

Courage and the Spirited Part of the Soul in Plato's Republic

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IN THE FINAL ARGUMENT OF PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*, Socrates attempts to demonstrate — against Protagoras' earlier insistence to the contrary — that the virtue of courage is a kind of knowledge. What distinguishes the courageous individual from the coward, on Socrates' view, is not that the former is willing to “go toward” what he fears while the latter is not, but rather that the courageous individual, unlike the coward, *knows* what is truly deserving of fear. In fact, Socrates claims, people *never* willingly choose what they know or believe to be worst or most fearful. All cases of cowardice, therefore, turn out to be cases in which the agent is *ignorant* or *mistaken* (at least temporarily) about what is truly fearful and bad, while courage is “wisdom about what is and is not to be feared” (360d).

In the *Republic*, Plato provides a “new” account of courage in terms of his freshly introduced theory that the soul consists of three distinct sources of motivation, or “parts”: the reasoning, the spirited, and the appetitive. An individual possesses courage, Socrates says, when the spirited part of his soul, or *thumoeides*, “preserves what is announced by rational accounts” in the face of opposition from unruly appetites within the individual's soul (442b–c). On the surface, at least, this new account seems very different from that of the *Protagoras*. Indeed, a dominant line of interpretation takes the *Republic's* account of the soul to depart sharply from that of the *Protagoras*, and to do so in ways that have important implications for understanding and comparing the two dialogues' discussions of courage. According to this traditional reading, one of the crucial innovations of tripartite psychology is that it allows Plato to countenance cases of *akrasia* — that is, cases in which an agent's appetites force her to act in a way that she simultaneously judges to be *worse* than another available course of action.¹ If this view is correct, then on the *Republic's* account, acts of cowardice no longer necessarily involve ignorance or mistaken rational judgment as they did in the *Protagoras*. For it is now possible for an agent to correctly judge (or perhaps even *know*)² which action is better and less fearful,

1. I will restrict use of the term '*akrasia*' to cases of this sort.
2. Reeve (1988: 134) argues that “there is no suggestion that it is impossible” that philosopher-kings with knowledge might act akratically. Cf. Hare (1982: 54).

and to maintain that judgment while she acts, but nonetheless willingly to choose the worse course of action because she is overpowered by her appetites.³

I will present an alternative reading of courage and cowardice in the *Republic* that resists the sharp developmentalism of the traditional interpretation. One thing that will distinguish my approach from that of previous work is that the latter, in examining putative shifts in Platonic psychology from *Protagoras* to the *Republic*, has tended to concentrate on the relationship between reason and *appetitive* desires.⁴ My interpretation, while continuing to examine that relationship, will instead focus on the *spirited* part of the soul and its relationship with reason. My account will defend two main lines of thought. The first is that Plato does not, in the *Republic*, abandon the *Protagoras*' view that all cases of cowardice involve mistaken judgment or ignorance about what is fearful. Rather, he continues to treat cowardly behavior as an indication that, at least at the time of action, the agent lacked correct belief about what is best and least fearful. The evidence for this view will include an argument that what it means for the *thumoeides* to "preserve what is announced by rational accounts" in the *Republic* is for it to prevent the fluctuation or corruption of reasoning under the deceptive influence of appetite. Spirit's psychic function, in other words, is not to prevent cases of *akrasia* in the sense specified above, but rather to provide non-rational support for stable, correct belief and knowledge. Second, I will argue that the *Protagoras* anticipates this account of courage in important ways. In particular, it draws attention to the problematic instability of belief and adumbrates the

3. Irwin (1977: 198), for example, advocates a view of this sort: "A brave man retains his belief that this is a brave action, and acts on his beliefs despite pleasures, pains, fears, and appetite. These conflicting desires can cause someone to lose his belief that an action is good, or cause him, like Leontius, to do what he knows to be bad, or to fail to do what he knows to be best."

4. One sign of this emphasis is that the discussion — e.g. in Irwin (1977: 191–2); Penner (1971: 103–11) and (1997: 49–61); Carone (2001); and Singpurwalla (2006) — has often centered around the question whether the *Republic* recognizes the possibility of "blind" or "good-independent" appetites in a way that the *Protagoras* did not.

need for something like the spirited element of our psychology. According to my interpretation, the *Republic*'s account of courage is an elaboration or supplementation of the *Protagoras*' account, rather than a rejection of it.

I will begin in Section 1 with brief remarks on the *Protagoras*' account of courage and cowardice. I will then outline and defend my interpretation of the *Republic* in Sections 2 through 5. Finally, in Sections 6 and 7, I will return to the *Protagoras* in order to draw attention to important points of continuity between the two dialogues.

1. Courage in the *Protagoras*

The occasion for discussing courage in the *Protagoras* evolves out of Socrates' reaction to the title character's "great speech" in defense of the teachability of virtue. Socrates says that he finds *Protagoras*' speech convincing, but that he still needs just "one little thing" from him: he wishes to hear more about the relationship among the various things that *Protagoras* treated as "virtue" in his speech — namely, justice, temperance, and piety. In response to Socrates' questioning, *Protagoras* reveals his view that what he considers to be the different "parts" of virtue — and he now includes courage and knowledge among them as well — are all *dissimilar* to one another, and that it is possible to possess one virtue without possessing the others (329d–330b). Socrates resists this view, and under pressure from Socrates' arguments, *Protagoras* later amends his position, admitting that "while four of them somewhat resemble each other, courage is completely different from all the rest. The proof that what I am saying is true is that you will find many people who are extremely unjust, impious, intemperate, and ignorant, and yet exceptionally courageous" (349d3–5).⁵ *Protagoras* now concedes that wisdom, justice, temperance, and piety are more closely connected than he had originally granted, but he continues to insist that courage is entirely distinct from the other virtues.

5. Translations of the texts are from Cooper (1997), with modifications.

The remainder of the dialogue serves Socrates' ultimate repudiation of this characterization of courage. Socrates proceeds by a seemingly circuitous route, however. He does not initially discuss the virtue of courage itself, but rather invites Protagoras to examine with him the popular notion of being "overcome by pleasure". According to the view of the Many, people often know how it is best for them to act but, despite possessing that knowledge, fail to act that way, because of impulses such as pleasure, pain, and fear. In such individuals, knowledge does not "rule" but rather is "dragged around like a slave" (352b–c). In Socrates' rejection of this position, he elicits from the Many (by way of their spokesperson, Protagoras) the admission that they identify the good with pleasure (and the bad with pain).⁶ Given this hedonistic view, Socrates shows them that their position is "ridiculous": it amounts to saying that people fail to act in the way they know is *best* because they are overcome by *the good* (355a–d).⁷

6. Here I attribute hedonism to the Many, along with Protagoras as their spokesperson. The question of the role that hedonism plays in Socrates' argument, however, and to whom precisely we should attribute that position, has a long history of controversy. A number of commentators attribute hedonism to Socrates *himself* (or, by extension, to Plato), including Adam (1957: xxix–xxxiii), Bartlett (2004: 82–3), Bentley (2003: 85–6, n. 2 and 104), Crombie (1962: 240), Grote (1864: 87–9 and nn. m, n, p), Gosling and Taylor (1982: 47–56), Hackforth (1928: 41–2), Irwin (1977: 308–9, n. 13, and 1995: 85–94), Nussbaum (1986: 111), Taylor (1976: 208–10), and Vlastos (1956: xl, n. 50). Others adopt various *ad hominem* or dialectical readings, which deny that either Socrates or Plato endorses, or is committed to, hedonism. For specific arguments, see Bidgood (1983), Duncan (1978), Dyson (1976: 44–5), Frede (1992: xxvii–xxix), Goldberg (1983: 250, 309–10, n. 10), Grube (1933), Kraut (1984: 266 and n. 37), McCoy (1998: 36–7), Russell (2005: 237–48), Sesonkske (1963), Weiss (1990), Wolz (1967: 217), and Zeyl (1980). Although my interpretation is aligned with this second group, nothing in the main arguments of my paper depends on that reading.
7. Another point of contention among interpreters concerns the issue of what exactly is shown to be *ridiculous* (γελοῖον, 355a6) about the Many's position, and at which point in the argument it is shown. Again, I do not think my present aims are affected by the controversy, though my own reading of the "ridiculousness" of the Many's position is in line with that of Dyson, who comments, "What is absurd? Merely that, on a very simple level, the popular thesis is silly. One cannot explain why a man who can do something good does something which he knows is bad, by saying that he is overcome by good" (1976: 36). Cf. Ferrari (1990: 119, n. 6), McCoy (1998: 36), and Weiss (1989:

Socrates offers an alternative explanation of the phenomenon in question, however. He suggests that all alleged cases of being "overcome by pleasure" are in fact cases of *ignorance*. The "power of appearances" causes immediate pleasures to seem greater than more remote pleasures, and as a result, people misjudge the value of short-term indulgence. Knowledge, however — specifically, the "art of measurement" — has the power to overcome the deceptive influence of appearances:

While the power of appearance often makes us wander all over the place in confusion, often changing our minds about the same things and regretting our actions and choices ... the art of measurement, in contrast, would render the appearances powerless by showing us the truth, would give us peace of mind firmly rooted in the truth and would save our life (356d4–e2).

Those who have *knowledge* of the true balance of long-term and short-term pleasures and pains, therefore, will reliably be ruled by their knowledge and will act accordingly. It follows that those who wrongly choose to indulge in immediate pleasure do not *know* that they are selecting the worse course of action. They are, in other words, *ignorant*, having been deceived in some way by pleasure and the power of appearances.

Closely connected to Socrates' argument is a psychological claim, which he makes explicit after concluding his response to the Many, and which provides an important theoretical resource in his rejection of Protagoras' understanding of courage. According to Socrates, no one willingly acts in a way that he knows, or even merely believes when he acts, to be worse for him than another available course of action. "No one goes willingly toward the bad or what he believes (οἶεται) to be bad", Socrates says. "Neither is it in human nature, so it

516, n. 6) for commentators who advocate similar readings. For alternative interpretations, see Clark (2012: 242, n. 9, and 245–54), Gallop (1964: 118–9), Santas (1966: 12–20), Taylor (1976: 181–6), Woolf (2002: 239–40), and Vlastos (1956: xxxix, and 1969: 81–3).

seems, to be willing to go toward what one believes to be bad instead of the good. And when he is forced to choose between one of two bad things, no one will choose the greater if he is able to choose the lesser" (358c6–d4).⁸ In other words, Socrates accepts the following Motivational Thesis:

(MT) If an agent knows or believes that some available action *x* is better or less bad than another action *y*, then it is impossible for the agent, *while maintaining that judgment*, to willingly choose action *y* instead.

With this principle in place, Socrates responds to Protagoras' account of courage in a way that parallels his response to the Many's account of being "overcome by pleasure". Fear, Socrates and his interlocutors agree, is an expectation of something bad. Since no one chooses what he expects to be bad (or worse, when the choice is between two bad things), it follows that neither the coward nor the courageous individual chooses what he (most) fears (358e). Rather, they both avoid what they fear, and what distinguishes them is that the courageous person rightly judges what is deserving of fear, while the coward judges wrongly. Courage, therefore, is knowledge or wisdom about the fearful, and cowardice is a form of ignorance.⁹ Contrary to Protagoras'

8. My account remains neutral on two issues that divide commentators at this point: (1) whether the psychological principle articulated here is a *premise* on which Socrates' preceding argument against the Many relies, and (2) whether the psychological principle first appears here at 358b–d (following the argument against the Many), or whether it has already been invoked during Socrates' exchange with Protagoras as the Many's representative (*e.g.* at 356b–e). For discussion of these issues, see Clark (2012), Dimas (2008: 268–70), Dyson (1976: 33, n. 3), Gallop (1964: 128–9), Gulley (1971: 120–1), Hubbard and Karnofsky (1982: 146–7), Morris (2006: 199–205), Moss (2006: 506), Santas (1966: 17–20 and n. 21), Sullivan (1961: 19–20), Taylor (1976: 189–90), Vlastos (1969: 72–3 and n. 9, 83–5), Weiss (1989: 519–20 and n. 11), Woolf (2002), and Zeyl (1980: 258–9).
9. Cf. Nicias' proposed definition of courage at *Lach.* 194e–195a. I will not be concerned with the *Laches* in the present paper, though it is worth noting that I do not take that dialogue to be in tension with my conclusions here.

earlier claim, then, courage is not independent from wisdom and the rest of the virtues.

Before turning to the *Republic's* account of courage, there is one point in this account that I would like to stress, which is that, although Socrates evidently characterizes knowledge *or* belief (at the time of action) as sufficient to guide an individual's behavior on any given occasion, only the former constitutes virtue.¹⁰ That is, although the Motivational Thesis entails that an agent who possesses merely *true belief* about the fearful at the time she acts will behave in the same way as the courageous person, Socrates does not define courage as knowledge *or* true belief about what is to be feared, but only as knowledge. Indeed, the purpose of Socrates' engagement with the Many is to defend the supremacy of *knowledge* — to show that it is "capable of ruling" in a person — whereas he defends no such claim about belief.¹¹ If no one willingly acts contrary to their knowledge *or* their belief about what is best, however, then why does true belief not enjoy the same supreme status as knowledge?

The reason is that, whereas knowledge is immune to the deceptive influence of pleasure and appearances, mere belief — even true belief — is not. Appearances, Socrates claims in the passage above, cause us to change our minds constantly and to regret the things we have done. This indicates not only that agents' beliefs about how they ought to act frequently shift, but also that, at least sometimes, agents hold the *right* beliefs about how they ought to act. Presumably, those who "regret" their actions are those who judge the value of their actions correctly *after* the fact. We can assume that many of them also judge the

10. The overwhelming majority of commentators accept that Socrates' psychological claim applies to belief as well as knowledge. See Vlastos (1969: 72–3 and n. 9) for a dissenting view, however, and Gulley (1971) for a reply to Vlastos.
11. I follow Penner (1997; cf. 1990: 45–8), Carone (2001: 109–16), and Segvic (2000: 27–34) in taking the *Protagoras* to be drawing a distinction between the power of knowledge and the relative weakness and instability of belief. Some commentators, however — *e.g.* Gulley (1965: 92), Irwin (1995: 237), and Wolfsdorf (2006: 131) — suggest that belief is treated as equal to knowledge with respect to practical efficacy. Carone (2001: 111, n. 12) provides a useful note on this issue.

value of their actions correctly at some point *prior* to acting, but that their judgments vacillate or temporarily “wander” because of the way things appear. What all of this shows is that, while it is true that those who *maintain* the correct belief about what is to be feared will act correctly, it is also true that those with merely correct belief often *fail* to maintain that belief when they act.¹² Those who *know* what is fearful and bad, on the other hand, will be impervious to the misleading force of the appearances. The *Protagoras*, then, while affirming the power of knowledge, at the same time draws attention to a serious concern about mere belief: it is weak, unstable, and unreliable.

In what follows I will suggest that the *Republic* remains committed to the Motivational Thesis (at least as far as courage is concerned), and that as a result it continues to treat all acts of cowardice as involving at least temporary ignorance or mistaken judgment. I will also suggest that whereas the *Protagoras* leaves no room for mere belief in courage, the *Republic* offers a more nuanced picture. The *Republic* may share the *Protagoras*’ view that *true* courage requires knowledge, and it certainly shares its worry about the weakness and instability of belief, but it also attempts to provide a partial solution to that instability. Its proposed solution, I will argue, lies in the spirited part of the soul, which — given appropriate education — provides a non-rational basis for stable, rational belief.¹³

2. Reason and Belief

Let us now turn to the *Republic*’s account of courage, which Socrates offers in terms of the soul’s three parts:

These two [the reasoning and spirited parts] ... will govern the appetitive part, which is the largest part in each person’s soul and is by nature most insatiable for money.

12. Cf. *Meno* 97e–98a.

13. My approach owes much to the accounts of Hobbs (2000) and Moss (2005), both of whom also explore ways in which the psychological and ethical accounts of earlier dialogues anticipate the spirited psychology of the *Republic*.

They’ll watch over it to see that it isn’t filled with the so-called pleasures of the body and that it doesn’t become so big and strong that it no longer does its own work but attempts to enslave and rule over (καταδουλώσασθαι και ἄρχειν) the classes it isn’t fitted to rule, thereby overturning everyone’s entire life. ... Then, wouldn’t these two parts also do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies — the one by planning, the other by fighting (τὸ μὲν βουλευόμενον, τὸ δὲ προπολεμοῦν), following its leader, and carrying out the leader’s decisions through its courage (τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ ἐπιτελοῦν τὰ βουλευθέντα)? ... And it is because of the spirited part, I suppose, that we call a single individual courageous, namely, when it preserves through pains and pleasures what is announced by rational accounts about what is to be feared and what isn’t (ὅταν αὐτοῦ τὸ θυμοειδὲς διασώζει διὰ τε λυπῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων παραγγελθὲν δεινόν τε καὶ μὴ) (442a4–c3).

How we understand this account of courage turns on two interpretive issues. First, what exactly is it that the spirited part of the soul “preserves” when the individual is courageous, and second, in what precisely does spirit’s “preserving” of it consist? I will take up the first question briefly in this section before turning to the second in Sections 3 and 4.

Commentators are generally in agreement that spirit’s job is to “preserve” some sort of practical belief, judgment, or application of knowledge — that is, some cognitive assessment of the value or disvalue of potential actions and the objects associated with them. (In the following Sections 2 through 4, I will leave the distinction between belief and knowledge to the side, but I will return to it in Section 5 to consider its relevance to Socrates’ account of individual courage.) Commentators disagree, however, over whether the bearer of the relevant judgment is the spirited part of the soul itself or the reasoning part. Indeed,

many commentators attribute beliefs about the fearful, the just, the honorable, or even the good to the spirited part of the soul, and they often take those beliefs to be the ones that spirit “preserves” in the virtue of courage.¹⁴ The text provides *prima facie* support for this view. There are strong indications that Plato does mean to allow some form of belief to the spirited part of the soul in the *Republic*,¹⁵ and spirited *motivations*, as Plato depicts them, are closely connected to a person’s judgments concerning what is just. When a decent person believes he has committed injustice, Socrates points out, he does not become angry with those who punish him justly. On the other hand, when

14. It should be noted that my dispute with the standard developmentalist reading does not hinge on this interpretive issue, but rather on those I will explore in Sections 3 and 4. Carone (2001: 127), for example, who also opposes the standard developmentalist view, nonetheless attributes beliefs about the good to the spirited part of the soul. For others who attribute such beliefs to the *thumoeides*, see esp. Bobonich (1994: 4, and 2002: 220), Burnyeat (2006: 10), Cairns (385–8 and n. 131), Carone (2001), Cooper (1999b: 135), Dorter (2006: 117), Gill (1985: 14), Irwin (1977: 193–5, and 1995: 211–3), Kahn (1987: 85), Kamtekar (1998: 325–34, and 2006: 189), Klosko (1986: 73–5), Lesses (1987: 149–54), Moline (1978: 12), Morris (2006: 225), and Moss (2005: 156, and 2008: 37). Cairns, for example, writes, “Reason supplies judgments about the better and the worse, spirit about the honourable and dishonourable” (386), and Kamtekar explicitly cites Socrates’ characterization of courage as evidence for a similar view (2006: 189). For some commentators who doubt attributions of belief to spirit, see Anagnostopoulos (2006: 176–7), Stalley (2007), and esp. Wilberding (2009: 361–5 and 370, n. 77). I am sympathetic to the arguments of Lorenz (2006a: 209) and Stalley (2007), both of whom suggest that the “beliefs” attributed to the lower parts of the soul in the *Republic* reflect a relatively loose use of the word ‘belief’ (δόξα) by Plato in the text.

15. In the cognitive division of the soul that occurs in Book 10, for instance, Socrates contrasts the rational part of the soul, which holds opinions on the basis of measurement and calculation, from the part of the soul that holds (opposed) opinions on the basis of appearances alone (602c ff.). Given that the latter part is said to be responsible for a wide range of non-rational impulses, including spirited anger (606d), it is reasonable to suppose that both of the lower parts of the soul share in at least some form of belief. Moss (2008) provides a compelling argument along these lines, though she ultimately attributes more sophisticated beliefs to spirit than I think the evidence justifies. See an excellent reply to Moss in Ganson (2009). Further evidence of spirited belief occurs in Book 4, where Socrates characterizes moderation as a relation among the soul-parts in which “both the ruling and the ruled agree [lit. ‘share the belief’, ὁμοδοξόσι] that the reasoning part ought to rule and don’t raise a faction against it” (442c11–d1).

someone believes that an injustice has been committed against *him*, his spirit becomes “boiling and angry” and fights for what he believes to be just (440c–d). Although Socrates attributes the beliefs in these cases only to the *person* (τις, 440c1, 440c7), and not explicitly to the person’s spirited part, his point clearly illustrates that our feelings of anger and other spirited desires appear alongside our beliefs.¹⁶ It is tempting, therefore, to suppose that the beliefs of the “person” are beliefs of the spirited part of the person’s soul. Kahn, for example, draws exactly this inference: “Quite definite judgments of a moral sort are characteristic of the intermediate part of the soul, the *thumoeides*, which gets angry when it thinks it (*i. e.*, the person) has been wronged.”¹⁷

Despite the above considerations, there are, I think, strong reasons for thinking that the beliefs the spirited part is supposed to “preserve” in the virtue of courage are the ones that belong to the reasoning part of the soul.¹⁸ Note that this interpretive claim is independent of the question whether the *thumoeides* also holds beliefs of its own (and, if so, whether those beliefs include judgments about what is good, just, or fearful).¹⁹ My argument is simply that even if the spirited part *does*

16. Cf. Annas (1981: 127) and Cross and Woosley (1966: 122).

17. 1987: 85.

18. A controversy in the secondary literature concerns the question whether psychic states such as desires and beliefs are properly to be attributed to the parts of the souls themselves or simply to the *person*. (See, for example, discussion in Lorenz [2006a: 26–8 and n. 19] and Price [2009].) Nothing in my account turns on that issue, though I will freely make references to “reason’s judgments” for ease of discussion.

19. It would be consistent with my view, for example, to insist that spirit holds such judgments about the just, fearful, and good that are in some important way informed by, or derived from, reason’s “announcements”. (Kamtekar [1998: 327–8 and nn. 19, 22] entertains a view of this sort.) Though nothing in my interpretation turns on this point, I do think there are obstacles to attributing such sophisticated beliefs to the *thumoeides*. For one thing, if Plato had intended to indicate that spirit holds its own beliefs about goodness, justice, or fearfulness, he surely could have indicated that without ambiguity. Yet nothing in Socrates’ remarks suggests such a picture: all we are told is that reason makes judgments, and when it does, the spirited part’s emotions and desires appear on the psychological scene. The claim that spirit also holds beliefs of its own unnecessarily duplicates a psychic task and involves complicating

hold such beliefs, it is not its preservation of *its own* beliefs that constitutes courage, but rather its preservation of the relevant judgments of reason. Several points support this conclusion. To begin with, the language Socrates employs throughout his discussion of the relationship between the reasoning and spirited parts consistently attributes deliberative and doxastic functions to reason, while emphasizing the non-cognitive, motivational contribution of the *thumoeides*. In his characterization of courage, Socrates identifies “rational accounts” (λόγοι) as the source of the announcements about what is to be feared, and he immediately makes it explicit (if it was not clear enough already) that the reasoning part of the soul is responsible for those accounts²⁰: “And we’ll call him wise because of that small part of himself that rules in him and makes those announcements and has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul” (442c5–8). The “announcements” that are preserved in the virtue of courage, therefore, unquestionably originate in the reasoning part of the soul. Likewise, we also find in the above passage that reason and spirit jointly guard the individual’s body and soul, “the one by planning (τὸ μὲν βουλευόμενον), the other by fighting (τὸ δὲ προπολεμοῦν), following its leader and carrying out the leader’s decisions (ἐπιτελοῦν τὰ βουλευθέντα)”. Here it is clearly reason that does the deliberating and judging, while the role of spirit is, as far as we can tell from what Socrates says, limited exclusively to “fighting” in support of reason’s judgments.²¹

Plato’s psychological account in a way that is under-supported by the text. More importantly, though, and as I hope to show in what follows, in his characterization of courage — and of the spirited part’s function as reason’s “ally” — Plato exclusively emphasizes spirit’s *motivational* role. This suggests that, regardless of whether Plato means to attribute any sophisticated beliefs to spirit, those beliefs are not the relevant ones that the courageous person’s spirited part “preserves”. For discussion of the cognitive resources of the spirited part of the soul, see Wilburn (2014a).

20. One manuscript, preferred by Adam (1902: 260) (though not Burnet [1902]), actually reads ὑπο τοῦ λόγου instead of ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων at 442c2.
21. This is also consistent with Socrates’ introduction of spirited impulses in the text: he says that spirit is “invincible and unbeatable” (ἄμαχόν τε καὶ ἀνίκητον, 375b1).

Similarly, in Socrates’ comments following his introduction of the *thumoeides*, he points out that when appetite is forcing someone contrary to reasoning, he becomes angry with his appetite, “so that of the two factions that are fighting a civil war, so to speak, spirit allies itself with reason” (440a8–b4). In contrast, he says, we never see spirit “ally itself with an appetite to do what reason has decided must not be done (αἰροῦντος λόγου μὴ δεῖν ἀντιπράττειν)” (440b4–7). Again, the picture we have is one in which reason makes decisions and judgments about how the agent ought to act, and spirit’s job is to join reason in “fighting” disobedient appetites. (Note that reason “fights”, too: its judgments are associated with desires of its own.) The emphasis on the spirited part’s job as an allied “fighter” suggests that its role is limited to just what I have suggested: supplying motivational support for the practical judgments issued by the reasoning part.²²

There is a further argument to be made here, in connection with this last point. It is important to note that Socrates’ aim in discussing the connection between spirited desires and judgments about justice is to show that spirit is the psychic “ally” of reason (σύμμαχον, 440b3).²³ Against Glaucon’s initial suggestion that the part of the soul “by which we get angry” might be the same as the appetitive part (439e), Socrates seeks to show that, on the contrary, the spirited part of the soul has a close affinity with the reasoning part. He is so successful in demonstrating their closeness, in fact, that he must next prove that the spirited and reasoning parts are not themselves identical. I take this contextual consideration to be decisive in showing that the judgments about justice in question belong to the reasoning part. For if all Socrates were saying at 440a–d were that the *thumoeides* is responsive to its *own* beliefs about justice, that would do nothing to establish its

22. Cf. *Timaeus* 70a, where the spirited part boils “when reason announces (τοῦ λόγου παραγγείλαντος) that some unjust action is taking place”, and *Phdr.* 253e–254e, where the good horse joins the charioteer in *resisting* the bad horse, but it is the charioteer who is responsible for issuing the “command and reason” (κελεύσματι καὶ λόγῳ, 253d7–e1) that the good horse supports.
23. A point noted in Singpurwalla (2013: 44).

close relationship with reason.²⁴ Likewise, Socrates prefaces his discussion of courage with a reminder that spirit is supposed to serve as an “ally” that “obeys” reason. That characterization makes the most sense if the spirited part of the soul and its desires are being depicted as supportive of the reasoning part and *its* judgments.

If this interpretation is right, then reason is the bearer of the judgments about what is good, just, or fearful that the courageous individual’s spirited part “preserves”.

3. “Preserving through Pains and Pleasures”

The next issue that must be addressed is what precisely it means for the spirited part to “preserve” reason’s judgments. In this section I will argue that its “preservation” of them consists in ensuring that reason maintains those judgments in the face of appetitive impulses. According to the reading I will defend, the *Republic* — at the very least in its characterization of courage and cowardice — remains committed to the Motivational Thesis and continues to treat *akrasia* as an impossibility. It is here, then, that my interpretation will depart most clearly from the standard, developmentalist picture.²⁵

I begin my argument by pointing out that 442b does not represent the first mention of “preservation” in the text. Rather, Socrates prepares the way for his distinctive characterization of individual courage in two important passages from Books 3 and 4 that point to the reading I am proposing. The first passage immediately follows Socrates’

24. Kamtekar (1998: 326–7) recognizes that this passage “is intended to emphasize spirit’s partisanship with reason and its judgments”, yet she nonetheless attributes judgments about justice to the spirited part.

25. Some commentators seem tempted by the sort of reading I am proposing, but nonetheless stop short of accepting it outright. Klosko provides a useful example (1986: 79): “The courageous soul is like wool which has been treated to hold its dye. In such souls, beliefs are held fast, immune from pleasure and pain, appetite and fear. Thus Plato holds that courage can anchor true opinions to the soul through a means quite different from converting them into knowledge.” This sounds strikingly similar to the account I will offer below, yet Klosko insists that the psychology of the *Republic* is “significantly different” from that of the *Protagoras*, in that it accepts the possibility of *akrasia* (70).

outline of the programs of musical and gymnastic training. Having determined how the young guardians are to be educated, he and his interlocutors must next determine who among the young are well-suited for becoming rulers — the “true guardians” of the city. Socrates claims that rulers are distinguished by their exceptional commitment to certain kinds of civic *beliefs*, and in particular, to the belief that they must always do what is best for the city as a whole (412d–e). Evaluating which citizens should rule, therefore, requires observing them throughout their lives to make sure that they do not “abandon” (ἐκβάλλουσιν, 412e7) their correct beliefs. Socrates elaborates: all “abandonment” of true belief is involuntary, he says, and it occurs on account of one of three causes: theft (κλαπέντες), compulsion (βιασθέντες), or magical spell (γοητευθέντες):

By “the victims of theft” I mean those who are persuaded to change their minds or those who forget, because time, in the latter case, and argument, in the former, takes away their opinions without their realizing it. ... By “the compelled” (βιασθέντας) I mean those whom pain or suffering causes to change their mind (μεταδοξάσαι). ... The “victims of magic”, I think you’d agree, are those who change their mind because they are under the spell of pleasure or fear (μεταδοξάσωσιν ἢ ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς κληθέντες ἢ ὑπὸ φόβου τι δείσαντες) (413b4–c3).

In order to determine which citizens will be “good guardians” of their beliefs, Socrates proposes that contests and competitions be devised to “test” them. These will include not only subjection to labors and pains, but also, and most importantly, exposure to pleasures and fears — that is, to tests against abandonment through “magical spell”. The citizens must be tested “more thoroughly than gold is tested in fire”, and those who prove immune to the spell of pleasure and fear throughout their lives will be selected as candidates to become rulers.

This passage provides a revealing characterization of the relationship between non-rational impulses and rational belief: the former prevail over the latter not by causing the individual to act against her concurrently held better judgment, but rather by causing her (at least temporarily) to *abandon* her judgment. In other words, those who hold the right beliefs about how they should act prior to acting but nonetheless behave wrongly under the influence of pain, pleasure, and fear do not do so *akratically*, but rather because those impulses have caused them to “change their minds” about how they ought to act.²⁶ Indeed, Socrates’ proposal presupposes the sufficiency of stable true belief for determining an individual’s behavior, because he treats his tests as reliable for the purposes of sorting candidates to become rulers from the rest of the auxiliaries. If *akrasia* were possible, however, then akratics would pass the tests along with the enkratic and the temperate; for, given the possibility of *akrasia*, it would be possible for citizens to behave viciously despite never wavering in their correct judgments about how they ought to act.²⁷ Clearly Socrates does not consider such people fit to become philosophers, however. On the contrary, his proposal clearly implies that those who succeed in retaining their correct judgments will also *act* on them, and thus that failure to act in accordance with a correct judgment betrays the *abandonment* of that judgment.²⁸ This is important because, as we have seen, Socrates’ later conception of individual courage appeals to the idea of preservation

26. Carone (2001: 131–2) also emphasizes this passage and cites it as evidence of Plato’s continued commitment to a “Socratic” view of moral psychology. Cf. remarks in Cornford (1912: 249–50) and O’Brien (1967: 138, n. 21).

27. It should be noted that passing tests against belief abandonment is evidently not *sufficient* for becoming a ruler in the Kallipolis, despite what Socrates himself implies at 413e–414a. In Book 6, Socrates indicates that, in addition to the earlier tests, there will be exercises to determine whether the auxiliaries are able to endure the most important *studies* (503d–504a). Presumably, the latter kind of test is designed to evaluate the auxiliaries’ intellectual abilities (good memory, facility at learning mathematics, etc.), while the tests against belief abandonment are designed to determine whether their non-rational motivations are sufficiently well-trained.

28. That is, Socrates gives us no reason to think that he has in mind any other criterion for determining whether the youths maintain or abandon their beliefs

of judgment *through pleasures and pains*. By filling out the details of the ways in which pleasures and pains threaten judgment, then, the earlier discussion provides insight into the kind of “preservation” needed in the face of such impulses. What the earlier passage shows is that courageous “preservation” refers to stable retention of correct judgment.

A second passage confirms this reading by establishing an even clearer link between the Book 3 discussion of belief “abandonment” and the later account of individual courage. In Book 4, before turning to the virtues of the individual, Socrates first examines and outlines the virtues of the city, anticipating that the latter will illuminate the former. He claims that the city’s fighting class will be responsible for the city’s possession of courage. More specifically, the city will be courageous when its auxiliary class “has the power to preserve (σώσει) through everything its belief about what things are to be feared” (429b8–c1).²⁹ Courage, Socrates says, is “a certain sort of preservation”

apart from their *behavior*, which rules out the possibility that an akratic would pass the tests as he understands them.

29. It is worth addressing a possible objection to my account that concerns a disanalogy between individual courage and courage in the city. The city is courageous not when the auxiliaries ensure that the *rulers* maintain *their* judgments, but rather when the auxiliaries maintain their *own* (law- and ruler-informed) judgments. By analogy, we would expect that an individual is courageous not when her spirited part ensures that her reasoning part maintains *its* judgments (as I have argued), but rather when spirit maintains its *own* judgments. I accept that there is a disanalogy here, though I do not find it problematic, for a number of reasons: (1) First, because cities and individuals are not the same in every respect, we should not expect every detail of Socrates’ analysis of the city to be applicable to the individual soul. (2) One obvious way in which cities and individuals differ is that cities are composed of individuals, whereas individuals are not composed of further individuals. That is, whereas each member of a city possesses her own soul with its own reasoning, spirited, and appetitive parts, it is not the case that each part of an individual’s soul has *its* own reasoning, spirited, and appetitive parts. We should expect that this important difference will be responsible for some limitations of the city-individual analogy, and indeed, the disanalogy in the case of courage seems to reflect precisely this sort of limitation. For if (a) individuals each have their own reasoning parts, but the spirited part does not have its *own* reasoning, and if (b) reasoning is responsible for a person’s beliefs about goodness, justice, etc., then we would expect courage in the city to involve the auxiliaries’ retention of their own (rational) beliefs, but courage in the individual to involve the spirited part’s support of *reason’s*

(σωτηρίαν, 429c5). When Glaucon asks what sort of preservation he has in mind, Socrates responds, “That preservation of the belief that has been produced by law through education about what things and what sorts of things are to be feared. And by preservation (σωτηρία) of this belief ‘through everything’ I mean preserving (διασώζεσθαι) it and not abandoning (ἐκβάλλειν) it because of pains, pleasures, appetites, or fears” (429c7–d1). Socrates provides an analogy: those who dye wool aim to do so in such a way that the color is completely absorbed and cannot be washed out. In providing musical and gymnastic training to the young guardians, he says, they were aiming to do something similar — namely, ensure that the youths would “absorb” lawful beliefs so thoroughly that “even such extremely effective detergents as pleasure, pain, fear, and appetite wouldn’t wash it out. ... This power to preserve through everything the correct and lawful belief about what is to be feared and what isn’t is what I call courage (430a1–b4).

This characterization of what Socrates (more precisely) calls “political courage” (ἀνδρείαν πολιτικὴν, 430c2–3) anticipates his account of individual courage by identifying the virtue with a kind of preservation.³⁰ In this earlier context, however, what is meant by ‘preservation’

retention of belief. Finally, (3) Plato calls justice in the city “a sort of image of justice”, while “true” justice is the individual justice in the soul (443c–d). This suggests that Plato himself recognizes some limitations of the city-individual analogy, and that the virtues of the city are not intended to be perfect replications of individual virtues. Cf. Adam (1902: 263).

30. Bobonich nicely characterizes an ambiguity in Socrates’ reference to “political” courage: “It is ... unclear whether it attributes a qualified sort of courage to the auxiliaries (*i.e.* ‘political courage’) or whether it merely claims that the preservation by the auxiliaries of the opinion handed down by the philosopher rulers makes the city courageous without taking a position on what this condition in the auxiliaries is to be called” (2002: 44–5). Cf. Irwin (1977: 329, n. 26) and Annas (1981: 114). My own (tentative) position is that Socrates does mean to attribute a qualified courage to the *auxiliaries* themselves, for two main reasons: First, Socrates states at 429b7–c1 that the city is courageous “because of” (διὰ) the ability of its auxiliaries to preserve their lawful beliefs. He *then* addresses the question what that ability consists in — namely, not allowing one’s beliefs to be “washed out” — and it is that ability of *the individuals* that Socrates then calls “political courage”. And second, Glaucon contrasts “political courage” with “the correct belief about these same things which you find in animals and slaves, and which is not the result of education”. This

is made explicit: it means maintaining a stable belief in the face of non-rational impulses. Crucially, moreover, Socrates identifies *failing* to preserve one’s belief in this way with “abandoning” it, a clear reference to his earlier discussion of the various ways in which beliefs are “abandoned”.³¹ By the time Socrates offers his account of individual courage at the end of Book 4, then, he has already established what kind of “preservation” courage requires. Non-rational impulses threaten to destabilize our rational judgments, and the courageous individual is someone who, despite the psychological pressures posed by such impulses, continues to maintain her correct reasoning about what is valuable and how she ought to act. When Socrates identifies individual courage with the spirited part’s “preservation” of what is announced by reason, therefore, we have strong reason to believe that that preservation consists in preventing the “abandonment” of rational judgment.

4. The Threat of Appetite

There is a further argument in support of my interpretation. On Plato’s moral psychological picture, the greatest danger to reason’s rule in the soul, and to the successful carrying out of its correct judgments, is the appetitive part of the soul and its desires. Socrates characterizes exactly this danger in his account of courage: the reasoning and spirited parts must jointly watch over appetite to make sure that it does not become “so big and strong” that it “attempts to enslave and rule” the other parts. Although Socrates’ language might be taken to suggest that appetite’s domination of the soul involves brute psychic “force”,

contrast makes the most sense if he is taking Socrates to be attributing a kind of courage to properly educated *people*. I do not think my account depends on this interpretation, however. What matters for my purposes is simply that the later characterization of individual courage at 442b–c is clearly modeled on, and informed by, the characterization of political courage, and that this political courage is understood in terms of stable belief.

31. In martial contexts familiar to Greeks, cowardice is paradigmatically demonstrated by “throwing away” one’s weapons (often rendered with ἀποβάλλω, *e.g.* at *Laus* 943e5 and ff.). Plato seems to be appropriating that image by characterizing cowardice as the “abandonment” (ἐκβάλλειν) of belief.

careful examination of the text shows that is not how Plato understands it. The threat the appetitive part poses, on his account, is *not* that it will “bully” reason and force the individual to act akratically, but rather that it will in various ways *corrupt* or *change* the agent’s rational judgment. The fact that *that* is the specific sort of danger that appetite poses, and against which the spirited part must guard as reason’s “ally”, adds support to my reading of courage.

We have already seen that, in Books 3 and 4, Socrates characterizes pleasure and fear as “detergents” that cause people to abandon their correct and lawful beliefs. There are, moreover, two key passages that make it explicit what it means for appetite to become “so big and strong” that it “rules and enslaves” the reasoning part of the soul. Most significantly, during Socrates’ discussion of the various kinds of degenerate psychic constitutions in Books 8 and 9, he offers a revealing account of the origin of the oligarchic individual:

Don’t you think that this person would establish his appetitive and money-making part on the throne, setting it up as the great king within himself (ἐγκαθίζειν καὶ μέγαν βασιλέα ποιεῖν ἐν ἑαυτῷ)[?] ... He makes the reasoning and spirited parts sit on the ground beneath appetite, one on either side, reducing them to slaves (καταδουλωσάμενος). He won’t allow the first to reason about or investigate anything except how a little money can be made into great wealth. And he won’t allow the second to admire or honor anything but wealth and wealthy people or to have any ambition other than the acquisition of wealth or whatever might contribute to getting it (553c4–d7).

In the young oligarch’s soul, appetite is the ruler and “king”, while reason and spirit are the “slaves” of appetite. What we can immediately see, however, is that reason’s enslavement to appetite consists not in its being “forced” to go along with appetite contrary to its own judgments and values, but rather in having its judgments and values

corrupted under the influence of appetite.³² Because appetite has come to dominate his soul, the oligarchic individual believes that wealth is the greatest good, and as a result he devotes his rational resources to scheming about how to make a profit.³³ The oligarchic individual is not akratic, therefore, but someone with mistaken values.³⁴

The second key passage occurs in Book 9. Socrates asks, “Why do you think that the condition of a manual worker is despised? Is it for any other reason than that, when the best part is naturally weak (ἀσθενές) in someone, it can’t rule (μὴ δύνασθαι ἄρχειν) the beasts within him but can only serve them and learn the things that flatter them (ἀλλὰ θεραπεύειν ἐκείνα, καὶ τὰ θωπεύματα αὐτῶν μόνον δύνηται μανθάνειν)?” (590c2–6). Reason’s “weakness” here clearly consists not in its susceptibility to being forcibly overcome by the lower soul-parts, but rather in its susceptibility to being corrupted by them. When reason is weak, it becomes a “servant” to the lower parts of the soul, just as it does in the oligarchic individual, and it uses its rational capacities for the sake of nothing other than learning how to please them.³⁵

What these passages show is that appetite’s “strength” in the soul consists in its ability to destabilize and corrupt rational judgment

32. Cf. interpretations of non-rational “rule” in the soul in Brown (2012: 68–9), Cooper (1999b: 127, n. 13), Johnstone (2011), and especially Carone (2011: 135), who cites the oligarchic youth in support of conclusions similar to my own.
33. Socrates emphasizes similar corruptions of belief due to appetite in the democratic and tyrannical individuals (e.g. at 560b–c and 574d). Significantly, alongside changes in the rational beliefs, we also find changes in the individuals’ sense of shame and other spirited desires: the oligarchic individual’s *thumoeides* “admires” and “honors” only wealth and the wealthy (553d); the democratic individual comes to consider “shamelessness” to be “courageous” (560e); and the tyrannical individual “destroys” any beliefs or desires that contain a sense of shame (573a–b).
34. The oligarch is even characterized as *enkratic* at 554c–e, where he “masters” his “dronish”, spendthrift desires.
35. Brickhouse and Smith propose a similar account of the ways in which non-rational impulses affect reasoning in earlier “Socratic” dialogues (2010: 71; cf. 2007), though they contrast such an account with that of the *Republic* (2010: 107).

(while, conversely, reason's "weakness" consists in its vulnerability to that influence). Appetite "rules" and "enslaves" reasoning, in other words, not by forcibly dragging it along, but rather by leading it astray.³⁶ That is the threat of appetite against which the spirited part of the soul must guard.³⁷

There is, however, a potential objection to this account, which concerns the Motivational Thesis. The interpretation I have defended evidently leaves no room for akratic action in the *Republic*. If someone successfully maintains her rational judgment in the face of appetitive impulses, I have suggested, then her stable judgment (along with her allied spirited motivations) will effectively determine her actions. The case of Leontius, however, as most commentators interpret it, represents an apparent counterexample to this claim. Socrates reports that Leontius, upon noticing some corpses lying by the public executioner, "had an appetite to look at them but at the same time was disgusted and turned away. For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, mastered by the appetite, he pushed his eyes wide open and rushed towards the corpses" (439e9–440a1). It is generally assumed by commentators that in being "mastered" by his appetites, Leontius acts *akratically*, and the comments that immediately follow the story seem to provide further support for this interpretation. Socrates asks, "Don't we often notice in other cases that when appetite is forcing (βιάζονται) someone contrary to reasoning, he reproaches himself and gets angry with that in him that is doing the forcing (τῷ βιάζομένῳ)?" (440d–b2). This apparently indicates that

36. Klosko (1986: 69–75) nonetheless interprets the kind of rule that appetite threatens at 442a–b as a form of *akrasia*.

37. Consider also Socrates' likening of appetitive pleasures to "leaden weights" that "drag" reason's vision downward toward the realm of becoming and force it to serve evil ends, "so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes" (519a–b). This image echoes Socrates' claim in the *Phaedo* that pleasures and pains are nails that "rivet" the soul to the body and make it share the body's beliefs and desires (83c–d). What both passages suggest is that appetites and their associated pleasures undermine reason not by forcing the individual to act akratically but rather by diverting rational attention, judgment, and desire to the wrong kinds of objects.

appetite sometimes does *force* someone to act, akratically, contrary to a stable rational judgment.³⁸

There are several lines of response to this objection. The first is to point out that neither the Leontius case nor the remarks that follow are as clearly indicative of *akrasia* as they are standardly taken to be. To begin with, Leontius counts as an akratic agent only if, at the precise moment he acts on his appetite, he also *rationally believes* that he should not. Yet unlike in the two other cases of psychic conflict in Book IV — the thirsty individuals and Odysseus — we are told nothing about the status of Leontius' reasoning in the story. Indeed, Leontius is supposed to illustrate conflict between *appetite* and *spirit*, and those are the only parts of his soul that are explicitly said to be involved in the struggle.³⁹ Furthermore, while it is true that Socrates' subsequent remarks indicate that appetites are sometimes engaged in psychic "civil war" against spirit *and* reason, they do not take a position on how that conflict between the two parties is actually resolved. Indeed,

38. This reading reflects a long tradition according to which Plato's tripartite theory of the soul is introduced largely *in order* to be able to explain cases of *akrasia*. Some supporters of various versions of this view include Bobonich (1994: 3, 5; 2002: 219–47; and 2007: 41–2, 51), Brickhouse and Smith (2007: 16–7; and 2010: 200), Cooper (1999a: 74–5), Dorion (2007: 125–6; and 2012: 37–8, 48–9), Frede (1992: xxix–xxx), Gardner (2002: 200, 203), Gill (1985: 6), Gosling (1990: 20–1), Hare (1982: 53–4), Irwin (1977: 191–5; and 1995: 209–11), Klosko (1986: 70), Lesses (1987: 148; and 1990: 144), Lorenz (2006b: 147–8), Miller (1999: 96), Penner (1971: 191–5; and 1990: 49–61), Reeve (1988: 134–5), and Rowe (2003; and 2007: 25). Commentators who (for a diverse range of reasons) reject or doubt the prevalent interpretation include Carone (2001), Ferrari (1990: 139, and 2007: 168–9), Kahn (1996: 243–57), Morris (2006), Shields (2001: 139, and 2007: 82–3, 86), Singpurwalla (2006: 243, 254–5), Stalley (2007: 80–3), and Whiting (2012: 175). I provide my own response to the traditional view in Wilburn (2014b). The present account is especially indebted to the work of Carone and Ferrari (1990).

39. Cf. Crombie (1962: 346). It is worth adding that, *if* reasoning is involved with spirit throughout the struggle against appetite, that seems to undermine Socrates' conclusion that Leontius' psychic conflict necessarily demonstrates the distinctness of a spirited part of the soul (rather than serving as a second demonstration of conflict between reason and appetite). The standard reading thus leaves Plato more vulnerable to the sort of criticism of his account of spirit that is offered in Hardie (1936: 141–5), Penner (1971: 111–3), and Robinson (1995: 44–6).

Socrates uses the conative or progressive present tense and participle (βιάζονται, βιάζομένῳ), which can be taken to indicate a struggle that is *continuing* and has not yet been decided. What his statement indicates, then, is simply that sometimes appetites are *in the process of using force* against reasoning and spirit. All we can conclude, in other words, is that at *some* point prior to acting, the agent rationally judges that he should not indulge his appetite, and that *both* reason and spirit resist appetite at that time. That is consistent with the denial of *akrasia*, however. For all Socrates tells us, it could be that *if* the reasoning part continues to maintain its judgment, then reason and spirit will effectively overcome appetite, and that, on the other hand, *if* appetite overcomes the others, it will be because it has caused the individual to “abandon” — for at least a moment — his rational belief.⁴⁰

40. One objection to this way of interpreting the case might be that Leontius rebukes himself *while* gazing at the corpses (I am grateful to Hal Parker for drawing my attention to this worry): “Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!” (440a2–3). The use of speech might be taken as an indication that reason is, after all, involved in the struggle throughout. I do not think this conclusion is required, however. Textual evidence suggests that Plato acknowledges the possibility that individuals might make use of language even when reason is inactive: (1) Plato contrasts the appetitive part of the soul, which is active during sleep, with the reasoning part, which “slumbers” (*Rep.* 571c) or is “bound by sleep” (*Tim.* 71e) at that time. Plato was, however, nonetheless aware that people make use of speech in their dreams (*Tim.* 71e–72a). (2) In the *Laws*, the Athenian Visitor suggests that when individuals become drunk, their reasoning “completely abandons” them, while their non-rational impulses become intensified (645d–e). Such individuals are characterized by “complete license of speech (παρησσία)”, however (649b3–4). The implication, then, is that Plato does not think the mere use of words shows that the reasoning part of the soul is supportive of the speech-act and any other behavior associated with it. (In this context, we might also consider Aristotle’s remark at *NE* 1147a18–9 that “saying the words that go along with knowledge” is no sign of the knowledge.) If that is the case, then Leontius’ use of speech does not show that he has maintained his rational judgment at the time of action. (It should also be noted that failure to maintain his judgment at the time of action could mean either that Leontius’ reason comes to hold a *different* judgment about the action at that moment, or that it simply stops holding any judgment *at all* about it momentarily.) Carone (2001: 136–9) advocates a reading of the Leontius case that is similar to my own. Brickhouse and Smith (2010: 206–10) provide a reply to Carone.

It might be objected that the language of “force” tells against the suggestion that appetite’s victory over reason, if it should occur, involves destabilizing the latter’s judgment. In response, we should note, firstly, that even if appetites characteristically prevail over reason by corrupting it, it is still true that prevailing over *appetites* often requires something like brute psychic force. On Plato’s view, it is not always possible to achieve victory over one’s appetites by “persuading” appetite, changing its desires, or getting it to acquiesce in reason’s commands; rather, sometimes acting correctly necessarily requires forcefully acting “against appetite’s will”, so to speak (see, e.g., *Rep.* 554d, *Tim.* 70a, and *Phdr.* 254d–e). If that is right, then the language of “physical” struggle when describing conflicts involving appetite is appropriate, whether or not appetite’s “victory” over reason involves akratic force.

More importantly, though, Plato often characterizes the corrupting influence that appetitive impulses have on reason in violent terms: they “force” us to change our minds (βιασθέντας, 413b9); they “enslave” reason (καταδουλωσάμενος, 553d2); they “compel” it to serve evil ends (ήναγκασμένον, 519a4); they “forcefully drag it” (έλκομένη βία, 577e3); and they “compel” it to chase after alien pleasures (άναγκάζειν, 587a4).⁴¹ Yet attention to the contexts of those expressions consistently reveals that the kind of “force” Plato has in mind involves the corruption and destabilization of beliefs and values. This should give us pause before assuming that, even if the appetites at 440a–b do succeed in “forcing” some-one contrary to reasoning, their doing so necessarily involves *akrasia*.

There is a further line of response to the Leontius objection, however, which is to acknowledge that perhaps, after all, Plato *does* accept the possibility of *akrasia* in the text, and that Leontius is an implied akratic. I do not think anything in the text can *rule out* that interpretation. However, I also think that, whatever Plato’s views on *akrasia* at the time he wrote the *Republic*, he shows no interest in drawing attention to its possibility, and he at least *treats* stable true belief at the time

41. In the *Laws*, the Athenian Visitor even says that appetitive pleasure “persuades with forceful deception” (πειθοί μετ’ άπάτης βιαίου, 863b8) in order to get its way.

of action as if it were sufficient for behaving correctly. This is especially true of his characterization of courage and cowardice throughout Books 3 and 4: whether *akrasia* is possible in the *Republic* or not, it does not seem to be in the picture in Socrates' account of courage. My claim is simply this, then: even supposing Plato *had* come to accept the possibility of *akrasia* (or, for that matter, had accepted it all along), his early educational proposals — including the tests against belief abandonment — and his account of courage in Book 4, along with his emphasis through the dialogue on the *corruption* of reason by appetite, either ignore or trivialize its significance.

5. Courage in the *Republic*

According to this account, spirit's primary function as reason's ally, and its role in the virtue of courage, is to ensure that reason retains stable, correct judgment in the face of appetitive states and impulses. Three further questions must be addressed concerning the details of this account. First, *how* precisely does spirit carry out the function Plato assigns to it? Second, are the "announcements" that the *thumoeides* preserves at 442b–c merely rational *beliefs*, or are they applications of rational *knowledge*? And finally, does spirit's preservation of those "announcements" constitute *true* courage, on Plato's view, or does the genuine courage possessed by the philosopher require something more?

Although my interpretation does not turn on any particular answer to the first question, my own proposal is the following: Plato distinguishes the spirited part of the soul by its desire for honor, and he associates it with honor-related emotional states such as shame, anger, admiration, and disgust.⁴² Early musical education conditions the *thumoeides* and directs its love of honor in such a way that its emotions, desires, and attitudes become aligned with, and hence supportive

42. For textual support, see esp. *Rep.* 401d–402a, 439–440a, 441c, 549a, 550b, and 581a; *Tim.* 70a–d; and *Phdr.* 253d–254a. Cf. characterizations of spirit and its desires in Brennan (2012: 109), Burnyeat (2006: 9–13), Cairns (1993: 383–4), Cooper (1999b: 130–6), Hobbs (2000: 7–37), and Kamtekar (1998: 323–34).

of, correct rational judgment.⁴³ As a result, when reason makes "announcements" about how the agent ought to act, the spirited part provides additional motivation to behave as reason commands.⁴⁴ If spirited motivations are sufficiently strong, then the reasoning part of the soul will maintain its judgments and the agent will act accordingly. Why, then, does the strength of supportive spirited desires impact the stability of reasoning in this way? Presumably, because spirited desires can influence reason in the same way appetites do. We have seen that strong appetites, when they pull the agent toward an action *opposed* by reason, threaten to corrupt the agent's rational judgments. Likewise, we can expect that strong spirited desires, when they pull the agent toward the action *recommended* by reason, will influence the agent's reasoning in a way that pushes it further, and more securely, in the direction toward which it is already inclined.⁴⁵

Concerning the second and third questions, there are at least four distinct interpretative options:

1. Spirit preserves true rational beliefs at 442b–c, and preservation of true rational belief is sufficient for true courage.
2. Spirit preserves true rational beliefs at 442b–c, but true courage requires more than the preservation of true rational belief (e.g. the preservation of knowledge).

43. Discussions of the effects of early education on the spirited part of the soul are found in Cairns (1993: 386–8), Cross and Woolzley (1966: 123), Gosling (1973: 42–5), Hobbs (2000: 58–9), Moss (2005), Lear (2006), Singpurwalla (2013), and Wilberding (2009).

44. Note that my interpretation takes no position on the question whether early education trains the spirited part of the soul to supply motivations that support correct rational judgments *because* they come from reason, or whether it trains spirit to supply motivations that, as a matter of fact, support rational judgments, but for independent reasons (say, because spirit has been trained to find the sorts of actions prescribed by correct reason attractive).

45. Moss (2005) provides what I take to be a congenial account, according to which spirited motivations have the effect of drawing reason's attention to what is good about the better course of action.

3. Spirit preserves knowledgeable rational accounts at 442b–c, and preservation of knowledgeable accounts is sufficient for true courage.
4. Spirit preserves knowledgeable rational accounts at 442b–c, but true courage requires more than the preservation of knowledgeable accounts (*e.g.* the continuous pursuit of *new* beliefs and knowledge through courageous study).⁴⁶

I take it that all four of these interpretations are compatible with my proposed account of courage. What is important for my account is simply that the “courage” Socrates describes at 442b–c is achieved through motivational support by the *thumoeides* that ensures stable reasoning. The questions of whether what he is describing constitutes *true* courage or some inferior approximation of it, and whether the reasoning being supported there is true belief or knowledge, do not directly affect my interpretation. I will not, therefore, insist on any one of the four interpretations for present purposes. I do, however, wish to rule one of them out: option (1) does not seem to be a tenable interpretation. On the reading I have advocated, consistently stable true belief is sufficient for *acting as the courageous individual* would — and for the possession of “political” courage — but that does not entail that the person who consistently acts in that way thereby counts as possessing *genuine* courage. Indeed, Plato provides strong signs in the *Republic* that mere correct belief is insufficient for true virtue. A notable example is Socrates’ remark that “beliefs without knowledge are shameful

46. One might want to recognize two further options: (5) Spirit preserves rational beliefs (whether true or false) at 442b–c, and preservation of rational beliefs is sufficient for true courage; and (6) Spirit preserves rational beliefs (whether true or false) at 442b–c, but true courage requires more than the preservation of rational beliefs. However, it is implausible that Socrates’ account of courage is meant to allow courageous individuals to include those whose spirited part preserves *false* beliefs. First, the account of “political” courage at 430b makes it explicit that the “preserved” beliefs are *correct* ones. And second, the account of individual courage makes it clear that the courageous individual is someone whose reasoning and spirited parts are not “enslaved” and “ruled” by appetite, but rather have “learned their own roles”. It is not clear how such a person could include those with false beliefs about what they ought to do.

and ugly things”, and that the *best* of them are “blind” (506c). Since we can certainly assume that genuine courage is something noble and good, on Plato’s view, genuine courage cannot consist merely in the preservation of true belief.⁴⁷ That leaves options (2), (3), and (4). Given any of those interpretations, it is clear that the virtue of true courage, for Plato, either prominently requires, or is identical with, lasting and stable knowledge.

6. The Stability of Belief

If the interpretation I have defended is correct, then the accounts of courage offered in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* have a great deal more in common than has typically been acknowledged. In the *Protagoras*, courage is knowledge about what is and is not to be feared, and cowardice consists in false belief or ignorance. Likewise, in the *Republic*, courage involves the retention of correct reasoning about what is and is not to be feared, while cowardice continues to consist in a form of (at least temporary) ignorance: the “abandonment” of correct belief. Similarly, both the *Protagoras* and the *Republic* treat correct belief and knowledge at the time of action as equally sufficient for acting correctly, though the dialogues also agree that mere belief is problematic in being subject to fluctuation and corruption under the influence of pleasure, pain, and appetitive impulses.

It is in their responses to this last problem that we can perceive a discrepancy between the two dialogues. In the *Protagoras* Socrates evidently leaves no room for mere belief in the psychology of virtue: courage is *wisdom* about what is to be feared, while belief — even correct belief — is treated as an irredeemably unstable source of “confusion” and “regret”. In the *Republic* the picture is more complex. While *true* courage evidently continues to involve knowledge or wisdom — namely, the knowledge that grounds the wise philosopher’s practical judgments — the text also attempts to provide a basis for the stability of mere belief: the spirited part of the soul. When properly educated

47. See a further argument for the same conclusion in Carone (2001: 130, n. 47).

through early musical and gymnastic training, the *thumoeides* can provide motivations that support, and ensure the “preservation” of, correct and lawful belief. The *Republic* thus evidently adopts a somewhat more optimistic attitude than does the *Protagoras* about what mere belief can accomplish. Its optimism serves an important function in its accounts of moral education and development, moreover. The possibility of true belief made stable by an educated spirited part of the soul makes it possible for those who have not yet achieved wisdom — especially the young and the auxiliaries of the city — to cultivate and practice an important precursor to courage proper. That precursor, which Socrates calls “political courage”, represents an indispensable stage in individual moral progress — a stage between “confusion” and “wandering”, on the one hand, and the perfect wisdom of the philosopher, on the other.⁴⁸

Even this seeming discrepancy between the two dialogues masks a more subtle continuity, however. It has already been noted, first of all, that by pointing to the problematic instability of belief, the *Protagoras* draws attention to the psychological and ethical need for something like the *thumoeides* of the *Republic*. The *Protagoras* does more than that, though: it hints at the presence of a spirited element of our psychology (though it makes no mention of “parts” of the soul, of course). This is clearest in the dialogue’s treatment of the *kalon* — the honorable or noble — in Socrates’ final argument.⁴⁹ Socrates himself, following to its conclusions the hedonistic position he attributes to the Many, casually subsumes the honorable under the pleasant (which the many identify with the good) throughout

48. Kamtekar (1998) and Wilberding (2008) both explore, and provide illuminating accounts of, ways in which the spirited part of the soul might ground a “second-best” sort of morality for Plato. Cf. remarks in Vlastos (1969: 72–3, nn. 7, 9) and Klosko (1986: 76–9).

49. We might also point to the important role the emotion of shame (which Plato later associates with spirit; see esp. *Phdr.* 253e–254a) plays in the dialogue, e.g. at 312a, 322c, 333c, and 352c. Also, at 351b1, Protagoras identifies spirited anger (*θυμός*) as a source of confidence (*θάρσος*), which he distinguishes from courage, though he thinks all courageous individuals are confident. (See discussion of Protagoras’ argument in Devereux [1975].)

his discussion. When he initially asks Protagoras whether to live pleasantly is good, Protagoras adds the caveat that it is good only if the pleasures taken are *honorable* ones (351c). Socrates feigns offense at the idea that some pleasures are good and others bad, and he subsequently teases the hedonistic identification of pleasure and the good out of Protagoras. Later, when Socrates turns to his account of courage, he asks whether going to war is honorable and whether, being honorable, it must also be good and therefore (on the basis of hedonism) pleasant (359e–360a). Although Protagoras agrees, the exchange clearly points to a weakness of the Many’s account, which commentators have often noted:⁵⁰ according to their hedonism, an action that is painful in the short term can nonetheless be considered good and pleasant if it yields greater pleasure in the long term. The problem, however, is that fighting in war is a painful experience that involves the risk of personal injury or *death*. Those who die in war, while achieving the height of honor, never achieve long-term pleasure. This suggests two things: first, that the pleasant and the honorable are in fact distinct from one another, and second, that when courageous individuals risk their lives fighting in wars, they are seeking the latter rather than the former. If that is the case, then it also suggests that there is an element of our nature — one that is especially prominent during displays of courage — that desires honor rather than pleasure.⁵¹ It suggests, in other words, that something like the honor-loving *thumoeides* of the *Republic* plays an important role in our psychology, and in particular in the psychology of courage.⁵²

50. See discussion in Denyer (2008: 185), Dimas (2008: 259–60), Duncan (1978: 222–23), Goldberg (1983: 313, n. 22), Klosko (1980: 321), Moss (2006: 509), Sesonske (1963: 79), Sullivan (1961: 20), Taylor (1976: 208–9), and Wolz (1967: 216). Cf. Aristotle *NE* 1115a26–7.

51. Hobbs (2000: 113–36) offers a rather different reading of the *Protagoras* (one that attributes a kind of qualified hedonism to Socrates), though her conclusion is similar: the *Protagoras* shows that courage and the rest of the virtues cannot be understood without a more complex moral psychology, and in particular, without an appeal to the *thumoeides* and its characteristic concerns.

52. A further point seems to confirm this: Socrates had earlier suggested that what makes war *good* (on the Many’s account, at least) is that it brings

7. Conclusion: The *Deinon*

The *Protagoras* defines courage as “wisdom about what is and is not to be feared”. Significantly, perhaps, the word translated “to be feared”, *deinon*, is one that appears in the dialogue in two earlier contexts in which it is applied to sophists and sophistry. First, when Socrates pushes Hippocrates to explain what the sophist’s wisdom consists in, he replies that a sophist is “expert at making people clever (*deinon*) speakers” (312d). Later Socrates reports, “Prodicus corrects me each time I use the word *deinon* to praise you or someone else, as for example, ‘Protagoras is a wise and *deinos* man’. When I say that, he asks me if I am not ashamed to call good things terrible. For terrible, he says, is bad” (341a6–b2). It is hard not to suspect a bit of irony here, and that Socrates knows perfectly well the implications of his use of *deinon*. After all, Socrates warns Hippocrates early in the dialogue that sophists are like “peddlers” who will try to “deceive” people into purchasing their teachings, regardless of whether those teachings are beneficial or harmful for the soul. For Socrates, and for Plato, what is truly *deinon* is deception about the Good — the only “real” kind of faring badly, Socrates says, is the loss of knowledge (345b) — and that is precisely the kind of harm one risks by exposing oneself to the influence of a sophist.⁵³ In the *Republic*, we have seen, courage continues to involve knowledge or correct belief about what is *deinon*. The primary threat against which the courageous individual guards, however, is not the

“preservation of cities and power over others” (354b). Spirit, we know, is the part of the soul that characteristically loves power (see, for example, *Rep.* 549a and 581a). Moreover, Protagoras had earlier claimed that early cities were unable to remain intact until the gods sent justice and a *sense of shame* (αἰδῶς) — a spirited emotion — to human beings (322b–c). Cf. *Laws* 698b–699d, where the Athenian Visitor attributes Athenian success against the Persian invasion to their “sense of shame”, without which “they would never have banded together as they then did to defend themselves”.

53. Early in the *Protagoras*, Socrates claims to have noticed Hippocrates’ courage (310d). As it subsequently turns out, however, in seeking the instruction of a sophist without knowing what effect it will have on his soul, Hippocrates proves ignorant about what is to be feared and hence not truly courageous after all.

external one posed by people like Protagoras, but rather the internal one posed by appetite, which threatens to corrupt our reasoning about what is valuable and how we should live our lives. The function of the spirited part of the soul is to preserve and protect reason against this “sophist” within.⁵⁴

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