

## **Appearances and Calculations: Plato's Division of the Soul**

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Why does Plato divide up the soul in just the way he does? The question is complicated by the fact that it is not quite clear how he does divide it. *Republic* 4 famously uses cases of motivational conflict to show that the soul has three parts: the rational part, which desires truth and the overall good of the soul, the spirited part, source of anger and ambition, and the appetitive part, which desires food, drink, sex, and other pleasures. In Book 10, however, Socrates twice more argues for a divide between the rational part and some other part of the soul, without stating how these divisions relate to the one already established. At 602c-603a he gives an argument based on the cognitive dissonance that sometimes occurs when we experience optical illusions: the rational part calculates the truth and believes in accordance with its calculations, while an inferior part believes that things are as they appear. Then at 603e-605c he gives a third argument, based on what we might call emotional conflict: the rational part wishes to follow calm deliberation, while a non-rational part longs to indulge in violent emotion.

This last division maps onto the Book 4 division fairly easily: most commentators assume that the emotional part is appetite, perhaps in combination with spirit, and I shall argue below that they are right to do so. The division based on optical illusions, however, is much harder to accommodate. The argument is concerned with cognitive instead of motivational conflict; worse, the kind of cognition in question bears no obvious relation to motivation at all. Thus interpreters tend to downplay the significance of this

psychic division, and many hold either that it deals with different parts of the soul from that of Book 4 or that the relationship between the two divisions is indeterminate.<sup>1</sup>

There is a serious problem for this widespread interpretation, however. As I will argue, a fair reading of *Republic*10 – that is, a reading not specifically constructed to avoid the conclusion that the illusion-believing part is appetite or spirit – shows that the illusion-believing part *is* (or includes) appetite and spirit. The only reason anyone has wished to resist this conclusion, I surmise, is its strangeness. And indeed it is strange. Why should appetite or spirit see the submerged stick as bent? Surely doing so satisfies no craving for pleasure, or ambition for honor. One might well agree with Annas’ diagnosis: Plato “fails to see that his argument will not work, that desire has nothing to do with optical illusions, because he thinks of the lower part of the soul as being merely the trashy and reason-resisting part.”<sup>2</sup>

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I have benefited greatly from discussion of this material with many people; I am particularly indebted to Rachel Barney, Cian Dorr, Matt Evans, Allan Silverman, Damien Storey, and audiences at Columbia and Rutgers.

<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that a new non-rational part is here introduced (C. Janaway, *Images of Excellence*, (Oxford, 1995), 144), that the nature of the non-rational part is here left indeterminate (M.F. Burnyeat, “Plato on the Grammar of Perceiving,” *Classical Quarterly* 26 (1976), 29-51, at 34), and that Book 10 posits a division within reason itself (N.R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato’s Republic* (Oxford, 1951), 239-40, A. Nehamas, “Plato on Imitation and Poetry,” in J.M.E. Moravcsik and P. Temko eds., *Plato on Beauty, Wisdom and the Arts*, (New Jersey, 1982), 47-78, M.F. Burnyeat, “Culture and society in Plato’s *Republic*,” Tanner Lectures on Human Values 20 (1999), 215-324, at 223, and D. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato’s Theaetetus* (Oxford, 2004), 113, note). Some, however, hold that Plato is referring to both appetite and spirit, if imprecisely (J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, 2 volumes (Cambridge, 1902), volume 2, 40; T. Penner, “Thought and Desire in Plato,” in G. Vlastos ed., *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, II (New York, 1971), 96-118), or to appetite alone (I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (Oxford, 1977), 5; J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* (Oxford, 1981), 131; C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: the Argument of Plato’s Republic* (Princeton, 1988), 127, 139). Analyses close to the one I give below are offered by R. Barney, “Appearances and Impressions” *Phronesis* 37 (1992), 282-313, at 286-7, and H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 2006), chapter 5.

<sup>2</sup> *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic*, 339.

The project of this paper is to take the Book 10 arguments not as embarrassments to be explained away, but instead as providing the key to Plato's division of the soul. I will argue that they illuminate a distinction that is absolutely central to Platonic psychology, but opaque and much misunderstood: the distinction between rationality and non-rationality.

What all three of the *Republic's* arguments for psychic division have in common is the claim that one part is rational while its opponent is not. More precisely, one part is guided by *logismos* – reasoning, or most literally calculation, in the narrow arithmetical sense or in the wider sense of reckoning and accounting – while its opponent is not. The best part of the soul's desires arise “out of calculation” in the first division (439d), it measures and calculates and “trusts in measurement and calculation” in the second (603a), and it “wishes to follow calculation” in the third (604d); Plato's standard name for this part is *to logistikon*, usually translated “the rational part,” but literally that which can or tends to calculate.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, appetite is *alogiston* – unreasoning, non-rational, or most literally uncalculating – (439d), spirit gets angry without calculation (*alogistôs*, 441c), the part that believes optical illusions forms its belief without regard to calculation (*logismos*, 602e-603a), and the emotional part is uncalculating (*alogiston*, 604d).

This distinction between rational and non-rational parts of soul is obviously of paramount importance to Plato: it is because one part has the capacity for *logismos*, a special capacity which the others lack, that this part is by nature superior and must rule the others if the agent is to be virtuous and happy. But just what is this special capacity? The question is much harder than it might seem. For, on a face-value reading of the dialogue, Plato grants the appetitive and spirited parts all sorts of states and abilities we

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<sup>3</sup> Translations are mine throughout except where otherwise noted.

might think paradigmatically rational: beliefs, including normative and evaluative ones,<sup>4</sup> the ability to be persuaded by argument,<sup>5</sup> and even the ability to recognize means toward given ends.<sup>6</sup> Hence the complaint that Plato simply contradicts himself:

[T]he appetitive element is purely appetitive and, as Plato himself says (439d7), has no reason in it...[Thus] it makes no sense at all to say that reason controls appetite with the agreement of appetite that reason should be in control [442c-d]. That would be to assign to appetite some degree of reason which by definition it cannot possess...If he had not been so brief and hasty in his account of virtues in the individual, he might have detected the inconsistency himself.<sup>7</sup>

Of course we are not bound to take the text at face value, and many do not. Some dismiss the apparent attributions of beliefs and the like to appetite and spirit as metaphorical; others insist that, despite Plato's misleading silence on the matter, most of the activities he attributes to the lower parts are mediated by the rational part.<sup>8</sup> But

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<sup>4</sup> The characterization of these parts' desires implies that they must have fairly sophisticated beliefs about what is the case, e.g., that x is drink, that y is an insult. 571c makes this explicit: the dreamer's appetitive part supposes (πίεταί) that he is having sex with his mother. As further evidence that appetite and spirit must be capable of something at least very like belief, Socrates seems to endorse Glaucon's claim at 441a-b that all children and many adults utterly lack *logismos*. Meanwhile, a number of passages dealing with the political equivalents of appetite and spirit, in Books 8 and 9, appear to attribute beliefs about what is good to these parts of the soul (see e.g. 554d); 574d very strongly implies that the appetitive part has beliefs about what is fine and shameful. Most unambiguous is the claim that in a temperate soul, the appetitive and spirited parts believe that reason "should" rule (δεῖν, 442d).

<sup>5</sup> Implied at 554d.

<sup>6</sup> Implied by the characterization of appetite as a lover of money (580e). It is worth noting that the *Phaedrus*' description of the non-rational parts makes all of these attributions completely explicit (see especially 253d-254e), and while the *Phaedrus*' tale of horses and charioteer is allegory, unless Plato conceives of the lower parts as capable of fairly sophisticated cognition it is very misleading and unilluminating allegory indeed.

<sup>7</sup> R.C. Cross and A.D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic* (New York, 1966), 123-4.

<sup>8</sup> The motive is charity. Some scholars hold that the non-rational parts cannot have beliefs and the like because they are purely conative (and the rational part purely cognitive, explicit claims that it has its own desires notwithstanding (see e.g. 580d)); for the classic rejection of this "faculty psychology" reading, see J. Moline, "Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche," *Archiv für*

these indirect readings, like the accusations of self-contradiction, are simply unmotivated unless we have a clear account of what abilities Plato means to deny these parts in calling them non-rational, an account grounded solely in Plato's texts rather than in any assumptions about the meaning of 'rational.'<sup>9</sup>

The fact is that Plato has a good claim to have invented the idea of rationality, and with it the rational/non-rational distinction. Although he doubtless drew on the preSocratics in important ways, he was the first to press into service the term *logismos* to characterize a broad range of mental activity and to set it off from the rest.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the word he chose suggests not the common human capacity for thought, language and belief, but some ability over and above these: in ordinary Greek usage a *logistikos* person is one particularly skilled in the more difficult forms of thinking (see e.g. *Republic* 526b), while an *alogistos* one is no sub-human, but simply foolish or unreasonable (see e.g. *Apology* 37c; cf. *Republic* 441a-b).

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*Geschichte der Philosophie* 60 (1978): 1-26. Others allow that each part is agent-like, with its own cognition and conation, but think that non-rational cognition must, to qualify as non-rational, be much more primitive than these passages imply. For a recent example of the metaphor strategy for downplaying these passages see R.F. Stalley, "Persuasion and the Tripartite Soul in Plato's *Republic*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XXXII (2007), 63-89; of the rational mediation strategy, see M. Anagnostopoulis, "The Divided Soul and the Desire for Good in Plato's *Republic*," in G. Santas ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (Blackwell, 2006), 166-188.

<sup>9</sup> Much is made of 437e-438a, which argues that "thirst itself is for drink itself" rather than for drink of a particular sort: the passage is often taken to show that appetites are "bare urges" or "simple desires," involving no cognition of any kind. But (a) the point of the passage is not nearly as clear as is often assumed, and Socrates' analogy between "thirst itself" and "knowledge itself" should make us hesitate to conclude that he has in mind any claim about cognitive impoverishment (see also my brief discussion in section 4); and (b) as we have seen above, the *Republic* also applies the term *alogiston* (non-rational) to a wide range of cognitively complex desires, emotions, and other phenomena. I thus suspect that assumptions about rationality play a role both in the preference for the "bare urge" reading of the passage and in the insistence that this one passage reveals the core meaning of *alogiston* while all the many others are misleading.

<sup>10</sup> I am here strongly influenced by M. Frede's arguments about the emergence of the concept of rationality in his Introduction to M. Frede and G. Striker, eds., *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford, 1996).

Rather than accusing Plato of muddling his own distinction, then, and rather than trying to explain away the evidence, we would do better to examine his various characterizations of the parts of the soul in search of a substantive concept of rationality that explains his carving up psychic phenomena the way he does. The best place to start, I submit, is with the mystery with which we began: the relation between the *Republic's* three arguments for the division of the soul. For if we can find something common to the beliefs, desires, and emotions classified as rational, and something common to those classified as non-rational, we will have an excellent basis for an account of what rationality amounts to on Plato's view.

That is what I undertake here. I begin by giving a reading of *Republic* 10 that shows that appetite and spirit believe optical illusions. I then develop an explanation for this, as follows.

First, in the optical illusion argument Plato is re-describing the parts of the soul with an emphasis not on their motivational but rather on their cognitive aspects. The characterization relies on a distinction between how things really are and how they *appear*, where appearances are often false and always ontologically deficient. The non-rational parts are those that unreflectively accept appearances; the rational part is that which can calculate, where calculation involves reflecting on and when necessary resisting the way things appear.

Second, these cognitive qualities entail and explain the parts' motivational characters. As the *Republic's* third division emphasizes, the category of appearances includes not only straightforward sensory appearances such as that a stick is straight or bent, but also what I shall call evaluative appearances, such as that pastries are good or an

insult bad. All passions (desires, emotions, pleasures and pains)<sup>11</sup> are responses to things *qua* valuable, but only calculation can grasp what is truly good or bad, as opposed to what merely appears so. Thus it is because the rational part can calculate that it desires what is best overall, and it is because the appetitive and spirited parts unreflectively accept appearances that they have inferior passions. To say that (e.g.) the appetitive part sees the stick as bent does not, then, mean that we see the stick as bent because doing so satisfies some craving; it means rather that one and the same susceptibility to appearances explains both our perception of the stick and our appetites for pleasure.

To put the point more strongly: we discover in Book 10 that what it is for a part of the soul to be non-rational, with all that that entails for its ethical status, is for it to accept unreflectively that things are just as they appear to be, while what it is for the rational part to be rational, with all that that entails for its ethical status, is for it to be able to transcend appearances by calculating how things really are. These are the defining features of rationality and non-rationality, which unify and explain the various traits of the parts of the soul and their various characterizations throughout the dialogue.

One note before I begin: my focus is on the parts of the soul as presented in the *Republic*, but I draw on other dialogues – especially the *Protagoras* and *Timaeus* – in developing and defending my view. Some might object to my doing so, on the grounds that there are significant differences between the psychological theories of these three dialogues.<sup>12</sup> If we can find continuities across the dialogues, however – such as the

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<sup>11</sup> Unlike Aristotle, Plato does not officially introduce the term ‘passions’ (*pathê* or *pathêmata*) to pick out emotions, desires, pleasures and pains as a class, but he frequently uses these words to refer to these states (as e.g. at *Timaeus* 69c, quoted below). The theory I will go on to attribute to Plato should explain why he groups these states together.

<sup>12</sup> The *Protagoras* denies the possibility of the kind of motivational conflict on which the *Republic*’s tripartition is based, while the *Timaeus* denies *doxa*, belief, to the appetitive part of the

explanation of certain emotions and desires as responses to quasi-perceptual appearances of things as good or bad – then we should welcome this fact as evidence that, differences notwithstanding, there is something common to them that can illuminate the difference between rationality and non-rationality as Plato conceived it.

### **1. Parts of the soul in *Republic* 10**

As part of Book 10's attack on imitative poetry, Socrates appeals to a division in the soul in order to identify the part over which visual imitation (painting) exerts its power (602c-603b).<sup>13</sup> First, he claims that when we experience optical illusion we often simultaneously believe both that things are as they appear and that things are as measurement and reasoning prove them to be.<sup>14</sup> Second, he reminds us of a principle he used in Book 4's argument for psychic division (436b-c): that no one thing can do or undergo opposites regarding the same thing at the same time – the “principle of opposites,” as it is often called. He even makes explicit reference to that earlier argument (“Didn't we say...?”, 603a), a sign that we are at the very least meant to bear Book 4's

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soul (77b-c, quoted below). C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast* (Oxford, 2002) argues that the *Timaeus* represents a change in Plato's view of the cognitive capacities of the lower parts of the soul, while Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, argues that it reflects instead a revision of Plato's concept of belief. My arguments should provide indirect support for seeing the *Timaeus*' psychology as continuous with the *Republic*'s, despite the change in terminology.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed defense of conclusions similar to those I reach in this section, see Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, chapter 5.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle denied that we believe the false appearance, insisting on a distinction between how things appear to us and how we believe them to be (*De Anima* 3.3. 428a24 ff.), and most contemporary philosophers would take his side. Did Plato ignore the possibility that one might experience an appearance without assenting to it, a possibility that would have barred the application of the principle of opposites here, allowing him to attribute the experience of the appearance and the disbelief in it to the same part of the soul? I suspect that he is instead expressing the view that there is real conflict in these cases: we are compelled by the false appearance even though we do not all things considered believe it. Nonetheless, Plato nowhere explicitly distinguishes between awareness of and assent to appearances within the lower parts of the soul; on the view I attribute to him, this might be explained by the view that for these parts assent is automatic.

division in mind at this point. Next, he uses the principle of opposites to show that there must be two distinct parts of the soul, one that believes in accordance with measurements and calculation, one that believes against them in accordance with the *phainomenon*, appearance (602d). Since measuring, calculating and weighing are the work of the *logistikon*, and since this is the best part of the soul, it must be an inferior (φαῦλον) part of the soul that believes in accordance with appearances (603a). When all goes well, the rational part “rules in us” (602c-d). Just as, according to Book 4, a person is ethically virtuous when reason rules in her and appetite and spirit are ruled (441e ff), here a person is cognitively virtuous when the calculating part rules and the appearance-believing part is ruled.

Socrates takes the argument to establish that art that trades in visual images “consorts with” an inferior of the soul. But visual art was all along of merely illustrative interest, Book 10’s real target being imitative poetry. Does it, too, target an inferior part of the soul? This is Socrates’ question as he launches a direct discussion of the psychology of imitative poetry (603b-c). Now we get an investigation of human behavior, both as the subject of tragedy (what sort of behavior tragedies represent) and as the effect of tragedy (what sort of behavior tragedy induces in its audience). It is in this context that Plato offers his third argument for a division in the soul.

The argument centers on cases of conflict between an impulse to yield to strong emotion and a wish to follow “reason (*logos*) and law” (604a). Once again, the principle of opposites is used to infer the presence of two parts (604b). On one side there is the *logistikon* again, now described as the part that resists emotion, follows calculation (*logismos*, 604d), and deliberates about what to do. Opposed to this is an unreasoning

(*alogiston*, 604d) part which “leads us toward memories of suffering and toward lamentation and is insatiable for these things” (604d), “hungers for the satisfaction of weeping and thoroughly lamenting, being by nature such as to have appetites for these things” (606a), feels pity (606b), prompts laughter (606c), and is also the source of “lusts and spirit and all the appetitive desires and pains and pleasures in the soul” (606d). This part is inferior (605a) and “thoughtless” (ἀνόητον) (605b). It is this part that tragedy “nurtures” and empowers (606d); thus, Socrates concludes, it is right to bar such poetry from the ideal city.

I want to show (i) that the emotional part involved in this last division is identical to or includes appetite and spirit, and (ii) that this emotional part is also identical to the illusion-believing part involved in Book 10’s earlier division of the soul. The consequence, of course, is the claim people find so bizarre: that the illusion-believing part is or includes appetite and spirit.<sup>15</sup>

(i) *The emotional part includes appetite and spirit*

Plato does not outright identify the part of the soul targeted by tragedy with appetite and spirit, but he comes very close. Consider a passage I quoted in part above:

Concerning lusts and spirit (θυμῶν) and all the appetitive desires (ἐπιθυμητικῶν) and pains and pleasures in the soul...poetic imitation...nurtures these things, watering them although they should wither, and sets them up to rule in us although they should be ruled. (606d)

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<sup>15</sup> It should be clear that I am using ‘part’ in a loose sense; I take this to be justified by Plato’s purposes in Book 10. See below, and compare Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, 65.

Here we have unmistakable allusions to the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul (θυμός or τὸ θυμῶδες, and the ἐπιθυμητικόν). (Even if we choose to translate θυμός here as ‘anger,’ this emotion has been attributed to spirit throughout.) If poetic imitation nurtures appetitive and spirited desires by influencing some unreasoning part of the soul, it must be that this unreasoning part of the soul is or includes both appetite and spirit.

Moreover, the general characterization of this part of the soul is strongly reminiscent of Plato’s characterization of the appetitive and spirited parts earlier in the dialogue. It is “insatiable” for grief and lamentation (ἀπλήστως ἔχων, 604d): variations of ἀπληστῆς have frequently been used to characterize the appetites.<sup>16</sup> It “*hungers* for the satisfaction of weeping and sufficiently lamenting, being by nature such as to have an *appetite* (ἐπιθυμεῖν) for these things” (606a, emphasis mine). And the type of character that gives in to excessive emotions – that is, the type ruled by this unreasoning part of the soul – is “irritable and multicolored” (ἀγανακτικόν τε καὶ πικίλῳ, 605a): ‘multicolored’ has earlier been used to describe the democratic character, who is ruled by his appetites (561e; cf. 557c, 558c, 559d), and to describe the appetites themselves (588c; see also 404e), while ἀγανακτικόν (which occurs in a similar context also at 604e) strongly suggests spirit, the source of anger.

Furthermore – and this consideration seems to me decisive – the *Republic*’s earlier discussion of poetry and art, in Books 2 and 3, makes clear that poetry is important in education precisely because it strongly influences both appetite and spirit, for better or worse. The “musical” education prescribed in Books 2 and 3 is designed to harmonize

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<sup>16</sup> At 442a, 555b, 562b, 562c, 578a, 596b, and 590b. (Plato also uses the word once to characterize the rational part’s love for wisdom, at 475c.)

spirit with reason (411e); it can do so because poetry affects spirit by presenting certain things as worthy of honor and admiration, or of outrage and disdain. Meanwhile, dangerous poetry offers great pleasures, but makes people intemperate:<sup>17</sup> given Book 4's characterization of the appetitive part as pleasure-seeking, and of temperance as involving appetite-mastery, this implies that it strengthens people's appetites. Precisely this concern is echoed at the conclusion of Book 10's discussion of poetry: "If you let in the pleasurable muse in lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will be kings in your city" (607a). Book 10's complaint that imitative poetry strengthens and nurtures an inferior part of the soul to the point that it will usurp the rational part is, then, a reiteration of Books 2 and 3's complaint that this kind of poetry fosters vice by encouraging unruly appetites and leading spirit astray.

Some protest that neither appetite nor spirit is at issue on the grounds that Book 10 is concerned with emotions (like grief) not explicitly included in the earlier characterization of these parts.<sup>18</sup> But the allusions to appetitive and spirited desire are so strong that it is more likely that Plato is here expanding his characterization of these parts. Alternately, and perhaps most plausibly, we may take it that in Book 10 Plato is simply not concerned with the distinction between the various non-rational elements in the soul – not interested in ascribing certain motivations to the appetitive part in contrast with the spirited, nor in the question of whether there are other non-rational parts besides.<sup>19</sup> Instead, he is here concerned with the distinction between the rational part of

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<sup>17</sup> 390a, 390b, 397d, 399e.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. A.W. Price, *Mental Conflict* (Routledge, 1995), 68-9.

<sup>19</sup> In *Republic* 4 Plato says that virtue is a matter of "harmonizing the three [parts of soul], just like the three notes in a musical scale, lowest and highest and middle, *and any others there may be in between*" (443d, emphasis mine). If this last phrase refers to the parts of the soul it indicates that the Book 4 division is not exhaustive (and even if it refers to musical notes it arguably

the soul and the rest of the soul taken as a whole, so that the differences between appetite, spirit and any other non-rational parts matter far less than their common feature of non-rationality. (This indeterminacy between the non-rational parts will be less problematic if we can demonstrate that there is some feature shared both by appetitive and spirited desire as we know them from the earlier books and by the impulse to yield to strong emotions, a feature that justifies characterizing them all as non-rational. A main claim of this paper will be that the illusion argument reveals such a feature.)

(ii) *The emotional part is the illusion-believing part*

Recall the argumentative structure of Book 10. The optical illusion argument establishes that visual imitative art appeals to a non-rational part of the soul; then Socrates inquires whether imitative poetry does as well, and addresses the question by examining the psychology of tragedy. Now look at how he phrases the result of that inquiry: imitative poetry appeals to a part that is not merely similar in its non-rationality to that appealed to by visual art, but is in fact *the very same part of the soul*:

[T]he imitative poet..., by making images (εἰδωλα) far removed from the truth, gratifies the part of the soul that is thoughtless and doesn't distinguish greater things from lesser, but thinks that the same things are at one time large and another time small. (605b-c)

This is an unmistakable reference to one of the optical illusions discussed in Book 10's first division argument: "The same magnitude viewed from nearby and from afar does not seem equal to us" (602c). Thus 605b-c states that the imitative poet appeals to the

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suggests the same point, by analogy); if so, however, it also indicates that Plato is happy to leave the matter indeterminate.

part of the soul that believes that a person standing at a distance is smaller than he was when standing closer – that is, to the part of the soul that perceives and believes optical illusions.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this is just what we should expect from Book 10 (although the argument could certainly be clearer). Socrates has argued that the imitative poet, like the painter, produces mere images, things far removed from the truth. The assumption underlying the conclusion at 605b-c seems to be that images, whether visual or poetic, all appeal to the same inferior, unreasoning part of the soul. (On the nature of poetic images, see section 3).

Our reading has shown, then, that it is the appetitive and spirited parts that believe the appearances in optical illusions.<sup>21</sup> In the next section I show that this result is far from anomalous: elsewhere in the *Republic* and in other dialogues, Plato contrasts appetite and spirit with the rational part by characterizing them as responsive to, and unable to transcend, perceptual appearances.

## 2. The non-rational soul as the seat of perception

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<sup>20</sup> Most of those who argue that the inferior part identified in the optical illusion passage is not the same as that targeted by imitative poetry ignore 605b-c; Burnyeat dismisses it as a misleading overstatement of an analogy (Burnyeat, “Culture and society in Plato's *Republic*,” 224-6).

<sup>21</sup> There is an important but inconclusive textual objection to this reading: 602e4-6 reads, on the usual translation, “But often when this [the *logistikon*] has measured and has indicated that some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposites appear *to it* (τῷ ὑτῷ) at the same time” (based on the translation of G.M.A Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve (henceforth Grube/Reeve), in J.M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, 1997); emphasis mine). This implies that it is a sub-part of the *logistikon* that receives and believes the illusion. (See note 1 above for a list of those who accept this reading.) Natural as this translation may be, the weight of the evidence given here is against it. (Additional arguments are provided by Lorenz, *The Brute Within*.) A promising alternative translation of the sentence is suggested by Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, vol. 2, at 408 and 466-7 (revived with slight revision by Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, 68); others are proposed by B. Jowett and L. Campbell, *Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1894) and Barney, “Appearances and Impressions,” 286-7, note.

A passage from the *Timaeus*, evidently ignored by those who find incredible the suggestion that appetite or spirit see the stick as bent, explicitly and unambiguously associates illusion-perception with the appetitive part of the soul:

The part of the soul that has appetites for food and drink and whatever else it feels a need for, given the body's nature...[does not] understand reason (*logos*)...[or] have an innate regard for any arguments (*logoi*), but...[is] much more enticed by images and phantoms night and day. Hence the god conspired with this very tendency by constructing a liver [as the bodily seat of the appetites]....so that the force of its thoughts sent down from the mind might be stamped upon it as upon a mirror that receives the stamps and returns images.

(*Timaeus* 70d-71b)<sup>22</sup>

The appetitive part responds not to reasoning, but instead to “images and phantoms” (εἴδωλα καὶ φαντάσματα): that is, to the kind of shadowy appearances that occupy the lowest rung of the *Republic*'s ontology.<sup>23</sup> This is strong confirmation of our reading of *Republic* 10. But the *Timaeus* goes further: it attributes to the appetitive part – arguably along with spirit – not just illusory perception, but sense-perception in general:

Within the body [the gods] built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it those terrible but necessary passions (παθήματα): pleasure...pain...daring and fear...; also *thumos* [anger or spirit]...and hope. These they fused with unreasoning sense-perception (αἰσθήσει δὲ ἀλόγῳ) and

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<sup>22</sup> Quotations from the *Timaeus* are based on the translation of D. J. Zeyl in Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works*.

<sup>23</sup> Plato uses the term φαντάσματα for the shadows and reflections that are at the lowest level of the divided line (510a), εἴδωλα for the shadows in the cave (520c), and both terms for the products of imitative art (599a, 599d, 601b, and 605c).

all-venturing *erôs*, and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul. (*Timaeus* 69c-d)

Plato reiterates the point, and also emphasizes the contrast between perception and calculation, in commenting on the appetitive part at *Timaeus* 77b-c: this part “has no share at all of belief or calculation (ἀπισμῶν) or understanding (νοῦν), but instead of perception, pleasant and painful, with appetites.” Thus the *Timaeus* explicitly attributes sensory perception to the appetitive part, and at least suggests, at 69c-d, that spirit shares in perception as well.<sup>24</sup>

When we turn back to the *Republic* with the *Timaeus*’s claim in mind, we notice strong associations between perception and the non-rational parts of the soul. Consider Book 5’s contrast between true philosophers and the “lovers of sights and sounds,” who have no awareness of the imperceptible Form of Beauty but are devoted to the beauty they perceive through sight and hearing (475d ff).<sup>25</sup> Philosophers are ruled by the rational parts of their souls. Although Plato does not emphasize the point, clearly the lovers of sights and sounds are not: if their rational parts are not free to contemplate the Forms, it must be because they are enslaved to appetite or spirit. If those ruled by

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<sup>24</sup> The *Timaeus*’ “mortal soul” is clearly to be identified with the *Republic*’s appetitive and spirited parts: see e.g. the characterizations at *Timaeus* 70a-b. 69c-d could be read as listing perception as an ingredient that will be housed in one or the other division of the mortal soul, with 77b-c settling the question of which part by assigning it to appetite, but the description of perception and *erôs* as “fused” (συγκερασάμεναι) with all the rest implies that each of these two features belongs to both parts of the mortal soul.

<sup>25</sup> Commentators point out that the “sights and sounds” in question are theatrical spectacles, but in the context of Book 5-7’s metaphysical and epistemological divide between the perceptible and imperceptible the literal interpretation is clearly intended as well. See Adam’s note *ad loc*: “σφίαια in φιλο-σφίαια is presently defined so as to exclude sense-perception: hence ‘lovers of sights and sounds’ are not ‘lovers of knowledge’” (*The Republic of Plato*, vol. 1 at 334).

appetite or spirit are also wedded to perception, the implication is that appetite and spirit themselves are confined to perception-based thought.<sup>26</sup>

The attribution of perception to appetite and spirit further confirms our reading of *Republic* 10. This may seem obvious: it is unsurprising that a part of the soul responsible for ordinary perception would be responsive to illusory perceptual appearances as well. But Plato also has a deeper reason for treating ordinary perception as importantly similar to illusory perception, and for assigning both to the non-calculating parts of the soul: perception, in sharp contrast with calculation, has access only to mere appearances.

It will be easiest to put this point in the terms of *Republic* 6's divided line (509d-511e). The lower half of the line is the "visible" realm, and more generally the perceptible, and while Plato certainly distinguishes between ordinary perceptible objects (the second level) and things like shadows and reflections (the lowest level), he also tends to assimilate the two, most explicitly in the *Timaeus*, where he calls the whole physical world a picture (εἰκῶν) and phantom (φάντασμα) of the intelligible (52c2-3; cf. 49d-3). Thus Plato uses the lowest section of the line as a metaphor for the perceptible world as a whole, and the reason for this is clear: on his view, everything we can perceive is but a shadow and image of what is real, the Forms. "As the opinable is to the knowable" – that is, as the whole perceptible realm is to the intelligible – "so the likeness is to the thing that it is like" (510a). What most of us take to be the real world is a mere shadow of reality, and what most of us take to be true merely apparent.

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<sup>26</sup> Bobonich puts it well: "Although the *Republic* does not make fully clear the relation between perception and the lower parts of the soul, the lower parts do have access to perception and the beliefs that are a part of perception, while they lack higher sorts of cognitive abilities" (*Plato's Utopia Recast*, 322). Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, also argues that appetite and spirit exercise and are limited to perception-based cognition.

While not all perception is illusory in the same way as the perception of the submerged stick, then, perception never captures the truth in the full Platonic sense: never gets beyond appearances to capture being, for this is imperceptible. This is the view that underlies *Republic 5*'s denigration of the perceptible world as opinable but unknowable, the *Phaedo*'s similar argument about the cognitive unreliability and ontological deficiency of the perceptible world, and the view that the Forms, which wholly *are* and are knowable, are inaccessible to perception. Thus, just as in the metaphysical case, Plato uses the lowest epistemological section of the divided line as a metaphor for the whole lower half. "What about someone who believes in beautiful things, but doesn't believe in the Beautiful itself?" (that is, someone who recognizes only what can be perceived): "Isn't this dreaming?" (476c).

If perception can never get us beyond the dream-world of mere appearances, however, another kind of cognition has just that task: *logismos*. *Logismos* in the narrow sense – a branch of mathematics closely related to arithmetic – joins arithmetic as the first subject of study prescribed in the education designed to turn souls away from the perceptible world of becoming and toward the intelligible realm of being (522c). Relying on perception keeps us in the cave, but counting and calculating about what we perceive can lead us out. Plato also uses *logismos* and its verbal variants in their more general senses to describe the kind of cognition whereby we can transcend the perceptible world:

Do sight or hearing offer people any truth?...And if those bodily senses are not precise or clear, our other senses can hardly be so...When then, does the soul grasp the truth?...Is it not in reasoning (ἐν τῷ λογίσεισθαί) if anywhere that any of the things that *are* become clear to the soul? (Phaedo 65b-c)

The famous finger passage of *Republic* 7 (523a ff.) makes the same claim: when contradictions make us realize the limits of perception, “the soul, summoning calculation (*logismos*) and understanding (νόησις)” (524b) searches for the truth in the imperceptible, purely intelligible realm.

These passages show that calculation, in both its narrow and broad senses, stands to perception in general just as it stands to illusory perception in the *Republic* 10 passage. Even veridical perception grasps only inadequate appearances, and thus needs supervision and correction by *logismos*.

Thus Plato provides a clear principle for characterizing perception as *alogiston*: it is sharply opposed to calculation, in being limited to appearances. As we have seen, he also assigns perception to the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul, the parts whose desires and emotions he calls *alogiston*. We may still worry that this move is unprincipled: here Plato is simply using *alogiston* as a catch-all term, and carelessly lumping inferior cognition together with inferior passions in the same part of the soul. In the next section I show that the *Republic*'s third division of the soul provides a much better rationale. Appetitive and spirited passions belong to the non-rational, perceiving part of the soul – the part that is unable to calculate, and thus limited to mere appearances – because they are unreflective acceptances of appearances: not now of ordinary sensory appearances, but of appearances of things as good and bad.

### **3. Evaluative appearances**

*Republic* 10's account of the passions will be easier to recognize if we start with another passage in which Plato compares the experience of optical illusions to moral error, one that makes clearer what analogy he sees between the two: the "art of measurement" passage from the *Protagoras*. This passage famously offers a revisionist account of practical error; in doing so, it also implies a revisionist account of the passions that motivate it.

Most people, says Socrates, maintain that they sometimes act badly because their knowledge of what is best is overpowered by some other psychic force: "sometimes anger (*thumos*), sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, at other times *erôs*, often fear" (352b-c) – that is, by precisely those passions that the *Republic* and *Timaeus* will assign to the non-rational parts of the soul. In his argument against this claim, Socrates gives his own account of these passions: they are (or include) evaluations of their objects, which may be dangerously false.<sup>27</sup> Fear, for example, is "an expectation (προσδοκία) of something bad" (358d): in being afraid of something, we are taking that thing to be bad. What is wrong with the coward is not that he acts on fear, but that his fear involves an evaluative mistake: he is ignorant about what is truly bad (360c), and so expects as bad – fears – something that is not. Likewise, the argument implies, what is wrong with the self-indulgent person is not that she acts on her appetite for pleasure, but that this appetite involves an evaluative mistake: she is wrong about what is truly pleasant, and so desires as most pleasant something that is not.

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<sup>27</sup> The definition of fear as a προσδοκία, advance-belief (see next sentence), certainly implies that this passion *is* an evaluative belief or belief-like state; *Laws* 644c-d defines fear and also confidence as *doxai*, beliefs. It may, however, be going beyond what Plato had worked out to insist that he means to equate passions with evaluations rather than holding that they are, e.g., partly constituted by evaluations and partly constituted by physical feelings.

Socrates explains these mistakes by analogy with optical illusions. Just as the same thing appears larger when near at hand and smaller when far away (356c – the same example we find in *Republic* 10), something near in time may appear more pleasant or painful than it is, and something remote in time less so. In matters practical, then, just as in matters visual, we are led astray by false appearances. Moreover, we can ensure that our actions are correct, just as we can ensure that our visual beliefs are true, only by using *measurement* to determine how things really are:

While the power of appearance (τῆς φαντασίαν) makes us wander all over the place in confusion, often changing our minds about the same things and regretting our actions and choices, ...the art of measurement, in contrast, would make the appearance (φάντασμα) lose its power by showing us the truth...and would save our life... People who make mistakes concerning the choice of pleasures and pains – that is, goods and bads – make these mistakes through a lack of knowledge...of measurement. (Protagoras 356d-357d)<sup>28</sup>

These last lines remind us of what is most fundamentally at issue in this part of the *Protagoras*: mistakes about “goods and bads.”<sup>29</sup> The appearances that lead us astray in matters of action are value-appearances: appearances of things as good or bad, worthy of pursuit or of avoidance. Virtue consists in overcoming “the power of appearance” via the “art of measurement” – in rationally evaluating different alternatives to see which is truly best. Through the scrutiny, comparison, criticism, and sometimes rejection of appearances we reach the truth about value, and desires and emotions that result from these measurements lead us aright: the courageous person is safe in acting on his fears,

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<sup>28</sup> Translation by S. Lombardo and K. Bell in Cooper ed., *Plato: Complete Works*.

<sup>29</sup> I here bracket the question of why Socrates in this part of the *Protagoras* equates the good with the pleasant.

because his fear is based on knowledge of what is truly bad (360a-d). The passions that motivate wrong action, meanwhile, are (or include) the unreflective acceptance of false value-appearances. The intemperate person who craves excessive bodily pleasures does so because these appear to be better than they really are; the coward who cannot stand his ground in battle fears death because it appears to be worse than it really is.

It is worth noting briefly that this view has much in common with the theories of the passions developed explicitly by Aristotle and the Stoics. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* defines various passions as responses to quasi-perceptual appearances of things as good or bad.<sup>30</sup> To give the most striking examples, fear is “a pain or disturbance arising from the appearance of a destructive or painful future evil (ἐκ φαντασίας μέλλοντος κακῆς) (*Rhetoric* 1382a21), pity “a pain taken in an apparent evil (ἐπὶ φαινόμενῳ κακῶ), destructive or painful, befalling one who does not deserve it” (1385b21 ff).<sup>31</sup> Despite a radically different underlying psychological theory, the Stoic definition is strikingly similar: passions are (false) appearance-based value judgments, beliefs that what merely appears good or bad really is so. Appetite is for what appears good (τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν), fear is of what appears bad.<sup>32</sup> Pleasure and pain, meanwhile, result from the presence of these apparently good or bad things:<sup>33</sup> pleasure is “a fresh belief that something good is present,” pain or distress “a fresh belief that something bad is

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<sup>30</sup> For this interpretation of the passions in the *Rhetoric*, see among others A. Nehamas, “Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*,” in A. Nehamas and D. Furley eds., *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, (Princeton, 1994), 257-82, and G. Striker, “Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the *Rhetoric* and His Moral Psychology” in A.O. Rorty ed. *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 286-302.

<sup>31</sup> Other relevant definitions include those of anger (*Rhetoric* 1378a31), hope (1383a17), shame (1383b13), indignation (*nemesis*, 1387a8), envy (1387b23) and emulation (1388a32).

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Stobaeus 2.881 8-90.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

present,”<sup>34</sup> where such beliefs are assents to false appearances (or “impressions”:  
φαντασῖαι, *species*).<sup>35</sup> This is not the place for a careful investigation of the continuities  
and differences between Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics on the passions, but the  
similarities are worth noting, and, given Plato’s enormous influence on his successors,  
should I think count as confirmation that some version of the view of passions as  
responses to evaluative appearances is there to be found in Plato.

If we could find evidence of this view in the *Republic*, we would have an  
explanation for Book 10’s equation of the passionate and illusion-believing parts of the  
soul. The project may seem doubtful, because the *Republic*’s psychological theory is  
notoriously different from the one implicit in the *Protagoras*: the *Protagoras* denies the  
possibility of motivational conflict, treats all desire as reason-sensitive, and makes no  
distinction between better and worse parts of the soul.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the continuities are  
stronger than generally recognized. In the *Protagoras*, the virtuous are those whose  
passions arise from the art of measurement; in the *Republic*, they are those whose souls  
are ruled by the passions of the rational part of the soul, the *logistikon*. As we have seen,  
both in his name for this best part of the soul and in his descriptions of it Plato  
emphasizes the centrality of calculation to all its doings. Calculation is obviously similar  
to measurement, and *Republic* 10’s optical illusion passage not only groups them together  
(along with weighing and counting) as belonging to the rational part of the soul (602d-e),  
but characterizes both as countering the rule of appearance, τὸ φαινόμενον – a striking

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<sup>34</sup> Pseudo-Andronicus, *On Passions* 1; also attributed to Chrysippus by Galen, *On Hippocrates’  
and Plato’s Doctrines* 4.2.1-6.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Seneca, *De ira*, 2.1-3.

<sup>36</sup> I give my own account of the differences between the *Protagoras* and the *Republic* on this  
topic, and argue that it is Plato’s changing views about the “power of appearance” that motivates  
the shift from the *Protagoras*’ psychology to that of the *Republic*, in my “Pleasure and Illusion in  
Plato,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72 (2006), 503-35.

echo of the *Protagoras*' contrast between "the art of measurement and the power of appearance" (*Prot.* 356d). Given that *Republic* 10, like the *Protagoras*, uses resistance to illusory perceptual appearances as an analogy for ethical virtue, could it be that the *Republic* too construes non-virtuous passions as responses to deceptive evaluative appearances? We find evidence that it does in *Republic* 10's discussion of the parts of soul in connection with tragedy.

Socrates' main complaint against tragedy is that it corrupts the soul by strengthening the non-rational part(s). He puts this charge in two ways. First: tragedy is dangerous because it produces "images that are far removed from truth" (605b-c, quoted in section 2 above). Second: tragedy is dangerous because it induces strong emotions (see especially 606a and 606d). The obvious inference is that tragedy induces emotions *by* producing images: that is, that the emotions in question are responses to images.

But what sort of images are at issue? As many have noted, Socrates thinks tragedy dangerous not because it presents fiction as fact, but rather because it reinforces and exploits widespread but false judgments of value.<sup>37</sup> It presents certain things as good – glory, revenge, the daring and passion of an Achilles – and other things as terrible: death, disgrace, the loss of one's child. In Socrates' view these values are badly mistaken: as he is about to reiterate in the remainder of Book 10, what is truly good for us is being just, and what is truly bad is being unjust. But most people have false value-beliefs, and it is to these that tragedy panders. Thus the tragedian's images are evaluative

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<sup>37</sup> See for example E. Belfiore, "Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry," in F.J. Pelletier and J. King-Farlow eds., *New Essays on Plato, Canadian Journal of Philosophy* s.v. IX. (1983), 39-62; Burnyeat, "Culture and society in Plato's *Republic*," (especially pp. 313 ff.); Janaway, *Images of Excellence*; Nehamas, "Plato on Imitation and Poetry." See also my "What is Imitative Poetry and Why is it Bad?" in G.R.F. Ferrari ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (Cambridge, 2007), 415-444, for fuller argument than I can offer here that tragedy copies and presents evaluative appearances.

images. The tragedian knows how to make Achilles' revenge appear glorious, Oedipus' fate horrible, and so on. Therefore the passions that tragedy provokes, like the non-virtuous passions of the *Protagoras*, are responses to vivid but false appearances of things as good and bad.

Moreover, Plato says that the imitator's images and appearances are themselves copies not of things as they are, but of mere images and appearances (598a-b, 600e, 601b); in particular, the imitator

will imitate, not knowing in what way each thing is worthless or worthy (πῶν ἢ χρηστόν); but the sort of things that *appear* to be fine or beautiful (οὐδὲν φαίνεται καλὸν εἶναι) to the ignorant many, this, it seems, he will imitate. (602b, emphasis mine)

The implication is that even out of the theater most of us are aware not of genuine value but only of appearances. It is natural to suppose that these appearances form the basis for our everyday passions.

This suggestion is confirmed by *Republic* 10's characterization of the rational person's resistance to emotion. He is "measured"<sup>38</sup> in his grief (603e); he holds back from lamentation because he "follows calculation" (604d). This recalls the rational part's role in optical illusions, where it resists false appearances by measuring and calculating (602d-603a). Of course, 'calculation' in the earlier passage is naturally read as referring to a mathematical operation related to weighing and measuring, while here Plato uses the term interchangeably with 'deliberation' (τὸ βουλευέσθαι, 604c), but the overlap in vocabulary suggests that deliberation is somehow similar to the kind of calculation one

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<sup>38</sup> Μετριάσει, from μετριάζειν. The word means "to be moderate," but the context might encourage us to note the etymological connection with μετρεῖν, "to measure."

uses to determine the relative sizes of two objects, or the true shape of a submerged stick. The idea that the tragedian copies (and produces) evaluative images, the mention of things that “appear fine” to the many at 602b, and a later reference to poverty, illness and the like as “seeming evils” (δοκῶντα κακά, 613a),<sup>39</sup> fill in the analogy. The death of a son appears terrible, just as the stick in water appears bent. In each case, to calculate is to question and scrutinize the appearance. Grieving and lamenting, meanwhile, like believing that the stick is bent, means accepting without reflection that things are as they appear.<sup>40</sup>

For further evidence that the *Protagoras*’ appearance-based non-virtuous passions survive tripartition as the passions of the non-rational parts, let us return to the *Timaeus*’s description of the appetitive part of the soul (71a ff). Knowing that appetite would be more influenced by “images and phantoms” than by *logoi*,

the god conspired with this very tendency by constructing a liver, a structure which he situated in the dwelling place of [the appetitive] part of the soul. He made it into something dense, smooth, bright and sweet, though also having a bitter quality, so that the force of the thoughts sent down from the mind might be stamped upon it as upon a mirror that receives the stamps and returns images (εἰδωλα). So whenever the force of the mind’s thoughts could avail itself of a congenial portion of the liver’s bitterness and threaten it with severe command, it could then frighten this part of the soul. And by infusing the bitterness all over the liver, it could project bilious colors onto it and shrink the whole liver...causing pains and bouts of nausea. And again, whenever thought’s gentle

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<sup>39</sup> Unlike Aristotle, Plato draws no sharp distinction between appearing and seeming.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Barney, “Appearances and Impressions,” 287, and G.R.F. Ferrari, “Plato and Poetry,” in G. Kennedy ed. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1989), 92-148, 133.

inspiration should paint quite opposite pictures (φαντάσματα)...it would ...  
make that portion of the soul that inhabits the region around the liver gracious  
and agreeable... (Timaeus 71a-d)

The passage dwells more on the physiology of appetitive passions than on their psychology, but we can extract from it the following account.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes the rational part of a person's soul can induce passions in the appetitive part, frightening or soothing it.<sup>42</sup> This happens when the rational part has certain *logoi* – arguments or accounts – which it wants to communicate to the appetitive part in order to ensure its cooperation in action. The content of these *logoi* is prescriptive and evaluative: they are threats, commands, reassurances and the like. More particularly, because the *logoi* belong to the rational part of the soul, they are concerned with good and bad, benefit and harm.<sup>43</sup> “Doing this tempting but unjust act is bad;” “Making this painful but noble sacrifice is good.” The rational part does not deliver its *logoi* to the appetitive part directly, however; instead it reflects them off the shiny surface of the liver, yielding images.<sup>44</sup> It is to these images that the appetitive part responds with fright, pain, calm and other passions.

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<sup>41</sup> Compare Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, 98 ff. Here as elsewhere I differ from Lorenz mainly in emphasizing that the “perception” exercised by the non-rational soul must include awareness of appearances of a special kind, evaluative appearances.

<sup>42</sup> Presumably appetite often responds directly to external objects and events with feelings like hunger, lust, pleasure, pain and the like; this passage details a way in which the rational part can gain control over the appetitive by countering these ordinary passions with rationally induced ones. It would stand to reason for the *Timaeus* also to characterize ordinary appetitive passions as responses to images and phantoms, these ones produced not by the rational soul but by the impress of external objects, but this goes beyond what we find in the text.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. *Republic* 441c, 442c.

<sup>44</sup> Note that the constitution of the liver – smooth and dense – is just like that of the eyes, as described at 45b-c; this encourages us to take it that what the liver reflects are literal images closely analogous to those that play a role in sight.

Two points in this account are crucial for us. First, these rationally-induced appetitive passions are responses to things *qua* valuable. They are responses to images of *logoi* about what is good and bad, and while the images do not preserve the full content of these *logoi* any more than a mirror reflection preserves the full character of its original, they clearly preserve enough of it to frighten or soothe: they do not simply present scenarios, but present them as desirable or fearful, pleasant or painful. Second, the rational part does not try to explain why the agent should pursue or refrain from some course of action, but instead simply brings it about that that course of action *looks* good or bad, the way something can look good or bad in a picture. As in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* 10, then, here too passions are responses to evaluative appearances. (Here the appearances are inner states, what we might call mental images. While there is no hint of such inner states in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* 10 discussions of evaluative appearances, we might conjecture that the *Timaeus* develops the earlier view with the thesis that for x to appear F to S is for S to have an inner appearance (image, phantasm) of x as F.)<sup>45</sup>

Taking this *Timaeus* passage as confirmation of our reading of *Republic* 10, we can now conclude that the fundamental difference between calculated and uncalculated passions in the *Republic* – that is, between the passions of the rational part and those of the non-rational parts – precisely parallels the difference between measurement-ruled and appearance-based passions in the *Protagoras*. Finally, then, we have our explanation for *Republic* 10’s equation of the passionate part of the soul with the part that believes optical illusion (605b-c). Passionate emotions like those provoked by imitative poetry

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<sup>45</sup> The *Philebus*’ account of hopes and other passions as involving “painted images” (40a) of states of affairs that cause one pleasure (or pain) indicates a similar view of appearances, and of passions.

are unreflective responses to vivid appearances of things as having positive or negative value, and thus they are non-rational in precisely the same sense as is the belief that the submerged stick is bent. The non-rational part of the soul is the part that fails to question appearances, with respect to value just as with respect to shape or size.

#### 4. Calculated and uncalculated passions

We have seen evidence that Plato construes non-rational passions as the unreflective acceptance of something broadly akin to perceptual appearances; in this section I want to say something about why the view might have attracted him.

When we look at Plato's descriptions of appetite and spirit, we see that he generally characterizes them as pursuing what simply strikes them as manifestly worth having. A full defense of this claim would require detailed case-studies of his presentation of the non-rational parts of the soul and of their passions, but a few examples should suffice here.<sup>46</sup> First, consider what we learn about the spirited part of the soul through *Republic* 2-3's discussion of childhood "musical" education. (Plato makes clear that this education targets the spirited part of the soul, most explicitly at 411e.) The goal of such education is love of the fine or beautiful (τὸ καλόν, 403c), and hatred of its opposite:

Anyone who has been properly educated in music and poetry...[will] praise τὰ καλὰ [what is fine, admirable or beautiful]...[and will] rightly object to τὰ αἰσχρὰ [what is shameful or ugly], hating it while he's still young and unable to

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<sup>46</sup> For more evidence and discussion, see my "Pleasure and Illusion in Plato" on appetitive desire, and my "Shame, Pleasure, and the Divided Soul," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XXIX (2005), 137-170, where I argue that the *Gorgias* presents the pleasant and the fine (*kalon*) – the respective objects of the *Republic*'s appetitive and spirited parts' desires – as reason-independent, potentially conflicting apparent goods.

grasp the reason [*logos*], but, having been educated in this way, he will welcome the reason when it comes and recognize it easily because of its kinship with himself. (401e-402a)<sup>47</sup>

Children – in whose souls reasoning is not yet present, but spirit is already strong (441a-b) – cannot yet understand what is good and bad, or why; they can, however, be trained to form judgments and passions regarding the fine and the shameful. Why are they able to do so without the aid of reasoning? Surely because such qualities seem simply manifest, as ordinary sensory qualities are. In listening to music or myths, or looking at paintings or architecture, we feel ourselves simply struck by the beauty or ugliness of the sounds and sights, and just as simply struck by the fineness or shamefulness of the acts and people represented.

As to appetitive desires, consider the *Gorgias*' treatment of appetitive pleasure as what *seems* good to foolish people, and its corresponding implication that appetitively-driven people fail to distinguish pretense from authenticity, the way things appear from the way things are. Rhetoric and pastry-baking are powerful because they provide pleasure and gratification (462c-e), and in doing so provide the “seeming good condition” (δῖκῶσα εὐεξία) of soul and body (464a). That is, because pastries taste pleasant foolish people think them beneficial (and hence trust the pastry-chef more than the doctor), and because the orator's speeches are pleasing they think the orator knows what is good for them (and hence are persuaded by orators more readily than by Socrates). Like seeing something with one's own eyes, taking pleasure in a thing is a vivid experience, strong and compelling – and hence authoritative for those not inclined to question how things appear.

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<sup>47</sup> Translation based on Grube/Reeve.

These passages make Plato's view look much like one that has explicit defenders today: there is a special mode of perception, evaluative perception, distinct from but in the same psychological category as seeing and smelling.<sup>48</sup> Consider the objects most prominently associated with the non-rational parts of soul in the *Republic*: pleasure for appetite, and honor and beauty or fineness (τὸ καλόν) for spirit.<sup>49</sup> It takes no abstract reasoning, no calculation to be attracted or repelled by such things, and their appeal or repulsion often persists in the face of reasoning that impugns it. This makes it compelling to speak of desires for pleasure and honor and aversions to pain and disgrace as based on something similar to ordinary perception.<sup>50</sup> Plato, if my interpretation of him

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<sup>48</sup> Compare J. Prinz, *Gut Reactions* (Oxford, 2004), especially 225-7. For a related but more doxastic view of the passions, see M.C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001). There is one passage in the dialogues where Plato seems to say that passions are themselves perceptions of this sort, although the statement is too indirect, and its context too convoluted, for it to bear much weight: "For perceptions we have such names as sight, hearing, smelling, feeling cold and feeling hot; also what are called pleasures and pains, appetites (ἐπιθυμῖαι) and fears; and there are others besides, a great number which have names, an infinite number which have not" (*Theaetetus* 156b, based on the translation by M.J. Levett).

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. 436a, 439d, and 561a ff for appetite as pleasure-loving, 548c, 550b and 553d for spirit as honor-loving. Plato also characterizes appetite as desirous of wealth, and spirit as desirous of victory, but wealth is desired as a source of pleasures (580e-581a), and arguably victory is desired as a source of honor. What I say should, however, be consistent with these being values in their own right.

<sup>50</sup> Bobonich also argues that the non-rational parts of the soul and the people ruled by them base their passions on perceptible value – and that their ethical limitations derive from this cognitive one – but he means by this that they detect or ascribe values only on the basis of sensible properties such as color or sound: "Non-philosophers [in the *Phaedo*]...think that what makes things fine or good is the possession of various sensible properties. What makes something fine is, for example, its bright color or shape (*Phd.* 100c-d); what makes something good, for example, is its being a bodily pleasure" (Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*, at 29; cf. 64 on the *Republic's* lovers of sights and sounds). This may well capture part of Plato's view, but it cannot cover all cases of non-rational passion. As Bobonich himself concedes, "honor is not obviously a sensible property" (i.e. not perceptible by any one of the five senses) (*ibid.*, 31). (The same can be said of many objects of appetitive and spirited desire, such as victory, or some of the pleasures the democratic soul pursues in Book VIII). Why then should those who value only what they can perceive value honor? The problem disappears if we grant that the appeal of honor is manifest and vivid, and that in desiring honor one is having an unreflective, unreasoned response to that appeal.

is right, may have been the first philosopher to take this to be more than metaphor, but he is certainly not the last. Epicurus, according to Cicero,

denies that any reason or argument is necessary to show why pleasure is to be pursued, pain to be avoided. He holds that we perceive these things, as we perceive that fire is hot, snow white, honey sweet; it is unnecessary to prove any of these things with sophisticated reasoning; it is enough just to point them out.

(*De Finibus* I.30)<sup>51</sup>

And contemporary philosophers who speak of passions as involving value-perception emphasize the same considerations: that in feeling a passion for a thing its value seems to us manifest and compelling –

[I]n desire, one is somehow *struck* by, affected by, the merits of the thing wanted, or the prospect of having it, in a way one needn't be if one merely knows it would be good...[I]f one wants a thing it *seems* to one as if the thing wanted would be good. This is not necessarily the case when one merely believes (or knows) that it would be a good thing...[This shows that] to desire something is to be in a kind of perceptual state, in which that thing seems good.<sup>52</sup>

[W]e desire other things and other people, we are struck by their appeal, we are taken with them. This is part of how things are manifest to us: part of their appearing or presenting is their presenting to us in determinate ways to various

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<sup>51</sup> The idea that on Plato's view pleasure in particular is or involves the perception of value has gained footing in recent work on the true and false pleasures of the *Philebus*. V. Harte, "The *Philebus* on Pleasure: the Good, the Bad and the False," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104 (2004), 113-30, and M. Evans, "Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Error," (MS) both argue for an interpretation of the dialogue on which a pleasure is true if its object is genuinely valuable, and otherwise false, for pleasures in general are modes of awareness of the value of their objects.

<sup>52</sup> D. W. Stampe, "The Authority of Desire," *Philosophical Review* XCVI (1987), 335-81, at 356, 359.

degrees appealing or repulsive. On the face of it, appeal is as much a manifest quality as shape, size, color and motion.<sup>53</sup>

– and that we seem to detect value in a way that neither requires nor is sensitive to rational reflection:

[Affect] can have authority in the matter of what we should desire and do [i.e. in matters of value]...[It] silences any demand for justification. In this way affect is akin to perceptual experience considered more generally.<sup>54</sup>

By contrast, consider the passions of the rational part: its love of wisdom and *erôs* for the Forms; its wish to abstain from drink when drinking is harmful, and in general to do what is best; its desire for and pleasure in knowledge. Such passions are not unreflective acceptances of appearances of value; instead, they arise “out of calculation” (439d). The *logistikon* goes for what it reasons to be good on the basis of complicated considerations about what is best in the long run, or overall, or given the nature of the soul, and despite one’s immediate cravings, and so on.<sup>55</sup> In matters ethical as in matters visual it takes into account the appearances – the fact that the stick looks bent to one’s eyes, the fact that the drink appeals to one’s thirst – but only as material for its calculations about the truth.

## 5. Good-Dependence

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<sup>53</sup> M. Johnston, “The Authority of Affect,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (2001), 181-214, at 188.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>55</sup> This part “calculates about the better and worse” (441c), desires “what is advantageous for each part and for the whole” (442c), and exercises “foresight on behalf of the whole soul” (441e).

Before closing, we must consider an important objection. The account of the passions for which I have argued runs counter to the widely-held view that the passions of the non-rational parts are what Terence Irwin calls “good-independent”: they in no way involve or depend on apprehension of their objects as good.<sup>56</sup>

I will not pretend to settle the issue of good-dependence here, but will note that it is by no means clear that the burden of proof is on my side. Indeed, although Irwin’s view remains the orthodox one there is a growing movement against it. Many recent writings argue that the *Republic* is consistent with the “Socratic” dialogues in holding that all desire is for things *qua* good.<sup>57</sup> The case for this view is straightforward. In dialogues thought to precede the *Republic* Socrates claims that everyone always desires the good.<sup>58</sup> In dialogues thought to post-date the *Republic* Socrates claims that everyone always desires the good.<sup>59</sup> And in the *Republic* itself Socrates certainly seems to claim that everyone always desires the good:

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<sup>56</sup> T. Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory* (Oxford, 1977), 78, 117, 192, and *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford, 1995), 208-9. Irwin in fact allows that spirited desires are “partially good-dependent” (*Plato’s Ethics*, 212), but the view is often proposed in a stronger form on which only rational desire is good-dependent: see e.g. M. Woods, “Plato’s Division of the Soul,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 73, (1987), 23-47, and C. Kahn, “Plato’s Theory of Desire,” *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1987), 77-103.

<sup>57</sup> See among others G. Lesses, “Weakness, Reason, and the Divided Soul in Plato’s *Republic*,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (1987), 147-161; G.R. Carone, “Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change His Mind?” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XX (2001), 107-148; Price, *Mental Conflict* (especially 49-52); Bobonich, *Plato’s Utopia Recast*; and R. Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (Chicago, 2006), chapter 6. I argue against the good-independence view in my “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato.”

<sup>58</sup> See *Gorgias* 468b-c, *Protagoras* 352c ff, *Meno* 77c-78b, 87e-89a, and *Symposium* 205a ff.

<sup>59</sup> “[E]verything that recognizes the good hunts for it and longs for it, wishing to capture it and possess it for itself, and caring nothing for anything except what brings about good things” (*Philebus* 20d). For the related claim that no one willingly chooses things other than the good, or willingly does wrong, see *Philebus* 22b, *Timaeus* 86d-e and *Laws* 731c. Each of these passages could in principle be interpreted as consistent with the existence of good-independent desires, but in each case such a reading relies on attributing to Plato implicit psychological theses for which we have no other evidence.

Every soul [or “the whole soul,” ἅπασα ψυχή] pursues the good and does everything (πάντα πράττει) for its sake, divining that it is something but being in confusion and unable to grasp adequately what it is. (505d-e)

It is possible (and common) to read this passage as consistent with the view that only the rational part desires the good.<sup>60</sup> But surely the straightforward interpretation is this: each part of the soul desires what it takes to be good, and therefore each person, no matter which part of her soul rules her, pursues things under the guise of the good in all her actions. Only a well-educated rational part ruling a harmonious soul, however, can “adequately grasp what the good is;” souls ruled by appetite or spirit err on account of their confused notions of the good. This reading is supported, moreover, by the passages in the *Republic* that seem to ascribe evaluative thoughts and concern for what is good (or for how things should be) to appetite and spirit, and to the cities ruled by the corresponding classes.<sup>61</sup> Only one passage has been taken to show that at least some non-rational desires are not for things *qua* good: the argument that “thirst itself” is for “drink itself,” rather than for hot or cold or wholesome (χρηστόν) drink (437e-438a). But the claim that drink is the proper object of thirst is perfectly consistent with the view that being thirsty involves taking drink to be good.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> On one version of this reading, the rational part regards as good the objects desired by whichever part rules the soul, and no one ever acts on any desire of a lower soul-part without the mediation of reason. Irwin provides the defender of good-independence a more plausible alternative by pointing out that πάντα πράττει can mean “goes to all lengths” (Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory*, at 336, n.45): on this reading, the passage’s claim applies only to actions motivated solely by the rational part.

<sup>61</sup> See 442c-d, 555b, 562b, 574d.

<sup>62</sup> For much fuller defense see e.g. Carone, “Akrasia in the *Republic*,” Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies*, and my “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato;” another good-dependent reading of 437e-438a is offered in Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, commentary ad loc. It is worth noting that on a natural reading of 438a Socrates accepts (but declares irrelevant) the claim that

Read in the straightforward way, 505d-e invites the following view. The appetitive part desires pleasures and gratification (436a, 439d), while spirit loves honor and victory (581b), because in their confusion these parts of the soul take these objects to be good. ‘Good’ here is relatively undemanding: it certainly need not mean ‘morally good,’ nor ‘beneficial,’ nor ‘best all things considered,’ but it does mean more than simply ‘desired’. Plato presents each part of the soul as finding its characteristic object worthy of pursuit.<sup>63</sup> The spirited part does not merely happen to want honor: it takes honor to make life worth living, and sees it as “to be gone for” above all else. Likewise, the appetitive part pursues gratification because it thinks gratification the thing most worthy of pursuit. Hence the democratic city, corresponding to the appetite-ruled soul, in “defining license [to pursue whatever one desires] as the good” does not merely aim at license but holds “that this is the *finest* (κάλλις) thing it has, so that this is the only city *worth* (ἄξιον) inhabiting” (562b-c). Some will insist that it is the rational part of the corresponding soul that would make such a judgment, and not the ruling appetitive part, but, as with the parallel reading of 505d-e, I think this interpretation needlessly indirect. Surely in the democratic city it is the masses themselves – the civic counterpart to the appetitive part – who make this judgment. And if appetite itself can judge that something “should” be done (442d), why should it not judge something worthy, fine and good?

Finally, the good-independence view has been popular largely due to its explanatory power: the idea is that non-rational desires are inferior, dangerous, and prone

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all people have appetites for good things, a point perhaps deliberately obscured by some translations.

<sup>63</sup> Compare Lesses, “Weakness, Reason, and the Divided Soul in Plato’s *Republic*,” 151. Bobonich and Carone both explain a part of the soul’s desiring things *qua* good as that part’s desiring something as an “ultimate end” for the sake of which they desire other things (*Plato’s Utopia Recast*, 245; “Akrasia in the *Republic*,” 129). This is right as far as it goes, but we must add or make explicit the qualification about worthiness.

to conflict with rational ones precisely because they have no concern for the good. In fact Irwin seems at times simply to equate rationality with good-dependence, and non-rationality with good-independence.<sup>64</sup> Our account, however, can explain the difference between rational and non-rational motivation, the superiority of the former, and the possibility of conflict between the two, without appeal to good-independent desires. A part of the soul limited to appearances may find good and thus desire some base pleasure or honor even when the rational part has calculated that it is bad, just as such a part may believe a submerged stick bent even when the rational part has calculated that it is straight. Furthermore, on Plato's view, in matters of value as in general, what genuinely *is* does not appear (is not manifest, obvious, accessible without abstruse calculation), while what appears to most people is not what is real and true. Apparent value is an inferior, deficient, shadowy copy of true value, just as (e.g.) perceptible equality is an inferior, deficient, shadowy copy of the Equal itself (*Phaedo* 74d-e).<sup>65</sup> Corresponding to these ontologically inferior apparent values and ontologically superior imperceptible ones are ethically inferior appearance-based passions and ethically superior calculation-based ones. If appetitive and spirited passions are based on appearances, they can never get at the ultimate truth about value any more than sight can get at the ultimate truth about the Large or the Equal. This is not to say that the objects of appetitive or spirited desire are always bad. Just as not all sense-perception is illusory, not all appetitive and spirited passions are dangerously false in the same way as those encouraged by imitative poetry, or those that lead people astray in the *Protagoras*' art of measurement passage. None of

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<sup>64</sup> The Socratic position allegedly rejected in the *Republic* "requires all desires to be rational or good-dependent" (Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, 78); "The appetitive part...[is] entirely good-independent and non-rational, uninfluenced by beliefs about goods" (ibid. 192).

<sup>65</sup> By 'true value' I do not mean only the Form of the Good. The supreme rational desire is for this Form, but everyday rational desires are for everyday things insofar as they partake in it.

them, however, get beyond appearances to the truth: this is a privilege reserved for reasoning. Thus the passions of the rational part alone are for what not merely appears good, but truly is so.<sup>66</sup>

## **6. Conclusion: what it is to be rational, what it is to be non-rational**

I began with a promissory note: that once we came to understand them properly, we would see that the psychic division arguments of *Republic* 10 show us what it is for a part of the soul to be rational or non-rational, and thereby provide a unifying explanation for Plato's various characterizations of the parts of the soul throughout the dialogue, a rationale for his dividing things up the way he does. Along the way we have encountered what seem to be quite disparate characterizations of these parts of the soul. Appetite and spirit:

- desire pleasures and honor, respectively (*Republic* 4, 8, 9)
- are subject to strong emotions such as grief (*Republic* 10)
- perceive the submerged stick as bent, and believe that it is (*Republic* 10)
- are the seat of perception in general (*Timaeus* 69c-d, 77b-c)

Meanwhile the rational part (when free to perform its proper function) desires what is best in contrast with pleasures and honor, resists strong emotions when it judges them inappropriate, calculates the true shape of the stick instead of accepting that it is as it

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<sup>66</sup> Lesses' view sounds similar: "[E]ach part is the source of distinct types of motivations, precisely because each holds beliefs about what is good...[But the non-rational parts'] beliefs are false, partly because appetite and spirit are unable to calculate and to measure the way the rational part can" ("Weakness, Reason, and the Divided Soul in Plato's *Republic*," 151-2). His intended sense of 'calculation' is, however, much narrower than mine: on his view the crucial point is that the rational part alone "can make all-things-considered judgments about how to act" (ibid. 154). Evaluative calculation as I define it includes but is not limited to this kind of judgment.

appears, and concerns itself less with the perceptible realm than with the purely intelligible realm of Forms.

The account I have developed unifies these features. Appetite and spirit desire pleasures and honor, and feel grief or anger, for the same reason that they perceive the stick as bent and are responsive to perceptibles in general: because they are cognitively limited to the perception and acceptance of appearances. Pleasure and honor appear good; the death of a son appears bad; the stick appears bent; the same finger appears both big and small (*Republic* 523e ff). The rational part's ability to calculate, meanwhile, allows it to criticize and transcend appearances both in the sensory realm and in the ethical. Moreover, because appearances are at worst outright false and at best adequate but at an ontological remove from being and truth, a part of the soul limited to appearances is crippled cognitively – and therefore ethically as well. At worst it desires and pursues things that are worthless or bad. At best – as with the harmonious soul described at *Republic* 586d ff. – its passions can be trained to track the higher value it cannot perceive, so that it takes pleasure in or sees as beautiful and honorable only those things which the rational part calculates to be good.

This interpretation of the distinction between rationality and non-rationality thus accounts for Plato's central, ethical use of this distinction: it shows why the rational part of the soul should rule and the non-rational parts obey. It also, I submit, does better justice to Plato's texts than interpretations that impose foreign conceptions of rationality, for it allows us a straightforward and literal reading of the implications that appetite and spirit have beliefs about how things are, including beliefs about what is best or how things ought to be, that they can recognize means to ends, and that they are open to

persuasion by the rational part.<sup>67</sup> An uncalculating part of the soul can receive appearances as of something being drink or an insult, of something being good or as it ought to be, of wealth leading to pleasure, or of a recommended course of action being advantageous. What it cannot do is question or criticize such appearances.

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<sup>67</sup> Plato evidently saw no contradiction in attributing the desire for wealth to a part he calls *alogiston* (the appetitive part), and we must therefore assume either that appetite does *not* engage in means-end thinking in desiring wealth (see Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, 47-8) or, more plausibly (in light especially of the means-end claim at 580e-581a), that such thinking is not, on Plato's view, a form of *logismos* proper. My own interpretation of *logismos* provides a non-arbitrary case for the latter. As for the implication that the appetitive part is open to persuasion through *logoi*, on the interpretation I offer this need not impugn its non-rationality: that Plato thinks those who never question appearances extremely open to persuasion through *logoi* is clear from his characterizations of rhetoric, sophistry and poetry throughout the dialogues.

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