

Akrasia and the Rule of Appetite in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Republic*

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Abstract. According to a traditional line of interpretation, Plato's introduction of the three-part soul in *Republic* 4 was motivated in part by his desire to acknowledge and account for cases of akratic action, and thereby to repudiate the psychology and the conclusions of the earlier dialogue *Protagoras*. In this paper I reject this interpretation, arguing that countenancing *akrasia* was never a major philosophical concern for Plato, and *a fortiori* that it was not his motivation for introducing the tripartite soul. I argue that his moral psychological focus and concern in the *Republic* was rather on the notion of psychic rule, and on illuminating various ways in which reasoning is *corrupted* by non-rational desires (rather than overcome by them through brute psychic 'force'). I then offer an explanation of Plato's evident lack of concern for *akrasia* by appealing to the *Protagoras* itself. I conclude with a rejection of sharp developmentalism between the two dialogues.

A prevalent line of interpretation makes *akrasia* a centerpiece of Platonic moral psychology: in earlier dialogues, notably *Protagoras*, this interpretation has it, Plato presents an 'intellectualist' account of the soul that is distinguished in large part by its denial of the possibility of *akrasia*. The *Protagoras* denies, that is, that it is possible for an agent, under the influence of pleasure, pain, fear, or the like, to act contrary to her better judgment about what she ought to do (provided she continues to maintain that judgment at the time of action). All putative cases of *akrasia*, the *Protagoras* claims, are in fact cases of ignorance. However, Plato later came to *accept* the possibility of *akrasia*, and in the *Republic* he introduces a new tripartite theory of the soul that is intended to accommodate its possibility and repudiate the psychology of the *Protagoras*.¹ According to this reading, Plato's theory of tripartition was introduced largely *because* Plato wanted to explain akratic action. Reeve states this view succinctly: referring to Socrates' argument of the *Protagoras*, he comments, "It cannot be reasonably doubted, in my view, that Plato developed the tripartite psychology of the *Republic* in response to this

¹ An alternative version of this line of interpretation is that the *Protagoras* presents a distinctively *Socratic* moral psychology, and that Plato develops the tripartite theory of the soul as a rejection of the Socratic view and *its* denial of *akrasia*.

argument.”² On the prevalent interpretation, then, considerations about akratic action motivate tripartite theory, and *akrasia* assumes a place of great importance in Platonic moral psychology and the development of Plato’s thought.³

I would like to raise doubts about this picture. According to my alternative interpretation, Plato introduces the theory of tripartition in order to provide the resources for illuminating his understanding of psychic *rule*. While many commentators may accept that psychic rule is *a* priority (perhaps even a *main* priority) for Plato, however, my view is somewhat stronger. In particular, I will argue that recognizing and explaining the possibility of *akrasia* was not *any* part of Plato’s motivation for introducing tripartite theory, and that in fact he systematically avoids countenancing cases of *akrasia* in the *Republic*.⁴ Here it is important to note that, for the purposes of this paper, I restrict use of

² 1988: 134.

³ Those who advocate versions of the prevalent interpretation 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; Gardner 2002: 200, 203; Gill 1985: 6; Gosling 1990: 20-1; Irwin 1977: 191-5 and 1995: 209-11; Lesses 1987: 148 and 1990: 144; Lorenz 2006: 147-8; Miller 1999: 96; Penner 1971:103 and 1990: 49-61; Reeve 1988: 134-5; and Rowe 2003 and 2007: 25. Dorion (2012: 37-8), for example, who discusses both *akrasia* and *enkrateia* in connection with tripartite psychology, comments, “In light of the partition of the soul in the *Republic*, Socrates there recognizes explicitly what he refuses to admit in the *Protagoras*, viz. not only that there can be conflict between reason and desire, but equally that it is possible to be overcome by the latter.” Gosling (1990: 22) remarks: “For the later Plato, therefore, there is no general problem about weakness of will: it occurs as the ordinary person of the *Protagoras* says it does.” Finally, Lorenz (2006: 147) writes, “On the *Protagoras*’ picture [...] no emotion can ever get a person to act against what they believe is best *as long as they maintain that belief*. This, I think, is a rather implausible view [...] It is emphatically rejected by the *Republic*’s theory of motivation.”

⁴ Others who (on a wide variety of grounds) reject, or express reservations about, 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; Weiss 2006: 169-70, 180-1; and Whiting 2012: 175. Some interpreters, such as Carone, Morris, and Singpurwalla reject the developmentalism inherent in (many versions of) the prevalent interpretation, while nonetheless evidently accepting that *akrasia* was a central psychological concern for Plato. Others such as Weiss accept developmentalism but reject the idea that *akrasia* was a major motivation for the perceived shift in Platonic moral psychology. Ferrari, Kahn, Shields, Whiting, and (perhaps) Stalley all reject *both* developmentalism and the centrality of *akrasia* in Plato’s moral psychology. Kahn (1996: 256-57), however, rejects developmentalism not because he takes Plato to be committed to a denial of *akrasia* in the *Republic*, but because he takes Plato never to have been committed to denying *akrasia* in the first place. I take my interpretation of the *Republic* to be allied on many key points with that of Carone, although there are some crucial differences between our two accounts: (a) she takes *akrasia* to be a central issue in Platonic moral psychology, whereas my central thesis is that it is

‘*akrasia*’ to cases in which an agent performs some action while believing, and despite believing, that she should do otherwise—that is, to cases in which an agent’s appetites ‘force’ her to act against her concurrently held better judgment (rather than, say, by causing her to vacillate in that judgment).

I will begin by arguing, in §1 and §2, that tripartite theory is not concerned with explaining akratic action, but rather with providing the resources to elucidate the notion of psychic control or rule. As I will show in §3, however, psychic control or rule—even when it is exercised by the inferior appetitive element in the soul—is not understood on the model of *akrasia*. As the *Republic* presents it, appetite does not exercise control over an agent’s soul by forcing the agent to act against her better judgment, but rather by, in various ways, *corrupting* the agent’s reasoning and judgment. One of the primary aims of my paper, then—in addition to challenging the view that acknowledging *akrasia* is a motivation for tripartite psychology—is to contribute a careful analysis of Plato’s presentation and understanding of self-mastery and psychic rule in the *Republic*. In §4 I will offer an account of *why* Plato was primarily concerned with psychic rule. Drawing on the *Protagoras* and *Phaedo*, I will suggest that the answer has much to do with what Plato finds ‘ridiculous’ or ‘strange’ about the many’s understanding of *akrasia*. Finally, in §5, I will address the issue of developmentalism. If my account is correct, then there may be much more continuity between the moral psychology of *Protagoras* and *Republic* than is typically thought.

1. *Akrasia* in the *Republic*

There are at least three initial reasons for doubting the view that Plato introduces tripartite psychology in order to recognize and explain the phenomenon of *akrasia*. First, as some commentators have previously noted, tripartition of the soul is not necessary for

not; (b) she is insistent that the *Republic* is committed to denying the possibility of *akrasia*, whereas my own conclusions are somewhat weaker; and (c) her account turns on the question whether appetites and emotions are ‘good-dependent’ or ‘good-independent’ in the *Republic*, whereas nothing in my account depends on that issue. (See n. 44 for more on the good-dependent or -independent status of appetites.)

countenancing *akrasia*.⁵ If Plato's primary concern had been to account for akratic behavior, then he evidently would have needed at most a *two*-part division of the soul: a rational part that judges and desires what is best, and a non-rational part responsible for passions that pull against reason's desires.⁶ Given the hypothesis that tripartition aims to account for *akrasia*, the 'third' part of the soul becomes explanatorily idle.⁷ This suggests that the developmentalist picture is at the very least not telling the whole story, and that even if accounting for *akrasia* was part of the motivation for the theory of tripartition, it was not the sole or primary motivation for it.

A second point, however, suggests that accounting for *akrasia* was not even *part* of the motivation for tripartite psychology. In the *Republic* 4 argument for tripartition, Socrates distinguishes the three parts of the soul from one another by appealing to the phenomenon of psychic conflict: first, conflict between reason and appetite; second, between appetite and spirit; and third, between spirit and reason. Yet in the three cases of conflict that he cites, Socrates avoids explicitly recognizing a case of *akrasia*.⁸ Consider first his argument for a division between the reasoning and appetitive parts of the soul. Socrates comments: "Now, would we assert that sometimes there are thirsty people who are unwilling to drink? [...] What, then, should one say about them? Isn't it that there is something in their soul, bidding them to drink, and something different, forbidding them to do so, that masters the thing that bids?" (439c2-7).⁹ Socrates makes it clear that this conflict between reason and appetite does not result in akratic behavior: the thirsty individuals are unwilling (οὐκ ἐθέλειν) to drink because the reasoning part of their souls 'masters' (κρατοῦν) the appetitive part. Likewise, when Socrates argues for the

⁵ This point is noted in Dorion 2012: 36; as well as in Shields 2001: 139 and 2007: 77.

⁶ Nor is tripartition *sufficient* for countenancing akratic action: one may think that desires originate in three different parts of the soul, but that nonetheless (for one reason or another), agents always act in accordance with their judgments of goodness. Carone (2001: 133-4) advocates such an interpretation. Cf. Stalley 2007: 81.

⁷ Precisely this point has been taken by some commentators as evidence that Plato's *real* commitment, despite the appearance given by *Republic* 4, was to a merely *bipartite* division of the soul. See Penner 1971: 111-3, Rees 1957, and Robinson 1995: 44-6, as well as replies in Moss 2005 and Miller, Jr. 1999: 99.

⁸ A point noted in Stalley 2007: 80.

⁹ Translations of Plato are from Cooper 1997, with modifications.

distinction between the reasoning and spirited parts of the soul, he appeals to the case of Odysseus, who “struck his breast and spoke to his heart” in order to quell his spirited anger. “Here”, Socrates explains, “Homer clearly represents the part that has calculated about better and worse as different from the part that is angry without calculation” (441b6-c2). Although Socrates himself does not explicitly indicate whether reason or anger ultimately prevails in this conflict, reason’s victory is nonetheless clear: in the quoted passage from Homer, Odysseus does not rashly retaliate against the insolent suitors and maidservants, but instead patiently waits to carry out his plan for a more glorious revenge. Odysseus, like the thirsty individuals, does not act akratically.

The case of Leontius, to which Socrates appeals to illustrate the conflict between appetite and spirit, is more complicated. According to the story Socrates has heard, Leontius was once walking up from the Piraeus when he saw some corpses lying by the public executioner:

He had an appetite to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned away. For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, overpowered by the appetite, he pushed his eyes wide open and rushed towards the corpses, saying, ‘Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the admirable sight!’[...] [That story] certain proves that anger sometimes makes war against the appetites as one thing against another (439e9-440a6).

Leontius is often taken to be the *Republic*’s paradigmatic exemplar of akratic behavior,¹⁰ and there is some *prima facie* justification for this reading. Unlike the two previous cases, in Leontius we have a clear instance of an agent acting in accordance with a recalcitrant non-rational impulse: he is ‘overpowered’ (κρατούμενος) by his appetite. However, this does not yet make it a case of *akrasia*, because what we do *not* have is any explicit indication that, when Leontius acts on his appetitive desire, he is at the same time acting *against* his rational judgment. The only psychic factors Socrates explicitly cites are appetite on the one hand and anger on the other.¹¹ Of course, Socrates also does not *deny*

¹⁰ See, for example, Bobonich 1994: 7; Brickhouse and Smith 2007: 16; Cooper 1999b: 128; Dorion 2012: 38, n. 20; Gardner 2002: 200; Gosling 1990: 21; Irwin 1977: 192; Kahn 254-5; Lesses 1987: 148; and Reeve 1988: 134.

¹¹ Crombie (1962: 346) comments: “Rational calculation perhaps has nothing to say on the topic of corpse-viewing. Even if it does in fact condemn it, the more relevant point is that the morbid appetite is also opposed by non-rational attitude of disgust”.

that Leontius acts against a rational judgment when he gazes at the corpses, and many commentators have found it natural to suppose that Leontius does act against such a judgment.¹² This reading seems to receive support from the comments that follow. Socrates continues, “Besides, don’t we often notice in other cases that when appetite forces someone contrary to rational calculation, he reproaches himself and gets angry with that in him that’s doing the forcing, so that of the two factions that are fighting in a civil war, so to speak, spirit allies itself with reason?” (440a8-b4).¹³ On the surface, this remark seems to acknowledge that appetites sometimes ‘force’ agents to act akratically against their better judgment. If that is correct, and if we are supposed to read this comment back into the preceding case of Leontius, then Leontius’ corpse-gazing *does* turn out to be an instance of *akrasia*.

I will return to this important passage later in the paper. For now, it is enough to note that even if the remarks at 440a-b *do* imply that Leontius acts akratically, Socrates himself avoids bringing that implication to the surface when he describes the case. That, in itself, is sufficient to undermine the prevalent view. *If*, as the developmentalist picture claims, tripartition is introduced in order to countenance and explain akratic behavior, then we would expect Plato to make a clear, unambiguous case of *akrasia* the focal point of his discussion. Instead, he systematically avoids doing so: in the two cases in Book 4 in which he makes it explicit that reasoning is involved in a psychic conflict, reasoning *prevails*; and in the one case in which a non-rational impulse prevails, Plato does not make it explicit that reasoning is involved at all. In other words, precisely when Plato has the opportunity to recognize the possibility of akratic action and repudiate the conclusions of the *Protagoras* (and precisely when, on the prevalent view, that is one of his primary objectives), he does not.

For the final preliminary consideration against the prevalent view, we should begin by noting that in the *Protagoras*, Plato uses ‘weaker than’ locutions to characterize the many’s position on *akrasia*. Individuals act contrary to what they know is best, the

¹² E.g. Rowe 2003: 27: “Leontius [...] quite clearly does not think it a good thing to feast his eyes on dead bodies, even while he is doing it.”

¹³ Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 208-9 take these remarks to be decisive on the question whether Leontius is an akratic. See further discussion in §4 and n. 40.

many claim, because they are ‘weaker than pleasure’ (ἡδονῆς ἥττω) or ‘weaker than themselves’ (ἑαυτοῦ),¹⁴ and it is this understanding of *akrasia* in terms of being ‘weaker than’ that Socrates confronts and ultimately rejects. *If* tripartition had been introduced in order to vindicate the many’s position and countenance akratic action, then we would expect these distinctive ‘weaker than’ expressions to be prominent in the *Republic*’s treatment of the tripartite soul. Yet they are not. In fact, they appear nowhere in the crucial Book 4 argument for the division of the soul, nor does Plato make any use of them in the remainder of the dialogue following Book 4. The significance of this point becomes amplified when we note that Plato does, in fact, provide an analysis of the expression ‘being weaker than oneself’ in the *Republic*, but that he does so at 430e ff., *prior to* his introduction of tripartition. Again, if tripartite psychology is supposed to provide the resources for repudiating the *Protagoras*’ denial of *akrasia*, then it is unclear why Plato would have revisited the notion of ‘being weaker than oneself’ *before* introducing the tripartite soul and ignored that notion *after* introducing it.

2. ‘Being Weaker than Oneself’

So much for preliminaries. The main case against the prevalent view can be constructed through a closer examination of the passage just referred to: the *Republic*’s treatment of ‘being weaker than oneself’ at 430e ff. The passage will prove important in what follows, so I quote it at some length:

<Soc.> Moderation is surely a kind of order [κόσμος], the control [ἐγκράτεια] of certain kinds of pleasures and desires. People indicate as much when they use the phrase ‘being stronger than oneself’ and similar phrases. I don’t know just what they mean by them, but they are, so to speak, like tracks or clues that moderation has left behind in language. Isn’t that so?

<Gl.> Absolutely.

<Soc.> Yet isn’t the expression ‘being stronger than oneself’ ridiculous? The self that is ‘stronger’ is the same as the self that is ‘weaker’, so that the same person is referred to in all such expressions.

<Gl.> Of course.

<Soc.> Nonetheless, the expression is apparently trying to indicate that, in the soul of that very person, there is something better and something worse, and that, whenever what

¹⁴ For examples, see 352d8-e1; 353a1, c2; 354e7; 355c3, d6, e2; 357e2; 358c2-3.

is naturally better is in control of [ἐγκρατές] what is worse, this is expressed by saying that the person is ‘stronger than himself’. At any rate, this expression is a kind of praise. But when, on the other hand, what is smaller and better is mastered [κρατηθῆ] by what is larger and worse, due to poor upbringing or bad company, this is called being ‘weaker than oneself’ and licentious, and it is a kind of reproach.

<Gl.> Appropriately so.

<Soc.> Take a look at our new city, and you’ll find one of these conditions in it. You’ll say that it is rightly called ‘stronger than itself’, if indeed something in which the better rules [ἄρχει] the worse is properly called moderate and ‘stronger than itself’ [...] If any city is said to be ‘stronger than itself’ and ‘stronger’ than its pleasures and desires, it is this one (430e6-431d5).

Socrates’ analysis of the expressions ‘stronger’ and ‘weaker’ than oneself emerges out of his effort to determine what it means for a city to possess the virtue of moderation. He assumes that moderation must involve control over pleasures and desires, a point at which he takes popular expressions such as ‘stronger than oneself’ to hint. What is noteworthy, however, is that Socrates falls short of endorsing the popular use of those expressions. He does not, that is, endorse the sort of use that the many make of those expressions in the *Protagoras*.¹⁵ Rather, he claims that he “does not know what they mean” (οὐκ οἶδ’ ὄντινα τρόπον, 430e6) when they say such things, but that he nonetheless thinks those expressions, if properly construed, have something to teach about moderation. His own construal understands being ‘stronger’ or ‘weaker’ than oneself in terms of psychic control or mastery: when what is better in an individual is in control of what is worse, the individual is ‘stronger than himself’; when what is worse is in control, the individual is ‘weaker than himself’.¹⁶ He then applies this same analysis to the city: when what is better in the city rules over the worse, the city is ‘stronger than itself’; when the opposite is the case, the city is ‘weaker than itself’. In order to complete the aim of his discussion, Socrates goes on to identify moderation in the city as the condition in which, not only does the better part of the city rule, but everyone in the city also shares the opinion that it *ought* to rule.¹⁷

¹⁵ Dorter (2006: 109) also draws attention to the connection between *Rep.* 430e ff. and the many’s position in the *Protagoras*.

¹⁶ Having not yet introduced the tripartite soul, Socrates does not speak explicitly of parts, but uses the substantivized τὸ βέλτιον and τὸ χεῖρον.

¹⁷ Further discussion of 430d ff. can be found in Annas 1981: 115-8; Dorion 2012: 34-8; Dorter 2006: 107-10; and Dyson 1976: 36.

It is important to note a shift in language that occurs in the above passage. When Socrates speaks of the individual case of being ‘stronger’ or ‘weaker’ than oneself, he speaks of one element in the soul ‘controlling’ or ‘mastering’ (ἐγκρατές, κρατηθῆ) the other. When he applies his analysis to the political case, however, he speaks of one element in the city ‘ruling’ (ἄρχει) the other. The two cases are clearly meant to be analogous: Socrates tells Glaucon that he will find “one of these conditions” in their city. The use of ‘ruling’ in parallel to ‘controlling’ and ‘mastering’, therefore, shows that the kind of control or mastery involved in the individual case is to be understood on the model of rulership. Socrates does not yet make this point explicit, but it is clearly implied by the passage. It is, moreover, confirmed by Socrates’ treatment of virtuous and vicious souls in Books 4, 8, and 9, where the notion of psychic rule becomes absolutely central (and where such rule is sometimes characterized as ‘controlling’ or ‘mastering’). After introducing the three parts of the soul, for example, Socrates says that the reasoning part of the soul is supposed to rule (441e4), but that the appetitive part “attempts to enslave [καταδουλώσασθαι] and rule over the classes it isn’t fitted to rule” (442b1-2). Moderation in the soul, moreover, like moderation in the city, involves an agreement among the soul’s parts that the best part ought to rule (442c-d). Socrates concludes, “Then isn’t to produce justice to establish the parts of the soul in a natural relation of mastering, and being mastered by [κρατεῖν τε καὶ κρατεῖσθαι], one another, while to produce injustice is to establish a relation of ruling and being ruled [ἄρχειν τε καὶ ἄρχεσθαι] contrary to nature?” (444d8-11).¹⁸ Socrates goes on, in Books 8 and 9, to

¹⁸ Whiting (2012: 200-2) argues, on the basis of 444d8-11 and the medical analogy on which Socrates draws in that passage, that Plato employs the terms ‘master’ (κρατεῖν) and ‘rule’ (ἄρχειν) differently in the *Republic*. She suggests that for Plato, ‘mastery’ consists in the ‘healthy’ blending of the soul’s elements, such that no distinct part or parts are required to maintain control over other distinct parts. ‘Ruling’, on the other hand, involves an ‘unhealthy’ separation of the soul’s elements, such that some parts *do* need to control others. Plato’s ideal, she suggests, is modeled on the former, rather than the latter: in the ideal soul, there will not be distinct, competing elements, and hence no need for any of those elements to control the others. She writes, “The true ideal is ultimately anarchic, and [...] the need for ruling and being ruled is already problematic.” Whiting’s distinction between κρατεῖν and ἄρχειν, however, simply does not hold up to an examination of Plato’s use of those two terms throughout the text. We have already seen, how, at 430e6-431d5, Socrates assimilates the concept of mastery to the concept of rule. Moreover, in that same passage, he describes the *unhealthy* state of the individual’s soul in terms of mastery and the *healthy* state of the city in terms of rule. Likewise, he uses the two terms (and a wide variety of others, for that matter) indiscriminately and interchangeably throughout the

discuss the various kinds of psychic ‘regimes’ that can arise, and the language of rule continues to dominate that discussion: parts of the soul and their desires ‘rule’ one another (ἀρχήν, 550b6; cf. 571c4, 590c4); they ‘enslave’ one another (καταδουλωσάμενος, 553d2; cf. 577d4); they ‘master’ (κρατούσας, 554e1; cf. 574d9) or ‘control’ (ἐγκρατέστατος, 589b1) one another; and they act as kings (βασιλέα, 555c6), tyrants (τυραννευθείς, 574e2), and despots (δεσπόζειν, 577d5).

What all of this shows is that it is the notion of psychic rule, not *akrasia*, that is central to Plato’s understanding of the relationships and interactions among the three parts of the soul.¹⁹ This is precisely why Socrates claims not to know what the many mean when *they* use the phrases ‘stronger’ or ‘weaker’ than oneself. On the popular view, those expressions refer to cases of akratic and enkratic action. If Plato had intended to countenance *akrasia* in the *Republic*, we would expect him to make that clear in a discussion of the popular phrases used to refer to it. Instead, Plato has Socrates distance himself from the many’s understanding of being ‘weaker’ and ‘stronger’ than oneself in order to reinterpret those expressions in anticipation of the ethical and psychological account that follows. In this way Plato does what he often does: he appropriates a popular notion and reworks it for his own philosophical purposes. Significantly, the phrases ‘stronger’ and ‘weaker’ than oneself disappear from the text following Socrates’ analysis of them at 430e-431d. Having recast the popular language of *akrasia* in terms of psychic rule, it is the latter that becomes the focus of the text. This revision of the popular notion is highlighted in Book 9: Socrates concludes that the best, most just, and happiest

text: at 550b, the spirited part ‘rules’ the soul; at 554e1, the oligarchic man’s better desires ‘master’ his worse; at 571c4, the reasoning part of the soul is approvingly referred as the ‘ruling’ part; at 574d9, just beliefs are ‘mastered’ by unjust ones; at 590c4, the reasoning part of the soul is too weak to ‘rule’ the other parts; and at 606d5 poetry establishes our non-rational impulses as ‘rulers’ in us when instead “they ought to be ruled”. Finally, the decisive blow to Whiting’s proposal of an anarchic ideal comes at 580b8-c4, where Socrates concludes, “Shall we, then, hire a herald, or shall I myself announce that the son of Ariston has given as his verdict that the best, the most just, and the most happy is the most kingly, who is king of himself [βασιλεύοντα αὐτοῦ].”

¹⁹ Kahn (1996: 254-5) recognizes this point, stating that in the *Republic*, “[Plato’s] concern is not with moral weakness but with alternative principles that can rule in the psyche.” Ferrari (2007: 169) concurs that *akrasia* is not Plato’s focus: “All should agree that it is the wider concept of mental conflict rather than the narrower concept of weakness of will that Book 4 in fact discusses.” Cf. also Shields 2007: 82.

individual is the one who is ‘king of himself’, while the worst, most unjust, and most miserable individual is the one who is ‘tyrant of himself’ (580b-c). The language of being ‘king’ or ‘tyrant’ of *oneself* is clearly intended to parallel the paradoxical language of being ‘stronger’ and ‘weaker’ than *oneself*. The notion of *akrasia*, however, has been left behind in favor of psychic rule.

3. *The Rule of Appetite*

Although Plato makes psychic rule the central notion in the *Republic*’s treatment of the tripartite soul, that does not yet preclude the possibility that *akrasia* has an important role to play in the text as well. In particular, if it turns out that appetite’s rule or control in the soul prominently involves, or is precipitated by, instances of akratic behavior, then *akrasia* would prove to be more important to Plato’s moral psychology than I have so far suggested.²⁰ Given that appetite’s control of the soul necessarily involves *some* sort of subversion or domination of the reasoning part, it is worth asking whether that subversion or domination amounts to, or involves, *akrasia*. In what follows I will examine the picture of appetitive psychic rule that emerges over the course of the *Republic*, and I will argue that akratic action does *not* play any significant role in that picture: the manner in which appetite comes to take control of the soul does not involve or amount to *akrasia*, nor does its rule consist in the akratic domination of reason.

There are two seemingly distinct—but ultimately reconcilable, I will show—models of appetitive psychic rule that are suggested by the text. According to the first, which I will refer to as the Ignorance Model, appetite’s subversion of reason involves the *corruption* of rational judgments. On this model, the individual who is ruled by her appetitive part is *ignorant*: she holds mistaken beliefs about what is valuable or good, and those mistaken beliefs are informed by the interests of the appetitive part of her soul. There are at least three important discussions in the *Republic* that support this model. The first is Socrates’ analysis of ‘vicious’ psychic regimes in Books 8 and 9. Throughout that

²⁰ Lesses (1987: 148), for example, understands appetite’s unjust rule of reason to involve akratic behavior. I focus on appetite in what follows because it is the part of the soul responsible for the kinds of desires most commonly associated with akratic behavior—namely, desires for pleasure. See §5 for further discussion.

discussion Socrates' description of the manner in which a new psychic element comes to assume control of a person's soul overwhelmingly emphasizes changes in the person's *beliefs*. Perhaps the clearest example, and certainly the one most relevant to the present discussion, is his characterization of the oligarchic individual's origins:

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], adorning it with golden tiaras and collars and girding it with Persian swords?... 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 value or admire 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 this dramatic depiction, appetite becomes the ruler of the oligarchic individual's soul, while reason becomes the slave of appetite. However, it is clear that the appetitive part's domination of reason does not consist in *forcing* the individual to act contrary to his rational judgments. Rather, its domination of reason consists in changing *what reason's judgments are*.²¹ The oligarchic individual uses his reasoning for nothing other than figuring out how to maximize his wealth. Far from being opposed to his appetitive interests and desires, his reasoning actually supports those interests and assists him in promoting them. The oligarchic man, then, does not pursue money akratically; he pursues it having come to believe that wealth is the greatest good.

Similarly, Socrates says that an individual becomes 'democratic' when the 'unnecessary' appetites in him perceive that he lacks learning (μαθημάτων) and true speeches (λόγων ἀληθῶν) in the 'Acropolis' of his soul. "And in the absence of these guardians", Socrates explains, "false and pretentious speeches and beliefs [ψευδεῖς δῆ

²¹ Carone (2001:135) also draws on this passage to support the view that non-rational domination of reason *in general* involves influencing rational judgment: "When a lower part predominates, it does so by making the whole soul subject to its desires and beliefs." My understanding of appetite's 'rule' in the oligarchic soul is consistent with the accounts of Brown 2012: 68-9; Cooper 1999b: 127, n. 13; Johnstone 2011; and Lorenz 2006: 157. Brown understands Plato's conception of psychic rule to be informed by what he calls the 'principle of psychological hegemony', according to which, "To be ruled by a soul-part is to take the ends of that soul-part to be one's ends, generally." Johnstone provides an especially in-depth and insightful analysis of the regime changes in Books 8 and 9.

καὶ ἀλαζόνες λόγοι τε καὶ δόξαι] rush up and occupy this part of him” (560b7-c3).²² As in the case of the oligarchic individual, the regime change that takes place in the democratic man’s soul is characterized in part by a change in his beliefs. The words that Plato uses to describe those beliefs and the speeches that accompany them are significant, moreover. First, they are *false* beliefs—that is, they amount to instances of ignorance. Second, they are ‘pretentious’ or ‘boastful’ speeches and beliefs: although they are false, they misleadingly present themselves as true. They are, in other words, *persuasive*. Significantly, Plato often associates ‘pretentious’ speech of this kind with the appetitive part of the soul and with its characteristic object, pleasure. In the *Philebus*, for example, Socrates declares that pleasure is “the greatest pretender of all” (ἀπάντων ἀλαζονίστατον, 65c5), and in the *Phaedrus*, he characterizes the ‘bad’ horse, which represents the appetitive part of the tripartite soul, as a “companion of pretension” (ἀλαζονείας ἑταῖρος, 253e3). The plausible idea contained in these characterizations is that, when we are under the influence of our desires for pleasure, we often entertain, and sometimes ultimately accept, spurious chains of reasoning that support and justify the indulgence of those desires. In other words, we *rationalize* our appetites. This is, in fact, precisely the effect that the bad horse tries to bring about in the *Phaedrus*. When the individual resists his appetitive desire for sexual contact with a beautiful boy, the bad horse tries to *convince* the good horse and the charioteer (representing the spirited and reasoning parts of the soul, respectively) to follow its lead by tempting them with ‘pretentious’ rhetoric. What all of this suggests is that when the appetitive part of the soul and its desires exert control over, or assume rule of, the soul, that control or rule

²² And cf. Socrates’ mention of beliefs in his discussion of the tyrannical individual: “And in all this, the old traditional opinions that he held from childhood about what is fine or shameful—opinions that are accounted just—are mastered (κρατήσουσι) by the opinions, newly released from slavery, that are now the bodyguard of erotic love” (574d5-9). Socrates concludes that the soul of the tyrant “least of all does what it wants” (ἥκιστα ποιεῖ ὅ βούλεται), and that, “forcibly dragged by the stings of a dronish gadfly, it will be full of disorder and regret” (ὑπὸ δὲ οἴστρου ἀεὶ ἐλκομένη βίᾳ παραχῆς καὶ μεταμελείας μεστὴ ἔσται, 577d10-e3). Notice that his conclusions distinctly echo the ‘Socratic’ claims of two earlier dialogues. First, in the *Gorgias* Socrates argues that although tyrants do “whatever they think best” (αὐτοῖς δόξη βέλτιστον εἶναι), they do *not* do what they really want (βούλονται) (466d9-e1 and ff.). Second, in the *Protagoras* Socrates asserts that the Power of Appearances “makes us wander all over the place in confusion, often changing our minds about the same things and regretting [μεταμέλειν] our actions and choices” (356d4-8). Cf. remarks in Price 1995: 103 and Parry 2007: 391-3.

characteristically involves a change in the individual's beliefs. The individual accepts false, 'pretentious' reasons for acting or living as his appetites incline him. For that reason, he is not akratic, but simply ignorant.

A second passage that supports the Ignorance Model can be found in Book 3. The young guardians, Socrates says, must be tested in pleasures, pains, and fears in order to make sure that they remain committed to the lawful beliefs that have been inculcated in them through early musical and gymnastic training. He then explains the various ways in which beliefs can be lost or abandoned. While everyone abandons false beliefs 'voluntarily', true beliefs are always abandoned *involuntarily*, on account of one of three causes: theft, compulsion, or magic (412e-412b). Socrates explains:

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 beliefs without their realizing it [...] By 'the compelled' 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 [μεταδοξάσωσιν] because they are under the spell of pleasure or fear (413b4-c3).

Once again, the picture of appetitive control of the soul that emerges from this passage is one in which appetite assumes psychic power or influences the individual's behavior by bringing about a change in the individual's *beliefs*. Nothing in this passage suggests that appetites assume control in the soul or influence an individual's behavior simply by forcing the individual to act against his better judgment. Rather, his non-rational affections and desires, including those related to pleasure, bring about his action (if they do at all) by making him (at least temporarily) ignorant: they cause him to abandon a true belief.²³ A further point suggests that non-rational impulses affect behavior *exclusively* by causing the individual to change his mind. In his immediately subsequent remarks, Socrates outlines the tests and trials to which the young must submit in order to determine which of them are more fit to become rulers. Crucially, the *only* trials he requires of them are those that test their retention of lawful beliefs in the face of pleasures and pains. If *akrasia* were possible, or at least, if it were a phenomenon that

²³ O'Brien (1967: 138, n. 21; cf. 155) observes, "At *Rep.* 412e the danger to the young Guardians-in-training is not that they will act against their right opinion but that they will *lose* it through persuasion, pain, pleasure, or fear."

Plato considered ubiquitous or significant, then we would not expect such tests to represent a complete, effective examination of the guardians' moral fortitude. For if *akrasia* were a threat, then maintaining one's lawful belief about how one ought to act would not be sufficient for actually behaving that way. The fact that Socrates' presents the retention of correct beliefs as the sole criterion of success in these tests, then, suggests that whenever people act viciously on account of their non-rational impulses, they do so because they have *changed their minds*.²⁴

Finally, in Book 7, Socrates likens appetitive pleasures to 'leaden weights' that 'bind' the soul to the realm of becoming. They drag reason's vision downward, he says, thereby preventing it from turning 'upward' toward the realm of true reality (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 these images suggest is that appetites and their associated pleasures subvert the authority of reason by misdirecting its focus. Under the influence of pleasure, the rational part of the soul pays attention to, reasons about, and comes to desire the ends of appetite. Socrates confirms this interpretation in his introduction to the 'leaden weights' image: he says that the reasoning of those who are reputedly "vicious but clever" is "forced to serve evil ends, so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes" (519a1-6). The picture of appetitive domination of reason that we find here, then, is precisely that which we find in the case of the oligarchic individual: appetite does not force the individual to act against the resistance of his better judgment, but rather changes what the individual's judgments and values are to begin with.

The Ignorance Model of appetitive psychic rule indicates that appetite subverts reason's authority in the soul by influencing the latter's judgments: appetite rules reason by *corrupting* it and making it ignorant. But the text also supports another, seemingly distinct, model of appetitive psychic rule: the Hydraulic Model. The crucial support for this model is found in a passage from Book 6:

We surely know that, when someone's desires incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened for others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another

²⁴ I explore this passage and its implications in much more detail in Wilburn (*forthcoming*). Cf. also discussion in Carone 2001: 131-2.

channel [...] So, when someone's desires flow toward learning and everything of that sort, he'd be concerned, I suppose, with the pleasures of the soul itself by itself, and he'd abandon those pleasures that come through the body – if indeed he is a true philosopher and not merely a counterfeit one [...] Then surely such a person is moderate and not at all a money-lover (485d6-e3).

The passage indicates that our desires (particularly our appetitive and rational ones) bear something like a zero-sum relation to one another: as one set of desires gets stronger, our other desires become correspondingly weaker.²⁵ Socrates' focus here is on the relationship between reason and appetite. When our rational desires become strong, he says, our appetites for bodily pleasure and money are thereby weakened. The clear implication is that the converse is also true: when our appetitive desires are strong, our rational ones will thereby be weakened as well. This picture is confirmed throughout the text by comments that point to a competitive tension between rational and appetitive interests. While describing the city's shift toward an oligarchic regime in Book 8, for example, Socrates says, "From there they proceed further into money-making, and the more honorable they consider it, the less honorable they consider virtue. Or aren't virtue and wealth opposed, as if they were set on the scales of a balance, always inclining in opposite directions?" (550e4-8).²⁶ What these passages indicate is that our appetitive desires do not motivate us completely 'independently' of our rational ones. That is, it is not the case that our appetites can become strong enough to overcome our rational desires without thereby affecting the strength of those rational desires. Rather, appetite's becoming strong enough to determine our behavior necessarily involves a corresponding *decrease* in the strength of our rational motivations.²⁷ According to this Hydraulic Model, appetite's domination of reason involves a *weakening* of reason and its desires.

On the surface, at least, the Hydraulic Model seems distinct from the Ignorance Model. The latter takes appetitive rule to involve the corruption of the reasoning part,

²⁵ Brown (2012: 68) also draws attention to this passage and its endorsement of what he calls the 'hydraulic principle of psychology'. The channeling passage is also discussed in Gill 1985: 19-21; Grube 1980: 135; and Kahn 1987: 95-101.

²⁶ Cf. 328d and 605b3-5.

²⁷ Carone (2004: 71; cf. 2001: 128-29) notes the trouble 485d poses for advocates of the view that "desire can have a strength independent of the strength of reason, if that is taken to imply that desire can get stronger without reason getting weaker, and vice versa."

while the former takes it to involve the weakening of it. As a matter of fact, however, there is no reason why we should not understand these to amount to the same thing. The two models can be reconciled as long as we understand reason's 'weakness' to consist in its susceptibility to make false judgments and desire the wrong things under the influence of non-rational appetite and emotion. In other words, the stronger appetite and its desires become, the weaker reason becomes; and the weaker reason becomes, the weaker and more unstable its practical judgments become, leaving them vulnerable to the deceptive influence of appetite.²⁸ There is, in fact, textual support for this reconciliation of the two models. In Book 9 Socrates asks, "Why do you think that the condition of a manual worker is despised? Or 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 ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τὰ θεραπεύματα αὐτῶν μόνον δύνηται μαυθάνειν]?" (590c2-6). Here Socrates makes it clear that what it means for reason to be weak is for it to become a 'servant' of the lower parts of the soul. Just as the reasoning part of the oligarchic individual does nothing but calculate how to maximize profit, so the reasoning part in this passage 'learns' only the things that give pleasure to the non-rational soul-parts. Because of its weakness, what reason studies, calculates, and learns are determined by the interests of appetite and spirit, and as a result reason's judgments—and, ultimately, its desires—are corrupted. Thus 'weakness' in this passage is clearly to be understood in accordance with the Ignorance Model of psychic control. Reason's being weak does not mean that, despite maintaining the correct judgments about what the individual ought to do, it is brutally 'forced' to go along with appetite anyway; rather, it means that, under the influence of a strong appetite, it is unable to reach or maintain the correct judgments to begin with.²⁹

²⁸ Cf. Brown's discussion of the connection between his 'principle of psychological hegemony' and 'hydraulic principle of psychology': "The two casual principles are related. For instance, a rational part can come to accept that honor or victory is what is good only if it is too weak to grasp what is really good, but it will be too weak if the spirit has taken much of the soul's 'hydraulic power' away from reason" (2012: 69).

²⁹ The account I have offered of appetite's rule or domination of reason is not unlike the account that Brickhouse and Smith offer of the ways in which non-rational impulses influence reasoning in earlier, 'Socratic' dialogues like the *Protagoras*. They write (2010: 71; cf. 2007): "Socrates believes that appetites and passions can be either strong or weak and that a strong appetite or passion is more likely to cause an unknowing agent to believe that the pleasure at which it aims is

4. *Why Not Akrasia?*

If the picture I have outlined is correct, then acknowledging and explaining *akrasia* was never a significant concern for Plato and hence was not the motivation for tripartite theory. Instead, Plato's concern in the *Republic* was with the broader notion of psychic control or rule, which he understood on the model of ignorance and weak or corrupt judgment. The question at this point is the following: *why* was accounting for *akrasia* never a primary concern for Plato?

In order to answer that question, we should begin by distinguishing two ways in which the reasoning part of the soul might fail to maintain proper control or rule in the soul. The first type of failure is (1) *local failure*. Local failures are *temporary* failures of reason: an individual fails to carry out her rational judgment in a *specific instance* under the influence of non-rational appetite or emotion. Local failures can in turn be divided into two kinds. First, (1a) temporary changes of judgment: an individual initially judges that a given action is wrong, but she temporarily changes her mind under the influence of appetite and ends up performing the action anyway. Afterward, her initial judgment of the action's value returns, and the agent regrets, or may regret, having performed it. Second, (1b) instances of *akrasia*: the individual judges that a given action is wrong, but her appetite is more psychologically forceful than her judgment, and she performs the action while continuing to believe that she should not.³⁰ The second main type of failure is (2) *global failure*. Global failures represent long-term, systematic corruptions of an individual's reasoning about what is valuable. Under the influence of non-rational desire

in fact a good [...] The stronger the appetite, the more 'convincing' this power will be." However, they take this picture to be "entirely distinct from what we find in the later books of the *Republic*" (2010: 107). Ferrari (2007: 199) evidently shares my interpretation of psychic rule in the *Republic*: he claims that any soul that falls short of the ideal rule of reason falls short not only because the other parts are strong, but also because reason is correspondingly weak. He then adds (n. 27): "This schema leaves room for the possibility that the weakness of will to which such imperfect characters might be subject could continue to be traced to an intellectual mistake, to wrong thinking, as we found Socrates claiming in dialogues other than the *Republic*."

³⁰ Failures of type (1a) and (1b) correspond to instances of what Penner calls 'diachronic belief *akrasia*' and 'synchronic belief *akrasia*', respectively. See discussion in Penner 1990: 45-6 and 1997: 124.

and emotion, the individual's judgments about what is good, and hence about which practical goals are worth pursuing and how it is best to structure her life, are mistaken. This is the type of failure that, according to my interpretation, primarily concerns Plato in the *Republic*. Those who are 'weaker than pleasure' in the *Republic*'s sense, such as the oligarchic individual, exhibit global failures of this kind: appetite, rather than reason, rules their souls.

With these distinctions in place, we can identify at least two reasons why Plato was concerned with psychic control or rule rather than *akrasia*. The first has to do with the ethical priority of global failures. Simply put, for the purposes of promoting virtue and minimizing vice, the prevention and correction of global failures is much more important than the prevention of local ones. We can see adumbrations of this point by examining Plato's treatment of the many's position in the *Protagoras*. According to the many, people frequently fail to do something they know is good and willingly do something they know is worse instead *because* they are 'overcome by pleasure'. In other words, the many claim that people can and often do act akratically. Significantly, in Socrates' reply to their account, he places repeated stress on the many's commitment to hedonism. In the exchange leading up to his refutation of their position, Socrates provides at least three explicit opportunities for the many to acknowledge some other criterion of goodness aside from pleasure, and all three times he and Protagoras attest to their failure to do so.³¹ Finally, in the passage that immediately precedes Socrates' argument against their view, he says:

³¹ See 354b7-c3, 354d1-4, and 354d7-e2. Cf. discussion in Vlastos 1969: 77, n. 24. Against this view, however, Ferrari 1990: 132-4 and n. 29; Hackforth 1928: 41; Irwin 1977: 309, n. 13; and Nussbaum 1986: 111, argue that hedonism is not really the many's position. Rather, they claim, Socrates has to *argue* them into it. As evidence, they cite the fact that in response to Protagoras' initial resistance to Socrates' suggestion that all pleasures are good, Socrates asks, "Surely you don't, like the many, call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good?" (351c2-3). However, if we turn to the *Republic*, we can see that this passage does not necessarily tell against the many's hedonism. In his discussion with Adeimantus about the nature of the Good in Book 6, Socrates remarks, "You certainly know that the many believe the good is pleasure, while the more sophisticated believe that it is knowledge." Then, after explaining how those who define the good as knowledge run into difficulties, he asks, "What about those who define the good as pleasure? Are they any less full of confusion than the others? Aren't even they forced to admit that there are bad pleasures? [...] So, I think, they have to agree that the same things are both good and bad. Isn't that true?" (505b5-c11). What these comments suggest is that Plato took the many to be committed *both* to hedonism *and* (despite its being in tension with hedonism) to the view

Even now it is still possible to withdraw, if you are able to say that the good is anything other than pleasure or that the bad is anything other than pain. Or is it enough for you to live pleasantly without pain? If it is enough, and you are not able to say anything else than that the good and the bad are that which result in pleasure and pain, listen to this. For I say to you that if this is so, your position will become ridiculous [γελοῖον] (354e8-355a6).

These remarks are noteworthy for two reasons. First, because the many wrongly identify pleasure with the good, they count as individuals who are ‘ruled by pleasure’ or ‘weaker than pleasure’ in the sense carved out by the *Republic*. Second, Socrates expressly identifies the many’s hedonism as the source of the ‘ridiculousness’ of their position: *if* the many cannot identify anything good other than pleasure, he says, then their position will turn out to be ridiculous. Socrates elucidates this alleged ridiculousness by substituting the word ‘pleasure’ in the many’s explanation with the word ‘good’. He points out that, given the many’s hedonism, their position amounts to the following: that people pursue what is *worse*, knowing it to be worse, because they are ‘weaker’ than *the good*. Now, there is some controversy over what precisely is ‘ridiculous’ about this view, but I take at least part of what the many would find ridiculous about it is simply the idea that being weaker than what is *good* could be the correct explanation of an individual’s pursuit of what is *worse*. Those who are ‘weaker than the good’ should be those who are pursuing what is *better*.³²

that some pleasures are good and others bad. At any rate, it is clear that he did not find it implausible for these two commitments to sit (uncomfortably, in Plato’s mind) alongside one another, particularly in those who are ‘full of confusion’ like the many. If this is correct, then Socrates’ comment at 351c does nothing to undermine the hedonism of the many.

³² My understanding of the ‘ridiculous’ of the many’s position is in line with Dyson’s interpretation (1976: 36). He 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 [...] There is another linguistic aspect too: the verb ‘overcome’, ἡττώμενος, appropriate to reprehensible conditions in moral contexts, is ludicrous when combined with ‘by good’, ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.” Vlastos (1956: xxxix) adopts a similar view, while Gallop (1964: 118-9) responds to Vlastos’s account and proposes a much more complicated understanding of the ‘absurdity’ of the many’s position. Gallop’s interpretation is largely motivated by the assumption that when Socrates draws attention to the ‘absurdity’ of their position, he is drawing attention to a *self-contradiction*. Similarly, in response to Gallop’s criticism, Vlastos (1969: 78-83) later repudiates his earlier view because he finds that it cannot account for the sense in which the many’s position contradicts itself. Like Dyson, however, I do not take Socrates to be pointing out a self-contradiction. (Or at least, I do not take the ‘ridiculousness’ that would be immediately clear and compelling to the many to

There is, however, a further, related ridiculousness, which Socrates' interlocutors no doubt fail to notice, but which comes to the surface when we substitute the word 'worse' in the many's original formulation with 'less pleasurable' (again, a move justified by the hedonistic premise). The many's position then becomes: people pursue what is less pleasurable, knowing it to be less pleasurable, because they are 'weaker than pleasure'. The ridiculousness of this formulation parallels that of the previous one: being weaker than pleasure should mean that one is pursuing what is *more* pleasurable, not what is less pleasurable. The effect of this reformulation is that it turns the many's account on its head and exposes them for what they are—namely, individuals ruled by pleasure. The many believe that their being weaker than pleasure is limited to instances of momentary weakness in the face of temptation, and that such instances constitute the main obstacle to their happiness. That is why, when Socrates suggests that an 'art of measurement' would provide them with the ability to unfailingly select the maximum amount of pleasure, they greedily embrace it as their 'salvation' in life. In fact, however, such an art of measurement would not provide the happiness the many desire. Because of their hedonism, the many turn out to be weaker than pleasure *whether they resist immediate pleasure or not*.³³ Indeed, the preceding suggests that their being weaker than pleasure is demonstrated even more distinctly by those instances in which they successfully *resist* temptations for the sake of greater long-term pleasure—in other words, by precisely those instances in which they take themselves to have advanced their happiness by being 'stronger' than pleasure. Because they wrongly identify pleasure and

consist in that kind of logical inconsistency.) This is not, in other words, a formal *reductio*. Nor should we suspect that it is supposed to be: γελοῖον does not mean 'self-contradictory', but rather 'ridiculous' or 'deserving of laughter'. What Socrates has shown, then, is simply that there is something 'funny' about the many's position—and that is why his imagined interlocutor immediately responds by *laughing* (γελάσεται, 355c8). Ferrari (1990: 119, n. 6) also endorses Dyson's interpretation.

³³ Ferrari's (1990) admirable treatment of the *Protagoras* presses a similar line of interpretation. He argues that the many of the *Protagoras* are 'ignorant of their ignorance', because they wrongly take themselves to 'know' what it is that they need to live a good life—namely, a measuring art of the kind outlined by Socrates. However, Ferrari notes (124), "Even if those people were fully adept at the art of measurement he describes, and so could 'find security in life' (356e2, e6), they would not, after all, truly be able to 'save their lives' [...] For the life guided by such measurement is enslaved to the body." Cf. Segvic 2000: 31: "The akratic agent not only lacks knowledge of what is better or best; he also wrongly believes that he possesses this knowledge."

the good, their being weaker than pleasure is a *permanent* state, and *that*, from Plato's point of view, is the real obstacle to their happiness. In other words, where the many perceive a merely local failure of reason, Plato identifies a much more serious, global failure.

An important passage from the *Phaedo* confirms this interpretation. Socrates claims that the so-called 'moderation' of ordinary people is something 'strange' (ἄτοπος, 68d3), and he explains:

Is it licentiousness of some sort that makes them moderate? We say this is impossible, yet their experience of this simple-minded moderation turns out to be similar: they fear to be deprived of other pleasures which they desire, so they keep away from some pleasures because they are mastered by others [ἄλλων ἀπέχονται ὑπ' ἄλλων κρατούμενοι]. Now to be ruled by pleasure [τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν ἡδονῶν ἄρχεσθαι] is what they call licentiousness, but what happens to them is that they master certain pleasures because they are mastered by others. This is like what we mentioned just now, that in some way it is a kind of licentiousness that has made them moderate (68e3-69a4).

Unlike the many of the *Protagoras*, the many in this passage successfully *resist* temptation. That is to say, where the many of the *Protagoras* manifest local failures of reason, the many of the *Phaedo* manifest local 'successes' of reason.³⁴ However, like the many of the *Protagoras*, the many of the *Phaedo* are hedonists. The reason they resist immediate temptation is for the sake of getting more pleasure in the long-term, and they therefore suffer the same *global* failure of reason as the many of the *Protagoras*. That is why their 'moderation' is no real moderation at all: "Such virtue is only an illusory appearance of virtue; it is in fact fit for slaves, without soundness or truth" (69b7-8). With respect to their judgments about value and their ultimate goals in life—the most important determinants of living well, for Plato—they are no better off than the 'licentious' many of the *Protagoras*.³⁵

³⁴ Ferrari (1990: 121-5, 134-6) also discusses this passage from the *Phaedo* as it relates to the discussion in the *Protagoras*.

³⁵ Indeed, some passages suggest that they might be *worse* off—e.g. *Euth.* 281c-e, which argues that 'courage' and 'moderation', along with other putative goods like wealth, honor, and power, are actually *evils* when they are controlled by ignorance. (Cf. *Rep.* 491b-c and *Laws* 696d-e.) Ferrari (1990: 136, n. 32) suggests that akratics are in at least one sense closer to philosophical awakening than those who exhibit 'popular' moderation: at least akratics are aware that there is *something* wrong with them (even if they are mistaken about what that something is).

What this shows is that preventing and correcting global failures is an ethical priority over correcting local ones. This is true both because of the depth, duration, and severity of the psychic impact associated with global failures, but also because, as the *Phaedo* makes clear, local ‘successes’ of reason are not sufficient for possessing virtue. The ability to maintain and carry out one’s judgments about what is valuable is of no benefit if one has mistaken values.³⁶ Whether *akrasia* is possible or not in the *Republic*, then, it is simply not the primary concern of an ethical reformer.

Further considerations suggest that the ethical priority of global failures is also connected to a *psychological* priority. In particular, I submit, global successes of reason psychologically entail and guarantee local ones: souls that are properly ruled by reason will *not* be subject to instances of local failure. Conversely, the only agents who locally fail to carry out their rational judgments under the influence of non-rational motivation are those whose souls are not properly ruled to begin with. Those who are in some way or other ruled by *appetite*, I would like to suggest, are especially prone to local failures of reason, on Plato’s view. This, then, is the second reason why Plato was not concerned with acknowledging and explaining *akrasia*: if it occurs at all, it is a mere side effect of improper psychic rule.

The Ignorance/Hydraulic Model of desire provides support for this interpretation. According to that model, a large part of what it means for reason to rule in the soul is for reason to be appropriately strong in relation to the other soul-parts. In those ruled by reason, therefore, appetite and its desires will be correspondingly *weak*. We have also seen that, when appetite is strong and reason weak, appetite’s relative strength consists in its ability to corrupt reason’s judgments, and reason’s relative weakness consists in its susceptibility to that corruption. What this strongly suggests is that, in an individual whose soul is properly ruled, precisely the converse will be the case: appetite’s relative weakness will consist in its *inability* to influence reason’s judgments, and reason’s relative strength will consist in its invulnerability to appetite’s influence. In other words, in those ruled by reason, appetite will not be sufficiently strong, nor its desires

³⁶ Cf. Ferrari 1990: 134: “[The many] are indeed right to think that we are divided between our understanding of what is best, on the one side, and impulses which can conflict with it, on the other. The problem is that, on their conception of what this understanding would be, it (so to speak) just isn’t worth being distinguished, ultimately, from the impulses with which it conflicts.”

psychologically salient enough, to make reason ‘change its mind’ (so to speak), even in local instances. Appetite’s psychic influence will simply be too weak to undermine or corrupt the individual’s rational judgment. Those ruled by reason, therefore, will not be subject to local failures of reason.

Conversely, those who *are* subject to local failures of reason will be those whose souls are not properly ruled to begin with. In particular, those whose souls are ruled by *appetite* and its associated desires seem, on Plato’s view, to be especially susceptible to, or at least candidates for, local failures. The reason is this: as we have seen, in those ruled by appetite—such as the oligarchic individual—appetite’s psychic influence has the effect that the individual rationally judges appetitive objects of desire to be valuable and worthy of pursuit. As a result, the individual’s reasoning part is concerned with calculating how to maximize pleasure or wealth *in the long term*. There will inevitably be instances, however, in which indulgence in *immediate* pleasures conflict with those rational goals. In those ruled by reason, conflicts between the individual’s rational goals and immediate appetitive interests will perhaps arise as well. However, because the appetitive part of the soul is weak in those ruled by reason, it will not have the psychic prominence necessary either to generate substantial psychic conflict or, *a fortiori*, to actually determine the individual’s behavior. Those ruled by appetite, however, *ex hypothesi* have an appetitive part that exerts a powerful psychic influence. As a result, it is strong enough not only to bring about a global failure of reason, but also to bring about the kind of salient psychic conflict that can lead to local failures when immediate temptations present themselves. Therefore, those ruled by appetite—like the Many of the *Protagoras*—will be those who have a special susceptibility to psychic conflict between appetite and reason and, ultimately, to local failures.

There is some direct support for this reading, moreover. In Book 8, Socrates explains that, because of the oligarchic man’s lack of education, he will possess ‘dronish’ and evil appetites that he will have to forcibly hold in check “by means of some decent part of himself” (554b-d). Socrates then comments, “So someone like that wouldn’t be entirely free from civil war within himself, and he wouldn’t be one, but rather in some sense *two*, though generally his better desires are in control of his worse” (554d9-e1). Significantly, Socrates does not call either the aristocratic or the timocratic individual “in

some sense two”, despite the fact that the latter’s soul is one of the ‘vicious’ psychic regimes. It is not until the oligarchic individual—the one ruled by appetite—that we get this characterization. I take the explanation of this fact to lie precisely in the above analysis. In the aristocratic individual, and even in the timocratic one, the appetitive part of the soul is not strong enough to constitute a significant and sustained psychic obstacle to the individual’s rational desires and goals. That is not to rule out the possibility that the timocratic individual might be subject to local failures of reason. Certainly he might be subject to such failures as are associated with spirited anger, and perhaps he might even be subject to occasional failures due to the influence of appetite. The point, however, is that whatever recalcitrant impulses might arise in the aristocratic and timocratic individuals, it is not until the oligarchic individual that those impulses are prominent, powerful, and persistent enough to require constant, forcible repression. It is only those ruled by appetite who become “in some sense two”.³⁷

If this is right, then the ethical priority of global failures is partly grounded in their psychological priority. Those susceptible to local failures will be those who have *already* failed ‘globally’, and they will be susceptible to the former *because* of that global failure—because, that is, their souls are not properly ruled in the first place. Instilling proper rule in the soul is thus not only ethically more important than preventing instances of *akrasia* or wavering judgment; it is also psychologically sufficient for preventing such local failures. For those reasons, establishing correct patterns of rule in the soul is Plato’s primary objective in the *Republic*.

³⁷ Whiting (2012) also discusses the significance of the oligarchic individual’s ‘doubleness’, but she interprets it in light of her argument that the *Republic* allows for what she calls ‘radical psychic contingency’. According to her interpretation, it is contingent both what sort of internal structure each of the soul-parts has in any given individual, as well as *how many* genuine parts actually belong to any given soul (175-6). About the appetitive part of the soul, she suggests that in well-ordered individuals, it is not a unified, ‘agent-like’ part of the soul at all, but more like a collection of disjointed desires. In increasingly vicious souls, however, it becomes increasingly unified and agent-like, and by the time we get to the oligarchic character, it has become a genuine *part*, or “something like an organized political faction” (198). While our accounts have in common the view that in the oligarchic individual the appetitive part of the soul has become psychologically prominent in a way that it is not in more well-ordered souls, I do not share her temptation to think that it is any less a ‘part’ (however that term is to be understood in the *Republic*) in those more well-ordered souls.

We should not conclude, however, that local failures of reason are of *no* ethical concern at all to Plato. Given that indulgence in appetitive pleasure *strengthens* the appetitive part of the soul, on Plato's view,³⁸ instances of local failure will exacerbate a vicious psychic condition and make it more difficult to establish a virtuous one. Presumably, preventing local failures will be of concern especially with respect to the city's youths, whose souls are not yet mature enough to have acquired a stable and virtuous psychic 'regime', but who are ideally making progress toward such a condition by practicing good and decent behavior. By stimulating the appetitive part of their souls, local failures of reason would represent an obstacle to their moral development. And indeed, the discussion at 413 ff. makes it clear that some attention is paid to whether the young are successful in mastering problematic non-rational impulses. The important point, however, is that (as noted in §3) the kind of local failure with which Plato proves to be concerned in his discussion of early education is explicitly of type (1a), not (1b). He is concerned with monitoring and preventing cases of shifting and abandoned judgment in the young guardians, not cases of akratic action.

This latter point, along with Plato's focus on the notion of psychic rule and the absence of any straightforward acknowledgment of a case of *akrasia* in the *Republic*, suggests two important conclusions. The first is that Plato may not have come to accept the possibility of *akrasia* after all, despite what commentators have widely accepted. The main case for thinking that he *does* accept its possibility, as noted earlier, lies in the case of Leontius, and in Socrates' subsequent remark that 'in other cases' we observe appetite 'forcing' someone contrary to his reasoning. What our examination has shown, however, is that although Plato comfortably uses much of the language of *akrasia* throughout the *Republic*, he recasts that language for his own purposes. Non-rational soul-parts and impulses—particularly appetitive ones—'force' us to change our minds (βιασθέντας, 413b9); they 'rule' and 'master' reason; they 'enslave' it (καταδουλωσάμενος, 553d2); they 'forcefully drag it' (ἐλκομένη βία, 577e3); and they 'compel' it (ἀναγκάζειν, 587a4).³⁹ Yet Socrates' glosses on these expressions consistently reveal that he

³⁸ See, for example, *Rep.* 442a-b and 588e-589a.

³⁹ And compare the Athenian Visitor's reference to the 'forceful' (βιαίου) persuasion by which pleasure gets its way at *Laws* 863b8.

understands appetite's domination of reason to occur through the corruption of rational judgment. Surely this at least leaves open the possibility that when appetites 'force' people contrary to their reasoning at 440b1, that force does not have to be interpreted on the akratic model.⁴⁰ And if appetites do not cause akratic behavior in that crucial passage, then they do not evidently cause it *anywhere* in the *Republic*.

⁴⁰ Carone (2001: 136-9) advocates (more strongly than I do) a similar reading of the Leontius case and of Socrates' subsequent remarks. She writes (138), "Reason is 'overpowered' not in the sense that the agent performs the action while at the same time strongly believing that he should not, but in the sense that, at that moment, his reason has been weakened and come to adopt the beliefs of the prevailing part." Brickhouse and Smith (2010: 206-10) offer a reply to Carone. They object that her interpretation cannot account for Socrates' characterization of the cases in question as ones in which reason and spirit are 'allied' in their opposition to the appetites. (Spirit 'allies itself with' or 'fights alongside' [σύμμαχον] reason, 440b7; cf. 440c7.) "In Carone's understanding", they argue, "reason would have to be understood as perhaps only initially allied with spirit, but this alliance dissolves and reason comes to be allied (at least momentarily) with appetite instead [...] But the story itself hardly makes it seem as if Leontius has acted in accordance with an all-things-considered judgment. Were this actually what Plato had in mind, the case would have to be explained differently" (209). There are three points to make in response to their argument. First, while they are certainly correct that the story does not make it seem as if Leontius had acted in accordance with his rational judgment, it is not obvious that this omission tells in their favor. For it could just as easily be said that the story does not make it seem as if Leontius had acted *contrary* to a rational judgment. Given that Socrates avoids discussing Leontius' reasoning entirely, it is not clear why the case 'would have to be explained differently' if Plato had understood the case as Carone suggests. Moreover, given the emphasis throughout the text on the ways in which reasoning is *corrupted* by appetites, it is not clear why, in the absence of any clear indication about the status of Leontius' reasoning, the burden of proof should be on Carone, rather than on those who oppose her. Second, it is not necessarily true that reason must *either* judge that it is all-things-considered best to gaze at corpses *or* judge that it is all-things-considered best to abstain from doing so. It is also possible that it simply *does not judge at all*, at least temporarily. In other words, it is possible that the full account of Leontius' case (and at least some other cases in which appetites 'force' us to act) is something like this: Leontius initially judges that he should not gaze at corpses, and his reasoning and spirit are initially aligned in resisting his desire to do so. Under the influence of his appetites, however, his judgment becomes clouded and blocked from his mind, such that, at least at the moment of his action, Leontius does not hold any rational judgment at all about the particular act of corpse-gazing in question. Given that Socrates has just provided an account of how correct judgments are 'lost' or 'abandoned' (and perhaps not necessarily 'replaced'), this interpretation is hardly ungrounded. Finally, note that whatever Socrates is claiming at 440a-b is something he casually assumes (rather than argues for) on the basis of mundane observation (it is something that we 'notice' [αἰσθανόμεθα, 440a8]). If the point he is making is one that can be readily extracted from everyday experience, however, then that suggests it is not intended as an important philosophical claim, and certainly not as a rejection of a previously argued-for position. Ultimately, I have no strong commitment to the readings of Leontius that Carone or I have offered, but I do think that those readings should be recognized as, at the very least, permitted by the text.

I do not claim that this interpretation of the Leontius case and Socrates' remarks at 440a-b is necessitated by the text, however. Indeed, although Plato never explicitly acknowledges *akrasia* in the *Republic*, it is also clear that he never explicitly rules out its possibility. However, and this is the crucial second conclusion that we can draw from Plato's treatment of psychic relationships in the text: even if Plato *had* come to accept the possibility of *akrasia*, he nonetheless seems to have thought that, *as a matter of empirical fact*, appetite tends to bring about failures of reason not by forcing individuals to act against their concurrently held better judgments, but rather by *corrupting* those judgments. There is nothing inconsistent about believing both that *akrasia* is in principle possible *and* that it rarely (or even never) actually occurs.⁴¹ Plato's consistent attention to preventing the vacillation and corruption of reason's judgment in the text, rather than akratic action, shows at least that he took the former to be the much more prevalent and ethically significant phenomenon. This, then, is a further reason why Plato was not interested in countenancing *akrasia*: he took it to be either an impossibility or, at most, a negligible anomaly. Either way, it was not worth addressing.

5. Conclusion

There are two final issues that I would like briefly to address. The first concerns the spirited part of the soul, about which I have said very little in this paper. One reason for that is simply that the most prominent cases of putative *akrasia* are those involving appetite and appetitive desires. Socrates mentions non-rational impulses other than pleasure when he takes on the Many's position in the *Protagoras*—including anger—but it is on pleasure that he focuses his account. If *akrasia* were possible at all, on Plato's view, then we would expect it to be possible first and foremost in cases involving conflict between reason and appetite. Indeed, as we have seen, Plato thinks that rational desires and appetitive ones are in a unique kind of tension with each other, “as if they were on

⁴¹ Cf. Price 1995: 97: “We might expect [Plato's] writings to be rich in case-studies of hard *akrasia*. In fact, they contain few. We shall need to reflect why he expects reason to be more often suborned than subdued.”

opposite scales of a balance”.⁴² Despite my neglect of spirit, however, it should be noted that I do take the spirited part of the soul to have an important role to play in the Platonic account of psychic mastery and rule. Plato characterizes spirit in the *Republic* as reason’s psychic ‘ally’. Along with reason, it is supposed to ‘watch over’ the appetitive part of the soul in order to make sure “that it doesn’t become so big and strong... that it attempts to enslave and rule over the other classes it isn’t fitted to rule” (442a5-b2). I take it that one of spirit’s primary roles as reason’s ally, then, is to ‘do its part’ (however that is to be worked out) to prevent both local and global failures of reason. Its job, in other words, is to make sure that appetite remains weak, and appetite’s psychic influence minimal, so that it does not influence or corrupt the judgments of reason.⁴³

The second issue is that of developmentalism. The conclusions of my paper suggest that there is much more continuity between the moral psychology of the *Protagoras* and that of the *Republic* than has typically been thought. To begin with, it is not clear that Plato’s attitude toward *akrasia* underwent the sharp reversal that many versions of the prevalent interpretation allege. In the *Protagoras* Socrates concludes that all putative cases of *akrasia* are really just cases of fluctuating judgment and ignorance. Under the influence of our appetites and the Power of Appearances, he explains, immediate pleasures *appear* bigger and more intense than long-term ones, and that appearance causes us to make mistaken judgments about the value of those competing pleasures. In the *Republic*, we have seen, Plato does not provide this kind of unequivocal rejection of *akrasia*. However, he never explicitly acknowledges the possibility *akrasia* either, and his presentation of appetite’s control of reason consistently emphasizes ways

⁴² Furthermore, although local failures of reason due to the influence of the spirited part of the soul—most obviously, cases involving impetuous anger—are no doubt possible on Plato’s account, it is generally much easier to reconcile such cases with a denial of the possibility of *akrasia*. For cases of impetuous anger characteristically involve acting in *haste*, which suggests that the individual might act *before* making a rational judgment about what she ought to do. If that is the case, then in acting that way she does not act contrary to a concurrently held rational judgment. Cf. the analyses of impetuous or spirited anger offered at *Laws* 866d-867c and in Aristotle (*EN* 1149a24-1150a8). I discuss the former in Wilburn (2012)

⁴³ I provide an analysis of the spirited part’s psychological role in the *Republic*, and in particular its function in the virtue of courage, in Wilburn (forthcoming).

in which reasoning is destabilized or corrupted, rather than forcibly overcome.⁴⁴ Certainly it should be clear that, whatever changes of mind Plato may or may not have had about the issue of *akrasia* following the *Protagoras*, those changes of mind were *not* the motivation for the *Republic*'s tripartite account of the soul. Plato's use of that theory shows that its purpose is to provide the resources to describe and evaluate various kinds of psychic mastery and rule, and to promote virtuous psychic constitutions. This is exactly what we should expect the significance of tripartition to be, given that the *Republic*'s answers to its two central questions—*What is justice?* and *Why should we be just?*—crucially rely on the notion of psychic rule in a partitioned soul.

Nor, however, should we think that *Republic*'s lack of interest in explaining *akrasia* represents a shift in Plato's priorities. In the *Protagoras*, the emphasis of Socrates' argument against the many is overwhelmingly on affirming the supremacy of *knowledge*. It is not until 358b, in fact, *after* Socrates has completed his argument against the many, that he concludes that no one acts contrary to what he knows *or believes* to be best (and thereby denies the possibility of *akrasia* entirely).⁴⁵ Up until that point, his focus is exclusively on demonstrating the impossibility of acting contrary to one's knowledge, without commenting directly on whether it is possible to act contrary to mere *belief*. When he finally does draw that conclusion, it has the status of an afterthought.

⁴⁴ Much of the debate concerning whether Plato changes his view about *akrasia* in the *Republic* has been focused on the question whether appetites are 'good-dependent' or 'good-independent' in the *Republic*—that is, whether or not they involve, or are essentially responsive to, judgments about goodness. Prominent in many accounts that advocate the 'prevalent view' is the idea that whereas earlier dialogues like the *Protagoras* take all desires to be good-dependent, the *Republic* accepts (at 437d ff.) that at least some desires are *good-independent*—Penner calls these 'blind' desires—and it is those good-independent desires that allow for the possibility of akratic action. This is the view that is advocated, for example, in the accounts of Gosling 1990: 21; Irwin 1997: 191-2; Penner 1971: 103-11 and 1990: 49-61; and Reeve 1988: 134-5. As a result, those who oppose developmentalism have tended to take the approach of denying that the *Republic* recognizes the existence of good-independent desires (often, in part, by appealing to *Rep.* 505d-e). This is the approach found in Carone 2001; Morris 2006; and Singpurwalla 2006: 256, n. 16. (There are some who fall outside of this pattern, however, e.g. Gardner 2002: 200-1 and Shields 2007: 76. Gardner takes appetites to be good-dependent both before and in the *Republic*, but he is a developmentalist on other grounds. Shields accepts the shift from good-dependence to good-independence but rejects developmentalism.) Nothing in my interpretation, however, turns on the good-dependent or -independent status of the appetites. My approach to rejecting sharp developmentalism is thus distinct from those adopted by other prominent anti-developmental accounts.

⁴⁵ οἰόμενος, 358b7. Cf. 358c7, 358d1, 358e5, and 359d2.

Indeed, the purpose of Socrates' discussion is to point out that, contrary to what the many believe, they do not *know* what is good for them when they do what is bad for them. For Plato, this has a double meaning: they are ignorant because they do not know (as they think they do), at the time that they choose it, that the pleasure they are choosing is *less* than the pleasure they are forfeiting; and furthermore, they are ignorant because they do not know *that pleasure is not really the criterion of goodness*. Whereas the former point is what the many take away from the discussion, the latter point is the one that matters to Plato. The many have corrupt values under the influence of their appetites—they are 'ruled by pleasure' whether they resist temptation or not—and that is their real moral affliction.⁴⁶ This is precisely the moral psychological insight that is explored by the *Republic*, through its methodical examination of the soul's structure and the relationships of rule among its parts. The tripartite psychology of the later dialogue allows Plato to vindicate and explain the *Protagoras*' central claims that knowledge is the sort of thing that 'rules' in the soul, and that all cases of wrongdoing involve ignorance or unstable judgment about what is best. The *Republic* does not repudiate the moral psychology of the *Protagoras*, then, but rather explores and elaborates on it.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ Other dialogues that have sometimes been taken to be concerned with *akrasia* are, I think, similarly *unconcerned* with it upon closer examination. At *Gorgias* 491d ff., for example, Socrates asks Callicles whether it is necessary for superior individuals to 'rule themselves'. When asked what he means, Socrates responds, "Just what the many mean: being moderate and self-controlled, ruling the pleasures and appetites within oneself" (ὡσπερ οἱ πολλοί, σώφρονα ὄντα καὶ ἐγκρατῆ αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ, τῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ἄρχοντα τῶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, 491d10-e1). I think there is much to be said about what is going in Socrates' exchange with Callicles in the *Gorgias*, but this much, at least, is clear: the psychic condition to which Socrates opposes self-control and rule over one's appetites is not *akrasia*, but rather deliberate, licentious self-indulgence (ἀκολασία) of the sort that Callicles endorses. I have also argued in Wilburn 2013 that the *Laws* is similarly unconcerned with *akrasia*, despite how many interpreters have read 644d-645b, where the Athenian Visitor likens human beings to 'divine puppets' as a way of illuminating the notion of being 'stronger' or 'weaker' than oneself.

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