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THE PROBLEM OF ALCIBIADES:
PLATO ON MORAL EDUCATION
AND THE MANY

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I will not leave you now, nor ever, unless the Athenian people
make you corrupt and shameful. And that is my greatest fear,
that a love of the people might corrupt you.

(PLATO, *Alcibiades I* 132 A 1–4 [Socrates to Alcibiades])¹

ARISTOPHANES' *Frogs* succinctly captures Athens' ambivalence towards Alcibiades in the waning days of the Peloponnesian War: 'The city yearns for him, it hates him, it longs to have him back' (1425). On the one hand, Alcibiades was the object of much admiration and awe throughout his life: he was handsome and wealthy, successful in seemingly everything he attempted, and—with the great Athenian general Pericles as his adoptive guardian—intimately connected to one of the most renowned political figures of the fifth century. At the same time, however, Alcibiades' behaviour and aspects of his personality gave rise to suspicion and resentment: his lifestyle was characterized by the kind of excess and licentiousness that Athenians associated with tyrants, and he was known for his arrogance and boundless personal ambition, which made Athenians fear his political aspirations. Indeed, where his own interest was at stake, Alcibiades proved wily and unscrupulous, even engaging in treachery against his own city for the sake of self-preservation. In the aftermath of Athens' defeat at the hands

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¹ Translations of Plato are from J. M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, 1997), with modifications.

of Sparta at the end of the fifth century, many of his fellow citizens were prepared to blame Alcibiades for their devastating loss.²

What I am calling the ‘problem of Alcibiades’ refers to the perceived need, among Socrates’ admirers in the fourth century and beyond, to address and account for Socrates’ famous association with, and influence on, this controversial and incendiary figure.³ Alcibiades’ notoriety (no doubt in combination with Socrates’ own) had brought a special attention to the relationship between the two, and given Alcibiades’ reputation for dissolute and perfidious behaviour, their relationship contributed (or at least was taken by subsequent generations to have contributed) to Socrates’ trial and execution on the charge of corrupting the youth.⁴ In the decades

² Lysias provides an especially strong statement of this sentiment in a speech against Alcibiades’ son: ‘If anyone among you feels pity for those who lost their lives in the sea-fight, or is ashamed for those who were enslaved by the enemy, or resents the destruction of the walls, or hates the Lacedaemonians, or feels anger against the Thirty, he should hold this man’s father responsible for all these things’ (*In Alc. I* 39). For the diverse and complex range of Athenian attitudes towards Alcibiades see esp. Thuc. 6. 15. 2–5; Plut. *Alc.* 1–4; 10–13; 22–5; 28; Ar. *Frogs* 1417–36; And. *In Alc.* 10–40; Dem. *In Mid.* 143–6; and Xen. *Hell.* 1. 4. 12–20.

³ Alcibiades literature was popular among the Socratic schools of the 4th cent. In addition to the two Platonic or pseudo-Platonic dialogues entitled *Alcibiades*, we know of dialogues entitled *Alcibiades* by both Euclides and Antisthenes, and we have substantial fragments from the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines of Sphettus. We also know that Phaedo’s dialogues *Simon* and *Zopyrus* both depicted Socrates and Alcibiades together. Xenophon, finally, addresses the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades at *Mem.* 1. 2. 12–47. For an overview of the early Socratic literature see C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form [Socratic]* (Cambridge, 1996), ch. 11; and D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens [Alcibiades]* (Oxford, 1999), 214–17. For a recent interpretation of Xenophon’s response to the problem of Alcibiades see G. Danzig, ‘Alcibiades versus Pericles: Apologetic Strategies in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*’, *Greece and Rome*, 61 (2014), 7–28.

⁴ Xenophon reports that Socrates’ accuser explicitly named Alcibiades as one of the young men of Athens that Socrates allegedly ‘corrupted’ (*Mem.* 1. 2. 12). See also Liban. *Ap.* 136–41 and Aeschin. *In Tim.* 173. Here I should, however, emphasize an important point of clarification about my objective, which is that my arguments are meant to be insulated from controversies about the historical Socrates and the so-called ‘Socratic problem’ as it is discussed in L. Dorion, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem’, in D. R. Morrison (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge, 2011), 1–21; Kahn, *Socratic*, 74–87; T. Penner, ‘The Historical Socrates and Plato’s Early Dialogues: Some Philosophical Questions’, in J. Annas and C. J. Rowe (eds.), *New Perspectives on Plato: Modern and Ancient* (Washington, 2003), 189–212; G. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), ch. 2; and R. Waterfield, ‘The Quest for the Historical Socrates’ [‘Quest’], in J. Bussanich and N. D. Smith (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates [Companion]* (London, 2012), 1–19. In particular, nothing in my arguments depends on the idea that Socrates’ relationship with Alcibiades *in fact* played a role in Socrates’ conviction on the charge of corrupting the youth. All that mat-

and centuries following the death of Socrates, therefore, those who wished to defend Socrates and rehabilitate his philosophical mission were forced to confront the issue of his influence on Alcibiades. The relationship between the two had represented a conspicuous failure of Socrates' supposed project of moral reform and one which—especially in the light of Alcibiades' great promise—needed to be accounted for.

In this paper I will examine Plato's response to the problem of Alcibiades, and in doing so I seek to defend two main claims. First, I will argue in Section 2 that Plato's diagnosis of the problem—his explanation of why Socrates failed to convert Alcibiades to the life of philosophy—consists in two central points: that motivations associated with the spirited part of the soul play a decisive role in moral education, particularly in the case of exceptionally ambitious and talented individuals; and that the democratic many *themselves*, not Socrates, are primarily responsible for the corruption of promising young men such as Alcibiades. These points are connected, moreover: the many exert a moral influence on the young by shaping and exploiting their spirited motivations. I aim to show that Plato develops and dramatizes this diagnosis of the problem

ters in the present context is that in the 4th cent. and beyond there was a *perceived* need to address Socrates' influence on Alcibiades, however historical or merely legendary it may have been, and that Plato felt this need and entered into the debate. Strictly speaking, it is not even necessary for my purposes that Socrates and Alcibiades ever had any sort of relationship at all. My arguments are, therefore, compatible even with the extreme view, defended by T. C. Brickhouse and N. D. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* [*Socrates*] (Oxford, 1994), 173–86, and *The Trial and Execution of Socrates: Sources and Controversies* (Oxford, 2002), 5–8, that politics played no role in Socrates' actual trial, and that any apparent evidence to the contrary is due to the influence of Polycrates, who manufactured political charges—including Socrates' association with Alcibiades—in his *Accusation of Socrates*, which was published a few years after Socrates' death, and to which later 4th-cent. writers such as Xenophon and Libanius were responding (see also A.-H. Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth: The Two Socratic Apologies of Xenophon* (Notre Dame, 1957)). My arguments are certainly congenial, however, to interpretations of Socrates' trial that attribute political motivations to Socrates' accusers, or that at least acknowledge a role for such motivations. See e.g. R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Meno* [*Meno*] (Cambridge, 1964), 384; C. C. W. Taylor, *Plato: Protagoras* [*Protagoras*] (Oxford, 1976), 64; and G. Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* [*Socratic*] (Cambridge, 1994), 87–9; and recent accounts in R. Waterfield, *Why Socrates Died: Dispelling the Myths* (Toronto, 2009), 173–90; and M. Ralkowski, 'The Politics of Impiety: Why was Socrates Prosecuted by the Athenian Democracy?', in Bussanich and Smith (eds.), *Companion*, 301–27. For discussion of Polycrates' alleged influence on Plato see Bluck, *Meno*, 368; E. R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* [*Gorgias*] (Oxford, 1959), 28–31; Waterfield, 'Quest', 17–18; and especially Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 223–30.

of Alcibiades in three earlier dialogues—*Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Symposium*—as well as in book 6 of the *Republic*.⁵

My second main claim will be that the psychological and educational theories of the *Republic* are informed by Plato's diagnosis of the problem of Alcibiades, and that they are conceived, at least in part, as a solution to that problem. In particular, I will argue in Section 3 that the *Republic's* emphasis on the role of the spirited part of the soul in early moral education, and on the importance of instilling correct values on a large scale in the ideal city, partly reflects Plato's thinking about Alcibiades and his desire to ensure that gifted individuals like him are not corrupted by the many. On this view, the account of education in the *Republic* is designed to solve the very problems that, from Plato's point of view, led to Alcibiades' downfall as it is portrayed in the earlier dialogues.⁶

1. Alcibiades and spirited motivation

Here it will be useful to establish two premisses on which the arguments of this paper will be relying. The first is that the spirited part of the soul, as Plato presents it in the *Republic* and other dialogues,

⁵ Although *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Symposium* are standardly taken to pre-date the *Republic*, the chronology is unimportant to me, and my arguments take no stance on the question of developmentalism in Plato's works. I will argue that in the *Republic* we find, fully worked out, ideas that are merely sketched or implied in the earlier dialogues, but I take that to be compatible both with developmentalist and with more unitarian lines of interpretation. A related point is that nothing in my arguments will require me to take a stand on the issue of precisely what it means for something to be a 'part' of the soul according to the theory of tripartition as we find it in the *Republic* and later dialogues: the continuity in Plato's thinking that I will defend should be consistent with a wide range of interpretations of the details of tripartite theory. For discussion of psychic parthood in Plato and related issues see C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics [Utopia]* (Oxford, 2002), 216–35; H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1996); J. Moline, 'Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 60 (1978), 1–26; A. W. Price, 'Are Plato's Soul-Parts Psychological Subjects?', *Ancient Philosophy*, 29 (2009), 1–15; C. Shields, 'Simple Souls', in E. Wagner (ed.), *Essays on Plato's Psychology* (Lanham, Md., 2001), 137–56; and especially the contributions to R. Barney, T. Brennan, and C. Brittain (eds.), *Plato and the Divided Self [Divided Self]* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁶ Another obvious dialogue to consider in this context is the *First Alcibiades*. Although I will not focus on it in the present paper, I will make use of it throughout, as I take it to corroborate my reading of the other dialogues, as well as my interpretation of Plato's views on Alcibiades more generally. On authorship of the *First Alcibiades* see n. 9 below.

is associated with a range of honour- and esteem-related desires, emotions, and attitudes that include the following: the desires for honour, victory, fame, and good reputation; anger in response to perceived slights and injustices; gentleness towards what is familiar and hostility towards what is unfamiliar; feelings of admiration (towards the *kalon*) and moral disgust (towards the *aischron*); sensitivity to praise and blame; the emotion of shame; and the boldness and endurance associated with courage and fighting. Nothing in this characterization of spirited desire and emotion is new, and I will defer to existing secondary literature for relevant discussion and defence.⁷

The second premiss is that Plato takes spirited motivations to play an especially prominent role in the psychology of Alcibiades in particular—a view that is, in fact, widely accepted and attested by other Platonic sources and by the ancient tradition more generally.⁸ We will see evidence of Plato's view in each of the dialogues examined in Section 2, but some preliminary support for it—and perhaps the most vivid expression of it in the Platonic corpus—can be

⁷ See esp. T. Brennan, 'The Nature of the Spirited Part of the Soul and its Object', in Barney, Brennan, and Brittain (eds.), *Divided Self*, 102–27; D. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature [Aidōs]* (Oxford, 1993), 388–9; J. M. Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation', in id., *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton, 1999), 118–37; A. Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero: Courage, Manliness and the Impersonal Good [Hero]* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 1; R. Kamtekar, 'Imperfect Virtue', *Ancient Philosophy*, 18 (1998), 315–39 at 325–7; and G. R. Lear, 'Plato on Learning to Love Beauty' ['Beauty'], in G. Santos (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (Malden, Mass., 2006), 104–24.

⁸ Indeed, arguably the most notorious feature of Alcibiades' character, as far as his contemporaries and successors were concerned, was his ambition. (1) Thucydides reports that Alcibiades was an enthusiastic (*προθυμότεστα*) advocate of the Sicilian expedition in large part because he hoped to advance his reputation (*δόξη ὠφελήσειν*), and he reports that the public suspected him of aspiring to tyranny (*ὡς τυραννίδος ἐπιθυμοῦντι*) (6. 15. 2–4). (2) Isocrates writes: *καίτοι πολλοὶ τῶν πολιτῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν* [i.e. Alcibiades] *δυσκόλως εἶχον ὡς πρὸς τυραννεῖν ἐπιβουλευόντα* (*De bigis* 38). (3) Xenophon claims that Alcibiades and Critias were 'by nature the most honour-loving of all Athenians' (*φύσει φιλοτιμοτάτω πάντων Ἀθηναίων*) and wanted to become the most famous men of all (*πάντων ὀναμιαστοτάτω γενέσθαι*) (*Mem.* 1. 2. 14; cf. 1. 2. 16; 1. 2. 39; 1. 2. 47). (4) Plutarch refers frequently to Alcibiades' *φιλοτιμία* and *φιλοδοξία* (see *Alc.* 6. 3; 7. 3; 11. 1; 27. 4; and 29. 2) and attributes his rivalry with Nicias to his distress at seeing the latter greatly honoured by their fellow citizens (*Alc.* 14. 1–9). (5) In his commentary on the *Alcibiades* Proclus calls Alcibiades 'honour-loving' (*φιλότιμον*, 115. 6), 'rule-loving' (*φίλαρχον*, 137. 16), and 'a lover of power' (*δυνάμεως ἐραστής*), and he provides an extended analysis of Alcibiades' distinctively ambitious psychology (e.g. at 138–9 and 146–51). (6) Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Alcibiades* also repeatedly characterizes Alcibiades as a lover of honour (*φιλότιμος*, 24. 1; 31. 3; 33. 8; 38. 15) and as a lover of conflict (*φιλόνεικος*, 71. 15).

found in the *First Alcibiades*, where Plato (or a Platonic author)⁹ has Socrates testify to Alcibiades' inexhaustible ambition:

Suppose one of the gods asked you, 'Alcibiades, would you rather live with what you now have, or would you rather die on the spot if you weren't permitted to acquire anything greater?' I think you'd choose to die. What then *is* your real ambition in life? I'll tell you. You think that as soon as you present yourself before the Athenian people—as indeed you expect to in a very few days—by presenting yourself you'll show them that you deserve to be honoured more than Pericles or anyone else who ever was. Having shown that, you'll be the most influential man in the city, and if you're the greatest here, you'll be the greatest in the rest of Greece, and not only in Greece, but among the foreigners who live on the same continent as we do. And if that same god were then to tell you that you should have absolute power in Europe, but that you weren't permitted to cross over into Asia or get mixed up with affairs over there, I think you'd rather not live with only that to look forward to; you want your reputation and your influence to saturate all mankind, so to speak. (105 A–C)

Here Socrates characterizes Alcibiades' desire for power, reputation, and honour as *the* driving motivation of his young life. As we will see in Section 2, Plato takes spirited motivations of this sort to play a crucial role in Alcibiades' downfall.

2. Diagnosis of the problem of Alcibiades

In this section I will argue that in three early dialogues that prominently feature or refer to Alcibiades, as well as in *Republic* 6, Plato adumbrates and presents his diagnosis of the problem: that the democratic many themselves are responsible for Alcibiades' corruption, and that they influence young men like him by shaping and affecting their spirited motivations. Although the arguments will vary somewhat for each dialogue, they will all take roughly the following form. (1) Plato draws attention to the figure of Alcibiades, and to spirited elements of his psychology, in contexts that conspicuously allude to Socrates' conviction on the charge of corrupt-

⁹ My arguments assume nothing about the Platonic authenticity of the *First Alcibiades*. For recent discussion of that issue see M. Johnson and H. Tarrant (eds.), *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover-Educator [Alcibiades]* (London, 2014) (especially the contributions by Y. Kurihara and E. Benitez, and the appendices by E. Baynam and H. Tarrant and by T. Roberts and H. Tarrant); and N. Smith, 'Did Plato Write the *Alcibiades I*?', *Apeiron*, 37 (2004), 93–108.

ing the youth. (2) In those same contexts, Plato also draws attention to the role of spirited motivation in moral education, and to ways in which the democratic many corrupt, or at least have the potential to corrupt, the young—especially the most promising among them—by influencing such motivations. (3) We can conclude that (1) and (2) are connected: Plato’s attention to Alcibiades and the charge of corrupting the youth alongside insinuations or accusations that the many corrupt the young is partly intended as a response to the problem of Alcibiades.

2.1. *Protagoras*

Although Alcibiades is not one of the main speakers of the *Protagoras*, his presence is clearly important to Plato: the opening lines of the dialogue draw immediate attention to him.¹⁰ ‘Where have you just come from, Socrates?’ an anonymous friend asks. ‘No, don’t tell me. It’s pretty obvious that you’ve been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades’ (309 A 1–2). Plato also reminds the reader of the young man’s presence at several key points throughout the dialogue, and, significantly for present purposes, in the course of doing so he characterizes Alcibiades as an exemplar of spirited desires and tendencies. On three separate occasions in the text Alcibiades rallies to Socrates’ side in order to pressure

¹⁰ In a recent article R. Ramsey, ‘Plato’s Oblique Response to Issues of Socrates’ Influence on Alcibiades: An Examination of the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*’ [‘Response’], in Johnson and Tarrant (eds.), *Alcibiades*, 61–76, adopts an approach that is in some ways methodologically similar to my own: he examines Plato’s treatment of Alcibiades in the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* in relation to those dialogues’ positions on moral education, and he draws conclusions on that basis about Plato’s response to (what I am calling) the problem of Alcibiades. Ramsey, however, arrives at conclusions that are quite different from (and ultimately incompatible with) my own. In particular, he argues that the explanation of Alcibiades’ downfall offered in those texts is that (a) Alcibiades was corrupted by sophists, and (b) Alcibiades was *by nature* corrupt and thus incapable of benefiting from Socratic education anyway. I do not think either of these explanations can be correct, however: (a) is ruled out by the fact that in *Republic* 6 Socrates calls the many ‘the greatest sophists’ and denies that *any* of the so-called sophists teach anything other than the views of the masses; and (b) is ruled out if, as many commentators have assumed (and I will argue), *Republic* 6’s discussion of how those with the ‘best natures’ become corrupted is meant to allude to Alcibiades. Moreover, Ramsey’s explanation evidently ignores the testimony offered by Alcibiades himself in the *Symposium*, as well as the *First Alcibiades*. Because of our different conclusions, Ramsey and I also emphasize very different elements of the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*. For another commentator who discusses the significance of Alcibiades’ presence in the *Protagoras* see P. Coby, *Socrates and the Sophistic Enlightenment: A Commentary on Plato’s Protagoras* [*Protagoras*] (London, 1987), 19–23.

Protagoras into continuing the conversation (336 B–E, 347 B, and 348 B–C), and crucially, he does so by exploiting Protagoras' sense of honour. He suggests that walking away from the discussion would constitute Protagoras' admission of his inferiority to Socrates, and the ultimate effect of Alcibiades' taunts is that Protagoras becomes 'ashamed' (*αἰσχυνθείς*, 348 C 1). Most notably, after one such intervention Critias comments that 'Alcibiades is always a lover of victory in any challenge he rushes into' (*Ἀλκιβιάδης δὲ ἀεὶ φιλόνικός ἐστι πρὸς ὃ ἂν ὀρμήσῃ*, 336 E 1–2). His remark attributes a characteristically spirited motivation to Alcibiades—one that Critias evidently considers a perennial feature of Alcibiades' character—while also indicating Alcibiades' impetuosity, a further trait often associated with spirited psychology.¹¹

Alcibiades' presence is made even more significant by Socrates' arguments against the teachability of virtue, which subtly allude to the charge of corrupting the youth. When Protagoras promises to make the young Hippocrates a better man and good citizen—which he later identifies with making someone admirable and virtuous (328 A–B)—Socrates confesses that he has never believed virtue to be teachable at all (318 E–319 B). First of all, he observes, there are no recognized or distinguished experts among his fellow Greeks in the art of citizenship, as there are in other teachable fields such as shipbuilding. Rather, everyone is considered equally eligible to provide counsel about matters of justice and city management (319 B–D). Second, Socrates points out, the men reputed to be wisest and most virtuous regularly neglect to teach virtue, not only to their fellow citizens, but even to their own sons. If virtue were teachable, however, then those who are virtuous would invariably seek to impart their wisdom to their offspring and others (319 E–320 B).

Socrates' speech is directly relevant to the problem of Alcibiades. Note, to begin with, that Socrates' sceptical remarks imply a criticism of some of the fundamental principles of Athenian democracy, which rests on the idea that *all* citizens are experts in matters of justice and are fit to share in ruling the city, and which takes the practices and institutions of democracy to be effective in educat-

¹¹ See, for example, Plato's discussion of impetuous crimes committed out of spirited anger at *Laws* 866 D–868 A (and cf. Arist. *NE* 1149^a24–^b3). For Alcibiades' spiritedness in the dialogue see Coby, *Protagoras*, 18–19 and 91. For Alcibiades' spirited nature in general see F. Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire [Desire]* (Oxford, 2006), 202 and n. 41.

ing its young men. Democratic citizens, it is presumed, collectively teach one another through their laws and social interactions, and virtuous fathers, in particular, impart virtue to their sons.¹² The critique of democracy implied by Socrates' speech, moreover, evidently reflects doubts about, and perhaps even hostility towards, Athenian role models and educational practices that were (rightly or wrongly) attributed to the historical Socrates himself, and which were strongly associated with his corruption of young men.¹³ In the *Gorgias*, for instance, Socrates argues at length for the controversial view that the most renowned politicians of Athens' past—including Themistocles and Pericles—actually made Athenians *worse* as a result of their leadership (515 B–517 A),¹⁴ and Xenophon explicitly attributes to Socrates' accuser the claim that he taught sons to treat their fathers and associates with contempt (*Mem.* 1. 2. 49–54).¹⁵

¹² The former view is on display in both *Apology* and *Meno*, where the democratic partisans Meletus and Anytus, respectively, assert that all Athenians are qualified teachers of virtue (*Ap.* 24 D–25 A; *Meno* 92 E–93 A). Trust in a good father's ability to educate his sons is evident, among other places, in Isocrates' *On the Team of Horses*, where Alcibiades' son argues, in defence of Alcibiades himself, 'My father was left an orphan . . . and became the ward of Pericles, whom all would acknowledge to have been the most moderate, most just, and wisest of the citizens. Indeed, I count this also among his admirable qualities—that . . . he was fostered, raised, and educated under the guardianship of a man of such character' (28). Similar views are found at *Crito* 45 C–D, *Lach.* 179 C–D, and (with tongue in cheek) *Menex.* 237 A–238 D.

¹³ Elsewhere in Plato, for instance, Socrates undermines the idea that all Athenians could be teachers of virtue (*Ap.* 25 A–C) or that the many could ever impart wisdom (*Crito* 44 D). Again, the question of the historical Socrates' *actual* political proclivities—discussed in M. Anderson, 'Socrates as Hoplite', *Ancient Philosophy*, 25 (2005), 273–89; Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates*, 153–72; and Vlastos, *Socratic*, ch. 4—is irrelevant to my arguments.

¹⁴ As commentators have noted, Socrates actually criticizes both sides of the Athenian political spectrum in the *Gorgias* by including Cimon and Miltiades among those responsible for Athens' troubles. See Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates*, 160; and Dodds, *Gorgias*, 33 and n. 2, 357, and 364. Socrates' criticism was perceived even in antiquity to be problematic (see esp. Ael. Ar. *Pro quattuor* 331–5). As A. Nehamas, 'Socratic Intellectualism', in id., *Virtues of Authenticity* (Princeton, 1999), 26–58 at 48, comments: 'Socrates claims that Pericles failed to make the Athenians good since they eventually prosecuted him and almost sentenced him to death. But does this argument not apply even more directly to Socrates himself?' Cf. Dodds, *Gorgias*, 355–6.

¹⁵ Although Xenophon defends and reinterprets the Socratic ideas that led to this reputation, even he acknowledges, 'I know that he did in fact use this language about father, relatives, and friends' (*Mem.* 1. 2. 53). Here is a sample of additional evidence that Socrates was associated with anti-Athenian or -democratic views. (1) At *Meno* 93 A–94 E Socrates provides another argument to the effect that the great leaders of Athens' past have characteristically failed to improve their own sons (93 A–94 E). (2) In the pseudo-Platonic *Theages* the young Theages tells Socrates, 'I've

The pertinence of Socrates' subtly anti-democratic arguments to the problem of Alcibiades is amplified, moreover, by their inclusion of a crucial reference to Alcibiades himself. In the course of presenting his case against the teachability of virtue, Socrates points out the young man's own reputation for corrupt behaviour:

Take a good look at Cleinias, the younger brother of Alcibiades here. When Pericles became his guardian, he was afraid that he would be corrupted, no less, by Alcibiades. So he separated them and placed Cleinias in Aripbron's house and tried to educate him there. Six months later he gave him back to Alcibiades because he couldn't do anything with him. (*Prot.* 320 A 3–B 1)

By having Socrates draw attention to Alcibiades' infamous character during a discussion of moral education, Plato calls to mind Socrates' relationship with Alcibiades and to the role it was perceived to have played in Socrates' trial. This association is intensified by the fact that Socrates uses Alcibiades as evidence that putatively virtuous fathers regularly fail to educate their sons. By pointing to Pericles' inability to educate either Cleinias or, by implication, Alcibiades himself, Socrates challenges the pedagogical credentials of one of the pre-eminent champions of democratic ideals. In other words, Socrates mentions Alcibiades in the course of presenting exactly the sort of anti-democratic argument for which he was known, and the sort which contributed to his reputation for corrupting the young and alienating them from their fathers and relatives.¹⁶ The fact that insolence towards prominent politicians, and towards Pericles in particular, was one of the well-known examples of

heard about the arguments they say you offer, that the sons of the politicians are no better than the sons of shoemakers' (126 D 1–3). (3) In the *Clouds* the effect of Socrates' 'education' of Pheidippides is that he strikes his own father and justifies his behaviour with a series of casuistic arguments (1325–1439). Significantly, perhaps, Pheidippides (like Alcibiades) has a family connection to Pericles (see M. Nussbaum, 'Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom' [*Aristophanes*], *Yale Classical Studies*, 26 (1980), 43–97 at 68; and K. J. Dover, *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), 99 and xxv–xxvii). For discussion of Socratic education in the *Clouds*, and of how the *Clouds* relates to the *Protagoras*, see Nussbaum, 'Aristophanes', esp. 81–3.

¹⁶ Indeed, it is just such an argument that Callicles in the *Gorgias* associates with those who have 'cauliflower ears', referring to oligarchic young men (cf. Dodds, *Gorgias*, 357). The inflammatory undertones of Socrates' remarks are highlighted even further by his praise of Sparta later in the *Protagoras* (342 A–343 B; and cf. *Alc. II* 148 B–149 C). For Pericles' failure to educate even his own sons see Plut. *Per.* 36. 1–4.

Alcibiades' objectionable behaviour only reinforces this point.¹⁷ We can conclude, then, that Socrates' mention of Alcibiades at this critical point in his discussion of moral education is a deliberate Platonic allusion to the controversy surrounding Socrates' reputed influence on Alcibiades and other young men like him.

If Socrates' speech alerts the reader to the issue of Socrates' alleged corruption of young men like Alcibiades, Protagoras' Great Speech hints at an alternative explanation of that corruption. In response to Socrates' case against the teachability of virtue, Protagoras argues, to begin with, that all human beings are granted a share in shame and justice, without which political life would be impossible. The reason all Athenians are accepted as counsellors on matters of justice, then, is not that none of them is an expert in the art of citizenship, but rather that *all* of them are, at least to some extent. Protagoras furthermore argues that in fact good men *do* educate their sons, and he proceeds to offer an outline of how fathers and citizens in general, along with the democracy and its laws themselves, teach virtue to young men.

Two features of Protagoras' defence of Athenian moral education are especially relevant in the present context. The first is that moral education takes place largely on a public level through the influence of the democratic many and the city as a whole: *all* citizens, according to the sophist's picture, have a share in educating the young. Second, early education and ethical development, as Protagoras characterizes them, include a substantial role for characteristically spirited motivations. Protagoras identifies justice and a sense of shame as the necessary conditions of human communities, and he stresses the importance of teaching children which kinds of speech and action are admirable (*kalon*) and shameful (*aischron*), just and unjust. He also emphasizes exposure to the praise of noble

¹⁷ Xenophon famously recounts a conversation in which the young Alcibiades, after associating with Socrates, arrogantly presumes to best Pericles in argument (1. 2. 39–46); Aelius Aristides, drawing on Aeschines of Sphettus, reports, 'Plato's speeches [in the *Alcibiades I*] were directed against a man who not only readily despised Pericles, but as Aeschines says about him, was the sort who "would have most gladly rebuked the twelve gods". So great was his excess of pride' (*Pro quattuor* 575). In the *Symposium* Alcibiades twice compares Pericles unfavourably with Socrates (215 E; 221 C–D), and in the *Alcibiades I* Socrates attempts to woo Alcibiades by telling him, 'I hope to exert great influence over you by showing you that I'm worth the world to you and that nobody is capable of providing you with the influence you crave, neither your guardian nor your relatives, nor anybody else except me' (105 E 1–5). Finally, in the *Alcibiades II* Socrates ominously imagines a scenario in which Alcibiades might undertake to kill Pericles (143 E–144 B).

role models whom the young will strive to emulate, and he describes how young men engage in gymnastic training that is designed to prevent cowardice. While the *Protagoras* shows no interest in offering an explicit division of the soul of the sort we find in *Republic* 4, it is clear that the pedagogical and social policies Protagoras recommends prominently target motivations that are distinctively spirited from the perspective of tripartite theory.¹⁸ (I will henceforth refer simply to ‘spirited motivations’ in the earlier dialogues, as shorthand for ‘motivations identified as spirited under tripartite psychology’, without taking a position on whether tripartition is somehow latently present or implicit in the earlier dialogues.)

Protagoras’ Great Speech indicates, then, that democratic culture and the many serve as the main agents of moral education, and that they do so largely by influencing a young person’s spirited motivations. His speech also gestures, however, at what Plato takes to be the *inadequacy* of democratic education: it fails to distinguish what is *truly* just and admirable from what is merely *considered* just and admirable in a given society such as Athens.¹⁹ The democratic programme is designed to promote the inculcation of established traditions and obedience to a given set of laws, but it is not equipped to guarantee that a society’s inherited values are the correct ones, and it cannot, therefore, assure true as opposed to merely apparent virtue.²⁰ This weakness of democratic education is hinted at in at least two ways. First, Protagoras observes that it is considered madness for any man to admit that he is unjust, even if he really is. Rather, people believe that ‘everyone ought to claim to

¹⁸ See also discussion in Cairns, *Aidōs*, 356–8, who observes that Protagoras is promoting ‘a valued disposition encompassing a sense of the ways in which one’s own honour and status are bound up with those of others’.

¹⁹ This is true despite the fact that, as we will see in sect. 4, the education Protagoras describes has much in common, at least in outline, with the programme that Socrates actually recommends in the *Republic*.

²⁰ See discussion of this issue in Cairns, *Aidōs*, 360; Coby, *Protagoras*, 59; and A. Sesonske, ‘Hedonism in the *Protagoras*’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 1 (1963), 73–9 at 74–6. Some commentators who emphasize this line of thought—including P. Friedländer, *Platon*, ii. *Die Platonischen Schriften* (Berlin, 1930), 14; A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and his Works* (London, 1927), 244–7; G. Vlastos, ‘Introduction’, in id. (ed.), *Plato: Protagoras* (New York, 1956), vii–lvi at xii–ix; and M. B. McCoy, ‘Protagoras on Human Nature, Wisdom, and the Good: The Great Speech and the Hedonism of Plato’s *Protagoras*’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 18 (1998), 21–39—find in the culturally relativistic implications of the Great Speeches traces of Protagoras’ famous Man–Measure Doctrine. I am sympathetic to such readings, although nothing in my present argument depends on them.

be just, whether they are or not', and that 'it is madness not to *pretend* to possess justice' (323 B 5–7).²¹ The implication is clearly that the democratic system encourages or produces the mere *appearance* of justice, rather than true virtue, and that it thereby gives rise to individuals who may be willing to deceive their fellow citizens and commit injustice in secret.²²

Second, Protagoras tellingly compares the way the many collectively teach virtue to the way they collectively teach Greek. He mockingly says, 'You're spoiled, Socrates, because *everyone* here is a teacher of virtue, to the best of his ability, yet you can't see a single one. You might as well look for a teacher of Greek; you wouldn't find a single one of those either!' (327 E 1–328 A 1). His comment subtly betrays the culturally variable nature of the education he advocates. It is true that any society is equipped to teach a language to its young, but *which* language it teaches is a matter of convention that varies from one society to the next—a line of thought that was, moreover, familiar to Plato and his audience.²³ The obvious problem, from Plato's perspective, is that what is virtuous and admirable, unlike language, is not relative to convention. Democratic education will be effective in establishing true virtue, therefore, only if democracy and the many who populate it uniformly promote the correct values. Plato does not perform *modus tollens* on that conditional in the *Protagoras* itself, but by having the sophist defend Athenian education in a way that draws attention to its conservative and fallible character, Plato makes room for identifying the problem with democratic culture: the many's impoverished

²¹ Significantly, the word for 'pretend' used here, *προσποιούμενον*, is the same word used in the *Gorgias* to characterize the way that the various forms of flattery 'pretend' to be true crafts (*προσποιεῖται*, 464 C 7; 464 D 4; cf 519 C 3).

²² This implication is reinforced later in the text when Protagoras is led through Socrates' questioning towards the conclusion that, at least on the view of the democratic many, prudence and sound deliberation mean achieving beneficial results *through injustice* (333 C–E). It is, moreover, corroborated outside the *Protagoras* by book 2 of the *Republic*, where Adeimantus explains that according to the education Athenians offer their young, what matters is not *being* just, but rather *seeming* just (365 A–C).

²³ We find a version of it in the *First Alcibiades* (110 D–112 D), for instance, and in the *Dissoi Logoi* we find another argument concerned with the teachability of virtue that appeals to the same language analogy cited by Protagoras, but which adds: 'If someone does not believe that we can learn words, but that we are born knowing them, let him consider this: if one sent off a child to Persia as soon as he was born and the child was raised there without hearing the Greek language, he would speak Persian. If someone should bring a child here from there, he would speak Greek' (6. 12).

and largely mistaken ideas about what is virtuous, admirable, and good.²⁴ Given the conspicuous presence of a spirited Alcibiades in the dialogue, alongside allusions to Socrates' alleged influence on him, it is reasonable to conclude that Protagoras' speech is partly intended to suggest a diagnosis of the problem of Alcibiades: that the democratic many themselves, not Socrates, are primarily responsible for the downfall of promising young men.²⁵

2.2. *Gorgias*

The position hinted at by the *Protagoras* comes into sharper focus in the *Gorgias*. Alcibiades does not appear as a character in the *Gorgias*, but he is mentioned in two critical passages in the dialogue. The first occurs immediately after Callicles takes over the argument from Polus:

Well, Callicles . . . I realize that you and I are both now actually sharing a common experience: each of the two of us is a lover of two objects, I of Alcibiades, Cleinias' son, and of philosophy, and you of the Athenian *dēmos*, and the Demos who's the son of Pnylamps. I notice that in each case you're unable to contradict your beloved, clever though you are, no matter what he says or what he claims is so. You keep shifting back and forth. If you say anything in the Assembly and the Athenian *dēmos* denies

²⁴ Some critics have denied that there are any signs of cultural relativism in the Great Speech, or indeed that Plato is critical towards its content at all. G. B. Kerferd, 'Protagoras' Doctrine of Justice and Virtue in the *Protagoras* of Plato', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 73 (1953), 42–5 at 45, comments, 'It has been objected that [Protagoras'] argument involves the identification of goodness with the actual traditions of an existing civilized state . . . This is surely a perverse criticism. The virtue with which Protagoras is concerned is repeatedly stated to be the condition of all cities—without it no Polis can exist . . . His function cannot be merely therefore to express and teach what the community already believes.' (See also G. L. Kustas and S. Moser, 'A Comment on the "Relativism" of the *Protagoras*', *Phoenix*, 20 (1966), 111–15; and H. G. Wolz, 'Hedonism in the *Protagoras*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 5 (1967), 205–17 at 206–10.) Even if Kerferd's point is correct, however, I do not think it affects my main argument. Even if Protagoras does advocate, or takes himself to be advocating, the *existence* of objective standards of value, that still leaves open the question whether the democratic educational system he describes is qualified to teach those values, as opposed to its own (more or less convention-based) values. Protagoras clearly presupposes that it *is* so qualified, but that certainly does not mean that *Plato* shares his view, nor does it rule out the possibility that Plato intends to draw his readers' attention to his concerns about the Athenian system.

²⁵ The fact that the author of the *First Alcibiades* clearly has the *Protagoras* in mind when he has Alcibiades explain how he was educated seems to provide some additional corroboration for this reading. When Socrates asks Alcibiades from whom he has learnt justice, Alcibiades replies that he learnt it from the many, just as he learnt Greek from them (110 E–111 A).

it, you shift your ground and say what it wants to hear. Other things like this happen to you when you're with that good-looking young man, the son of Pylilampes. You're unable to oppose what your beloveds say or propose, so that if somebody heard you say what you do on their account and was amazed at how laughable it is, you'd probably say—if you were minded to tell him the truth—that unless somebody stops your beloveds from saying what they say, you'll never stop saying these things either. In that case you must believe that you're bound to hear me say things like that, too, and instead of being surprised at my saying them, you must stop my beloved, philosophy, from saying them. For she always says what you now hear me say, my dear friend, and she's by far less fickle than my other beloved. As for that son of Cleinias, what he says differs from one time to the next. (481 C 5–482 A 7)

The second mention of Alcibiades occurs at the conclusion of Socrates' critical remarks about Pericles and other renowned Athenian statesmen. Socrates argues that such leaders made the city 'swollen and festering' by satisfying the democracy's appetites indiscriminately, but that the citizens do not know who is truly to blame for their diseased condition. Instead, they sing the praises of Pericles and others who are truly at fault, while blaming their advisers of the moment. Socrates then warns: 'Perhaps, if you're not careful, they'll lay their hands on you, and on my friend Alcibiades, when they lose not only what they gained but what they had originally as well, even though you aren't the real causes of their ills, but if anything only auxiliary causes' (519 A 4–B 2).

Socrates' references to Alcibiades occur in contexts that, as in the *Protagoras*, also include all of the following: emphasis on spirited motivation; allusions to the death of Socrates on the charge of corrupting the youth; and attention to the pernicious role of the many in moral education. Concerning spirited motivation, it is significant that both mentions of Alcibiades take place during Socrates' exchange with Callicles (the first *immediately* after Callicles takes over the conversation), with whom Alcibiades has a great deal in common.²⁶ Most importantly for present purposes, Plato portrays

²⁶ A number of commentators have drawn attention to the striking parallels and similarities between Alcibiades and Callicles, and some have even gone so far as to suggest that the character of Callicles is a thin mask for Alcibiades himself. While I find this conclusion overly speculative, certainly it seems fair to conclude, with Ramsey, 'Response', 74, that 'We can feel some confidence in taking the *Gorgias* to present an image of the character and inclinations of the Alcibiades-type . . . [Plato] at least intended us to have [Alcibiades] in mind.' See also discussion in Dodds, *Gorgias*, 12–14, and Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 235–8.

Callicles as another exemplar of strong spirited tendencies and concerns. The very first words out of Callicles' mouth—and the opening words of the dialogue—are 'war and battle' (πολέμου καὶ μάχης, 447 A 1), and he is quick to perceive 'love of victory' as Socrates' motivation in the argument (515 B 5), thereby betraying his own understanding of their conversation as a contest. He is also an ambitious politician (515 B–C), he is deeply interested in what it takes to achieve 'reputation' in one's city (485 D–E; 486 C–D), and he believes that someone who seeks power 'should either be a ruler himself in his city or even be a tyrant' (510 A–B). Once Callicles becomes Socrates' main interlocutor, moreover, the emotion of shame and the virtue of courage become central. Callicles distinguishes between natural and conventional standards of what is admirable and shameful, and he criticizes Socrates for exploiting his interlocutors' sense of (conventional) shame.²⁷ He claims that in fact it requires great boldness and courage to lack shame in front of the many, and those who espouse conventional views do so merely out of weakness and cowardice. Hence Callicles takes pride in his shamelessness, identifying it with (the spirited qualities of) boldness and courage and attributing it only to those who are superior to the crowd.²⁸

Socrates' references also occur alongside heavy-handed allusions to the charges brought against Socrates and to his ultimate trial

²⁷ By convention, Callicles claims, it is shameful to get more than one's share and to indulge one's appetites without restraint, but by nature it is *admirable* to do those things. Significantly, Alcibiades is also a paragon of the sort of self-indulgent lack of restraint promoted by Callicles. Xenophon calls Alcibiades the 'most licentious' (ἀκρατέστατος) man in all of Athens (*Mem.* 1. 2. 12).

²⁸ Socrates exploits Callicles' sense of pride in his 'courageous' shamelessness at key points in their conversation, e.g. 'You certainly won't be shocked or feel shame; for you see, you are a courageous man' (494 D; cf. 487 A–E; 489 A; 494 C). In fact, spirited motivations—in particular, shame—play a role throughout the *Gorgias*, but they become especially prominent through the character of Callicles. Their role in the dialogue has been much discussed by commentators, including G. R. Carone, 'Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars? The Moral Psychology of Plato's *Gorgias*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 26 (2004), 55–96 at 81–2 and 90–2; J. M. Cooper, 'Socrates and Plato in Plato's *Gorgias*', in id., *Reason and Emotion*, 29–75; D. B. Fetter, 'Shame as a Tool for Persuasion in Plato's *Gorgias*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 47 (2009), 451–61; and especially J. Moss, 'Shame, Pleasure, and the Divided Soul' ['Shame'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 29 (2005), 137–70. One caveat that should be added to the above is that although Callicles is distinguished by especially strong spirited motivations, we need not liken him to the 'timocratic individual' described in *Republic* 8, who is 'ruled' by his θυμοειδές. Indeed, there are reasons for thinking that he is much more like the democratic or even tyrannical individual of that dialogue than the timocratic one. See discussion in Dodds, *Gorgias*, 13–14, and also n. 34 below.

and death. In Callicles' extended speech, which is his immediate response to the comments that contain Socrates' first mention of Alcibiades, he speaks of the danger of spending too much time in philosophy. He warns Socrates, 'If someone got hold of you or of anyone else like you and took you off to prison on the charge that you're doing something unjust when in fact you aren't, you can know that you wouldn't be able to help yourself . . . You'd come up for trial and face some no good wretch of an accuser and be put to death, if death is what he'd want as the penalty' (486 A 7–B 4). Later, immediately following his second reference to Alcibiades, Socrates himself concedes that if he were ever brought to court by an unjust man, it is not unlikely that he would be put to death. He would be judged, he says, as a doctor would be judged by a jury of children if brought to trial by a pastry chef. He explains, 'For I won't be able to point out any pleasures that I've provided for them, ones they believe to be services and benefits . . . nor will I be able to speak the truth if someone charges that I corrupt the youth by confusing them or abuse older ones by speaking bitter words against them in public or private . . . So presumably I'll get whatever comes my way' (522 B 4–C 3). Here, alongside a reference to Alcibiades and criticism of the respected democratic leader who was his guardian, Socrates predicts precisely the charge—corrupting the youth—which in the minds of Plato's readers was so closely associated with his relationship with Alcibiades and his perceived hostility to democratic practices.

Finally, Socrates' references to Alcibiades occur in contexts that draw attention to the corrupting role of the democratic many in moral education. Callicles himself, to begin with, characterizes democratic educational practices along the same lines as those found in Protagoras' Great Speech: 'I believe that the people who institute our laws are the weak and the many. They do this, and they assign praise and blame with themselves and their own advantage in mind . . . and so they say that getting more than one's share is "shameful" and "unjust" and that doing what's unjust is trying to get more than one's share' (483 B 4–C 8). In this way the many 'mould' young men 'like lion cubs' (483 E–484 A). Although Callicles' attitude towards Athenian values is much more critical than Protagoras', their ways of characterizing the process of moral

education in a democracy are consonant with one another:²⁹ in both cases the many instil values in the young through the assignment of praise and blame and by shaping the youths' attitudes about what is admirable and shameful, just and unjust. Again, then, we find that early education occurs largely by targeting a class of distinctively spirited motivations. This impression is perhaps reinforced by Callicles' choice of analogy: in Plato's image of the tripartite soul in *Republic* 9, he represents the spirited part of the soul as a 'lion'.³⁰

The *Gorgias* goes further towards an indictment of the many, however, in two ways. First, whereas Plato does not directly or explicitly call the many's values into question in the *Protagoras*, in the *Gorgias* Socrates' attitude towards the many is expressly critical and dismissive throughout.³¹ Most importantly in the present context, in the two passages that refer to Alcibiades Socrates indicates that the many 'shift back and forth' in their views and also argues at length that the many assign praise and blame incorrectly: in their ignorance of what is good and bad for them, they 'sing the praises' of those responsible for their misfortune while wrongly blaming others. If early moral education occurs largely through the inculcation of the many's views about what is admirable and shameful, praiseworthy and blameworthy, and if those views are unstable and misguided, then the implication is that the democratic many themselves are a corrupting influence on young men such as Alcibiades.

The *Gorgias* also contains a second and perhaps deeper worry, though, that bears especially on individuals like Callicles and Al-

²⁹ Both are also consistent, I take it, with the account offered by Adeimantus in *Republic* 2.

³⁰ In doing so Plato follows an established tradition in Greek literature, which often associates spiritedness with lions. See e.g. Pind. *Isthm.* 4. 45-7: 'In the toil of conflict [Melissus] resembles the θυμός of loud-roaring lions in his daring.' Significantly, the lion is also used as a symbol of Alcibiades himself in both Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1431-2) and Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades* (2. 2). Moreover, the only fully surviving quotation from Phaedo's dialogue *Zopyrus*—which features Socrates and Alcibiades searching for a teacher—reads: 'They say, Socrates, that the youngest son of the king was given a lion cub as a gift . . . And it seems to me that the lion, having been raised with the boy while he was young, followed him wherever he went, so that the Persians said the lion was in love with the boy' (G. Giannantoni, *Socratic et Socraticorum reliquiae*, i (Naples, 1990), III. A 11). Plausibly, Phaedo is following Aristophanes and others in using the Persian lion as a metaphor for Alcibiades. For discussion of the lion analogy in the *Gorgias* see Dodds, *Gorgias*, 268-9, and Ramsey, 'Response', 72.

³¹ For example, he identifies the crowds found in law courts and the assembly as 'those who lack knowledge' (454 B; cf. 471 E-472 A), and he says that he 'disregards' the many and does not even bother to discuss things with them (474 A-B).

cibiades: those who possess especially strong spirited desires, and who are especially ambitious and eager to achieve power and fame, will be especially prone to the deleterious influence of the many. In the passage quoted above, Socrates notably tells Callicles that he is a ‘lover of the Athenian *dēmos*’ (485 D 3–5; cf. 513 C 7)—a remark which, on the face of it, seems contradicted by Callicles’ own evident contempt for the democratic many, to whom he clearly considers himself superior. A parallel occurs in the *First Alcibiades*, where Socrates calls Alcibiades a ‘lover of the people’ (δημεραστής, 132 A 3), despite the young Alcibiades’ obvious sense of superiority to them.³² The Platonic point behind these characterizations is that those who wish to achieve success and honour in a place like Athens must necessarily ingratiate themselves to the many.³³ As Socrates indicates earlier in the *Gorgias* during his exchange with Polus, those who aspire to exert political influence in democratic law courts and assemblies must make use of oratorical practices that appeal, not to what is truly best, but to what the many, in their ignorance of what is best, find pleasing. Hence even the most successful Athenian politicians, including Pericles and Themistocles, are like pastry chefs who merely ‘flatter’ the appetites of the many. Given Callicles’ ambitions, then, Socrates advises him:

[You] should now be making yourself as much like the Athenian people as possible if you expect to endear yourself to them and have great power in the city . . . If you think that some person or other will hand you a craft of the sort that will give you great power in this city while you are unlike the regime, whether for better or for worse, then in my opinion, Callicles, you’re not well-advised. You mustn’t be their imitator but be naturally like them in your own person if you expect to achieve any genuine success in winning the friendship of the Athenian *dēmos* . . . For each group of people takes delight in speeches given in its own character, and resents those given in an alien manner. (513 A 1–C 2)

The implication of the passage is clear. Those who seek honour and power must assimilate themselves to the people on whom their honour and power depend: the many teach unstable and often misguided values, and the successful politician or orator

³² Cf. Thuc. 2. 43. 1, where Pericles encourages Athenians to be ‘lovers’ (ἐραστές) of their city.

³³ See the excellent discussion of this issue in J. Moss, ‘The Doctor and the Pastry Chef: Pleasure and Persuasion in Plato’s *Gorgias*’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 27 (2007), 229–49 at 241–4.

must internalize them. Indeed, there are already signs of such assimilation in Callicles himself: ‘many of the Athenians’ would attest to his good education (494 B); what he says constantly ‘shifts back and forth’ in accordance with the whims of the many (just as what Alcibiades says ‘differs from one time to the next’); in spite of himself, he cannot help feeling shame that conforms to conventional views (494 E); and finally, his hedonistic conception of value reflects the appetitive nature of the democratic many.³⁴ What Plato shows us, then, is that it is the fate of the spirit-driven and ambitious in a democracy to become as corrupt as the populace they disdain. In doing so, they also run the risk that the democracy will ultimately turn against them for the very corruption of which the many themselves are the cause, as Socrates warns might happen to both Callicles and Alcibiades.

Although Alcibiades is mentioned in only two passages in the *Gorgias*, then, they occur alongside allusions to Socrates’ trial and at critical points in the unfolding of Plato’s concerns about the role of the many in moral education. Clearly Plato intends his readers to see the implications of the dialogue for the case of Alcibiades and thereby intends to offer resources for diagnosing the cause of the notorious Athenian’s downfall.

2.3. *Symposium*

In the *Symposium* Plato addresses the problem of Alcibiades in a way that is much more direct than what we find in the *Protagoras* or *Gorgias*: through the testimony of Alcibiades himself.³⁵ In a crucial

³⁴ Callicles’ proposal that a happy life consists in having as many appetites as possible and satisfying them all indiscriminately (491 E–492 C) is strikingly similar to the characterization of the democratic individual and regimes of *Republic* 8. Note that it is perfectly consistent with (indeed, even *predicted* by) my reading of the text to think that Callicles now seeks power in the city largely as a means of satisfying his *appetitive* desires, having already been to a large extent corrupted by the many. The idea is that promising and especially ambitious individuals such as Callicles or Alcibiades start off with strong and distinctively spirited desires for honour and rule (like Alcibiades in the *First Alcibiades*), but that given the necessity of assimilating to the many in order to achieve those, they become increasingly corrupt, with increasingly strong and varied appetites alongside their spirited desires (like Alcibiades in the *Symposium*). See also nn. 28 and 36.

³⁵ Pausanias’ speech on the supremacy of Athenian law is also relevant here, in that it draws attention to the conventional nature of law and hence performs something like the function of the Great Speech in the *Protagoras* (as I understand it). See comments in R. G. Bury, *The Symposium of Plato [Symposium]* (Cambridge, 1932), xxv–xxvii.

passage in which Alcibiades explains his relationship with Socrates, he states:

He always compels me to agree with him that, despite the fact that my own shortcomings cry out for attention, I neglect myself and waste my time on the affairs of the Athenians . . . Socrates is the only man in the world who has made me feel shame [*αἰσχύνεσθαι*]*—*ah, you didn't think I had it in me, did you? Yes, he makes me feel ashamed [*αἰσχύνομαι*]: I know perfectly well that I can't prove he's wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet, the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I am overcome by the honour I receive from the many [*ἡττημένῳ τῆς τιμῆς τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν*]. My whole life has become one constant effort to escape from him and keep away, but when I see him, I feel ashamed [*αἰσχύνομαι*] in the light of what we have previously agreed upon. (216 A 4–B 6)

These comments and their immediate context contain the marks of Plato's engagement with the problem of Alcibiades that we have observed in the other dialogues. First, they highlight the importance of spirited motivation in his moral development.³⁶ Alcibiades describes two influences on his psychology and behaviour—Socrates and the many—both of which affect him (perhaps not exclusively, but saliently) through his spirited desires and emotions.³⁷ His testimony reveals, firstly, that Alcibiades experiences shame in the presence of Socrates in a way that is morally salutary: his spirited sense of shame motivates him to live up to standards of virtue to which Socrates, and the love of wisdom that Socrates has inspired in him,

³⁶ It should be noted, however, that Alcibiades, as he appears in the *Symposium*, should not necessarily be taken to be 'ruled by spirit' in the sense outlined in *Republic* 8. All that matters is that he is presented as having strong spirited motivations as a prominent feature of his psychology, whatever the structure of that psychology might be. Indeed, while I think the young Alcibiades of the *First Alcibiades* (and perhaps the *Protagoras*) does approximate the timocratic individual of the *Republic*—a reading corroborated by Proclus (*In Alc.* 138–9)—I am sympathetic to Hobbs's suggestions (*Hero*, 256) that in the *Symposium*, at least, Alcibiades is 'a disturbing example of a timocrat sinking into the chaotic existence of the democratic anarchist'. Cf. discussion of Alcibiades' psychology in K. Corrigan and E. Glazov-Corrigan, *Plato's Dialectic at Play: Argument, Structure, and Myth in the Symposium [Dialectic]* (University Park, Penn., 2004), 173–4 and 181; and in Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 219–22 and 258–9.

³⁷ Spirited motivations are, in fact, prominent in the character of Alcibiades throughout his appearance, and his encomium of Socrates focuses heavily on praise, honour, shame, admiration, and courage: Alcibiades feels 'dishonoured' (*ἡττηῖσθαι*, 219 D 4) by Socrates and vows to 'exact his revenge' (*τιμωρήσωμαι*, 214 E 2), and he admires Socrates' courage (219 D 5), endurance (220 A 1; 220 A 6), and performance in battle (220 D 5).

have drawn him.³⁸ He also reveals, however, that his spirited love of honour actually pulls him *away* from virtue.³⁹ In particular, his desire for esteem leads him towards a corrupt way of life in the presence of the *many*, who do not share philosophic values and among whom he seeks to achieve power and glory.⁴⁰ Hence we find explicitly what the earlier two dialogues to a lesser or greater degree implied: that the democratic many are responsible for corrupting Alcibiades, and they do so by way of his boundless desire for their honour and esteem.

Here we can also perceive a tension inherent in Alcibiades' relationship with the many. On the one hand, he considers himself superior to them and, as a result, does not admire them and feels no shame in their presence. On the other hand, he also seeks *to be admired* by them and to achieve power among them, and consequently he is at the mercy of those he considers inferior. This is precisely the tension we observed above in the character of Callicles,

³⁸ The possibility of a positive role for spirited emotion is, in fact, one that is introduced and developed earlier in the dialogue, most notably in Phaedrus' opening speech. Phaedrus argues that the most effective forces for inspiring virtue, and the necessary conditions for living well, are 'a sense of shame in acting shamefully and a love of honour in acting admirably' (*τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνειν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν*, 178 D 1–2). Phaedrus' characterization echoes Lysias, who accuses Alcibiades of *ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς καλοῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς κακοῖς φιλοτιμείσθαι* (*In Alc. I* 42). Significantly, perhaps, Phaedrus argues that lovers would never abandon their weapons or desert the ranks, crimes of which Alcibiades' own son was later accused (see Lys. *In Alc. I* and *II*). Also relevant is Socrates' report of Diotima's account of 'love of honour' (*φιλοτιμία*, 208 c ff.). Hobbs (*Hero*, ch. 9) provides an excellent analysis of the role of spirited motivation in the dialogue. Further discussion of possibly tripartite and spirited psychology in the *Symposium* is offered in Cairns, *Aidōs*, 378–9; Sheffield, *Desire*, 227–39; A. Nehamas, 'Only in the Contemplation of Beauty is Human Life Worth Living: Plato, *Symposium* 211 D', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 15 (2007), 1–18 at 6; and J. Reid, 'Unfamiliar Voices: Harmonizing the Non-Socratic Speeches and Plato's Psychology', in P. Destrée and Z. Giannopoulou (eds.), *Plato's Symposium: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

³⁹ Alcibiades' remarks show not only that spirited motivations can pull a person either towards or away from virtue, but also that a single individual can experience *vacillation* in his spirited emotions in the alternating presence of competing sources of honour and admiration. Note that the conflict is not, however, the sort that would—given the *Republic's* Principle of Opposites—generate a subpartitioning of the spirited part of the soul itself: it is *diachronic*, not *synchronic*. Cf. Sheffield, *Desire*, 237–9.

⁴⁰ Commentators who discuss this passage and issues related to it include Hobbs, *Hero*, 255–61; C. D. C. Reeve, 'A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*' ['Violets'], in J. H. Leshner, D. Nails, and F. C. C. Sheffield (eds.), *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Washington, 2006), 124–46 at 145; and M. Sharpe, 'Revaluing *Megalopsuchia*: Reflections on the *Alcibiades II*', in Johnson and Tarrant (eds.), *Alcibiades*, 134–46 at 143–5.

who—like Alcibiades—draws attention to his lack of shame in the face of the many, but who has political aspirations that require their approval.⁴¹ As the *Republic* testifies, those who love honour will ultimately accept it from whatever source offers it, even if they hold that source in low esteem (475 A–B). The latent conflict between a man's shamelessness in the face of a democratic many he holds in low regard, on the one hand, and his desire to be admired and honoured by them nonetheless, on the other, is one that Plato evidently takes to be distinctive of talented and ambitious individuals in a place like Athens.⁴² It is a conflict, moreover, that he considers not only morally problematic, but also—as Alcibiades' speech makes clear—psychologically troubling to those introspective enough to recognize it.⁴³

Finally, Alcibiades' speech as a whole contains numerous allu-

⁴¹ This is a point that is also anticipated earlier in the *Symposium*. During Socrates' exchange with Agathon, the young man claims to disregard the opinion of the many, an attitude which leads Socrates to suggest that Agathon might (like Alcibiades) feel no shame in acting disgracefully in front of them. At the same time, however, Agathon's success as an ambitious poet relies on the approval of the very theatre crowd he claims to ignore.

⁴² It might be objected that if Alcibiades is shameless in front of the many, then he cannot really have internalized their values in the inevitable way I have suggested. There are several lines of response to this worry, however. (1) The defining value of democracy is *freedom* (*Rep.* 557 B), on Plato's view, and Alcibiades' behaviour embodies that value to the extreme. (2) Shamelessness is actually one of the essential ingredients of the democratic regime in the *Republic* (560 E). (3) One of the distinguishing features of democratic values, especially as Plato understands them, is that they promote doing injustice *whenever one can get away with it*. Alcibiades is simply someone who, given his natural and material resources, can get away with a lot more than most people. Andocides provides a useful illustration. Writing in the voice of Phaeax, he complains: 'It makes me angry to think that while you yourselves cannot place even malefactors under arrest without risk . . . Alcibiades, who imprisoned [Agatharchus] for such a long time and forced him to paint, went unpunished—nay, increased thereby the awe and the fear in which he is held' (*In Alc.* 18). Because Alcibiades is able to commit shameful and even unjust acts with impunity, there is nothing in his democratic education to encourage him to do otherwise. (4) As Andocides' speech testifies, Alcibiades' shameless behaviour actually earns him the *honour and admiration* of his fellow citizens, even if they do find that behaviour reprehensible. In short, then, Alcibiades is the consummate product of the democracy, with all its flaws. Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 258–9, offers an excellent analysis of Alcibiades' relation to the democracy.

⁴³ For alternative explanations of the *Symposium*'s account of Socrates' failure to educate Alcibiades see A. Hooper, 'The Dual-Role Philosophers: An Exploration of a Failed Relationship', in Johnson and Tarrant (eds.), *Alcibiades*, 107–18 at 115; Sheffield, *Desire*, 202–3 (though Sheffield does acknowledge some role for Alcibiades' love of honour); and P. Woodruff, 'Socrates and the Irrational', in N. D. Smith and P. Woodruff (eds.), *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy* (Oxford, 2000), 130–50 at 143–4.

sions to the role his relationship with Socrates played in the latter's trial. Alcibiades prefaces his speech by saying that he is going to 'exact his punishment' on Socrates (214 E), and he tells his companions that they are 'members of the jury' who must stand in judgement over Socrates (219 C); and Alcibiades' speech contains allusions both to the Sicilian campaign (217 C) and to the profanation of the Mysteries (219 C)—two of the most notorious incidents with which he, Alcibiades, eventually became associated, and which would have been prominent in the minds of those reflecting on Socrates' trial.⁴⁴ These overt allusions to Socrates' conviction on the charge of corrupting the youth make it doubly clear that Plato intends us to understand Alcibiades' indictment of the many in an apologetic light. We can conclude, therefore, that in having Alcibiades confront the issue of his downfall in a context that calls to mind the trial of Socrates, Plato thereby attempts to offer a diagnosis of the problem of Alcibiades: his corruption was due not to Socrates, but to the democratic many themselves—the very people who condemned Socrates. In other words, it is not Socrates, but rather Athens itself, that is guilty of corrupting the youth.

2.4. *Republic* 6

If the preceding three dialogues in various ways draw attention to both a role for spirited motivation in moral education and the corrupting influence of the democratic many on promising youths, the *Republic* confirms and accounts for these points in more detail. In book 6, in the course of defending his claim that the city should be entrusted only to those endowed with a 'philosophic nature', Socrates provides an explanation of how most people who actually possess such a nature are typically corrupted and compelled to abandon philosophy. It is here that we find Plato offering, arguably more fully than anywhere else, the philosophical resources for diagnosing the problem of Alcibiades.

Socrates begins by suggesting, paradoxically, that the very qualities that constitute a philosophic nature—along with other pu-

⁴⁴ The apologetic and historical context of the *Symposium* is discussed in Bury, *Symposium*, lxiv–lxv; Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan, *Dialectic*, 177–9; Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 241–5; M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), 166–71 and p. 466 n. 17; Sheffield, *Desire*, 191, 201–2, and 204 n. 43; and V. Wohl, 'The Eros of Alcibiades', *Classical Antiquity*, 18 (1999), 349–85.

tative goods such as beauty, wealth, and powerful relatives—also contribute to the *corruption* of that nature (491 A–B). The reason is that a young person endowed with exceptional traits and resources will, precisely because of the promise he shows, be exploited by his fellow citizens and associates, who will flatter and honour him in hope of securing his favour. The inevitable result, Socrates says, is that such a young man will ‘be filled with impractical expectations and think himself capable of managing the affairs, not only of the Greeks, but of the barbarians as well’, and will become full of ‘empty pride that lacks intelligence’ (494 C–D). Socrates asks, ‘If someone approaches a young man in that condition and gently tells him the truth, namely, that there’s no understanding in him, that he needs it, and that it can’t be acquired unless he works like a slave to attain it, do you think it will be easy for him to listen when he’s in the midst of so many evils?’ (494 D 4–7). Even if the young man *were* to be drawn to philosophy, moreover, his fellow citizens would do anything to keep him away from it, including plotting against, or taking to court, the one who drew him to it (494 D–E). In the absence of philosophical guidance, however, young men will receive their only ‘education’ from the many themselves. Socrates explains:

When the many are sitting together in assemblies, law courts, theatres, army camps, or in some other public gathering of the crowd, they cast blame very loudly and excessively on some of the things that are said or done and they praise others in the same way, shouting and clapping, so that the very rocks and surroundings echo the noise of their praise or blame and double it. In circumstances like that, what is the effect, as they say, on a young person’s heart? What private instruction can hold out and not be swept away by that kind of praise or blame and be carried by the flood wherever it goes, so that he’ll say the same things are admirable or shameful as the crowd does, follow the same way of life as they do, and be the same sort of person as they are? (492 B 5–C 8)

In this way the many turn the young into ‘precisely the kind of people they want them to be’ (492 B 1–2). This improper ‘education’, Socrates explains, has its most harmful effects on those with a philosophic endowment: just as they are the ones capable of extraordinary good, so also, when raised improperly, they are capable of extraordinary *wickedness*. As a result of their corruption by the many, therefore, the best-natured youths end up being those who do ‘the greatest evil to cities and individuals’ (τὰ μέγιστα κακά, 495 B 3).

Socrates' account attributes the many's corrupting influence to two main ways in which they impact on the spirited element of a young person's psychology. The first is that the many shape a person's sense of what is admirable and shameful. Through their clamorous praise and blame, they 'teach' a young man which kinds of behaviour, and which kinds of people, they deem worthy of honour or dishonour. This kind of influence is exacerbated in the case of those with ambition in the city—whether it be in poetry or politics, Socrates says—who are 'compelled' to act in the ways the many deem praiseworthy if they want to achieve success (493 c–d). Because what the many praise is not truly admirable (and what they blame not truly shameful), however, their influence leads young men away from genuine virtue and philosophy. The second way the many corrupt the young—in particular, the best among them—is by *honouring* them excessively. This has the effect of giving a young man the false impression that he is already worthy of great power and honour, and hence that he does not need to subject himself to the rigorous self-improvement demanded by philosophy. Both of these methods exploit a young person's spirited desire for honour and his sensitivity to what earns the praise and esteem—or blame and censure—of his fellow citizens.

Although Alcibiades is never mentioned by name, book 6's account is filled with allusions to him and his relationship with Socrates, including striking parallels to Alcibiades' autobiographical remarks in the *Symposium*.⁴⁵ The *Republic*'s account includes, in addition, an allusion to Socrates' trial: those who try to lead the best young men towards philosophy will be 'plotted against' and 'brought to court'. The *Republic* also points to beauty, wealth, physical strength, and 'relatives who are powerful in the city'—all qualities superlatively attributed to Alcibiades—as the resources that make an exceptional young man the object of the many's flattery and honour.⁴⁶ Finally, Plato's intention to bring to mind Alcibiades in *Republic* 6 is attested by *Alcibiades I* and *II*, along with Plut-

⁴⁵ In both accounts, for instance, a young man is approached privately and persuaded that he is like a 'slave', and he feels drawn to philosophy but is ultimately ruined by the honour of the many. The reference to those who do 'the greatest evil to cities' also recalls Xenophon's report that, according to Socrates' accuser, Alcibiades (and Critias) 'did great evil to the city' (*Mem.* 1. 2. 12).

⁴⁶ In the *Symposium* Alcibiades reports in similar terms that Socrates, by contrast, cares nothing about the beauty, wealth, or fame that are valued by the crowd, and that he refused the offer of Alcibiades' bodily beauty and possessions.

arch's *Life of Alcibiades*, all of which clearly draw on its account of the many's role in corrupting young men in their depictions of Alcibiades.⁴⁷

Given the above evidence, a number of commentators have rightly taken *Republic* 6 to allude to Socrates' failed efforts to rehabilitate Alcibiades.⁴⁸ If that is the case, then the *Republic* vindicates Alcibiades' own claim in the *Symposium* that the democratic many kept him away from Socrates and philosophy.⁴⁹ In doing so, it confirms the diagnosis that is sketched in the *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Symposium*.

3. Solution to the problem of Alcibiades

I would now like to propose that the diagnosis of the problem of Alcibiades signalled in book 6 is importantly connected to two other central Platonic views that are introduced in the *Republic*: its accounts of the soul and of early education. On my interpretation, the *Republic*'s tripartite account of psychology provides the theoretical basis both for Plato's diagnosis of Alcibiades' downfall and for the dialogue's positive educational programme. Moral education in the Kallipolis, moreover, is designed at least in part as a *solution* to the problem of Alcibiades: it aims to eliminate and prevent the sorts of problem that led to Alcibiades' corruption and downfall. I will begin with a brief analysis of how the *Republic*'s theories of the soul and education fulfil these roles, and I will conclude with some remarks on the significance of this picture for our understanding of the development of Plato's thought.

3.1. *Early education and the spirited part of the soul*

To begin with, the introduction of a tripartite soul in the *Republic* provides the resources for explaining the many's corruption of

⁴⁷ See esp. *Alc. I* 105 A–106 A and 132 A; *Alc. II* 141 A–B; and Plut. *Alc.* 4. 1–4 and 6. 1–4.

⁴⁸ See e.g. J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, ii (Cambridge, 1902), 25; Gribble, *Alcibiades*, 219–20; Reeve, 'Violets', 131 n. 12; Taylor, *Protagoras*, 64; and Waterfield, 'Quest', 16.

⁴⁹ Alcibiades' testimony is also corroborated by the closing words of the *Alcibiades*. When Alcibiades promises to obey Socrates and cultivate justice, Socrates responds, 'I should like to believe that you will persevere, but I'm afraid, not because I distrust your nature, but because I know how powerful the city is—I'm afraid it might get the better of both me and you' (135 E 6–8).

young men from a psychological perspective. Whereas the earlier dialogues never offer a division of the soul—either because Plato did not yet accept tripartite theory or because making it explicit was orthogonal to his aims in those dialogues—the *Republic* explicitly identifies a distinct part of the embodied soul that operates (or can operate) independently of reason, and which has a special set of concerns centred on honour and dishonour. The *thumoeides* is, moreover, a part of the soul that is fully active ‘right from birth’ (441 A), in contrast to the reasoning part of the soul, and which is therefore a ready target of education (or miseducation) throughout an individual’s youth. On this picture, the spirited element of the soul is responsible for precisely those attitudes and desires that play a critical role both in early moral development and in the democracy’s corruption of young men in book 6: the many corrupt the young, on the *Republic*’s view, by exploiting and improperly shaping their spirited motivations at a time in life during which those motivations have a decisive influence on their behaviour and, ultimately, the whole course of their lives.

The *Republic*’s recognition of the importance of a distinctively spirited part of the soul, moreover, informs the dialogue’s positive account of early moral education. The first point to note here is that the programme of education Socrates proposes in the text has much in common, on the surface, with the democratic education described by Protagoras in the Great Speech: both advocate a combination of musical and gymnastic training; both emphasize the use of role models for emulation by the young; both make use of poetry; and both stress the importance of teaching children what is praiseworthy and blameworthy, admirable and shameful. There are, however, at least two crucial ways in which Plato departs from, or aims to improve, the traditional picture of moral education. First, whereas the *Protagoras* (along with *Gorgias* and *Symposium*) offers no details about the psychology that underlies moral education, in the *Republic* early education exploits motivations and sensitivities that are associated with, or explicitly attributed to, the *thumoeides*—praise and blame, feelings of shame and honour, and the promotion of endurance and courage.⁵⁰ That this represents a deliberate Platonic refinement

⁵⁰ See esp. 378 B–C and 385 E–391 E. For discussion of thumoedic education in the *Republic* see C. Gill, ‘Plato and the Education of Character’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 67 (1985), 1–26 at 7–11; J. C. B. Gosling, *Plato* (London, 1973), 42–

of the inherited democratic understanding of education is clear when we compare Socrates' characterization of the effects of music and gymnastics on children with that of Protagoras in the Great Speech. According to the Protagorean account, harmony and rhythm 'become familiar [*οἰκειοῦσθαι*] to the souls of the children, so that [the children] become gentler [*ἡμερώτεροι*]' (326 B 1–3). In Socrates' account, on the other hand, music has the effect of 'relaxing [the *thumoeides*] with soothing stories, and making it gentle [*ἡμεροῦσα*] by means of harmony and rhythm' (441 E 9–442 A 2). Here rhythm and harmony do not simply make the *children* gentler; rather, the children become gentle in virtue of the fact that rhythm and harmony have made the spirited part of their souls gentler. Likewise, Socrates claims that when children have absorbed rhythm and harmony into their souls, they will be ready to 'warmly welcome' (*ἀσπάζοιτ'*) reason as something that is 'familiar' (*οἰκειότῃτα*) to them (402 A 3–4). His comment clearly alludes to his earlier observation that spiritedness makes an animal friendly towards the familiar and hostile towards the unfamiliar, and that spirited dogs in particular 'warmly welcome' (*ἀσπάζεσται*, 376 A 6) those who are known to them. In the *Republic*, therefore, effects of musical education that Protagoras had registered merely on the child or on the child's soul in general are expressly registered on the *thumoeides*.

In the case of gymnastic training, Plato's revision of the democratic account is even more pronounced and explicit. Protagoras had warned that gymnastics must be practised in order that the young person's *body* be able to 'assist' his soul and thereby prevent cowardice. Socrates, however, dissents from this common view. He argues that 'a god has given music and gymnastic training to human beings not, except incidentally, for the body and the soul, but for the spirited and wisdom-loving elements of the soul itself' (411 E 4–7). Gymnastic training, he claims, 'arouses the spirited part' of a person's nature, and, if practised properly, it makes the *thumoeides* 'courageous' (410 B–D). Indeed, it is the spirited part of the soul that

5; Lear, 'Beauty'; Moss, 'Shame'; A. Nehamas, 'Beauty of Body, Nobility of Soul: The Pursuit of Love in Plato's *Symposium*', in D. Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford, 2007), 97–135 at 126–31; R. Singpurwalla, 'Why Spirit is the Natural Ally of Reason: Spirit, Reason, and the Fine in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 44 (2013), 41–65; and J. Wilberding, 'Plato's Two Forms of Second-Best Morality', *Philosophical Review*, 118 (2009), 351–74.

is the source of courage in an individual, and whereas the traditional account regards gymnastics as training the *body* so that it can assist the *soul*, Socrates views gymnastics as training the *spirited part of the soul* so that it can assist the *reasoning part* (440 A–B; 441 A). Again, the parallels between the two accounts show that recognition of the *thumoeides* represents a thoughtful theoretical refinement of the more traditional, democratic model of education.

There is a second, and even more important, way in which Plato seeks to improve on the Protagorean picture of education: he aims to replace the unstable and misguided values of the many with *correct* values. The spirited motivations that largely determine our moral development are, we have seen, primarily shaped by the social and cultural influences with which we are raised. Because of that, as *Republic* 6 and Alcibiades' own testimony make clear, private education—even *good* education—is almost always futile when societal influences pull against it. In order to reliably produce virtuous citizens, therefore, proper education must include not only instruction at the individual level, but also the elimination of harmful influences at the *public* level. For Plato, this means that citizens must be more or less univocal in affirming true standards of virtue: moral education will be consistently effective, in other words, either on a large scale or not at all. Accordingly, the *Republic's* political and educational policies are carefully designed to make sure that what the citizens and culture of the Kallipolis as a whole treat with honour is *truly* admirable and what they treat with dishonour *truly* shameful. This is evident, for example, in Socrates' censorship of the traditional poets, whom he criticizes for praising the wrong sorts of character and for making disgraceful behaviour appear respectable. Instead he allows only 'hymns to the gods and encomia of good men' (607 A 3–4). By regulating the content of poetry, Socrates turns one of the main venues for corruption in Athenian culture into a tool for instilling correct values. Likewise, Socrates' Kallipolis leaves no room for the assemblies or law courts, where the democratic many exercise their problematic influence on the young.⁵¹ Finally, we find that Socrates places great emphasis on the need to distribute honours to those who truly deserve them in the city—namely, the virtuous and wise. The Guardians, he says, will be happier than Olympic victors, 'for

⁵¹ The Assembly, of course, is replaced by philosophical rulers. On eliminating the law courts (certainly, at least, as Athenians know them), see 405 A–C and 464 D–E.

the Guardians' victory is even greater' (465 D).⁵² In various ways, then, Socrates aims to make sure that the values of the citizens—especially concerning what is admirable and honourable—are not only correct, but also uniform. In the Kallipolis a young person's spirited desire to be admired and honoured, therefore, will find satisfaction *only* through the pursuit of a lifestyle that is genuinely, rather than merely apparently, virtuous. If book 6 diagnoses the shortcomings of the traditional education outlined by Protagoras, then the programme of moral education outlined in books 2, 3, and 10 is designed to correct those shortcomings in the ideal setting of the Kallipolis.

3.2. *The development of Plato's thought*

The line of interpretation I have defended offers a partial account of the philosophical motivations for two of the most distinctive theoretical advancements of the *Republic*: its accounts of psychology and education. On a general level, my conclusion is in line with the findings of many previous commentators: I have argued that both the theory of tripartition and the *Republic's* educational programme reflect Plato's acceptance of an important role for non-rational motivations in our psychology—motivations, that is, that can arise independently of our considered judgements about what is best for us—as well as his pessimism about the possibility of any successful education that ignores or improperly attends to such motivations. My interpretation deepens our understanding of this familiar picture, however, in several ways. To begin with, the attention of previous commentators has tended to focus on the importance of *appetitive* desires in Plato's thinking. There are notable exceptions to this rule, particularly in more recent literature, but historically, discussion of the motivation for tripartite theory has centred on Plato's recognition of non-rational appetites and the various ways in which they can lead us to live or act badly.⁵³ My account, while

⁵² See further discussion of this point in Hobbs, *Hero*, 233–4.

⁵³ D. Scott, 'Platonic Pessimism and Moral Education', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (1999), 15–36, provides an especially good analysis along these lines. He emphasizes ways in which appetitive desires can corrupt or prevent correct reasoning about how to live our lives and what is valuable; I take my proposals to be compatible with much of what he says. Often discussion of the role of the appetites in motivating tripartite theory has been framed in terms of the issue of *akrasia*. Many commentators have proposed that *Republic 4's* account of the soul is designed largely, or even primarily, in order to accommodate the possibility of *akrasia* (in con-

compatible with such readings, emphasizes instead the crucial role of *spirited* motivations in Plato's thought. One reason this matters is that whereas Plato's treatment of appetitive desire tends to highlight the psychic *danger* posed by the appetites, and hence the importance of minimizing their influence in our psychology, Plato's discussion of spirited desire highlights spirit's potential to serve a positive role in moral development as the 'ally of reason'. Importantly, then, Plato's psychological theory is motivated not only by apprehension about the appetites, but also by a cautious optimism about spirited motivation: given proper upbringing, the spirited part of the soul can provide support for mastering the very appetites that are the source of deep ethical concern for Plato.

The interpretation I have offered also adds to previous accounts by emphasizing the close relationship between spirited desire and the *many*, a connection that has received little attention even in the handful of accounts that do focus on the role of spirit in motivating tripartite theory. If my interpretation is right, however, then considerations about the many are integral to Plato's thinking about education. He takes the many to exert a powerful, often irresistible, influence on the spirited element of a young person's psychology, and his critical attitude towards democracy is at least partly grounded in that very fact: because the democratic crowd is appetitive in its orientation, neglect of the many on the political level will have a grave and nearly inevitable impact on the moral development of *individuals*. Beyond the borders of the ideal city, each young person's soul is in danger of succumbing not only to the ruinous influence of appetites within his own soul, but also to the compelling sway of appetitive souls from *without*. Even those souls that do possess the fortitude to escape the threat of the former, therefore, still face a formidable obstacle to virtue in the latter.

trast, it is presumed, either to an earlier Platonic or to a Socratic 'intellectualist' account of the soul that denies such a possibility). See, for example, Bobonich, *Utopia*, 219–47; T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford, 1995), 209–11, and *Plato's Moral Theory* (Oxford, 1977), 191–5; T. Penner, 'Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, suppl. 16 (1990), 35–73 at 49–61; and C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1988), 134–5. For some replies to this line of interpretation see esp. G. R. Carone, 'Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change his Mind?', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 20 (2001), 107–48; G. R. F. Ferrari, 'The Three-Part Soul', in id. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (Cambridge, 2007), 165–201 at 168–70; Kahn, *Socratic*, 243–57; and J. Wilburn, 'Akrasia and the Rule of Appetite in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Republic*', *Journal of Ancient Philosophy*, 8 (2014), 57–91.

This brings me to my final point, and to what I take to be the primary contribution of my interpretation: it reveals an important but perhaps overlooked motivation for some of the most distinctive new views we find in the *Republic*. In particular, Plato's reflections on the problem of Alcibiades, according to my account, provide at least a partial motivation both for the tripartite theory of the soul and for the programme of moral education associated with it. On Plato's view, promising individuals such as Alcibiades can—largely by way of their spirited ambitions—either be ruined by improper education or led towards true virtue by a proper one. The Kallipolis is designed to be a place, not only where someone like Socrates would have been duly appreciated, but also where an exceptional and ambitious person like Alcibiades would never have been corrupted in the first place.

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