

DICHOTOMY BETWEEN BODY AND SOUL/MIND IN THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH AND THOMAS MANN'S THE TRANSPOSED HEADS

GILGAMIŞ DESTANI VE THOMAS MANN'IN DEĞİŞEN KAFALAR'INDA BEDEN VE RUH/ZİHİN İKİLEMİ

ДИХОТОМИЯ МЕЖДУ ТЕЛОМ И ДУШОЙ/РАЗУМОМ В «ЭПОСЕ О ГИЛЬГАМЕШЕ» И «ПОМЕНЯННЫХ ГОЛОВАХ» ТОМАСА МАННА

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ABSTRACT

Given the complexity and awkwardness of human beings both physically and psychologically, human nature is equally difficult to comprehend. This has made it a significant topic of discussion throughout history. This article examines the struggle between body and soul/mind predicated upon Plato's theory, which delves into their differences. The primary question explored is whether the body or soul is the determining factor. Plato argues for the supremacy of the soul over the body, using metaphors and logical arguments presented in dialogues to reinforce his points. In terms of body and soul, Plato addresses issues of justice, virtue, goodness, morality, and truth, all of which contribute to the ideal soul necessary for achieving philosophical knowledge. According to Plato, the body, bound by the deceptions of the physical world, hinders the soul's ability to reach the realm of the Forms or Ideas. This conceptual framework is extensively analyzed in Plato's *Republic*, where all these terms and ideas are thoroughly explored. Plato's theory is examined through a comparative analysis of the ancient myth *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and its modern reinterpretation, *The Transposed Heads* by the German author Thomas Mann. The study investigates the dichotomy between body and soul by analyzing the distinct yet complementary characteristics of the main characters (Gilgamesh-Enkidu and Shridaman-Nanda) in both works, drawing parallels to the relationship between body and soul.

Keywords: Body, Gilgamesh, Human Nature, Platon, Soul, Thomas Mann.

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ÖZ

İnsanların hem fiziksel hem de psikolojik olarak karmaşık ve garip bireyler olmaları göz önüne alındığında, insan doğasını anlamak zordur. Bu durum, tarih boyunca önemli bir tartışma konusu haline gelmiştir. Bu makale, beden ve ruh/zihin arasındaki çatışmayı, Platon'un bu iki unsurun farklılıklarını inceleyen teorisi temelinde ele almaktadır. Çalışmanın temelini oluşturan ana soru, beden mi yoksa ruhun mu belirleyici faktör olduğudur. Platon, ruhun beden üzerindeki üstünlüğünü, metaforlar ve diyaloglar şeklinde sunulan güçlü mantıksal görüşlerle savunmaktadır. Beden ve ruh bağlamında Platon, adalet, erdem, iyilik, ahlak ve hakikat gibi konuları ele alır ki bunlar felsefi bilgiye ulaşmak için ideal ruhu oluşturan unsurlardır. Fiziksel dünyanın illüzyonlarıyla sınırlı olan beden, Platon'un önerdiği Formlar/Fikirler alanına ulaşabilen ruh için bir engel teşkil eder. Bu teorik çerçeve, yukarıda belirtilen tüm terim ve kavramları içeren Platon'un *Devlet* adlı eseri aracılığıyla incelenmektedir. Platon'un teorisi, eski bir mit olan *Gilgamesh Destanı* ve Alman yazar Thomas Mann tarafından yazılmış modern bir yeniden yorumlama olan *Değişen Kafalar*'a karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma perspektifinde uygulanmaktadır. Beden ve ruh ikilemi konusuna değinilerek, her iki eserdeki ana karakterlerin (Gilgamesh-Enkidu ve Shridaman-Nanda) farklı doğaları ve beden ile ruh gibi tamamlayıcı özellikleri incelenerek analiz edilmektedir. Bu ikiliğin farklı perspektiflerden incelenmesi, insan deneyiminin karmaşıklığını ve derinliğini anlamamıza katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden, Gilgamesh, İnsan Doğası, Platon, Ruh, Thomas Mann.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Учитывая сложность и двойственность человеческой природы как в физическом, так и в психологическом аспектах, понимание человеческой сущности представляет собой трудную задачу. Данная статья рассматривает борьбу между телом и душой/разумом на основе теории Платона, исследующей их различия. Основной вопрос заключается в том, что является определяющим фактором — тело или душа? Платон утверждает превосходство души над телом, используя метафоры и логические аргументы, представленные в его диалогах. Вопросы справедливости, добродетели, блага, морали и истины, рассматриваемые в контексте души и тела, составляют основу идеальной души, необходимой для достижения философского знания.

Согласно Платону, тело, связанное с обманами материального мира, препятствует способности души достичь мира Идей. Эта концептуальная структура детально анализируется в *Государстве* Платона, где все эти понятия рассматриваются. Теория Платона анализируется в сравнительном контексте древнего мифа *Эпос о Гильгамеше* и его современной интерпретации *Поменянные головы* немецкого писателя Томаса Манна.

Ключевые слова: Тело, Гильгамеш, Человеческая природа, Платон, Душа, Томас Манн.

Introduction

The complexity of human nature presents a significant challenge to comprehension. Numerous philosophers and theologians have proposed diverse theories and insights, resulting in a wide array of conclusions on the subject. A central question within this discourse concerns the relationship between the body and the mind or soul: Which holds greater importance for existence and identity? Are they interdependent, or can they exist separately? Historically, various thinkers and philosophers have offered distinct perspectives on this issue, with some advocating for the sanctity of the body, while others emphasize the superiority and fundamental nature of the mind or soul.

This paper explores the tension between body and mind through the philosophical lens of key thinkers, particularly Plato, as reflected in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*. Plato underscores the significance of leading a righteous and virtuous life, cautioning against the undue focus on honor, wealth, appearance, and prominence, which can result in allurements and delinquency. He asserts that individuals can lead balanced and virtuous lives by prioritizing reason and wisdom over the alluring yet perilous aspects of human nature, such as overwhelming desire, lechery, and pride. In *The Republic*, Plato draws parallels between the human soul and the structure of political states, arguing that a state led by a ruler guided by reason rather than physical desires will be fair, agreeable, and ideal. Through this, Plato lays the foundation for political and democratic theory, advocating for the establishment of equitable states or cities. He critically examines various forms of governance to identify which is best suited to create an ideal state. These political theories continue to hold relevance today, as societies still strive for a model system and government that enables people to lead fairer and fulfilling lives.

Within the scope of this paper, the ancient Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh* is the first text to be analyzed. Despite its antiquity, like the works of Plato, it continues to be valued and relevant in contemporary times. *Gilgamesh* explores themes akin to those found in Plato's writings, including tyranny, justice, love, death, wisdom, and the pursuit of knowledge. "We can point to a god of 'wisdom' in Mesopotamia, Ea, and look at what he does exactly to merit this distinction. We can find examples in ancient Near Eastern literature of 'wise men' such as Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim, Job, or the Eloquent Peasant" (Denning-Bolle, 1987, p. 215). These figures, like the philosopher-sages of Greece, serve as exemplars of wisdom, reflecting a cross-cultural fascination with intellect.

Reflection serves as a vital method for imparting wisdom to the unwise, a concept prominently illustrated in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The protagonist, Gilgamesh, gains enlightenment through the reflective guidance of Enkidu, being fashioned by the gods to temper Gilgamesh's excessive and immoral conduct. Enkidu, who receives guidance from the gods in his dreams, acts as a mediator, conveying the gods' warnings and wisdom to Gilgamesh. "Enkidu recounts his dream of the gods' dialogic counsel in his dialogue with Gilgamesh. Hence, dialogues between the gods in the dream are embedded with the larger Enkidu-Gilgamesh dialogue" (Denning-Bolle, 1987, p. 227). Several other characters also strive to deepen Gilgamesh's understanding throughout his quest for eternal youth. In the epic, in addition to Enkidu, the barmaid Siduri attempts to impart the futility of seeking immortality to Gilgamesh. Additionally, Utnapishtim, as a figure of wisdom, attempts to impart the significance of acquiring wisdom and knowledge to Gilgamesh through dialogue.

Wisdom's real value lies in its power to instruct. It needs to be communicated. Dialogue is its vehicle. Through his words, the master constructs a dialogic kinship with another in order to instruct him in the perplexities of life. In Mesopotamia, the master may be a special priest, initiated into the intricacies of rituals responsible for the education of novices. Or he may be an Utnapishtim who needs to instruct a brash young hero in the realities of normal life. (Denning-Bolle, 1987, p. 231)

Engaging in a comparative study of philosophy, where different teachings address similar themes, can generate diverse perspectives rooted in distinct traditions. Numerous examples exist of analyzing a Western work through the lens of Western philosophy, and vice versa. In this context, alongside *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* will be examined through the philosophical framework of Plato. Universal concepts such as justice, goodness, the soul, and wisdom have intrigued not only Eastern but also Western thought since ancient times. Nirvana, the final state in which wisdom,

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knowledge, truth reside just as the Platonic heaven, can be attainable by the wise soul in Indian philosophy. While Eastern traditions may not have produced philosophers like Plato or Aristotle, Buddha stands as a central figure symbolizing these ideals. “In the same way as the Buddha is the prophet of *nirvana* and no self, Plato may be called the prophet of idea and soul” (Faden, 2011, p. 43). Whereas the philosophers in the West often address similar topics and concepts, they typically disagree with one another and share little common ground. For example, McEvilley notes: “Plato’s description of out-of-the-body knowledge has more in common with the practices of Indian yogis than with that of Descartes” (Bussanich, 2005, p. 13). India is notably rich in a variety of doctrines and philosophical teachings due to its history of multiple civilizations.

It is deduced that both Eastern and Western thoughts with their brilliant philosophers have been in line with each other. Plato suggests that a pure soul rejoices in its release from the body’s confinement, ascending to the divine realm and the world of Forms. In contrast, a corrupted soul endures suffering, remains lost, and continues its existence trapped within physical bodies. In *The Transposed Heads*, Shridaman who symbolizes the wise man as a philosopher-like figure endeavors to warn his friend, Nanda who is tempted by worldly desires and passions. Shridaman tries to direct Nanda into the right path in which one can reach the conscious and wise mind. Shridaman remarks Nanda that:

...you do not belong among the souls who feel the need to emerge above the frightful ocean of laughing and weeping as lotus flowers rise above the surface of the stream and open their cups to the sky. You are perfectly at home in the depths, where such a complex profusion and variety of shapes and forms exist. You are well off, and that is why one feels good at the sight of you. Then you suddenly get the idea in your head to meddle with Nirvana and talk about its negative condition and how it cannot be called hushed nor cosy, and all that is funny enough to make one weep, or, to use the word made on purpose, it is touching, because it makes me grieve for that well-being of yours that is so good to see. (Mann, 1959, p. 13)

It is argued by Plato that the righteous soul or mind can be liberated from the corrupting influence of the body and its misdeeds. A soul that prioritizes reason can navigate toward the truth. By avoiding the deceptive illusions of the material world, such a soul can achieve the triumph of acquiring genuine and everlasting merits, equally the True, the Beautiful and the Good. Similarly, these sacred trinities are also reflected in Indian philosophy; “Plato spoke of the True, the Beautiful and the Good ... You in India have the trinity of *satyam* (truth), *shivam* (good), *sundaram* (beautiful), essentially the same trinity as Plato taught” (Raine, 1994, p. 129).

By touching upon these theories, humans are divided between the senses, which interact with the physical world, and the intellect or mind, which links us to a realm beyond sensory perception. Not only do physical appetites embody traits but also mental abilities shape human behavior. It is our capacity for reasoning and decision-making that sets us apart from animals. Nonetheless, it is challenging to determine whether our faculties or intuition is better suited to guide us toward truth and happiness. Socrates believed that reason is the most effective means of achieving true happiness and emphasized the soul’s strength in reaching the truth. Plato, Socrates’ student, and devoted follower, also recognized the soul’s importance, viewing it as imperishable and disconnected from the body. In contrast, the body is confined to the material world, and due to its limitations, real knowledge and truth cannot be fully grasped through sensory experience alone. Alternatively, according to Plato, “Knowledge or wisdom is a kind of mental looking- a vision of the Eternal” (Hare, 1982, p. 145). Hence, he created a realm of Forms where the senses have no place. Consequently,

those who manage to avoid the misleading aspects of sensory experience can move closer to the truth and virtuous life found in the intelligible realm of Forms; “Therefore knowledge is not located in immediate experience, but in reasoning about it, since the latter, apparently, but not the former, makes it possible to grasp being and truth” (Plato, 1987, line 186d).

Based on these approaches, the epic of *Gilgamesh* and Thomas Mann’s *Transposed Head’s* will be examined through the conflict and separation between the body and mind/soul. In both works, certain characters—such as Gilgamesh, Nanda, and Sita—embrace worldly pleasures and life’s rewards, while others, like Enkidu in the epic and Shridaman in the novella, embody wisdom. These contrasting figures, therefore, can be seen as representations of human nature.

Methodological Study of Plato upon the Body and Soul

“The human body is the best picture of the human soul.” (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

“As a rule, the mind, residing in a body that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and where there is no strength of mind there can be no strength of soul.” (Gandhi)

Psychology of humankind resembles a maze in which one can simply lose their way, highlighting the necessity of a mature and wise mind to grasp its intricacies. Fundamental questions regarding human nature often focus on the interplay between soul and body: What truly defines our identity—our soul or our physical form? Which holds supremacy—the body or the mind? Philosophers, tracing back to ancient Greece, have extensively debated this topic. Some assert that the soul commands the body, dictating its actions and changes, whereas others argue for the preeminence of the body to demonstrate, “...the fact that human nature consists not just of a body, but of an informed body, is just an application of a broader metaphysical thesis” (Pasnau, 2012, p. 351). As it is understood that not only is the physical body sufficient, but also wise body is an essential complement.

The contributions of key ancient Greek philosophers, notably Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, are chiefly influential in the discourse on psychology of humankind and conventionalities. Socrates, as Plato’s intellectual predecessor, was instrumental in shaping the development of Plato’s philosophical perspectives and methodologies. Plato emphasizes that a well-balanced soul must embody virtues like determination, self-discipline, integrity, and wisdom. In *The Republic*, he delves deeply into these virtues by examining the creation of a model society and state, progressing from a general to a more specific focus. This seminal work is crucial in expressing Plato’s vision for a healthier and happier society. Plato emphasizes the definition and comprehension of justice, analyzing its nature and importance in human life. The book initially explores societal and bureaucratic justice, then shifts to personal justice. Justice is first depicted by Cephalus, an elderly man symbolizing justice, and is further examined through Socrates and Polemarchus, a noble young man, from a moral perspective in *The Republic*. Thrasymachus provides a satirical take on justice, while Glaucon and Adeimantus, Plato’s brothers, approach it as an abstract concept. Socrates proposes a model state featuring advanced education, science, morality, and art—elements that reflect life itself. Through intricate dialogues focused on unified knowledge, Socrates seeks a just and fulfilling life, although the initial responses in these discussions are often vague and unsatisfactory. Books I and II primarily explore the nature and description of justice, resulting in conflicting interpretations and ambiguous conclusions. Plato underscores the fundamental connection between justice and the state, emphasizing their interdependence. “...the two blend in one, and are two faces of the same truth; for justice is the order of the State, and the State is the visible embodiment of justice under the conditions of human society. The one is the soul, and the other is the body...” (Plato, 1894, p. 4). Thus,

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justice embodies integrity and moral goodness that could be instilled within the state. Plato envisions an ideal state led by rulers who embody justice, in place of dictators, sophists, or poets. He argues that only those with a genuine commitment to justice are capable of establishing a state that achieves divine perfection.

In Book VII, Plato presents his renowned 'allegory of the cave,' which demonstrates that our senses are limited to the material world and are incapable of perceiving anything beyond auditory objects. Given the constant flux of material things, they are unreliable. Yet, there lays a higher realm in which one is not constrained by sensory perception, and where everything is immutable. The domain of the Forms that represent the Ideal or perfect harmony is the optimal residence. In Plato's *Phaedo* (trans. 1993) "Each form is unique, a single 'one', contrasted with its many sensible instances, invisible to the bodily eye, but accessible to the intelligence, the mental organ which 'sees' it" (xii). In the material world, we can only perceive shadows and imitations of the Forms, which means it cannot mirror true existence. In the 'allegory of the cave,' Plato depicts captives bound inside a cave, with various statues positioned on a wall above them and a fire burning behind. The images they see on the cave walls are mere shadows, not the existing statues. These shadows represent mere reflections or simulations. Upon being liberated from their chains, the prisoners come to understand the true nature of their condition; while the fire and statues symbolize the level of conviction, they do not represent the ultimate phenomenon. The fire serves only as a precursor to the 'real light'—the illumination provided by philosophy and wisdom.

Plato thus shows us the path from the darkness of the cave to the light. When the prisoners are freed from the cave, they encounter the brilliance of the Sun, which enables them to grasp the true essence of Knowledge. The objects they observe outside the cave possess a greater degree of reality compared to the statues and fire they were familiar with inside.

It all begins when the prisoner is released from the shackles, turns away from the shadows, and moves upward toward a vision of 'things themselves' (lines 515c- 516a). Once released, the prisoners will presumably see, for example, the puppets that were responsible for producing the images at which they had stared for so long. Eventually, when fully out of the cave, they will see 'the things in heaven and heaven itself'. (Plato, qtd. in Roochnik, 2003, p. 31)

Heaven represents holy beauty and form, where true philosophy and wisdom dwell. By freeing oneself from worldly passions and desires, a person can escape the shadows of earthly images.

Seneca's philosophy offers a comparable perspective. Seneca believes that by questioning and reasoning, we can free ourselves from the darkness of the soul and, in doing so, perceive the bright light of knowledge or wisdom descending from heaven. As the individual ascends closer to the heavens, he progressively approaches reality and the enlightened understanding of knowledge and truth. Plato suggests that the prisoner's ascent from the depths of the earth towards the sun symbolizes the movement towards the idea of the Good (1955, line 517c). Thus, nearing the Sun represents an approach to philosophical knowledge, or the knowledge of the Good. In the introduction part of *Phaedrus* by Plato: "the winged soul, dancing with the gods in the heavens and looking with them from the rim of heaven to the immortal Forms beyond heaven. In time, Socrates reports, the soul will lose her wings and fall to earth" (2003, x). This quote illustrates Plato's concept of the soul's connection to the divine and its eventual descent into the physical world. The 'winged soul' symbolizes its purity and ability to ascend to the realm of the 'Forms', which represent ultimate truth, beauty, and knowledge. When the soul soars alongside the gods, it partakes in

the divine contemplation of these eternal truths. However, over time, as the soul becomes weighed down by worldly concerns and desires, it loses its wings and falls to earth, signifying its embodiment in the material world.

In Book VIII of *The Republic*, Plato describes four forms of government, each corresponding to individuals with different variety of souls. Given that a city reflects the inherent imperfections of individuals, these forms of government are ultimately prone to failure. The first form, timocracy, is a government rooted in military power, where those who value triumph and dignity dominate, guided more by spirit than by wisdom. The second form, oligarchy, is based on wealth, resulting in a division between the rich and the impoverished. The discontent of the lower classes eventually leads to a revolt against the aristocracy, giving rise to democracy, a system characterized by an unrestrained desire for freedom. This inevitably results in anarchy, and to subdue it, tyranny—the worst form of government—will arise. Book IX primarily examines the manipulative passion and propensity that seek to undermine the influence of reason and wisdom. Tyrannical individuals are especially susceptible to being led astray by their ungoverned and uncontrollable desires, resulting in audacious manners and criminal actions. Socrates highlights these reckless demands with examples such as lusting after one's mother and committing crimes. The myth of Oedipus Rex, where Oedipus unknowingly has sexual relations with his mother and kills his father, is possibly the most poignant literary and mythological representation of such desires. Socrates asserts that if the realistic part of our soul is inactive, uncontrollable desires surface in our dreams. Beyond dreams, a tyrannical man allows these manipulative desires to dominate his daily life. External challenges can prevent someone from thinking rationally and wisely. In *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* by Sextus Empiricus: "The passion is a 'very violent motion' that carries us along, 'pushing us violently' toward action" (Nussbaum, 1994, p. 380). Socrates points out that a tyrant, being unjust, cannot attain a truly happy life. In contrast, many people think that happiness can be achieved through money and wealth, but these are fleeting and only create a superficial sense of happiness.

In Book IX of *The Republic*, the journey to an enchanted life is shaped by personal choices. A rational person derives joy from knowledge and truth. A spirited person values honor as essential for happiness, whereas someone driven by profit considers property, prosperity, and potential as crucial for a fulfilling life. In *Philebus*, Socrates emphasizes that: "What you and I are now to attempt is to put forward a certain state or condition of the soul which can render the life of every man a happy life" (Plato, 1972, line 11d). Deep thinkers believe that pursuing reality brings contentment, with the ultimate joy being the attainment of the Form of the Good. Although Plato is uncertain whether the just man is the happiest of all, he does argue that the fair human is more satisfied than the unfair one. Socrates suggests that heavenly logic can guide us to the Form of the Good and the realm of the gods. He uses the analogy of a charioteer and two horses to describe the soul: one horse symbolizes goodness, while the other represents evil, which tries to corrupt the good horse. Few people are drawn solely to the contentment of education and observation because it is challenging to remove physical appetites and delight from their lives. This level of detachment is typically achieved only by philosophers, who are passionate about truth and find contentment in the simplest things.

In summary, as discussed, Plato and Socrates emphasize the condition of the soul over that of the body. They assert that a soul led by knowledge and reason can attain the reality and the pure Form of the Good, which lies beyond the reach of the senses, confined to the physical world filled with representations, delusions, and shadows. Thus, the realm of physical needs is unreliable and might be misleading. Solely deep thinkers can obtain this wisdom and overcome the corrupting influence of affection and appetite. In *Phaedo*, Socrates

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implies: "...true philosophers abstain from all bodily desires and stand firm without surrendering to them..." (Plato, 1993, line 82c). Socrates asserts that physical training nurtures the soul, just as the body depends on the soul's well-being to flourish. While Plato views the body as subordinate to the soul, he also emphasizes their unity. Over time, his perspective on the soul's superiority becomes more nuanced, acknowledging that the body's effects cannot be completely disregarded. Although he considers bodily desires and passions to be dangerous and deceptive—hence should be overcome—Plato, in works like *Philebus*, also recognizes the importance of love and pleasure as motivating factors that can stimulate the pursuit of learning and reality.

A comparison and analysis of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* in terms of Plato's theory of body and soul/mind.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a poem set in ancient Mesopotamia, a region known for its rich heroic traditions. It was created during the Sumerian period and centers around the city of Uruk. The two main characters, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, have contrasting traits that complement each other, meaning they need one another to achieve completeness. Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, embodies the qualities of a legendary figure: bravery, ambition, and strength, embarking on quests to confront monsters like Humbaba and deities such as The Bull of Heaven. In contrast, Enkidu is a wild man raised among animals and with the help of a concubine, he becomes acquainted with civilization. Enkidu's creation by the gods was a response to their displeasure with Gilgamesh's immoral behavior. Plato distinguishes between the appetitive side of human nature, which includes desires for food, beverage, and sex, reflecting our animalistic and bodily urges, and the wise mind, which seeks ultimate reality and wisdom. As Plato remarks, "there is a dangerous, wild, and lawless kind of desire in everyone, even the few of us who appear moderate" (Plato, 1974, IX, line 572b). Gilgamesh is driven by his physical desires and struggles to act with reason and morality in the epic.

The married women of Uruk are sexually abused by Gilgamesh who is a tyrannical ruler. In response to his relentless and immoral attitude, Enkidu is created by the gods to serve as his companion, assistant, and server, to demonstrate Gilgamesh's strength and bravery. This journey with Enkidu teaches Gilgamesh valuable lessons and helps him grow. Enkidu acts like Gilgamesh's conscience, guiding him toward the right path. Gilgamesh's strength and intense desires lead him to believe that he is invincible and that he will never die. However, the death of his friend Enkidu profoundly impacts him, making him realize the impossibility of achieving immortality. Enkidu: "...everlasting life is not your destiny ... He has given you unexampled supremacy over the people...But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace..." (Sandars, 2001, p. 70). Enkidu enables him to remember his limits and boundaries as a human being. By the end of the epic, Gilgamesh accepts the reality of mortality, becoming a just and ordinary king who focuses on serving his people and awaiting his own death. "Gilgamesh is no longer a young, narcissistic aggressor, but an old, wise and humble ruler" (Pruyser and Luke, 1982, p. 90). Gilgamesh's journey shifts from a worldly and ostentatious quest to a profound spiritual exploration in which he reflects on life and death.

Following Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh comes to realize the futility of the mortal body, which is ensnared by deceptive illusions. The reality of death shocks and terrifies him, especially given his nature, which is driven by physical desires and ambitions. Plato argues that we should not grieve over death, as it leads the immortal soul to the Platonic realm of eternal happiness, provided it possesses good virtues. According to Plato, philosophers are the most admirable individuals because they dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge.

As Masao and Dilworth argues: “Consequently, the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, must of course be one who does not fear death. If a man grieves and becomes afraid when facing death, he is not a philosopher who loves and pursues wisdom...” (1986, p. 115). Gilgamesh begins his odyssey as a youthful and vigorous individual, and he concludes his spiritual quest by acquiring wisdom and knowledge, which he finds to be far more treasured than desires, riches, reputation, and other material possessions. Gilgamesh represents every person focused on worldly concerns and leading a decadent life. Nevertheless, his story demonstrates that not physical pleasures, but wisdom can guide the humanity toward truth and happiness.

Eminent authors have touched upon the reciprocal effect between literature and mythology that is also underlined by Thomas Mann. Legendary characters and events play a significant role in his works. Mann advocates that mythology serves to invigorate and preserve the characteristics of past beliefs and practices, helping to create a connection to the future. Mann asserts: "Myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless pattern, the pious formula, into which life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious" (Assmann, 2006, p. 167). The issue of myth is discussed by Mann but other remarkable modernist writers like James Joyce coined the "mythical method" that is to apprehend the “favorable impact of myths for past times:" Thus, like Mann, Joyce uses mythic parallels as a ' way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"(Eliot, 1975, p. 177). In this way, not only Mann but also Joyce strives to rejuvenate fictitious customs by integrating them with contemporary life and craft.

Within this scope, *The Transposed Heads* by Thomas Mann examines an Indian legend through a philosophical lens. Mann employs sarcasm, parody, and clever language, complemented by detailed characterizations and lucid imagery. The story presents a love predicament and a companionship from a psychological perspective, focusing on two characters ostensibly mismatched friends: Nanda that is substantially imposing, and Shridaman that is portrayed as a refined and scholarly figure with a lofty attitude. Shridaman, a philosopher-like lover of wisdom, represents the highest caste, the Brahmins, which aligns with reason and wisdom, similar to Plato’s philosopher kings.

In contrast, Nanda belongs to a lower caste, associated with physical desires and zeal. In the story, Nanda and Shridaman both have crush on the same woman, Sita that shows interest for both men but eventually marries Shridaman. Sita, driven by her own sexual desires and lust, is dissatisfied because Shridaman’s wise mind cannot fulfill her physical needs. Shridaman’s body;

[...] was a body proper to serve as adjunct and appendage to a noble and knowledgeable headpiece that was of course head and front of the whole, whereas with the whole Nanda the body was, so to speak, the main thing, and the head merely a pleasing appendage. (Mann, 1959, p. 6)

She continues to pursue Nanda. Recognizing that neither he nor Sita is happy with the marriage, Shridaman sacrifices himself by beheading in devotion to the goddess Kali.

Grief-stricken and guilt-ridden, Nanda also beheads himself. Kali allows them to return to life, but with their heads placed on the mismatched bodies, creating a clash between soul and body. This raises the inquiry of Sita’s marital status: does she get married to Shridaman or Nanda? Which aspect is more defining—the body or the mind? Initially, one might expect Sita to be pleased with the head of Shridaman on the body of Nanda now that she admires Nanda's physique. Nevertheless, she becomes dissatisfied over time. Even though the head of Shridaman is now on Nanda’s charming body, Shridaman’s intuition, which governs his actions, does not take care of the body as well as Nanda did. This neglect deeply disappoints Sita.

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In *The Transposed Heads*, a conflict arises between soul and body. Although both mind and body complement each other, the reason ultimately guides and determines how the body is used. As noted, Plato advocates for the primacy of the soul or mind in achieving contentment. Bliss that is solely tangible is not the real bliss as "...to obtain true happiness in this world, i.e., something more than mere sensual pleasure, man must first acquire virtue and wisdom" (Held, 1983, p. 139). According to Plato, sensibility and emotions are not reliable because they can deceive us, whereas intellect and intuition guide us to the reality and a virtuous life. Although Shridaman initially embodies the ideal philosopher, his love diminishes his rationality. This love ultimately leads to Shridaman's disgrace and both men's deaths; "Clear knowledge or pure thinking can only be attained by the pure soul uninfected by the corruption of the body" (Masao and Dilworth, 1986, p. 34). Unable to resolve the conflict between body and mind, the two friends end their lives, leaving Sita alone with a boy that embodies a mixture of both Shridaman and Nanda but retains Shridaman's intellectual qualities. Sita represents human nature in her insatiability and dissatisfaction with any situation. Her relentless pursuit of perfection and completeness highlights her failure to recognize that true perfection or completeness is unattainable.

Conclusion

Human nature has been a central theme in philosophical and intellectual discourse, encompassing traits such as pride, greed, lust, envy, and gluttony. While various perspectives address these characteristics, Plato's universal philosophy places reason at the core and critiques the reliance on earthly property and sensory experiences. Within this theoretical framework, Plato emphasizes the soul's predominant power over the body, arguing that while the body is part of the physical world, the mind is imperishable and can achieve everlasting life in the Platonic realm, where the Forms or Ideas exist in their true, permanent, and eternal state. To attain the joys of an everlasting and blissful life, human being ought to cultivate the mind with goodness like fairness, ethics, good will, and decency, rather than becoming enmeshed in the deceptive world of bodily senses. The soul is divided into three parts by Plato: the appetitive (physical desires), the spirited (dignity and reputation), and the rational (reason). By prioritizing wisdom and resisting the misleading physical desires and spirited impulses, one can acquire knowledge, which Plato considers the most valuable achievement, surpassing wealth, and fame. According to Plato, those who succeed in this pursuit and dedicate themselves to the search for the unique truth are the true philosophers. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Transposed Heads* have been analyzed comparatively through the lens of Plato's theory, reflecting a Western ideological perspective. In the epic, Gilgamesh, depicted as an unjustified and corrupt king, is driven by the lustful aspect of his soul. Throughout his journey, seeking fame, He gains enlightenment through the influence of Enkidu and other supporting figures. This journey, which begins with inexperience and immaturity, culminates in Gilgamesh's realization and acquisition of wisdom following the death of his friend and his futile quest for eternal youth. He ultimately values the profound wealth of proficiency and understanding gained from his odyssey over superficial temporary reputation and wealth. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* remains universally read and studied globally due to its exploration of universal human traits and frailties, offering reflections that resonate with readers across diverse contexts.

In *The Transposed Heads*, Shridaman and Nanda serve as interdependent figures akin to mind and body, reflecting themes similar to those in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Shridaman represents the intellectual or spiritual aspect, engaging with complex subjects such as astronomy and grammar, while Nanda symbolizes the physical or bodily side, valuing his own attractive appearance. After meeting and marrying Sita, Shridaman becomes

increasingly influenced by romantic desires, moving away from his rational mind. Plato explores the effects of love and its potential dangers at length in *Phaedo*. Sita, driven by lust, is unable to satisfy her desires with Shridaman, who lacks physical allure, and remains preoccupied with Nanda. The transposition of heads following Shridaman's sacrifice at Kali's temple fails to bring contentment, as Shridaman's intellect continues to dominate, causing Nanda's body to revert to its previous state of neglect. This tumultuous love triangle ultimately results in the deaths of the men. Their combined legacy is the boy named Andhaka that embodies both physical and intellectual attributes, with his wisdom prominently highlighted, emphasizing the primacy of the mind over the body. Thomas Mann examines the dynamics of soul and body through this myth, presenting it as a richly described Indian tale.

In conclusion, Plato's dichotomy of body and mind is applied to both an epic and an Indian myth in this analysis. Despite the differing characters and time periods, common traits among the characters are evident. The central question explored throughout this comparative study is if the soul or the body holds superiority. Plato clearly emphasizes the submission of the body to the mind. Similarly, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* demonstrates the triumph of philosophy and intellect acquired by the protagonist, which is passed down as an everlasting tribute to future generations. Shridaman and Nanda further validate the predominance of the mind or soul, as both men's head transposition does not alter the fundamental dynamics in *The Transposed Heads*. Although Shridaman inhabits Nanda's body, he does not maintain it as Nanda did, because Shridaman's actions are governed by his intellect. The philosophical mind is the decisive determinant and the foundation for attaining unique truth and enlightenment, which necessitates a purification from lustful and passionate compulsions. Wisdom ought to lead, protecting individuals from the deceptive and illusory nature of the senses, guiding them toward truth and the eternal Platonic heaven.

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