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Eschatology and the Limits of Philosophy in the *Phaedo*

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An abiding puzzle in the *Phaedo* is the transition in the text from initial pessimism about the possibility of wisdom during human life to a more optimistic view. Prominent interpretations posit different kinds or degrees of wisdom at issue in the two sets of passages. By contrast, I argue that the pessimistic view rests on the implicit premise that the soul cannot be completely purified during human life—a premise which arises from an initial conception of impurity and its cause. In developing his eschatology, Socrates refines this conception and rejects the implicit premise. Because the embodied soul can be completely purified, it can achieve philosophical wisdom as well.

When considered in full, Socrates's defense of the life of philosophy in the *Phaedo* displays a puzzling ambivalence about the possibility of wisdom and virtue during human life. On the one hand, the initial account Socrates attributes to the true philosophers (γνησίως φιλοσόφοις, 66b2) includes the apparent restriction of wisdom to the afterlife.[1] True philosophers are said to believe, for example, that they will satisfy their defining desire for wisdom only when they are dead, not while they live (66e2–4). Moreover, the explanation of this restriction seems to identify embodiment itself as the insuperable obstacle: as long as we have (ἔχωμεν) and are fused (συμπεφυρμένη) to bodies, we will never adequately (ἱκανῶς) acquire wisdom and truth (66b5–7).[2]

1. I argue below that this is an allusion to a broadly Pythagorean ideal of being a genuine philosopher or practicing philosophy in the right way. Socrates preserves this ideal but departs at some points from the initial account that includes the restriction of wisdom to the afterlife. See Section 1 below.

2. This explanation is ambiguous between a reading that defines having and being fused to a body as the same condition and a reading that distinguishes them. I argue in Section 2 below that by appealing to the purifying power of philosophy, Socrates shows how it is possible to have a body without being fused to it. Bobonich (2002: 34) and Fine (2016: 564) emphasize the repeated use of the word "adequately" to qualify the pessimism about acquiring wisdom. They argue that

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On the other hand, a number of subsequent passages seem to assume that wisdom is after all available to embodied philosophers. In the "right exchange" passage, for example, Socrates claims that bodily pleasures, pains, and fears can be exchanged not only for wisdom but with wisdom (69a9–b3).[3] Then, when Socrates defines wisdom as the condition of the soul that results from inquiring with the soul by itself, he employs a contrast with the soul's condition when it inquires through the senses, apparently implying that wisdom is possible when inquiry through the senses is still an option for the soul (79c2–d7). Third, in the account of the soul's ruling functions, the activities of opposing and disciplining the body are attributed to the wise soul (94b4–5). Finally, among Socrates's last words to his friends is the exhortation to do everything possible to share (μετασχεῖν) in wisdom and virtue during human life (114c7–8).

To resolve this tension, interpreters typically argue that the wisdom at issue in the more optimistic passages is different from and inferior to the kind denied to embodied philosophers in the initial account. Some claim that the wisdom available during human life is deficient *in kind*—a lower-grade quasi-virtue that involves correct values or goals without real philosophical understanding (Rowe 1993: 151; Vasiliou 2012: 22–26). Others take it to be genuine but partial wisdom, inferior *by degree* to the full wisdom the philosopher desires (Bobonich 2002: 35; Fine 2016: 565–66). Crucially for our purposes, these different strategies nevertheless share a common line of defense centered on the claim that the limits on wisdom depend on explanatorily prior limits on the degree of the soul's purification. The central common claim is that throughout the *Phaedo*, Socrates takes embodiment to prevent the soul from being purified completely and this in turn prevents it from acquiring full wisdom.[4] These views thus take as their

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the qualifier is meant to leave room for the possibility of acquiring partial or impure wisdom. See below for critical discussion.

3. This is a contested reading of a notoriously difficult passage. Weiss (1987: 62) argues that the passage denies that achieving wisdom is possible during human life, though it does allow the soul to attain the other virtues by pursuing wisdom in the right way. Vasiliou (2012: 21–22) criticizes Weiss's view effectively, but he goes on to argue that the wisdom taken to be possible in the passage is a lower-grade form of quasi-wisdom. See below for critical discussion.

4. This claim is explicitly endorsed by a number of scholars. Vasiliou (2012: 25) argues that the impossibility of complete purification prevents the attainment of genuine wisdom and virtue. He seems to offer this as the fundamental explanation of the unavailability of genuine wisdom. Pakaluk (2003: 101–2) argues that the limitations by degree on the embodied soul's purification and separation explain corresponding limitations on the philosopher's goals of achieving wisdom and being dead; and Ebrey (2017: 22) argues that embodiment prevents complete purification and full aloneness, though he also claims that philosophers "cultivate" wisdom. Whether cultivation implies attaining wisdom in whole or part remains unclear. Fine (2016: 561) considers but does not fully endorse the argument, in part because she recognizes that Socrates may allow the possibility of the embodied soul's becoming completely pure. In footnote 11, however, Fine seems willing to concede that complete purity is not after all available until after death.

foundation a claim I will call the Impossibility Premise (IP): the soul cannot be completely purified while still embodied.

What these views overlook, however, is that IP is the subject of the same kind of ambivalence that we observe in the case of wisdom. As I show in Sections 1 and 2 below, IP figures as a necessary implicit premise in the true philosophers' account but Socrates subsequently rejects it in the course of developing his eschatology. Crucially, the rejection of IP is accompanied by an explanation that clarifies the point at which Socrates departs from the true philosophers' account: rather than defining impurity as the inevitable result of the *metaphysical* condition of embodiment, Socrates defines it as an *ethical* phenomenon resulting from the soul's willing choices. This conceptual refinement allows Socrates to reject IP and accept the possibility of complete purification.

Section 3 then considers the implications of the rejection of IP for the availability of wisdom during human life. I show first that the transition in the text to a more optimistic view about wisdom is not an isolated case but rather part of a striking pattern in which Socrates returns to each of the epistemically significant relations restricted to the afterlife and affirms their availability during human life. These relations include seeing the forms, observing them, and being in the kind of contact with them that yields wisdom. Any attempt to extend the quasi or partial wisdom interpretations to cover this entire pattern would suffer extreme strain. By contrast, the explanation I offer below is elegant and complete: by rejecting IP, Socrates rejects the grounds of the true philosophers' pessimism about the possibility of wisdom. When the embodied soul is completely purified, it can inquire by itself and ultimately stand in the special relations to the forms that make it possible to achieve wisdom that is full in the following two senses:

- Wisdom is a genuine philosophical virtue involving knowledge of the forms rather than a quasi-virtue involving correct values or goals with no real understanding.
- Wisdom of this sort can be achieved with respect to the whole domain of forms rather than being limited to some subset of forms.

What I aim to show, then, is that it is possible for the philosopher to achieve high-grade, philosophical wisdom with respect to the full range of forms, even while still embodied. Although this is a strong conclusion, two qualifications must be borne in mind. First, to say that wisdom of this sort is possible is not to say that anyone has yet achieved it, much less that it is widespread or common. Second, to say that wisdom is full in these respects is not to say that it is altogether without limitations. As I argue in the final section, embodied wisdom is subject to limitations that distinguish it from the condition available in the after-

life. This and related differences explain why, despite the fullness of his wisdom, it is rational for the philosopher eagerly to anticipate that future state.

1. The Place of IP in the True Philosophers' Account

Pessimism about the possibility of wisdom is expressed primarily in a passage described by Socrates as stating things true philosophers are likely to say to each other (66b1–3). Among these things is a specific line of reasoning singled out by Socrates as the account or argument from which the restriction of wisdom to the afterlife follows (ὡς ὁ λόγος σημαίνει, 66e2–4). One interpretation of Socrates's emphasis on the *logos* as the basis of the restriction is that Socrates is highlighting the dependence of the restriction on the *logos*; if elements of the *logos* are questionable, so too is the restriction.

This possibility is salient because some of the constituent claims in the *logos* do seem questionable, from Socrates's own point of view. For example, Socrates would not accept, without modification or qualification, the claims that the body prevents us from ever thinking successfully about anything at any time or that the need to acquire wealth and satisfy bodily desire occupies most of our spare time (66c4–5, 66c7–d7).[5] Not only is Socrates a counter-example to these claims, they are implicitly contradicted in the outer frame of the dialogue when Phaedo tells Echecrates that the last day with Socrates was spent immersed in philosophy, as was their custom (59a1–3). The pessimistic passage thus gives us reason to doubt that Socrates would endorse all of the true philosophers' *logos* in his own person.

When seeking to understand Socrates's relationship to the true philosophers, then, we must be careful to distinguish his attitude toward the ideal of practicing philosophy in the right way from his attitude toward the specific argument leading to the restriction of wisdom to the afterlife. Socrates can maintain allegiance to the former throughout the *Phaedo* while retaining the right to modify or even reject some elements of the latter.[6] We have seen that some of these elements are

5. Recall that in the *Apology*, Socrates describes himself as having an almost inhuman lack of interest in wealth and other typical concerns (31b1–5).

6. Why does Plato proceed in this dialectically complex manner? One plausible hypothesis draws on Sedley's (2019: 49) discussion of the different strands present in the *Timaeus*. Sedley argues that Plato synthesizes Pythagorean inspiration and Socratic philosophy in the domain of physics. My view of the *Phaedo* is similar, with two noteworthy differences: (i) the synthesis occurs in the domain of ethics, with the Socratic component focused especially on the ethical significance of the soul's willing choices; and (ii) the synthesis includes not just Pythagorean but also Orphic elements. Edmonds (2013: 71–92) argues that an emphasis on extreme purification was taken by ancient authors and commentators as strongly indicative of Orphism. It

explicit claims about the possibility of philosophy while embodied. Our focus, however, is a claim not explicitly expressed but on which the argument restricting wisdom to the afterlife clearly depends. The explicit premise on which their pessimism about wisdom rests is the claim that the soul cannot be alone by itself during human life, but only in the afterlife (66e6–67a2).[7] Because acquiring wisdom requires the soul to be alone by itself, this achievement must await the soul's departure to the afterlife where full aloneness is possible. The denial of the possibility of aloneness is the crucial claim that justifies positing IP as an essential implicit premise because purification is subsequently identified as the sole means by which the soul comes to be alone by itself (67c5–d2). Thus, if the soul cannot be alone by itself until the afterlife, the explanation must be that it cannot be completely purified during human life.

Although it is never explicitly asserted, then, IP earns its keep as an implicit premise necessary to explain the crucial claim that the embodied soul cannot be alone by itself. More formally, IP derives support from its role in the following argument:

(P1) It is possible for the soul to attain full wisdom when and only when it is fully alone by itself.
(P2) The soul is fully alone by itself when and only when it is completely purified.
(P3) IP: The soul cannot be completely purified while still embodied.
(C1) Therefore, the soul cannot be fully alone by itself while still embodied.
(C2) Therefore, the soul cannot attain full wisdom while still embodied.[8]

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is worth noting that Socrates offers novel interpretations of other notions strongly associated with Orphism as well, such as initiation (69c3–d2) and a purifying rite (69c2–3, 82d5–7). On my hypothesis, then, the synthesis is produced by imbuing concepts familiar from Orphism with content from the philosophical ethic Socrates defends. The synthesis preserves and defends the broadly Pythagorean emphasis on the ethical centrality of practices while ultimately yielding a Socratic conception of practicing philosophy in the right way. This account of the role of Pythagoreanism in the *Phaedo* differs somewhat from the one I defend in Butler (2015), though the two are consistent on the fundamental point that Socrates is committed to the norms of philosophical practice as they are expressed in the dialogue. For a range of additional views on the role of Pythagoreanism in the *Phaedo*, see Sedley (1995: 8–22), Rowe (2007: 96–121), and Ebrey (2017: 22–27).

7. "Alone by itself" is the translation of αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτὴν favored by Gallop (1975). For an illuminating defense of this translation, see Broackes (2009: 48–51). The translation is especially fitting in application to the soul in the *Phaedo* where the emphasis is on both the soul's separation from the body and its independent operations.

8. This argument is my account of the reasoning in the true philosophers' *logos* leading to the restriction of wisdom to the afterlife. It can also be seen as a sympathetic development of the suggestion by defenders of the quasi and partial wisdom views that limitations on purification explain limitations on wisdom, though it goes beyond their explicit claims.

This argument provides a compelling and plausible account of the reasoning leading to the true philosophers' pessimism about acquiring wisdom during human life. For our purposes, two points are especially significant. First, the argument captures the explanatory centrality of IP. The text makes it clear that the body prevents the acquisition of full wisdom by preventing aloneness (66d7–e4) and deficiency of aloneness is explained by deficiency of purification (67c5–d2).[9] Second, once the soul is fully alone by itself, it is in the condition that allows it to observe the intelligible things in themselves, and this is what yields full wisdom (66d8–e2). Achieving full aloneness is thus sufficient for the possibility of full wisdom in the sense that aloneness enables the soul to engage in the kind of reasoning and observation that yields wisdom.

There are thus strong textual reasons for assigning IP the crucial role in justifying the initial restriction of wisdom to the afterlife. As I show just below, however, Socrates ultimately rejects IP and accepts the possibility of complete purification. Before making this case, it is necessary to explain how Socrates can reject IP without lapsing into contradiction or incoherence, given its presence as an implicit premise in the initial account. We have seen that Socrates seeks to preserve the ideal of practicing philosophy in the right way while modifying or rejecting specific elements of the initial account. Part of preserving the ideal is preserving the centrality of purification as a fundamental ethical concept. But to create space for the rejection of IP, Socrates must refine the concept of purification away from the specific conception employed in the initial account. This refinement facilitates a change in the account of the source of impurity and a consequent rejection of IP. These developments are the focus of Section 2 just below.

To prepare for that discussion, it will be useful to consider the treatment of a concept with clear and deep similarities to impurity: imprisonment.[10] When

9. At 66d7–8, Socrates claims that "we really have shown" that achieving pure knowledge requires the soul being alone by itself. Thus, the preceding claims about the body as an impediment are in service of showing that it prevents the soul from being alone by itself. For this reason, I am skeptical that the text envisions some other way that the body might make it in principle impossible for the soul to attain full wisdom even when alone by itself.

10. The concept is introduced in the context of the claim that human beings are in a kind of prison, with no explicit mention of the body. Still, the parallel between imprisonment and impurity can survive this observation. First, as Burnet (1911: 62) claims, there is "no doubt" that Orphics used the notion of imprisonment in connection with the soul-body relationship. Thus, the reference to the secret doctrines likely makes the soul-body interpretation available to the interlocutors. For further discussion, see Warren (2001: 97–8) and Palmer (2021: 14). Second, the body is explicitly identified as that from which we must be liberated in the context of the true philosophers' *logos* (67a2–6)—the same passage in which IP is the crucial implicit premise. Finally, even if Socrates introduces the idea of the body as the prison in his own person, it does not follow that he takes this to imply the impossibility of embodied wisdom; after all, a commitment to the possibility of

Socrates introduces this concept, he characterizes it as a weighty (μέγας) but opaque (οὐ ῥᾳδιος διδεῖν) element of the Orphic or Pythagorean secret doctrines (62b2–6). But this opacity does not lead Socrates to set the concept aside altogether; instead, he refines it in a two-step process.[11] First, he brings imprisonment into the domain of moral psychology by defining it as a condition caused by desires, in which the prisoner himself is complicit (82d9–83a1). The second step then completes the refinement by implicating the soul directly and thereby clarifying the role of the prisoner:

> (T1) [The philosopher's soul] would not suppose that, its own liberation being a job for philosophy, while philosophy is doing that the soul should of its own accord surrender [αὐτὴν παραδιδόναι] itself for the pleasures and pains to bind it back inside again, and should undertake a Penelope's interminable task by working at a sort of web in reverse. (84a2–6)[12]

This passage explains that it is not merely having bodily desires that implicates the prisoner. Rather, the soul imprisons itself when it surrenders to bodily feelings. The emphasis on the soul's role in giving itself over (αὐτὴν παραδιδόναι) indicates that imprisonment is a dynamic condition caused and exacerbated by the soul's choices and actions. Philosophical practice produces liberation, even to the point of allowing the philosopher to adorn his soul with freedom during human life (114e3–115a1); but progress in liberation can be undone and indeed reversed by deciding to give oneself over to bodily desire and pleasure.

In the case of imprisonment, then, the discussion begins from an opaque conception belonging to the initial Orphic or Pythagorean framework. Socrates then refines this conception by emphasizing the role of the soul's decisions in imprisoning or liberating the soul. Given the similarity in the conceptual roles of imprisonment and impurity in the dialogue, there is strong antecedent reason to expect similar refinements in both cases. In the eschatology Socrates develops as part of his defense, these expectations are confirmed.

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remediation seems to follow from his claim that the soul can be adorned with freedom during human life (114e3–115a1). What matters for the parallel is that imprisonment and impurity are introduced in need of clarification and refinement, and each is ultimately explained *not* by appeal to the body as an irremediable hindrance but to the power of the soul's willing choices. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this issue.

11. White (1989: 122) and Ebrey (2017: 23–24) observe the broad trajectory of Socrates's clarification of the notion of imprisonment but not the specific emphasis on the soul's choices or the parallel to the concept of impurity.

12.. Translations follow Sedley and Long (2010) with minor changes.

2. Eschatology and the Possibility of Complete Purification

The primary goal of the eschatology is to show that it is fitting for philosophers to attain the best afterlife—one in which they win the greatest goods and join the company of good and wise gods (63b4–c4, 63e8–64a3).[13] To reach this high bar, Socrates offers a general theory about the fate of souls in the afterlife. The central element of the theory is the Resemblance Principle according to which the fate of souls is determined on the basis of resemblance to their practice during human life (82a7–8). The souls of drunks and gluttons are reincarnated in donkeys and other beasts, tyrants and thieves in wolves and hawks, and so on (81e5–82a5).

In these cases, souls pass into inferior kinds because of the contaminating effects of the relevant practices. The theory also recognizes the case in which the soul passes into the superior kind of the gods. The standard for this outcome brings the question about Socrates's commitment to IP into full view:

> (T2) Yes, but coming into the race of gods is not permitted [οὐ θέμις] for anyone who did not pursue philosophy and has not departed in a completely [παντελῶς] pure condition, but only for one who loves learning. (82b10–c1)[14]

This passage applies the general principle connecting practices and fates of souls to the case of philosophy. Only those who love learning and practice philosophy will be permitted to join the divine kind. For our purposes, what is most striking is the requirement of complete purification. Socrates not only entertains the possibility implicitly denied in the initial account, he establishes that possibility as a necessary condition for attaining the best afterlife—the afterlife that serves as the focus of his central argument.

The initial justification of this requirement clearly adverts to the resemblance between the condition of complete purification and the purity of the divine beings whose company the soul is to join (83e1–3). This initial justification is then given

13. Here I sidestep the issue of whether fittingness in this case involves desert. Kamtekar (2016: 122–26) argues that the fate of souls is a matter of natural consequence rather than desert. It should be noted, however, that in response to Simmias's humorous observation that most people think philosophers deserve death, Socrates implies that his defense of philosophy will explain the kind of death philosophers deserve (64b1–9).

14. Fine (2016: 561) notes this passage but does not rely on it, citing peculiarities in the text. For discussion of these peculiarities, see Burnet (1911: 74). But these peculiarities do not affect the main point that departing in complete purity is a necessary condition for joining the gods at death. My claim is not that this passage establishes the rejection of IP and the possibility of complete purification during human life. In the remainder of this section, I show that a companion passage to T2 explains how complete purification can be achieved. Then in Section 3, I show that a number of additional passages imply that cognitive achievements that require complete purification are possible during human life.

further substance and detail in the myth at the end of the dialogue.[15] In the myth, two distinctions among souls are relevant. The first is between those who have lived average, ethically undistinguished lives and those who have lived nobly and piously (114d1–5). Upon judgment, the former remain underground and are sent to the Acheron where they receive different punishments depending on the gravity of their wrongs (113d4–114b6). The latter, by contrast, are freed from the region below the earth and make their way to the pure dwelling on the surface of the earth (114b6–c2). Crucially, however, Socrates introduces a further distinction in the latter group:

> (T3) And of these [who lived nobly and piously], those who have been purified sufficiently [ἱκανῶς] by philosophy live thereafter entirely without bodies, and enter dwellings even more beautiful than these, though describing them is not easy and we lack sufficient time at present. (114c2–6)

In the myth, then, there are two groups that receive favorable outcomes.[16] The first have lived noble and pious lives but have not been purified sufficiently by philosophy. Because they remain impure to some degree, they retain their bodies while living an augmented form of human existence on the surface of the earth (111b1–6). Although their time on the surface is long and happy, they eventually die.[17] Call this group the Surface Dwellers. The second, having been

15. Plato establishes two explicit points of continuity between the myth and the part of the theory that includes the Resemblance Principle. The first is the notion of the wandering of the dead and the role of the guides in leading souls to their appropriate places. This is discussed twice before the myth (81c8–e2, 108a7–b3) and once within it (113d1–4). Secondly, the myth identifies a place where non-philosophical souls wait until they are sent away to be born as living creatures (113a4–5). Thus, although Socrates recommends a degree of epistemic humility about the details of the myth (114d1–3), it is clearly viewed as a full-fledged part of the eschatological theory. Rather than being a term of abuse, then, the use of the word '*muthos*' is likely intended to signal something about the narrative form or origin of the account. For discussion, see White (1989: 23–26), Edmonds (2004: 4–28), and Betegh (2009: 77).

16. This point is obscured in Stewart (1960: 127–28) but noted correctly in Dorter (1982: 173–75), White (1989: 264–65), Sedley (1990: 378), Edmonds (2004: 214–17), Rowe 2007: 103–09), and Reed (2020: 130).

17. It is not entirely clear what happens to the souls of the Surface Dwellers when they die. One possibility is that they are reborn as human beings. Socrates identifies this as a possibility for some of those who practice the civic virtues (82b5–8). The category of the civically virtuous is broad, as it can lead to being reborn as a social animal (bees or ants) or as a human being. Presumably, those in the latter group are much closer to philosophy and so achieve a much greater degree of purification than those reborn as insects. But they fall short of complete purification, perhaps because they still care too much for honor or how they are perceived by others (82c6–8). The claim that the Surface Dwellers are the civically virtuous is defended by Dorter (1982: 173–75). By contrast, Rowe (2007: 103–09) argues that the Surface Dwellers are philosophers who have fallen short of the standard of complete purification.

purified sufficiently, attain the best afterlife—an eternal, bodiless existence in dwellings too beautiful to describe.[18] Call them the Purely Discarnate.

One noteworthy aspect of this distinction is the account of the standard for joining the latter group. T2 leads us to expect *complete* purification as the standard but T3 sets it as *sufficient* purification instead. Even if this linguistic difference indicates a substantive shift in the theory, it might be a change in the stringency of the requirement for the best outcome rather than in Socrates's view about whether complete purification is possible.[19] In fact, however, the likelihood is that the shift to 'sufficiently' is merely an expression of the kind of diffidence befitting a myth rather than of a substantive change in view. The reason is that in the body of the eschatological theory, Socrates does not merely assert the requirement of complete purification, he explains why that standard must be achieved:

> (T4) First, take a case where a soul is separated in a pure condition, bringing with it nothing from the body, because it had no willing [ἑκοῦσα] association with the body in its life; but instead avoided [φεύγουσα] the body and stayed gathered together alone into itself [αὐτὴ εἰς ἑαυτήν], since that was how it always practiced. Such a soul is doing nothing but pursue philosophy correctly and practice for really being dead. (80e2–81a2)

This passage is significant for two reasons. First, it clarifies part of the underlying rationale for the requirement of complete purification. If a soul is to join the ranks of the Purely Discarnate, it must depart in a pure condition, *bringing nothing with it from the body.* The implication of the italicized phrase is that souls departing with residual impurity will bring the body along to the afterlife and end up at best among the Surface Dwellers. To avoid this outcome, the soul must be purified completely so that it can reach the surface of the earth in the proper condition to join the Purely Discarnate. Given this rationale, it is unlikely that Socrates would weaken the requirement in the myth and risk conflict between the myth and the Resemblance Principle over the fate of souls with residual impurity.

For the main argument of this section, however, the second point about T4 is the crucial one. The passage shows that Socrates does not view complete purification as a mere possibility in logical space. It does so by explaining how (ἅτε, 80e3) the soul can achieve that demanding condition. The soul becomes com-

18. Although T3 says only that the Purely Discarnate live *thereafter* without bodies, a previous passage states that the completely purified soul is freed from human evils and spends the rest of time (τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον) with the gods (81a8–9).

19. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this point and additional comments on this issue.

pletely purified by avoiding all willing association with the body during human life. This explanation identifies the source of impurity not as embodiment *tout court* but as willing association with the body. T4 thus characterizes impurity as an ethical problem in the sense that it derives from the soul's decisions and actions rather than the mere metaphysical fact of embodiment. This conception of the problem creates the possibility of a complete remedy through the flawless practice of philosophy. If a philosopher has no willing association with the body in life while dedicating himself to the zealous pursuit of wisdom through inquiry (114e3–5), his soul can reach the level of complete purity and join the divine kind at death.[20]

As in the case of imprisonment, then, Socrates replaces the conception of the source of impurity implicit in the Orphic framework with an ethical and voluntarist conception focused on the soul's willing choices. Just as the soul imprisons itself by giving itself over to bodily desires and pleasures, so too it makes itself impure by willingly associating with the body. In the latter case, however, there is a further complication deriving from the centrality of the notion of willingness in the explanation. If willingly associating with the body always causes impurity, it is far from clear how any soul can ever be completely purified. Even the most disciplined philosopher will need to associate with the body on some occasions. In the domain of desire, he will need to eat and drink at sufficient levels to sustain the life of zealous inquiry; in the domain of perception, he will need to navigate the world, participate in question-and-answer inquiries (75c10–d3), and experience the deficiency of the sensible world in the way that puts him in mind (ἐννοῆσαι) of the nondeficient standards (75a11–b2). Many of these actions in both domains will evidently be the results of his choices. If they thereby count as cases of willing association with the body, it will be impossible for even the most disciplined philosopher to achieve complete purification.

The possibility of complete purification thus depends on the defensibility of a distinction between cases of associating with the body that are both chosen and willing and cases that are chosen but nevertheless not willing. T4 provides a clue to the grounds of this distinction in the claim that the philosopher avoids the body rather than associating with it. Socrates employs avoidance and similar concepts in his account of the norms that define the limits of acceptable association with the body. Crucially, these norms always conclude with a qualifier: the philosopher avoids (ἀπέχεται) bodily desires and pleasures *as far as possible* (82c2–4, 83b5–7) and withdraws (ἀναχωρεῖν) from the senses *except as their use is necessary* (83a5–7).

20. Philosophical practice is the purifying rite and it includes both avoidance of the body and devotion to pure reasoning (82d5–7). In the afterlife, the philosopher's soul will be free of the former but not the latter. I develop an account of the elements of philosophical practice in Butler (2012: 115–23).

The norms of philosophy are thus formulated to yield a distinction between bodily activities that are ethically permissible because necessary and those that are unnecessary or gratuitous. The gratuitous bodily activities are *willing* because they reflect the agent's choice to associate with the body even though the option of avoidance was available to him. By contrast, the philosopher's unwilling bodily activities simply reflect what is necessary for continued life and practice in the embodied condition. They are activities he cannot avoid on pain of ceasing to live as a devoted philosopher. Thus, although they involve associating with the body for subsistence and perception (in its limited positive role), these are not cases of willing association.

By complying with these norms of avoidance, then, the philosopher further abides by the overarching requirement never to act contrary to philosophy and purification (82d5–7). Because his bodily activities are not contrary to purification, they are not sources of impurity in his soul. They are the kinds of activities from which he hopes to be free in the afterlife; but because they are necessary for philosophy in the embodied condition, they are ethically permissible. On the ethical conception of impurity at work in T4, this makes them consistent with the possibility of complete purity.

The requirement to avoid all *willing* association with the body thus constitutes a standard which is both coherent and extremely demanding—so demanding as to imply that very few will reach the goals of complete purity and the best afterlife. But this is as it should be, given both the emphasis in the dialogue on the difference between the pretenders to philosophy and the few true initiates (69c8–d2) and Simmias's attribution to Socrates of the view that achieving clear knowledge during human life is either impossible *or very difficult* (85c1–4). The key point is that these claims stop short of the impossibility affirmed in IP. If the philosopher practices in the right way, he can depart bringing nothing with him from the body and join the ranks of the Purely Discarnate.

3. From Complete Purification to Full Wisdom

Socrates's refinement of the concept of impurity and its cause allows him to reject IP and accept the possibility of complete purification. This in turn frees him from the logic of the argument that leads the true philosophers to deny full wisdom to the embodied. It remains to be seen whether Socrates avails himself of this freedom and endorses the possibility of full wisdom during human life. Recall that in the initial account, the value of complete purification for wisdom is that it allows the soul to be alone by itself. The value of aloneness in turn is that it allows the soul to stand in epistemically significant relations to the intelligible objects. When the soul is alone by itself, it can come into contact with the intelli-

gibles (67b2), see them (66d7), and observe them in themselves (66d7–e2). Standing in these relations is what allows the soul to acquire the wisdom it desires.

In assessing the implications of the rejection of IP, then, we can examine the text not only for explicit discussions of wisdom but also for evidence that Socrates allows the embodied soul to stand in the relations of contact, vision, or observation to the intelligible objects. Because the soul's being alone by itself is what makes the special relations possible, the first step is to seek evidence of the possibility of aloneness during human life. T4 arguably provides such evidence in the claim that by avoiding all willing association with the body, the soul stays gathered together, alone into itself. The latter expression occurs in T4 without the qualifier "as far as possible" or any other explicit rider. Moreover, T4 is devoted to explaining the case in which the soul departs in a pure condition, bringing nothing bodily with it. This makes it very unlikely that a qualifier is suppressed or implicit. Presumably, the explanation for a soul's being unable to gather *fully* alone into itself would be that it still has some bodily impurity with it. But we know that the soul at issue in T4 has nothing bodily with it. Reading a qualifier into the passage would render it incoherent by shifting its focus from the completely pure soul to a soul that cannot gather fully alone into itself because of recalcitrant impurity.

This initial evidence provided by T4 is then buttressed in a subsequent passage in which Socrates returns to the theme of the epistemic significance of the soul's gathering alone into itself:

> (T5) Philosophy, they are aware, persuades the soul to withdraw from the senses, except as their use is necessary, and encourages the soul to collect and gather itself alone into itself, and to trust nothing but itself, concerning whichever being, alone by itself, the soul thinks [νοήσῃ], when the soul too is alone by itself, and not to regard as true what it examines by other means and in other things. The latter kind of thing is perceptible and visible, whereas what the soul sees [ὁρᾷ] is intelligible and invisible. (83a6–b4)

As in T4, the variations on the expression "alone by itself" occur without explicit qualifiers. But the evidence for the unqualified reading in T5 is stronger because of the parallel Socrates draws between the conditions of the soul as subject and the object it cognizes. Specifically, Socrates claims that just as the object of the cognition, an invisible intelligible, is alone by itself, so too the soul that cognizes that object is alone by itself. In the case of the object, there is no question that its aloneness is unqualified, as it is an invisible intelligible. Given the parallel, then, an implicit qualifier in the case of the soul's aloneness is unlikely. Instead, the clear sense of the passage is that practicing philosophical avoidance

will allow the soul to gather itself alone into itself, at which point it will be fully alone by itself. In that condition, the soul can have trustworthy cognitions of the invisible intelligibles, alone by themselves.

In addition to the force of the parallel, T5 is significant because it clearly implies that the soul is embodied when it cognizes the forms in the relevant way. *Only* the embodied soul must gather and collect itself alone into itself, and only it needs to be encouraged not to trust sense perception or use it for inquiry. Similarly, then, it is the embodied soul that is capable of the cognitive practice recommended in the passage: knowing or thinking the intelligibles when both the soul and the objects are alone by themselves in the full and unqualified way.[21]

T4 and T5 thus provide some support for the hypothesis that full aloneness is possible, even during human life. The next step is to seek evidence of the possibility of the epistemically significant relations made possible by that condition. Let us begin with vision.[22] At the end of T5, Socrates concludes his contrast between inquiring with the soul by itself and with the senses by stating that unlike the perceptible and visible objects, what the soul sees (ὁρᾳ) is intelligible and invisible. Socrates thus characterizes the soul's thought or knowledge when alone by itself as a kind of rational seeing of the invisible intelligibles. Although he does not explicitly connect rational seeing to achieving wisdom, he implies that it is an exalted, trustworthy cognition in which the truth is apprehended by the embodied soul.

The second special cognition enabled by aloneness is the observation or contemplation of the intelligible objects. In the initial account, observing things in themselves is said to be necessary for knowing the intelligibles purely, which in turn is necessary for achieving wisdom (66d7–67a2). The initial account restricts observing of the intelligibles to the afterlife, but Socrates subsequently takes a different view:

> (T6) Instead, [the philosopher's] soul secures a calm [γαλήνην] from [bodily pleasures and pains], following its reasoning and being always engaged in reasoning, observing [θεωμένη] what is true, divine, and not an object of opinion [καὶ τὸ ἀδόξαστον], and nurtured by that, supposes that it should live in this way as long as it lives, and that when it meets its end it will enter into what is akin and of the same kind, and will be separated from human evils. (84a6–b4)

21. The cognitive verb 'νοήσῃ' at 83b1 likely connotes knowledge or some other kind of exalted epistemic state, but it would be tendentious to assume that in this context.

22. At 66d5–7, seeing (καθορᾶν) the truth is said to be necessary for achieving wisdom but made impossible by embodiment.

This passage offers the most extended account of the way of life the soul should establish and preserve if it is to join the divine kind in the afterlife. This implies that the manner described is the life of maximal resemblance to the divine life of the Purely Discarnate. Respects in which the soul's condition resembles the divine include being at peace from bodily feelings and completely immersed in reasoning.[23] In addition, living in the nurture of the divine is the appropriate practice and training for joining the divine kind in the afterlife.

Crucial for present purposes, however, is the claim that the soul immersed in reasoning observes the true and divine intelligibles. As in the case of seeing in T5, Socrates does not explicitly connect observing to achieving wisdom, but he implies that it is an exalted cognitive state by noting that its object is not an object of opinion (ἀδόξαστον, 84a8).[24] Moreover, the condition of pure reasoning in maximal freedom from sense perception and bodily distraction is previously identified as the one in which the soul reasons best and most successfully (65c5–9, 65e6–66a6).[25] Observation in T6 is thus taken to be a way of cognizing the intelligibles that is insulated from the effects of bodily feelings, wholly rational, superior to belief, and available to the soul only when it is in the condition of maximal resemblance to the divine.

With respect to both seeing and observing the intelligibles, then, clear evidence of their possibility is present but an explicit connection to wisdom is missing. To find this last step, we must consider the remaining concept from the group of three: contact between the soul and the intelligibles. In the initial account, true philosophers are said to believe that the soul must come into contact with the pure intelligibles if it is to know them; but they deny that such contact is possible for the embodied soul on the grounds that it is not permitted (οὐ θεμιτὸν) for the impure to contact (ἐφάπτεσθαι) the pure (67a6–b2). The suppressed premise here is a variation on IP: the embodied soul is always

23. As in the case of sense-perception, achieving a peace from bodily feelings does not mean altogether ceasing to experience them. It means minimizing exposure to them, especially those likely to be intense, through behavioral avoidance and developing a practiced indifference to them and their false reports about what is most true and most real (83b5–c9). This kind of calm is different from the total freedom from bodily experiences enjoyed by the Purely Discarnate, but this is as it should be because living as a human being in the nurture of the divine is different from actually becoming divine.

24. This casts doubt on the claim in Trabattoni (2016: 36) that any cognition involving *logos* will be a species of *doxa*. Observation of the forms occurs when the soul is immersed in reasoning; but the forms are *adoxaston*.

25. These passages indicate that the role of sense perception is limited to putting the soul in mind of forms in the initial stage of recollection. The reasoning and observing of forms described in T6 and T7 do not involve perception at all. This is similar to the view defended in the *Republic* which assigns perception a role in "summoning" the soul upward (523b–524d) but excludes it from the reasoning at the highest level of the Line (511b–c).

to some degree impure and so contact with the pure is impermissible. Once IP has been rejected, however, it is open to Socrates to allow contact between the embodied soul and the pure intelligibles, provided that the soul has reached the level of complete purity. Crucially, Socrates pursues this opening in the course of explaining the nature of wisdom:

> (T7) But when the soul inquires [σκοπῆι] by itself it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging, and being akin to this, it always stays with it whenever it is by itself and can do so; it ceases to stray and remains in the same state as it is in contact [ἐφαπτομένη] with things of the same kind, and its experience [πάθημα] then is what is called wisdom [φρόνησις]. (79d1–7)

This passage defines wisdom as the *pathēma* of the soul when it is in contact with the pure intelligibles. T7 thus preserves the true philosophers' belief in the connection between contact and wisdom. In addition, it is consistent with the principle that contact requires complete purity. This is evident from the repeated use of the phrase "by itself" in application to the soul, a phrase that applies only if the soul is completely pure. T7 thus respects the principle that the soul can be in contact with the pure only if it is completely pure.

The departure from the earlier discussion, however, is that T7 seems clearly to be describing a condition which is available to embodied souls, within human life. First, T7 is the second part of a contrast between the effects on the soul of inquiring through the senses and inquiring with the soul by itself (79c2–d7).[26]

26. It is true that Socrates introduces this contrast as something they were saying before, presumably at 65b–66a. In fact, at 66a7–8, Socrates claims that acquiring wisdom involves grasping the beings through the use of pure thought alone, closely anticipating the account of wisdom in T7. The immediate sequel then claims that acquiring full wisdom is not possible during human life, but only in the afterlife. This might be thought to imply that the kind of grasping described at 66a7–8, and by extension the contact described in T7, are not sufficient for full wisdom and T7 must be describing some inferior sort of wisdom. In the 66a passage, however, Socrates lays out the conditions required for grasping beings in the way that produces wisdom without affirming that they are possible during life. These conditions include full disassociation from the body, given that the body prevents the acquisition of wisdom *whenever* the soul associates with it (66a5–6). The ensuing passage then argues that this kind of full disassociation is impossible during human life. This is clear from the claim that full aloneness occurs only in the afterlife (66e6–67a2). Because full disassociation is impossible, we cannot achieve the kind of grasping and wisdom described at 66a7–8, but only try to get close to it. As I read the text, then, it offers the following argument: (P1) The person who will grasp being and achieve wisdom is the one who fully disassociates from the body (65e6–66a8). (P2) Unfortunately, this kind of full disassociation is not possible until the afterlife (66b1–67a2). (C) Therefore, the best we can do in life is to try to approach these conditions (67a3–b2). As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates explains that only *willingly* associating with the body causes impurity and thereby prevents full aloneness, so that the kind of grasping and contact described at 66a7–8 and in T7 are possible after all, though extremely difficult to achieve. Thanks to an anonymous referee for focusing on this passage.

The passage as a whole is most plausibly read as contrasting two modes of inquiry available to the embodied soul.

Moreover, the qualification that the soul always stays with the pure *whenever it is by itself and can do so* has a point only in application to the embodied soul (Fine 2016: 565–66; Edmonds 2004: 184). The qualification would be unnecessary in the case of the Purely Discarnate, given their permanent aloneness. It is the embodied soul that must work to achieve contact with the pure by inquiring by itself, that needs relief from the instability and wandering caused by reliance on the senses, and that can have its aloneness limited or threatened by the realities of embodiment. The wisdom defined in T7 is thus an excellence available to the embodied soul and not merely to the soul in the afterlife.[27]

This explicit connection to wisdom in T7 is part of a striking pattern, traced in this section, in which Socrates returns to each of the epistemically significant conditions denied to embodied souls in the initial account—aloneness, vision, observation, contact, and wisdom—and discusses them in ways that highlight their availability within human life. Moreover, the details of the discussions are extremely difficult to square with the quasi-wisdom and partial wisdom alternatives. The former can be viewed as the combination of the claims that the wisdom available during human life falls short of genuine virtue and that it involves correct values or goals but not knowledge or understanding (Rowe 1993: 151; 2003: 67–68; Vasiliou 2012: 12–32). But as we have seen, the wisdom described in T7 is available during human life and it is clearly genuine and high-grade. T7 clarifies the nature of the wisdom associated with purification in the "right exchange" passage. The whole point of this passage is to contrast this kind of genuine wisdom and virtue with the slavish simulacrum involving the strategic exchange of bodily states (69a6–c3). Moreover, wisdom defined as contact with the intelligibles is obviously a philosophical virtue and not any of the lower-grade forms countenanced in the *Phaedo*.

The reference to contact in T7 also supports the conception of wisdom as involving knowledge rather than just values or goals. Contact puts the soul in touch with the intelligible objects in the way that allows it to see them and observe them in themselves. This clearly goes beyond merely valuing wisdom or having it as a goal. Similarly, the emphasis in T6 on the status of the objects as *adoxaston* underscores the nature of the relevant cognition as epistemic rather than merely doxastic. Thirdly, the completely purified state that enables wisdom is the condition in which the soul reasons best, being maximally free from the sources of bodily distraction and cognitive error (65c5–9, 65e6–66a6, 83c5–8). Finally, the use of the perceptual language in connection with wisdom supports

27. Here again it should be emphasized that the availability of wisdom does not imply that Socrates or anyone else has attained it, much less that it is common.

the epistemic conception as well. One connotation of this language is that contact with the forms, like perceptual contact, includes both a causal element in which the objects are present to the soul in an affecting way and an informational element in which features of the objects are represented. This informational element helps to explain why the person with wisdom can provide defining accounts of the forms, as emphasized in the discussion of recollection (76b–c).[28] As an information-bearing state that occurs in ideal epistemic conditions and takes the fundamental elements of the world's intelligible order as its objects, wisdom is properly conceived as a virtue deserving of the honorific 'knowledge.'

These considerations constitute a strong case in favor of the claim that wisdom is full in the first sense: it is a genuine virtue involving knowledge of the forms. It might be argued, however, that the partial wisdom alternative is consistent with the foregoing account and thus the second sense of fullness remains to be established. On Fine's view, for example, wisdom is partial in the sense of being piecemeal, restricted to some subset of forms, excluding others (2016: 566). Fine might agree, then, that wisdom has the features described above but continue to insist that it is limited to some subset of forms during human life.

To evaluate this position, it is worth noting first that the argument of Section 2 above blocks an initially appealing line of defense. If it were true that Socrates always takes the embodied soul's purification to be limited *by degree*, it would be natural to think that wisdom must be limited in the same way; and a natural way of explaining this without endorsing quasi-wisdom would be to advert to genuine wisdom with respect to a limited number of forms. As we have seen, however, Socrates rejects the claim that purification is always limited by degree. Thus, this argument appealing to parallel limitations rests on a false premise.

But the much more important argument is the textual one. Fine's textual case appeals primarily to the claim in the true philosophers' account that the soul will come to know *all* that is pure and unsullied in the afterlife (67a8–b1), reading into this claim a contrast with partial wisdom during human life (2016: 566).[29] This proposal faces two difficulties. First, the passage cited does not state or imply anything about partial wisdom being available during human life. Given

28. Wisdom is the penultimate end of the closely related processes of purification and recollection, second only to the outcome in the afterlife. These processes overlap in the devotion to inquiry and reasoning, especially of the question-and-answer sort (76b–c). So, the informational content of the wisdom-constituting cognitions is developed and refined over time. When the soul is completely purified, the information is possessed in an especially perspicuous and secure way, ready to be formulated in defining accounts of the forms.

29. One might also cite Socrates's exhortation to do everything possible to share in wisdom and virtue during human life (114c7–8). But this passage falls short of the claim that embodied souls are always limited to mere shares, parts, or degrees wisdom.

the pessimism of the preceding passages (e.g., 66e2–4), it is equally likely that the contrast would be with knowing *nothing* pure and unsullied during human life or that the passage is simply extolling the superiority of the afterlife.

Moreover, Fine's appeal to this text overlooks the explanation in the passage that immediately follows. Full knowledge is restricted to the afterlife on the grounds that only the pure can come into contact with the pure (67b1–2). As we have seen, Socrates accepts this general principle but rejects IP and accepts the possibility of complete purification during human life. This then allows him in T7 to endorse the possibility of contact and wisdom as well, with no indication that the soul is limited to contact with a special subset of forms. Again, if Socrates were committed to IP, it might be reasonable to interpret these passages in terms of the partial wisdom hypothesis; but the passages themselves provide no independent support for that hypothesis.

The remaining strategy for defending the hypothesis is to argue that although it lacks direct textual support, it nevertheless enjoys indirect support as part of the best explanation of all relevant textual data. Specifically, it might be argued that appealing to partial wisdom is the best way to explain how Socrates can coherently hold both that genuine wisdom is available during human life and that the afterlife is far superior on grounds related to wisdom. The first of these commitments raises a serious problem for the quasi-wisdom view while the second challenges the full wisdom alternative defended above. Partial wisdom, by contrast, is just the right kind of condition to do justice to optimistic passages such as T5–T7 while still leaving room for the philosopher's convictions about the superiority of wisdom in the afterlife.

Although this is a formidable argument, it leaves a hostage to fortune by appealing to a best explanation claim. If my full wisdom alternative can offer an explanation equally good or better, focusing especially on the claim about the superiority of wisdom in the afterlife, the partial wisdom view will lose its remaining line of defense. While I believe this can be done, it is important not to understate the difficulty. It is crucial to Socrates's overall argument in the *Phaedo* that he shares the attitudes of hope for and anticipation of the afterlife and that he does so on grounds related to wisdom (68b3–6). It is the philosopher *qua* lover of wisdom who has these attitudes and so it must be for Socrates. But it is unclear how it can be rational to maintain these attitudes if full wisdom is available during human life. If such a valuable good is available, perhaps the philosopher should even fear death and cling to life, given the uncertainty surrounding the afterlife. The challenge, then, is to explain how it can be rational for Socrates to hope for and anticipate the afterlife, to do so on grounds related to wisdom, yet defend the availability of full wisdom during human life.

The first point to note in response is that wisdom's being full in the two senses defined above does not imply that it is altogether without limitation.[30] Because this can have the air of paradox, it will be useful to begin with an analogy. Like all analogies, this one is imperfect, but it is illuminating not only for the central point but also for some of the important details:

> Imagine a small, self-contained world called "Theoria." In Theoria, there are 25 objects available to visual perception, each of which is of surpassing beauty. Everyone in Theoria is born with a serious visual impairment which, left untreated, makes it impossible to see the objects. The available treatment consists of a time-consuming, strenuous, and sometimes painful daily protocol. Patients who remain dedicated to this protocol eventually acquire genuine, high-grade vision that allows them to see all 25 beautiful objects. Nevertheless, their vision is constrained by the following limitations: (i) it depends on continued dedication to the protocol and (ii) for some portion of each day, their vision is occupied by attending to the details of the protocol. Finally, if the patients remain dedicated to the protocol for 30 years, they can live the rest of their days with full vision and no need for the protocol.

This analogy illustrates the point that a virtue can be full in our sense while still being subject to significant limitations that make it rational to hope for and anticipate the point at which the virtue is possessed without the limitations.[31] The vision in Theoria is not an ersatz or quasi version; nor is it merely partial in the sense of being limited to some subset of the beautiful objects. Still, its dependence on and involvement in the strenuous protocol justify both a certain humility about the quality of the vision possessed during the 30 years and eager anticipation of the future liberated condition.

This analogy succeeds to the extent that there are limitations on wisdom in the *Phaedo* corresponding to those in the analogy. The dependence of wisdom on a similar protocol is clear and undeniable. Socrates claims that the embodied soul must rule over the body by opposing it, disciplining it, and mastering it using both harsh and gentle methods. This obligation extends everywhere and

30. Pakaluk (2003: 101–2) argues that the purification and separation achieved by the philosopher is strict but limited, on analogy to being in Paris for a short time. But he takes these to be cases of limitation *by degree*. My inclination is to read the analogy as involving a person's being fully in Paris for a limited time rather than being in Paris to a limited degree. Still, Pakaluk's discussion of these issues is helpful and illuminating.

31. An external referee suggests that the effects of aging on vision is a problem for the analogy; but to the extent that embodied wisdom depends on our rational capacities and they are subject to weakening with age, it might be a strength of the analogy.

throughout the entirety of life (94b7–d6).[32] Crucially, the obligation belongs not merely to the neophyte philosopher but is said to belong especially to the wise soul (94b4–5). The significance of the attribution to the wise soul is, first, that it shows the dependence of wisdom on continued dedication to the protocol and, second, that it suggests that embodied wisdom is subject to a limitation analogous to (ii) in the analogy. The disciplinary activities are the business of the soul *qua* wise and thus fall within the purview of wisdom, even if they are not part of its definition or essence (which is given in T7). Presumably, the wise soul's need to attend to and oversee these activities limits the amount of time it can engage in the kind of inquiry and reasoning that puts it in contact with the intelligibles, though not to the extent of rendering full wisdom impossible.[33]

In the *Phaedo*, then, we find limitations on wisdom corresponding to those on vision in the analogy: wisdom depends on continued dedication to a time-consuming, sometimes painful protocol and it has within its purview a set of inferior activities that divert its attention away from the intelligibles. Because these limitations derive directly from embodiment, they are constraints from which the philosopher's soul will be entirely free in the afterlife. Socrates highlights this by noting that the obligation to rule over the body belongs to the soul only when it is together with the body in the same place (79e8–80a2). The souls of the Purely Discarnate are altogether separate from bodies and thus are capable of continuous reasoning, continuous contact, and wisdom without the limitations. These are significant differences between the embodied and discarnate conditions, though not of the sort posited by the quasi and partial wisdom interpretations.

Still, it might be argued that these differences are inadequate to the task of responding to the challenge, either because they do not pertain to the quality of wisdom itself or because they are insufficient to justify the outsized importance given to wisdom in the afterlife. To the first problem there are two responses. First, the role of embodied wisdom in overseeing the disciplinary activities arguably does constitute a qualitative difference, given the inferiority of these activities; second, the text itself is ambiguous on the question of the nature of the difference between embodied and discarnate wisdom. Some passages suggest that the difference is not in the wisdom itself but in how it is possessed or

32. In this passage, hunger and thirst are listed among the affections to be opposed and mastered (94b7–c2). Thus, dealing with the necessary desires and activities should be included in this general obligation to rule over the body.

33. A defender of the partial wisdom view might deny this and insist that the limitations are so severe as to prevent full wisdom. But we need an independent reason to accept this. There is no direct textual evidence supporting the claim that wisdom is limited to some forms but not others; by contrast, the limitations I describe here are textually supported and sufficient to ground the philosopher's hope for a better encounter with wisdom in the afterlife.

encountered in the afterlife (67b7–10, 68a7–b2, 68b3–4). Preserving some ambiguity on this point is thus a strength rather than a weakness of the interpretation.

Finally, it can be tempting initially to think that all that matters is whether some good is possessed and that the manner of its possession cannot make much of a difference, but this temptation yields to further reflection. The analogy above shows that the prospect of possessing a virtue in a free and unencumbered way can justify both humility about one's current condition and intense anticipation of the future one. This phenomenon is not restricted to imaginary cases. Consider our real attitudes toward physical health. Even fully healthy people hope against hope for some way of maintaining their current standard without the need for regimens of discipline and exercise. The differences between embodied and discarnate wisdom outlined above are thus fully adequate to justify the attitudes of hope and anticipation emphasized in the *Phaedo*. Even though full wisdom is available during human life, there is good reason to anticipate the point at which it will be possessed in the wholly liberated way characteristic of the divine.

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