

APPEARANCE, PERCEPTION,  
AND NON-RATIONAL BELIEF:  
*REPUBLIC* 602C–603A

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IN a passage of book 10 of the *Republic*, 602 C–603 A, Plato offers a new argument for the claim that the soul consists of parts. The argument has the same basic structure as the well-known arguments for the division of the soul in book 4: Socrates draws our attention to an example of opposition in the soul, appeals to the ‘Principle of Opposites’—that the same thing cannot do or undergo opposites at the same time and in relation to the same thing (436 B 8–9; 602 E 8–9)—and concludes that different parts of the soul are responsible for each side of this opposition. However, while structurally similar, the arguments consider entirely different kinds of conflict. The arguments in book 4 begin with the widely accepted assumption that motivational conflict can occur: at the same time both desiring to do and desiring not to do the same thing. The argument in book 10, in contrast, centres on a more surprising kind of conflict: at the same time both believing and disbelieving the same thing.

It is generally thought that, unlike desire, reason abhors contradictions: we can, and often do, hold conflicting beliefs unwittingly, but as soon as we notice such a conflict we are compelled to resolve it immediately. The argument of 602 C–603 A, however, requires us to accept that in certain situations we knowingly hold, at the same time, beliefs (*doxai*) that contradict, with no avenue for resolution. We would hope to find a considerable attempt to make this plausible, but instead Socrates simply points to encounters with visual illusions as putative examples of the kind of cognitive conflict he has in mind: for example, believing a stick is straight but, at the same time, the opposite appearing to be the case because the stick is partially immersed in water. But why should we accept that this

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For many helpful questions and comments on earlier drafts of this paper I would like to thank Jessica Moss, Terence Irwin, and David Charles, and the audience at Oxford’s Ancient Philosophy Workshop.

is an example of conflicting beliefs? Surely, one might think, this is an opposition between what we believe and how things look—surely we simply *do not* believe that the stick is bent, *despite* how it looks. Remarkably, Socrates shows no awareness of this concern and Glaucon accepts what he says without question.

Moreover, the very fact that Plato allows cognitive conflict between the parts of the soul might itself seem puzzling. Motivational conflict can occur between our appetitive, spirited, and rational parts because each have their own desires, but one might expect a cognitive ability such as belief to be the preserve of just one part of the soul, the rational part. Book 10 tells us otherwise: there are (at least) two believing parts of the soul. Naturally, then, the second question we would like an answer to is: what are the two believing parts? Again the passage is not as informative as we would hope. In contrast to the arguments in book 4, in 602 c–603 A Socrates is never explicit about the parts he is dividing between. The rational part is mentioned (*to logistikon*, 602 E 1) but it is not unambiguously identified with either party of the opposition. Rather, the opposing parts are only explicitly labelled the ‘best’ part of the soul and an ‘inferior’ or ‘lower’ (*phaulon*) part. Consequently, there is space for two very different readings, and each, as we will see, appears to have strong evidence in its favour: first, that Plato is introducing a new division, subdividing the rational part of the soul into a higher and lower part,<sup>1</sup> or, second, that he is sticking to his earlier tripartition, so that the ‘inferior’ part is one or both of the non-rational parts we find in book 4.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See N. R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* [Interpretation] (Oxford, 1951), 239–43; A. Kenny, ‘Mental Health in Plato's *Republic*’ [‘Mental Health’], *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 55 (1969), 229–53 at 248–9; A. Nehamas, ‘Plato on Imitation and Poetry in *Republic* X’ [‘Imitation’], in id., *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton, 1999), 252–78 at 264–9; M. F. Burnyeat, ‘Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*’ [‘Culture’], in G. Peterson (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 20 (Salt Lake City, 1999), 215–354 at 223–8; D. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* [Midwife] (Oxford, 2004), 113 n. 40; and R. Kamtekar, ‘Speaking with the Same Voice as Reason: Personification in Plato's Psychology’ [‘Personification’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 31 (2006), 167–202 at 173 n. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. T. Penner, ‘Thought and Desire in Plato’, in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays, II* (Notre Dame, 1971), 96–118; M. F. Burnyeat, ‘Plato on the Grammar of Perceiving’ [‘Grammar’], *Classical Quarterly*, ns 26 (1976), 29–51; H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* [Brute] (Oxford, 2006); J. Moss, ‘Appearances and Calculation: Plato's Division of the Soul’ [‘Calculation’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 34 (2008), 35–68; T. S. Ganson, ‘The Rational/Non-Rational Distinction in Plato's *Republic*’ [‘Rational/Non-

The aim of this paper is to offer a thorough analysis of this passage, focusing on these two interpretative problems: how disbelieving a visual illusion gives rise to conflicting beliefs and what the two believing parts of the soul are. There are two related conclusions that I wish to reach, one for each problem and both arising from an analysis of what Plato means by ‘appearances’ (*phainomena*) and ‘beliefs’ (*doxai*). The first is that the relevant appearances are entirely sensory but nonetheless sufficiently belief-like to (a) warrant being called *doxai* and (b) oppose, by themselves, our calculated beliefs; there is no need for a third mental state, a belief that *assents* to the appearance. The second concerns how we locate the part of the soul that opposes calculation. It is generally thought that the subject of the opposing belief is the subject of the opposing appearance: that is, that the part of the soul to which it ‘appears’ (*phainetai*) that *p* is the part that believes that *p*. I argue that this is a mistake, and one with consequences for the argument’s most divisive line, 602 E 4–6: the subject of the opposing belief is not the part of the soul that is said to be appeared to in 602 E 4–6, namely the rational part, but the part that gives rise to the sensory appearance, and this, I will argue, is a non-rational part.

### 1. Introduction to the argument

Showing that there are two believing parts of the soul is an intermediate aim of 602 C–603 A. It takes its place in a long and elaborate series of arguments defending the banishment of imitative poetry from the *kallipolis*, reinforcing book 3’s examination of poetry with the help of the partite psychology developed in book 4.<sup>3</sup> Our passage’s role is to identify the part of the soul that imitation affects, revealing that it is an inferior part—‘a part of us that is far from wisdom’ (603 A 12–B 1)—and thereby supporting the claim that imitative poetry’s effect is corrupting. The argument does not consider

Rational’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 36 (2009), 179–97; R. Singpurwalla, ‘Soul Division and Mimesis in *Republic X*’ [‘Mimesis’], in P. Destree and F. Herrmann (eds.), *Plato and the Poets* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), 283–98; and D. Wolfsdorf, ‘Pleasure and Truth in *Republic 9*’ [‘*Republic 9*’], *Classical Quarterly*, NS 63 (2013), 110–38.

<sup>3</sup> As Socrates indicates at the opening of book 10: ‘now that we have distinguished the separate parts of the soul, it is even clearer, I think, that such poetry should be altogether excluded’ (595 A 5–B 1).

poetry's effect on the soul directly but rather makes a point about another paradigmatic imitative art, painting, which is assumed to exploit our souls in the same way as visual illusions (602 D 1–4). (As I will argue below, the connection between poems, paintings, and visual illusions is revealed in the preceding discussion: whether it is poetry or painting, imitation is the art of making 'appearances' (*phainomena*)—or 'images' (*eidōla*) or 'semblances' (*phantasmata*)—and these are treated as the same kind of thing as naturally occurring sensory appearances such as reflections in mirrors and visual illusions. The assumption, then, is that what is true of visual illusions, so long as it is true of them *qua* appearances, should also be true of imitations, whether paintings or poems.)

The question that invites the argument is 'on which of a person's parts does it [sc. imitation] exert its power?' (602 C 4–5). Socrates begins his answer by drawing our attention to a variety of illusions:

Through sight the same magnitude doesn't appear to us to be equal when near and far away . . . And something looks crooked when seen in water and straight when seen out of it and the same thing is seen to be both concave and convex on account of the eye's wandering anew around the colours. (602 C 7–12)

These are familiar and fairly benign illusions which we typically see through without difficulty; instead of trusting our senses we come to a correct belief by some more reliable method, such as 'calculation, measurement, and weighing'. But what is interesting about such illusions is their recalcitrance. While 'calculation, measurement, and weighing' may lead us to a correct belief, it will never correct the illusion itself: even if we believe an immersed stick is straight, it will nonetheless *appear* bent. This is the kind of conflict that Socrates wishes to draw our attention to. As it is presented in the text, his argument can be outlined as follows:

- (1) 'Through sight the same thing appears to us not to be of equal size when near and far away' (602 C 7–8).
- (2) But 'measuring, counting, and weighing give us welcome assistance . . . so that we aren't ruled by what appears larger or smaller, more numerous, or heavier, but by calculation, measurement, and weighing' (602 D 6–9).
- (3) 'Calculating, measuring, and weighing are the work of the rational part of the soul' (602 E 1–2).
- (4) 'But often to this, after it has measured and declared that

some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposite appears at the same time about the same things' (602 E 4–6).

- (5) 'We said that it is impossible for the same thing to believe [*doxazein*] opposites about the same thing at the same time' (602 E 8–9).<sup>4</sup>
- (6) Therefore, 'the part of the soul that forms a belief contrary to the measurements couldn't be the same part that believes in accord with them' (603 A 1–2).
- (7) 'The part that trusts in measurement and calculation is the best part of the soul' (603 A 4–5).
- (8) Therefore, 'the part that opposes it is one of the inferior parts in us' (603 A 7–8).

We can clearly see here the two problems I introduced above.

First, the argument as it stands has a conspicuous gap. Lines (1) to (4) establish that a certain belief–appearance conflict can occur: we believe a stick is straight but at the same time the opposite appears to be the case (where 'appears', occurring in (1) and (4), refers to what *looks* to be the case). From (5) to (8), however, it is assumed that a belief–belief conflict has occurred: we believe the stick is straight and at the same time also believe that the stick is bent, in agreement with the appearance.<sup>5</sup> What permits Socrates to move from belief–appearance conflict to belief–belief conflict? This is surely the most puzzling step in the argument, and yet Socrates makes no attempt to justify it; Glaucon accepts what he says without question.

Second, the argument is not explicit about what parts it is dividing between. In (3) we learn that calculating, measuring, and weighing are the 'work' (*ἔργον*) of the rational part, as we would expect. But this does not, strictly speaking, entail that the 'best' part *is* the rational part, as a whole: it leaves open the possibility that the beliefs of the 'inferior' part are *also* the work of the rational part. Neither the 'best' nor the 'inferior' part, then, is explicitly identified, and what evidence there is has failed to lead to a consensus. On

<sup>4</sup> 'We said': in book 4 'assent and dissent' (437 B 1) were included among the opposites to which the Principle of Opposites applies.

<sup>5</sup> Socrates favours the illusion that 'things appear to us not to be of equal size when near and far away'. If we believe, unlike Plato, that perception itself represents depth, we might not be inclined to see this as an illusion. For this reason, I will instead favour Socrates' less contentious example of a partially immersed stick.

one side there is a variety of indications in book 10 that we should map the ‘best’ and ‘inferior’ parts onto the partitions established in book 4, making the former the rational part of the soul and the latter the appetitive and/or spirited part.<sup>6</sup> On the other side is line (4), 602 E 4–6, which appears to make the rational part alone the subject of both sides of the conflict, suggesting that Plato is modifying his earlier tripartition by adding, as Burnyeat states his reading, ‘a new division, grounded on cases of cognitive conflict in which the reasoning part of the soul appears to be at variance with itself’.<sup>7</sup>

I begin by presenting the evidence that the ‘inferior’ part of the soul is non-rational (Section 2). This evidence would be decisive if it were not for the argument’s most controversial line: line (4), 602 E 4–6. If we follow the standard and, I argue, correct translation of 602 E 4–6, it states that the rational part is the subject of both the calculated belief and the opposing appearance. It has been assumed that this implies that the relevant conflict is *within* the rational part of the soul and, thus, that the argument is dividing the rational part itself into two further parts. I argue that whether or not this is the implication of 602 E 4–6 depends on how we solve the first problem the passage raises, namely its transition from belief–appearance to belief–belief conflict (Section 3). After surveying recent attempts to make sense of this transition (Section 4), I follow a number of commentators in arguing that the only feasible solution is to take Plato to be treating perception as itself a kind of judgement-maker.<sup>8</sup> a sen-

<sup>6</sup> Throughout book 10 the non-rational part or parts are never clearly aligned with the book 4 partitions, so it is difficult to discern whether he has in mind the appetitive part, spirited part, or both. I am inclined to agree with Nehamas that it is loosely both and that ‘the explanation of why he opposes reason to spirit and appetite together . . . is simply that he does not need to distinguish these two for his present purposes’ (‘Imitation’, 267). With respect to our present passage, note the plural in 603 A 7–8, line (8): τῶν φαύλων ἅν τι εἶη ἐν ἡμῖν.

<sup>7</sup> Burnyeat, ‘Culture’, 223.

<sup>8</sup> See Burnyeat, ‘Grammar’, 34–5, and ‘Culture’, 228; Ganson, ‘Rational/Non-Rational’, 185–6; and Wolfsdorf, ‘Republic 9’, 135–6. The reading that I will defend is closest to Ganson’s, especially with respect to his claim that Plato believes perception has an ‘assertoric character’. The more general claim that perception is treated as similar to belief in the *Republic* is made by many, more often with reference to 523 A–525 A. For example: J. M. Cooper, ‘Plato on Sense-Perception and Knowledge (*Theaetetus* 184–186)’, *Phronesis*, 15 (1970), 123–46; M. Frede, ‘Observations on Perception in Plato’s Later Dialogues’ [‘Perception’], in id., *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 1987), 3–8; and G. Fine, ‘Plato on Perception: A Reply to Professor Turnbull, “Becoming and Intelligibility”’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, suppl. (1988), 15–28.

sory appearance that  $p$  is, for Plato, one way in which the soul issues a judgement that  $p$  (Section 5), a reading that makes particularly good sense of our passage when supplemented by another central discussion of perception in the *Republic*, 523 A–525 A (Section 6).

Understood in this way, the conflict is between the soul's two distinct ways of telling us about the world: our rational, calculation-sensitive beliefs and our calculation-insensitive, purely sensory 'beliefs'. (I argue, however, that we should be cautious about aligning the latter *doxa* with belief as we typically understand it: it should rather be understood to refer to a more general category of representational states that includes both sensory appearances and beliefs, although for the present 'belief' is an acceptable translation.) I aim to show that this reading has significant implications for our understanding of 602 E 4–6: once we have correctly understood the connection between sensory appearances and beliefs—or, more precisely, correctly understood the way in which sensory appearances are belief-like—we will see that this line implies that the rational part of the soul is perceptually aware of the appearance, but not that it believes what appears (Section 7).

## 2. That the 'inferior' part is non-rational

One source of resistance to the suggestion that the 'inferior' part of the soul is the appetitive or spirited part might be the thought that belief is too cognitive an addition to parts of the soul that are seats of brute passions: surely it is the *rational* part's responsibility to perform cognitive tasks such as thinking and believing, while the non-rational parts are responsible for conative states such as appetite or anger.<sup>9</sup> It is not at all clear, however, that Plato takes our cognitive and conative functions to be divided so neatly. Most importantly for our purposes, it has often been noted that book 10 is not the first place where beliefs are attributed to the non-rational parts of the soul. For example, we are told that moderation occurs when all three parts 'believe in common [ $\delta\muοδοξ\omega\sigma\iota$ ] that the ra-

<sup>9</sup> Kenny takes the fact that the opposition is between beliefs to be sufficient to establish that it is within the rational part ('Mental Health', 248 n. 1), and Nehamas is troubled that the alternative 'would involve the attribution of thinking to appetite' ('Imitation', 265). Contrast Burnyeat, who is happy to attribute beliefs to the non-rational parts ('Culture', 227–8), but nonetheless does not think that we find such beliefs in 602 C–603 A.

tional part should rule' (442 C 11–D 1);<sup>10</sup> that in the soul's decline from oligarchic to democratic, it is not just the appetitive part's desires that take over the 'citadel' of his rational part, but in addition false 'words and beliefs [*logoi* . . . *doxai*]' rush up and occupy this part of him' (560 C 2–3); that in dreams a man's appetitive part can, while his rational part is inactive, 'suppose' (*οἶεται*) that it is sleeping with his mother (571 C 9–D 1); and that the tyrannical man's decline is marked by being overcome by beliefs that 'used only to be freed in sleep' (574 D 5–E 2). These passages are not conclusive, but they certainly upset the idea that the appetitive and spirited parts are purely conative. One might dismiss them as metaphor, but a literal understanding is at least consistent with the kind of partition that Plato argues for in the *Republic*. Plato's aim is not to partition the soul's basic abilities—desire in this part, belief in that part, and so forth—but to identify parts of our soul that are distinct by virtue of their overarching, often conflicting, goals. As such, each part can be endowed with whatever cognitive or conative abilities allow it to effectively pursue its characteristic goal, and there is no reason to think that the same ability cannot be shared by more than one part. The clearest evidence for this is that all three parts of the soul, including the rational part, have their own desires.<sup>11</sup> If all parts can have their own desires, what reason do we have to deny them, in principle, their own beliefs?<sup>12</sup>

One reason, it might be thought, is that a cognitive deficiency that Plato does attribute to the appetitive and spirited parts is, as our customary name for them suggests, that they are *alogiston*, non-rational.<sup>13</sup> But this does not by itself entail an inability to form be-

<sup>10</sup> Although it requires greater exegesis, a similar point can be made about courage. A comparison of 429 B 8–D 1 and 442 B 11–C 3, where Plato describes civic and psychic courage respectively, suggests that psychic courage involves the spirited part preserving correct beliefs in the face of temptations and fears.

<sup>11</sup> This is made especially clear in a passage in book 9, 580 D 7–581 A 1, where Socrates tells us, first, that all three parts of the soul have their own pleasures and *ἐπιθυμῖαι* and, shortly after, that the appetitive part, the *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, is so called because of the *intensity* (*σφοδρότης*) of its *ἐπιθυμῖαι* for food, drink, and sex—not, then, because it is their exclusive home.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Burnyeat: 'it is as mistaken to suppose the lower two parts of the soul incapable of thought or judgement as it is to deny desires and pleasures to the top part' ('Grammar', 35 n. 22).

<sup>13</sup> Although it is not Plato's name for the appetitive and spirited parts, he undoubtedly characterizes them as *ἀλόγιστον*: e.g. 439 D 3–8 and 441 C 2. For an excellent discussion of the use of *ἀλόγιστον* in the *Republic*, and in particular in book 10, see Moss, 'Calculation', esp. 36–7.

liefs. The most straightforward understanding of what it means for something to be *alogiston* is that it lacks the ability to engage in *logismos*: reasoning or calculation. It requires a strong faith in the rationality of our beliefs to assume that all beliefs are the result of reasoning. Certainly there is nothing about beliefs *per se* that prevents them from arising not through reasoning but through some other, perhaps more causal, means, and in fact 602 c–603 A provides us with conclusive evidence that Plato agrees. Whatever interpretation of the argument one favours, there is no doubt that it sets apart the ability to engage in calculation and the ability to form beliefs: the inferior part is said to form the beliefs it does precisely *because* it lacks the ability to engage in calculation. There is, then, at least one part of the soul—whatever part it turns out to be—that is both incapable of *logismos* and capable of forming beliefs.

These observations allay some of the worries about the very idea of attributing beliefs to the appetitive or spirited parts of the soul. I turn now to the reasons for thinking that this is exactly what Plato does in 602 c–603 A. The first and most conclusive argument has received careful and detailed statements in recent literature, so I will state it only briefly here.<sup>14</sup> It centres on two claims, each of which enjoys strong textual support: first, that poetry appeals to a non-rational part of the soul, and second, that paintings and visual illusions appeal to the *same* part of the soul as poetry.

As we have seen, the question 602 c–603 A aims to answer is ‘on which of a person’s parts does imitation exert its power?’ It is in fact the first of two arguments that address this question. The second looks directly at the effect poetry has on the soul (603 B–606 D). It begins by identifying opposing inclinations found in a person struggling with grief. On one side is a part of him that, following calculation (604 D 4–5), bids him to tolerate his loss calmly and resist being overcome by his grief. But pulling in the opposite direction is an *alogiston* (604 D 9) part that urges him to give in to his grief and ‘leads him towards recollections of his suffering and towards lamentation and is insatiable for these things’ (604 D 8–9). Socrates argues that it is this latter part of the soul that is affected by poetry: if we enjoy the ‘long lamenting speech’ of a tragic hero recounting his suffering, this is because it appeals to the part of our soul that ‘hungers for the satisfaction of weeping and wailing, desiring these things by nature’ (606 A 4–6).

<sup>14</sup> See Moss, ‘Calculation’; Lorenz, *Brute*, ch. 5; and Singpurwalla, ‘Mimesis’.

This ‘hunger’ for lamentation is not explicitly attributed to any part of the soul, but as a strong, reason-resistant passion it seems highly likely that it finds its home among the non-rational parts (even if it is difficult to say which non-rational part). This is confirmed when Socrates moves from the example of grief to a more general account of the passions poetry appeals to, which are indisputably passions appropriate to the spirited and appetitive parts: ‘lusts and anger [or spirit: *θυμοῦ*] and all that is appetitive [*πάντων τῶν ἐπιθυμητικῶν*] and painful and pleasurable in the soul’ (606 D 1–2).

This gets us halfway. If this is to help us identify the inferior part in 602 C–603 A, we also need a second claim: that poetry and painting appeal to the same part of the soul. This is the more disputed claim. While few would wish to suggest that what ‘hungers for the satisfaction of weeping’ is our rational part, it might be suggested that Socrates makes two different divisions in book 10, each apparent in distinct situations: a division within the rational part revealed by cognitively deceptive illusions, and a division between the rational and non-rational parts revealed by emotionally engaging poems.<sup>15</sup> But Socrates makes it absolutely clear that this is not what he is doing. He concludes his second argument by linking it to his first, concluding that ‘we’d be right to take him [sc. the poet] and put him beside the painter as his counterpart’ (605 A 8–9). As one example of their similarity, he tells us that:

The imitative poet . . . by making images [*εἰδῶλα εἰδωλοποιούντα*] far removed from the truth, gratifies the part of the soul that is thoughtless and doesn’t distinguish greater from lesser, but *believes the same things are at one time large and another time small*. (605 B 7–C 4, my emphasis)

This is a reference to the illusion used as the central example in the first argument: ‘the same thing appears to us not to be of equal size when near and far away’ (line (1), 602 C 7–8). Plainly, then, Socrates takes the argument to have shown that the poet and the painter gratify the very same part of the soul: a single part for which it is true both that it unreflectively accepts visual illusions and that it is the source of non-rational passions. This is very strong evidence in-

<sup>15</sup> Murphy is the only author I am aware of who believes that the ‘inferior’ part refers consistently to a subdivision of the rational part throughout book 10. He argues that in 603 B–606 D it refers not to the non-rational, grieving part (although he believes this part is also affected by poetry) but to erroneous attitudes to this grief held by a lower part of reason (*Interpretation*, 241). This reading is very difficult to square with, for example, 606 A 3 ff.

deed that the ‘inferior’ part in 602 C–603 A is the same *non-rational* ‘inferior’ part in 603 B–606 D.<sup>16</sup>

A second reason to take the inferior part to be non-rational is that this enables us to give 602 C–603 A a meaningful role in the overall argument of book 10. Consider the following question, which is invited by the previous argument: what is it about painting and poetry that explains why, despite their obvious differences, they affect the same part of the soul? Those who argue that they affect different parts of the soul naturally think that they do so by virtue of different characteristics: for example, painting because it is cognitively deceptive and poetry because it is emotionally engaging. Accordingly, they believe that since it concerns something unique to painting, 602 C–603 A does not lead to any conclusions about poetry or imitation in general; rather, it provides only a ‘parallel or analogy’.<sup>17</sup> (And surely a weak analogy: that one thing can appeal to one part of the soul—which is in any case already clear from book 4 (cf. 603 D 3–7)—hardly supports the claim that another thing, for different reasons, appeals to a different part of the soul.) Conversely, if painting and poetry affect the very same part of the soul, we should expect them to do so by virtue of some characteristic that they share in common. And if it concerns a characteristic common to both, 602 C–603 A leads to a conclusion that is relevant to both painting and poetry. On examination, the text favours this latter reading.

In the passage quoted above, 605 B 7–C 4, Socrates tells us that the poet affects the illusion-believing part of the soul ‘by making images far removed from the truth’. This is Socrates’ definition of imitation (*ὠρισάμεθα*): an imitator is a ‘maker of images [*εἰδῶλον δημιουργός*] . . . at a third remove from the truth’ (599 D 2–4). Thus, poetry affects the non-rational part of the soul simply because it is an imitative art, an art that makes images. In other words, a poem affects this part of the soul not by virtue of something unique to a

<sup>16</sup> The discussion of poetry also helps, independently, to identify the ‘best’ part. Recall that in 602 C–603 A there was some interpretative latitude regarding the identity of the best part, granted by the fact that the best part’s calculation is only said to be the ‘work’ of the rational part. In the discussion of poetry we find a more conclusive claim. Socrates says that the poet ‘arouses, nourishes, and strengthens this part of the soul [sc. the inferior part] and so destroys the rational part [*τὸ λογιστικόν*]’ (605 B 3–5). In the previous line Socrates claims, similarly, that poetry appeals to the inferior part rather than to *τὸ βέλτιστον τῆς ψυχῆς* (605 A 9–B 2). This clearly requires us to identify *τὸ βέλτιστον τῆς ψυχῆς* with *τὸ λογιστικόν*—and assuming that we cannot have two *best* parts, this entails that the best part in 602 C–603 A should equally be identified with the rational part.

<sup>17</sup> Burnyeat, ‘Culture’, 11.

poem—say, its emotive content or the fact that it is auditory—but simply by virtue of the characteristic that makes it an imitation: being a mere image or appearance of what is real. If this is right, then what poetry affects is a part of the soul that is sensitive to such images or appearances, while being insensitive to rational argument. Thus, it is a part that can be moved by compelling images of grief but is unmoved by (since, it seems likely, it is unable to comprehend) arguments about how one genuinely ought to grieve.

The same is true of painting. Painting is introduced in book 10 as an especially clear example of imitation: a painting is, in a fairly straightforward way, an image that imitates a subject. So even though poetry is what Socrates is ultimately interested in, he relies almost exclusively on the example of painting in some of his most important arguments, including his account of ‘what imitation in general is’ (595 c 7) and the claim that it is something epistemically inferior (595 c–598 d). Since these arguments must apply to poetry too, the assumption is that in so far as paintings and poems are both imitations, they can be studied from the perspective of this shared characteristic. So when Socrates asks what part of the soul imitation exerts its power on he turns first to painting not as something unique, but simply as his clearest example of imitation. As such, he examines the effect paintings have on the soul simply by virtue of being, like visual illusions and poems, ‘images far removed from the truth’.

If this is how we should read the argument, it aims at a conclusion that applies to both painting and poetry: since painting simply *qua* imitation affects *x* part of the soul, then imitation *per se*, including poetry, affects *x* part of the soul.<sup>18</sup> The best test of whether this reading is correct is to look at the conclusions Socrates draws from the argument, and indeed they apply to imitation as such. His first conclusion is that ‘painting and *imitation as a whole* . . . consorts with a part of us that is far from reason’ (603 A 10–B 1, ἡ γραφικὴ καὶ ὅλως ἡ μιμητικὴ, my emphasis).<sup>19</sup> Further, by adding this to his earlier epistemological conclusions, he draws a similarly comprehensive conclusion: ‘imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with an inferior thing to produce an inferior thing’ (603 B 4). These

<sup>18</sup> For similar interpretations of the argument’s structure see Lorenz, *Brute*, 60–1, and Moss, ‘Calculation’, 45.

<sup>19</sup> Note the singular: imitation as a whole consorts with *a* part of us far from reason (πῶρρω δ’ αὖ φρονήσεως ὄντι τῶ ἐν ἡμῖν), not two parts (one for painting and another for poetry).

conclusions are licensed only if 602 c–603 A concerns painting just in so far as it is one kind of imitation.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, consider the conclusions that we can draw about *Republic's* psychology if the inferior part in 602 c–603 A is (a) a non-rational part or (b) a lower subdivision of the rational part.

(a) Nehamas supposes that if the appearance-believing part is non-rational, we will be stumped by ‘the difficult question of what appetite has to do with perceptual error and illusion. Why should *desire* tell us that the immersed stick is bent?’<sup>21</sup> The preceding discussion suggests that this gets the explanation back to front. It would of course be implausible to suggest that a non-rational part is taken in by visual illusions because of its desires, but the opposite is highly plausible: that this part has the desires that it does, desires that are often at odds with the calculated aims of the rational part, at least in part because it lacks calculation and must instead rely on mere appearances. Understood in this way, while the arguments for partition in book 4 tell us what passions the non-rational parts of the soul have, the argument for partition in 602 c–603 A tells us why they have them. This point is well stated by Moss:

To say that (for example) the appetitive part sees the stick as bent does not, then, mean that we see the stick as bent because doing so satisfies some appetite; it means rather that one and the same susceptibility to appearances explains both our perception of the stick and our appetites for pleasure.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> It is true that he goes on to express reservations about the generality of the argument, and so recommends the second argument that looks directly at poetry:

SOC. Does it apply only to the imitations we see, or does it also apply to the ones we hear—the ones we call poetry?

GLAUCON. It is likely [*εἰκός*] that it applies to poetry too.

SOC. Then we must not rely only on a likeliness [*εἰκότι*] drawn from painting, but also go directly to the part of our thought that poetic imitations consort with.

(603 B 6–C 1)

How ‘likely’ it is surely depends on nothing other than the likeliness of the general conclusion he reaches, which is that imitation as a whole appeals to an inferior part of the soul. So the worry he expresses is about the *certainty* of his conclusion, which obviously does not imply that it is, while held with reservations, any less general than stated. Notice also the sentence’s not-only-but-also (*μη . . . μόνον . . . ἀλλὰ καί*) structure.

<sup>21</sup> Nehamas, ‘Imitation’, 265. Cf. J. Annas: ‘desire has nothing to do with optical illusions’ (*An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1981), 339).

<sup>22</sup> Moss, ‘Calculation’, 40. A number of authors have defended this view of the relation between non-rational cognition and non-rational conation: see Lorenz, *Brute*, ch. 5; J. Moss, ‘Pleasure and Illusion in Plato’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 72 (2006), 503–35; and Singpurwalla, ‘Mimesis’. Both Moss and Sing-

(b) Now turn Nehamas's question around: what does believing an illusion, against one's better judgement, have to do with *reason*? Surprisingly, this is not a question that he or anyone who defends a similar view considers, yet if we are to introduce a new subdivision of the rational part, it must have some sensible psychological function. But it is difficult to see what this function might be. The putative higher subdivision of the rational part can already form all the beliefs the rational part requires, including beliefs that accept or reject appearances, so there seems to be no work left for an illusion-believing yet rational part to do: when this lower part's beliefs agree with the higher part's beliefs, they are not needed, and when they disagree with them, all they can do is lead the rational part astray. It seems, in other words, that the only unique contribution this part could make is to get certain things wrong. This reading, then, fares badly precisely where the alternative fares well: it not only makes 602 c–603 A oddly tangential to book 10's discussion of imitation, it also introduces a new part of the soul for which we can find no clear psychological function.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Belief–appearance conflict: 602 E 4–6

From the evidence we have seen so far, identifying the inferior part of the soul with the appetitive and/or spirited part has much in its favour: it finds strong textual support, it gives 602 c–603 A a meaningful role in Plato's discussion of imitation, and it makes good psychological sense. However, at the very centre of our passage there is one piece of evidence that has proved to be more than just a thorn in the side of this reading; it has led some, even in the face of the

purwalla couple this with the claim that the non-rational parts desire the apparent good. For example, they claim that the appetitive part desires pleasure because pleasure (merely) appears good to it. But the point stands even without this claim. In book 9 Socrates argues that the appetitive and spirited parts are prone to being misled by 'mere images or shadow-paintings of true pleasures' (586 B 8), and therefore will achieve 'the pleasures that are most their own' only if they follow the rational part's calculated conclusions about the highest pleasures possible for them (586 B 7–587 A 1).

<sup>23</sup> Although I am not aware that it has ever been suggested, one might attempt to identify the lower division of reason with the perceptual faculty itself, so that its function is simply perceiving. In sect. 7 I consider some of the reasons why the perceptual faculty must be attributed to the non-rational parts.

strongest evidence from the preceding section, to conclude that the division must be within the rational part.<sup>24</sup>

Those who argue that the division is within the rational part of the soul take their cue from line (4), 602 E 4–6.<sup>25</sup> According to the standard and the most natural translation, this line states that once the rational part of the soul has used calculation to conclude that, for example, an apparently bent stick is in fact straight, the stick nonetheless continues to appear *to it* to be bent. Thus the rational part is by itself the subject of both a correct belief (it believes the stick is straight) and, simultaneously, an opposing false appearance (the stick appears to it to be bent). To quote the line again:

(4) τούτῳ δὲ πολλάκις μετρήσαντι καὶ σημαίνοντι μείζω ἅττα εἶναι ἢ ἐλάττω ἕτερα ἐτέρων ἢ ἴσα πάναντία φαίνεται ἅμα περὶ ταυτά. (602 E 4–6)

But often to this [sc. the rational part: 602 E 1], when it has measured and declared that some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposite appears at the same time about the same things.

There has been general agreement that *if* the rational part of the soul suffers this kind of belief–appearance conflict, then it must also be the part that suffers the belief–belief conflict, and therefore, applying the Principle of Opposites, it must be divided into two parts, a higher rational part that believes in accord with calculation and a lower rational part that believes in accord with appearances.

<sup>24</sup> Burnyeat, for example, originally defended a rational/non-rational partition, citing the passage quoted above, 605 B 7–C 4, in which the illusion-believing part is what poetry appeals to ('Grammar', 35 nn. 21 and 22). More recently, on the strength of 602 E 4–6, he has defended the rival view, dismissing 605 B 7–C 4 as a misleading overstatement: 'as often with Plato, what begins as a parallel or analogy ends with one term dominating the other' ('Culture', 225–6).

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, simply citing this line has often been taken to be a conclusive argument for a division within reason. For example, Burnyeat: 'At 602 E 4 τούτῳ must refer to the subject which did the measuring . . . it is this part that receives opposite appearances, hence this part that has to undergo division to avoid the contradiction' ('Culture', 223 n. 12); Nehamas: 'Since in our present passage the calculating part of the soul is said to have two opposing beliefs (602 E 4–6), it must be the calculating part itself that is further divided' ('Imitation', 265); Kamtekar: 'the opposite appears to it (τούτῳ) . . . Applied to this phenomenon, the Principle of Opposites yields a division within reason' ('Personification', 173 n. 11); Sedley: 'the clear implication of τούτῳ at 602 E 4 and διάνοια at 603 B 10 . . . is that both functions are carried out by the intellect itself' (*Midwife*, 113 n. 40). The use of διάνοια that Sedley appeals to is less clear than he assumes. Socrates is referring in this line to 'the part of our διάνοια with which poetic imitations consort' (603 B 10–C 1; my emphasis; cf. 595 B 5–6), i.e. the lamenting and uncontroversially non-rational part of the soul examined in 603 B–606 D. If anything, then, this use of διάνοια suggests that he is prepared to attribute cognition to a non-rational part of the soul.

Those wishing to avoid this conclusion, on the strength of the evidence presented in the previous section, have generally attempted to find a translation of 602 E 4–6 that avoids making the rational part the subject of the opposing appearance. Many alternatives have been attempted. Some try to find an alternative subject for *τούτω* ('to this'). Rachel Barney, for example, suggests that *τούτω* refers not to the rational part itself but to the rational part's *conclusion*, and that it should be governed by *τάναντία* ('the opposite'). This would give us the following translation: 'often the opposite of this [i.e. of what the rational part concludes]—when it [the rational part] has measured and declared that some things are greater or less than or equal to others—appears at the same time, about the same things'.<sup>26</sup> Others have suggested that *τούτω* refers to the whole soul or person, not just the rational part.<sup>27</sup> However, these translations fall foul of the fact that by far the most likely subject of *τούτω* is the rational part, as is clear from the exchange leading up to 602 E 4–6:

(3) ἀλλὰ μὴν τοῦτό γε τοῦ λογιστικοῦ ἂν εἴη τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ ἔργον.  
τούτου γὰρ οὖν.

(4) *τούτω* δὲ πολλάκις . . . (602 E 1–6)

(3) SOC. But calculating, measuring, and weighing are the work of the rational part of the soul.

GLAUCON. Yes, of this.

(4) SOC. But often to this . . .

It is natural to take *τούτω* to have the same reference as *τούτου* in the previous line and this, in turn, clearly refers back to the rational part (*τοῦ λογιστικοῦ*) in line (3).

A second approach, found first in Adam and recently revived by Lorenz, leaves *τούτω* as it is according to the standard translation, but takes *τάναντία* to refer to the other side of the opposition.<sup>28</sup> That

<sup>26</sup> R. Barney, 'Appearances and Impressions' ['Appearances'], *Phronesis*, 37 (1992), 283–318 at 286 n. 4

<sup>27</sup> See B. Bosanquet, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (New York, 1895), 393–4, and S. Halliwell: 'this should not mean that reason itself succumbs to erroneous sense impressions, only that the soul as a whole does' (*Plato: Republic 10* (Warminster, 1988), 134). Another approach is to separate *τούτω* from *φαίνεται* with the less than felicitous grammatical innovation of taking it to form with the participles a kind of genitive-absolute-like clause, but in the dative case: see B. Jowett and L. Campbell (eds.), *Plato's Republic: The Greek Text*, vol. iii (Oxford, 1894), 451–2. Wolfsdorf, presumably for similar reasons, also separates *τούτω* from *φαίνεται* in his translation ('*Republic 9*', 135). For some further alternatives see J. Adam (ed.), *The Republic of Plato [Republic]*, vol. ii (Cambridge, 1902), app. II.

<sup>28</sup> See Adam, *Republic*, app. II, and Lorenz, *Brute*, 67–8.

is, what ‘appears’ (*phainetai*) to the rational part is not the opposite of what it calculates, but rather the opposite of what the senses report—what appears to it is its own correct conclusion about the larger and smaller. The problem with this reading is that it is at odds with Plato’s careful use of appearance language in book 10. As I will argue shortly, in this context an ‘appearance’ (*phainomenon*) or what ‘appears’ (*phainetai*) is either the product of imitation or a misleading image that occurs naturally, such as a reflection or visual illusion. Adam’s and Lorenz’s reading, however, requires us to take ‘appears’ to refer not to the most relevant appearance in the passage, the false sensory appearance, but to what appearances of this kind are explicitly contrasted with in book 10—the *truth* about the larger and smaller. It is far more likely that what ‘appears’ to the rational part is what was mentioned just a few lines earlier: the *mere* appearance of being larger or smaller (τὸ φαινόμενον μείζον ἢ ἑλαττον, 602 D 8).

I take it that the standard translation is here to stay. But what these attempts to find an alternative translation illustrate is that both sides of the debate take 602 E 4–6 to be decisive in one way or another, believing either that it shows that it is the rational part that is partitioned or that it *would* show this if we stick to the standard translation, and so requires another translation. It is only decisive, however, if their common assumption is correct, namely that if the rational part suffers this kind of belief–appearance conflict then it must also suffer the belief–belief conflict to which the Principle of Opposites is applied. This assumption has received little defence, and yet the argument’s move from belief–appearance to belief–belief conflict is by far its most puzzling. Why does Plato think that having something appear to one entails that one believes what appears? Until we have answered this question we do not know what connection there is between appearing and believing, so we are not entitled to assume that a part of the soul that is appeared to, as the rational part of the soul is according to 602 E 4–6, is thereby a part that believes what appears.

I am going to argue that in fact this assumption turns out to be false. It is true that the only opposites mentioned in 602 E 4–6 are (a) what the rational part believes and (b) what appears to the rational part, so it might seem that this sentence is very misleadingly expressed if Plato did not intend the opposition to be within the rational part. What I aim to show, however, is that once we have

correctly understood the relation between appearance and belief we will see that it explains both why the opposition is not within the rational part and why 602 E 4–6 describes the opposition in just the right way.

#### 4. From appearance to belief

In the previous section I argued that we cannot hope to understand the implications of 602 E 4–6 until we have solved the first puzzle I raised. That is, we need to understand how it might be valid for Socrates to establish in (1)–(4) that belief–appearance conflicts occur and then in the continuation of the argument to assume that he has shown that belief–belief conflicts occur:

- (5) ‘It is impossible for the same thing to believe [*doxazein*] opposites about the same thing at the same time’ (602 E 8–9).
- (6) Therefore ‘the part of the soul that forms a belief contrary to the measurements couldn’t be the same part that believes in accord with them’ (603 A 1–2).

What is assumed, it seems, is that the ‘appears to’ in (4) implies the presence of a concurring belief or, more generally, that when we experience a visual illusion we invariably believe it. Accordingly, the simplest way to render the argument valid is to take the following premiss to be implicit in the first half of the argument:

If it appears to a person that *p*, then they believe that *p*.

*Prima facie*, this assumption is highly questionable. Most of us will readily accept that what appears to be the case can be—in at least one sense of ‘appears’—the opposite of what we believe to be the case, as is illustrated well by the illusions Socrates mentions and widely discussed modern examples such as the Müller-Lyer lines. But a quite natural conclusion to draw from these illusions is that having a belief and having something appear to one are different and independent mental states. In other words, as Aristotle saw, they seem to provide *counter-examples* to the assumption Plato requires.<sup>29</sup>

It really is surprising, then, that Plato makes no attempt to de-

<sup>29</sup> In the *De anima* Aristotle uses this line of argument to object to the view—he is likely to have Plato’s position in the *Sophist* in mind (see n. 43)—that appearances

defend the move from appearance to belief. Indeed, the occurrence of belief–belief conflict is not even formally stated in the argument. It is simply assumed in (5), the statement of the Principle of Opposites, as if it had already been introduced. This makes interpreting the argument difficult, but it also gives us a clue about the kind of assumption we are looking for. It suggests that Plato thought there was something plausible, perhaps even obvious, about taking belief–appearance conflict to be a form of belief–belief conflict, so much so that it does not require mention. If this is right, what we are looking for is not an elaborate philosophical defence of the connection between appearance and belief but some intuitive, relatively theory-light reasons why someone (like both Socrates and Glaucon) could just assume that it is true.

There are two possibilities. Either there is some reason, perhaps drawing on the broader psychological theory of the *Republic*, why one (or a part of one) invariably *assents* to appearances, forming beliefs that agree with them. Or Plato’s understanding of what an ‘appearance’ is entails a conceptual link between having it ‘appear’ to one that  $p$  and having a belief that  $p$ .<sup>30</sup>

Hendrik Lorenz takes the first approach. He recognizes that the move from appearance to belief is just assumed in the argument and that this requires explanation, but he says ‘a moment’s reflection on Plato’s psychological theory should make it clear how natural it is to assume that the parts of us below reason *accept* sensory appearances’. The reflections he has in mind are the following:

[The lower parts of the soul] could never begin to perform [their characteristic] functions without being supplied with tolerably good information

are a ‘blend’ (*συμπλοκή*) of perception and belief. Such a view would require that we believe that  $p$  when it appears that  $p$ , but he points out that ‘often false things appear [*φαίνεται*] while at the same time we hold true beliefs about them, for example the sun appears a foot across but is believed to be larger than the inhabited part of the earth’ (3. 3, 428<sup>b</sup>3–4).

<sup>30</sup> A third approach is to try to make the conflict between beliefs more palatable. Anthony Price suggests that since conflict between outright beliefs is psychologically implausible, the conflict should involve ‘at least one half-belief’ (*Mental Conflict* (London, 1995), 43). Allan Silverman suggests that the opposing belief is not that, say, the stick *is* bent, but only that it *appears* bent (‘Plato on *Phantasia*’ [*Phantasia*’], *Classical Antiquity*, 10 (1991), 123–47 at 137). My difficulty with both of these approaches is that they make the conflict more psychologically plausible by making it a ‘conflict’ only in a very attenuated sense. Consequently, they make it correspondingly less plausible that this is a kind of conflict to which the Principle of Opposites could be applied.

about the person's environment . . . The text before us suggests that, just as one would expect, one way they get the information they need is by sensory appearances. Moreover, the lower parts of the soul cannot do what we do, namely resort to measurement, arithmetic, and the like, so as to discover how things really are. For these are the resources of reason. Unlike us, then, the lower parts *are* at the mercy of how things appear to the senses (cf. 602 D 6–9). They cannot help being taken in by sensory appearances.<sup>31</sup>

This strikes me as a very plausible account of the non-rational parts' relationship to appearances, but Lorenz is mistaken to identify this as the assumption the argument requires. His suggestion is that the belief–belief conflict is established by bringing into play a number of claims (all of which I agree with) about the cognitive abilities of the non-rational parts of the soul: they are aware of sensory appearances; they are able to form desires and motivate actions on the basis of such appearances; and they lack the reasoning abilities needed to doubt them. Together these claims make it natural to assume that the non-rational parts of the soul will assent to the appearance that the rational part rejects.

The problem is that appealing to these claims would render the argument question-begging: it makes a premiss of the argument rest on assuming that there are two distinct believing parts of the soul when the argument is intended to *establish* such a partition. Socrates has of course already given arguments for partition in book 4, but what he offers in book 10 is a new argument of the same kind, going *from* a case of conflict *to* the existence of parts of the soul corresponding to each side of this conflict. To see this we need only reflect that if this partition were assumed from the outset, the appeal to the Principle of Opposites would be entirely otiose. So while Lorenz's considerations could form a second argument for the same conclusion, and perhaps a good one, it is not Socrates' argument in book 10. For this argument to be valid, the possibility of belief–belief conflict must be made plausible without taking for granted either partition itself or the particular characteristics of the (as yet unestablished) part of the soul that believes in accordance with the appearance.

The argument's deductive direction, then, must be from belief–appearance conflict to belief–belief conflict, and finally to the existence of separate believing parts of the soul. Any attempt to explain the former in terms of the latter will lead to circularity. In general,

<sup>31</sup> Lorenz, *Brute*, 68.

this prohibits any appeal to reasons (even good reasons) for thinking that a part of the soul will assent to the appearance. Thus, we must turn to the second possibility: that Plato's understanding of 'appearance' entails that we believe what appears.<sup>32</sup>

There is one very quick way in which we can get the kind of conceptual link between appearance and belief that we are looking for. Appearance language in Greek, as in English, can be put to a number of very different uses, and one of these is simply to indicate that something is believed to be the case. A ubiquitous example is when one of Socrates' interlocutors registers his assent with the familiar 'it appears so': *phainetai*. In this sense, *phainetai* indicates only that one holds a certain belief, perhaps tentatively or provisionally; it implies no specific commitments about what evidence supports this belief—one is simply stating one's view of the matter. Rachel Barney argues that in our passage Plato is using appearance language in this judgemental sense. She claims that what it refers to is 'what I, or some constituent part of me, initially and unreflectively takes to be the case on the basis of perception'.<sup>33</sup> This would, in a certain way, offer an easy solution to the problem, since the move from belief–appearance to belief–belief conflict would be nothing more than a rewording: 'appearance' just *means* 'belief'. On this reading, then, when Socrates says in line (4) that 'the opposite appears to it', this is just a way of saying that the opposite is—'initially and unreflectively' and 'on the basis of perception'—believed by it. (Note that, if the standard translation of line (4) stands, this reading does indeed imply that the rational part is the subject of the opposing beliefs.)

But this judgemental reading of *phainetai* introduces a new problem, or rather it pushes the same problem one step back. It allows for a smooth transition from line (4) to line (5) at the cost of passing onto (4) precisely the same difficulty we had with (5): if 'it appears to' simply means 'it is believed by', then (4) already assumes that belief–belief conflict occurs, and again we need to ask why. That is, we still need to figure out what connection there is between a par-

<sup>32</sup> It is true that line (3) of the argument connects 'calculating, measuring, and weighing' with the rational part of the soul before the Principle of Opposites has been applied, in line (5), but this reflects the order of exposition rather than the logical structure of the argument. Thus, in the conclusion drawn from the Principle of Opposites, line (6), Socrates uses entirely non-committal descriptions of the parts, and only in lines (7) and (8) does he begin, cautiously, to identify them.

<sup>33</sup> Barney, 'Appearances', 287.

tially immersed stick *looking* bent and the belief that it is bent. The original question can be restated as follows: why does Plato think that when we judge a (sensory) appearance to be false, the opposite at the same time (judgementally) appears to us to be true? In short, by moving appearances closer to beliefs, Barney at the same time moves them further from visual illusions, but the solution we are looking for is one that will explain how appearances can be equally associated with both beliefs and visual illusions.<sup>34</sup>

I believe Barney's reading illustrates a train of thought that influences, if only implicitly or partially, many commentators' readings of the passage. When trying to understand the connection between appearance and belief in 602 C–603 A, there is naturally a temptation to think of the judgemental use of *phainetai*. It is this temptation, I believe, that has led commentators to follow the grammar of the judgemental *phainetai* when trying to locate the subject of the corresponding belief. Specifically, the assumption is that occurrences of 'it appears to' can be replaced *salva veritate* by 'it is believed by', so that the subject of the appearance—the rational part in 602 E 4–6—is thereby the subject of the relevant belief. It is well worth emphasizing, then, that Plato is in fact using appearance language in a very different way.

In Greek, again just as in English, there is also a purely phenomenal or sensory use of appearance language. In this sense, to say that something 'appears' so-and-so to one is to say that it is presented to one as so-and-so, irrespective of what one believes. This is most commonly used to describe how something is presented to the senses—how something looks—and for our present purposes it is safe to take these appearances to be a kind of perceptual experience. Thus, if we say that 'the moon appears larger when lower in the sky', we are saying that this is how it looks to us, without implying that this is how we believe it to be: the moon will appear larger—will be presented to us as or will look larger—irrespective of what

<sup>34</sup> In some respects the position Barney wishes to reach is close to the one I will defend. She does wish to maintain a connection between what 'appears', judgementally construed, and the recalcitrant, seemingly sensory appearance that constitutes the visual illusion, but she does not offer an account of how this might be achieved ('Appearances', 288), and I fail to see an answer. To get a sense of how our views diverge, note that according to the reading I will defend appearances are belief-like in just the same way and for precisely the same reason that perceptions are belief-like. Barney's linguistic connection, in contrast, is between *φαίνεσθαι* and *δοξάζειν*—if she is to claim in addition that 'appearances', understood in this judgemental way, are also sensory, this will need to be defended by a separate argument.

we believe.<sup>35</sup> As this example illustrates, in contrast to seeing that *p*, saying that it appears that *p* does not imply that *p* is true. This makes the sensory use of ‘appears’ particularly apt in cases where perception is suspected of failing to represent how things really are; visual illusions present an obvious example.

While they are related, judgemental appearance language and sensory appearance language are undeniably different. For example, there is no contradiction in saying that it judgementally ‘appears’ to one that *p* and also, at the same time, that it sensorily ‘appears’ to one that not-*p*. They are as different (and, as we will see, as similar) as the mental states each picks out: tentative beliefs on the one hand, and deceptive perceptual experiences on the other.

Book 10 furnishes us with plenty of evidence to allay any doubt about the sense of ‘appears’ Plato is using. First, of course, what Socrates calls ‘appearances’ *seem* to be sensory appearances: paintings, reflections in mirrors, and visual illusions. It should also be noted that these are not only called *phainomena* but also, synonymously, *eidōla* and *phantasmata*, images and semblances, and these words are not so easily construed judgementally. But most importantly, since Plato is using appearance language to make a distinction, and he does so carefully and deliberately (596 A–598 C), our understanding of what he means should follow this distinction.

One account is especially clear. Socrates argues that imitators not only *produce* appearances, they also *imitate* appearances (597 E 10–598 C 5). He asks whether a painter imitates his subject ‘as it is or as it appears’ (*οἷα ἔστιν ἢ οἷα φαίνεται*, 598 A 5), or, in another phrasing, whether he imitates ‘the existing thing, as it is [τὸ ὄν, ὡς ἔχει] or . . . the appearance, as it appears [τὸ φαινόμενον, ὡς φαίνεται]’ (598 B 2–3). Socrates explains this distinction with the following example: when we are looking at a couch it appears to change shape as we vary our perspective (for example, from the front it is a broad rectangular shape and from the side a narrow L-shape) but of course the couch itself, as it is, remains the same. Thus, because the painter can only copy the way things look, he is forced to imitate the apparent and changing couch, as it appears, not the real and unchanging couch, as it is. The distinction is unambiguous, and Plato is very careful with the language he uses to express it. It is not a distinction between what is and is not believed (the painter does not believe a couch changes shape) but between the apparent and real, where

<sup>35</sup> Compare Aristotle’s example of the apparent size of the sun, quoted in n. 29.

‘the appearance’ and what ‘appears’ refer to the fallible information presented to our senses, functioning as non-factive counterparts to ‘perceive’. If we are to associate this kind of appearance with belief, we must do so with an appropriate account of perceptual experiences, not with an account of the meaning of *phainetai*.

This is perfectly consonant with the appearance language we find in 602 c–603 A. Consider the opening lines of the argument: (1) ‘Through sight [*διὰ τῆς ὀψεως*] the same thing appears [*phainetai*] to us not to be of equal size when near and far away’ (602 c 7–8). The reference to sight makes it natural to take this to be a claim about sensory appearances, about how something looks when near and far away. This also makes the claim comprehensible and true, at least to the extent that the same object will take up more space in our visual field when near than when far away. The claim would be absurd, however, if this *phainetai* had the same meaning as the *phainetai* that an interlocutor uses to register his assent (‘it appears so’)—no one would say in *this* sense that it appears to them that something is simply smaller when distant.

### 5. Sensory appearances as beliefs

The preceding discussion has led to two claims: first, that to explain the move from belief–appearance to belief–belief conflict we need to examine the relevant appearances rather than the characteristics of the appearance-believing part of the soul, and second, that the relevant appearances are sensory, that is, that they refer to what is (fallibly) presented to the senses. What should now be clear is that these appearances have no obvious relationship, semantic or otherwise, with what *we* typically call beliefs, the kind of beliefs we would profess having or would rely upon if we were making a bet. But this is hardly surprising: the argument of 602 c–603 A clearly invites us to extend belief beyond the normal range. We typically take beliefs to fall into a single more or less consistent set governed by certain rational constraints. Chief among these are that they tend towards mutual implication, do not permit outright contradiction, and are responsive to reasoning and evidence: thus, if we use ‘measuring, counting, and weighing’ to conclude that *p*, we will, other things being equal, believe that *p*—and we could not believe otherwise. The purpose of Plato’s argument, however, is to show that

some beliefs are entirely insensitive to reasoning, responsive only to sensory evidence, and capable of contradicting outright our more rational beliefs. Some beliefs, then, fall outside of the set of rational beliefs that we typically take to be exhaustive. Plato is introducing what is, from our perspective, a highly atypical species of belief. At this point, a natural question is whether what Plato calls a *doxa* in 602 c–603 A is something that we would be willing to call ‘belief’. I will argue that we have some good reasons to think that it is not.

The following is one way to state the reading I am rejecting: by introducing the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul, Plato increases the number of potential subjects of belief, so we find a surprising view of belief in 602 c–603 A simply because Plato is extending typical beliefs to atypical subjects. We have already seen why this reading will not work: the argument establishes the existence of the opposing beliefs before their subjects have been established. The surprising belief, then, is established before it is attributed to a subject, and this means that it is the belief itself, not its subject, that is atypical. Instead, then, we ought to focus on what Plato does in fact appeal to in order to establish its existence, namely the opposition between a sensory appearance that *p* and a calculated belief that not-*p*. In particular, we should focus on the fact that Plato takes it to be *obvious* that this opposition involves opposing *doxai*. A parsimonious explanation, which I will try to make plausible in the following, is that Plato is assuming that the sensory appearance is itself a belief or a belief-like state. That is, he is assuming that it is relatively uncontroversial that *doxa* is a word that can be used to describe both the calculated belief and the sensory appearance itself. The conflict between *doxai*, according to this reading, just is the conflict between what the calculating part concludes and the sensory appearance; there is no third mental state, namely a second (typical) belief that assents to the appearance.

Here we have to be cautious. On the one hand, if the Principle of Opposites is to apply, sensory appearances must be sufficiently belief-like to come into genuine conflict with our calculated beliefs: simply allowing *doxa* to cast a wider net than ‘belief’ is not a solution. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that 602 c–603 A’s argument is exceptionally puzzling to us in a way that it is not to Socrates and Glaucon: what seems natural to them, that disbelieving a sensory appearance is a conflict between *doxai*, does not seem

at all natural to us if we assume that *doxa* means exactly what we mean by ‘belief’.

I suggest a middle ground along the following lines. What Plato assumes is a common-sense view of perceptual experiences in which they are, while not beliefs, remarkably similar to beliefs. The similarity is one that I think many will be happy to accept. Both perception and belief are mental states that represent the world to us, with the accuracy or success of a perception or a belief being determined by whether or not it truly represents how the world is. In this they both differ from representational states such as entertaining, imagining, or wishing, all of which can have representational content, but none of which aims to represent how the world *is*. In turn, while this implies that *doxa* is broader than ‘belief’, it nonetheless ties it to a characteristic that we strongly associate with beliefs: being a mental state that represents the world to us as being a certain way. This world-representing role is sufficiently central to our idea of belief for it to be surprising to notice that it is shared by perception—it may not make perceptions beliefs, but it certainly makes them belief-like. In short, then, the claim is that sensory appearances and beliefs are, according to a common-sense understanding of each, two species of the same genus, *doxa*, a genus that sets them apart as mental states that represent the world as being a certain way.<sup>36</sup> (Depending on what one thinks a belief is, one might decide on reflection that both *doxai* count as beliefs. My purpose in urging a distinction between *doxa* and belief is not to deny this possibility, but rather to shift our focus from a search for conflicting beliefs to a question that is more relevant to our assessment of the argument: how can disbelieving a sensory appearance provide sufficient cognitive conflict for the Principle of Opposites to apply? Once we make sense of the argument and understand exactly how its conclusion is established, it will then be possible to re-examine the similarity between sensory *doxai* and beliefs.)

It is important that the view of perception I am attributing to Plato is a common-sense view: what opposes our calculated belief must not only be obviously a *doxa*, but also obviously a perception. Here it fares very well. The view I am attributing to Plato amounts

<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that, at least on the surface, this agrees with the Divided Line. There Socrates also places *two* distinct kinds of cognition under the heading of *δόξα*, both *πίστις* and *εἰκασία*, and the latter is defined in relation to sensory appearances such as reflections, shadows, and ‘everything of that sort’ (509 E 1–510 A 3).

to little more than a description of what it seems like to have a perception. The first claim it requires is that perception is representational. This is simply to say (more or less) that we can accurately describe the content of perception propositionally, or, in other words, that our ordinary descriptions of perceptions are accurate: we see, for example, 'that a book is on the table'. This much is true of all representational states: we can equally imagine or entertain 'that a book is on the table'. What sets perception apart is a stronger claim: that perception represents the world to us as being a certain way. Again, this fits a common-sense view of perception. What we take ourselves to see are the objects in our environment, such as books and tables. Our perceptions, even if illusory, at least present themselves as giving us unmediated access to the world: what we (seem to) see is not the qualities of our experience, or an image of the world, but the world itself, as it is.<sup>37</sup>

There is a further claim that Plato would, arguably, make about perception, a claim that undoubtedly makes perception more belief-like. My reading of 602 c–603 a is in part distinctive because I do *not* bring this claim to bear on the argument, so it is worth noting. The claim is that perception's relationship to desire and action is analogous to belief's. Specifically, perception, like belief, provides sufficient cognition to give rise to a desire or an act. If I am thirsty, seeing a glass of water enables me to desire and reach for the glass; I do not need, in addition, a belief that affirms my perception. The main reason for attributing this claim to Plato (which strikes me as in any case quite plausible) is that the non-rational parts of the soul are incapable of any beliefs other than sensory *doxai*, yet can motivate actions on the basis of the latter. Now, one might think, with Lorenz, that to acquire a disposition to act on the basis of a sensory appearance amounts to a minimal kind of *assent* to an appearance, and further, that assenting to an appearance is necessary for *believ-*

<sup>37</sup> These are the basic claims of modern representational theories of perception. It is commonly noted that these characteristics make perceptions belief-like and it has even been argued, by Kathrin Glüer, that it is sufficient to make them beliefs, albeit by construing a perception's content, *contra* Plato, as a belief that it *seems* that *p* ('In Defence of a Doxastic Account of Experience', *Mind & Language*, 24 (2009), 297–327). Silverman applies a very similar view of perceptual beliefs to 602 c–603 a ('*Phantasia*', 137; see n. 30 above). Note that the belief theories of perception pioneered by D. M. Armstrong are not a suitable comparison (see e.g. *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (New York, 1968), ch. 10). Theories of this kind take perceptions to be (or be acquisitions of) what I have referred to as rational or typical beliefs, and thus they have difficulty accommodating conflicts between belief and perception.

ing an appearance (or that a sensory *doxa* has two components, a sensory appearance and assent to this appearance).<sup>38</sup> I think there are good reasons for not introducing this claim to 602 c–603 a, and therefore for not thinking that such assent is necessary for an appearance to qualify as a *doxa*. First, it is not at all clear that the illusions Socrates mentions (e.g. a seemingly bent stick, an ambiguity between concave and convex, or a shadow-painting) do give rise to any dispositions to act. They might lead us to accept certain counterfactuals (for example, were I to reach for the stick, I would be inclined to act as if it were bent), but this is true even if there is no actual *change* in the soul, and acquiring a disposition involves, it seems to me, acquiring an actual state of readiness to act in some pertinent manner—not every manner for which we can find true counterfactuals. Are we really, for example, disposed to *act* as if the Müller-Lyer lines are unequal simply by looking at them on a page? But for the sake of argument let us assume that such illusions do, at some minimal level, give rise to dispositions to act. It must still be shown that this is a claim that Socrates does in fact rely on, which faces the obvious difficulty that it is not only never mentioned, even obliquely, in the argument, but is even obscured by Socrates' choice of illusions that have no practical significance. Socrates even explicitly contrasts the conflict they give rise to with conflicts 'in matters of action' (ἐν ταῖς πράξεσι, 603 d 1–3), and one might reasonably think that having conflicting dispositions to *act* is indeed a conflict in matters of action.<sup>39</sup> It is preferable to stick to the explicit content of the argument, and, as I hope to show, this is all that is required.

<sup>38</sup> Lorenz, *Brute*, 97: '[In the *Republic*] having a *doxa* may simply be a matter of being in a representational state, a state that presents something as being some way or other, and accepting that the thing in question is that way. . . . The acceptance that such a "belief" involves may be entirely uncritical, and may be no more than a disposition to act on the information contained in the representational state.' Ganson suggests a similar account of belief as one way to make sense of the sensory belief in 602 c–603 a ('Rational/Non-Rational', 187); I am more sympathetic to his central account, which takes the sensory appearance itself to be the relevant belief without relying on assent (ibid. 186–7 and 194–6).

<sup>39</sup> Ganson ('Rational/Non-Rational', 187) cites 602 d 6–9, line (2), as evidence of competing dispositions to act: calculation 'gives us welcome assistance . . . so that we aren't ruled by what appears larger . . . but by calculation' (my emphasis). However, it strikes me that Plato simply means that what 'rules', i.e. determines, our (rational) beliefs is not misleading appearances but truth-finding calculation. If this has a practical implication, it is that our subsequent actions are ruled by correct rather than false beliefs.

The crucial question now is whether the reading I have suggested makes perceptual experience sufficiently belief-like to genuinely oppose our calculated beliefs. We can assume that for Plato believing, at one time, both that  $p$  and that not- $p$  would be sufficient for the Principle of Opposites to apply and that, say, entertaining that  $p$  and believing that not- $p$  would not be sufficient. Having both a sensory appearance that  $p$  and a belief that not- $p$  would seem to be somewhere in between these two cases. If the above account of perception is correct, what we can say is that in this case we have, at one time, contradictory representations of how the world is. Unlike believing and merely entertaining opposites, there is a *bona fide* conflict here: after all, they are different representations of how the world *is*, and the world cannot be both ways at once. This is a good start, but more can be said. For this we need to turn to another discussion of perception in the *Republic*.

#### 6. Perception in the finger passage: 523 A–525 A

Since we are dealing with sensory appearances—how certain things look to us—we should expect to learn something from Plato’s view of what perception is in the *Republic*. The closest we get to an account of perception is found in the so-called ‘finger’ passage, 523 A–525 A. Plato here draws a distinction between perceptions that summon understanding and perceptions that do not:

Some perceptions don’t summon the understanding [ $\tau\eta\nu$  νόησιν] to investigate them, because the judgements of perception [ $\tau\eta\varsigma$  αἰσθήσεως κριζόμενα] are themselves sufficient, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because perception seems to produce no sound result. (523 A 10–B 4)

Perceptions that summon understanding (or ‘calculation’, *logismos*, 524 B 4, or ‘thought’, *dianoia*, 524 D 3) occur ‘whenever sense perception doesn’t declare one thing any more than another’ (523 C 2–3). Socrates’ example is perceptions of magnitude: sight declares one’s ring finger to be both large (in relation to one’s little finger) and small (in relation to one’s middle finger). Such perceptions are said to ‘compel’ us to summon the understanding: if perception does not declare something to be  $F$  any more than not- $F$ , understanding must be summoned to figure out what  $F$  is. In contrast, if what we are considering is simply a finger, not its conflicting pro-

perties, sight is sufficient on its own: ‘an ordinary soul isn’t compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight doesn’t indicate to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger’ (523 D 3–6).

So in normal circumstances perception is capable, without any interpretative work from a faculty outside of perception, of issuing sufficient judgements to the soul, where presumably by ‘sufficient’ (*ἰκανῶς*) he means that perception’s judgement is all that our soul needs to grasp that, for example, the object before us is a finger. One might object that ‘judgements’ is an over-translation of *κρινόμενα*, which could be less suggestively translated ‘discriminations’, but this would not be in keeping with similar language we find throughout the passage. And this is what is especially notable about the finger passage: perception gives ‘reports to the soul’ (*παρὰγγέλλει τῇ ψυχῇ*, 524 A 3); ‘declares’ or ‘indicates’ (*σημαίνει*) things to be a certain way (524 A 7; 534 A 10); ‘says’ (*λέγει*) something to us (524 A 8); gives ‘interpretations’ or ‘explanations’ (*ἐρμηνεῖαι*, 524 B 1); and makes conflicting ‘announcements’ (*εἰσαγγελλόμενα*, 524 B 5). Throughout the passage, then, perception is presented as a faculty that *tells* the soul something about the world, something that the soul will at times disagree with. It seems fair to say that at least to a degree this language is metaphorical. By using this language, Plato is comparing the commerce between perception and ‘the soul’—presumably one or other part of the soul—to one person reporting or announcing something to another person. Why does Plato think this is an apt comparison?

We noted that among its representational bedfellows, perception seems more like belief than entertaining or imagining: perception and belief are alike in that they represent the world as being a certain way. They are two ways in which we are, fallibly, informed about how the world is. But the comparison is not perfect: if an immersed stick merely looks bent to me, I would not say that *I* think this is how the world is. Even though my perceptions and my beliefs are both mine, I have a greater sense of ownership over my beliefs. So if they conflict, it will always be my beliefs that I identify with: if someone asked me what I take to be true, I will state my belief and not my perception. In the finger passage Plato finds a better set of propositional attitudes to attribute to perception: judgements, reports, or announcements. What these have in common is that, like beliefs, they *assert* that something is the case, but unlike beliefs, we

experience them as something asserted *to* us.<sup>40</sup> (Given the tripartite nature of the soul in the *Republic*, we have to be careful how we understand ‘to us’. Our beliefs are also held by a *part* of the soul, so we should be able to say that beliefs are, like perceptions in the finger passage, asserted to ‘the soul’ (where this is an unqualified subject that, when further specified, will turn out to be one or other part of the soul). The rational part’s beliefs can, for example, be commands for another part of the soul.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, perceptions are assertions made both by us and to us: they are asserted both by (a part of) the soul and to (a part of) the soul. But this analysis is consistent with one part of us being more integral to our personal identity than another, and in this respect Plato is as inclined as we are to identify a person most with the part with which he reasons and believes.<sup>42</sup> It is in this sense that it is more natural to say that we experience our perceptions as assertions *to* rather than *by* us.)

On this reading, then, when we see that *p*, a part of us asserts to the soul that *p*. This strikes me as a very natural and plausible way to describe the way in which we find the content of our perceptions presented to us—our perceptions seem to ‘tell us’ something about the world, even if we at times mistrust the ‘testimony of the senses’—and it seems to correctly explain the similarities and differences between perceptions and other representational states such as beliefs and entertainings. It also fits exceptionally well with the suggestion that Plato considers perception to be a kind of *doxa*, at least going on accounts of *doxa* that we find elsewhere: in the *Theaetetus*, for example, a *doxa* is defined as ‘a proposition asserted not aloud

<sup>40</sup> Ganson presents a very similar view of perception in 602 C–603 A—‘one’s very state of perceiving that *p* seems in some sense to assert *p* and so can be correct or incorrect in what it asserts’—but surprisingly he makes no appeal to 523 A–525 A (‘Rational/Non-Rational’, 186). See also Lorenz, *Brute*, 88–94. The relation between perception and assertion also plays a part in many modern representational accounts of perception. See especially M. Huemer’s discussion of both belief and perception as kinds of ‘assertive mental representations’ (*Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* (Lanham, Md., 2001), ch. 4, esp. 4.2) and R. G. Heck, who characterizes perception as a state that has, like belief, ‘assertoric force’, although in contrast to belief: ‘we might say that perception is more like a little voice saying, “There is a desk in front of you”’ (‘Nonconceptual Content and the “Space of Reasons”’, *Philosophical Review*, 109 (2000), 483–523 at 508).

<sup>41</sup> For example, the spirited part is courageous when it preserves ‘the declarations of reason about what is and is not to be feared’ (τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων παραγγελλέν, 442 C 2–3).

<sup>42</sup> For example, in Plato’s image of the soul in book 9, 588 B–589 E, he likens the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul to, respectively, a multi-headed beast and a lion, while the rational part is likened simply to a human being.

to someone else, but silently to oneself' (190 A 5–6) and a similar account is found in the *Sophist* (263 E–264 A).<sup>43</sup>

Most importantly, understood in this way we can make far better sense of how disbelieving a sensory appearance is a conflict of the kind that Plato requires. Asserting conflicting claims to oneself is no less an example of strong psychological dissonance than believing opposites. Notice that the rational part's side of the conflict is first introduced as an assertion, presumably to the soul: it is said to 'declare' (σημαίνειν, 602 E 4) that certain things are the same size, while at the same time perception—borrowing the finger passage's idiom (524 A 7)—'declares' that they are different sizes.<sup>44</sup> If a single

<sup>43</sup> There is also further support from the *Sophist's* account of appearances, although it is somewhat double-edged. First, comparison with the *Republic*, and in particular book 10, is invited by strong thematic similarities: appearances in the *Sophist* are of the same kind—reflections, shadows, 'things in dreams', and man-made appearances such as paintings (266 B 9–C 9)—and they are equally investigated because they are the product of a corrupting 'image-maker', the sophist, who, like the poet, is an 'imitator of real things' (μιμητής . . . τῶν ὄντων, 235 A 1) who is comparable to a painter (236 B 9–C 1). But in the *Sophist* Plato explicitly defines appearances: they are assertions or denials in the soul (i.e. δόξαι) made through (διὰ) perception (264 A 4–6) or 'the blending [σύμμιξις] of perception and δόξα' (264 B 1–2). This both gives us the link between appearance and belief needed to explain the conflict in 602 C–603 A and does so, as the finger passage suggests, by making them assertions in the soul. However, while in the *Republic* perception is a kind of δόξα, and appearance a kind of perception, in the *Sophist* a δόξα is added to perception to make something new, an appearance. An explanation often offered is that from the *Theaetetus* (esp. 184 B–186 E) onwards Plato no longer thought perception had the cognitive sophistication necessary for belief, and so rejects the *Republic* view (see e.g. Lorenz, *Brute*, ch. 7; Frede, 'Perception'; and Burnyeat, 'Grammar'). I am more persuaded that the cognitively rich αἴσθησις of the *Republic* is not rejected but simply further analysed into a cognitively bare component, which Plato now takes to be αἴσθησις proper, and a representational component, δόξα (for comparable views see Silverman, 'Phantasia', 133, and Wolfsdorf, 'Republic 9', 136). (It is also possible that we find some anticipation of his later view in the *Republic*. At 602 C 11–12 we are told that the same thing can appear at one time concave and at another time convex διὰ τὴν περὶ τὰ χρώματα αὐτῶν πλάνην τῆς ὀψεως. This is an interesting, though far from straightforward, explanation, and it certainly admits of more than one interpretation. But it might be understood to suggest that whether we have an appearance of convexity or concavity depends on the way in which our eyes 'wander' (πλάνην) around the colours and find a pattern—one of two possible patterns—among them. If we assume, further, that the eyes are wandering around the *same* colours in each case, then this suggests that it is possible for two different appearances to arise from identical 'bare' perceptibles (τὰ χρώματα). I am grateful to Thomas Johanson for discussion on this point.)

<sup>44</sup> A more common translation of σημαίνουντι in 602 E 4–6 is 'indicated', but this runs the risk of making it sound as if the rational part is only suggesting its findings, which is too weak if this is its calculated conclusion. Moreover, on the standard reading of 602 E 4–6 (*contra* Adam and Lorenz) σημαίνουντι introduces the rational part's side of the conflict, but a conflict between a mere indication and an appearance is

soul makes contradictory declarations to itself (or announcements, reports, or assertions) at the same time and about the same thing, this is a perfectly legitimate place to appeal to the Principle of Opposites to analyse the opposition as declarations made by different parts of the soul.

### 7. Back to 602 E 4–6

Let us now take another look at the controversial line 602 E 4–6:

- (4) ‘But often to this, after it has measured and declared that some things are larger or smaller or the same size as others, the opposite appears at the same time about the same things.’

The almost universal pattern that interpretations of this line have followed begins with the view that the argument ‘assumes that “*p* appears to *s*” is equivalent to “*s* believes that *p*”’.<sup>45</sup> According to the standard translation of 602 E 4–6, the relevant *s* is the rational part, so it would seem to say that it is the rational part that believes that *p* (and, at the same time, that not-*p*). Thus, on one side, commentators who feel the force of the standard translation conclude that the conflict and partition are within the rational part of the soul and, on the other side, those who wish to avoid this conclusion offer alternatives to the standard translation. These readings make one or both of two mistaken assumptions, both of which lead to the conclusion that we should locate the subject of the lower belief by replacing ‘*p* appears to *s*’ with ‘*s* believes that *p*’. The first is that we should follow the grammar of the judgemental *phainetai*, where ‘*p* appears to *s*’ simply means ‘*s* believes that *p*’. The second is that the relevant belief is or is in part an assent to what appears to be the case, which makes having it appear to one that *p* a necessary condition for believing that *p*.<sup>46</sup>

On the reading I have defended here neither of these assumptions turns out to be correct: the relevant appearance language is sensory, surely not what Plato intends. ‘Shown’ would be a good and suitably ostensive alternative if it did not imply that what is shown is correct (cf. 440 A 5 and 518 C 4).

<sup>45</sup> Wolfsdorf, ‘*Phantasia*’, 135–6. This is one of the more explicit statements of this common reading; in other respects Wolfsdorf’s interpretation of 602 C–603 A is compatible with the reading I have offered here, and in particular he takes the sensory appearance itself to be the non-rational belief.

<sup>46</sup> Though not a sufficient condition: see n. 48 below.

not judgemental, and the sensory *doxa* does not involve assent to a sensory appearance—rather, it is identical to the sensory appearance. Consequently, we need to take a different approach when locating the subject of the sensory *doxa*. From the argument of the previous section, we can now see that the answer is that we ought rather to understand ‘*p* appears to *s*’ as equivalent to ‘*p* is asserted to *s*’—the relevant ‘believer’ is the part of the soul that asserts, not the part that is asserted to. This places the rational part in a very similar position to ‘the soul’ (very likely, on analysis, also the rational part) in the finger passage: it receives a dubious ‘report’ or ‘announcement’ from perception, and therefore it summons calculation to assess, and ultimately reject, perception’s report. That the rational part is the recipient of a perceptual assertion that *p* clearly does not entail that it believes *p* (just as your asserting something to me does not entail that I believe you), but it *does* entail that another part of the soul is asserting that *p*, and this, as we have seen, is what is required for the relevant cognitive conflict.

It remains to explain why Plato chooses to introduce both sides of the conflict from the perspective of the rational part in 602 E 4–6: why, that is, are the only opposites that he mentions what the rational part believes and what appears to the rational part? There are two excellent reasons. The first is that this correctly captures how we experience the conflict. From a purely theoretical perspective both sides of the conflict are equivalent: each is an assertion by and to the soul, differing only in their source. But this is not how the conflict seems to be from our perspective: to us, it feels as if *we* believe that the immersed stick is straight *despite* the fact that our perception tells us otherwise. This, as we saw, is what makes the finger passage’s descriptions of perceptions as ‘reports’ and ‘announcements’ so apt: we identify strongly with our rational part’s conclusion, while experiencing the sensory appearance as a claim about the world made *to us* by something else, even if it is something within us.<sup>47</sup> In short, our experience of the conflict is more or

<sup>47</sup> We might even be tempted to locate the error in the world, not in us, especially since Socrates claims that imitations themselves (e.g. paintings or poems) mislead us, referring to these too as ‘appearances’. It is perhaps to anticipate this misunderstanding that Socrates states, at the opening of our passage, that the errors are ‘clearly present in our soul’ while external objects ‘exploit this weakness in our nature’ (602 C 12–D 3). The illusory appearance arises in us through the interaction between our soul and an (exploiting) external object (cf. *συγγίγνεσθαι*, 603 B 4; *προσομιλεῖν*, 603 C 1).

less identical to the experience of the rational part in 602 E 4–6, so this description of the conflict is both accurate and relevant.

The second reason is that what explains the occurrence of the conflict is the fact that the rational part is the recipient of a false appearance. The illusions in 602 C–603 A are (in practice) irrelevant to the lower parts of our soul because they do not excite any of our characteristically appetitive or spirited passions. But they are very relevant to the rational part: its characteristic desire is for the truth, and this means that it is immediately called into action upon realizing that the illusions are false. It is the rational part's response, then, that gives rise to the conflict; were it less alert, or the illusion more convincing, the error would pass by undetected and no conflict would ensue. This brings us to a very important point: it is *because* the rational part is aware of the false sensory appearance that it summons calculation to discover the truth. And to say that it is 'aware' of what merely looks to be the case can surely mean only that it is perceptually aware—that is, that it is 'appeared to'.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, being appeared to would seem to be a prerequisite for the calculation it engages in, since this calculation begins from and is applied to the appearance. For example, to conclude that the stick is straight, the calculating part takes how the stick appears to it, namely bent and partially immersed in water, notices that something is awry, and then uses its knowledge of optics to conclude that this is exactly how we would expect a straight, immersed stick to look. Notice that this would be true *even if* the calculating part were a higher subdivision of the rational part—if the partition were within the rational part this argument would suggest that *both* rational parts are appeared to, undercutting the very motivation for this reading.

In conclusion, some final words on the non-rational parts of the soul. My analysis of both the conflict and 602 E 4–6 focused on perception, conceived more or less as a faculty. If the inferior part is

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that this is compatible with Lorenz's reading, as he recognizes: if, as he believes, assent is required for believing an appearance, this makes having it appear to one that *p* a necessary but *not* sufficient condition for believing that *p*, and he thinks it likely, presumably for reasons similar to the ones I offer here, that the 'best' part is 'appeared to' without believing the appearance (*Brute*, 67 n. 20). He notes *πιστεύειν* at 603 A 4 and I take his point to be that to say that the best part 'puts its trust in' calculation suggests that it chooses between what appears to it and what its calculation concludes. However, Lorenz does not bring this point to bear on his reading of 602 E 4–6.

non-rational, then the faculty of perception must be attributed to the non-rational parts of our soul. This is never explicitly stated in the *Republic*, although it is stated in surrounding dialogues: in the *Phaedo* perception is placed in the body alongside base pleasures and passions (79 C 2–8; 82 D 9–83 E 3), while the soul receives what our bodily senses ‘assert’ to it (*φάναι*, 83 D 6), and in the *Timaeus* the appetitive and spirited parts are ‘fused with unreasoning sense perception’ (*αἰσθησει δὲ ἀλόγῳ*, 69 D 4–5; cf. 77 B 4–6). There is no reason to doubt that Plato held the same view in the *Republic*: in all other respects he expresses the same low opinion of perception, and much of this associates it with our lower parts and their characteristic errors.<sup>49</sup> But leaving these considerations aside, that perception should be attributed to the non-rational parts should in any case be seen as a conclusion of the reading of 602 C–603 A defended in this paper. In Section 2 we saw very strong evidence that the inferior part is non-rational. Now that the only serious putative counter-evidence—the apparent difficulty posed by 602 E 4–6—has been dealt with, the case is surely closed: the inferior part in 602 C–603 A is indeed non-rational, and therefore it is the source of the perceptual assertions.

Now, it might seem that one conclusion of this paper is that the cognitive resources available to the non-rational parts of the soul are strictly sensory and do not, therefore, include any capacity that we would be willing to call belief. But this is not a conclusion that I would wish to draw. While I argued that *doxa* means something less specific than ‘belief’ within the context of the argument that we find at 602 C–603 A, this does not entail that the specific *doxai* involved in the conflict are not beliefs. After all, at least one of them—the *doxa* attributed to the rational part of the soul—clearly is a belief. Whether or not the *doxai* available to the non-rational parts of the soul are also beliefs is not a question answered by 602 C–603 A, in part because, as an argument *for* partition, it remains neutral about the range of cognitive abilities available to the parts it establishes. We must look elsewhere to decide whether or not sensory *doxai* count as beliefs. To take an example mentioned in Section 5, while it cannot be added as a premiss to 602 C–603 A’s argument, a claim that Plato very likely accepts is that the non-rational parts of the

<sup>49</sup> For a detailed defence of the claim that we should attribute perception to non-rational parts see Moss, ‘Calculation’, 46–9, and for further discussion of perception in the *Timaeus*, see Silverman, ‘Phantasia’, 126–9.

soul can give rise to dispositions to feel and act in certain ways on the basis of perceptual *doxai* alone. It is common to think of belief as at least partly constituted by these kinds of relations to our other mental states; a large part of what it means to believe that *p* is to have a disposition to feel and act in a way consistent with *p* being true. It is certainly striking, then, that in the *Republic's* partite psychology sensory *doxai* appear to have a role that is functionally analogous to belief: the former represent the world to our non-rational parts and guide our non-rational desires, and the latter represent the world to our rational parts and guide our rational desires. Considerations of this kind might well lead one to conclude that non-rational parts' *doxai* warrant the name 'belief', and this is not a conclusion that is ruled out by the fact that in certain contexts *doxa* can, as it does in 602 c–603 a, have a meaning less specific than belief.

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