

PSYCHIC DISHARMONY: PHILOPONUS AND EPICURUS ON PLATO'S *PHAEDO*

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I

MANY of the Hellenistic philosophers were avid and careful readers of Platonic dialogues. Epicurus was no exception. Despite his generally hostile attitude to other philosophers (and especially to the suggestion that he might have *learnt* anything from them), there is good reason to think that Epicurus read and thought seriously about Platonic works.¹ One might imagine that to any philosopher living and teaching in Athens the Platonic corpus would have been both interesting and available. Further, given the evident interest in Plato's writings shown by his various followers, we should assume that Epicurus himself was similarly aware of them.² More

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¹ On Epicurus on his predecessors and rivals see D. N. Sedley, 'Epicurus and his Professional Rivals' ['Rivals'], in J. Bollack and A. Laks (eds.), *Études sur l'épicurisme antique* (Lille, 1976), 121–59. Cf. J. Warren, *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. 24–8, 186–92. On the question of Epicurus' knowledge of Aristotle see e.g. D. J. Furley, 'Aristotle and the Atomists on Motion in a Void', in P. K. Machamer and R. J. Turnbull (eds.), *Motion and Time, Space and Matter* (Columbus, Oh., 1976), 83–100; O. Gigon, 'Zur Psychologie Epikurs', in H. Flashar and O. Gigon (eds.), *Aspects de la philosophie hellénistique* (Geneva, 1986), 67–98. It is possible that much, if not all, of Epicurus' knowledge of Aristotle came via his knowledge of Theophrastan works. See D. N. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom [Lucretius]* (Cambridge, 1998), 182–5.

² Colotes wrote works *Against the Lysis* and *Against the Euthydemus*. Although they are omitted from the list at D.L. 10. 24, Metrodorus seems to have written works *Against the Euthyphro* and *Against the Gorgias* (see PHerc. 1005. xi). See Philod. *De piet.* 701–8 Obbink and D. Obbink, *Philodemus on Piety*, pt. 1 (Oxford, 1996), 379–89. Polyaeus wrote a work *Against Plato* (D.L. 10. 25); cf. Cic. *ND* 1. 93. See also G. Indelli, 'Platone in Filodemo', *Cronache ercolanesi*, 16 (1986), 109–12, for a survey of references to Plato in Philodemus.

specifically, there are clearly areas of Plato's thought that would have spoken to Epicurus' own interests. There are, of course, the various discussions of the nature of pleasure and pain in such dialogues as *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Philebus*, some of which would have offered thoughts in sharp contrast to Epicurus' own, but others of which may not have been so opposed to his views.³ Further, the elaborate and complex account of a teleologically organized cosmos given in the *Timaeus* clearly did excite Epicurus' interest, if not anger and dismay.⁴ But perhaps above all one might imagine that the *Phaedo*, with its twin related topics of the nature of the soul and the fear of death, would have been high on Epicurus' reading list. There is little evidence that Epicurus did read and think much about the *Phaedo*, but what indications we have are very suggestive. We have preserved in Philoponus' commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* a brief account (followed by Philoponus' own refutation) of Epicurus' argument against one of Socrates' arguments in the *Phaedo* aimed in turn at refuting Simmias' proposed harmony theory of the soul.⁵

This brief report is significant in many ways. It is a reliable indication that Epicurus was interested not only in the sorts of ideas and conclusions which appear in Plato's *Phaedo*, but also in the detail of specific arguments in the dialogue. His engagement with Plato and Platonic texts is therefore much deeper than simple dismissal or polemic.⁶ Rather, he engaged in close examination of the various arguments in the *Phaedo* and, moreover, was interested in examining and criticizing not only the arguments for 'Platonic' conclusions, but also arguments against views he himself did not hold. More specifically, in the particular brief report we shall go on to

³ See J. Warren, 'Epicurus and the Pleasures of the Future', *OSAP* 21 (2001), 135–79; id., *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics [Death]* (Oxford, 2004), 137–42; and T. Reinhardt, 'Readers in the Underworld: Lucretius *De rerum natura* 3. 912–1075' ['Underworld'], *Journal of Roman Studies*, 94 (2004), 27–46.

⁴ Cf. Sedley, 'Rivals', 133–4; id., *Lucretius*, 106–7 and 177–9. In *Epic. Nat.* bk. 14 (PHerc. 1148) there seems to be a detailed criticism of the *Timaeus*' account of the nature of the elements. See G. Leone, 'Epicuro, *Della natura*, libro XIV', *Cronache ercolanesi*, 14 (1984), 17–107.

⁵ H. B. Gottschalk, 'Soul as *Harmonia*' ['*Harmonia*'], *Phronesis*, 16 (1971), 179–98 at 196–8, should be credited with bringing this passage to light as evidence for Epicurus' engagement with the idea of the soul as a harmony.

⁶ Contrast e.g. Diog. Oen. 38. 3–10 Smith: καθ' ἑαυτὴν μὲν γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ οὐτ' εἶναι δύνα[ται] | ποτε, εἰ καὶ πολλὰ περὶ | [τοῦ]του φλυαρεῖ Πα[λάτων] | καὶ οἱ Στωικοί. οὐδ' ἔτε κερ[αί]σθαι, ὥσπερ οὐκ [αἰσ]θάνεται τὸ σῶμα ἀπαλλαγείσης τῆς ψυχῆς]. The polemic continues in fr. 39, abusing Plato for thinking that the soul is indestructible.

consider, Epicurus seems to be arguing against Socrates' dismissal of the harmony theory of the soul, although there is no doubt that the notion of a harmony theory of the soul was not at all something which Epicurus himself found appealing. In fact, Lucretius offers an extended discussion and dismissal of some version of a harmony theory early in book 3 of *De rerum natura*. The Epicureans, therefore, find themselves objecting both to such harmony theories and also to the sort of account of the soul which is eventually preferred by the interlocutors in the *Phaedo*. Their conclusion will be that both the harmony and the Platonic dualist accounts of the soul are mistaken.

II

In his commentary on Aristotle, *De anima* 1. 4, 407^b27 ff., Philoponus includes an extended discussion of the notion that the soul is some sort of harmony. Aristotle, he tells us, had himself offered further discussion of this theory in his *Eudemus* (so sections from this part of Philoponus are given as fragment 7 in Ross's edition of that lost work) but it was Plato who, in the *Phaedo*, first subjected this view to serious criticism. Philoponus then goes on (*In DA* 142. 5 ff. Hayduck) to give his own analysis and discussion of the Platonic arguments from *Phaedo* 92 E 5 ff., distinguishing five separate arguments against the thesis that the soul is a harmony. The third of these arguments is the one which concerns us here. Philoponus begins his discussion at 142. 22, but the most concise summary of the argument is given at 143. 1–2:

The attunement [*ἡ ἁρμονία*] is more and less [*μᾶλλον καὶ ἧττον*] attunement; but the soul [*ἡ ψυχή*] is not more and less soul.

The conclusion, left unstated, must therefore be:

Therefore the soul (i.e. any soul) is not (an) attunement.

Leaving aside for the moment just what the premisses mean, the argument has the form of a second-figure syllogism: All As (attunements) are B ('more and less'); no Cs (souls) are B; so no Cs are A.⁷

If we turn to the *Phaedo* itself for some elucidation of what is

⁷ Philoponus identifies it as such at 143. 7.

going on here, we run immediately into a difficult interpretative controversy. Many modern commentators would resist Philoponus' claim that this constitutes a single, independent argument in the *Phaedo* against the harmony thesis. Rather, it is often thought to be part of a longer stretch of argument running from 93 C 3 to 94 A 11, which forms a *reductio ad absurdum* of the harmony thesis, and concludes that if the harmony thesis were true then it would be impossible for souls to vary morally, for some to be good and others to be bad.⁸ Whatever the plausibility of that particular reading, Philoponus is adamant that 93 D 1–E 3 is a separate argument and may well have been encouraged along this line of thinking by Epicurus.⁹

Even accepting Philoponus' divisions, his version of the argument needs clarification, particularly of the meaning of the phrase 'more and less' on which it crucially depends. It seems tolerably clear that we are to understand the claim about harmonies to be that two objects may both be truly designated as 'harmonies' but that one can be 'more' than another. Alternatively, the claim may be that a single harmony can vary over time, at one time being 'more' and at another 'less'. But 'more' and 'less' what? Philoponus himself offers some attempt at explanation in his first version of the argument:

The attunement admits of [*ἐπιδέχεται*] the more and less. For we say that this lyre is more attuned than that. But the soul does not admit of more and less. For the soul does not become more soul and less soul than itself, nor than any other [soul]. So the soul is not [an] attunement. (142. 22–6)

Consideration of this explanation will serve to highlight important difficulties which most commentators have found with the original Platonic argument. Note first that the argument of *Phaedo* 93 D

⁸ D. Gallop, *Plato: Phaedo [Phaedo]* (Oxford, 1975), ad loc., and C. C. W. Taylor, 'The Arguments in the *Phaedo* concerning the Thesis that the Soul is a *Harmonia* [*'Harmonia'*]', in J. P. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. ii (Albany, NY, 1983), 217–31 (esp. 223 ff.), agree that Socrates offers two arguments against the harmony thesis. The section which Philoponus here distinguishes as a separate argument is, according to them, part of a longer argument (argument B, 93 A 11–94 B 3) sandwiched by another (argument A, 92 E 5–93 A 10 and 94 B 4–E 6).

⁹ A similar reading, distinguishing this as a separate argument, can be found in Nemes. *Nat. hom.* 23. 10–17 Morani, and cf. Meletius, *Nat. hom., De anima (Anecdota Graeca Oxon., iii. 145. 3–11 Cramer)* = Dicaearchus §22 Mirhady. Damascius' commentary on the *Phaedo* (I §405) makes it clear that this was the standard interpretation of the passage before Proclus. Damascius himself prefers to see this as part of a more extended argument, as do many modern commentators. See the note ad I §§361–70 in L. G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, iii. *Damascius* (Amsterdam, 1977).

1 ff. is rather different in form from the simplified version given by Philoponus. Rather than asserting the first premiss of Philoponus' version—that attunements admit of degrees—at *Phaedo* 93 D 1 ff. Socrates instead infers from his opponents' views that (i) the soul is an attunement and (ii) no soul is more or less a soul than any other. Socrates shows that to retain both (i) and (ii), these objectors ought also to think that (iii) no attunement is any more or less an attunement than any other. And it is this concession extorted from the harmony theorists which is then used to generate the absurd conclusions which condemn their theory. In any case, whichever method is used to generate this argument (asserting a starting premiss about attunements which is to be taken as true as Philoponus does, or generating a conclusion about attunements which is shown to have disastrous consequences, as Socrates does), the overall structure of the objection is clear.

Clear though the structure of the objection may be, it is hard to be convinced by either Socrates' or Philoponus' version. For his part, Socrates already at *Phaedo* 93 A 14–B 4 has secured Simmias' agreement that the more an attunement is attuned, the more an attunement it is and that the less an attunement is attuned, the less an attunement it is. This is surely the most puzzling claim in the whole argument, and commentators differ not only in their interpretation of what it might mean, but also in whether they think Socrates himself is asserting this claim or merely leaving the question open.¹⁰ Philoponus and—apparently—Epicurus believe that Socrates himself is asserting that the more an attunement is attuned, the more of an attunement it is. But it is easy to see why one might be reticent to attribute such a claim to Socrates. We can object that although one lyre may be more or better attuned than another, that hardly shows that the attunements themselves are 'more or less' attunements: one is just a better, more precise, or more melodious attunement than another. It is perhaps no accident that Philoponus himself slips into talking about the differing degrees of attunement of different lyres at 142. 22–6, rather than sticking to the original Socratic claim. No one, I imagine, would want to claim that of two lyres, one might be more a lyre than another simply

¹⁰ See Gallop, *Phaedo*, ad loc. for a careful discussion. Gallop marks this as his premiss B1 and disagrees with Philoponus' interpretation by denying that Socrates here *asserts* that the greater the degree of attunement, the more an attunement is an attunement. For Gallop, Socrates simply leaves the matter open, neither affirming nor denying that an attunement can be more or less attuned.

by being more ‘attuned’. Rather, both are lyres, but one is more attuned than another.¹¹ Similarly, it is true that no soul is ‘more or less’ a soul than any other, but that does not rule out their differing in degrees in many other ways. On the harmony thesis, just as two lyres may be attuned to different degrees, so too two souls might be ‘attuned’ in different ways—perhaps making one more virtuous than another. For present purposes, we do not need to offer a full account of the Platonic source argument. Our interest is focused instead on the discussion between Philoponus and Epicurus, so what matters is how they understood this source argument. In fact, it will turn out that Philoponus’ discussion of the *Phaedo* argument will conspicuously leave open just that possibility, noting that just as a lyre is not to be identified with its attunement, but lyres may vary in attunement, so too souls are not to be identified with some attunement, but nevertheless may vary in attunement of some kind.

Epicurus attacks this construal of the Platonic argument by offering what he takes to be an exactly similar but palpably absurd application of just the same sort of reasoning. As Philoponus notes at 143. 10 and 143. 31, Epicurus is employing a *parabolē*, or ‘parallel’ argument: a dialectical manœuvre which objects to an argument by offering another, with isomorphic premisses and an absurd conclusion.¹² Most of the surviving examples of such arguments are aimed at Zeno of Citium’s syllogisms, but here we have a striking example of an Epicurean version. It is also presumably a pleasing irony that Simmias’ original expression of the harmony argument in the *Phaedo* is itself a *parabolē*; perhaps that is what prompted Epicurus to offer a further such argument in Simmias’ defence.¹³

Philoponus records the Epicurean argument as follows:

‘The sweet’ [τὸ γλυκὺ] admits of (ἐπιδέχεται) more and less. But honey does

¹¹ It might be acceptable to think that something with such a small degree of attunement that it cannot be used to play any melody whatsoever might not count as a lyre at all, but nevertheless we would wish to allow that a number of instruments might all be lyres, although tuned to different degrees, without agreeing that of these some are more lyres than others.

¹² Cf. 143. 4, where Philoponus characterizes the Epicurean argument as being διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων.

¹³ See *Phaedo* 85 E 3–86 A 3. For *parabolai* aimed at the Stoics see S.E. *M.* 96–7, 109, 134, and see M. Schofield, ‘The Syllogisms of Zeno of Citium’, *Phronesis*, 28 (1983), 31–58. For an Epicurean account of *parabolai* see Philod. *Rhet.* 1 (PHerc. 1427), II. 17–30 Longo (F. Longo Auricchio, edition of Philodemus *On Rhetoric* bks. 1 and 2, in F. Sbordone (ed.) *Ricerche sui papiri ercolanesi*, vol. iii (Naples, 1977)).

not admit of more and less for it is a substance [οὐσία]. Then honey is not sweet—which is absurd. (143. 4–6)

There are a number of important things to note before we turn to Philoponus' riposte. The argument uses an expression missing from the source text of the *Phaedo* but prominent in Philoponus' first summary of that argument, namely this talk of 'admitting of' more and less. The phrase seems to be a slogan lifted from Aristotle's *Categories* (e.g. 3^b33 ff.) and therefore not, in all likelihood, part of an original Epicurean version. Philoponus, well versed as he is in such Aristotelian works, or perhaps some intermediate Peripatetic source, has recast the argument in the Peripatetics' own terms. (And we shall also see Aristotelian terminology prominent in his diagnosis of Epicurus' error.) However, one likely relic of Epicurus' own argument is the phrase used here for 'the sweet', τὸ γλυκύ, since Philoponus later objects to Epicurus and claims that rather than use this word he should instead have spoken of 'sweetness', γλυκύτης. Had Epicurus been more scrupulous, says Philoponus, he would not have been misled into thinking that his proposed counter-argument was valid.

The combination of these observations might even suggest the ultimate source of Philoponus' report. There is little sign that Philoponus himself had direct knowledge of Epicurus' writings, so he must have discovered Epicurus' argument in some other source, and one candidate seems more likely than any other as the ultimate source of this report, namely Strato.¹⁴ Although Philoponus never mentions Strato by name, the circumstantial evidence is certainly intriguing. Both Strato and Epicurus may have been in Lampsacus at the time Epicurus was writing the section of *On Nature* which probably included the relevant discussion of the nature of the soul.¹⁵ Further, Strato himself compiled a number of objections to Plato's *Phaedo* and would no doubt have been interested in this objec-

¹⁴ Philoponus notes that he is reliant on intermediate sources for his information on Epicurus at *In An. Post.* 330. 19 Wallies and *In GC* 12. 6 Vitelli (where his source is Alexander). His other references to Epicurus or Epicureans are very general, noting only that they were atomists (*In DA* 114. 35) or hedonists (*In Cat.* 2. 6 Busse).

¹⁵ Sedley, *Lucretius*, 129–32, dates the composition of *Nat.* 1–13, including bks. 6–9, which, he argues at 116–19, would have contained the discussion of the nature and mortality of the soul, to the years 311/10–307/306 BC. It is not clear where the discussion of the harmony theory would fall within these books but perhaps, like Lucretius, Epicurus would have tackled it early on, before pressing on to give his own account of the nature of the soul, its mortality and corporeality.

tion too.¹⁶ In addition, one of Strato's works listed by Diogenes Laërtius is a book 'On the more and less' (*περὶ τοῦ μᾶλλον καὶ ἧττον*, D.L. 5. 60), precisely the crucial notion at stake in Epicurus' argument.¹⁷ If this suggestion is plausible, then we have a further layer in the complex history of the discussion of the harmony theory of the soul—a theory which seems to have preoccupied a number of Hellenistic thinkers.

The particular choice of counter-example in Epicurus' *parabolē*, namely the sweetness of honey, is also significant. The sweetness of honey, like the heat of fire, is often used as an example of an essential property, and was probably used by the Epicureans to illustrate this very point. For example, Torquatus at Cic. *Fin.* 1. 30 argues that to deny that pleasure is to be pursued is as absurd as denying that honey is sweet or that fire is hot.¹⁸

¹⁶ See D. N. Sedley, 'Plato's *Phaedo* in the Third Century B.C.', in M. Serena Funghi (ed.), *'Οδοὶ διζήσιος: le vie della ricerca. Studi in onore di Francesco Adorno* (Florence, 1996), 447–55, for a discussion of PHeid. G inv. 28 and PGraecMon 21 (edited as parts of one work by A. Carlini, 'Commentarium in Platonis *Phaedonem* (?) PHeid G inv. 28+PGraecMon 21', in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini*, iii. *Commentari* (Florence, 1995), 203–20), which contain fragments of a work of the 3rd cent. BC. Col. II includes a concise and semi-formalized summary of Socrates' arguments against the harmony theory. Sedley conjectures that it might be a copy of Strato's work criticizing Plato's *Phaedo*. Cf. Strato fr. 118, 122–7 Wehrli and H. B. Gottschalk, 'Strato of Lampsacus: Some Texts', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section*, 11.4 (1965), 95–182 at 164–7. Strato was also, it seems, interested in Socrates' discussion of the harmony theory and this argument in particular: fr. 118 Wehrli (= Olymp. *In Phaed.* 2. 134, p. 174 Norvin): *ὡς ἁρμονία ἁρμονίας δξυτέρα καὶ βαρυτέρα, οὕτω καὶ ψυχὴ ψυχῆς, φησὶν ὁ Στράτων, δξυτέρα καὶ νοθεστέρα.*

¹⁷ Based on an analysis of Strato's notion of the void, D. J. Furley, 'Strato's Theory of the Void', in id., *Cosmic Problems* (Cambridge, 1989), 149–60 [first published in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung*, 1. *Aristoteles und seine Schule* (Berlin, 1985), 594–609] at 159, comments, however: 'We shall never know whether Strato read Democritus or Epicurus. My own view is that there is nothing in the surviving reports of his opinions and arguments that requires us to think that he did.'

¹⁸ Polyrat. *De irrat. cont.* xxvi–xxvii Indelli appears to class 'sweetness' as a relative property. Various more sceptically minded authors also use the example of honey for their own ends. Timon of Phlius ap. D.L. 9. 105 declares that although honey appears sweet he does not assert that it is so. Cf. S.E. *PH* 1. 20 and, contrasting Pyrrhonism with Democritus, 1. 213. See also Xenophanes 21 B 38 DK. Philoponus himself, in other works, also uses the sweetness and colour of honey as an example of the relation of supervenience which, he argues, holds between a substance's properties and its ingredients. See his *In GC* 169. 32–170. 5 Vitelli and cf. S. Berryman, 'The Sweetness of Honey: Philoponus against the Doctors on Supervening Qualities', in C. Leijenhorst, C. Lüthy, and J. M. M. H. Thijssen (eds.), *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 2002), 65–79, who argues (76) that the terms of this debate on the metaphysics of mixture are borrowed from discussions in the philosophy of mind. See also S.

Having given the Epicurean counter-argument, Philoponus proceeds to refute it:¹⁹

'The sweet' [τὸ γλυκύ] does not admit of more and less as such [ἀπλῶς], but does so *qua* sweet [καθὸ γλυκύ], not *qua* body [καθὸ σῶμα]. Similarly, honey does not as such not admit of more and less; it does not do so *qua* honey [καθὸ μέλι] but does do so *qua* sweet [καθὸ μέντοι γλυκύ]. In a similar way the soul *qua* soul does not admit of more and less, but does do so in respect of its affections [κατὰ γὰρ τὰ πάθη]. So we ought in these premisses to grasp in advance the respect in which each of these things admits of more and less and the respect in which it does not. When this is set down in advance, the middle term turns out to be different. And if the middle term is different, the inference is invalid. (143. 23–31)

We can agree, says Philoponus, that the property of sweetness varies by degrees (one thing can be sweeter than another), but if by 'the sweet' (τὸ γλυκύ) Epicurus means to refer to some body, some material stuff, then this does not vary *qua* that stuff by degrees. Honey, therefore, does not vary *qua* honey but can vary in sweetness. (We can imagine two pots, each containing a sticky substance. The substance in pot A may be sweeter than that in pot B, but it is not 'more' honey than that in pot B; both are perfectly good pots of honey.) By specifying for each premiss in what way sweetness does and honey does not admit of more and less, Philoponus thinks we will see clearly that the 'more and less' in question is not the same in both premisses.

This objection alone will not suffice. After all, Epicurus did not advance this argument because he thought the conclusion was true, but rather because he took it to be a patently invalid argument identical in form to the Platonic version. Philoponus therefore needs to show not only that the Epicurean argument is mistaken in some way—since that was its intention all along—but also that there is some relevant distinction between it and its Platonic counterpart. The Platonic argument is sound and the Epicurean argument is not (143. 31–2). And this is what he attempts to demonstrate next.

First he offers to exchange the first premiss of Plato's version

Berryman, 'Necessitation and Explanation in Philoponus' Aristotelian Physics', in R Salles (ed.), *Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji* (Oxford, 2005), 65–79.

¹⁹ See Gottshalk 'Harmonia', 197 n. 60, for an anonymous writer's more succinct explanation of the fault in Epicurus' reasoning.

for his own rewording, in order to make the argument clearer (σαφέστερος, 143. 44). So rather than:

ἡ ἄρμονία μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον ἐστὶν ἄρμονία

The attunement is more and less (an) attunement

we ought to give:

πᾶσα ἄρμονία τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον ἐπιδέχεται.

Every attunement admits of more and less.

The first version does not appear in our text of Plato's *Phaedo*. The closest we have is the agreement to the question posed at 93 A 14–B 2, which asks whether, if the degree of attunement were to increase, we would be left with more of an attunement. Perhaps this is evidence that Philoponus is not working directly with Plato's text or, at least, is not concerned with direct exposition of that text. Perhaps he is working with a version of the argument given by Aristotle in his *Eudemus*.²⁰ In any case, the second, revised and clearer, version of the premiss, Philoponus assures us, is to be preferred since it does not require any qualification. We need not specify that the attunement *qua* attunement admits of more and less. Why not?

For the attunement [ἡ ἄρμονία] is not some sum composed together with a substrate [μεθ' ὑποκειμένου] like 'the sweet' [τὸ γλυκύ], for this latter means 'the sweetened body' [τὸ ἐγλυκασμένον σῶμα] like 'what has been attuned' [τὸ ἡρμωσμένον], but attunement is something simple [ἀπλοῦν] just like 'sweetness' [γλυκύτης]. (144. 1–3)

Philoponus insists on a crucial distinction between, on the one hand, 'the sweet' (τὸ γλυκύ), a noun formed by adding an article to the neuter adjective and, on the other, the abstract noun, which I have rendered here as 'sweetness' (γλυκύτης). This distinction, which Philoponus explains in terms familiar from Aristotelian ontology, is meant to parallel that between something which is attuned (e.g. a lyre) and an attunement: 'sweetness' (γλυκύτης) is a quality (ποιότης) and therefore the analogue of an attunement, whereas 'the sweet' (τὸ γλυκύ), is a body arranged in a particular way and therefore the analogue of the lyre. Now, it seems, the Epicurean argument

²⁰ The latter alternative is less likely. 144. 22 ff. marks the move from the discussion of Plato's arguments to the two arguments against the harmony thesis Philoponus finds in Aristotle's *Eudemus*. 142. 4 ff. therefore is most likely to be an excursus, describing the earlier Platonic arguments against the harmony thesis found in the *Phaedo*.

fails to stand as a precise analogue of the Platonic original. Epicurus ought to have given as his opening premiss not 'The sweet [τὸ γλυκύ] admits of [ἐπιδέχεται] more and less', but rather 'Sweetness [γλυκύτης] admits of more and less'. But put like this, Philoponus argues, no absurdity results. It merely turns out that honey is not identical with the quality of sweetness (γλυκύτης), and we do not have to admit the absurd conclusion that honey is not sweet.

Whether the Epicureans could have accepted this particular Aristotelian distinction between the quality of sweetness and the body which possess this quality (even a body such as honey which, we might stipulate, essentially possesses this particular quality) is not crucial. They know that there is something wrong with their *parabolē* argument, however that error is diagnosed. It still remains for Philoponus to show that the Platonic argument is not susceptible to the same problems. The Epicureans' mistake, on Philoponus' account, is their failure to make clear what is meant by 'the sweet' in their first premiss. If Epicurus means 'the sweetened body', something composed with a substrate, then it is true that it admits of more and less only *qua* sweet. And this is true only because sweet flavour, the quality of being sweet, admits of more and less. But the Platonic argument is not similarly flawed. Socrates wants to say that an attunement, here being the analogue of the property 'sweetness' in the corrected Epicurean version, admits of more and less although souls do not. So he is correct to conclude that souls are not attunements, just as the corrected Epicurean argument would be correct to conclude that honey is not 'sweetness'.

Now we can return to the explanation offered at 143. 23–31. Philoponus' central contention, however, is clear: terms like 'sweetness' or 'attunement' are potentially ambiguous between something simple, a property, and something composite, a body arranged in a particular way. This gives him two contrasting pairs of items:

- (1a) γλυκύτης—simple, admits of more and less.
- (1b) τὸ γλυκύ—composite, 'a sweetened body', admits of more and less only *qua* γλυκύ.
- (2a) ἁρμονία—simple, admits of more and less.
- (2b) τὸ ἡρμωσμένον—composite, admits of more and less only *qua* ἡρμωσμένον.

Honey, since it does not admit of more and less, cannot be identical

with (1a) but could be identical with (1b) once this is understood correctly. As Philoponus himself puts it, honey admits of more and less *qua* sweet but does not do so *qua* honey (144. 18–21). More interesting, however, is the question of where this leaves our conception of the soul. A soul, since it cannot admit of more and less, cannot therefore be identical with (2a). But now it seems that it could be identical with (2b), provided this too is understood in a particular way. This might be surprising, since it seems to allow that there is a sense in which a soul is ‘something attuned’ as there is a sense in which honey is ‘something sweet’. Indeed, Philoponus has already agreed that there is a sense in which a soul does admit of more and less, namely ‘in accordance with its affections’ (*κατὰ τὰ πάθη*, 143. 27), presumably meaning that a soul may, for example, be more or less angry at different times or that one soul may, for example, be more irascible than another.

The validity of Socrates’ argument in the *Phaedo* has been salvaged at the price of specifying that it shows only that souls are not attunements in one particular sense of attunement: a soul is not an attunement in the same sense as that in which honey is not ‘sweetness’. The possibility remains that souls are attunements in a different sense, just as it must be left possible for honey to be sweet. This remaining possibility allows that souls are not to be identified with some kind of attunement just as honey is not to be identified with sweetness, but that just as honey is nevertheless admitted to be susceptible to variety *qua* sweet so too souls can be allowed to vary in accordance with their affections. Now, the fact that both attunements in some sense and souls in some sense admit of ‘more and less’ does not itself, of course, lend the harmony thesis any independent support. Moreover, that souls can vary and, in some sense, admit of ‘more and less’ is presumably a conclusion congenial to Socrates in the *Phaedo*, to Aristotle, and to Philoponus himself. They all want to be able to say that souls may differ from one another morally, but that they are all essentially the same. Identifying souls with attunements, they all want to say, prevents this.²¹

²¹ For Philoponus’ own position on the relationship of the soul to bodily states see the sources collected in R. R. K. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 A.D.: A Sourcebook*, i. *Psychology* (London, 2004), 199–203 (§6(a) 49–55).

III

At this point we can step back and take stock. Why is Epicurus offering an argument against an argument against a psychological theory he does not accept? Epicurus' purpose here is clearly dialectical since we know that he is no friend of the harmony theory himself.²² But that observation alone will not explain what Epicurus sought to gain from this kind of dialectical argumentation. The best explanation of Epicurus' practice here is that he is concerned more generally to show not only that the harmony theory of the soul is misguided—which is why he produced a number of other direct refutations of that view which in all likelihood form the basis for Lucretius' dismissal of the theory at 3. 98–135—but also that the Platonic alternative is equally misguided. Indeed, of the two rivals to Epicurus' own materialist theory, at least the harmony theory of the soul would allow one to maintain the important belief that the soul is mortal and does not survive the decomposition of the body.²³ The psychological theory eventually proposed in the *Phaedo*, on the other hand, not only mistakes the nature of the soul but also, and disastrously in Epicurus' eyes, requires one to believe that the soul is immortal and therefore sets obstacles in the way of anyone attaining the correct belief that 'death is nothing to us'.²⁴ To an Epicurean, this section of the *Phaedo* must have seemed absurd: neither the harmony theorist nor Socrates has any grasp on the true nature of the soul. In that case, it is perhaps not surprising that Epicurus has offered such a ridiculous counterpart to Socrates' argument. To him, the entire discussion is ridiculous.

There is, however, a more positive and important point made by Epicurus' criticism of Socrates' practice. Leaving aside the fact that

²² Cf. Gottschalk, 'Harmonia', 197.

²³ Cic. *Tusc.* 1. 77 offers the Epicurean view as an ally of Dicaearchus' and Aristoxenus' harmony theories in claiming that the soul is mortal. Philolaus seems to have held both that the soul is an attunement and that it is immortal. See C. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton, Pythagorean and Presocratic* [*Philolaus*] (Cambridge, 1993), 330–2, and J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, rev. edn. (London, 1982), 488–92.

²⁴ It is of course true that one of Socrates' intentions in the *Phaedo* is to persuade us not to fear death precisely because the soul *is* immortal (provided we live good lives, that is). The radical disagreement between Platonists and Epicureans on the correct way to combat the fear of death is well exemplified in the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*. See Warren, *Death*, 213–15.

Socrates himself has no adequate grasp on the true nature of the soul, a more local problem—again, in Epicurus’ eyes—is that he is not tackling the harmony theory in the right way. We can imagine that Epicurus might well have approved of at least one of Socrates’ arguments, however, namely the claim that the harmony theorist can make no sense of the soul and body coming into any sort of conflict. At *Phaedo* 94 B–E Socrates makes the sensible point that on the harmony theory it is hard to see how the soul can take its rightful place as the body’s ruler. Rather, it seems that the soul will be altered and affected as the body is altered and affected. Second, the harmony theorist will have trouble accounting for cases in which psychic and bodily desires conflict—for example, when the body is thirsty and desires a drink but the soul opposes this (94 B–C).²⁵ All of these objections would find some favour with Epicurus. But Socrates’ own preferred model for accounting for these phenomena certainly would not. Indeed, as Lucretius’ refutation of the harmony theory shows, a proper account of why the harmony theory is false will show also that Socrates’ brand of dualism cannot be accepted either.

IV

The two principal topics of the third book of Lucretius’ great Epicurean poem are (i) the nature of the soul and (ii) the fact that death should not be feared. It is therefore hard to imagine that Plato’s *Phaedo* would not be in the background of Lucretius’ work, since those are the very same topics which Socrates pursues in that dialogue. Yet Lucretius makes no explicit reference to the *Phaedo* here, nor does he refer to Plato anywhere in his poem.

This does not rule out an awareness of or even engagement with Plato’s work, and there are signs that Lucretius is prepared to use motifs from other Platonic dialogues—the *Gorgias* in particular—in book 3.²⁶ In part, the difference of approach between Lucretius

²⁵ In the *Republic* Socrates will analyse this as a conflict between parts of the soul rather than between the soul and the body. The harmony theorist would likewise be entitled to describe thirst, for example, as a desire of the soul, not the body, and might also be entitled to make psychic conflict compatible with his harmony theory by positing more than one soul harmony in an individual, or even the possibility of internal discord within a single harmony. Cf. Taylor, ‘*Harmonia*’, 229.

²⁶ See W. Görler, ‘Storing up Past Pleasures: The Soul-Vessel-Metaphor in Lu-

and Epicurus is explained by the nature of their respective projects. In *On Nature* Epicurus offers a lengthy and detailed account of his philosophical system which involves the discussion and rejection or modification of various alternative philosophical views. He is writing a work for committed Epicureans and for those already interested in the finer points of philosophical detail. Lucretius, on the other hand, is writing a therapeutic work aimed at those who have not yet declared an allegiance to Epicureanism and, quite possibly, are not well acquainted with philosophy of any sort. This seems to be the pose he adopts by using the internal addressee, Memmius, and the reader is expected to fill a similar role. So, unlike Epicurus, Lucretius is not particularly concerned with the elaboration and refutation of rival theories unless he believes that they are potentially attractive to his imagined audience either because they are commonly held but misguided beliefs, such as the belief that the gods will punish those they dislike and benefit those they favour, or else because they are beliefs which might be mistakenly adopted due to a slight misunderstanding of the correct, Epicurean opinion.²⁷

The harmony theory of the soul, which Lucretius discusses early in the third book (3. 98–135), falls neatly into this second category. It is important for Lucretius to inoculate Memmius and us against this view since it is in important ways like the correct Epicurean view while also failing to capture the truth.²⁸ Lucretius has just as-

cretius and in his Greek Models', in K. A. Algra, M. H. Koenen, and P. H. Schrijvers (eds.), *Lucretius and his Intellectual Background* (Amsterdam, 1997), 193–207; Reinhardt, 'Underworld'.

²⁷ An interesting possible exception to this general view is Lucretius' polemic against various theories of *primordia* at 1. 635–920. Here various philosophers are named as standard-bearers of different, but equally mistaken, ontological views. Heraclitus is named as an exemplar of a monistic theory, Empedocles of a pluralist theory, and Anaxagoras of a profligate theory which makes all 'homoioimerous' substances fundamental. Lucretius' primary concern is to make clear the comparative virtues of Epicurean ontology, rather than to argue against Heraclitus *per se* or any possible followers of these Presocratics. (Cf. K. Kleve, 'The Philosophical Polemics in Lucretius: A Study in the History of Epicurean Criticism', in O. Gigon (ed.), *Lucrece* (Entretiens Hardt, 24; Geneva, 1978), 39–75 at 65, who claims that these philosophers are chosen as proxies for Stoic physical theories. This seems unlikely. Lucretius' material even here depends on Epicurus, principally *Nat.* bks. 14 and 15. See Sedley *Lucretius*, 123–6.)

²⁸ Sedley *Lucretius*, 49, comments that Lucretius' decision to offer the simple transliteration *harmonia* is part of his attempt to dissuade us from the theory: 'An alien concept deserves an alien name.'

suggested his first significant claim about the nature of the soul, that no less than hands and feet it is ‘part of a person’ (‘esse hominis partem [dico]’, 3. 96) which will already rule out various competing views of the soul, including Platonic notions of the soul as a separable incorporeal thing. But immediately,²⁹ Lucretius warns us against a related view, the ‘harmony theory’, which, he tells us, holds that the soul is not located in any *particular* part of the body but is a kind of living condition of the body as a whole (98–9). Before we look at the reasons he offers for rejecting this view, we should pause to wonder why Lucretius should interrupt his exposition so abruptly. We have hardly begun to discover the true nature of the soul and already are being warned away from alternatives.

The harmony theory of the soul is not described in detail by Lucretius, but it does seem to share some important traits with the Epicureans’ own view. First, it would follow from this view that the soul is mortal since, it appears, the soul somehow is to be analysed as a particular arrangement or condition of bodily elements and therefore, once that particular arrangement is disrupted, the soul too would cease to be. This is why the theory has to be countered by Socrates in the *Phaedo*, precisely because it would seem to make the soul mortal and then raise fears about death. For the Epicureans, however, this view of the soul manages to produce the correct account of death, namely that it is the destruction of the body and the soul. Their objection to it must lie elsewhere.

Second, it might be thought that the harmony theory of the soul is, like the Epicureans’ own account, a materialist theory. This is not so clear. It certainly is like the Epicurean view in that it denies that souls can exist independently of certain material circumstances. However, it is open to a harmony theorist to take a number of routes. It is possible for him either to identify the soul-harmony with the particular material components arranged in some way or, alternatively, to deny such an identification. Both accounts appear in the *Phaedo*. Simmias first specifies that the theory he has in mind rejects the identification of the harmony with its material components. The attunement of a lyre, he says, is invisible, incorporeal, beautiful and divine whereas the physical components of a lyre are not. Still, when the frame or strings break, the attunement

²⁹ It is clear that a line has been lost between 3. 97 and 3. 98 but it is likely simply to have introduced the topic of the harmony theory by offering some subject to govern the reported account in 3. 98 ff.

is destroyed (85 E 4–86 B 3). This appears to offer what we might call a non-reductionist account of the attunement. The attunement depends on the physical constituents arranged in a particular way but is not identical to them. Nevertheless, it is also possible for the harmony theorist to agree with a close identification of the soul and the physical constituents. Indeed, Simmias himself also seems to come close to just this claim when, later in the same passage, he draws an analogy between the physical components of a lyre and the elemental components (the hot, cold, dry, and wet) of organic bodies. He ends his account by asking Socrates to consider how he would answer someone who ‘thinks it correct that the soul is a mixture [κρᾶσις] of bodily elements and the first to perish in what we call death’ (86 D 2–3, cf. B 7–C 3), apparently identifying the soul and the elements thus arranged.³⁰ Any serious harmony theorist would no doubt wish to clarify the precise relationship between the soul and the bodily elements. Lucretius’ account of the theory (3. 99: ‘habitum quendam vitalem corporis esse’) seems to reject the strong identification of soul with bodily elements and is therefore more like Simmias’ first account.³¹

Lucretius therefore has to deal with a theory which is a serious competitor for the Epicurean view since it shares its two major claims: the soul is mortal and corporeal or, if not corporeal itself, then a particular arrangement of corporeal elements. It is more than likely that this proximity of the Epicurean and harmony theories is what provokes not only the prominent rejection of the theory early in Lucretius’ third book but also Epicurus’ own evident interest in the theory and, more importantly, his interest in pointing out the failings in Plato’s own attempts to refute it. He was concerned, for his own purposes, to find the correct method for rejecting this dangerous alternative psychology.

As we saw, Philoponus does not record what arguments Epicurus himself offered as more effective means of countering the harmony theory. But it is not implausible that whatever they were, they might find an echo in Lucretius’ account. There, we find three major counter-arguments:³²

³⁰ For discussion of this lack of clarity see Gallop, *Phaedo*, ad loc., and Taylor, ‘*Harmonia*’, 217–22.

³¹ *Habitus* occurs only here in *De rerum natura*. It is probably intended to render the Greek ζῆξις.

³² Cf. P.-F. Moreau, *Lucretius: l’âme* (Paris, 2002), 20–4.

- (1) The soul is not an arrangement of the elements of the body since it is possible for the soul to be healthy and well and the body not, or vice versa (3. 100–11).
- (2) The soul can be active when the body is motionless, as in sleep (3. 112–16).
- (3) The soul can function even in the case of extreme damage to the body. Also, sometimes a minor physical injury can cause major psychic malfunction (3. 117–29).

These claims seek to outline ways in which the soul and body interact which are incompatible with the harmony theory and, in particular, are incompatible with its assertion that the soul is not located in any specific part of the body (3. 101). This last point is puzzling, since there is no reason why a sophisticated harmony theorist could not specify that only some parts of the body need to be arranged in a particular manner for the soul to exist, just as we can imagine a lyre with physical parts some of which are not themselves essential for the production of an attunement.³³

Indeed, these three claims are not themselves necessarily fatal to a harmony theory.³⁴ Lucretius persists in the unnecessarily extreme view that in the harmony thesis all constituents of the body must be perfectly arranged for the soul to function. Further, in his presentation, Lucretius already helps himself to the idea that the soul is composed of atoms of particular sorts, notably atoms of heat and wind (3. 120: ‘*corpora pauca caloris*’; 124–5: ‘*calidi vaporis semina*’; cf. 3. 231–6). We might also note that an imagined ‘sophisticated’ harmony view, which holds that the soul is an arrangement of certain bodily elements positioned in a particular part of the body, is again very reminiscent of the Epicureans’ own theory, which Lucretius outlines later (3. 231–87). Once again, the rival’s proximity to the preferred account must have sparked both the Epicureans’ interest and their intense desire to put clear water between them-

³³ Huffman *Philolaus*, 328–9, argues that Philolaus 32 B 13 DK shows that he took the soul to be located in the heart and therefore presumably dependent only on the attunement of certain parts of the whole body. D. N. Sedley, ‘The *dramatis personae* of Plato’s *Phaedo*’, in T. J. Smiley (ed.), *Philosophical Dialogues* (Oxford, 1995), 3–26 at 22–6, disagrees, arguing that Philolaus imagines the soul to be the attunement of the whole body, much as outlined in Simmias’ theory in the *Phaedo*.

³⁴ Against (3), for example, the reply might be that the soul may function in the case of extreme damage just as a lyre may be damaged but still play. Similarly, against (1) and (2), provided the necessary physical constituents are appropriately arranged the soul might still be present and healthy.

selves and harmony theorists. Nevertheless, Lucretius' objections do introduce the general method which he employs throughout his presentation of the nature of the soul, namely the deployment of examples of the ways in which we can agree that the body and soul not only interact but also act independently of one another. His central concern with the harmony thesis is that, by identifying too strongly the soul and the arrangement of bodily constituents, it makes it impossible for the body and soul to act independently. Some distinction must be made between body and soul for these phenomena to be explicable and so, in accordance with general Epicurean scientific methodology, any theory which fails to accommodate these phenomena must be rejected.

Crucially, however, Lucretius will also argue that the distinction between body and soul must not be drawn too radically since this will make it impossible to explain the various cases in which the body and soul do interact, the body affecting the soul and vice versa. In short, although we should distinguish between body and soul, these two should not be thought to be metaphysically different kinds of things. A large portion of this part of book 3 is therefore devoted to various arguments demonstrating that the soul and body must both be corporeal. Again, it is profitable to set these arguments in a dialectical context which includes the *Phaedo*, since there too Socrates agrees that any adequate account of the soul must give a reasonable explanation of the interaction between soul and body. One of his complaints against the harmony theory is that it fails to allow the soul to control or oppose the body. Rather, its consequence must be that the soul and its affections are always directed by changes in the composition of the body (92 E 5–93 A 13, 94 B 4–95 A 3).³⁵ The Epicureans are sure that the body can sometimes, but not always, affect the soul, so they could, had they wished, have borrowed Socrates' argument. But Lucretius does not. Instead, he uses considerations about the soul's ability to be affected by bodily changes to prove something decidedly uncongenial to Socrates, namely the view that the soul must be corporeal.

We can imagine the puzzlement an Epicurean reader would have experienced in encountering this section of the *Phaedo*. Sometimes, such as in the argument about harmonies admitting 'more and less',

³⁵ See n. 8 above. For discussion see V. Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms, Ancient and Modern' ['Epiphenomenalisms'], *Philosophical Review*, 106 (1997), 309–63 at 322–5.

Socrates seems to be arguing poorly. At other times, such as in the argument concerning the causal power of the soul, Socrates seems to be doing rather well. But on the other hand, to Epicurean eyes Socrates undermines whatever good work he has done by opting for the strange view that the soul is incorporeal and that it survives a person's death. The Epicureans will embrace one of Socrates' arguments against the harmony theory—namely that it does not allow the soul to act upon or oppose the body—but will use this not primarily as an argument against the harmony theory but as an argument against Socrates' preferred view of the soul as well. In their view, the evident ability of the soul to act upon or oppose the body can be explained only by making soul and body metaphysically similar, i.e. by making them both corporeal. Epicurus himself deals with this point rather curtly. Noting that the only *per se* incorporeal existent is the void and that the void can neither act nor be acted upon except by allowing bodies to move through itself, he concludes that the idea that the soul is incorporeal is wildly mistaken:

ὥστε οἱ λέγοντες ἀσώματον εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν ματαίζουσιν. οὐθὲν γὰρ ἂν ἐδύνατο ποιεῖν οὔτε πάσχειν, εἰ ἦν τοιαύτη. (Ep. Hdt. 67)

So those who say that the soul is incorporeal are foolish. For were it like that it would not be able to act or be acted upon in any way.

Curiously, therefore, Plato has managed to grasp only half of this principle, sufficient for him to cast doubts on the harmony theory. But he has failed to see that it is important to be able to explain both the soul's acting and being acted upon. The harmony theory may fail to explain how the soul can act upon the body but Plato's own theory fails to explain not only how it might act upon the body but also how it might be affected by it. Lucretius can quite happily use similar observations about the interaction between the body and the soul to argue against the view that the soul is incorporeal and immortal (3. 445 ff.). This completes his positioning of the Epicurean account in opposition to both the harmony theory—which denies the soul any independence from the body—and the idea that the soul is incorporeal—which denies the soul any causal interaction with the body. The Epicureans, we might say, want to steer a middle path between Platonism and the harmony theory,

doing justice to both the interaction and also the independence of body and soul.³⁶

V

Let us step back for a moment and wonder just how much difference there is between the Epicureans' own account and the harmony theory which Lucretius is so insistent we must reject. After all, the Epicureans too will tell us that the soul is a group of physical elements in some sort of arrangement. Furthermore, they occasionally seem almost to agree with the harmony theorists in saying that the soul is some kind of mixture or blending. Aëtius 4. 3. 11 (Us. 315) reports that according to the Epicureans the soul is a mix (*κρᾶμα*)³⁷ of various kinds of atoms and it is likely that Lucretius' famous concerns about his ability to express in Latin the precise nature of the composition of the soul centre on the unavailability of a satisfactory Latin counterpart for *κρᾶμα*.³⁸ There are differences too, of course. The Epicureans claim that we ought to speak about the soul and the body as two distinct components of a living organism, although both are composed of atoms. Epicurus stresses the distinction between the soul and its container (*Ep. Hdt.* 63–6), a distinction which Lucretius retains.³⁹ So the Epicureans will dissent from the harmony theory by stressing a kind of dualism of body and soul. And even if the harmony theorist could claim also to recognize a distinction between body and soul analogous to the physical components of a lyre and the attunement of those physical components, this still differs importantly from the Epicureans, since they insist that body and soul, though distinct, are both corporeal. In this way, they will also keep their distance from the sort of dualism espoused by Socrates in the *Phaedo* by insisting that the soul and body are not metaphysically different—they are composed of the same sorts

³⁶ This combination of interaction and independence also has a role in Epicurean ethical theory, which insists that it is possible to retain mental equanimity in the face of physical pain and also that mental pleasures can counteract physical pains.

³⁷ Cf. Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1118 D, and cf. *συγκείσθαι* in Σ to *Ep. Hdt.* 66 (Us. 311).

³⁸ G. B. Kerferd, 'Epicurus' Doctrine of the Soul' ['Soul'], *Phronesis*, 16 (1971), 80–96 at 89–91, also has a brief discussion of the Epicurean theory of mixture. Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms', 320, stresses the common equivalence between *harmonia* and *krasis* in such discussions.

³⁹ For discussion see J. Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* [*Mind*] (Berkeley, 1992), 147–51.

of items. This observation might lead to further enquiry into the question of the coherence of that Epicurean attempt to maintain a position between the Scylla of Platonic dualism and the Charybdis of the harmony theory.⁴⁰ Their account of the soul makes it not only a group of special atoms, atoms of the most tiny and mobile kind, but also a group of atoms arranged in a special way. This is an enquiry of considerable philosophical as well as historical interest since the Epicureans are looking for what many modern philosophers of mind would like to hold: a vision of the soul or mind which allows it to be sufficiently metaphysically tied to the physical world for it to interact with the world but nevertheless retain distinctive abilities and properties which allow it to be causally independent, to retain the first-person features of consciousness, and so on.

The philosophical terrain of these three competing psychologies is clear enough. Epicureanism certainly takes a path which requires it to dissent from both Platonic dualism and harmony theories of the soul. But what of the historical question of Epicurus' own reaction to Plato's *Phaedo*? It might be objected that not only is it not clear whether Lucretius is interested in attacking Platonism in particular in his arguments against an incorporeal soul, it is also not clear whether the harmony theory of the soul which he attacks is intended to be recognizably the theory outlined by Simmias in the *Phaedo*. There were certainly other philosophers—known and unknown to us—who held theories relevantly like the views which Lucretius attacks. This is all true and, moreover, it would no doubt suit Lucretius' argument if he were to be able to reject whole families of related misconceptions about the soul.

Nevertheless, there are still strong reasons to think that an engagement with Plato's *Phaedo* provided much of the material for Epicurus' development of his own account of the soul and that this is what we find reflected in Lucretius, although transformed and re-presented in the way in which Lucretius moulds all Epicurus' work for his own ends.⁴¹ Peripatetic engagement with the harmony theory of the soul continues long after Aristotle in the work of

⁴⁰ There are different views on their success. It might be objected, for example, that the Epicureans' reliance on the 'nameless' fourth component of the soul demonstrates the limits of their own physicalist enterprise. See Kerferd, 'Soul', 85–7, and cf. Annas, *Mind*, 137–43, for a careful and illuminating discussion of this question.

⁴¹ The hypothesis that a reaction to the *Phaedo* lies behind Epicurean psychological theory might also lend weight to the suggestions that other passages in *De rerum natura* bk. 3 reflect Platonic themes. Commentators have noted, in particular, the

Aristoxenus, Dicaearchus, and Strato, so there is no doubt that this question was still the subject of lively debate in the Hellenistic period. It is likely that the *Phaedo* was the source text for much of this discussion in the Lyceum and, it seems, the debate resonated in the Garden too.⁴² There is also some evidence to suggest that the argument at *Phaedo* 92 E ff. was one which a number of later philosophers thought worth further exploration. It would certainly have been a provocative text for Epicurus, and something he would have found it profitable to think with. The passage from Philoponus with which I began gives us a picture of Epicurus at work with a Platonic text, looking for arguments he might reuse and arguments he can reject. Happily for him, in looking at the *Phaedo*'s discussion of the harmony theory of the soul, he can score points against both that harmony theory and also Socrates' rejection of it.

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description of gradual icy death at 3. 526–30 (cf. *Phaedo* 117 E–118 A) and, perhaps, the picture of souls queuing for incarnation at 3. 776–83.

⁴² For a discussion of harmony theories, particularly Peripatetic versions, see Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms', 338–45; V. Caston, 'Dicaearchus' Philosophy of Mind', in W. W. Fortenbaugh and E. Schütrumpf (eds.), *Dicaearchus of Messana: Text, Translation and Discussion* (Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities, 10; New Brunswick, 2001), 175–93; and D. C. Mirhady, 'Dicaearchus of Messana: The Sources, Text and Translation', *ibid.* 1–142. Cf. Annas, *Mind*, 30–1. It is possible that Epicurus knew of Dicaearchus' work, for example, and Philodemus uses Dicaearchus as a source for his history of the Academy.

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