

# **The Meaning of a Just Existence as understood through the Self, the Soul, and God**

*An examination of what it means to have a meaningful existence through the lenses of Plato, Shakespeare, Descartes, Pascal, Kierkegaard, The Bible, and the correlation this has with the self and God.*

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It can be argued that it is not simply existing that matters, but rather, existing well. But *what* does it mean to exist well, and therefore unwell? *How* can we exist well, and more importantly, *why* does it matter to exist well? These questions have been pondered by various minds through the millennia. Each philosopher and subsequent school of thought had their thoughts on the matter. For Ancient Greek philosophers, there is a difference between the forms – named by other philosophers as the self, the perfect, the Infinite, God, or Heaven – and the appearances – the ‘other’, the imperfect, the finite, or earth. These differences define specifically what it would mean to live a good life; to come closer to the perfect. Though not every philosopher or school of thought agrees with the Socratic teachings, some directly oppose it as they believe the Greeks reduce themselves to fighting over a hierarchy. Arguably, this is the exact reason why the Greeks will never be able to leave the prison that they create between the forms and the appearances.

In this paper, I will argue what it means to achieve a good life, which cannot be found in the Platonic world but rather in the various schools of thought that have included the principles of love, equality, and freedom. By drawing on the works of Plato, Descartes, and Biblical authors, and with references to Kierkegaard, Pascal, and Shakespeare, I will show that to reach a meaningful existence you must incorporate principles of ‘The Self’, Equality, the ‘Soul’, and God. From this, I will demonstrate exactly why these principles are necessary to push past the limiting and hierarchical realm of the finite. Lastly, I will show why it is important to not only recognize the Infinite but *commit* to living by the principles of the Infinite as well.

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### ***The Prison of the Finite***

In Plato's work *The Republic*, students inquire about how to find justice in an unjust world. There is a contradictory nature that exists in the Platonic world. Socrates himself illustrates this when he describes the law of contradiction by stating,

“Clearly, one and the same thing cannot act or be affected in opposite ways at the same time in the same part of it and in relation to the same object; so, if we find these contradictions, we shall know we are dealing with more than one faculty.” (Plato, *The Republic*, 436b)

These students ask Socrates about how justice can exist in a contradictory world; where everyone is fighting in a hierarchy. Socrates replies that there is no uniting the opposing factors in this world. It is either the Forms - which in the Platonic world refer to the land of the gods – or the land of appearances, which is the land of ignorance and the imperfect. There is no combining the two. I will be calling the Forms, the Infinite and the realm of appearances, the finite. For Socrates, there is no combining the Infinite and the finite. There is a divided line between the two where we, as humans, who reside in the finite, will never reach the Forms. He states that “[N]othing incomplete is the measure of anything,” (Plato, *The Republic*, 504c) so we may deduce that what is incomplete, specifically human knowledge, does not amount to much. Since all of our knowledge is based on sensory perception, everything that we might know, or claim to know, exists in the finite. To Socrates, nothing in the finite can tell you about the Infinite. If it is derived from our senses, it cannot be trusted. This is why Socrates then says,

“[Y]ou’ve often heard it said that the form of the good is the most important thing to learn about and that it is by their relation to it that just things and the others become useful and beneficial. You knew very well that I was going to say this and, besides, that we have no adequate knowledge of it,” (Plato, *The Republic*, 505a).

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You cannot learn about the Infinite in Socrates' world, and therefore there is nothing useful or beneficial about the knowledge that we have now. He states in a previous quote that,

“Knowledge unqualified is knowledge simply of something learned [...]; knowledge of a particular kind is knowledge of a particular kind of object. What I mean is that when the object of knowledge is of a particular kind, [...] the knowledge itself must also be of a particular kind.” (Plato, *The Republic*, 436d – e)

Thus, the particular kind of knowledge that one has about the Infinite, being no knowledge at all, is meaningless as we can never know about the Infinite. Therefore, Socrates argues that “[...] opinions without knowledge are shameful ugly things, with the best of them being blind,” (Plato, *The Republic*, 506c). Without knowledge supporting our opinions, they are truly meaningless because they are just that, opinions. The law of contradiction states that something cannot be itself while also being something else, so knowledge of the Infinite is not obtainable to us who are in the finite (Plato, *The Republic*, 509d) and thus, for Plato, we have no knowledge at all. Knowing *about* the Infinite is not enough to be considered knowledge *of* the Infinite, by Plato's own standards, which is why humans cannot have any knowledge at all.

Plato has written in other works that philosophy is important to learn as this is what will help us in death for our souls to mount to the Infinite, essentially the training for death (Plato, *Phaedo*, 67e). We need knowledge of the Infinite to learn how to ascend. However, it has already been stated that it cannot be done, for humans exist in the finite. Plato's existence, and his understanding of it, is that the soul is imprisoned by the body (Plato, *Phaedo*, 64d-65a). It is only the Gods of the Platonic world that can know of both the Infinite and the Finite. To summarize then Plato sets up knowledge of the Infinite as such:

- i. True knowledge (one that is found in the Infinite) is knowledge obtained in the Infinite.
- ii. Plato states that it is only the Gods of the Platonic world that can ever have True Knowledge. We as humans can only know about the Infinite but never reach it.

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- iii. We can only have knowledge of a partial kind, as it is one obtained in the finite.
- iv. Opinions without knowledge are blind (Plato, *The Republic*, 506c)
- v. Nothing incomplete is the measure of anything (Plato, *The Republic*, 504c), The Law of contradiction states that nothing can be one thing and another at once (Plato, *The Republic*, 509d), and so, knowledge of a particular thing, is simply knowledge of it as a particular kind (Plato, *The Republic*, 436d – e)
- vi. Therefore, the knowledge we have is meaningless.

The Gods will never be known because they exist in the land of the Infinite, and since we will never reach the Infinite, our entire existence is fruitless. This is the prison that Plato has created and locked himself in, though it is not one that subjects the rest of humanity.

In one of Shakespeare's most famous works, *Hamlet*, a character is put through an enormous amount of strife in trying not to get trapped in a revenge cycle. The important take away of this play is, "[...] to let love lead fortune or else fortune will lead love," (Hamlet 3.2.187). This quote tells us that one is either subject to their inclinations or one controls them. Since Plato states that the body is a trap for the soul, it is therefore something belonging to the finite, while knowledge remains in the Infinite. Knowledge which can be found in the Infinite, is the only thing that matters as stated by Plato, and thus he is a subject to his own inclination, as he chooses to only focus on the finite, therefore foregoing the Infinite. Knowing that opinions are nothing without knowledge to support them, Plato makes false inclinations of the Infinite devising himself a trap, in which he holds the key, and yet cannot be free.

### ***Freedom in the Infinite***

The Bible begins with, "[i]n the beginning God created," (Genesis 1.1). It must be noted that there is no mention of what there was before the beginning of God's creation. The beginning starts with God creating and that is the only time that is necessary for our understanding. Both the Bible and Plato ask what the quantitative

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value of human life is. To begin to answer this question we should start with “God created man in his image,” (Genesis 1.27). This passage suggests that both humans and God are one and the same, for God created in their<sup>1</sup> image, which is Perfect. Later in the bible it is spoken more about what ‘perfection’ looks like, as God says:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, do good to them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5.43-48)

This quote shows us multiple things. Being created in God’s image, which is perfection, means that we ourselves have perfection in us. As humans we are equal to God because we are created in his image, but that does not mean we are *equivalent* to God. This image is what Plato would have called knowledge of the Infinite, for as humans we know in Biblical terms what God is. In the quote, “[b]ehold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil,” (Genesis 3.22) speaks of what people call the ‘fall of Adam’, yet I will be referring to it as the second beginning of Adam, though I will speak more on this a bit later. The Good is explained here to mean showing your neighbour, as well as yourself love, despite what they might choose to do, as that is what it means to be ‘perfect.’ And so, evil is the opposite of this. It is important to note two things here. First, that God is not an omnipotent being, one where they could make us, as humans, do whatever they want, but rather, God’s power stops at our own agency, as that is the reason God asks, and not wills, for us to live by their standards of perfection. Due to the law of contradiction, God cannot be omnipotent and yet allow us to have free will. Second, being

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<sup>1</sup> I will be referring to God as they, as gender is a human construct, and any time God is referring to themselves in the Bible it is as ‘Us’ rather than a specific gender.

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perfect or closer to God is not something that is done only after death, but rather in life, and it is through the actions we show each other and ourselves that we can achieve it. That is how heaven is created as “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)

Now, speaking on the second beginning of Adam and Eve, where God had casted them out, to repent and learn, and “till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis 3:23), God is the idea that we all have a beginning that is in nature but not of nature. The meaning of this can be seen as the progression of the things that were made in the Bible, where all things were made before humans, pointing towards humans. Creation, especially in the image of God, is unnatural. Here, unnatural means one that is *of* nature but not *in* nature. Time is a product of the finite, a thing of nature. God and our actions that begin and end with love is the Infinite, there is no time that matters before God. We can have the second beginning within the Infinite, thus, the Infinite is not reducible to it.. In the quote, God has created us as equal to his image from the beginning, and we have been imparted with the knowledge of Good and Evil, so we either choose to live this second beginning of love, or we do not begin at all. We have all the principles of God, but this does not erase our individuality, allowing for us to choose what we want to do. Having this knowledge of acting with love is what gives us the choice to act in freedom, allowing us to walk in the light and establish a relationship through these principles with God, which is what it means to follow God and to walk through the darkness (John 8:12). Evil or sin is treating people in terms of the finite, while the Good is treating people as irreducible to the finite.

“The things which God has prepared for those who love Him. [...] God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2.9-10)

The Spirit is the Soul which I will refer to as the Infinite. A human being can search the depths of God which means that we can investigate the principles of God and his teachings, because we know about the Infinite. Everyone is a part of the revelation of the Infinite because we have been created in God’s image, and know what Good

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and Evil is, therefore we know God and this gift has been imparted to us. God created the gift by saying, “let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness,” (Genesis 1.3-4). This light in the Bible that God created is treating people according to the principles of God, it is the tool that we need to access the Infinite. It continues with, “[a]nd God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters that were above, [...] and God called the firmament Heaven. And let the waters under heaven be gathered [...] and God called the dry land Earth,” (Genesis 1.7-10) suggesting that heaven is not somewhere far from our reach<sup>2</sup>, but rather all around us. We have all the tools needed to reach the Infinite, we would just need to, “[r]epent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (Matthew 3:2). Only those who love God can access the Infinite, which is why God says to, “[...] love thy neighbor as thyself,” (Matthew 19.19), for we are created in God’s image, and if we do not love our neighbor or ourselves, then we do not love God. Repentance is the reclaiming of your consciousness. It is a self-conscious re-creation of your past; it is the statement that we are not just existing in time -- we are in nature, but we are not of nature. It is the statement that we have a history and not just a past. Creation, then, is the redemption of time. Therefore, the Infinite can be seen through the lens of how you live in the eternal, while the finite is how you live in the temporal. In *Hamlet*, people were obsessed with obtaining dignity and honor, but these are themes of the finite. To obtain honor, you obtain dignity, but to obtain honor, you must put yourself above another, thus creating an endless cycle where someone is always first or second. This is letting fortune lead love. The ghost of Hamlet’s father tried to warn him of following in this nature for he is in hell “[...] and tormented [by] flames, must render up myself,” (Hamlet 1.5.5). He is,

“[d]oomed for a certain term to walk the night, and for the day confined to fast in fires, till the foul crimes done in my

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to clarify that by saying reach I do not mean to imply that Heaven is a place where we might someday ascend to, but rather that it is inside us, and can be found through the relationships we have with our neighbor.

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days of nature are burnt and purged away. [...] From me whose love was that of dignity [...] No reckoning was made but sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head. [...] If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not; [...] Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven. [...] Adieu, Adieu, Hamlet: Remember me,” (Hamlet 1.5. 5-95).

His dad is in hell<sup>3</sup> because he did not repent in the days when he was living. He did not treat people as though they were equals and he will not be able to find peace until he does. He allowed himself to let fortune lead his love, thus loving dignity instead of his neighbor. He warns Hamlet not to let this happen to him, to not get lost in the finite. He does not want Hamlet's mind to be tainted, but rather he wants him to leave his mother to her own devices. His dad wants him to remember him, and remember his mistakes, so Hamlet will not repeat them. Therefore, there is nothing before the recommitment to living in terms of the Infinite, what matters is how we live that beginning. Creation for the Greeks was trying to climb the hierarchical ladder to create the closest possible formulation of the 'Just City' though they were doing this without any knowledge of the Infinite; theirs was a cycle without meaning, as Plato believes justice cannot be maintained this way. For Pascal, this is what would be called the two infinities, “[A] world, or rather an all, in relation to the nothingness which one can reach? Whoever will consider himself thus will grow frightened of himself, and, considering himself suspended in the mass which nature has given him between these two abysses of the infinitely great and the infinitely small,” (Pascal, *Selections from the Thought*, pg. 5).

The infinitely great and small are not really infinite at all but rather finite and that is why “all infinities are equal,” (Pascal, *Selections from the Thought*, pg. 7). What is equal is that they are finite, redundant, nonsense, and equally lost. In the Platonic world, the hierarchy is important to Socrates as he is frightened by the Infinite

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<sup>3</sup> Should be noted that Hamlet's father's Hell was not in fiery pits, but trapped in a prison in which he could not escape, on the earth, within reach of Hamlet.

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and what it entails. He is focused on living the temporal, since he feels he cannot access the Infinite there would be no need to concern himself with it, thus rejecting to live by the principles of the Infinite. It is not just enough to accept that there *is* an Infinite, we have to consistently work towards maintaining and upholding its principles through the spirit of man, thus “no foundation can anyone lay, that which is laid which is Jesus Christ,” (1 Corinthians 3:11). The Spirit is shown through our interactions with the Infinite, your values, dreams, and aspirations, because “[...] what person knows a man’s thoughts except for the spirit of the man which is in him?” (1 Corinthians 2.12). Thus it is for a person to decide through their actions and thoughts whether or not they are willing to do the work in receiving the Spirit of God. We can only begin with the love of ourselves, which in turn is the love of God, as we are created in his image and our neighbour – or we do not begin at all. This entails distinguishing between the Spirit of the Lord and the spirit of the world. If you were to receive part of the Infinite, which in the Platonic world would be to realize that there is an Infinite, then you are still in the finite and have only accepted the spirit of the world. You must wholly *commit* to the Infinite, the Spirit of God, or else you do not have anything more than the finite. In the Infinite, everyone is equal, there are no hierarchies created by the finite, thus it is only the Infinite that can eradicate them. This is why “[n]o one comprehends the thoughts of God except for the Spirit of God,” (1 Corinthians 2.14) because you must accept the Infinite and all its principles or else you do not know God. Though this is not a task that is forced on you, but rather one that you must freely choose. “[A]nyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. [...] We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death,” (1 John 3:10-14). There is more to life than what is offered to you in the finite once you acknowledge that humans are irreducible to the finite. Once you have come to this realization, then you begin a new beginning, enveloping the Infinite.

“God is light and in him is no darkness at all, [we can either] [...] walk in darkness or [...] walk in the light as He is in the

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light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” (John 1. 5-7).

The limit of God’s infinite power is humanity’s freedom.

God can only give the gift of the Infinite to those who receive it because we have the freedom of choice, whether to turn our backs against this gift and continue in the finite or to walk in an unnatural light of the Infinite. Though we cannot forget that we have this gift that God has bestowed on us, it can be repressed, which is why people so often choose to continue in the finite. The Bible shows through its teachings of love, equality and freedom, that to choose the Infinite is to avoid any hierarchical systems, thus the impossibility of Plato to reconcile his contradictions.

“Now we have received the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the spirit,” (1 Corinthians 2.11-3).

Human knowledge is finite, such as putting one above the other, but there is an Infinite knowledge that can only be known by accepting the Infinite and knowing God. To see and know God would mean to know the difference between Good and Evil. It is to know you have a responsibility to confront evil -- which is to treat others in terms of the finite, where someone is first or second. The knowledge of Good and Evil indicates we are all first before the eyes of God and therefore, our own eyes. This is why Plato could not have reached the Infinite, as he had not made the commitment to the Infinite in knowing the difference between Good and Evil, and instead resorted to treating people in terms of the finite.

The Bible says that we have a second beginning that remains in nature - which is the realm of the finite – but is not of nature. That second beginning is the one that we give ourselves when we accept the responsibilities of the Infinite, that you respect others and maintain that everyone is equal. The Self is only unified when you can locate yourself in the finite, to realize you are in nature but not of nature, and practice the principles of God. Although there is one God in the Bible, it can be taken as an idol when you read the bible and

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take it to its word. The Bible is not meant to be read this way, as you can be led to contradictions which is why we should read, “[...] not of the letter but the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,” (2 Corinthians 3.6). If you read the Bible and only take in the words, then you will be led to contradictions as there are books in the Bible where people add in their own biases. This can be seen in the book of Corinthians when stated that women should cover their hair because it is disgraceful otherwise (1 Corinthians 11.6). But if you read the Bible and look for the messages of God, then you can overcome this. By the law of contradiction, God cannot be loving, just, and charitable while also practicing hateful principles. For the God in the bible is one of love and peace, whose messages can be summed up as loving yourself and loving your neighbor being your second beginning. God is in nature but not of nature and can be confused (i.e. if taken as an idol) with the spirit of the world. One could even say that this is the difference between the finite and the Infinite and coming into existence; you would need to be able to stand in the finite while not getting lost in it, to navigate the Infinite. You cannot let yourself get lost between the words on the page but navigate through the text to be able to draw out messages from God.

### ***Enveloping the Infinite through Thought***

I would like to start the discussion on Descartes with the following passage which I will be referencing throughout this section.

*“But what makes many people become persuaded that it is difficult to know this (i.e. the existence of the perfect being), and also even to know what kind of thing their soul is, is that they never lift their minds above sensible things and that they are so much in the habit of thinking about only what they can imagine (which is a particular way of thinking appropriate only for material things), that whatever is not imaginable seems to them to be unintelligible.” (Descartes, Discourse on Method, Section 37)*

In his Discourse, Descartes comments on Socrates and the Infinite and his trouble finding it. He states (as is shown by the passage above) that the reason why Socrates was not able to reach the Infinite was not that everyone could not reach the Infinite, but rather

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because he did not lift his mind above the sensible things and thus, could not know the full potential of his soul (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Section 37). It should be stated that for Plato, trying to recreate the Just City to emulate Justice was done in vain as well, as Justice was a thing of the Infinite, and because of his own reasonings, his opinions on what Justice *should* be are blind. This is not to say that Plato could not identify what sensible things were, but rather thought ‘because I cannot know the infinite, I should think/live by it and should only be concerned with life in this sensible world’. To Descartes, the soul is the Infinite which I will use as a reference from now on. Descartes holds the same principles that the Bible does. In stating that all men are equal, and that “[g]ood sense is the best-distributed thing in the world, [...] distinguishing the true from the false [...] is naturally equal in all men,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Section 2). What is equal in all humans is that we can reason, if we choose to use it to distinguish true from false, right from wrong, the Infinite from the finite. This was what it meant in the Bible that God created us in his image, or that we can attest to their being an Infinite in the Platonic realm. This is the same as saying that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2). You have the tools for reaching the Infinite, though it is not enough just to say that men could do this, that is important but, “the main thing is to apply it well,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 2). This is what Descartes means when he states that people believe that it is difficult to know the Infinite because people are not applying the tools that they have, the access to the good sense of distinguishing true from false.

But what does it mean to reason well? One thing that Descartes says is that “[t]hose who take it upon themselves to give precepts must regard themselves as more competent than those to whom they give them,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 4). This means that you cannot force someone to come to the Infinite, you cannot force someone to see things from your eyes, because if you do then you are stating that you are better, or of higher knowledge than another, and thus you fall into a hierarchy where you do not treat people as equal. This is what Kierkegaard meant when he said that, “the transition takes place in freedom,” (Kierkegaard, *Philosophical*

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*Fragments*, pg. 75). Freedom is your contribution. No one can make you embrace the Infinite, as its power stops at your autonomy. We begin to engage with the finite seriously when we realize that human beings are equal, which could also be called the light of God. Plato could not see this light and did not believe that everyone was equal. He mentioned allegories of ships where there is a ruler and then underlings and says that underlings could overthrow the ruler and so on in an endless cycle (Plato, *The Republic*, 342e). Thus, getting lost in the finite.

Descartes made a few resolutions; one states that he will “never accept anything as true that is not known to be such,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 18) which is what leads Descartes to question the sensory world. Descartes says that the senses can deceive us, for example, believing that you are awake when you are asleep. We cannot trust everything that comes to us in our senses and thus, we should not rely on them (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 39-40). The same can be said about the things that we imagine because they come from our senses which cannot be trusted. Therefore, this is a difference between the finite and the Infinite. This is what it means to raise your mind above sensible things.

To engage in the finite and not get lost in it would mean that we need to divorce sensible and imagined things and thus, all that would be left through this divorce is, “I think therefore, I am,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 32). Reason is common amongst all, but the ability to reason (seeing everyone as equals) well is not common amongst all (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 1). Being able to reason well, is what Descartes means by thinking. Descartes also describes what it means to think after analyzing what should be taken as true or false, as can be seen in the following:

“I attentively examined what I was and as I observed that I could suppose that I had no body and that there was no world nor any place in which I might be; but that I could not, therefore, suppose that I was not; and that, on the contrary, from the very circumstance that I thought to doubt of the truth of other things, it most clearly and certainly followed that I was; while, on the other hand, if I had only ceased to think, although all the other objects which I had

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ever imagined had been in reality existent, I would have had no reason to believe that I existed; I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, needs no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that “I,” that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that although the latter were not, it would continue to be all that it is.” (Descartes, *Discourse on Meditation*, 32)

You can pretend not to have a body as it falls into the sensible and imagined world and so is easy to replace, but you cannot pretend not to have a Soul, as then you would have something that is not true; that you never existed. The Soul, as stated before, can be understood as the equality of all humans, and thus you cannot pretend as though another person does not have a Soul and that they are not essential to existence, as you would be implying that someone is not equal to another. This is why Descartes states that “[he] have not presumed that [his] mind is in any respect more perfect than that of a ordinary man [...] I prefer to believe it exists whole and entire in each of us.” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 2). To Descartes, people are already whole, no one is missing anything that they need to reach the Infinite because the ability to reason is equal in all and thus cannot be lost or broken into parts. That is why the “I” is the mind, or in other terms the Soul, cannot be doubted, as one will always know that they exist, because they think, which is equal in all. Descartes further explains thinking as knowing that he cannot doubt a God. This is because, that which is imperfect cannot think of something that is perfect, and therefore, the idea of this perfect being (God) must have put that knowledge inside of us (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 82-83). One can indeed wander down the wrong path by not reasoning well, though with the commitment to accepting ‘I think I am equal to all through reason, therefore, I am,’ as well as ‘I think that there is a difference between the finite (what can be experienced through the senses) and the Infinite (God, and treating others well) therefore, I am.’ To clarify, ‘I am’ is not an existence everyone has because not

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everyone has the ability to reason well and recognize everyone as equal. To Descartes, this is recognizing true from false. Descartes reasons that there must be a God in the following passage,

“[R]eflecting upon the fact that I doubted and that, as a consequence, my being was not utterly perfect [...]. I decided to search for the source from which I had learned to think of something more perfect than I was, and I knew that this had to be from some more perfect nature,” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 34).

Descartes admits that he is not perfect, and if he were, he would never have doubted whether he thinks and therefore, exists. He reasons that he could not have made up a being who was more perfect than himself because of the contradiction it holds, and thus, he could not have gotten it from outside of himself. Therefore, this belief must have been placed in him by a being who is perfect (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 34). This is consistent with the passages from the Bible, stating that God has revealed the Infinite to us through The Spirit (1 Corinthians 2.10). Therefore, through this reasoning, God, or at least a perfect being exists to have given us the knowledge of perfection. Thus, to Descartes, elevating from the sensible realm, the finite, means to recognize and treat everyone as equal, and to believe in the existence of the Infinite, thereby establishing his second existence -- not of nature, but within it.

### ***Concluding Comments***

After reading and analyzing these authors it is clear to me that based on some of the other authors, Plato does not by any means live what would be known as a good existence. A part of what it means to have a good existence is realizing the difference between the finite and the Infinite. Plato recognized the two realms of being as that of the Forms and the Appearances. The Bible recognized this by stating that we can either choose to walk in darkness or in light, and Descartes recognized the difference between the sensible world and the Soul. Being able to recognize the difference between the finite and the Infinite is important so that you do not get lost in the finite, but rather can navigate it to the Infinite. The other part of a good existence is accepting that all human beings are equal to each other, and thus

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deserve the same treatment. For the Bible, equality means that we were all made in God's image, for Descartes, that all humans can reason, but for Plato, there is no sense of equality anywhere. There are only hierarchal standpoints spoken of in the position of the finite.

Plato is concerned with who will rule a city and create a world that can only mimic the Just city but where there will be people above others. He imposes on humankind that no one will be able to reach the Infinite because that requires knowledge about it, though no one is capable of accessing that knowledge and therefore no one can speak of it. Plato is measuring people, as stated by Pascal, on a scale of the infinitely great or small and through this the finite is inescapable allowing him to become lost within it (Pascal, *Selection from the Thought*, #76). Plato then does not have a good existence based on the choices he has made; you cannot have only part of the Infinite, and if you do, you only have the finite. There is no unifying the self in Plato, as he states it will always be in disarray and since we cannot have true knowledge, we can only know about what exists as the appearances. Descartes and the Bible state otherwise, that the Self is already unified and whole, as everyone has what they need to reach the Infinite. No one is divided or empty, as everyone can reason, and everyone is to treat people with equality, where the basis and goal are love (Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, pg. 25). God in the Bible, and Descartes, is the realization that we have a beginning that is in nature but is not of nature, meaning that God is supernatural, and we can also have a second beginning when we commit to all the principles of 'I think therefore, I am' (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Section 34). Our second beginning begins with a recommitment to the Other. It is choosing to live a life with the basis and goal of being love and thus enveloping the Infinite through thought.

## THE ORACLE

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