we have and are capable of having, the relationships between specific behaviours and motivations and among different motivations. Are relaxed standards about these matters also in order, and if so, how relaxed? And why, in the first place, is the conception of the soul as composed of independent and cultivable rational and partly rational ‘parts’ especially well suited to the ethical project?

Unfortunately, the account of the soul in Aristotle’s ethical writings is too sketchy to yield direct answers to these questions. Fortunately, the main source for Aristotle’s ethical psychology, Plato, gives us not only one highly detailed ethical psychology, but several. So in this paper I concentrate on Plato, and on the Platonic ancestor of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* soul, the parts of which can ‘speak with the same voice as reason’. I argue that Plato’s psychology represents our motivations as themselves person-like (‘personifies’ our motivations) with the aim of showing us the lineaments of philosophic virtue and of the self-transformation required for its development. Recognizing this affords us insight into how Plato appropriates and transforms the psychological conceptions of his predecessors and allows us to appreciate the value of personification, which has otherwise been under attack in recent scholarship. Finally, the changing details of personification and its changing relationship to other elements in Plato’s psychological accounts reveal

<sup>8</sup> In the *Politics* Aristotle complains that Plato seeks a degree of unity inappropriate for a city but appropriate for an individual (*Pol.* 1261<sup>a</sup>16–24)—why, one wonders, is the degree of independence accorded to the parts of the soul on the Platonic conception not inappropriate for an individual?

a dimension of progress between the psychology of the *Phaedo* and that of the *Republic* and suggest a reason why Plato might continue to attribute rationality to the non-rational motivations in the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* at the same time as he insists on their cognitive poverty.

The following section of the paper (2) establishes that personification of the soul is in need of explanation (which it has not received in the secondary literature). Section 3 examines the way we ordinarily use personification to think about our own motivations, and Section 4 argues that Plato uses personification in a similar way with respect to the development of philosophic virtue. Finally, Section 5 develops parallels between Plato's psychology and the theology of the *Republic* to suggest that we ought to regard personification as a likely story told for its effects on our self-conceptions and behaviour.

## 2. Why personify?

While Plato characterizes the soul as unitary, bipartite, or tripartite in different works, what I call 'personification' cuts across these distinctions and is sometimes present, sometimes absent, in unitary, bipartite, and tripartite conceptions. I consider the soul to be personified to the extent that it or each of its parts is treated as itself a subject of desires and beliefs which can originate movement and which can converse with the body or with other parts of the soul. Let us consider some examples.

The *Phaedo* represents the soul and the body as distinct subjects of beliefs, desires, and stable attitudes; body and soul are, moreover, able to communicate, agree, and conflict with one another. So, for instance, Socrates says that the soul can, if it believes that the truth is what the body says it is (δοξάζουσιν ταῦτα ἀληθῆ εἶναι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ τὸ σῶμα φῆ), share the beliefs (ὁμοδοξεῖν) of the body and enjoy its pleasures (83 D 6–7). He says the soul may be deceived (ἐξαπατᾶται) by the body (65 B 11), that the soul reasons (λογίζεται) best without the senses (65 C 5), that the soul of a philosopher disdains (ἀτιμάζει) the body (65 D 1), that the body disturbs the soul and does not allow it (ταράττοντος καὶ οὐκ ἐώντος) to acquire truth and wisdom (66 A 5), that the body and its desires (τὸ σῶμα καὶ αἱ τούτου ἐπιθυμῖαι) are the cause of war (66 C 5–7), and that disassociation from the body

frees us from the body's folly (τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἀφροσύνης) (67 A 7). He says that nature orders (προσάττει) the divine-like soul to rule (ἄρχειν) and be master over (δεσπόζειν) the mortal-like body, which it commands to be ruled (ἄρχεσθαι) and be subject (δουλεύειν) (80 A 1–5). He describes the soul's rule as opposing (ἐναντιουμένη) and mastering bodily affections by means of threats and admonishments (τὰ μὲν ἀπειλοῦσα, τὰ δὲ νουθετοῦσα) as well as by physical means, and to sum up, he says that the soul talks to the desires, angers, and fears as one thing talking to another (ὡς ἄλλη οἶσα ἄλλω πράγματι διαλεγομένη) and cites the Homeric precedent of Odysseus telling his heart to endure until it is the right time for revenge (94 C 10–E 1, cf. *Od.* 20. 17–18).

Similarly, the *Republic*, which introduces three parts of the soul as parts with which *we* learn, grow angry, and desire food, drink, and sex (436 A), also characterizes these parts as themselves the subjects and agents of learning, angering, desiring, and so on.<sup>9</sup> This move is partly justified by application of the Principle of Opposites to cases of psychic conflict. According to the Principle of Opposites, 'the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same respect [κατὰ ταῦτόν], in relation to the same thing, at the same time'<sup>10</sup> (436 B 8–9). Cases of psychic conflict analysed by means of the Principle of Opposites show that 'we aren't dealing with one thing but many' (436 C). So, for example, a person is thirsty but still does not drink on the grounds that the drink available is bad for him; if being impelled to drink and being restrained from drinking are opposites, then, according to the Principle of Opposites, the person's soul must be divided into two parts, one of which impels him to drink and the other of which restrains him from drinking (further reflection on the case leads to the identification of these as the appetitive and the reasoning parts). It is not only that in such cases people want to drink in so far as they have a thirsty appetite but refrain in so far as they have a forbidding reason; rather, there is in their soul 'something bidding [τὸ κελεύον] . . . them to drink' and

<sup>9</sup> For an argument that personification is due to an 'ambiguity' between function and agent, rather than to identification with a bodily agent as claimed by B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought* (New York, 1960), ch. 1, see D. B. Claus, *Toward the Soul: An Inquiry into the Meaning of ψυχή before Plato* (New Haven, 1981), 17–21.

<sup>10</sup> I have here modified the Grube–Reeve translation for κατὰ ταῦτόν from 'in the same part' to 'in the same respect', following the arguments of R. F. Stalley, 'Plato's Argument for the Division of the Reasoning and Appetitive Elements within the Soul', *Phronesis*, 20 (1975), 110–28 at 112–18.

'something different, forbidding them to do so, that overrules the thing that bids [τὸ κωλύον πεινῆν, ἄλλο ὄν καὶ κρατοῦν τοῦ κελεύοντος]' (439 C 5–7). Again, the case of the necrophile Leontius, who wants to look at corpses but is disgusted and turns away, and, once he has given in to his appetites, curses them (439 E–440 A), is taken to be a case of 'anger making war on the appetites, as one thing against another [τῆν ὀργὴν πολεμεῖν ἐνίοτε ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις ὡς ἄλλο ὄν ἄλλῳ]' (440 A 5–6). Socrates speaks of the spirited part as itself being angry (440 C) and quotes with approval Homer on Odysseus speaking to his heart (*Od.* 20. 17–18): according to Socrates, 'here Homer clearly represents the part that has calculated about better and worse as different from the part that is angry without calculation' (*Rep.* 441 B 7–C 2). Yet despite lacking calculation, the spirited part in a courageous person is said to preserve the pronouncements about what is terrible and what is not made by speeches or arguments (τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων παραγγελλθὲν δεῖνόν τε καὶ μὴ, 442 C 3–4). And Socrates characterizes the virtue of moderation as a condition in which all the parts of the soul share the same belief (ὁμόδοξῶσι, 442 D 1) about which of them should rule and which be ruled (442 C–D). The *Republic's* later characterizations of the soul intensify the personifying features identified so far from book 4. In book 10 Socrates observes that we sometimes persist in having appearances contrary to those we have arrived at by reasoning; for example, even though we reasoned that the stick half in the water is straight, it still goes on *looking* bent. Applied to this phenomenon, the Principle of Opposites yields a division of the soul into two parts: one to hold the beliefs arrived at by measurement and the other to hold the beliefs which conflict with them; it is the latter, 'inferior' part that is affected by imitation (602 C–603 A).<sup>11</sup> Again, the appetitive part is said to 'suppose' (οἶεται, 571 D 1) a dream experience real. And while the general identification in book 9 of ends characteristically pursued by each part of the soul—knowledge of the truth by

<sup>11</sup> At 602 E 4–6 Socrates says that after the rational part of the soul has determined by measurement that something is a certain size, the opposite appears *to it* (τούτω) at the same time (my emphasis). Applied to this phenomenon, the Principle of Opposites yields a division within reason. Note that the inferior of these two parts is said to be 'far from wisdom [πῶρρω . . . φρονήσεως]', not, as in the Grube–Reeve translation, 'far from reason' (603 A 12; Reeve's new translation reads 'wisdom': see C. D. C. Reeve, *Plato: Republic* (Indianapolis, 2004)). The poetry-loving part of the soul that 'hungers for the satisfaction of weeping and wailing, because it desires these things by nature' (606 A) is not easily mapped either onto the cognitively inferior part of 602 C–603 B or onto one of the inferior parts identified in book 4.

reason, honour by spirit, and ‘food, drink, sex, and all the things associated with them’ by appetite (580 D–581 B)—does not particularly personify the parts, the image with which Socrates sums up this account of the soul does: our soul consists of three creatures somehow joined together, a multicoloured beast with many heads of gentle and savage animals (the appetitive part), a lion (the spirited part), and a human being (the rational part). The advocate of justice of course recommends that the human being take control, and, like a farmer, feed and domesticate the gentle heads while preventing the savage ones from growing, make the lion his ally, and make the lion and the beast friends with each other and himself (588 B–589 B). In sum, whether they are represented as human or animal,<sup>12</sup> the parts of the soul are agents or origins of movement; they are subjects of desire—long- as well as short-term—and belief (or at least appearance); finally, it is as independent subjects that they communicate with one another.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, the personified conception of the parts of the soul has come under criticism.<sup>14</sup> The most-discussed problem is that of an explanatory regress. As Julia Annas puts it:

Each part has desires and pleasures, and tries to gain them, sometimes at the expense of the other two; they conflict, agree, and so on. That is, they are freely described in terms that are normally used only of the person as a whole. But the theory was introduced to explain certain behaviour on the

<sup>12</sup> The characterization of some of the parts as animals is by no means confined to this image. For example, at 440 C–D reason is said to recall the spirit of an angry man like a shepherd calling to his dog to come back.

<sup>13</sup> Commentators who agree that the non-rational parts of the soul are ‘personified’ include J. Annas, *Introduction to Plato’s Republic [Introduction]* (Oxford, 1981), ch. 5, esp. 123 ff.; T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford, 1995), 217–22; J. Cooper, ‘Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation’, in Cooper, *Reason*, 118–37 at 128; C. Bobonich, *Plato’s Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics [Utopia]* (Oxford, 2002), 229–57. These commentators agree in regarding as part of personification the idea of non-rational parts of the soul engaging in reasoning, especially means–ends reasoning.

<sup>14</sup> The earliest complaint about personification of the soul and its parts I have found is in G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, 4 vols. (London, 1865), iii. 147–8: ‘The confusion, into which Plato has here fallen, arises mainly from his exaggerated application of the analogy between the Commonwealth and the Individual: from his anxiety to find in the individual something like what he notes as justice in the Commonwealth: from his assimilating the mental attributes of each individual, divisible only in logical abstraction—to the really distinct individual citizens whose association forms the Commonwealth. It is only by a poetical or rhetorical metaphor that you can speak of the several departments of a man’s mind, as if they were distinct persons, capable of behaving well or ill towards each other.’ The criticisms discussed above are more specific.

part of the whole person showing that he or she is not a real unity. The parts are explanatory entities, parts needed to explain the behaviour of the whole. If they themselves, however, can be described in the way the whole person is, have we not reproduced the problems that led to the need for the theory in the first place? (*Introduction*, 142)<sup>15</sup>

Christopher Bobonich describes a second set of problems: how can one person be three subjects of desire and belief? how do these three subjects share information or communicate or agree? The animal characterizations of the lower parts suggests that their well-being is of little more than instrumental value to the agent, and that the agent is not really responsible for actions motivated by them; finally, this conception of the soul depicts the agent as a passive spectator of his own life.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophical defences of the *Republic's* psychology against the regress problem have engaged a great deal of contemporary scholarly and philosophical ingenuity. Hendrik Lorenz's recent attempt to get around the regress-inducing personified characterization of the parts of the soul is to say that partition-licensing conflict is 'simple' rather than sophisticated (e.g. between good-dependent and good-independent desires, or between higher- and lower-order desires)—for the more sophisticated the conflict, the more sophisticated the parts. According to Lorenz's 'simple' account, when someone simultaneously has a desire for and an aversion to the same thing, Plato distinguishes two parts, one to be the proper subject of the desire and the other to be the proper subject of the aversion. Such simple conflict, Lorenz says, results in three non-divisible parts, appetite, spirit, and reason, which can conflict with one another but not within themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, with simple conflict as the basis for partitioning, the internal unity of each of the three parts of the soul is compromised, even on Lorenz's elegant formulation of partition-licensing conflict as 'what one part has a desire for, the other has an aversion for'. So, for example, I can have a simultaneous desire and aversion

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 218: 'If . . . [Plato] treats the two non-rational parts of the soul as though they were capable of behaving like reasonable people, he seems to be treating each part as though it were an agent with its own rational part. To understand how this "agent" makes its choices, we must presumably divide its soul into three; if we must also make each of these three parts an agent, we seem to be forced into a vicious regress.'

<sup>16</sup> Bobonich, *Utopia*, 254–7.  
<sup>17</sup> 'Desire and Reason in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 27 (2004), 83–116.

for the last two squares of Lindt chocolate I have been eating while writing, or to smoking a cigarette when I have a throat infection, or to eating my favourite food if I have caught a stomach bug. So either the appetitive part of the soul should be divided, or the basis for partitioning the soul must be some more specialized form of conflict. And there is evidence that Plato does not insist on three and only three parts of the soul: at *Rep.* 603 D 5–7 Socrates speaks of the myriad oppositions we simultaneously experience in our souls (*μυρίων τοιούτων ἐναντιωμάτων ἅμα γιγνομένων ἢ ψυχῇ γέμει ἡμῶν*); at *Rep.* 443 D he says that the just person binds together in himself the three parts of the soul so far distinguished ‘and any others there may be in between’. Further, denying means–ends reasoning to appetite has the consequence (recognized by Lorenz) that if I, who do not rationally endorse my smoking, figure out that I need to go to the gas station in order to buy cigarettes, then there is no part of my soul that desires to go to the gas station, even if I do, for my appetite desires only the cigarettes, or smoking them, and my reason is actively opposed to going after cigarettes.

Finally, it is worth noting that my question ‘Why personify?’ demands an answer whether or not the characterization of the soul’s parts is exactly like the characterization of the person as a whole. Attempts to convict or exonerate Plato of explanatory regress have turned on this question, hence the focus in scholarly discussion on whether Plato attributes means–ends reasoning to the appetitive part, e.g. at *Rep.* 554 C–D, when the oligarch holds his worse desires in check not by persuasion or taming but by force, and at 580 D–581 A, when he calls the appetitive part ‘money-loving’. But even if the parts are cognitively and conatively much simpler than human persons, that they are like independently functioning animals of some sort is beyond doubt. And this too requires explanation: why does Plato represent our motivations as like animals or humans?

So it seems to me that prior to examining whether or not any of the proposed solutions to the difficulties with Plato’s psychology succeed, we need to address the question: why does Plato personify the parts of the soul in the first place? what is the value of personifying our motivations?

To answer this question, we need to distinguish personification from partition.<sup>18</sup> One goal of partitioning the soul may be to explain behaviour: positing a small number of different sources of

<sup>18</sup> In a paper for the University of Toronto conference on the Divided Soul,

motivation to account for different action tendencies reduces the bewildering variety of our motivations to a comprehensible few; characterizing some of these motivations as having their own direction and so as capable of conflicting with reason accounts for the surprising phenomena of action contrary to the agent's judgement of what is best. But by contrast with partition, the personification of these motivations contributes nothing to the explanation of behaviour.

In addition to explaining synchronic behaviour, partition can also explain why different people have different patterns of behaviour, action tendencies, and characters: they are dominated by one or another of the different sources of motivation present in each of us. Thus the honour-lover is a person dominated by the spirited part of his soul (the motivations of which may be developed in particular ways in different societies: 435 D–E, cf. 544 D–E). Once again, however, this explanatory task—explaining personality types by the predominance of particular motivations in their psychology—does not seem to require that the motivations be personified. So then why personify?<sup>19</sup>

Now it is commonly said that the characterizations of the soul detailed above should not be understood literally, for they are metaphorical, or a *façon de parler*. Even if this is right, we still need to understand why Plato chooses these metaphors or *façons de parler* rather than others. One (I suspect widely held) view is that personification somehow captures the way we experience ourselves.<sup>20</sup> I do not know whether this is the case (is it true in every culture? where it is true, is it the cause or the effect of ways of representing human

André Laks draws a similar distinction between what he calls 'homunculus' and 'heterogeneity' in the psychology of the *Republic*.

<sup>19</sup> I do not mean to suggest that if personification does no theoretical-explanatory work, we should judge that the parts of our souls are not really person-like. We may have reason to believe in unobserved entities (or unobserved features of entities) because they do some theoretical-explanatory work *or* because they serve some practical end. Cf. Socrates on the doctrine of recollection: 'I do not insist that my argument is right in all other respects, but I would contend at all costs both in word and deed as far as I could that we will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that it is not possible to find out what we do not know and that we must not look for it' (*Meno* 86 B–C).

<sup>20</sup> A. W. Price suggests that personification is 'a manner of speaking, a way of writing up internal conflict in the style of external drama . . . such conceptions can faithfully capture an aspect of the way the mind pictures itself, a self-dramatizing mode in which it experiences, and transmutes, its own workings' (*Mental Conflict* (Routledge, 1995), 56).

beings?), but even if it is, personification is not the only way in which Plato characterizes the soul or its parts: for example, he also likens the embodied soul to the barnacle-encrusted and maimed sea god Glaucus (*Rep.* 611 B–612 A), the spirited part of the soul to a metal that must be tempered (*Rep.* 411 A–B), and the appetitive part to a jar which may be leaky or sound (*Gorg.* 493 A–494 A; *Rep.* 586 B). Nor is it the case that Plato needs to personify psychic entities in order to represent psychic conflict. For example, in the *Republic* he uses the language of opposing forces to show how the Principle of Opposites applies to psychic conflict, describing desire as ‘tak[ing] something [τῆνος λαβεῖν]’ (437 B 2) and ‘be[ing] impelled towards it [ἐπὶ τοῦτο ὀρμᾶ]’ (439 B 1) and ‘thirst[ing] and driv[ing] . . . [the soul] like a beast to drink [τοῦ δῖφοντος καὶ ἄγοντος ὥσπερ θηρίον ἐπὶ τὸ πιεῖν]’ (439 B 4–5), while aversion ‘draws . . . [the soul] back when it is thirsting [τὶ αὐτὴν ἀνθέλκει διψῶσαν]’ (439 B 3), and ‘push[es] and driv[es] away [ἀπωθεῖν καὶ ἀπελαύνειν]’ (437 C 9).<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Plato’s choice to personify psychic elements is not so surprising in the light of the descriptive practices of his predecessors. In a Homeric passage well known to readers of Plato, Odysseus’ spirit (*θυμός*) is aroused when he sees his maidservants off to visit the suitors, and his heart (*κραδίη*) cries out, and he has to tell it to endure patiently (*Od.* 20. 9–21). Other Homeric examples include Nestor taking counsel ‘if wit [*νόος*] can do anything for us now’ (*Il.* 14. 61–2);<sup>22</sup> Asius failing to persuade the heart (*φρήν*) of Zeus (*Il.* 12. 173); and Calchas being accused of prophesying whatever is dear to his heart (*φρεσὶ*) (*Il.* 1. 107). Euripides’ Medea addresses her heart: ‘Do not, O my heart, you must not do these things! | Poor heart, let them go, have pity upon the children’, and then a little later, ‘Oh, arm yourself in steel, my heart! Do not hang back | From doing this fearful and necessary wrong.’ In the next lines she addresses her hand in much the same way: ‘Oh, come my hand, poor wretched hand, and take the sword | Take it, step forward to this bitter starting point | And do not be a coward, do not think of them | How sweet they are and how you are their mother’

<sup>21</sup> C. Bobonich, in ‘Akrisia and Agency in Plato’s *Laws* and *Republic*’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 76 (1994), 3–36, documents Plato’s use of two models for talking about psychic conflict in *Republic* 4: in terms of opposing forces and in terms of command and consent. This is already reason to disagree with Price when he writes, ‘It is inevitable that we should speak of mental conflict in social language’ (*Mental Conflict*, 2).

<sup>22</sup> Trans. R. Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago, 1951).

(*Med.* 1056–7 and 1242–7).<sup>23</sup> Still, not finding something surprising is not the same as explaining it, and while the precedents may incline, they cannot necessitate Plato's personifying the soul or its parts.

A third possibility is that it is the city–soul analogy that explains the personification of the soul in the *Republic*<sup>24</sup> (so personification in other dialogues would have to be explained by the literary context in those dialogues). But this is not yet an explanation. Plato the author chose the political analogy in order to illuminate the nature of the soul (with respect to what individual justice looks like and how it is good for its possessor), but this leaves open at least two possibilities: that the personified depiction of the soul is a side effect of the city–soul analogy chosen for other purposes (which purposes?), or that the city–soul analogy was chosen in part because it personifies the soul.

One last set of remarks to motivate and give direction to the 'why personify?' question. In *Plato's Utopia Recast* Christopher Bobonich argues that Plato's late dialogues, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*, develop an ethical psychology that avoids the problems of personification besetting the *Republic*. According to Bobonich, in Plato's later psychology actions and feelings are the joint products of beliefs contributed by reason and non-rational action tendencies contributed by the appetitive and emotional parts of the soul, and these parts are not themselves person-like at all—the non-rational 'parts' are not subjects of experience and they cannot motivate action by themselves. On this new conception, Plato can still regard occurrent emotions and appetites as partly rational and reason-responsive, because they have belief-components which can be rationally modified, but he no longer has to worry about the explanatory regress or disunity and passivity entailed by the conception of the person as composed of person-like parts.

<sup>23</sup> Trans. Rex Warner, in D. Grene and R. Lattimore (eds.), *Euripides: The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. i (Chicago, 1955). In Sophocles, Oedipus says his soul (*ψύχη*) grieves for both himself and the city (*OT* 64); Antigone says that her soul (*ψύχη*) has long been dead so as to serve the dead (*Ant.* 559); and Odysseus says he does not like to praise a stubborn soul (*σκληρὰν ψύχην*, *Aj.* 1361).

<sup>24</sup> So, for example, in *Mental Conflict* Price claims that personification is most intense in books 8 and 9, which, 'expounding parallels between political and psychic decline, naturally picture the soul in civic and interpersonal terms' (56). In his comment on the present paper, A. A. Long develops this suggestion and argues that it is the city–soul analogy, which models vice on civil war and virtue on concord, that politicizes the soul and so is responsible for personification.

Bobonich argues that in the *Theaetetus* Plato shows himself to be aware of at least one philosophical problem with treating distinct elements in us as themselves subjects of experience, namely, that this makes it difficult to give an account of how each of us is a unitary subject of experience. Socrates argues that a sense-organ such as the eye or the ear cannot be that with which ( $\hat{\omega}$ ) we see or hear, but must rather be that through which ( $\delta\iota'$  οὖ) we see or hear, for otherwise our perceptions would lie around inside us like so many Greeks inside a wooden horse. To avoid this bizarre conclusion, he says, we must realize that there is some one single form within us to which all perceptions converge (*συντείνει*). It is this one single form (call it the soul or whatever you like) with which ( $\hat{\eta}$ ) we perceive, through our sense-organs (184 C–D). And it must be through (not just with) the soul itself that we think about properties common to the special sensibles, such as existence, sameness, number, and so on (185 A–E.) Plato's contrast between that with which one perceives or thinks and the instruments (*ὀργάνων*, 184 D 4) through which one perceives or thinks implies that the former is the user of the instruments, the subject or agent of perception or thought.<sup>25</sup> So the philosophical lesson would seem to be: do not multiply the subjects or agents of perception or thought, or you will have difficulty accounting for the way in which perception, as well as thought, is unified in our mental lives. And this philosophical lesson, Bobonich claims, applies also to the motivationally distinguished parts of the soul in the *Republic*.

Bobonich's evidence that Plato has applied the lesson of the *Theaetetus* to the motivationally distinguished parts of the soul comes, first, from the *Timaeus*' and *Phaedrus*' characterization of non-rational motivations as lacking in the cognitive resources that enabled them to function as subjects and agents in the *Republic*: the *Timaeus* deprives the appetitive soul (which even plants have) of belief, allowing it only sensation, desire, and pleasure and pain (77 B–C), thus suggesting that it cannot understand either verbal commands or images;<sup>26</sup> the *Phaedrus* states that a vision of the Forms is necessary for conceptualization and speech (249 B–C), and since only the rational part of the soul ever sees the Forms, the non-

<sup>25</sup> M. F. Burnyeat, 'Plato on the Grammar of Perceiving', *Classical Quarterly*, NS 26 (1976), 29–51 at 33.

<sup>26</sup> The reasoning for appetite's inability to grasp images (*φαντασίαι*) is that (1) the *Sophist* says that appearance (*φαντασία*) requires both opinion (*δόξα*) and perception (*αἴσθησις*) (264 B), but (2) the *Timaeus* denies that the appetitive part has opinion (77 B–C).

rational parts of the soul cannot have beliefs (they can have only unconceptualized perceptions). Further corroboration comes from the *Laws*' description of the soul as a puppet, pulled by cords (the golden cord of calculation and other cords including pleasure and pain, and possibly opinions about the future such as fear and confidence); these cords may be seen as generating action tendencies rather than full-fledged motivations. This image emphasizes both the unity and activity of the person: *we* are to pull along with the golden cord of reason (644 D–645 C). We may note, however, that the *Republic* also treats the person as subject and agent over and above the parts on occasion (e.g. 443 D–E, 550 A–B, 553 C–D, 606 C); usually this is taken to be a fault of the account, on the assumption that to be properly explanatory, it should reduce the person to the parts.

It is not obvious that the conception of the soul Bobonich attributes to the late Plato is philosophically superior to the one with person-like parts, because while it avoids some of the difficulties of that conception, it raises difficulties of its own. It requires that we attribute all conflicting beliefs, as well as desires, perceptions, and so on, to the same subject. But such attribution of contrary predicates to the same subject seems to violate the principle of non-contradiction and so to require some story, which Plato does not give, such as that some of these contrary predicates are latent rather than occurrent, or successively but not simultaneously true of the subject. Further, this conception of the soul makes it mysterious how our non-rational action tendencies could be taken up by the rational part, or by us as subjects and agents, so as to become reasons for action. The puppet image does not, for example, show how an appetite or emotion could be an occurrent state composed of a belief contributed by the rational part and non-rational affections or motions.<sup>27</sup> And it does seem odd, if Plato has a new unitary psychology, that he never gives us much of an account of it that makes clear its differences from his former psychology—contrast the *Republic*'s

<sup>27</sup> Nor can I make sense of Bobonich's account of how reason influences appetite in the *Timaeus*. Since appetite cannot grasp images, the images reason flashes on the liver do not affect it; instead, it is affected by the stirring up of sweet or bitter humours in the liver, which result in pleasurable or painful sensations. But how can blind appetite associate these sensations with any of the things desired by the agent? In any case, it should not be appetite that makes associations or indeed feels pleasure and pain; it should be the person—but then what is the point of stirring up the humours in the liver?

detailed account of the tripartite psychology and the emphasis on its differences from the psychology of the early dialogues. Finally, if opinion and expectation about the future are among the cords that can pull against reason or calculation (644 C–D), then more than one of the cords will be a source of cognitions.

But let us set these points aside and suppose that the late dialogues do mark a change in Plato's psychology, in the direction indicated by Bobonich.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the parts of the soul continue to be personified in these dialogues. In a later passage in the *Laws*, the Athenian identifies anger and pleasure as constituent elements of the soul, which he says may be parts or states (it does not matter which); he here characterizes pleasure as getting its way 'by persuasive deceit' (863 B). More striking, in the *Timaeus* the cognitively limited appetitive part is also supposedly capable of obeying reason (only if it refuses to obey (ὁπότ' . . . τῶ ἐπιτάγματι καὶ λόγῳ μηδαμῇ πείσθῃσθαι ἐκὼν ἐθέλοι, 70 A 6–7) should the spirited part of the soul restrain it by force), and of divination (the gods having made even 'this base part of ourselves as excellent as possible', *Tim.* 71 D–E). The situation is even more puzzling in the myth of the *Phaedrus*, where Plato represents the soul as a chariot driven by a charioteer (reason), and pulled by one noble and one bad horse. Although they have not seen the Forms (and so, strictly, should not be able to conceptualize or speak), these horses have desires and beliefs as complex as any in the *Republic*, and they engage in cognitively sophisticated bargaining and manipulation. The noble horse, 'lover of honour with modesty and self-control [τιμῆς ἐραστής μετὰ σωφροσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς], companion to true glory [ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἑταῖρος], . . . needs no whip and is guided by verbal commands alone [κελεύσματι μόνον καὶ λόγῳ ἡμιοχεῖται]' (253 D 6–E 1); it is 'controlled . . . by its sense of shame [αἰδοῖ βιαζόμενος]' (254 A 2); when the bad horse tries to make the lover suggest to the beloved that they have sex, the noble horse and the charioteer both become 'angry in their belief that they are being made to do things that

<sup>28</sup> H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 2006), also sees significant cognitive impoverishment of the non-rational parts of the soul in the late dialogues. He argues that while the *Republic* denies calculation or reasoning to the appetitive and spirited parts, the later dialogues also deny these parts *doxa* (thus judgement and conceptualization)—and at the same time, the late dialogues develop the idea of a capacity for representational content without conceptualization—such as that possessed by the appetitive part, to communicate with which thought is said to 'paint . . . pictures [φαντάσματα ἀποζωγραφοῖ]' (*Tim.* 71 C 3–4, cf. B 4–5).

are dreadfully wrong [ἀγανακτοῦντε ὡς δεινὰ καὶ παράνομα ἀναγκαζομένω] (254 B 1); when the charioteer pulls back from this, the noble horse 'fall[s] back voluntarily . . . and drenches the whole soul with sweat out of shame and awe [ὑπ' αἰσχύνῃς τε καὶ θάμβους]' (254 C 4); together with the charioteer, the noble horse begs the bad horse to wait till later and when 'later' arrives, it pretends to have forgotten (254 D); finally, when the lover and beloved are in bed, the noble horse 'resists such requests [viz. the bad horse's requests for sex] with modesty and reason [μετ' αἰδοῦς καὶ λόγου ἀντιτείνει]' (256 A 6). As for the bad horse, although (almost) deaf, it 'gives in [to the charioteer and noble horse refusing sex] grudgingly only when they beg it to wait till later . . . and when the promised time arrives, and they are pretending to have forgotten, it reminds them' and charges them with cowardice and promise-breaking (ὡς δειλία τε καὶ ἀνανδρία λιπόντε τὴν τάξιν καὶ ὁμολογίαν, 254 C 8–D 1). And so on.

According to Bobonich, the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* exaggeratedly personify the parts of the soul while arguing that the parts of the soul cannot be agent-like, thereby showing, without saying, that we should not think of the parts of the soul as like agents or subjects, but rather as the sub-agential springs of action and feeling described above for the puppet image of the *Laws*.<sup>29</sup> But what the works present are apparently contradictory accounts of the soul; how are we to tell which remarks about the soul represent Plato's view of the truth about the soul and which remarks illustrate problems with a conception of the soul he wants to reject? Why not instead reject the requirement of a vision of the Forms for conceptualization and speech of the sort internal to the soul? Why not suppose that the appetite that is deprived of any kind of conceptualization is only the appetitive part of plants and that when conjoined with a rational soul even the appetite's own resources are enriched? Why not allow the non-rational parts non-conceptual content capable of generating action on its own?

Not only Plato's middle-period but also his late psychology demands that we explain why he personifies the soul or its parts, for personification is a persistent feature of his psychology even where it may conflict with significant theoretical developments in the psychology. To answer the question 'why does Plato personify?' I want to begin with our own practices of personification.

<sup>29</sup> Bobonich, *Utopia*, 297.

## 3. Thinking about our motivations

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates describes thinking as the soul's conversation with itself about the objects under consideration (189 E). This is a quite natural way to conceive of a process in which one gives voice to reasons for and against believing that something is the case or engaging in a particular course of action. It allows for, but does not require, conceiving of the internal debate as engaged in by distinct subjects with different interests and points of view. Our question is: what is the advantage of that further characterization?

People often make use of this further characterization.<sup>30</sup> For example: suppose you have a bad temper, and become easily irritated at people for making small mistakes, or taking too long to complete jobs. Suppose also that you would like to become more patient and forgiving, believing that is a better way to be (both for yourself and for those around you). What can you do to become as you want to be? A few common strategies: you can make a resolution, viz. 'After 31 December I'm not going to lose my temper'; when you feel your anger rising at what looks to you like carelessness or inefficiency, you can count to ten before responding; you can also, in the meantime, talk to yourself, saying, for example, 'It isn't his fault; he's new to his job', or 'That's a boring job; it's natural for the mind to wander.' Of course, if you adopt the last strategy, you had better be prepared for some talking back: 'When you're new to your job, you should pay more attention; you need to work harder to make sure you do it right', or 'Everyone's job is sometimes boring, and then you have to take responsibility for making sure your mind doesn't wander.'

We can characterize this sort of internal debate in different ways. Focusing on the content of what is said, we can say that the strategy involves determining which beliefs about the situation and the agent are appropriate, or true and relevant, in anticipation of the fact that the arousal and dissipation of anger are responsive to these beliefs. But if we are already conceiving of the process of

<sup>30</sup> It is not clear to me to what extent what I suggest here is an elaboration of or a departure from the view (discussed in sect. 2) that personification of our motivations captures the way in which we experience ourselves. This is partly because of the vagueness of the expression 'the way in which we experience ourselves'. What I am suggesting is that personification helps to motivate, and make sense of, our attempts to transform ourselves in the direction of our practical ideals for ourselves.

determining what to believe or do as an internal debate, modelling our experience of inner dissension or uncertainty on disagreement among distinct individuals in a group, we might also group some of the beliefs together under the rubric of a certain kind of 'voice' and then construct a character for their 'speaker'. To return to the example, you might say that one part of you is sympathetic, seeing others' situations from their point of view as well as your own, but another part is self-righteous and unsympathetic, concerned only with meeting the standards that have been set. You then might (depending on the images you have to use from your culture and your personal experience) model your internal conflict on the sort of conflict an experienced teacher would have with a principal whose only background is administrative.

In discussing Freud's notion of the bodily ego, which enables the internalization or externalization of other people using metaphors of ingestion, excretion, and so on, Richard Wollheim asks whether such representations of mental states and processes are necessary for the mental states or processes to be efficacious.<sup>31</sup> Now I do not know whether assigning one's motivations to distinct parts of oneself or personae 'in' oneself leads to greater success in influencing one's own behaviour than does counting to ten. But it looks as if it might. And what it certainly does is to give one a way of understanding what one is trying to do in trying to change oneself to better live up to one's ideals. Assigning motivations to distinct and evaluatively loaded personae facilitates disowning some of one's motivations and identifying with others. Is that the sympathetic part, or the part that's afraid of confrontation? Is this the self-righteous part, or the part that alone maintains standards? Such attributions can enable one not only to disown some of one's motivations, but to do so in what seems an appropriate way: 'The anger that I'm feeling just belongs to the child in me who can't see things from others' point of view.' On the one hand, it really *is* me feeling this anger (it's no one outside of me); on the other hand, the anger is not a motivation I fully endorse. Conversely, such attributions can enable me to identify with some of my motivations in an appropriate manner: although not every part of me is patient and forgiving, the part that is sympathetic is. That (patient and forgiving) is what

<sup>31</sup> R. Wollheim, 'The Bodily Ego', in Wollheim, *The Mind and its Depths* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1993), 64–78. I am grateful to Jonathan Lear for directing me to this discussion.

I would like to become—and already am potentially, because a part of me already is, actually.

I can see two reasons why we might personify our motivations in such circumstances. First, our default mode of explanation seems to be by the attribution of desires and beliefs, and we eschew this default mode only when we have good reasons to, such as that the explanandum is not intelligent or even animate. So if I am trying to influence my own behaviour, or if I feel conflicted, or insufficiently motivated to do what I think I ought, or puzzled about some attitude that I have, it is likely that I will explain this in terms of the beliefs and desires of ‘parts’ of my psychology. Second, we tend to love and hate human beings and other animals much more intensely than we do other sorts of things, and so representing other sorts of things, including our own motivations, as humans or other animals may enable us to mobilize our emotional and motivational resources towards them.<sup>32</sup>

This sketch of our own practices of personification is oversimplified in at least two ways. First, our various motivations do not always wear their value on their sleeve, and so our personae for them are often not as one-dimensional as the above examples may suggest. Sometimes anger is the appropriate response.<sup>33</sup> Second, one’s uncertainty about the value of one’s various motivations is likely to be heightened when one does not have a clear sense of which of one’s motivations ought to be authoritative. This may open us up to manipulation (including self-manipulation), perhaps in terms of a conception of what is authoritative that is acknowledged by one’s actual and potential selves; consider, for example, the efficacy of the label ‘unmanly’ in the formation of the timocratic character (*Rep.* 549 D).

A final observation: to the extent that folk psychology already involves personification, Plato may not need to argue that the soul or its parts are person-like (as he does have to argue that there are three distinct parts of the soul) in order to use it in the service of the psychology for ethical transformation sketched in the next section.

<sup>32</sup> I owe this suggestion to Robert Wright.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Clarke made this point in his thoughtful comments on this paper.

## 4. Philosophic virtue and personification

Let us return to the question of Plato's uses of personification. In this section I argue that Plato personifies the soul in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* as part of his protreptic to philosophic virtue, showing how philosophic virtue develops the best of our features and requires the disciplining of the others. By representing some of our motivations as worthy-of-our-identifying-with, and others as to-be-alienated, personification both attracts us to philosophic virtue and steels us for the difficult task of acquiring it.

In the *Republic* Plato is explicit that the psychology he develops there is in the service of showing a certain kind of person what justice (in the soul) is and why it is choiceworthy: this is what Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge to Socrates requires (358 C–D, 367 B–E, 368 C), and it is what Socrates appeals to when he wants to excuse the imprecision of the *Republic's* psychology:<sup>34</sup>

You should know, Glaucon, that, in my opinion, we will never get a precise answer [viz., to the question 'Do individuals have the same parts in their soul as the classes in the city, so that they may be correctly called "just" etc. if they have the same internal condition?'] using our present methods—although there is another longer and fuller road that does lead to such an answer. But perhaps we can get an answer that's up to the standard of [*ἀξίως*] our previous statements and enquiries. (435 C–D, cf. 504 A–B, 611 E–612 A)

But Socrates' apologetic words should not obscure how positively well suited is his personified soul to the task of showing the nature and choiceworthiness of justice conceived of as the virtue of a philosopher.

To see this, we need to consider two things, and at some length: the (explicit) characterization of the justice of the soul, and its (implicit) contrast with the imperfect justice of non-philosophers. Following the argument establishing the three parts of the soul (*Rep.* 435 D–441 C), Socrates gives a surprisingly brief account of the virtues of the soul (441 C–442 D). Justice is the condition in which each of the three parts, reason, spirit, and appetite, does its own work: reason ruling with wisdom, and spirit obeying and allying

<sup>34</sup> While Aristotle affirms the lack of precision as appropriate to practical matters in general (*NE* 1094<sup>b</sup>12, 1098<sup>b</sup>28, 1137<sup>b</sup>19), Plato seems only to countenance it for the protreptic purposes.

with reason (441 D–E). So justice requires wisdom. And wisdom is the rational part's knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul (442 C).<sup>35</sup> It turns out that the argument for the choiceworthiness of justice establishes the choiceworthiness of the philosopher's justice, and to understand what that is, one has to learn something about what wisdom is. The brief account of the individual virtues gives way to a lengthy account of what a philosopher is and knows (474 B–540 C).

We may now turn to philosophic virtue's contrast with 'civic' (πολιτική) virtue (Socrates' example is courage), which is based on law-inculcated true belief (430 A–C). Above, I said that the argument for the choiceworthiness of justice establishes the choiceworthiness of the philosopher's justice; by that, I do not mean to say that Plato denies the value of less perfect instances of justice, or that he would not extend his argument to acknowledge the value of these less perfect instances.<sup>36</sup> The point is rather about the different dialectical roles played by these two kinds of virtue in the argument of the *Republic*. Socrates is advocating or recommending philosophic virtue to his interlocutors, as supremely worthy of choice. Civic virtue, on the other hand, is not a choice: Socrates' interlocutors are not in a position to choose it, for they are neither living in nor actually able to bring about the ideal city whose programme of early education produces civic virtue, and in any case, the production of civic virtue seems to require that environmental forces shape the pre-rational mind. (In the 'musical' education, impressionable young minds are stamped with stories of what gods and heroes do, so as to develop in them both firmly held beliefs about which acts and events are terrible, shameful, impious, permissible, admirable, moderate, courageous, etc. as well as stable dispositions to behave gently towards co-citizens and harshly towards enemies, and to deal properly with dangers, losses, and so on.) So even though civic virtue may be good for its possessor, the argument of the *Republic* does not feature it for its choiceworthiness.

Consequently, because he is not recommending to his interlocu-

<sup>35</sup> And courage is the condition in which the spirited part obeys the declarations of the rational part as to what is to be feared (442 B–C), and moderation the condition in which the parts of the soul agree that the rational part should rule and the non-rational parts be ruled (442 C–D).

<sup>36</sup> I have argued that the non-philosophic guardians in the ideal city do have genuine, albeit imperfect, virtue and that their possession of imperfect virtue is also good for them, in 'Imperfect Virtue', *Ancient Philosophy*, 18 (1998), 315–39.

tors that they pursue civic virtue, Socrates has no particular need of a personified psychology to describe it. Instead, he speaks of two parts of the soul, the spirited and the philosophic, which, having been stretched and relaxed by musical and gymnastic training, are now in harmony (410 B–411 E). He characterizes the philosophic part as the source of cultivation and the spirited part as the source of savagery, which must, like iron, be tempered to just the right extent else risk melting or becoming brittle. Too little music and too much gymnastic make a person savage—his spirited part harsh and his philosophic part reason-hating, but too much music and too little gymnastic make a person cowardly, his philosophic part soft and his spirited part feeble if naturally weak and irritable if naturally strong. Even though the spirited part and the philosophic part are independent sources of motivation, and tend in different directions, they are not conceived of as themselves subjects or agents, but as like strings in a musical instrument, to be harmonized with one another.

It might be objected that even in the course of describing early education in civic virtue, Socrates already personifies psychic motivations: at 389 D he describes moderation as rule over the pleasures of food, drink, and sex, and at 430 E–431 A as rule of the better over the worse; at 390 D he quotes the very lines from Homer he later uses to distinguish the reasoning part of the soul from the spirited part: ‘He struck his chest and spoke to his heart: “Endure, my heart, you’ve suffered more shameful things than this.”’ I admit that the notion of one thing ruling another is suggestive of personification;<sup>37</sup> what I find significant is that Plato does not exploit this possibility as long as he is talking about civic virtue—but then exploits it fully, using the very same lines of Homer, when he is setting out the psychology which will enable him to characterize and praise philosophic virtue. Indeed, it is not until Socrates defines philosophic courage that he says that the spirited part is the holder of the beliefs about what is to be feared and what is not (442 B–C; contrast the account of civic courage, 429 C–430 C).

Recall (from Section 2) book 9’s image of the soul as containing a human being, a lion, and a beast with many heads, some gentle and some savage; virtue is the condition in which the human being ‘within’<sup>38</sup> is in control, with the lion as his ally, taming or restraining the heads of the many-headed beast in the manner of a farmer

<sup>37</sup> As is the talk of virtue as concord (*συμφωνία*); cf. *Laws* 653 B–C, 660 D–E, 689 A–C.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle explicitly states that the rational part of the soul is what a person is,

(588 c–589 b). While there is no little person or lion or many-headed beast inside (and Socrates does not express any hope that people will believe there is, as he does in the case of the Noble Lie that our souls are gold, silver, iron, or bronze, 415 c–d), thinking about our motivations as belonging to one or other of these personae will help us to identify with them or to approve them conditionally, or to be alienated from them. Given that we already believe that the appetitive desires the fulfilment of which leads to health and well-being (e.g. hunger and thirst) have to be fulfilled moderately, and that the unnecessary ones (e.g. unlawful sexual desires that surface in dreams, 571 c–572 a) have to be stamped out or at least restrained, this image should, on any given occasion, reinforce our intentions; it may even steel us for the disciplining we have to do. Finally, it provides a way of dealing with particular motivations without attending to their content.<sup>39</sup> After all, who wants to say that he is run by a pack of wild beasts?

Julia Annas warns about this way of looking at our souls:

This idea, that something is part of me but not really me, not really human, is an unattractive and dangerous way of looking at myself. When I think that I am rational but it is not, I am externalizing part of myself, looking at it as something over which I have only the kind of control that I might have over an animal—that is, external control; I can get it to do some things and refrain from others, but I can never get it to understand my deliberations. It is thus not an accident that we find in this context the most extreme form of the language of coercion in the *Republic*—the view that the lowest part, or the person following it, should be enslaved to the best part, the reason . . . There are two ways in which Plato regards the divided soul . . . In one he is trying to do justice to the way in which some aspects of us may fail to go along with right reason, and may need habituation and training to develop in rational ways and in pursuit of ends sanctioned by reason. The idea here is the harmonized, integrated person all of whose motivations are, without conflict, in line with reason . . . But Plato also sees the idea at times in a different way, one in which the person isolates his ‘true self’ in his reason and then externalizes the parts other than reason as something subhuman, rejected and kept under harsh external control.<sup>40</sup>

most of all (*NE* 1178<sup>b7</sup>); here Plato is making the same point by characterizing the rational part as the human being within the human being.

<sup>39</sup> This way of handling one’s own motivations would seem to be more appropriate for those making the transition to philosophic virtue than for philosophers themselves. I am very grateful to Philip Clarke for discussion on this point.

<sup>40</sup> J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics Old and New* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1999), 135–6.

Annas's criticism here is not of personification *per se*, but of the particular personae sometimes accorded to the non-rational parts of the soul: if they are animals, they are subject only to external control, not really 'me'.

Now it might be that 'the two ways in which Plato regards the divided soul' correspond to two classes into which Plato divides our various emotions and appetites: the kind that can respond to reason, and the kind that cannot. But it is also worth noting that the *Republic* externalizes less than the *Phaedo*. The *Phaedo* identifies the self with the soul, and calls the body the soul's instrument<sup>41</sup> (and as such unsuited to ruling), while at the same time treating it as a distinct subject with base commitments (and as such unsuited to ruling for different reasons).<sup>42</sup> It locates the non-rational motivations in the body, and advocates disengagement—this is why the philosopher regards pains and pleasures equally as nails riveting his soul to his body (83 D), and indeed regards his body as hindering his pursuit of wisdom (65 A–67 B, 83 A–D); this is why death, the separation of the soul from the body, is no tragedy for the philosopher, for the philosopher constantly seeks to disengage his soul (65 A–67 B, 114 E), which 'by itself' has intellectual affinities, from the interests of his body, the source of appetitive and emotional desires. And to the extent that the body and the soul are committed to conflicting values, as two persons might be,<sup>43</sup> the condition of

<sup>41</sup> Comparing the *Phaedo* with Democritus' remarks on the relationship of body to soul, Charles Kahn (in his comments on the present paper) observes that although Democritus personifies body and soul to some extent, for example imagining them (or more precisely the mind and senses) in conversation, he does so much less than Plato even in the *Phaedo*. For example, while the body has its own desires and needs, it is not independent enough to cause trouble: the body's desires are simple and easily fulfilled (68 B 223 DK); ruin can be caused only by the mind's bad judgement, and when it comes to assigning blame, Democritus finds the soul guilty for ruining the body, for the body is like a tool (B 159). By contrast, Plato's *Phaedo* blames the body for afflicting us with all kinds of desires; as a consequence, Plato must give the body greater independence and agency than Democritus does.

<sup>42</sup> In his sensitive reading of the *Phaedo*, R. Woolf tries to resolve this tension 'in terms of the autonomy not of the body as a subject of experience, but of sense-perception as the deliverer of a misguided picture of reality' ('The Practice of a Philosopher', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 26 (2004), 97–129 at 108). But if the argument I am making in these pages succeeds in showing that Plato has good practical or protreptic reasons to characterize the body as an autonomous agent and subject (i.e. to give over some of our psychic motivations and abilities to the persona of the body), then we do not need to resolve the tension.

<sup>43</sup> In the *Phaedo* Socrates contrasts the philosopher's ideal—virtue with (*μετά*) wisdom—and ordinary, non-philosophical, virtue—virtue without wisdom—labelling the latter 'so-called', 'illusory', and 'slavish'. He calls wisdom the only true

the embodied soul looks to be unavoidably conflictual, and disengagement the best prospect for peace. By contrast, the *Republic's* location of emotional and appetitive desires as well as intellectual ones in the soul supports a conception of philosophic virtue not as disengagement but rather as a condition of rule or management (when all the parts are conceived of as human subjects) or restraint, domestication, and cultivation (when the lower parts are conceived of as wild or tame animals). The *Republic* requires a much greater degree of ownership (although not of course endorsement) of these motivations: they are all of the soul, and the soul as a whole is the subject of virtue or vice and happiness or unhappiness (even if only the rational part of the soul survives death). The *Republic* seems quite concerned to point out proper and improper ways of identifying with our motivations. For example, in discussing temperance Socrates says that the expression 'control over oneself' (*κρείττω αὐτοῦ*) is laughable, since the same self is controller and controlled; nevertheless, he explains that there is something true in this expression; as he puts it, it is the trace moderation has left in the language. The truth is that self-control is the condition in which the better part of the soul controls the worse part (430E–431A). The expression 'control over oneself' expresses that truth because *κρείττω* also means 'better', and when people use the expression as praise, they are implicitly identifying the person praised with the better, controlling self. Nevertheless, as Socrates has pointed out, the object of the control exercised by this praised person is also the person himself, i.e. a 'lower' part of himself, not some alien force to be controlled.

Let me turn at last to the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue which (as we saw in Section 2) has been thought to reject personification by arguing that the lower parts of the soul cannot be holders of beliefs because that requires a grasp of Forms that they do not have, but which at the same time extensively personifies the parts of the soul. Because the *Phaedrus* recommends, in rival speeches, both non-philosophic and

coinage: whereas ordinary virtue empowers its possessors to face fears in order to avoid greater fears, to refrain from pleasures in order to enjoy greater pleasures, and so on (68c–69c). Plato's point seems to be that philosophic virtue involves the agent's adopting wisdom as a new end and standard of evaluation, while ordinary virtue, although it may involve a change in the agent's behaviour, involves no change in the agent's conception of the good or terms of evaluation—pleasures and fears remain the agent's good and bad, and to obtain more of the one and less of the other remains the basis on which he decides what to do.

philosophic virtue, it is a test for my claim that Plato uses personification especially to represent and recommend philosophic virtue.

Socrates insists on beginning his speech on the harms of a relationship with a lover (and the benefits of one with a non-lover) with a definition, and so, for the purposes of defining love, sketches a rudimentary psychology. According to this psychology, we have in us two forms, an inborn desire for pleasure, and an acquired judgement (*ἐπίκτητος δόξα*) aiming at what is best. The condition in which judgement rules is self-control; the condition in which desire for one or another pleasure rules might be gluttony or sexual love or something else, depending on the pleasure desired. Love, then, is the condition in which the irrational desire for pleasure in beauty, along with kindred desires for bodily beauty, dominates judgement and all the other desires (237 D–238 C).<sup>44</sup>

The two parts mentioned in this psychology are minimally personified: they have intentional attitudes, and their relations are described in political language. Thus judgement aims (*ἐφιεμένη*) at what is best; the parts can conflict with one other (*στασιάζετον*) or be of the same mind (*ὁμονοεῖτον*). The claim that they can dominate (*κρατεῖ*) one another could be just a claim about relative strength, but cashing out the difference between judgement leading (*ἀγούσης*) us by reasoning about what is best and desire dragging (*ἐλκούσης*) us without reasoning requires some personification (237 D 9–238 A 1). With love characterized as a condition of being out of mental control, the failings of the lover are easy to see: the lover, overwhelmed by desire, seeks to assure the beloved's total dependence on him and so deprives him of his family and wealth, bodily health and strength, and intellectual development (238 E–240 A). While his love lasts, the lover is a pest (240 C–E), but his love does not even last: after a time he comes to be ruled by 'right-minded reason', whereupon he turns away from his past, including his past promises to the beloved (241 A).

Socrates famously interrupts this speech to recant, and at the end of his recantation describes the non-lover's friendship for what

<sup>44</sup> Here, the fact that others besides those called lovers desire beauty is taken as a reason to find out what is distinctive about lovers' desire for beauty (the answer being that it is irrational and accompanied by bodily desires); by contrast, at *Sym.* 205 A–D the fact that others besides those called lovers desire good things and happiness is taken as a reason to discount the ordinary-language restriction of the term 'lover' and to count all desirers of good things lovers too (cf. 'these words . . . really belong to the whole', 205 D 7).

it really is: ‘diluted by human self-control, all it pays are cheap, human dividends, and though the slavish attitude it engenders in a friend’s soul is widely praised as virtue, it tosses the soul around for nine thousand years on the earth and leads it, mindless, beneath it’ (256 E–257 A). This condemnation of ‘human self-control’ and the ‘slavish’ attitude it engenders echoes the *Phaedo*’s condemnation of the ‘slavish’ moderation of those non-philosophers who ‘wallow in the mire’ of the underworld (68 E, 69 C). Merely human self-control is put in its proper place by contrast with philosophic virtue, but to show this, Socrates first makes the point that madness, not having one’s judgement in control, can be a blessing from the gods—as it is, for example, in prophecy and poetry. Socrates’ brief now is to show that love, too, can be a god-sent madness, the source of divine goods, but this requires him to introduce a new psychology.

This second psychology describes the soul as composed of a winged chariot driven by a charioteer and pulled by two horses; in humans, one of these horses is good and the other bad (246 A–B). The image of the charioteer expresses (better than the image of the farmer in the *Republic*) reason’s two functions: to manage the other parts and to know the truth. A charioteer manages his horses and uses them to get somewhere; reason manages non-rational motivations (and somehow uses them) to see the Forms (248 A). Conversely, representing the non-rational motivations as the chariot’s horses suggests that they are not (not even appetite is) merely obstacles to reason’s progress but somehow (as a whole, when properly trained) essential to it. It is the horses that are winged, and it is wings that enable ascent to the place of the Forms (246 D). And the horses as well as the charioteer respond to the beauty of the beloved—although the bad horse’s particular way of responding requires reining in, so to speak.

By contrast, the first psychology ignores the intrinsic value of, and rational desire for, knowing the truth, and so it can recommend control by rational judgement rather than by irrational desire only on the grounds that rational control, being sober, stable, and lasting, better equips us to have the very same goods sought by our irrational desires—it is in no position to say that rational control alone affords us access to divine goods.<sup>45</sup> The idea of a god-sent madness pulls

<sup>45</sup> This is my main reason for disagreeing with Martha Nussbaum’s claim that the *Phaedrus*’ first two speeches represent the views of Plato’s middle-period dialogues (*The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cam-

apart these two reasons for valuing rational control and shows that if the divine good of knowledge can come to us in some other way than via the controlled exercise of our rational powers, e.g. through madness, then we ought to value this madness—for the value of madness or rational control is derivative. From the perspective of the second psychology, we can also see that the first psychology neglects the insight into genuine value—responsiveness to beauty—possessed by our non-rational motivations.<sup>46</sup>

Representing reason as the charioteer leads us not only to identify with reason, but also to regard the behaviour (and presumably also the condition) of our appetites and emotions as our responsibility—just as a charioteer is responsible for his horses.<sup>47</sup> (The fact that charioteer and both horses survive death also encourages identification with them; contrast the post-mortem survival of only reason in the *Republic*, but cf. 246 D.)

After the bad horse has been bloodied by being pulled back by the bit many times, it becomes ‘humble enough to follow the charioteer’s warnings, and when it sees the beautiful boy it dies of fright’ (254 E). Here it seems as if violent as the training has been, appetite is at last able to follow reason without actual or threatened violence: perhaps forbidden desires are by now associated in memory with punishment, as in a trained horse which needs only the touch of the bit as a sign reminding it to obey.<sup>48</sup> Yet there are limits to how the charioteer can mould his horses. The charioteer’s reverence for the boy (which is prompted by his memory of Beauty enthroned next

bridge, 1986), ch. 7): it seems to me that the non-lover’s fault is a failure to appreciate what is most valuable about reason—he thinks it is control over the non-rational, rather than access to the divine—and that in the *Republic* it is already clear that what is most valuable is not merely rational rule and harmony, but rather contact with (or approach to the) Forms (a concomitant of which is rational rule and harmony). Cf. *Rep.* 590 C–D. I do agree with Nussbaum, however, that the *Phaedrus* acknowledges the role of emotions and appetites in the best life more than the *Republic* and *Phaedo* do.

<sup>46</sup> And in the *Timaeus* the appetitive part of the soul is supposed to house the power of divination and thereby have some grasp of the truth (71 D–E).

<sup>47</sup> Rowe’s comparison of the two psychological accounts could not be further from the truth: ‘Driver (or “ruler”) and second horse are already familiar to us from Socrates’ first speech: they are respectively reason and the desire for sensual gratification, or now, more precisely, those elements in us which make us capable of reasoning and desiring. To these elements Socrates now adds a third, the “noble and good” horse, which is required for a proper treatment of the “experiences and actions” of the soul’ (C. Rowe (trans. and comm.), *Plato: Phaedrus* (Warminster, 1986), 177).

<sup>48</sup> Thanks to Sarah Broadie for discussion on this point.

to Temperance) is contrasted with the fear which helps the bad horse hold back from the boy as the charioteer does and wishes it to do. Further, (part of) appetite remains somewhat recalcitrant, for when the lover and beloved are in bed, the bad horse pleads with the charioteer 'that after all its sufferings it is entitled to a little fun' (256 A).

The new psychology can represent the struggle involved in pursuing wisdom in a way that both prepares one for what is to come and supports one's resolve to persevere despite difficulties. One difficulty is of understanding the internal conflict and resistance to philosophic virtue, and the new psychology provides a way of thinking about this. When the bad horse pleads for sex, the noble horse and the charioteer both grow angry at it for trying to make them do the wrong thing, and try to restrain it, the charioteer bloodying the bad horse's mouth by yanking on the bit. In return, the bad horse calls them cowardly and unjust (254 B–D). Surprisingly, here the charioteer uses the whip and the bit to control the bad horse,<sup>49</sup> while the bad horse pleads with the charioteer and the good horse and reproaches them with cowardice and injustice. One point this makes is that our being rational allows our appetitive desires to appear to us as reasons, and our being appetitive allows our reasons to appear to us as violent forces.<sup>50</sup> We might develop this point to characterize the way in which a philosopher must consider the reasons in favour of even appetitive desires, since the philosopher's wisdom equips him with knowledge of what is good for the whole soul and each of its parts.

<sup>49</sup> Bobonich, *Utopia*, 314, thinks that the *Phaedrus*, like the *Timaeus*, rejects the *Republic's* distinction between controlling the appetitive part by force and by persuasion. But it seems to me that as in the *Republic*, so too in the later dialogues, appetites are controlled by persuasion as well as by force (presumably some can be controlled by reason while others must be controlled by force). For examples of the former: at *Phdr.* 254 D–E the bad horse is said to follow the charioteer's requests and warnings; at *Tim.* 70 A–B the explanation of the location of the spirited part in the chest is that this enables it to use force on the appetites if they should refuse to obey the dictates of reason.

<sup>50</sup> As an ex-smoker I find that nicotine cravings present arguments for their satisfaction: 'you can't concentrate on your writing unless you smoke' or 'you'll gain all kinds of weight if you stop smoking'. And as a parent I find that young children can experience their parents' reason-giving as a kind of aggression.

## 5. The status of the psychological accounts

I have argued for a relatively narrow conclusion, that Plato's personification of the soul and its parts can be accounted for by the practical and protreptic goal of representing the development of philosophic virtue to would-be philosophers.<sup>51</sup> But Plato's psychology comes as a package, and a question arises as to how much of the content of that psychology one should try to account for in terms of Plato's practical and protreptic goals. For example, does Plato (ever) think it a theoretical-explanatory truth that we have three types of motivations—appetitive, spirited, and rational—or is this part of his psychology also to be explained in terms of its practical and protreptic goals?<sup>52</sup>

In order to answer this question, we need to consider the disclaimers in Plato's accounts of the soul in addition to the remarks about limited accuracy in the *Republic* (noted above in Section 4). The *Phaedo* concludes its account of the afterlife of the soul with Socrates saying:

No sensible man would insist that these things are as I have described them, but I think it is fitting for a man to risk the belief—for the risk is a noble one—that this, or something like this, is true about our souls and their dwelling places, since the soul is evidently immortal, and a man should repeat this to himself as if it were an incantation, which is why I have been prolonging my own tale. (114 D)<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> A question may be raised here as to whether Plato took himself to be in the business of ethically transforming his readers and listeners, or whether this would have been his way of constructing himself and his audience. (This question was put to me by Stephen Menn.) I do not suppose that we are in a position to know either way, but it does seem to me that without the hope of transforming *someone*, the sort of writing Plato engages in would seem pointless.

<sup>52</sup> L. Edelstein has argued that Plato's ethical myths, about the fate of the soul in the afterlife, appeal to the non-rational parts of the soul, rousing and confirming their hopes and allaying their fears, for these parts cannot understand the dialectical arguments that speak to reason ('The Function of Myth in Plato's Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10/4 (1949), 463–81). I have been arguing that the representation of the parts of the soul as spoken to is itself 'mythical'.

<sup>53</sup> The *Timaeus*, claiming only to present a 'likely story' or 'likely account' of the cosmos, to which belongs the account of the tripartite soul and the bodily organs in which these parts are housed, warns of inconsistency and inaccuracy in this account (29 c). The *Meno* admits the fallibility of its account of the possibility of our learning what we do not know as recollecting truths latent in our souls, but insists on the value of believing that one must search for what one does not know (86 B–C).

The *Phaedrus* begins its account of the structure and history of the soul with the words:

To describe what the soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like [ $\phi$  δὲ εἶκειν] is humanly possible and takes less time. So let us do the second [ $\epsilon$ οικέτω . . .]. (246 A 5–6)

Referring back to this account of the soul later in the dialogue, Socrates calls it a ‘not altogether implausible account, a storylike hymn [ $\sigma$ υ παντάπασιν ἀπίθανον λόγον, μυθικόν τινα ὕμνον]’ (265 B 8–C 1).

Perhaps it is difficult to know the soul because all our experiences are of the embodied soul, whereas the soul may in its true nature be simple (*Rep.* 611 B–612 A; *Phaedo* 80 B). Or perhaps it is the embodied soul that cannot be known because it undergoes change and things that change cannot be known (cf. *Rep.* 477 A–479 D). Or perhaps again understanding a part of the soul requires understanding what (object of desire or perceptual property) it grasps (*Rep.* 611 E; *Tim.* 61 D). Yet despite these problems for knowledge of the soul, in the *Phaedrus* Plato suggests that his account of the soul is ‘likely’ (246 A 5–6), and in the *Phaedo* that the account is worth believing.

I take ‘likely’ to mean ‘compatible with what the truth must be’, where what the truth must be is established by dialectic; my model is the *Republic*’s way of determining permissible content for theology or stories about the gods.<sup>54</sup> Here, some truths about the gods are established by dialectic: god is good, the cause only of good things, and unchanging (379 B–383 A). These truths constitute patterns (*τύποι*) to which stories about the gods must conform (379 A, 380 C).<sup>55</sup> Socrates deems suitable for elementary education stories which, although ‘false, on the whole, . . . have some truth in them’ (377 A), so long as they involve only ‘falsehood in words’, but not ‘falsehood in the soul’, i.e. so long as they do not involve false beliefs about ‘the most important things’ (I take it this means about matters of value) (382 A–B). While falsehood in the soul is always bad, falsehood in words can be useful: against one’s enemies, to protect one’s

<sup>54</sup> The *Republic* does not call the stories about the gods ‘likely’, but instead ‘falsehoods’, albeit falsehoods with a core of moral truth.

<sup>55</sup> It is difficult to see what sorts of stories could be told about the gods that did not represent them as changing at all; perhaps the idea is that behaviour expressive of a stable disposition does not involve change and what the gods should not do is behave in ways that betoken conflicting or unstable dispositions.

friends from harming themselves, and in the case of stories of ancient events involving the gods; in these contexts, falsehoods should be made as much like the truth as possible (382 c–d).<sup>56</sup> A prime example of a valuable falsehood in words would be the Noble Lie, which although false about the citizens' birth and psychic make-up, expresses the moral truths that the citizens are interdependent and unequal. Similarly, the 'falsehoods in words' about the behaviour of gods and heroes express moral truths about what it is permissible or desirable to do and to be.<sup>57</sup> So, having established the 'patterns' to which representations of the gods must conform, Socrates introduces a second criterion by which to evaluate these representations: their effects on citizens' souls and behaviour. Presumably our lack of exact knowledge about the gods makes it impossible for us to evaluate the truth of these stories beyond their compatibility with the 'patterns' of theology.<sup>58</sup>

The treatment of the soul in the *Phaedrus* is quite similar to the *Republic's* treatment of stories about the gods. Socrates begins his preferred account of the soul with a bit of dialectic to prove the truth (*τἀληθές*, 245 c 4) that the soul is immortal and a self-mover (245 c–e), and then switches over to his likely account of the soul's complex structure and history (246 a). We may suppose, then, that the soul's being immortal and a self-mover acts as some sort of constraint on what can be included in the likely account—analogue to the gods'

<sup>56</sup> This last statement is ambiguous between 'falsehoods should be made to appear to be true so that they can convince people' and 'falsehoods should deviate from the truth as little as possible'. In the *Phaedrus* Plato identifies the skill of making *x* appear like *y* with persuasion or the production of conviction (rhetoric); this, he says, requires knowledge of the classes into which *x* and *y* fall, and that is achieved by dialectic (261 e–262 b, 263 a–c, cf. 273 d–274 a).

<sup>57</sup> For the gods to function as models for behaviour it does not seem necessary that people believe the stories about them to be true 'as a whole'. We imitate fictional characters even knowing that they are fictional. On the other hand, we may acquire beliefs, e.g. beliefs about value, through the fictions we encounter. Socrates seems keen that citizens of the ideal city believe the Noble Lie (414 d–415 d) and even more keen that they not believe that the gods behave as tradition has it that they do.

<sup>58</sup> In the *Republic* Socrates says that if the traditional stories about the gods turned out to be true, they should still not be broadcast because of their moral effects. Might this indicate that the *Republic's* stories about gods would still be told even if there were (contrary) knowledge about the gods' true nature, on the grounds that the stories have virtue-engendering effect in listeners' souls? (This suggestion was made by Alice van Harten.) The relationship between Plato's theology and ethics is a large and complex topic, but for my purposes it is sufficient to say that stories about the gods (and similarly stories about the soul) may not conflict with ethical truths. One way to say this is that if it turned out that Zeus and Aphrodite and the others did actually behave as Homer tells us, then they are not gods.

goodness and unchangeability in the *Republic*.<sup>59</sup> The account of the soul that follows need not be only Plato's best scientific theory of the soul to date; it may also be a falsehood in words expressing moral truths: that we are in part—and at best—the sorts of creatures that can know the truth, and that we will flourish if we pursue it even though it should cost us in other conventionally valued goods.

In Plato's own categories, then, the accounts of the soul are 'likely' 'falsehoods in words'. I think this means not that Plato never believed that, for example, we have appetitive, thumotic, and rational motivations, but rather that he would have always been open to revising such beliefs—in the light not only of what such motivations do and do not explain, but also of how such a self-understanding affects ethical progress. This is quite a different attitude from Aristotle's tolerance of imprecision in psychology done for ethical purposes (with which I began). For Aristotle, the goal of goodness requires only an imprecise ethical psychology—a precise psychology is required only for (a branch of) physics, and physics is not a part of the wisdom that makes us good. However, Plato does not exclude such knowledge from the wisdom that makes us good, so having an accurate and precise psychology would seem to be part of the goal. The ethical psychology offered in the dialogues, then, seems to have the status of a possibly true, provisional, motivationally approved-of, way for non-philosophers to understand themselves as they turn towards philosophy. Perhaps a more adequate ethical psychology lies in their future.

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<sup>59</sup> NB one would then expect the soul, since it is immortal, to be simple, but not even the gods' souls are simple in the *Phaedrus*.

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