Psychic Contingency in the Republic
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This is my first appearance in a Plato forum and I am a stranger to the way of writing expected here: I am not accustomed to attributing views to an author who never speaks in propria persona. It was easier when I was an undergraduate and encouraged simply to assume that Socrates was Plato’s spokesman and to apply what I can now, thanks to my graduate education, call “the SSSPT operator”: the Socrates-says-so-Plato-thinks operator. But that was before it had dawned on me that there might be problems even with the SSSST operator: Irony was not recognized in the Philosophy department.

Of course I was not so naïve that such questions never occurred to me: I could hardly suppress them when taking courses in the English department. I still recall my puzzlement when asked to write a series of papers on novels such as The Brothers Karamazov and The Story of O, each answering the question: “What is the morality of the book?” I asked in vain: “What do you mean the morality of the book? Different characters have different moral views. The morality of The Brothers Karamazov? You must be joking. Perhaps you mean the morality of the author?” And I soon came to feel more at home in the Philosophy department, where I was at least provided with an algorithm for going from the views of a single character to those of the author himself. For these were the only views that really mattered and they could often be determined without having to read – let alone to worry about the meaning of – whole books as such.

I then learned in graduate school that there had, naturally, been some oversimplification in my undergraduate education, and that I needed to know of any given Platonic dialogue whether it was (roughly) “early”, “middle” or “late”, so as to know whether the views expressed by its Socrates belonged (again roughly) to the historical Socrates and/or the young Plato, to Plato in his philosophical prime, or to the mature Plato. But I was assured that I could rely on others, including stylometrists, for help with that. I got little help, though, with how to handle apparent discrepancies among the views expressed by Socrates in dialogues widely agreed to belong to the period in which Plato has Socrates express distinctively Platonic views such as the theory of separate Forms: for example, the discrepancy between the Republic, where Socrates
seems to view the soul as tripartite, and the *Phaedo*, where Socrates seems to view the soul as simple and assigns to the body many of the features assigned in the *Republic* to the lower parts of soul.

Those who take Socrates to express distinctively Platonic views in both dialogues tend to explain this discrepancy in developmental terms. Many take the *Phaedo* to reflect an early stage in Plato’s prime, when he had arrived at the theory of separate Forms but had not yet come to see (as he had by the time he wrote the *Republic*) that he needed to divide the soul, probably in order to account for the possibility of akrasia.\(^1\) But I do not myself find this story compelling, perhaps because I do not see the *Republic* as much concerned to account for this possibility. So I propose to take a different tack, one compatible with Plato having written both dialogues without having changed his mind in between about the nature of the human soul.\(^2\)

My proposal is to read the *Republic* as allowing for what I call “radical psychic contingency”. This involves not just the moderate idea, clearly present in *Republic* VIII-IX, that it is contingent how the parts of any given human soul are related to one another, but at least one of the following, more radical ideas: First, that with respect to at least some of the so-called parts, it is contingent *what sort of internal structure* each actually has in any given individual; and second, that it is contingent *how many* genuine parts actually belong to any given individual soul. The first of these ideas, though less radical than the second, may lead to the second if a certain kind of internal structure is required in order for a so-called part to count as a genuine part. If, for example, it turns out that the appetitive element (*to epithumētikon*) can be either a mere class of individual appetites or an organized unit, and only an organized unit counts as a genuine part of soul, then it will be contingent whether or not the *epithumētikon* of any given individual is a genuine part; so it will be contingent how many genuine parts an individual soul actually has.

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\(^1\) Shields 2001 refers to this view (which he rejects) as the “standard developmental view”. Lorenz 2006, 103, n. 19, has recently endorsed a version of it.

\(^2\) There is of course an easy way Plato could have done so: He could simply have written various parts for the *character* Socrates, whose views do not always (perhaps even never) reflect Plato’s own. My proposal is more conservative.
Embracing such contingency would allow Plato -- without any inconsistency or change of mind -- to ventriloquize about differently constituted souls in different dialogues and even in different passages within the same dialogue. If, for example, he accepts the second idea, Plato could think that although the souls of most folk have the three parts involved in the so-called state-soul analogy -- i.e., the rational, spirited and appetitive parts -- it is in principle possible for a philosophically cultivated soul (like the one to which the Socrates of the Phaedo aspires) to lack the lower parts and to consist simply in the so-called rational part (to logistikon). Plato could then have Socrates speak in the Phaedo about what he (Plato) takes a philosophically cultivated soul to be like, while having Socrates speak in the Republic about what he (Plato) takes the souls of most folk to be like. Plato could even have Socrates talk in different sections of the Republic itself about individual souls with different kinds and different numbers of so-called parts.

But in order to recognize this, we must free ourselves from some deeply entrenched yet misguided views, starting with what I call the “canonical view” according to which the central argument of the Republic depends for its success on the idea that each and every embodied human soul has exactly and only the three parts involved in the so-called state-soul analogy. For, whatever twentieth century philosophers may have thought was required for the success of Plato’s argument, it seems pretty clear that Plato did not himself think this was. Consider, for example, what he has Socrates say in the culmination of his central argument:

[A] Republic IV 443c10--e2  [Grube-Reeve translation, slightly modified]

<Justice> is not concerned with someone’s doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. One who is just does not allow any [part] of himself to do the work of another [part] or allow the various classes within the soul (ta en tê(i) psuchêi genê) to meddle with each other.3 He regulates well what is

3 I have substituted “in the soul” for “in him” in the Grube-Reeve translation (printed in Cooper and Hutchinson 1997) because it is important to my argument when Plato has Socrates talk about the soul itself and when he has Socrates talk about the person to whom the soul belongs. And I use this translation in spite of the need to correct such flaws because I want to demonstrate how this standard (and not unrepresentative)
really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order and is his own friend, and harmonizes the three [parts of himself] like three limiting notes of a musical scale -- high, low and middle. He binds together these [parts], and any others there may be in between (kai ei alla atta metaxu tunkhanei onta), and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious.\(^4\)

This suggests either that Plato failed to understand what was required by his own argument or that his argument is misunderstood by those who adopt the canonical view. I myself prefer to risk erring with Plato.

I have bracketed occurrences of “part” in [A] because no clear equivalent (such as meros) appears in the Greek. The same goes in many other places where translators tend to supply the word “part” -- as, for example, when Socrates summarizes his analogy by speaking of three eidê (i.e., three forms or species) in the soul analogous to the three natural genê (i.e., the three natural kinds or classes) of people in the state (Rep. IV 435b2-436b1). Here and elsewhere we are invited classify certain psychic entities by form or kind in something like the way we classify individual people by form or kind. The psychic entities in question are pretty clearly something like desires. So the idea seems to be that just as the individuals in each social class are supposed to be the same in kind with one another but different in kind from the individuals in the other social classes, so too the desires in each class are supposed to be the same in form or kind with one another but different in form or kind from the desires in the other classes.

Let us look again at [A]. The things bound together here -- however many they prove to be -- are anonymous. But it is natural to suppose that they are the genê explicitly mentioned or (what seems much the same) the individual members of these genê. So the ideal seems to be one in which desires of different kinds form a unity analogous to the

\(^{4}\) Korsgaard 1999 rightly makes much of this passage; but her “constitutional” reading of it seems to me (for reasons explained in sections 4--5 below) misguided.
unity of a well-governed state. There is no sign here of the sort of agent-like parts that what I call “realist” interpreters see in the Republic: no sign of parts that are themselves the proper subjects of the kinds of psychological states and attitudes (such as beliefs and desires) that combine to bring about action, or of parts from whose psychological states and attitudes those of the person as a whole might be said to derive.\(^5\) The only agent-like thing in play -- and the only proper subject of such states and attitudes -- seems to be (as what I call “deflationist” interpreters insist) the \textit{person himself}: He is the one who does not allow the various classes in his soul to meddle in one another’s business, who puts himself in order and who binds together \textit{these things}, whatever exactly and however many exactly they are. And the same is true in many places in the Republic where realist interpreters see agent-like parts; hence my frequent talk of \textit{so-called} parts.\(^6\)

I speak also of the \textit{so-called} state-soul analogy because, contrary to what much of the secondary literature suggests, this is not what Plato presents. His official analogy, at 368e, is between an individual man (\textit{andros henos}) and a whole state (\textit{holēs poleōs}). So it is strictly speaking the parts of the man and not the parts of his soul that are analogous to the parts of the state: The political analogue of the soul is the constitution (\textit{politeia}) that prevails within a state. Plato’s analogy can thus be described \textit{either} as a state-man analogy \textit{or} as a constitution-soul analogy, and henceforth, so as not to privilege either, I shall call it simply “the political analogy”. The idea is that as a state is just (or unjust) in virtue of the kind of \textit{constitution} it has, so too a man is just (or unjust) in virtue of the kind of \textit{soul} he has. And this is an idea that invites us to think in terms of contingency: There are many ways in which a state might be constituted and Plato himself reminds us of this when he has Socrates speak at the start of Book VIII of the four kinds of corrupt constitution “worth discussing” (544a), which clearly picks up the reference at the end of Book IV to the four forms of vice that stand out -- among the “countless” forms there are -- as “worth mentioning” (445c).

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\(^5\) For an extreme version of realism, see Bobonich 2002, especially 219-220. Bobonich follows Irwin 1996 on many points, including Irwin’s arguments against reading Socrates’ agent-like characterizations of the parts as “merely metaphorical” (on which more below). Lorenz 2006 is another realist; but, unlike Bobonich and Irwin, he denies cognitive capacities to the lower parts.

\(^6\) Deflationism has long been the default view. Recent defenders include Robinson 1971; Cooper 1984; and Gerson 2003, especially Chapter 3.
There are many such nods to contingency scattered throughout the *Republic*, and not just in Book X, where such nods tend to be acknowledged in a way those in earlier books are not. Some commentators worry, for example, about what they take to be Book X’s apparent references to parts of soul that are not easily mapped onto one of the canonical three or onto some simple combination of the three: the references to what our translation renders “the pitying [part]” (*to eleinon*, 606b9) and “the [part] . . . that wanted to tell jokes” (*ho . . . boulomenon gelôtopoiein*, 606c6).7 And most commentators would allow that Book X’s discussion of the sea-god Glaucus reveals Plato’s openness, perhaps even commitment, to the idea that a *disembodied* soul might lack one or more of the canonical parts.8 But this is not the sort of contingency that interests me here. I am concerned only with signs that Plato recognized contingency in the kinds and number of parts an *embodied* human soul might have. And we need not appeal for such signs to Book X’s apparent references to pitying and joking parts: [A] alone suggests not only that Plato is open to the possibility that at least some of the embodied souls discussed in Book IV have other so-called parts *in between* the canonical three, but also that he is open to possibility that even in *embodied* souls psychic elements that were *previously many* can *become one*.

1. **Spirit and other possible partly reason-responsive elements: the assimilationist ideal**

We can best understand [A] by reading it in its proper context -- namely, the accounts given in *Republic* II-IV of the more or less *ideal* state and the corresponding man. I say “*more or less* ideal” because as Books V-VII reveal -- and Glaucon reminds us at the start of Book VIII -- Socrates “had a still finer state and man to tell us about” than the ones he was describing before he was interrupted at the start of V (543c--544a). There is not space here for a proper discussion of these finer ideals, so we must for the moment

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7 See Moss 2008. Note that the sort of education described in *Republic* III seems designed to nip the development of such parts in the bud.
8 See Woolf in this volume.
bracket the middle books and focus simply on the *more or less* ideal state and man described in Books II-IV, together with the forms of corruption of these ideals that Socrates says in Books VIII-IX are “worth discussing”.

It is in Book II that Socrates first introduces what eventually appear to be two of the three canonical parts, though he speaks there of natures (*phuseis*) rather than parts of soul: the spirited nature and the philosophical nature, which are difficult to combine but must be combined -- as they are in well-bred dogs -- in the guardians of a well-governed state (374e--376c). Socrates maintains his focus on these two natures throughout Books II-III, and summarizes towards the end of III as follows:

[B] *Republic* III 411e5--412a7

It seems, then, that a god has given music and gymnastics to human beings not, except incidentally, for the body and the soul but for the spirited and wisdom-loving [parts of the soul itself] in order that these might be in harmony with one another (*hopôs an allêloan sunarmosthêton*), each being stretched and relaxed to the appropriate degree.

-- It seems so.

Then the person who achieves the finest blend of music and physical training and impresses it on his soul in the most measured way is the one we’d most correctly call completely harmonious and trained in music, much more so than the one who merely harmonizes the strings [of his instrument] <with one another> (*ton tas khordas allêlais sunistanta*).⁹

⁹ There is no explicit reference here to any instrument; hence the square brackets. But it is natural to think of a lyre. I have added ‘with one another’, which *is* in the Greek, but in the plural and so clearly contrasted with the preceding dual. The plural leaves it open, in precisely the way [A] leaves it open, how many strings are involved. But lyres often had seven strings: not just the *nêtê, hupatê* and *mesê* (corresponding to the *high, low and middle* in [A]), but also the *paranêtê, parahupatê, paramesê*, and *likhanos* (corresponding perhaps to [A]’s “and any others there may be in between”). So the contrast is between two-part harmonies on the one hand and harmonies involving various numbers of parts on the other. It is even possible that the two-part harmonies here involve octaves, which are said in the Aristotelian *Problemata* XIX.14 to be perceived as unison. Cf. *Republic* 399c-d on the absence of any need in a well-ordered state for poly-chorded or poly-harmonic instruments: The ideal is clearly a kind of unison.
There is no talk here -- and has been none yet -- of parts of soul as such: Socrates speaks simply of “to thumoeides” and “to philosophon.” Nor is there any mention here of appetites as such; it is only in Book IV that they begin to attract attention of their own.

There is, however, a potentially significant transition from the dual allêloin in Socrates’ reference to the ideal where to thumoeides and to philosophon are in harmony with one on another, to the plural allêlais where Socrates conjures up the image of someone tuning her own psychic strings in something like the way a musician tunes the strings of his lyre. The idea seems to be that the sort of two-part harmony effected by the finest blend of musical and gymnastic training is superior to the various multi-part harmonies that may in the end be the best more complicated characters can achieve.

Here, as in [A], contingency with respect to the number of parts is acknowledged: The idea of harmony may require at least two parts, but it certainly admits of more. And the epithumêtikon has not yet been identified as such, so it is not clearly among the envisaged parts.

More importantly, Socrates takes the proper combination of the spirited and philosophic natures to begin with musical training (which includes what we now call “literature”) and he may even take reason itself to emerge from such training:

[C] Republic III 401e5--402a4

. . . anyone who has been properly educated in music and poetry will sense it acutely when something has been omitted from a thing and when it hasn’t been finely crafted or finely made by nature. And since he has the right distastes, he will praise fine things, be pleased by them, receive them into his soul, and being nurtured by them, become fine and good. He’ll rightly object to what is shameful, hating it while he’s still young and unable to grasp the reason <for its being shameful>, but having been educated in this way, he will welcome [the] reason when it comes, and recognize it easily because its kinship with himself.10

10 I have italicized “he” to show how misguided it is to read this passage as evidence that Republic III treats the lower parts (and the appetitive part in particular) as able to
I cannot defend my reading of [C] in detail, but I have added “<for its being shameful>” so as to clarify how I understand the final (and most important) lines. I take Socrates’ points to be (1) that the right sort of upbringing enables a young person to recognize that certain things are fine and so to love these things, and to recognize that other things are shameful and so to hate these things, before she is able to grasp the reasons why the former are fine and the latter shameful; (2) that these affective dispositions to love and hate the right things are part of what enable her eventually to grasp the reasons why the former are fine and the latter shameful; and (3) that coming to grasp such reasons is what is involved in coming to have the logistikon proper (as distinct from the sort of partly but not fully reason-responsive tendencies from which the logistikon develops).

The most controversial point here is (3), but this receives some support from the passage where Socrates endorses Glaucon’s claim that thumos is present in children from birth, while logismos (or reasoning) comes, if at all, quite late (441a7–b1). Even if young children are prone to excessive or unwarranted anger, they are often provoked to anger by things that do in fact warrant it. In this sense, even young children have tendencies that are partly responsive to reasons of the sort mentioned here. And the proper training of a child’s thumoeides presumably involves taming her individual tendencies to anger in ways such that they become increasingly responsive to such reasons, which is part and parcel of acquiring reason itself.

It would of course be only in the highly idealized case of someone like the Stoic sage that a person’s tendencies to anger would ever be fully reason-responsive in the sense that she always and only became angry to the extent and only the extent warranted by her situation. But were such a case to arise, we might speak of the person’s recognize reason’s kinship with themselves and so as having the sort of cognitive capacities, including a self-conception, required for such recognition (contra Irwin 1996, 217–18). There is no mention here of parts of soul: It is the person who is said to recognize the kinship of reason, or reasons, with himself. And even if a part were involved because (as Irwin thinks) the attitudes of the whole person derive from those of his parts, it would presumably be to thumoeides (which is associated with the sort of shame operative here and has, unlike to epithumêtikon, actually been introduced by this point: The argument for partition, like the first reference to the epithumêtikon as such, comes only in Book IV).
thumoeides as having been completely absorbed by or assimilated to reason: To the extent that she has no tendency to become angry in ways other than those reason prescribes, Republic IV’s famous argument for dividing the soul is no argument for assigning to her soul a spirited part distinct from reason. For, at least as far as anger goes, her soul suffers no opposites of the sort that need according to this argument to be ascribed to different subjects: for example, no tendency to experience a certain form of anger that is simultaneous with an opposed tendency to suppress precisely that form of anger with respect to the same aspects of the same objects, etc.

In non-idealized cases -- which may include all actual cases -- human subjects will experience some tendencies to become angry in ways or degrees other than those prescribed by reason. But to the extent that these subjects are responsive to reason, they will also experience some tendencies to suppress that very anger. Such subjects will thus suffer opposites of the sort that must according to the argument of Book IV -- be assigned to different subjects. It seems doubtful, though, that the sort of tendencies associated with spirit are the only sort of partly but not fully reason-responsive tendencies to which human beings are prone. The examples Socrates mentions in Book X should come as no surprise. When pity tempts me to give money to a panhandler even though reason tells me he is likely to spend it on drugs, it is surely neither appetite nor spirit that leads me on and needs to be restrained by reason. And when at my grandfather’s funeral I had to suppress laughter at the ridiculous things the preacher said, it was surely something other than appetite leading me on (something at least partly reason-responsive) and something other than reason holding me back (something more like the sort of sense of family honor that might be associated with spirit).

These examples show how Republic IV’s famous argument might lead Plato to recognize the possibility that a subject should have more than one partly but not fully reason-responsive element between reason and the appetites (which are, unlike spirit, completely indifferent to reason). For in these cases, I seem to suffer precisely the sort of opposite tendencies that must, according to that argument, be ascribed to different subjects. But in an idealized case where I come, for example, to feel pity when and only when -- and to the extent but only to the extent -- reason prescribes, there is no longer any argument for assigning to my soul a pitying part distinct from reason. Note however that
neither here nor in the previous case does it follow that I have no tendencies to feel pity or anger. It is just that these tendencies have -- in my soul at least -- been thoroughly rationalized. And that, of course, is a contingent matter.

We have now seen why Plato might leave open, in [A] and [B], the possibility of other partly reason-responsive elements besides spirit. Still, there is an important feature of reason that helps to explain why Plato might nevertheless think that well-ordered souls harbor few if any such elements besides spirit: namely, that reason by its very nature requires a kind of unity among its inhabitants that the other so-called parts do not. We shall discuss appetites more fully below; but it seems clear from the outset that my individual appetites need not stand in rational relations to one another either to be what they are or all to count as mine. In this respect my appetites differ from the inhabitants of my logistikon, which must stand in rational relations to one another, not just in order all to count as mine but in order even to be what they are. For part of what makes something a belief are the rational relations in which it stands to the other beliefs with which it, so to speak, cohabits. I cannot simply add beliefs to my logistikon in the way I might appetites to my epithumêtikon (which is more like adding coins to a bank). If I believe some proposition $p$ and then acquire a belief in some proposition that clearly (or even not so clearly) contradicts $p$, the status of $p$ as a belief of mine is threatened -- unless of course my logistikon can itself be divided. But insofar as the very existence of something deserving the title of reason is constituted by a kind of rational coherence among its residents, it is difficult to regard reason itself as divided.

This difficulty explains why Plato regards spirit -- and any other only partly reason-responsive element there might be -- as distinct from reason and not as part of it. But this difficulty also helps to explain why Plato might think that well-ordered souls will end up with relatively few if any only partly reason-responsive elements besides spirit. For reason is inherently imperialistic: There is pressure on every such element, insofar as it is even partly reason-responsive, not just to become more reason-responsive but also to cohere with other such elements to the extent that it recognizes them as reason-responsive. This, in fact, is part and parcel of their becoming more reason-responsive. For the more insulated from other reason-responsive elements any given pretender to
reason-responsiveness seems to be, the more it needs to worry about its own status as reason-responsive.

Plato may think of spirit as an exception here, perhaps because it is the hardest to assimilate and/or because it has important jobs to do. Ambition may serve society better when it is not completely reason-responsive. And as long as external threats are present, every agent -- no matter how otherwise rational she is -- may sometimes benefit from having a spirited element that is only partly reason-responsive.\footnote{Just as a state must -- at least in non-utopian circumstances -- have some minimal defense forces, so too an individual requires protection, if not from internal enemies at least from external ones. And the need for some relatively automatic responses to perceived threats may explain why the thumoeides is not the sort of thing that can be expected to respond infallibly as reason would on reflection prescribe.} But this is a special case. In general, the more rational an agent is, the more the partly reason-responsive elements in her soul will be under pressure to “get along” with one another; and the more they come to cohere with one another, the less autonomous they will be, not simply of one another but of reason itself.

We can now see something Plato might have had in mind in having Socrates speak of psychic elements that were previously many becoming one. Children start off with various partly reason-responsive tendencies, each more or less capable of developing (as envisaged in [C]) into an aspect of reason itself. The ideal -- except perhaps for thumos -- is complete assimilation; and even thumos -- insofar as it is reason-responsive -- is under pressure to assimilate. So the general ideal is for the individual -- having started off as (roughly) a bundle of such tendencies -- to become “entirely one, moderate and harmonious”.

2. Two conceptions of to epithumētikon

But what about the appetites? The paradigms here are our more or less biologically driven desires for food, drink and sex, which are generally agreed to be minimally (if at all) responsive to reason. Unwelcome appetites, if they cannot be eradicated, must be handled by more “mechanical” means: diversions, Clockwork-Orange-style modification,
meditation, diet pills, cold showers, and the like. Assimilation to reason, even partial assimilation, seems out of the question. Isn’t the best Plato can reasonably hope for the appetites that they should come to obey reason?

This is not, I think, how Plato sees things. For there are signs (even in Republic IV) that he sees obedience to reason as a kind of deuteros plous. He seems to think that a proper upbringing can bring it about that a person’s appetites do not simply obey her reason, but spontaneously, as it were, and of their own accord sing the same tune with it. To see this consider how -- once appetites are center-stage -- Socrates describes sôphrosunê (i.e., temperance or moderation):

[D] Republic IV 431e8–432b1

<Sôphrosunê resembles a kind of harmony> because, unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in one part, making the city brave and wise respectively, moderation spreads throughout the whole. It makes the weakest, the strongest, and those in between -- whether in regard to reason, physical strength, numbers, wealth, or anything else -- all sing the same song together. And this unanimity, this agreement between the naturally worse and the naturally better as to which of the two should rule both in the city and in each one is rightly called sôphrosunê.

Here, however, there is a puzzle (especially for proponents of the canonical view who take the parts to be agent-like). Why, now that appetites are on the scene, does Plato have Socrates ask “which of the two should rule”? Why does he not have Socrates treat sôphrosunê as involving agreement among the three canonical parts?

One simple answer is that Socrates has not yet introduced the third canonical part, nor even anything corresponding as clearly to it as the philosophical and spirited natures correspond to the other two: The “naturally better” and the “naturally worse” here are most plausibly taken either as reason on the one hand and spirit on the other (as in Books

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12 The corollary of this is that ruling is itself a deuteros plous: The ideal for reason is to philosophize, not to rule. So I think the emphasis in Cooper 1984 on reason’s “innate taste for ruling” is misguided. Plato’s ideal is ultimately anarchic (on which more below).
II-III) or (perhaps better here) as reason on the one hand and spirit taken on the other together with any other psychic elements there prove to be.\textsuperscript{13} But the fact that Socrates has not yet introduced the third canonical part belongs in the end more to the \textit{explanandum} than to the \textit{explanans}: The principal question is why he (or rather Plato) did not introduce an appetitive element, alongside reason and spirit, from the get-go.

The answer, I think, turns partly on the way in which appetites differ from the inhabitants of reason or of any even partly reason-responsive element. As we have already seen, there is not the same sort of pressure on individual appetites, in order either to be what they are or to belong to the same subject, to stand in any particular relations (especially rational relations) to one another. It may be inconvenient or even disastrous for a subject if her various appetites pull her in different directions. But the fact that they do so does not by itself impugn any individual appetite’s status either as an \textit{appetite} or as \textit{hers} in anything like the way in which the doxastic analogue would impugn the status of at least some of her purported beliefs either as \textit{beliefs} or as \textit{hers}. That is no doubt why Plato finds it so easy to represent \textit{to epithumêtikon} as involving multiplicity – as he does, for example, at the end of Book IX (where he explicitly represents it as a kind of multi-headed beast) or in Book IV (where he implicitly compares it to a flock of sheep). It is also, I think, why Plato does not in fact worry -- as some proponents of the canonical view think he should worry -- about having to subdivide the third canonical part: He sees in the case of appetite none of the sort of constitutive demand for unity that he sees in the case of reason or even in the case of partly reason-responsive parts. In other words, he sees no obstacles in principle to a person’s appetites being just a motley crew.

But Plato’s ideal clearly requires more than this. Note however that it does not seem to require the \textit{epithumêtikon} to display anything like the sort of unity constitutive of

\textsuperscript{13} Even if moderation requires agreement among \textit{all} the elements, however many there are, agreement between two parties in cases where there are \textit{in fact} only two may suffice for moderation in a way in which it would not suffice for justice, which requires agreement among the \textit{three} canonical parts. For justice may be a remedial virtue requiring agreement among the three canonical parts, and so \textit{available} only in agents who in fact have these three parts (but also \textit{needed} only in such agents). And this might help to explain the distinction between justice and moderation, which can be difficult to distinguish insofar as \textit{each} seems to involve a kind of harmony or agreement among the so-called parts: For Plato may think that justice \textit{requires} three-part harmony in a way that moderation (which however \textit{admits} three and more part harmonies) does \textit{not}. 
reason or of partly reason-responsive elements. The ideal epithumêtikon seems to be something like a collection of the sort of necessary appetites that Socrates contrasts with unnecessary ones. As Socrates explains in Book IX, an unnecessary epithumia is one “that most people can get rid of, if it is restrained and educated while they are young, and that is harmful both to the body and to the wisdom (phronêsis) and moderation of the soul” (559a11-c1). Here Socrates refers back to Book II’s distinction between a healthy city and a feverish one (372e-373a). And he makes it clear that in the case of unnecessary appetites, the ideal is not obedience to reason -- which is ultimately a form of what Aristotle calls “continence” -- but rather eradication.14

We are now in a position to make better sense than our translation makes of the passage where the apparently singular referring expression “to epithumêtikon” first surfaces in Plato’s Republic.

[E] Republic IV 439c1--d5

Now would we assert that sometimes there are thirsty people who don’t wish to drink?
-- Certainly it happens often to many different people. [Glaucon is the interlocutor.]
What, then, should we say about them? Isn’t it that there is in their soul something bidding them (to keleuon) to drink and something different, forbidding them (to kôluon) to do so, that masters the thing that bids (kratoun tou keleuontos)?
-- I think so.

Doesn’t that which forbids (to men kôluon) in such cases come into play -- if it comes into play at all -- as a result of rational calculation (ek logismou), while the <things> that

14 Or better yet, contraception: It is clear from the lines immediately before [C] that exposure to evil images, which is compared to grazing in bad grass, gives rise to unhealthy appetites, whereas exposure to fine images, which is compared to taking in healthy breezes, prevents unhealthy appetites from arising in the first place (401b-d). Here, as elsewhere in Republic II-IV, the nature and etiology of various psychic conditions is compared, via images familiar from the Hippocratic corpus, to the nature and etiology of various bodily conditions. For more on this, see section 4 below.
drive and drag them to drink result from feelings and diseases (ta de agonta kai helkonta pathêmatôn te kai nosêmatôn paragignetai)?  

-- Apparently.

Hence it isn’t unreasonable for us to claim that they are two, and different from one another. We’ll call that [part] of soul with which it calculates [the] rational [part] (logistikon) and the [part] with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by the other appetites [the] irrational appetitive [part] (alogiston te kai epithumêtikon), companion of certain pleasures and indulgences.

-- Yes. . .

Then, let these two forms (eîdê) be distinguished in the soul. Now, is the spirited [part] by which we get angry a third [part] or is it of the same nature as either of the other two?

-- Perhaps it is like the appetitive [part] (tô(i) epithumêtikô(i)).

There are two things to note here, starting with the fact that it is Glaucon, not Socrates, who first uses the apparently singular referring expression, “to epithumêtikon”: Socrates himself, though he goes on to make his own use of this expression, has thus far used only the predicate adjective (back where he in describes what lusts, hungers, thirsts, etc., as “alogiston kai epithumêtikon”). Note also the phrase in bold, where I have altered the Grube-Reeve translation so as to reflect Plato’s use of the plural. Plato does not have Socrates speak, as the translation has it, of “what drives and drags [agents] to drink”; he has Socrates speak rather of “the <things> that drive and drag them drink”. The translators no doubt invoke the singular because they take Socrates to be talking about the

15 The Grube-Reeve translation renders this in the singular -- “what drives and drags them to drink is the result of feelings and diseases” -- but this is problematic for reasons explained below. Please note, pace Lorenz 2006, 21, that it does not seem to be the so-called parts that pull and drag the agent here: It seems rather to be the agent’s individual desires and beliefs. Note also that it does not follow from the fact Plato uses the singular in referring to that which forbids that he must be talking about a part of soul. For the fact that he speaks of what forbids as coming into play, if at all, as a result of calculation suggests that he may have in mind something like a mental tokening of the sort of imperative that is ordinarily taken to be the upshot of a bit of practical reasoning -- something like a mental tokening of a command such as “don’t drink” or “don’t drink this”. See Nicomachean Ethics 1147a25-b3 (translated and discussed in Pickavé and Whiting 2008): Aristotle speaks here as if it is individual beliefs that command and prohibit, and individual appetites that lead the agent on.
canonical part of soul that goes by the name “to epithumétikon”. But consider how odd Socrates’ claim here would be if he were in fact speaking of the canonical part, which is supposed (according to the canon) to be part of the natural endowment of any embodied human soul: Socrates would be saying that the part itself comes to be as a result of feelings and diseases.  

As far as this passage goes, Socrates seems to be speaking simply about a genos or (as he says here) an eidos of appetitive desires. And he seems to be saying that while some members come to be as a result of the sort of natural and healthy affections required to keep the species going, others members may come to be as a result of various diseases. In other words, he seems to have in mind something like a class: one that should include only natural and healthy appetites, but often in fact includes unnatural and diseased ones. So [E] seems to require only a deflationist conception of the Republic’s so-called parts of soul.

But realist readers resist this reading of [E]. They point, for example, to passages where Socrates speaks of “handing over rule to spirit” or “setting appetite on the throne” and argue on the basis of such passages that the lower parts, including the appetitive part, must be agent-like entities, capable not only of agreeing or disagreeing about who should rule but even in some sense of ruling the other parts. I say “in some sense” so as to flag an important issue that remains to be addressed: the issue of what to take “metaphorically” and what to take (as the realist reader Irwin puts it) “seriously”.  

Consider the following passage, which in Irwin’s view both must be taken “seriously” and shows (so taken) that Plato conceives of the parts as agent-like.

[F] Republic VIII 553b7--d7

16 Although I argue below that Plato may regard the existence of an appetitive part (meros) of soul -- as distinct from a mere collection of individual appetites -- as pathological, I do not think that is what he is talking about here. The point here seems to be that the things (mainly desires) that drive and drag us to act against reason may come about either as result of natural and even healthy affections or as a result of diseased ones. It is a separate question (discussed below) how, if at all, such desires are organized.  

17 Irwin 1996, 222.
The <timocrat’s> son sees all <that his father suffers>, suffers from it, loses his property, and, fearing for his life drives from the throne in his own soul the honor-loving and spirited [part] (philotimian te kai to thumoeides) that ruled there. Humbled by poverty, he turns greedily to making money, and, little by little, saving and working, he amasses property. Don’t you think that this person would establish his appetitive and money-making [part] (to epithumêtikon te kai philochrêmaton) on the throne, setting it up as a great king with in himself . . .?

-- I do.

He makes the rational and spirited [parts] sit on the ground beneath [appetite], reducing them to slaves. He won’t allow the first to reason about 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 . . .

But suppose that a proper reading of [F] does in fact show that Plato takes the epithumêtikon of an oligarchic character to be agent-like. Why suppose that this shows us anything about what the epithumêtikon of a well-ordered soul, or even an akratic one, is like? Why read [E] in light of the realist reading of [F]? Why not read the other way round? Why not take the apparently deflationist view we find in [E] to support reading [F] and other such passages, as John Cooper reads them, as “highly metaphorical” and even “potentially very misleading”?  

3. Methodological interlude: A widespread but arguably false conception of what is required for the consistency of the Republic taken as a whole

It is worth noting that most commentators tend simply to assume that we must read [E] and [F] the same way, whichever way -- realist or deflationist -- that is. Deflationists tend to see their view as all that is warranted by the argument of Book IV and so to

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18 Once again, I have italicized “this person” and “he” to show that it is person himself, rather than a part of his soul, that seems to do these things.

19 Cooper, 1984, n. 18.
generalize forward, reading Books VIII-IX as largely metaphorical. Realists tend, on the other hand, to generalize back: They read the agent-like language and images that dominate Books VIII-IX as showing that we should read Book IV as implicitly committed the realist view. So much of this generalization occurs without comment that it seems to be driven largely by tacit assumptions about what is required for a consistent reading of the Republic taken as a whole. But it is not obvious that these assumptions justify such generalization.

One such assumption seems to me as dubious as it is widespread. Most commentators seem to assume that the consistency of the whole requires what is said of any given part of soul in one passage of the Republic to apply equally to all homonymous entities in all other passages, both within the same book and across books. This “homogenizing” conception of what is required for consistency is perhaps most salient among realists. This may be because it is more for difficult them, once they insist on taking some arguably metaphorical passages “seriously”, to dismiss others as “merely metaphorical” (which may help to explain why realists are somewhat more prone than deflationists to charge Plato with inconsistency). But the salience of the homogenizing conception among realists may also be due to the fact that deflationists seem to have more independent arguments for ruling out a realist reading of any passage whatsoever than realists have independent arguments for ruling out a deflationist reading of any passage whatsoever. What I mean here are arguments driven primarily by considerations independent of the demand for consistency simply as such: for example, the deflationist argument that Plato would never allow something immaterial, like the soul, to have genuine parts, and so must be speaking simply of three kinds of desires; or the deflationist argument that the realist view involves the dubious supposition of some “mysterious self”, beyond the three so-called parts, to adjudicate among them.20

But even if deflationists do have more independent arguments here than realists, I think we can sometimes see the demand for consistency and the homogenizing conception of what is required for it bearing weight in deflationist arguments: for example, when deflationists argue that realist views undermine the unity of the person and so treat akrasia not (as it should be treated) as a form of conflict within a single

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20 See Gerson 2003, section 3.1.
agent, but rather as a form of conflict between distinct agents. To the extent that this argument is aimed to rule out a realist view not just in Book IV, where akrasia is treated, but also in Books VIII-IX, where the focus has shifted to vicious agents, the argument seems driven largely by a concern with consistency and a homogenizing conception of what is required for it. For the master premise is that akrasia is a form of conflict within a single agent, which is what the deflationist account in Book IV is supposed to secure. But even if an adequate account of akrasia requires a deflationist conception of the so-called parts, it does not follow that an adequate account of any and every vice requires the same conception: Plato could still treat at least some forms of the vice discussed in Books VIII-IX as involving a kind of division of the agent into parts that interact in ways more like those in which distinct agents interact. Moreover, there is evidence that Plato does in fact take some such division to distinguish at least some forms of vice from mere akrasia -- for example, when he has Socrates describe the oligarchic character as “not one but in some way two” (554d9-10). So it seems plausible to suppose that a deflationist whose concern with the sort of unity required for an adequate account of akrasia leads him to reject a realist conception of the parts in an oligarchic soul is leaning on something like the homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency. For some such supposition seems required to explain why he discounts as mere metaphor relatively clear signs that Plato takes at least some forms of vice to differ from mere akrasia at least partly insofar as these forms of vice involve something like conflict among distinct agent-like parts.

The converse error would be made by any realist who took signs that Plato thinks we need agent-like parts in order to account for the forms of vice discussed in Books VIII-IX to show that Plato must be assuming agent-like parts back in Books IV. Here too the homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency threatens to occlude evidence that Plato takes the emergence of distinct agent-like parts of soul to be part of what sets at least some vicious agents apart from merely akratic ones. And realist readers show themselves vulnerable to such threats when, for example, they argue that passages

21 Even some realists worry about this: Bobonich 2002, 254-67, argues that Plato himself was sufficiently moved by this worry that he abandoned tripartition in the Laws. Cf. Gerson 2003, 6.3.
like [F] support reading Book IV as implicitly committed to a realist conception of the so-called parts. Consider, for example, the relatively generic application of the homogenizing conception in the following passage from Plato’s Ethics, where, in his chapter devoted to interpreting Republic IV, Irwin appeals to the famous image at the end of Republic IX:

we cannot, however, understand the nature of a part of soul simply by understanding the character of its component desires. For Plato also conceives of the parts of the soul as analogous to agents; he compares the rational part to a human being, the spirited part to a lion, and the appetitive part to a many-headed and multifarious beast (588c7-c5). (Irwin 1996, 217; my italics).

It is worth noting that Irwin appeals here to the very image that Julia Annas proposes to “ignore” on the ground that it fails to fit both the ideal propounded in Book IV and the ideal in Plato’s Socratic dialogues. But what drives the argument seems to be the same in each case: the homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency. And this conception is (as we shall soon see) so powerful that Irwin and Annas would rather charge Plato with confusion than abandon it.

Annas argues that Plato does not speak in the Republic in one voice, but rather portrays a single idea -- the idea of the divided soul -- in different and mutually incompatible ways in different places. Plato’s ideal, as Annas first describes it, sounds deflationist: “a harmonized, integrated person, all of whose motivations are, without conflict, in line with reason” (136). 22 But Annas says a sentence later that “Plato also sees the idea at times in a different way, one in which the person isolates his ‘true self’ in his reason and then externalizes the parts other than reason as something subhuman, rejected and kept under harsh external control” (136). And Annas marks no difference here between a shepherd’s relationship with his dog (Book IV’s image for the relationship between reason and spirit) and a lion-tamer’s relationship with his lion (Book IX’s image for the relationship between reason and spirit): She speaks as if each of these

22 This and all other page numbers in brackets are from Annas 1999; the italics are all mine.
relationships involves the same sort of external control. Annas also speaks as if Plato himself failed to see what “seems obvious to us” -- namely, the lack of unity that characterizes agents who are “supposedly unified in this [external] way”.

But there are clear signs that Plato does not suppose that the agents in question are in fact unified -- for example, his description of the oligarchic character as “not one but in some way two”. Annas simply fails to see these signs for what they are. And the culprit seems to be her homogenizing conception of what is required for the consistency of the Republic taken as a whole. For she appeals explicitly to what is required for consistency when she recommends that we “ignore Plato’s vivid metaphor of a human as a little lion tamer” on the ground that this metaphor fails to fit the ideal propounded in Book IV and in Plato’s Socratic dialogues (136).

But even leaving aside the vexed issue of consistency with what Socrates says in other dialogues, there is reason to worry about any reading of the Republic that proposes to ignore descriptions of what are explicitly presented as corrupt souls on the ground that these descriptions do not “fit” the author’s (or the speaker’s) account of what an ideally constituted soul is like. Are we really to suppose that Plato sees no relevant difference between a shepherd’s relation to his dog and a lion-tamer’s relation to his lion? Mightn’t Plato think that the dog obeys the shepherd willingly in a way the lion does not willingly obey the lion-tamer, perhaps because the dog’s own desires are shaped partly by its affection for its master in a way the lion’s desires are not? Mightn’t Plato’s point be (as [B] perhaps suggests) that a properly trained dog-like spirit will love reason and want to follow it? The appetites -- which are of course analogous to the flock of sheep in Book IV and to the many-headed beast in Book IX -- are a different matter. But it seems clear that we should think twice before assimilating a flock of sheep to a beast of many (both gentle and savage) heads.

The point of using these different images is surely to allow for different sorts of cases: some in which a person’s appetites are in fact like wild animals, capable of being controlled, if at all, only by force, and some in which a person’s appetites are in some sense “domesticated”, presumably by a kind of persuasion. And I suspect that Plato

Note that the multiplicity here seems to be associated with fear and compulsion, as distinct from persuasion. So Plato may not in fact take persuasion as sign of the genuine
wants to allow for similar variation in the relations between reason and spirit. For there is room for variation even within human-dog relationships, as Socrates suggests at 563c, where he complains about the freedom granted to animals in a democracy, where horses and donkeys wander freely, bumping people who get in their way, and dogs are allowed to become like their mistresses. Real men do not allow their dogs to become like this; their problem is to prevent their dogs becoming like wolves, which Socrates says is “the most terrible and most shameful thing of all for a shepherd” (416a).

In general, then, we should not be too quick to dismiss some of Plato’s metaphors or images on account of their apparent inconsistency with others. We should attend to which images -- whether intended metaphorically or not -- he uses in connection with which kinds of subjects. For it may be significant if Plato tends to anthropomorphize -- or to bestialize -- more in some contexts than in others. And it may be significant which beasts he introduces in which contexts. Such differences arguably reveal different but complementary ideas rather than one idea that Plato confusedly describes in different ways in different places. For there are clear signs that what we find in Republic IV and what we find in Republic VIII-IX are not (as Annas suggests) competing moral psychologies but rather complementary aspects of a single psychology, one intended to accommodate different kinds (or at least different conditions) of soul, both the more or less ideal ones discussed in Books II-IV, and the increasingly corrupt ones discussed in Books VIII-IX.

4. The shift from medical/musical models to political ones

The clearest such sign comes in a relatively neglected passage towards the end of Republic IV. This is passage [J], which (as we shall soon see) signals an important difference between the sort of model on which Socrates’ accounts of more and less well-

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distinctness of the subject persuaded from the subject doing the persuading. And this is intuitive: Insofar as persuasion involves the giving and accepting of reasons, and we can give ourselves reasons that we may then accept, persuasion does not presuppose distinct subjects in quite the way force seems to presuppose the distinctness of what forces from what is forced.
ordered souls are based and the sort of model on which Socrates’ accounts of corrupt souls are based. [J] thus epitomizes an important shift that occurs towards the end of Book IV and so provides an important key to reading the Republic as a whole.

The shift begins late in Book IV, when Socrates for the first time speaks explicitly and unambiguously of a “meros” or “part” of soul: This is after the main argument has been consummated in [A] and scarcely more than a Stephanus page before the end of the book.

[G] Republic IV 444b1–5

Surely <injustice> must be a kind of civil war between the three [parts], a meddling and doing of another’s work, a rebellion of some part against the whole soul (epanastasin merous tinos tò(i) holó(i) tês psuchês), in order to rule it inappropriately. The rebellious [part] is by nature suited to be a slave, while the other [part] is not a slave but belongs to the ruling class (genos).

Here, however, Socrates is no longer speaking about souls that are more or less well-ordered (including ones more and less plagued by akrasia): He is launching the discussion -- which is interrupted at the start of Book V and resumed in Books VIII-IX -- of corrupt souls. And what we find in those books supports Joseph’s claim that the talk of merê of soul is a political metaphor.24 But Joseph, perhaps because he is concerned to defend the deflationist view, stresses the mere fact of the metaphor at the expense of what seems to me its point, which is to identify psychic equivalents of political factions. For taking this to be the point helps to explain a curious fact that is often noted but never in my view adequately explained -- namely, that we do not find Socrates speaking explicitly of a meros of soul until [G], where he seeks to launch the discussion of corrupt souls. We can easily explain this if we take the point of the metaphor to be that a well-ordered soul should no more house such merê than a well-ordered state should house political factions.

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24 See Joseph 1935, 47.
It may help to think here of what members of the ruling class generally fear. It is not that there should be individual members of the working class each doing his or her own job: That is what the rulers want. What members of the ruling class fear is that the members of the working class should organize themselves -- or be organized by outside agitators -- into something like a political party; that members of the working class should start functioning as an integrated unit capable of imposing collective demands either on the ruling class or on the state as a whole.

It seems clear that Socrates worries in Republic VIII-IX about the psychic analogues of just such political phenomena. The problem is not individual appetites each doing their own jobs; the problem occurs when the appetites get organized into something like political factions making collective demands. Consider, for example, the passage where Socrates compares the transition from a timocratically constituted soul to an oligarchically constituted one to the transition from a timocratically constituted state to an oligarchically constituted one, and speaks of the oligarchally constituted soul as one in which only necessary appetites are allowed to be satisfied: All other appetites (except that for wealth) are enslaved and the agent pursues wealth to the exclusion of everything else (553b--554a). Or consider the following passage, where Socrates describes the degeneration from an oligarchically constituted soul to a democratically constituted one.

[H] Republic VIII 559e4--561b5

And just as the city changed when one party (meros) received help from like-minded people outside, doesn’t the young man change when one form of his desires (eidous epithumión) receives help from external desires that are akin to them and like them.\(^\text{25}\) -- Absolutely.
And I suppose that, if any contrary help comes to the oligarchic [party] within him . . . then there’s civil war and counterrevolution within him, and he battles against himself.

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\(^{25}\) I have substituted “one form of his desires” for Grube-Reeve’s “one party of his desires”, but I have no objection to the use of “party” for meros in the first line. I am however struck by the fact that here, where Socrates actually uses meros, Grube-Reeve declines to use “part”, which they use so liberally in passages where meros does not occur.
-- That’s right.
Sometimes the democratic [party] yields to the oligarchic, so that some of the young
man’s appetites are overcome, others are expelled, and a kind of shame arises in his soul,
and order is restored.
-- That does sometimes happen.
But I suppose that, as desires are expelled, others akin to them are being nourished
unawares] and on account of his father’s ignorance about how to bring him up, they
grow numerous and strong.
-- That’s what tends to happen.
These desires draw him back into the same bad company and in secret intercourse breed a
multitude of others.
-- Certainly.
And, seeing the citadel of the young man’s soul empty of knowledge, fine ways of living,
and words of truth (which are the best watchmen and the finest guardians of the thoughts
of those men whom the gods love), they finally occupy that citadel themselves.
-- They certainly do.
And in the absence of these guardians, false and boastful words and beliefs rush up and
occupy the same place (ton auton topon) in him. 26
-- Indeed, they do.
And if some help comes to the thrifty [part] of his soul from his household, won’t these
boastful words close the gates of the royal wall with him to prevent these allies from
entering and refuse even to receive the words of the older private individuals as
ambassadors? . . . And won’t they persuade the young man that measured and orderly
expenditure is boorish and mean, and, joining with the many useless desires, won’t they
expel it across the border?
-- They certainly will.
. . . Isn’t it in some such way as this that someone who is young changes, after being
brought up with necessary desires, to the liberation and release of useless and
unnecessary pleasures?
-- Yes, that’s clearly the way it happens.

26 I have substituted “the same place in” for Grube-Reeve’s “this part of”.

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And I suppose that after that he spends as much money, effort, and time on unnecessary pleasures as on necessary ones. If he’s lucky, and his frenzy doesn’t go too far, when he grows older, and the great tumult within him has spent itself, he welcomes back some of the parties that have been expelled (merê tôn ekpesontôn), ceases to surrender himself completely to newcomers, and puts his pleasures on an equal footing. And so he lives, always surrendering rule over himself to whichever desire comes along, as if it were chosen by lot . . .

It seems clear that meros is used at the start of [H] to refer to a political faction -- a democratic or oligarchic faction whose members might receive support from other democrats or oligarchs as such. And it seems clear that Socrates envisions psychic analogues of such factions making collective demands based on principles such as “All appetites are equal and should be treated as such” (in the democratic soul) or (in the oligarchic soul) “The appetite for wealth is privileged and should be treated as such” or “Apart from the necessary appetites, which should be tolerated in moderation, only the appetite for wealth should be indulged.” This suggests that Socrates treats the epithumêtikon of at least some of the corrupt souls discussed in Books VIII-IX as a different (and arguably more agent-like) kind of thing from the epithumêtikon of any of the more or less well-ordered souls discussed in Books II-IV. More specifically, Socrates may treat the epithumetikon in a well-ordered subject as a collection of moderate and mostly necessary appetites each of which spontaneously and of its own accord sings the same tune with reason, while treating the epithumêtikon in an akratic or merely enkratic subject as a collection of appetites some of whose members fail to sing the same tune with reason but are more (in the enkratic case) or less (in the akratic case) obedient to it, and treating the epithumêtikon of a vicious subject as, at least by the time we get to the oligarchic character, something like an organized political faction capable of ruling reason rather than being ruled by it.

27 I have substituted “parties that have been expelled” for “parts that have been expelled” simply so as to match Grube-Reeve’s rendering of meros in the first line. It does not matter much which we use as long as we understand that Socrates is not referring to any of the canonical parts: What has been expelled are pretty clearly certain beliefs (and perhaps also desires).
The idea that Socrates recognizes some such range of possibilities is not ruled out by the fact that he uses the apparently singular referring expression “to epithumêtikon”, nor even by the fact that he uses the same expression both in discussing more or less ideal subjects in Book IV and in discussing increasingly vicious ones in Books VIII-IX. To see this, consider “to hippikon”, which Plato and his contemporaries could use in place of “hoi hippikoi” in the same range of ways in which we ourselves might use “the cavalry” in place of “the cavaliers”. They could use it both collectively, to say things like “The cavalry advanced on the village”, where the idea is that the cavalry functions as an integrated unit; and distributively, to say things like “The cavalry ran amok”, where the idea is that each individual member does what he or she does independently of what the others are doing, even if it happens to match what the others are doing. Similarly with “to epithumêtikon”: Plato could have used it both to say things like “The epithumêtikon of Trump subordinates everything to the pursuit of wealth” (meaning that Trump’s epithumêtikon is organized around the pursuit of wealth) and to say things like “The epithumêtikon of Henry VIII never met a sensual pleasure it didn’t like” (meaning that the epithumêtikon of Henry VIII was filled various diverse appetites). Plato could even have used “to epithumêtikon” in different ways in different passages of the Republic. But in that case, he would have left him vulnerable to being misread by homogenizing commentators.

Let us return to Book IV. I have said that [G] is the first place where Socrates speaks explicitly and unambiguously of a meros of soul. But this is controversial. There is one passage earlier on where many readers take him to speak in this way. It seems to me, though, that the earlier passage is ambiguous in a way that supports taking the shift of which I speak to begin only in [G]. The earlier passage runs as follows.

[I] Republic IV 442b11–d1

And it is because of this part (toutō(i) tō(i) merei), I suppose, that we call a single individual courageous, namely, whenever his spirit (autou to thumoeides) preserves through pains and pleasures the declarations of reason (to hupo tôn logon parangelthen) about what is to be feared and what isn’t.
-- That’s right. [Glaucon is the interlocutor.]
And we’ll call him wise because of that small part [of himself] (ekeinô(i) tô(i) smikró(i) merei) that rules in him and makes those declarations and has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each [part] and for the whole [soul], which is the community of all three beings (tên tou sumpherontos hekastô(i) te kai holô(i) tô(i) koinô(i) sphôn autôn trîôn ontôn).28

-- Absolutely.
And isn’t he moderate because of the friendly and harmonious relations between these same <beings> (tê(i) philia(i) kai sumphônia(i) té(i) autôn toutôn), namely, when the ruler and ruled believe in common (homodoxôsi) that the rational [part] (to logistikon) should rule and don’t engage in civil war against it (mê stasiazōsin autô(i))? 

Note that the parts mentioned here are not clearly parts of the soul, as distinct from parts of the person whose soul is in question: Socrates may be speaking simply about parts of the person, which is congenial to deflationists, who happily allow that persons can have parts (such as bodies) that their souls do not.29 And even if Socrates is talking about parts of soul as such, there is no clear reference here to an appetitive part as such: When he speaks of the whole as a community of three things, he speaks not (as the Grube-Reeve translation would have it) of three parts, but only more generically of three beings (as I have revised their translation to say). But it would have been so natural given the first two occurrences of “meros” to use “meros” here as well that we should at least consider the possibility that Plato is reluctant to have Socrates speak of the epithumêtikon (at least in this context) as a meros of whatever it is he is talking about.

28 I have substituted “beings” for “parts” both here (where the noun itself appears) without brackets, and in brackets in the next sentence (where the noun does not itself appear but the anaphora is relatively clear).
29 It is true that Socrates has just been speaking of reason ruling on behalf of “all the soul” (hapasês tês psuchês, 441e5) and reason together with spirit protecting “all the soul and the body” (hapasês tês psuchês te kai tou sômatau, 442b5-6). But it may be significant that Plato’s use of “hapas” is predicative rather than attributive (which would have cast the soul clearly as the sum of its parts). His point may be simply about all the soul, whatever it involves (where this may be contingent).
There is more than one possible explanation of this. It could be, as deflationists sometimes assume, that Plato is reluctant to allow that something immaterial should have genuine parts. But this fails to explain [I]'s differential treatment of the epithumētikon. For either Socrates is speaking about parts of the individual (as distinct from her soul) and so, on this assumption, has no reason not to treat to epithumētikon (along with the other things) as parts of her; or Socrates is speaking about the soul itself and so, on this assumption, should be as reluctant to speak of to thumoeides and to logistikon as parts of it as he is to speak of to epithumētikon as a part of it. We need a more discriminating explanation.

Fortunately, [G] taken together with [J] hints at the sort of discrimination we need. For these passages show Socrates finally speaking in [G] of a meros of soul as such and then immediately abandoning this language, only a few lines later, just where we might expect him to use it.

[J] *Republic IV 444d3--11*

To produce health is to establish the [components] of the body (ta en tô(i) somati) in a natural relation of mastering and being mastered (kratein te kai krateisthai), one by another, while to produce disease is to establish a relation of ruling and being ruled (arkhein te kai arkhesthai) contrary to nature.

-- That’s right.

Then, isn’t to produce justice to establish the [parts] of the soul (ta en té(i) psuchê(i)) in a natural relation of mastering and being mastered (kratein te kai krateisthai), one by another, while to produce injustice is to establish a relation of ruling and being ruled (arkhein te kai arkhesthai) contrary to nature.\(^30\)

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Here, as in [A], the elements in question are anonymous. This is at least partly because different sorts of elements are involved in the bodily and psychic cases. But Plato may

\(^{30}\) For reasons that should become clear, I have rendered *kratein kai krateisthai* here as “mastering and being mastered” rather than as Grube-Reeve’s “control and being controlled”.  

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also see a difference in each case between the nature of the elements involved when things go well and the nature of the elements involved when things go wrong. For it seems at least potentially significant that he has Socrates use different pairs of verbs for the normative and the pathological cases: When things (whether bodily or psychic) go well, he has Socrates say that the elements in question kratein kai krateisthai one another; but when things (again bodily or psychic) go wrong, he has Socrates say that the elements in question arkhein kai arkheisthai one another.

This shift in verbs, together with the anonymity of their respective subjects, epitomizes a fundamental difference between the models dominating Republic II-IV and those dominating Republic VIII-IX. The model of health invoked in Books II-IV is familiar from the Hippocratic corpus, where health tends to be identified with the proper blend (krasis) of various fluids or humors contained in the body. The elements involved here tend to be stuff-like and their names tend to function in mass-logical ways. As long as the proper blend is maintained, none of the humors is (individually) evident (phanera), though each contributes, in virtue of its characteristic powers, to the properties of the whole. But when the proper blend is disturbed and one or more of these humors is separated from the others (in a way likened to the curdling of milk by fig juice) then some humors -- no longer diluted, so to speak, by others -- begin to dominate, as a result of which disease and other pathological phenomena arise.

The idea that imbalances can lead to a kind of separation of some elements from others may indicate the kind of separation involved in political factionalism, a kind of separation that is not supposed to occur in a well-ordered state. But the sort of mastering and being mastered involved in the medical model -- on which the idea of justice as a kind of harmony is based -- is very different from the sort of ruling and being ruled involved in political models, where a separation of powers is required and one party rules over the others in the sense that it establishes laws or issues commands that the others are supposed to obey. The sort of mastering and being mastered involved in the medical and musical models do not require anything like the sort of separation of powers involved where one party issues commands or laws and then either persuades or forces the other party or parties to obey: Such mastering and being mastered involve rather something
like a mixture of stuffs, or of musical tones, standing in the right proportions to one another.

The difference between these models may help to explain the anonymity in [J] of the things said either to rule and be ruled, or to master and be mastered, by one another. Plato may leave the relata unspecified because he thinks that different kinds of things are related in the different cases -- not just in the bodily as distinct from the psychic cases, but also in the normative as distinct from the pathological cases of each of these (bodily and psychic) kinds. For we have seen evidence that Plato takes the epithumêtikon in a well-ordered soul to be something like a class of moderate and mostly necessary epithumiai, each doing its own job, while taking the epithumêtikon in (for example) an oligarchically constituted soul to be an organized unit on a par with a political faction, where different members hold (for example) different offices. And Plato may think it more apt to speak in the first sort of case of a mere genos (or eidos) of appetites, while speaking in the second sort of case of an appetitive meros of the soul. In other words, Plato may leave the relata in [J] anonymous because he lacks terms equally well suited not just to the bodily and the psychic cases, but also to the more or less ideal cases that Socrates has just been discussing and to the pathological cases to which Socrates now proposes to turn.31

If this is right, then treating Socrates’ talk of merê of soul not just as a political metaphor but as one associated with the sort of factions that should not exist in a well-ordered state allows us to explain the curious combination of [G] and [J]: It allows us to explain both why [G] is the first place where Socrates speaks explicitly of a meros of soul as such and why Socrates then in [J] (only a few lines later) abstains again from this language. But [J] alone arguably contains an important key to reading the Republic as a whole: For in saying that the elements of healthy bodies and souls kratein kai krateisthai one another, while saying that the elements of diseased bodies and souls arkhein kai arkhesthai one another, [J] points to a fundamental difference between Republic II-IV, where medical-cum-musical models are used to illuminate more or less well-ordered

31 Aristotle may make similar use of anonymity when he contrasts akratic subjects, who sometimes fail to draw from their beliefs conclusions they should draw, with virtuous subjects, who exhibit no such failure. See Pickavé and Whiting 2008, especially n. 41.
souls, and Republic VIII-IX, where governmental models are used to illuminate the various forms of corrupt souls that are “worth mentioning.”

5. The plausibility of a hybrid reading and Plato’s anarchic ideal

We are now in a position to see the plausibility of a hybrid reading, i.e., one according to which deflationists are more or less right about the appetitive part of the well-ordered souls discussed in Republic II-IV, while realists are more or less right about the appetitive parts of the various corrupt souls discussed in Republic VIII-IX. Some such hybrid would have many advantages. It would allow us not just to explain why intelligent commentators have lined up on both sides of the realist-deflationist dispute, but also to accommodate the good points made by each side. It would thus allow us to do greater justice to a wider range of passages than either an exclusively realist or an exclusively deflationist reading can do: For it would allow us to explain some of the apparent differences between the earlier and the later books without having either to discount significant portions of the latter (as deflationist readers often do) as largely metaphorical or to charge Plato with confusion (as realist readers sometimes do).

The ostensible advantages of a hybrid reading raise the question why its possibility has been hitherto ignored, even by a commentator astute enough to trip over it, not just once but twice. In a note in Plato’s Moral Theory, Irwin more or less concedes that “for the purposes of Book IV” a deflationist account will do. For he thinks both that Plato’s primary purpose in IV is to establish the possibility of akrasia and that all Plato needs for this purpose is “the claim that there are desires differing in kind in a way unrecognized by Socrates” (327). And Irwin calls attention in his main text to apparent differences between the division of soul in Republic IV and the division in Republic VIII-

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32 This and other page references in brackets are from Irwin 1977. Irwin’s concession may also rest to some extent rest on the thought that this claim is all that is actually warranted by the argument of Republic IV. For he points out that the Principle of Opposites (on which Book IV’s argument is generally agreed to turn) requires so many restrictions of scope that it is of little use to the argument and then claims that Plato should have moved directly to his argument about the three kinds of desire.
IX: He says explicitly that “it is not clear that [the parts in Books VIII-IX] are the same parts of the soul as the parts with the same names in Book IV” (227). But Irwin does not pause long enough to give serious consideration to the hybrid possibility. And what keeps him moving is pretty clearly the homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency. For his argument is explicitly aimed to show that the parts discussed in Books VIII-IX are in fact the same as the parts discussed in Book IV: The parts are simply put to different but “equally legitimate” uses in the two places (231).

Irwin trips again over hybrid possibilities in Plato’s Ethics. And here again the homogenizing conception keeps him up and running. Consider, for example, the following passage, where after laying out various possible conceptions of the relation between a person and the parts of her soul, Irwin seeks to determine “which one fits [Plato’s] remarks best”.

These difficulties about the role of the person in relation to the parts of his soul might be resolved in one of three ways:

(1) The reference to the person is not to be taken seriously: Plato he means only that the domination of one part is replaced by the domination of another.

(2) The reference to the person is to be taken seriously because Plato has a conception of the person as something beyond the three parts of soul.

(3) The reference to the person is to be taken seriously, but it refers to a special role of one (or more) of the three parts of the soul.

Admittedly, Plato may well fail to distinguish these answers, or he may shift confusedly from one to the other. Nevertheless, it is worth asking which one fits his remarks best.\(^{33}\)

Irwin argues (very roughly) that (1) does not do justice to the intentional sounding language of “handing over rule” etc., and that (2) involves the unacceptable idea of a mysterious self beyond the three parts. He concludes that it is (3) that best fits Plato’s various remarks -- and not just (3) but the version of (3) in which the person is identified in every case with the rational part of his soul. This requires Irwin to “modify” the

\(^{33}\) Irwin 1996, 285 and, for the next bit, 287 (my italics).
political analogy on Plato’s behalf by removing from the psychic side an important form of contingency found on the political side. But Irwin defends this modification by appeal to passages like [F] and [H].  

And he concludes as follows:

. . . Plato is not being careless in suggesting that the transition from one stage to another is a rational process involving the person who hands over control. If this is correct, then one aspect of the political analogy has to be modified when it is applied to the individual soul. In the sequence of political changes, one government is turned out and another is installed, and there is no single source of authority that consents to all the changes of the government. In the individual, however, Plato seems to intend the person to remain the permanent source of authority . . . (287)

But suppose for a moment that the texts do in fact portray Socrates shifting among Irwin’s three options. Why suppose that Plato’s portrayal rests on confusion? Why not take the political analogy at face value and ask how it might inform our reading of the psychic transitions?

For example, why not consider the possibility that Plato thinks the oligarchic character’s transition to a democratic condition is different in kind from -- perhaps less rational and orderly than -- the aristocratic character’s transition to an oligarchic condition? For Plato may well have introduced the political analogy partly in order to call attention to the diversity of forms of transfer of psychic power: He may have wanted readers to recognize the psychic analogues not only of orderly succession but also of anarchic rebellion and tyrannical backlash. And even if we accept Irwin’s basic arguments for (3), why accept the version of (3) that takes the special role to be played in

\[34\] Irwin’s appeal to [H] is especially precarious, for it is difficult to see the person himself \((qua\ identified\ with\ his\ rational\ part)\) as actively involved in the sorts of change described there. Irwin’s appeal to the final lines ("if he’s lucky . . .") is also weak (285), since the text surely portrays a kind of a coup d’etat in which appetite rather than reason ends up in office. But from the fact that a ruler lucky enough to be reinstated can later be said to make certain decisions, it does not follow that he himself endorsed the steps leading to his initial demise. In general, Irwin’s use of the intentional sounding language of “handing over rule” etc. in support of taking the relevant processes to have “psychological reality” seems misguided: For [H] clearly fingers the sort of subpersonal mechanisms that Irwin’s talk of “psychological reality” seems aimed to rule out.
every case by the rational part? Is it not part of the manifest content of Books VIII-IX that different parts rule in different sorts of characters?

Irwin may eschew a hybrid version of (3) because he worries that taking a choice made by any one of the three (realistically conceived) parts to count as the person’s choice will return us to (1), according to which the reference to the person is not to be taken seriously and it is the parts themselves that do all the work. But this would be the case only if Plato rejected a form of contingency in which (a) different parts govern the souls of different characters and (b) only a choice stemming from the part that actually governs a given soul counts as the choice of the person whose soul it is. For if Plato accepted such contingency, he could allow that a timocratic person, for example, occasionally acts against her governing thumos because she is overwhelmed by some especially strong appetite. This would be a form of akrasia in which the timocrat acts against her (admittedly corrupt) decision and so does not identify with whatever leads her to act in the way that she identifies with her decisions (however corrupt they may be). But there is plenty of room left here for the sort of principled adherence to appetite required if Plato is to distinguish the various forms of vice “worth mentioning” from mere akrasia.

This somewhat Aristotelian way of putting the point reveals the plausibility of a version of (3) that allows different parts of soul to play the special role in different characters without however collapsing into (1). On this sort of view, what distinguishes vicious souls in general from more or less ideal souls (including akratic ones) is that vicious souls harbor faction-like parts of a sort that should no more exist in a well-ordered soul than political factions should exist in a well-ordered state; and what distinguishes the different forms of vice from one another is which faction-like part rules in each case and how that part is actually organized. The thumoeidos will rule the soul of a timocratic character, while the epithumêtikon will rule the souls of oligarchic, democratic and tyrannical characters; and the latter will differ from one another insofar as the epithumêtikon of each will be organized according to different principles or “platforms”.

In sum, I see no reason to start modifying the political analogy on Plato’s behalf -- or charging Plato with other forms of confusion -- until hybrid readings have been ruled
out. For the hybrid territory remains at this point largely unexplored: Deflationist readers, taking the path of least resistance, have floated past the Republic’s jungle of metaphor and image, while realist readers, powered by the homogenizing conception of what is required for consistency, have simply tunneled through. What we need is an all-terrain method, one equipped to deal not only with the arguments -- which analytically inclined readers of both realist and deflationist stripes have tended to privilege -- but also with the metaphors and images that frame the arguments, casting light here and shadows there.

It is important, in exploring this territory, to keep in mind that Socrates does not represent ruling as the true ideal, either for the rulers in any given state or for the logistikon in any given individual. It is not just that he makes it clear Books V-VII that the best activity of which the logistikon is capable is philosophizing, and that having to rule interferes with this activity -- which means the rulers in any given state, no matter how much they happen to like ruling, could be doing something better instead. Even in Book IV, Socrates represents ruling as less than ideal: he says not only that with proper education and upbringing men do not need to be ruled (423e--424a), but also that it is not worthy (ouk axion) to give commands to men who are fine and good (425d7-e2). And the psychic corollaries are clear: Moderate appetites do not need to be ruled and there is in fact something unworthy about commanding them, perhaps because the commander could be doing something better instead.

I think it significant that Socrates goes on to describe legislators in badly constituted states as constantly passing and then amending legislation without realizing that this is like cutting off the head of a Hydra (426e). For this surely anticipates the famous image at the end of Republic IX. Socrates thus hints, even in Book IV, that the true ideal is ultimately anarchic and that the need for ruling and being ruled is already problematic. And taking the ideal to be anarchic helps to explain the fundamental differences there seem to be between the medical and musical models (with their talk of kratein kai krateisthai) that dominate the discussion of well-ordered souls in Books II-IV, and the political models (with their talk of arkhein kai arkhesthai) that dominate the discussion of corrupt souls in Books VIII-IX. These models are no doubt metaphorical, but that does not make them mere literary embellishment: They are the models or
metaphors around which Plato chose to organize the Republic. We should thus be reading the Republic’s arguments by their (arguably different) lights.

6. Postscript: the Phaedo revisited

Suppose then that the Republic allows for -- as one among other possibilities -- a character whose spirited and other partly reason-responsive tendencies have been thoroughly assimilated to reason and whose appetites are a mere collection of various individual appetites, each necessary and moderate and tending its own business. Although such a character has appetites, his soul lacks an appetitive meros. But what about these appetites? Do they belong to his soul or not? If not, is his soul exhausted by his logistikon?

Here it is worth recalling something Socrates says at Phaedo 83d:

. . . every pleasure and every pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and to weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal, so that it believes the truth is what the body says it is.

Socrates’ idea, I think, is that the relevant pleasures and pains, together with the sorts of desires with which they are associated, belong to the soul only if the soul itself comes to believe that their causes (in the case of pleasures and pains) and their objects (in the case of desires) are in fact the way the body presents them as being -- that is, only if the soul itself comes to believe that these things are in fact good and so to be pursued, or in fact bad and so to be avoided. As long as the soul dissociates from the body in the sense that the soul is not tempted to accept the appearances presented by the body, these appearances, together with the desires, pleasures and pains that are consequent upon them, will belong strictly speaking to the body. But when the soul is tempted to believe that what the body says is true, the soul comes under the sort of pressure that can lead it, so to speak, to crack. For, as we have seen, the logistikon is not -- indeed cannot be -- a mere collection of beliefs: The beliefs of any given logistikon must for the most part
cohere with one another. So beliefs introduced by the body that are incompatible with those already settled in one’s *logistikon* must either displace those already settled there or settle elsewhere. When displacement occurs, the *logistikon* is simply corrupted; but when they settle elsewhere, the soul comes to have faction-like parts of a sort the soul should not, ideally speaking, have.

In other words, Plato may think that a subject’s failure to dissociate fully from what her body presents as true is partly responsible for the sort of psychic partition of which the *Republic*-Socrates speaks. In cases where the subject comes to believe that what the body says is true, she (or her soul) must either lose any resident beliefs incompatible with what the body tells it or suffer some sort of division within itself, the very sort of division that might lead Plato to speak of the soul itself as having parts. If this is right, then the conflicts of which the *Republic*-Socrates speaks are not mere *evidence* of psychic partition but rather partly *constitutive* of it: The soul of a subject who suffered no such conflict would suffer no such division. What I have been suggesting here is that Plato may treat the soul of the true philosopher -- of whom his paradigm is Socrates -- as differing radically, albeit contingently, from the three (or more) parted souls of most folk. For as we learn from Alcibiades, towards the end of Plato’s *Symposium*, Socrates is radically dissociated from his body. He thus approximates the *Republic* ideal: Socrates has become “entirely one, moderate and harmonious”.

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