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Political images of the soul

Olivier RENAUT

Introduction

Political images of the soul consist of comparisons, analogies, metonymies, synecdoches and metaphors that compare the nature, parts, and functioning of the soul with those of a city. Plato uses these images in his dialogues to convey a clearer knowledge of the soul, of its mechanisms and of the way it should be ruled and ordered. It is difficult to draw up a strict typology of them,¹ but Plato employs political images in at least three ways, especially within the framework of the *Republic's* city-soul analogy.

Firstly, Plato makes use of a strict comparison between the city and the soul: this is how the city-soul analogy is first introduced in book II of the *Republic*. Since justice is an attribute of both individuals and cities, the city constitutes a larger frame for elucidating what justice is. Provided that the concept of justice is taken to be identical both in the soul and in the city, the differences between civil justice and individual justice are expected, at first, to be differences only of size and clarity. However, on a second level, this initial comparison becomes an analogy. As justice

¹ Two difficult issues arise here: first, can we draw a systematic typology of images in Plato's dialogues as we can in contemporary poetics, distinguishing comparison from analogy, metaphors, etc.? Second, as this volume shows, images can have different functions. On these two points, see Pender (2000) esp. 11-18 on metaphors and analogies in literal language.

proves to be an order between functions and classes, the analogy sees the city and the soul as structural entities, each having three functions or parts. Socrates establishes similarity and dissimilarity between relations and structures, not only between two realities. Moreover, to the analogical isomorphism is added the fact that individuals are presented as 'parts' of a bigger whole, *viz.* the city, making the relations between the two analogous entities more intricate, somehow obscure. Then, something which could not have at first been expected, the analogy becomes a way to explain how politics influences psychology and vice versa. Lastly, a third way of using political images of the soul is the metaphor. A political metaphor of the soul occurs when, for example, one compares the functioning of the soul to a theater or a public debate, or to a differentiated topological and political space, without explicating the analogous relation between the vehicle and the tenor. These metaphors may be consequences of a certain use of the city-soul analogy, suppressing the logical links that should keep the two entities distinct. In a way, we can consider them as a loose use of the city-soul analogy, playing with imaginary and vivid substitutions (a bragging mother standing for the appetitive function of the soul, a lion standing for the *thumos*). On the other hand, blurring the lines between vehicle and tenor may have a deeper significance: the metaphor could serve as a tool for producing real substitutions, for instance when civil law replaces absent reason in the soul of a citizen. In this case, the metaphor is not a consequence of the initial analogy but rather a normative tool that goes beyond the analogy and that has genuine effects on the organization of the soul's structure.

The use of political images is, in fact, an ancient practice.² Many actions we moderns would rather qualify as psychological are drawn from a political model: deliberation or psychic conflict, for instance, may be interpreted as an internalized public process, for example in Homer and in tragedy.³ But another origin of these comparisons is to be found in the well-known analogy between the city and the universe that we find, for

² See Brock (2013) who gives a full account of various metaphors from Homer to the fourth century applied to politics.

³ See Gill (1995) for the idea that in Homer and in tragedy, deliberation is an internalized public debate among conflicting values.

example, in the Presocratics.⁴ Finally, interactions between individuals and the political community they belong to were worthy of inquiry before Plato, found especially in the Hippocratic corpus and in Thucydides.⁵ More precisely, the relationship between private and public spheres, and, all the more, the prevalence of what is in the common interest over what is of only individual interest, also give rise to analogies concerning events that affect both the community and its individuals (natural plagues, war and peace, wealth and poverty, inherited cultural characters and customs defining the individual, etc.)⁶ These three heritages combined offer many bases for Plato to make political images of the soul understandable and efficacious for his audience.

But what then, exactly, is the ‘power’ of such metaphors, if they have any? What does Plato intend in his use of political vocabulary for describing a psychological state or functioning? In what follows, I argue that his main purpose is to produce, by way of metaphors, a new politicized psychology. Political metaphors are intended to justify how reason in individuals must be paired with public law in order to create virtue among citizens. Relying on the obvious fact that political structures interact with psychological traits, as the city-soul analogy demonstrates at the risk of logical incoherence, Plato goes beyond mere isomorphism by using a linguistic tool: making individuals think of their soul as a little city (and reciprocally their city as an expansion of a well-ordered psychological structure) is presented as a key means to attaining the rule of reason. Political images of the soul are a center piece of a rhetorical strategy⁷ for justifying the rule of law, especially to non-philosophers whose weakened rational capacity should be supported by non-rational representations and imagery.

⁴ In Renaut and Macé (2013), we argue that the analogy between the city and the universe found especially in Heraclitus, which claims that the role of the sage is beneficial for the city whose law derives from that of the cosmos, is the basis of a new platonic challenge: how philosophers, in a hostile community, should communicate their true knowledge of the common good.

⁵ See especially Demont (2009) for a precise overview of the problem. On Thucydides, see Morrison (1994).

⁶ On the interaction between public and private in ancient literature from Homer to Plato, see Macé (2012).

⁷ I borrow this expression from Blössner’s (2007) fine analysis of the city-soul analogy. However, in what follows, I do not take this rhetorical strategy to be logically flawed. My intention is not to defend the validity of the city-soul analogy but to show how metaphors are actually part of a persuasive strategy to institute the rule of reason.

1. The scope of the city-soul analogy

The city-soul analogy has been variously interpreted, and it is useful, to begin with, to investigate what scope it has within the *Republic*. According to the famous passage in book II (368c7-369a) which introduces the psycho-political framework, a strict comparison between a smaller entity (justice in the individual) and a larger frame (justice in the city) may help in discovering what justice is. Because ‘justice’ is a predicate that can be attributed both to the city and the individual, their comparison can reveal the essence of justice through the sameness of its *idea* in both cases.⁸ A ‘godsend’ (*hermaion*) positing the unity of the form of justice and the sameness of its appearance and meaning makes this comparison possible – it implies that we think of the city as a large individual and of the individual as a small city, at least as far as the justice they manifest is concerned. As is well known, in book IV the strict comparison becomes an analogy, following a complex path, and risking, it has been argued, a loss of consistency in the initial program. The analogy transforms a mere heuristic tool into a rhetorical device in order to match the soul’s structure and its political environment. The problem, according to B. Williams’ famous analysis, is that this inference is grounded on a loose use of the initial comparison: the city being used as a model for individual justice and then as an effect of the latter. ‘Parts and wholes’ problems occur when we apply the analogy beyond its heuristic scope – and that is Plato’s mistake; to the original comparison he adds the extra fact that individuals are ‘parts’ of the whole which is the city, in such a way that the analogy is potentially taken into an infinite regress, blurring the difference between the model and the image, the vehicle and the tenor.⁹

What appears to be a logical problem has, on the contrary, been interpreted as a force of the analogy, even as its goal. If we take it that the tripartite psychology is grounded in the nature of the soul, i.e. has a descriptive value, whereas the city’s organization is obviously prescriptive, then we must be of the opinion that the soul’s structure should be the model for civic organization. But the reverse is also true: the individuals are indeed influenced by the character of the city and by institutions. In this case, the functioning of the city should help us to find

⁸ As Pradeau (1997) 25–26 rightly points out.

⁹ Williams (1973) 257.

the structure of the soul. This two-way causality implied and expressed through the analogy is precisely what J. Lear recognizes in the *Republic*. Soul and city are linked by way of ‘internalization’ and ‘exteriorization’ of both moral and civil values and virtues.¹⁰

The truth remains that the logic of the argument appears somehow flawed, and a ‘metaphorical’ interpretation of psycho-political interaction should be preferred to a causal understanding of the argument.¹¹ In other words, the efficiency of the city-soul analogy is not grounded on valid relations between its elements but rather on its plausibility and its metaphorical efficiency.¹² Thus, political metaphors of the soul should be understood as a loose way of expressing a basic mutual influence between city and soul. Being intentionally loose ways of showing the link between city and individuals, they can be interpreted as shorter paths to mould and educate those who are not philosophers.¹³

A shift from comparison and analogy to the metaphorical is clear in book IV, where Socrates seems to suggest that the character of the community derives from that of the individuals who compose or rule it.

Well, then, we are surely compelled to agree that each of us has within himself the same species and characteristics as the city? Where else would they come from? It would be ridiculous for anyone to think that spiritedness didn’t come to be in cities from such individuals as the Thracians, Scythians, and others who live to the north of us who are held to possess spirit, or that the same isn’t true of the love of learning, which is mostly associated with our part of the world, or of the love of money, which one might say is conspicuously displayed by the Phoenicians and Egyptians (*Rep.* 435e1-436a3, trans. Grube & Reeve, slightly modified).¹⁴

Plato may borrow this typology from the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, waters and places* (§ 12-16), where the physician shows that some types of

¹⁰ Lear (1992).

¹¹ Ferrari (2005) 50–53

¹² Blössner (2007) 358–360

¹³ Philosophers, especially those who do not owe anything to the city they belong to, may not be sensible to such metaphors, being aware that his soul is not molded by the city in which he grew up. That does not mean that he denies that there are causal interactions; but he won’t credit the use of a metaphor of the “swarm” for example, as it is the case for educated guardians in 520b-c.

¹⁴ Ἄρ' οὖν ἡμῖν, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, πολλή ἀνάγκη ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι γε τὰ αὐτὰ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἔνεστιν ἡμῶν εἶδη τε καὶ ἦθη ἅπερ ἐν τῇ πόλει; οὐ γάρ που ἄλλοθεν ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκται. γελοῖον γὰρ ἂν εἴη εἶ τις οἰηθείη τὸ θυμοειδὲς μὴ ἐκ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐγγεγονέναι, οἳ δὲ καὶ ἔχουσι ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν, οἷον οἱ κατὰ τὴν Θράκην τε καὶ Σκυθικὴν καὶ σχεδόν τι κατὰ τὸν ἄνω τόπον, ἢ τὸ φιλομαθές, ὃ δὲ τὸν παρ' ἡμῖν μάλιστα ἂν τις αἰτιάσαιτο τόπον, ἢ τὸ φιλοχρήματον τὸ περὶ τοὺς τε Φοίνικας εἶναι καὶ τοὺς κατὰ Αἴγυπτον φαίη τις ἂν οὐχ ἤκιστα.

character (*èthè*) are the result of the combination of nature (geographical characteristics, climate, etc.), of law, and of political constitution.¹⁵ In this typology, it is not clear which comes first: the psychological and individual characteristics or the natural and political ones. For although the character of the city *comes from its members*, the city seems in return to *promote* and *transmit* psychological and individual character traits. The problem is the meaning we are prepared to give to the expression ‘species and characteristics’ (*eidè te kai èthè*). The simplest interpretation is to understand *eidè* as ‘appearance’ or ‘characteristics’, that is, almost as a synonym for *èthè*.¹⁶ It would mean that at least a majority of people in the city manifest the same characteristics that the city is famous for.¹⁷

But *eidè* can also mean ‘part’ and ‘function’, or even ‘class’ when applied to the parts of the city (which are more usually called *genè*¹⁸). In this case, which does not exclude the simpler interpretation but rather contains it, what Socrates is saying is that each member of a city possesses three psychological *eidè* whose structural order and development produces a character trait as well as, by extension, the reputation of a city. Scythians and Thracians are called ‘spirited’ *metaphorically*, for some of them (especially notorious warriors) present an ordering of their soul in which spiritedness (*thumoeides*) holds the reins over reason and desire. There is a transfer of a character trait held by some individual people over to the

¹⁵ On this point, see Renaut (2014) 261–264.

¹⁶ This is how Crombie interprets the term, as ‘behaviour-propensities’, Crombie (1962) 344. In support of this view, the term spiritedness (*thumoeides*) seems to mean a character rather than a psychic function.

¹⁷ This is a reading supported later in book VIII, when Socrates declares: “And do you realize that of necessity there are as many forms of human character (ἀνθρώπων εἶδη) as there are of constitutions? Or do you think that constitutions are born ‘from oak or rock’ and not from the characters of the people who live in the cities governed by them, which tip the scales, so to speak, and drag the rest along with them?” (*Rep.* VIII, 544d6-e2)

¹⁸ We find the expression τριῶν γενῶν at 435b10, τριττὰ γένη φύσεων at 435b5 and b7. But the term εἶδος is also employed at 435b2: τὸ τοῦ πολεμικοῦ εἶδος in reference to the auxiliaries; likewise, εἶδος is implied in the expression τὸ τοῦ βουλευτικοῦ καὶ φύλακος for the guardians at 435b3. According to Cooper (1998) 120 n. 4, Plato anticipates the exposition of a functional psychology and I agree with this interpretation. For a thorough analysis of this passage, see Kühn (1994). Even if Kühn rejects Cooper’s interpretation of the meaning of *eidè* (51 n.8), he agrees that this passage consists of a shift from a typology of characters to a functional psychology.

whole value system of an entire people, and this contamination is indeed metaphorical (to be precise, it is a synecdoche, for we use some of its parts to refer to the city as a whole). But it would be an error not to see that this ordering of a soul does not, in return, depend upon cultural and political factors. Just as Macrocephali in the Hippocratic treatise shape the cranial form of their new-born members (*A.W.P.* 14), in this passage it is cities and communities that fashion the customs of their citizens and promote psychological traits. That is the reason why this psychological typology is included in a geographical one. Values and customs are fashioning what is actually valued in individuals' behavior. The city's institutions fully interact with the tripartite psychology, in a metaphorical way. In this passage, the analogy is clearly a means for Plato to make the two wholes, city and soul, communicate and interact, through internalization of common values, and exteriorization of these values through action and service as a role model.¹⁹ The city, being composed of citizens having souls, should organize those citizens into groups based on their characters and dispositions; in return, this typology influences the structure of the citizen's souls depending on who should rule the city and give it its distinctive feature. Tripartite psychology pervades the city's organization, and vice versa, to such an extent that one could argue that Plato, by means of the analogy, politicizes the soul, and brings psychology into politics.²⁰ In other words, political metaphors should be seen as a normative attempt to shape the citizens' character and *psyche* in accordance with justice.

Metaphors are not only rhetorical devices, they have real effects on the behavior of citizens. This linguistic mechanism is not in the least incidental.²¹ Political metaphors and analogies are, firstly, an expression of the actual interweaving between psychology and politics, but they are also linguistic means for shaping our own perception of civic and psychic order. Part of the scope of the city-soul analogy is precisely to make this interweaving possible, through political images of the soul.

¹⁹ Lear (1992) 195: "Plato's point (435e) is not that a spirited *polis*, say, is spirited simply in virtue of having spirited citizens, but in having spirited citizens who are successful in shaping the *polis* in their image."

²⁰ Vegetti (1998) 40–41.

²¹ In book VIII, 560d1-561a1, Plato explains, quoting Thucydides, how in democracy public discourses that rename values and virtues create a psychic *stasis*. On this point see Loraux (1986); Desclos (2003) 158–161.

2. Political analogies and metaphors at work

Political vocabulary tends to pervade psychological descriptions, as when we think of our soul as a city, for example when Glaucon speaks of a “guardian [who] needs a guardian,”²² or when Socrates analyzes verbal expressions comparing struggles of the soul to an internal war. These expressions are more important than usually thought, especially when, as we will see later, they are used for non-philosophers.

In *Republic* IV, the popular expression ‘to be stronger than oneself’ (430e11-431b2) is taken as an example of a metaphor which helps in understanding psychological agency.²³

Yet isn’t the expression ‘to be stronger than oneself’ ridiculous? The stronger self that does the controlling is the same as the weaker self that gets controlled, so that only one person is referred to in all such expressions.

Of course.

Nonetheless, the expression is apparently trying to indicate that, in the soul of that very person, there is a better part and a worse one and that, whenever the naturally better part is in control of the worse, this is expressed by saying that the person is self-controlled (*enkrates*) or master of himself. At any rate, one praises someone by calling him self-controlled. But when, on the other hand, the smaller and better part is overpowered by the mass of the worse, because of bad upbringing or bad company, this is called being self-defeated or licentious and is a reproach. (*Rep.* IV, 430e11-431b2. trans. Grube & Reeve, slightly modified).²⁴

This simple expression, ‘to be stronger than oneself’, is a ‘clue’ (430e9) in language to reveal what the virtue of moderation is. Moderation, we are told, is a kind of *enkrateia*, i.e. the ability for reason to take over desires. But obviously, this idea of self-control is a consequence of an analogical transfer. To be ‘stronger than oneself’ presupposes an internalization of

²² *Rep.* III, 403e. See also *Rep.* VIII, 549b4.

²³ On the use of the metaphor to define agency and personality, especially in book VIII and IX, see Cairns in this volume. According to Pender (2000) 206-213, political images of the soul in the *Republic* are ‘cognitively irreducible and so become an integral, irreplaceable part of Plato’s theory’ (206). But, as we shall see, the goal of these images is not only illustrative but normative.

²⁴ Οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν κρείττω αὐτοῦ γελοῖον; ὁ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ κρείττων καὶ ἦττων δῆπου ἂν αὐτοῦ εἴη καὶ ὁ ἦττων κρείττων· ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν ἅπασιν τούτοις προσαγορεύεται. Τί δ' οὐ; Ἄλλ', ἦν δ' ἐγώ, φαίνεται μοι βούλεσθαι λέγειν οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὡς τι ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ μὲν βέλτιον ἔνι, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον, καὶ ὅταν μὲν τὸ βέλτιον φύσει τοῦ χείρονος ἐγκρατὲς ᾖ, τοῦτο λέγειν τὸ κρείττω αὐτοῦ – ἐπαινεῖ γοῦν – ὅταν δὲ ὑπὸ τροφῆς κακῆς ἢ τινος ὁμιλίας κρατηθῆ ὑπὸ πλῆθους τοῦ χείρονος σμικρότερον τὸ βέλτιον ὄν, τοῦτο δὲ ὡς ἐν ὀνειδίει ψέγειν τε καὶ καλεῖν ἦττω ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἀκόλαστον τὸν οὕτω διακείμενον.

the opposition of at least two agents, one stronger, the other weaker.²⁵ The metaphor reveals, then, a difference between at least two ‘parts’ or even ‘selves’; a better and a worse. This way of defining personality and agency occurs just before Socrates explains how the agent’s soul consists of three ‘functions’, each pursuing a proper object and opposing the others with its force and motivation: the rational part (*logistikon*) is a calculative or rational function, the spirited part (*thumos*) is a function that enables things to be valued, thus committing the individual to a set of values, while the appetitive part (*epithumètikon*) refers to desires.

It should be emphasized that this metaphor has, for Socrates, a clear political meaning.²⁶ First, the order of one’s soul is compared with a political power of one part of the city over another part, establishing a hierarchical relation between the two. Secondly, the ‘self’ in this expression is presented altogether as part of a larger community that potentially praises or blames it, the better part being associated, if not identified, with the few better ‘men’ in the city and, reciprocally, the worse part being explicitly associated with ‘bad company’. Thirdly, as the mention of ‘upbringing’ suggests, moderation understood as *enkrateia* may be an effect of the direct influence of politics over the non-philosophers that constitute the majority of the city.

The metaphor, whose vehicle is political and tenor psychological, is then reapplied to the city, reversing the roles of that which is compared and that which is being compared to. We may call a city ‘stronger than itself’ when the ‘wisdom and desires’ of the better men (where true moderation lies, for they have knowledge) control the desires of “children, women, household slaves, and in those of the inferior majority who are called free” (431b9-c3). This explanation is partly based on the city-soul analogy, for wisdom is identified with the guardians, whereas vile desire

²⁵ On *enkrateia* as a model for defining moderation in the *Republic*, see Dorion (2007). Dorion shows how *enkrateia* is dismissed in the first dialogues like the *Charmides*, and partially restored in the middle and late dialogues. This rehabilitation has two important consequences: first, *enkrateia* supposes at least a bi-partition of the soul and, second, *enkrateia* is understood not as a force distinct from reason but rather the action of reason, together with *thumos*, upon desires and pleasures. Dorion stresses the necessity of re-elaborating metaphors (kingship and slavery) to account for this new definition of moderation (see esp. pp. 132-133). It is not by accident that these metaphors are political, as we shall see in the *Laws*.

²⁶ As Morgan (2003) showed, comparing this passage with *Gorgias* 491c6-e1, pp. 194-198.

is represented by another category of people. But we are also clearly beyond the analogy here, for guardians are not just the ‘reason’ of the city, but also have good and educated *desires* (431c5-7) which they can communicate to those they rule, at least through laws, prescriptions and bans, praise and blame. And this is the true sense of moderation in the city: it is not enough that base citizens be ruled by better men, they also have to *agree* on who should rule the city and, consequently, their own desire (431d9-e2). A city is then moderate when all its members agree on the hierarchical relationship between the classes, desires and pleasures contained by the effect of wisdom, in the case of the guardians, and by true opinion, in the case of the rest of the city.

In conclusion to this passage (430e11-431b2), we may argue that two senses of moderation are set out. First, a popular one, that can be applied to individuals, when one obeys his reason or true opinion in order to contain his desires and pleasures. This popular definition is grounded in the political metaphor of the king (reason) and the slaves (desires). Second, a political one, which is applied to a city, when their members are supposed to obey their good rulers with respect to what is desirable and what must not be desired. But this interpretation would miss the point. It may not be logically necessary for a ‘moderate’ city to rely on the true moderation of its members, for Socrates accepts that the individuals are mostly not moderate. But would a political agreement or consensus on who should rule the city be sufficient? It appears that it is not the case. Such an agreement presupposes a community regarding affections, pleasures and pains, making the city united among its members (*Rep.* V, 462a9-e3) so that “the city is most like a single person” (462c10). Hence, we can at least affirm that the metaphor of ‘self-control’ applied to the city conveys a derived meaning of moderation that *enjoins* the citizens to show a transferred moderation or self-mastery.²⁷

This first political metaphor was meant to reveal the definition of moderation applied to the city. Oddly, Socrates used the psychological model of ‘self-control’ to define it more precisely, and we have seen that the initial vehicle of the metaphor was political, to explain, in a more vivid and imaginary way, what moderation in an individual soul was. The

²⁷ Jeon (2014) convincingly argues for the necessity of there being a whole-part causal causation at work in the *Republic*, especially for the class of the producers, where political values are closely connected with personal values and goals. See esp. p. 195-202.

function of the political metaphor is quite clear here: it is based on the logically false but efficacious identification between elements which are only analogous. The metaphor, to put it briefly, altogether expresses and creates an interweaving between city and individuals, the latter being ‘parts’ of the former. The same metaphorical process is observed when Socrates defines moderation in the individual soul. The provisional definition of moderation as ‘self-control’ is now deepened thanks to another political metaphor.

And isn't he moderate because of the friendly and harmonious relations between these same parts, namely, when the ruler and the ruled believe in common that the rational part should rule and don't engage in civil war against it?

Moderation is surely nothing other than that, both in the city and in the individual.

(*Rep.* IV, 442c10-d3)²⁸

To define moderation in individuals, Socrates resorts to the political metaphor of civic friendship (*philia*), concord (*symphonia*) and agreement on who should be in command (*homodoxia*). In contrast, those who are not moderate are compared to individuals involved in a civil war (*stasis*), which is also the image Socrates later uses to define injustice.²⁹ Conflicting judgments of value are compared with factions; to bring *stasis* to an end, the better men should rule the worse part of the city, and the whole soul should be ruled by reason. This metaphor is a perfect mirror of the first one, dealing with political moderation: to define individual moderation, Socrates takes a political metaphor which is already steeped in psychology.

What can we infer from this use of the psycho-political metaphor to define both moderation in the city and in the individual? One solution would be to understand that it is meant to be a linguistic way of defining neither the city's nor the individual's virtue *alone*, but rather the citizen's, i.e. the individual *in* the city, or the city as composed by individuals. The legislator uses the metaphor as a rhetorical means to enjoin the citizens

²⁸ Τί δέ; σώφρονα οὐ τῆ φιλία καὶ συμφωνία τῆ αὐτῶν τούτων, ὅταν τό τε ἄρχον καὶ τῷ ἀρχομένῳ τὸ λογιστικὸν ὁμοδοξῶσι δεῖν ἄρχειν καὶ μὴ στασιάζωσιν αὐτῶ; Σωφροσύνη γοῦν, ἣ δ' ὅς, οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστὶν ἢ τοῦτο, πόλεώς τε καὶ ἰδιώτου.

²⁹ *Rep.* IV, 444b1-8: “Surely, it must be a kind of civil war between the three parts, a meddling and doing of another's work, a rebellion by some part against the whole soul in order to rule it inappropriately. The rebellious part is by nature suited to be a slave, while the other part is not a slave but belongs to the ruling class. We'll say something like that, I suppose, and that the turmoil and straying of these parts are injustice, licentiousness, cowardice, ignorance, and, in a word, the whole of vice.” On this blurring of the lines between justice and moderation, see Larson (1951) 407.

not only to unify their souls but also to obey their rulers and to feel like a genuine part of the city. Each individual becomes, in a way, his own guardian, calling for civic and collective feelings of strategy, courage and obedience, whenever a psychological conflict occurs.³⁰

At the end of book IV, Socrates puts his definition of justice in the individual to the test of ‘ordinary situations’:

For example, if we had to come to an agreement about whether someone similar in nature and training to our city had embezzled a deposit of gold or silver that he had accepted, who do you think would consider him to have done it rather than someone who isn't like him?

No one.

And would he have anything to do with temple robberies, thefts, betrayals of friends in private life or of cities in public life?

No, nothing.

And he'd be in no way untrustworthy in keeping an oath or other agreement.

How could he be?

And adultery, disrespect for parents, and neglect of the gods would be more in keeping with every other kind of character than his.

With every one.

And isn't the cause of all this that every part within him does its own work, whether it's ruling or being ruled?

Yes, that and nothing else.

Then, are you still looking for justice to be something other than this power, the one that produces men and cities of the sort we've described?

No, I certainly am not.

Then the dream we had has been completely fulfilled—our suspicion that, with the help of some god, we had hit upon the origin and pattern of justice right at the beginning in founding our city. (*Rep. IV*, 442e4-443c2)³¹

³⁰ See for example the way Leontius resorts to public opinion as a law to resolve his psychic conflict, (*Rep. IV*, 439e6-440a7). It is not a coincidence that we find the term *πολεμεῖν* (440a5-6) to describe the way anger struggles with desires. The sensitivity of the honest man's *thumos* to justice, when he is victim to an injustice, requires an opinion of what is just, and it is for this that he will 'fight' (*συμμαχεῖ τῷ δοκοῦντι δικαίῳ*). (*Rep. IV*, 440c8) On these passages, see Renaut (2014) 171–175.

³¹ Οἷον εἰ δέοι ἡμᾶς ἀνομολογεῖσθαι περὶ τε ἐκείνης τῆς πόλεως καὶ τοῦ ἐκείνη ὁμοίως πεφυκότος τε καὶ τεθραμμένου ἀνδρός, εἰ δοκεῖ ἂν παρακαταθήκην χρυσοῦ ἢ ἀργυρίου δεξάμενος ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀποστερηῆσαι, τίν' ἂν οἶε οἰθηθῆναι τοῦτον αὐτὸ δρᾶσαι μᾶλλον ἢ ὅσοι μὴ τοιοῦτοι; Οὐδέν' ἂν, ἔφη. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἱεροσυλιῶν καὶ κλοπῶν καὶ προδοσιῶν, ἢ ἰδίᾳ ἐταίρων ἢ δημοσίᾳ πόλεων, ἐκτὸς ἂν οὗτος εἴη; ἐκτός. Καὶ μὴν οὐδ' ὅπως οἶον γ' ἂν ἄπιστος ἢ κατὰ ὄρκους ἢ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας ὁμολογίας. Πῶς γὰρ ἂν; Μοιχεῖαί γε μὴν καὶ γονέων ἀμέλεια καὶ θεῶν ἀθεραπεύσαι παντὶ ἄλλῳ μᾶλλον ἢ τῷ τοιοῦτῳ προσήκουσι. Παντὶ μέντοι, ἔφη. Οὐκοῦν τούτων πάντων αἴτιον ὅτι αὐτοῦ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἕκαστον τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττει ἀρχῆς τε πέρι καὶ τοῦ ἄρχεσθαι; Τοῦτο μὲν οὖν, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο. Ἔτι τι οὖν ἕτερον ζητεῖς δικαιοσύνην εἶναι ἢ ταύτην τὴν δύναμιν ἢ τοὺς τοιούτους ἀνδρας τε παρέχεται καὶ πόλεις; Μὰ Δία, ἢ δ' ὅς, οὐκ ἔγωγε. Τέλειον ἄρα ἡμῖν τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἀποτετέλεσται, ὃ ἔφαμεν ὑποπεῦσαι ὡς εὐθὺς ἀρχόμενοι τῆς πόλεως

All these ordinary situations are precise cases where law, whether codified or not, is at stake. The kind of justice Socrates is looking for by means of the analogy is some kind of civic virtue, a virtue anyone can practice in a city, and not justice in the individual, regardless of social and political conditions. The city's laws condition even 'private life', through a true opinion which relates to justice in a city. In all these cases, law seems to be the horizon, indeed the solution, whereby an individual can attain virtue.³² The 'help of some god' Socrates refers to is the 'godsend' seen in book II, which guaranteed the identity of the appearance of justice in the city and in the individual. True, this 'godsend' did not imply, at first, a structural identity between city and soul, leading to the analogy, but the analogy is the source of political metaphors which interweave psychology and politics. These political metaphors are both the expression of the way in which law stands for reason in the citizen's soul, as well as a means to persuade citizens that they should obey civic law. The necessity to refer to laws as the right opinion, and the persuasive dimension of these metaphors makes it clear that they are not intended for philosophers whose virtue is not mediated by any other opinion, but is the result of knowledge itself. Political metaphors are used to give "demotic virtues", and not philosophical virtues, a stronger basis, using law as a substitute for reason.

3. When law stands for reason

Political images of the soul do not only occur within the framework of the city-soul analogy in the *Republic*; in the *Timaeus* and in the *Laws* we find several comparisons and metaphors between individual characters, the structure and parts of the soul, and the organization of a city-state in all respects (its geography, military constructions, political institutions, etc.). It may be dangerous to compare several dialogues in their respective use of the political images of the soul, for each dialogue pursues a distinct

οϊκίζειν κατὰ θεόν τινα εἰς ἀρχὴν τε καὶ τύπον τινα τῆς δικαιοσύνης κινδυνεύομεν ἐμβεβηκέναι.

³² Kamtekar (1998) has shown how we might accept that the virtues of the auxiliaries are 'imperfect' in the sense that they only rely on true opinion and are lacking 'counterfactual reliability'. Whereas Kamtekar stresses the epistemic grounds of this 'imperfect virtue', I wish to stress the importance of politics in the constitution of these true opinions. Bobonich (2002) 42–45 remains unclear on the possibility for other classes to possess an imperfect form of virtue, but the possibility is open in the *Laws* (288-292).

dialectical path; but it shows, in spite of everything, how Plato wished to 'politicize' his psychology, i.e. as an instrument to account for the behavior of individuals in flawed institutions and a tool to promote an adequate education for citizens, even more so in the case of non-philosophers.

In book I of the *Laws*, the Athenian explicitly identifies, or rather substitutes, law and reason. What was only analogous in the *Republic* is, in the *Laws*, interchangeable.³³ Comparing the human soul to a puppet in book I, the Athenian puts forth a political metaphor:

- But that he possesses within himself a pair of witless and mutually antagonistic advisers, which we call pleasure and pain?

- That is so.

- In addition to these two, he has opinions about the future, whose general name is 'expectations'. Specifically, the anticipation of pain is called 'fear', and the anticipation of the opposite is called 'confidence'. Over and against all these we have 'calculation', by which we judge the relative merits of pleasure and pain, and when this is expressed as a public decision of a state, it receives the title 'law'. (*Leg. I*, 644c6-d3)³⁴

Psychic conflict receives a political treatment: pleasure and pain are 'advisers' (*sumboulos*), whereas public law (*nomos*) stands for calculation (*logismos*), when it is publicly stated. This law can either be knowledge or true opinion; it aims at helping the individual to judge and act virtuously when reason is eventually lacking or is too weak. The metaphor gives way to a mere substitution, insofar as prescriptions and interdictions are supposed to act directly on human affections, by providing the force that reason precisely lacks:

This cord, which is golden and holy, transmits the power of 'calculation', a power which in a state is called the public law (...) The force exerted by law is excellent, and one should always co-operate with it, because although 'calculation' is a noble thing, it is gentle, not violent, and its efforts need assistants, so that the gold in us may prevail over the other substances. (*Leg. I*, 644e6-645b1)³⁵

³³ Saunders (1962) has shown that even if the city-soul analogy is not explicitly stated in the *Laws*, it is not abandoned, and many parallels can be drawn between psychic dispositions and classes in the city of Magnesia. See esp. p. 42 sq.

³⁴ {ΑΘ.} Δύο δὲ κεκτημένον ἐν αὐτῷ συμβούλω ἐναντίω τε καὶ ἄφρονε, ὧ προσαγορεύομεν ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην; {ΚΛ.} Ἔστι ταῦτα. {ΑΘ.} Πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἀμφοῖν αὐτῶν δόξας μελλόντων, οἷν κοινὸν μὲν ὄνομα ἐλπίς, ἴδιον δὲ, φόβος μὲν ἢ πρὸ λύπης ἐλπίς, θάρρος δὲ ἢ πρὸ τοῦ ἐναντίου· ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσι τούτοις λογισμὸς ὅτι ποτ' αὐτῶν ἄμεινον ἢ χεῖρον, ὃς γενόμενος δόγμα πόλεως κοινὸν νόμος ἐπωνόμασται.

³⁵ ταύτην δ' εἶναι τὴν τοῦ λογισμοῦ ἀγωγὴν χρυσοῦν καὶ ἱεράν, τῆς πόλεως κοινὸν νόμον ἐπικαλουμένην, ἄλλας δὲ σκληρὰς καὶ σιδηρᾶς, τὴν δὲ μαλακὴν ἄτε χρυσοῦν οὖσαν, τὰς δὲ ἄλλας παντοδαποῖς εἶδεσιν ὁμοίας. δεῖν δὲ τῆ καλλίστη ἀγωγῇ τῆ τοῦ νόμου αἰετὸν συλλαμβάνειν· ἄτε γὰρ τοῦ λογισμοῦ καλοῦ μὲν ὄντος, πράου δὲ καὶ οὐ

Unsurprisingly, the Athenian makes this political metaphor of the soul a possible explanation to the expression we have already seen in the *Republic*, ‘to be better than oneself’: “the meaning of the terms ‘self-superior’ and ‘self-inferior’ will somehow become clearer, and the duties of state and individual will be better appreciated” (*Leg.* I, 645b2-5). The self-superior individual is the one whose soul is governed by reason and/or by law. Of course, in the latter case, reasoning is heteronomous and comes from an internalized norm which laws express. If his behavior is not unconditionally virtuous, because he lacks knowledge, he presents sufficiently virtuous dispositions. Law pervades every civic activity, from educational models in preliminary training, to games, rituals, institutions like *syssitia*, choral practices, etc. It helps reason to subdue human affections by making them compatible with true opinion.³⁶

I now turn to the *Timaeus*. From 69c, the physician explains, by use of political metaphors³⁷, how the moral parts of the soul are located in the body by daemons.

In the face of these disturbances they scrupled to stain the divine soul only to the extent that this was absolutely necessary, and so they provided a home for the mortal soul in another place in the body, away from the other, once they had built an isthmus as boundary between the head and the chest by situating a neck between them to keep them apart. Inside the chest, then, and in what is called the trunk they proceeded to enclose the mortal type of soul. And since one part of the mortal soul was naturally superior to the other, they built the hollow of the trunk in sections, dividing them the way that women’s quarters are divided from men’s. They situated the midriff between the sections to serve as a partition. (*Tim.* 69c5-70a2, trad. D. Zeyl, slightly modified)³⁸

In the first instance, the vocabulary Plato uses to locate the soul in the body is much more topological and political in nature: *prosoikodomeô*, *katoikizô*, *diokodomeô* are words that convey not spatial location but

βιαίου, δεῖσθαι ὑπηρετῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀγωγὴν, ὅπως ἂν ἐν ἡμῖν τὸ χρυσοῦν γένος νικᾷ τὰ ἄλλα γένη.

³⁶ On the significance of the educational program in the *Laws*, see Kamtekar (2010) on physical training and Renaut (2014) 300 sq. on the manipulation of emotions towards virtue.

³⁷ On the various fields of reference used by Plato in his metaphors, see Pender (2000).

³⁸ καὶ διὰ ταῦτα δὴ σεβόμενοι μιαίνειν τὸ θεῖον, ὅτι μὴ πᾶσα ἦν ἀνάγκη, χωρὶς ἐκείνου κατοικίζουσιν εἰς ἄλλην τοῦ σώματος οἴκησιν τὸ θνητόν, ἰσθμὸν καὶ ὄρον διοικοδομήσαντες τῆς τε κεφαλῆς καὶ τοῦ στήθους, αὐχένα μεταξὺ τιθέντες, ἴν' εἴη χωρὶς. ἐν δὴ τοῖς στήθεσιν καὶ τῷ καλουμένῳ θώρακι τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς θνητὸν γένος ἐνέδουν. καὶ ἐπειδὴ τὸ μὲν ἄμεινον αὐτῆς, τὸ δὲ χεῖρον ἐπεφύκει, διοικοδομοῦσι τοῦ θώρακος αὖ τὸ κύτος, διορίζοντες οἶον γυναικῶν, τὴν δὲ ἀνδρῶν χωρὶς οἴκησιν, τὰς φρένας διάφραγμα εἰς τὸ μέσον αὐτῶν τιθέντες.

rather a political image of the administration of an *oikos*, an estate, whether public or private. The metaphor of the 'isthmus' and the 'boundary' (*horon*) also conveys a political image of the body. The geopolitical separation is complemented by a domestic, though political, function: the separation of men and women. Timaeus then explains why the *thumos* should be close to the head, introducing a new metaphor:

Now the part of the mortal soul that exhibits manliness and spirit, the ambitious part, they settled nearer the head, between the midriff and the neck, so that it might listen to reason and together with it restrain by force the part consisting of appetites, should the latter at any time refuse outright to obey the dictates of reason coming down from the citadel. (*Tim.* 70a2-7)³⁹

An urbanistic metaphor, which refers to the political organization of the city in the *Republic*, compares reason with law,⁴⁰ with the ruling class occupying the Acropolis while the auxiliaries are based near the city walls, protecting the city from the outside by force, and from the inside by law and public order. This hierarchical metaphor is not exclusive with another urbanistic metaphor in the *Laws*, which explains why *thumos* is intermediary:

We can see that it is not universally true that one district extends right up to the boundary of another. In some cases there is a no man's land in between, which will extend so as to touch either boundary and occupy an intermediate position between the two. This, we said, was true of an act done in anger: it falls somewhere between voluntary and involuntary. (*Leg.* IX, 878b4-8, trans. T.J. Saunders)⁴¹

This passage concludes a long discussion on the way a judge should apply penal categories in considering cases involving murder or injury, being aware that these categories are too broad for a crime which is, strictly speaking, never committed willingly.⁴² What is translated as a 'no-man-land' (*methorion*) is naturally associated with intermediary (*metaxu*). This metaphor is not the least bit accidental: *thumos* appears

³⁹ τὸ μετέχον οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀνδρείας καὶ θυμοῦ, φιλόδικον ὄν, κατώκισαν ἐγγυτέρω τῆς κεφαλῆς μεταξὺ τῶν φρενῶν τε καὶ αὐχένος, ἵνα τοῦ λόγου κατήκοον ὄν κοινῇ μετ' ἐκείνου βία τὸ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν κατέχει γένος, ὅπουτ' ἐκ τῆς ἀκροπόλεως τῷ τ' ἐπιτάγματι καὶ λόγῳ μηδαμῇ πείθεσθαι ἐκὼν ἐθέλοι.

⁴⁰ Taylor (1928) 500, claims that Timaeus is referring to the urbanistic organization of Syracuse.

⁴¹ Ἔστιν δὲ οὐ πάντων, ὡς ἔοικε, τῶν ὄντων ὄρος ὄρω προσμειγνύς, ἀλλ' οἷς ἔστιν μεθόριον, τοῦτο ἐν μέσῳ ὄρων πρότερον ἐκατέρω προσβάλλον γίγνεται ἂν ἀμφοῖν μεταξὺ· καὶ διὰ καὶ τῶν ἀκουσίῳ τε καὶ ἐκουσίῳ τὸ θυμῷ γιγνόμενον ἔφαμεν εἶναι τοιοῦτον.

⁴² On this problem, see Wozzley (1972), esp. 312-313, as well as the reply in Saunders (1973).

to be an undefined ‘zone’ between reason and law on the one hand, and desire and civic disorder on the other; its command or its lack of control in a given individual is the criterion the judges must take into account in deciding whether the criminal should be accepted as a member of the city or not.⁴³

In the *Timaeus* and in the *Laws*, the metaphor aims at shaping a political organized body and soul, continuing the city-soul analogy of the *Republic* in other ways.⁴⁴ The parts of the soul are like the spaces politics invests in, just as it invests in the body. The plasticity of the metaphors allows the legislator some room to educate these souls, to divide them into ‘parts’ or ‘places’, with a view to mirroring the order of his city. This is why, as a potential cause of the psychic diseases discussed at the end of the *Timaeus*, political institutions are mentioned as at least as important as physical causes (87a7-b9).⁴⁵ A soul, then, is always a political soul, insofar as it is tied to a political institution in which the soul acts and suffers.

Conclusion

Political images of the soul can be read as loose uses of analogies and comparisons whose logical links are concealed. But the fact that they are rhetorical devices does not mean that they have no effect, nor that they pursue no philosophical aim. On the contrary, these political images, and especially political metaphors of the soul, which try to substitute the power of law for an inconstant reason, could be read as a starting point for what the city-soul analogy tries to analyze. If the city-soul analogy fails in explaining the valid relations of inclusion between individuals and the city they belong to, then the political metaphors are, indeed, powerful

⁴³ I discuss this passage in Renaut (2014) 318–322.

⁴⁴ Whatever constitution it may have, the city functions as a model for the body, even if the physician claims that the city should be organized on the model of the body, as Desclos (1996) 154 rightly reminds the reader: “La Cité doit être comme un corps, nous disent le *Timée* et le *Critias*, en oubliant de préciser que l’on a d’abord organisé le corps comme une cité, ce que confirme la configuration narrative de nos deux dialogues : le discours de Timée est comme enclavé entre les deux récits de Critias, leur ensemble étant de surcroît explicitement présenté comme la suite de la construction - dans et par la *République* - d’une Cité idéale.”

⁴⁵ This is why the scope of the tripartite soul remains, in the *Timaeus*, moral and political rather than physiological. See Stalley (1996) on the concept of penology as a « moralised medicine », and Macé (2010) on a platonic understanding of social psychology of the psychic diseases.

devices for making the rule of law a reality in the city. Transferring the power of reason to the power of law is a task that political metaphors of the soul seem to fulfill for an audience of citizens that are not philosophers.

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ABSTRACT

Folk psychology has traditionally used political images to represent the soul, whether dealing with actions, motivations, or other events, e.g. deliberation and psychic conflict. But the shift from ordinary language or myth to the true essence of the soul must be made with great precaution, especially when a philosopher like Plato employs these metaphors and images with a precise purpose in mind. This paper examines the use of political images (comparisons, analogies and metaphors) which compare the soul to a city, especially those in the *Republic*. It will be argued that these images aim at representing an ideal ordering of one's soul in a given political society, fulfilling the scope of the city-soul analogy. Political images of the soul are a means for going beyond a mere isomorphism between psychology and politics, and they explain how the two fields interact, so that politics can act upon the soul of the individual. If the city-soul analogy, strictly understood, fails in explaining the valid relations of inclusion between individuals and the city they belong to, the political metaphors are powerful devices for making the rule of law a reality in the city. Transferring the power of reason to the power of law is a task that political metaphors of the soul seem to fulfill for an audience of citizens in the platonic city.

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