

“Spirit” in Plato: Hearing Reason and Loving Honor

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WORK IN PROGRESS

1

It isn't hard to appreciate the intuitive appeal of Plato's distinction in the *Republic* between *appetite* and *reason*. Desires like thirst, hunger and sexual lust sometimes appear to move us in ways at odds with (or indifferent to) our reasoned decisions about what's best for us. And this at least suggests a distinction between two types of motivation and their sources.

However, Plato also purports to discern an additional “part of the soul”—‘spirit’ (*thumoeides*)—whose paradigmatic activity is anger (436a, 439e, 440a, 440c, 441b-c). That anger plausibly illustrates a *third* special category and source of motivation is not nearly so evident. Why should we count anger the product of something other than reason or appetite, as Plato conceives of these? Anger may indeed appear to us as some unreasoning force, and thus outside of reason. But then why not put it with thirst, among the *appetites*? Maybe one will reply that anger is no mere appetite, because we are angry only to the extent that we judge something important to us for certain reasons. But in that case why not see anger as somehow *reason*-based? Or perhaps, dissatisfied with either of these options, we may conclude anger is just some peculiar amalgam, and forms no distinct motivational kind. And if it is unclear that it does, the distinctness of spirit and reason is in doubt.

A related problem concerns spirit's *scope*: does it motivate us in any way *other* than through anger? Plato does describe spirit as what can make one resolute, fearless, and indomitable, and as what makes those in whom it rules lovers of victory and honor (548c6-7, 581a9-b3). So we may well think it *should* be more than merely the anger-feeling part of us. But it remains very unclear just what, if anything, distinguishes spirited motivations as a class.

All this can make us worry no full, coherent account of Plato's *thumos* can be given. Some will suspect that it is simply an artifact of his need to find a tripartite structure in the soul answering to his city's three social classes.¹ I will argue here that Plato's implicit notion of *thumos* is no such flimsy contrivance, but reflects genuine psychological insight. A number of writers on Plato would agree. But I believe my defense is novel, and it makes good sense of Plato's argument, while offering something new of relevance to contemporary moral psychology.

Many of the difficulties in situating a general category of *emotions* within the field of mental phenomena parallel challenges for understanding Plato's notion of spirit and its place within the soul. I would maintain my reconstruction of Plato's argument

uncovers a plausible view about what's shared by much of what we call emotion and how it functions in human psychology. Recent writers in a number of fields have argued that emotion plays a crucial positive role in decision-making—in opposition to a long intellectual lineage that sees it as a prime source of suffering and moral error.² One will likely see Plato, who so (in)famously glorifies the life of reason, heading that tradition.³ However, implicit in his notion of spirit is a way of seeing emotion as potentially beneficial that still has not received due recognition, and merits continued interest.

2

My account here relies partly on my interpretation of Plato's argument dividing reason and appetite, developed elsewhere.⁴ I need, therefore, to start by referring back briefly to two of central features of that prior account. The first concerns a standard objection to Plato's claim that conflicting motivations have distinct sources in the soul. To argue for a split in the soul, Plato appeals to a principle of opposition, which says that two opposed desires cannot be had in the very same part of one's soul. But the fact that two desires cannot be jointly *satisfied* does not logically rule out one's *having* them both at the same time. Why should it rule out having them in the same part of oneself? I have argued that Plato sees active desires as self-directed mental commands of some sort. So: thirst for something is a mental command to oneself to drink it, and the reasoned desire to refrain is a mental command *not* to drink that very thing. And if these orders simultaneously issued from the very same internal source, then they would form a single conjunctive order both to drink and not to drink it at the same time. But that is not a coherent command—it cannot be obeyed, and so cannot motivate. Therefore such incompatible commands (such conflicting active desires) must issue from *distinct* parts of the soul.

While much of the interest of Plato's distinction among three *types of motivation* does not, I believe, depend on this notion that desires are internal imperatives of some sort, his argument that the *sources* of the three types of desire lie in distinct soul-parts does need it. Thus, in reconstructing Plato's argument for the distinctness of spirit from reason and appetite, I will need to employ this mental command model of motivation—but I should stress that my ultimate interest lies in what he has to tell us about the taxonomy of desire.

The second relevant aspect of my earlier account concerns how desires of reason and desires of appetite differ in kind. On my interpretation, desires of reason are essentially those one has for what one thinks best *because one thinks it best*, on the *whole*, for certain *reasons*. Appetitive desires, on the other hand, are *sensory* and *non-evaluative*—that is, they are desires for sensory gratification whose possession does not presuppose that the possessor believe their satisfaction is good.⁵

Against the background of this conception of reason and appetite, I will offer an account of spirit that depends on developing two crucial points. First, the motives of spirit differ from desires of reason in this respect: the former (unlike the latter) need not

incorporate the belief that what would satisfy them is best for one on the whole. They need not—in their most primitive forms—include any *evaluative* conception at all. Nonetheless, spirited desires differ from appetites such as hunger, thirst, and lust. For the arousal and diminishment of spirited desires like anger can be directly *responsive* to one's values in a way never found in appetites. This is what makes spirit, as Plato says, the “natural helper” of reason. Working with these two ideas, we can, I will argue, dispel a number of doubts about the viability of Plato's notion of *thumos*, and broaden its role beyond mere anger-generation, so as to suggest a reasonable account of how spirit drives the love of honor. But to explain these points, I need to show how they emerge in response to problems that arise for Plato's argument.

To set the stage, let's sketch its core reasoning. First: Plato maintains spirit is distinct from appetite on the grounds that anger can oppose appetitive desires—a point he supports with the curious story of Leontius, who one day got angry with himself for wanting to stare at some corpses he came across while wandering by the city walls. This put anger at odds with *appetite*, for his impulse to look was (at least on one now common interpretation⁶) essentially lustful: the sight of pale naked bodies was to him sexually exciting. (439e-440a). If anger can in this way oppose appetite, then that with which anger is felt—*thumos*—is not just the same as that in the soul with which appetites are felt—*epithumetikon*. Further, Plato maintains, spirit is distinct from reason. *That* is clear, first, because we (as children) and other creatures (throughout their lives) can have strong, active spirited desires even when incapable of reasoned judgment about what is best for us on the whole (441a-b). Second, when we do become capable of such desires of reason, these sometimes oppose our spirit. This is illustrated with an allusion to Homer. Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, insulted by the maids of his household, watches as they salaciously carry on with insolent men who drain his wealth and want his wife. He feels an angry urge to strike out violently then and there—but exhorts himself to refrain and endure (441b). Thus Plato argues that angry spirit can *preexist* desires of reason (as in children and animals), and *conflict* with it in mature adults (as in Odysseus), only if that with which we feel anger differs from that with which we form desires of reason. In sum: spirit is not only distinct from appetite (the lesson of Leontius)—it is (as we learn from babies, dogs and Odysseus) distinct from reason as well. This, in bare outline, is Plato's core argument for the distinctiveness of spirit. Now let's look at some of its problems.

3

One may doubt how well Plato establishes the split between reason and spirit, if one takes the view that anger and other emotions consist in appraisals, or value judgments—somewhat along the following lines.⁷ When we get angry, this involves a judgment that something *bad* has been done, and that retaliation for it would be *good*. It is a mistake to consider anger some mere bodily sensation or physiological state of arousal or agitation—a “boiling feeling” say. Such feelings are a merely contingent and variable accompaniment of anger—they form no part of anger itself. Anger is essentially

and entirely a *cognitive-evaluative* state.⁸

Such an account of anger would banish Plato's rationale for keeping anger out of reason, and so undermine his basis for distinguishing reason and spirit. To see this, consider again Odysseus' state of mind while Penelope's attendants are enjoying themselves with the suitors. If anger consists in an evaluative judgment, cases like Odysseus' appear not to present us with a true *opposition between desires* at all—and thus give us no reason to divide the soul. For then, Odysseus' initial anger will consist in his judging that it is best for him to kill now, or else at least, that killing the maids now would be a pretty good thing to do. But in that case, when he realizes that it is *best not to do this* (since this would spoil his plans to reclaim his position in Ithaca), he does not form a desire that comes to stand in conflict with his initial anger. Rather, he merely *changes his mind* about what it would be best to do on the whole (which clearly involves no conflicting simultaneous desires). Or else he adds to his earlier evaluative belief that it would be very *good to kill* now, the belief that, on the whole it would *best not* to do so. And it seems he could hold the former evaluative belief without actively desiring anything in *conflict* with reason's injunction to desist.

Also, if such a view of Odysseus' anger prevails, we cannot hope to make the case for spirit's separateness just by appeal to the irascibility of dogs and children. For then we may say either: they have only a sort of sensory agitation that often accompanies, but is insufficient (and unnecessary) for true anger; or else, if they do have the genuine article, they must also make judgments of value. And such judgments, while perhaps short of the "on the whole" rational appraisals of which adult humans are capable, have their source in that part corresponding to what, in us normal human adults, has such capacity—namely, reason. Thus, to defend Plato's separation of anger from desires of reason, we need to see why we should say that anger enjoys a certain independence from evaluative judgment.

The following three considerations seem to me persuasive. First, while we cannot easily resolve questions about infantile or canine psychology, it seems reasonable to say that babies and dogs literally get angry: the wailing red-faced baby yanked from the breast and the frenzied dog robbed of his bone have become *enraged*. This does not for a moment strike us as simply *metaphorical* rage (a "raging storm"). For it has to do with what they *feel*—feelings that include a way of experiencing one's own body. Now the way it feels to be angry can indeed vary considerably. And it seems right to say sometimes people are angry (when they are just thinking *angry thoughts*) without this manifesting itself in somatic experience at all. Still, where bodily feelings *are* present (as they often are) it may be correct to think of one's episode of anger on that occasion as consisting either wholly or in part of such feelings. However, this is *not* to say anger has no "intentionality" or is "non-cognitive." We may say that such feelings count as feelings of *anger* only insofar as they express or manifest a desire directed outward—say, a desire for damage to some perceived source of frustration—hence something "cognitive" and "intentional." Still, it is consistent with this to deny that some distinctively *evaluative* concept must be deployed, if one is to feel anger. An instance of anger could

be non-evaluative without being non-intentional.

Second, there is indeed reason to doubt that babies and dogs entertain even a rudimentary conception of their own good. For what is needed to reveal that one has at work in one's life a *conception of value*—and not simply *nonevaluative* (but sometimes nevertheless) *beneficial desires*, of varying motivational force? For this, it seems crucial to find either some evidence of *conflict*, or at least of the *recognition of a potential conflict*, between what is required by one's conception of one's own good and what the satisfaction of desires demands. Such evidence seems to be missing in the case of dogs and young children. Maybe this reason for doubt would not seem very strong, if we could take it seriously only by embracing some wholly non-cognitive “brute bodily sensation” conception of anger. But, as we've seen, this is not the only option. Thus, we can reasonably defend the view that anger can arise without evaluative judgment, and does so in young children and non-human animals.⁹

Third, if one says anger consists entirely in some judgment or appraisal of value, one would fail to recognize certain real internal conflicts between anger and reason's desire. For it seems right to distinguish:

(a) *Non-conflictual* cases, where I merely think it would be *good* for me to do something now, which I also think that (as things are) it is *best* for me *not* to do now; and

(b) *Conflictual* cases where I indeed angrily desire to do something I simultaneously think it best *not* to do.

Consider: I may think it would be good (maybe even very good) for me to attend a certain meeting at work, but then something comes up—a family emergency, say—that makes it clear to me that it would be best *not* to do so. I still think it would be good to go to the meeting (other things being equal), but I may not be the least bit *angry* about missing it (I might even feel somewhat relieved about *that*), and I may then experience no *conflict of desires*. On the other hand, suppose I am very much looking forward to (and I think it would be very good thing for me to spend) a relaxing weekend off, but at the last minute I decide to spend it at work, since I am suddenly given some task that I must finish by Monday, or else risk losing my job. I might very well be angry. And what anger then desires (tell the boss to drop dead) may be in sharp conflict with what reasons says is best, on the whole, in the long run. It is hard to see how we can preserve the distinction between the (a) type case (where there is no reason-anger conflict) and the (b) type (where there is), if we try to make anger entirely into a judgment of value.¹⁰

This should be pursued in more detail. But we can now see it is feasible and desirable to construe Plato's *thumos* argument so that anger neither consists in nor even generally requires evaluative judgment. This does not ask us to assume that Odysseus' suppressed rage is indistinguishable from the anger of a child whose toy has

been snatched. We may recognize that Odysseus feels anger because of his beliefs about the respect due him, and about his loss of goodness should he accept the status of a ridiculed beggar. We may even hold that such value-laden judgments, or his propensity to make them, are strictly necessary to his anger then being directed as it is on this occasion. Still, we may also say that his anger does not entirely consist in beliefs about what is good or bad for him. His anger is also a genuine and active desire, likely manifest somehow in bodily feeling, a strong desire to destroy or damage a source of his frustration. Further: a desire of *that* sort, shown in feeling, is sufficient for anger, and was available to Odysseus as a toddler, before he developed any conception of his own good. Thus anger is a type of desire that can occur in the absence of a developed capacity for evaluative judgment, but it is also, in some special way, liable to be formed by one's conception of value, when this does arise. Given such an understanding of Odysseus' state, we are free to see him as in the grips, if only briefly, of a genuine conflict of active desires. And the Homeric episode again becomes a credible example of a type of soul-splitting internal motivational conflict, such as we can readily find elsewhere in life and literature.

This conception of anger's characteristic relation to evaluative thought, and its importance in making sense of Plato's notion of *thumos*, will become clearer when we turn from spirit-*reason* division to problems in the spirit-*appetite* division. These problems are pressing anyway, if we hold that anger can be non-evaluative, and is often manifest in sensory experience and desires relating to it. For the concern then arises: even if anger is not absorbed into reason, it is lost in appetite.

4

Let's now examine more closely Plato's separation of spirit and appetite. At its heart lies the story of Leontius. His anger includes a desire—a mental command—not to look at the bodies that nonetheless he lusts to gaze upon. And if one has the appetitive desire to F, and the spirited desire not to F, then that in the soul with which one actively desires to F (appetite) must be distinct from that with one actively desires not to F (spirit). Otherwise, we will be left, absurdly, trying to conceive of Leontius' motivational state in terms of a single internal command to look and not look.

But the most the argument shows is that there is a part of the soul—an angry, spirited part—distinct from that with which one feels *some* appetitive desire (a lustful compulsion to look). And Plato needs to show not just that some anger-feeling part is distinct from *some* appetitive part. He needs to maintain that some such spirited part is distinct from *any* appetitive part. The Leontius story alone cannot secure this, if our interpretation of Plato assumes—as does mine—that appetite can have distinct motivationally functional parts within it. For the story fails to show that Leontius' anger-feeling part does not feel some *other* appetitive desire, to which his anger is unopposed. And Plato *needs* to deny that every spirited part is identical with some appetitive part. For his conception of justice requires that spirit and appetite each does its own proper

work, and not the work of the other. But if every anger-feeling part does double duty as an appetite-generator, then whenever spirit gets angry it will also be correct to say *appetite* is getting angry. And if it is not possible for spirit to avoid also doing the work of appetite, it will be impossible for the soul to be just.

Plato could fill this gap in the argument, if he could maintain that there is something that anger can do that no *appetite*-feeling part of the soul *could* do. A hint in this direction is offered by the notion that spirit “allies” with and “obeys” reason in opposition to the appetites. Of a man’s angry spirit, outraged by what he takes to be an injustice, Plato asks: “Won’t it endure hunger, cold, and the like, and keep on till it is victorious, not ceasing from noble actions until it either wins, dies, or calms down, called to heel by the reason within him...?” (440c7-d2) In order to obtain justice, a man may, for any given appetitive desires he has at the time, think it best to do other than what their satisfaction demands, and his anger may join his reason here, to motivate him to deny satisfaction to *all* of his appetites—thirst, hunger, lust, desire for warmth, etc. For the indignant man’s angry spirit can even make him willing to face death. Thus, when reason commands that the satisfaction of all one’s appetites be denied, that part of one’s soul capable of generating anger can also issue an order (an angry desire) opposed to their satisfaction. The anger-feeling part then, is one that by nature can join reason to oppose all appetites. Then the argument could go: If every anger-feeling part also produced some appetitive desire, there would always be at least one appetitive desire that one’s anger could not oppose. But this isn’t so: anger can oppose them all, when one is sufficiently outraged at an injustice. Therefore, not every anger-feeling part can feel appetite—anger stands apart from appetite.

This begins to focus us on something that will prove central: the special “alliance” spirit forms with reason. Still, the division of spirit and appetite is not ready to go through. We can agree that anger distinguishes itself from all appetites in virtue of its potential to ally with reason against them all, only if it is clear that anger is not *itself* a kind of appetitive desire. But why not instead suppose that with which one feels anger is simply one of the heads of the “multiform” beast of appetite (580b11, 588b10-589b6)—albeit one perhaps capable of snapping at all the others when reason requires their suppression?

One place to look for an answer: Plato makes it clear, both in the indignant fury case just mentioned, and in the Leontius case, that spirit sometimes “allies” with reason against appetite. And he also has Socrates assert, “I don’t think you can say you’ve ever seen spirit...ally itself with an appetite to do what reason has decided must not be done” (440b). Perhaps then what distinguishes spirit from appetite is that spirited motives either ally with *reason’s* desires when these oppose appetites, or else ally with *neither* appetite *nor* reason. We might see this also in the claim a little later (441a) that spirit is “...by nature the helper of the rational part, unless it has been corrupted by a bad upbringing.” So maybe: spirited desires are not appetites because a spirited desire is by nature either neutral in reason-appetite conflicts, or it sides with reason; and the same is never true of an appetite—no appetite is such as to be either neutral in such a

conflict, or on reason's side.

Against this, it may seem that in some cases anger does demand the satisfaction of appetite against reason's counsel. But I will not explore this, since, even if Socrates' claim is defensible, the basic problem remains unsolved, and we have to look elsewhere for an answer. For what, in any case, could it mean to say appetite is never neutral and never sides with reason in reason-appetite conflicts? It might mean just that an appetite can never be neutral towards or in a conflict with appetite as a whole—for, if that were true (since it is also an appetite) it would then have to be indifferent to its *own* satisfaction, or desire its own frustration. But it is not yet clear why this point could not apply equally well to any paradigmatic *spirited* desire. So this will not by itself suffice to tell us what makes anger, for example, spirited, not appetitive. Perhaps we should say this: while an appetite might be neutral with respect to the satisfaction of some *other* appetites in conflict with reason, it can never move us to act *against* other appetites, in accordance with reason's command. And spirit (through anger) can move us to act with reason, against other appetitive motives.

But Plato himself appears to give us reason to reject this suggestion. For his portrait of the oligarchic personality seems to imply that some appetites—the “necessary ones”—*can* join with reason against extravagant and unlawful appetites (553b7-554-e1). However, perhaps we should avoid describing this as a case of appetites “allying” with reason against other appetites. We may suggest: for it to be true that an appetite naturally “allies” with or “helps” reason as anger can, it would not be enough that it seems to demand frustration of some *other* appetite that reason repudiates. Plato says that in the soul of the oligarchic man reason and necessary appetite together check the extravagant appetites, not through his “persuading” himself, and arguing that it’s “better not to”—rather the unnecessary appetites are controlled through “compulsion” and “fear.” Spirit, by contrast “listens to” and “heeds” reason (as a good dog does its master’s command (440d)), without the use of force or fear—since none is needed to secure assistance from a “natural” helper or ally. Here we have hit on something that is indeed critical to Plato’s argument: this contrast between force or compulsion on the one hand, and listening or persuasion, on the other. But to make use of this point, we must look for a finer—and less metaphorical—understanding of how it might explain the sense in which spirited desires are reason’s *natural allies*, as appetites are not.

5

Plato’s claim that spirit is “*by nature the helper of reason, unless corrupted by a bad upbringing*” (441a2-3) has now emerged as key. Spirit is neither reason nor appetite, since, while it precedes and can oppose reason, it is naturally educable into responding to reason against appetite, as no appetite is. But again, just what makes spirit’s capacity to align with reason’s commands unlike appetite’s? So far we have found a clue in the idea that, while reason may force the compliance of appetite, spirit

alone can *listen* to reason.

It adds some support to the thought that this contrast plays an important part in Plato's theory of motivation to see something similar at work in the tripartite psychology of the *Phaedrus*. There the soul is likened to a winged chariot, and its three parts are like the charioteer and the two horses he drives—one, a dark horse (“a companion to wild boasts and indecency” who, at the sight of a beloved beautiful boy, tries to make the others “go up to [him] and suggest ... the pleasures of sex” (253e, 254b)), and the other, a white horse (“a lover of honor with modesty and self-control, companion to true glory,” who at the sight of the boy feels “shame and awe” (253d, 254c)). Plato says the white, honor-loving horse is “guided by verbal commands alone” from the charioteer, while the dark lascivious horse is “deaf as a post, and just barely yields to the horsewhip and goad combined” (253e). Here again we have a contrast between two ways of responding to reason's bidding—each belonging to a different part of the soul. On the one hand, we have that part of the soul that loves honor (represented by the white horse) whose power is directly responsive to reason's command, while on the other we have the soul part that harbors sensual lust (whose image is the deaf, dark horse), by nature responsive to reason's use of force, but unresponsive (“deaf”) to reason's directives. I do not wish to worry about whether the light and dark horses of the *Phaedrus* soul exactly match spirit and appetite in the psychology of the *Republic*. I only want to make enough use of the parallel to see the “persuasion versus force” contrast as marking, for Plato, an important distinction between different ways reason relates to the rest of the soul, one which will help illuminate and justify his division of appetite and spirit.

The challenge now is to distinguish spirit's way of heeding reason from appetite's forced response, in some manner that puts no little agents or homunculi (or little horses or dogs, for that matter) into the soul, to serve as objects of persuasion or compulsion. Since Plato provides us only with a sketchy and figurative way of describing this relationship, I suggest we now ask ourselves this. Can we find in our experience of individual human motivation something fairly plausibly regarded as a literal analogue of Plato's persuasion/force contrast, which will fill the crucial gap in his argument?

If we look for a sense in which reason could be said to use force with appetite, we may think first of cases where we would say that the greater strength of desires of reason enabled them to “overpower” the influence of contrary appetites. What is it for one desire to overpower another? I assume that just as it makes sense to say that, when one is *thirstier* now than one was earlier, one's desire for drink is *stronger* now than it was earlier (and thus will have a greater influence on action, other things being equal), so it makes sense to compare *strength of desires* generally. And if two desires are in conflict, and one motivates rather than the other on account of its greater strength, we may say the one overpowers the other. Now, the strength of your desires of *reason*, unlike the strength of your appetites, is a function of how good you judge their satisfaction to be for you. If you think both x and y would be good for you, but x even better than y, your rational desire for x is stronger than that for y). We may also

talk about the strength of a *spirited* desire like anger (one is *angrier* on one occasion than another), where again the strength of such desires (like appetites) can vary independently of any corresponding comparative evaluative appraisal of their satisfaction. Nevertheless, we can compare the strength of different types of desires. Your thirst can be stronger than your desire for rest, your anger weaker than your thirst, and your desire for what you deem best because you deem it best stronger than your thirst. A case of this last sort, where despite one's thirst, one acts on a desire of reason not to drink, we can thus sensibly classify as a case where reason overcomes appetite "by force," since simply on account of its greater initial strength, reason moves one, against appetite's influence.

But reason can overcome appetite by force in less direct ways. For, judging it best not to do as appetite wants, one may decide on some action that, in turn, weakens one's appetite so that one's desire of reason is ultimately stronger. Thus the alcoholic, the compulsive eater, the smoker, or the child molester, may, either by deliberately habituating themselves to the absence of objects of their pernicious desires, or by subjecting themselves to operations or drugs, eventually so weaken (if not eliminate) their appetites for what they have judged it bad for them to obtain, that their reason's desire is in the end stronger than, and prevails over, their appetitive craving.

A related way in which reason can "force" appetite into line is this. I may treat myself in a way that recalls Plato's image in the *Phaedrus*: much as the charioteer keeps the bad horse from pulling everyone down, by using its desire to avoid the whip, so I may prevent my acting on some appetite by deciding to punish myself should I do so. For example, I might resolve that I must "pay for" every dessert I consume with a painful (to me) morning run. Here my rational consideration of what is best for me brings me to decide that it is best for me not to satisfy some appetite I have, and then, to help prevent myself from acting on it, I hold the satisfaction of some *further* appetite hostage to the frustration of the first. That is, I decide that, if I do act on the first appetite, I will frustrate the second, and thus the strength of the second helps motivate me away from satisfying the first, devalued appetite. This strategy for self-control of appetite works, if it does, only on account of the strength of (e.g.) my appetitive aversion to early morning exercise, and my belief in my own "threat"—my belief that if my appetite for sweets is indulged, my appetite for a restful and relatively pain-free morning will be frustrated.

All three of these ways in which reason's desire may influence appetite are plausibly viewed as amounting to the use of *force*. The first—"overpowering"—(where reason's desire, by its greater initial strength, cancels an appetite's effect) corresponds to a case where one person prevents another from acting by means of greater bodily strength. The second, where reason decides on some action that weakens appetite, seems to correspond to the case where one agent prevails over another through the use of some incapacitating weapon—again, intuitively, a use of force. The third case, where reason controls the expression of one appetite by making its satisfaction contingent on the frustration of another, aversive one, corresponds to the use of threat or blackmail—which, in a broad sense, counts as force or compulsion. At any rate, it is

apparently one of the types of motivation Plato had in mind when speaking of how reason controls appetite in the “oligarchic” soul. For there, it seems, reason keeps the influence of extravagant appetites in check, only by making one believe their indulgence will render insecure the satisfaction of the other (necessary) appetites.

Now we have some literal interpretation of the idea that reason can control appetite “by force.” But what might it mean, by contrast, for reason to move spirit “by persuasion”? Well, when you persuade *people*, not only do you influence them without the use of force, you also (on the positive side) secure compliance at least partly through the content of your speech—through what you say, and the reasons you offer for the truth of what you say. Given this, we might say that anger “listens to” reason, when reason’s evaluative judgment or belief affects anger—not in any of the ways in which we have seen reason “force” appetite into line—but somehow, crucially, on account of the *evaluative content of the judgment or belief*. Anger will be “listening” to or “persuaded” by reason’s evaluative judgment, only if the influence is due specifically to the fact that one thinks something *good* or *bad*, and not to some other aspect of the thought, or its effects.

Does something of this sort actually happen with anger? Think of a time when you believe you have been treated unjustly or without due consideration, and this makes you angry. Thinking about the wrong done you, you can get angry, without your having to do anything else that makes you angry. You become angry, apparently, only because you think it is *worse* for you to be thus treated than the alternative; it would have been *better* if you had been *differently* treated, you think. If you *hadn’t* thought this, you *wouldn’t* have been angry. (And if, on the contrary, you had thought that you were in the *wrong*, and being *justly* punished for some crime, and if you had thought this just action *best*, you wouldn’t have been angry at those who treated you this way, even if the punishment involved considerable frustration of your appetitive desires. (This seems to be the very sort of case, already mentioned, which Plato discusses at 440c1-5.) So here we seem to have the kind of sensitivity to considerations of value that would mark a *listening*, and not merely *forced* response to reason. For in such cases, evaluative judgment does not force anger in any of the ways canvassed (by overpowering; by debilitating instruments; by “threats”). Rather, it is the thought about injustice, and its *badness*, its (*dis*)*value* for you, that is critical to your anger.

This may allow us to draw a contrast between reason’s use of force with appetite, and anger’s listening to reason. But it is not yet clear whether this suffices to distinguish anger from the appetites generally. Consider again the third sort of compulsion reason may use with appetite—where I generate a desire not to eat something by linking it to my aversion to something painful. Here perhaps I “force myself” not to eat. But what about cases where reason *rewards* rather than *punishes*? Suppose I tell myself I will let myself have the cake that I crave, provided that I also frustrate my desire for the martini I want—in effect, rewarding myself for an abstinence with an indulgence. When I motivate myself away from acting on a given appetite, by offering myself something else I appetitively desire (as opposed to threatening myself with something I do not want), it

hardly seems right to speak of “compulsion” or the “use of force.” This is less like the use of threats and more like bribery, and one cannot say one is forced by a bribe. How is this any different from *anger’s* “unforced” alliance with reason?

It seems that there is a difference. Even if reason’s “bargaining” with appetite in this way does not constitute the use of force, it may be distinguished from the kind of “persuasion” to which anger is susceptible. For if bribery is not compulsion, neither does it seem quite right to say (except jokingly) that it is *persuasion*. Notice: when, as in the example, I motivate my abstinence from drink by making use of my desire for cake, the *evaluative content* of reason’s judgment is, in a way, *incidental* to the efficacy of the motivational mechanism employed. What is crucial to getting me to want not to take the drink is that I secure the belief that I will lose the cake if I get the drink. This is what “does the work” in getting appetite to do as reason wants—the instrument reason employs. But then the thought that it is *better* for me to have the cake than the martini is, in a way, not completely necessary: *however* I get myself to believe (or just come to believe) that I must frustrate the desire for drink to satisfy the desire for food, this would be equally effective in harnessing appetite’s energies toward the cake and away from the cocktail, whether or not it involves some judgment about what is best for me overall. That is to say: here reason’s evaluative judgment employs a psychological mechanism that can work on appetite just as effectively in the absence of evaluative judgment. Thus the means by which reason’s value impinges on appetite does not depend on appetite’s sensitivity to considerations of value. (To revert to Plato’s image: the dark horse is no less *deaf* in response to the carrot than to the stick.)

Now note: the response of *anger* to reason that we have brought to our attention is not like this. It is *not* mediated by some means reason may employ to affect desire that would work equally well, regardless of whether it is motivated by evaluative judgment. My recognition of the badness of my offender’s transgression against me, which accounts for my angry desire to harm him, is not linked to this anger by decision via some value-neutral mechanism that could secure the result in the absence of that recognition. The value-consideration is in this way indispensable or essential to my anger’s arousal.

So, to say that appetite cannot be persuaded by evaluating reason, as anger can, means, for example, that you cannot become hungry for something when you were not, or become more hungry for it than you were, by thinking that eating it is best for you on the whole—unless it does so by leading you to some other state of mind or action, whose efficacy in this regard does not depend on the evaluative content of reason’s judgment. This is not to say that, without the use of “force” or some instrumental means, I cannot become hungry by thinking of *eating*. The point is that if this happens, it will not be because I think of eating as what is *best on the whole*. This evaluative aspect of my thought, if in place, will be inessential to making me hungry.

Now, I suggest that this contrast between anger’s persuadability by evaluative reason, and hunger’s incapacity to “listen” to reason’s judgments of good or bad, so

understood, generalizes to the entire class of appetitive desires—cases of sexual desire, thirst, and so on. It seems also that you cannot make yourself have a thirst or a lust (or make yourself thirst or lust to a greater or lesser extent) by thinking of the goodness or badness for you of taking this or that drink or committing this or that sexual act. You may think this or that behavior would be good or bad for you, with regard to food, drink and sex, and this may simply overpower, or in one way or another instrumentally influence your non-evaluative desires for these, or some non-evaluative aspect of the content of your evaluative thought may arouse or dampen such desires. But your belief in the goodness of certain acts cannot excite your hunger, thirst or lust to commit them, as considerations of value can excite your anger. Nor can your belief in the *badness* of such acts diminish or extinguish your hunger, thirst, or lust to do them, as anger towards particular people can be staunched by the thought that it would be bad for you to direct hostile acts upon them (because, say, you realize they were not responsible for the offense against you).¹¹

These reflections tend to the conclusion that, while reason can use the energies of appetite in ways not properly regarded as *compulsion*, these are unlike cases where anger (thus spirit) listens to reason's considerations of value. For, even where appetite's compliance is not forced, evaluative reason's influence with it is secured via some aspect of thought, or through some means indifferent to considerations of *value*.

I propose this as the key to understanding why spirit is by nature reason's helper as appetite is not. Desires like anger are, like appetites, non-rational, in the sense that they are not essentially desires one has for what one thinks best because one thinks it best. Nevertheless, such desires are, with decent upbringing, susceptible to either *arousal and strengthening*, or *extinction and diminishment*, because of what one thinks is good or bad. But this operates neither through the arousal of some *other state of mind*, nor by means of some *action* motivated by evaluative judgment, whose influence on the desire in question does not depend on judgment's evaluative content. Otherwise put: anger (and other spirited desires), while *not themselves essentially evaluative*, are *essentially susceptible to non-instrumental strengthening or weakening by evaluative thought*. More briefly: such desires are—not inherently evaluative but—inherently *value responsive*. Spirited desires are necessarily value responsive in this sense; appetites, by contrast, are not. This, I suggest, is how we are to understand the idea that spirit can “listen to,” be “persuaded by,” and thus “ally with” reason, as appetites cannot.

One point about this “value responsiveness” needs to be clarified right away. I say that anger and other spirited desires are such as can be aroused or diminished non-instrumentally *because* of what one thinks is good or bad. But just how are we to understand this ‘because’? One way would be to see the evaluative thought as a distinct state or event that precedes and causes the anger, which in turn is conceived of as *feeling*, not *thought*. But we need not interpret value sensitivity this way in all cases. What is crucial is just the idea that one's experience of angry desire is *explained by* one's having a certain evaluative belief, thought, or judgment. As far as that goes, the value judgment that explains why one is angry may, in some cases, form a constitutive

part of the anger episode in question, rather than a separable preceding cause. So, for example, we can imagine an Odysseus working up an anger thinking about the maids, muttering harsh insults under his breath. This thought need not cause a boiling bodily feeling, or maybe even any bodily feeling at all, for it to explain why he is angry. We may say that part of what makes what he is experiencing anger here is the value-ladenness of the thought's content—hence part of the explanation of his anger lies in how bad he thinks it is for subordinate members of his household to behave in such fashion. (So in this instance the 'because' in 'He's angry because he thinks that...' marks a constituting or "formal," not an "efficient" because.) Now, there would be more to his anger than this: also crucial are the words with which his thought is expressed and the stress and rhythm of his speech (even if it is silent). But in any case, one is not to suppose there must be two distinct states here—the evaluative judgment and some "feel" of anger—causally related. Nor should we assume that because evaluative thought plays a crucial role in explaining why one feels anger, one's anger is something one can always *control* by directing one's thoughts.

I want to emphasize that when we understand spirited desire in terms of susceptibility to "non-instrumental arousal and diminishment of anger by evaluative thought we can interpret that phrase with enough flexibility that we can consistently recognize simultaneously: both the *peculiar intimacy* with which evaluative thinking and anger (as contrasted with e.g., hunger) are joined, and the *developmental priority* of anger over rational thought about one's own good. Thus we can coherently join, under the "value responsive" category, both the angry thought of the somatically tranquil adult, and the visceral, felt anger of the young child throwing a temper tantrum. In both cases we find a desire that belongs to a type whose occurrence, disappearance, strength or weakness can be explained (non-instrumentally) by the evaluative thought of subjects of those desires, *provided they are suitably equipped to think such thoughts*. The *difference* between the two cases lies in the fact that the adult *is* suitably equipped, while the child is not. That is to say, the adult has developed a capacity for value judgment that enables the relevant "value-responsive" potential inherent in such desires to be realized. Young children, by contrast, while indeed possessing desires with that potential, lack as yet the cognitive capacity to trigger it—and so the occurrence of such desires in them is not explained by reference to their evaluative thoughts. (And, we might suppose, while non-human animals have desires characterized by this same potential, they cannot acquire the additional capacities necessary to arouse it in themselves.)

6

With this conception of anger as value-responsive in hand, we can now summarize and reformulate Plato's argument that the seat of anger, *thumos*, is distinct both from appetite and reason, as follows. There are desires we have, such as anger, that are *not desires of reason*, since something is essential to these that is not essential to anger: *being a desire one has for what one thinks best because one thinks it so*.

Further, anger is not to be confused with some evaluative judgment tossed up by reason in the course of deliberation, for we are capable of anger before we are capable of evaluative judgment, and other animals get angry, though they never really give thought to their own good. Moreover, anger does not arise in just *the same part of the soul* as desires of reason, because it can clash with them, aiming at just the opposite of what one thinks best. And if there is an opposition between an angry desire (a mental command) to F and a simultaneous desire (mental command) not to F because one thinks this best, that with which one feels the first, spirited desire is not just the same as that with which one forms the second, desire of reason.

Anger is also not, on the other hand, any kind of *appetitive* desire. For something is essential to anger that is essential to no appetite: anger is essentially *value-responsive*. Thus unlike an appetite, it can “listen to” reason, without being “forced” to do its bidding. Further: anger also does not arise in just *the same part of the soul* as appetites do. For the part of us capable of anger can ally with reason to oppose the satisfaction of *all* one’s appetites.¹² And again the mental command model of desire and principle of opposition can be applied to conclude that this gives anger and the appetites distinct sources in the soul. Now the argument can be completed. If we define spirited desires as those desires that are value-responsive, anger will be a spirited desire. Since this allows us to argue, on the basis of motivational conflict, that the anger-feeling (thus a spirited) part of the soul is neither a province of appetite, nor a part of reason, we may conclude: the spirited part of the soul is distinct from either of those two.

Both to confirm this as an interpretation of Plato, and to explore its significance for moral psychology, we should now ask how well this reconstruction sits with what else the *Republic* has to say about *thumos*. So let’s return to two questions mentioned at the outset—that of spirit’s *scope*, and its special connection to a concern for *honor*. First, what types of motivation—other than anger—will fall within the range of spirit, and does this fit with Plato’s text? By the “value-responsive” standard I propose, a list of plausible candidates would contain many included among states we are inclined to classify as *emotions*—such as, shame, pride, hatred, disgust, fear, affection, elation, sadness, amusement, and pity. These, and perhaps many others, seem to exhibit the value sensitivity that I propose distinguishes spirit from appetite. Determining whether this impression is correct would require detailed reflection on each case. But supposing it is correct, it does not seem in conflict with Plato. For I do not think that he is committed to *denying* that these are denizens of *thumos*. In fact, it is plausible to read him as implicitly placing two of these—pride and shame—in spirit. For in Book VIII, he describes the man in whom spirit predominates as both honor-loving and *proud* or *haughty* (*hupselophron*) (550b). So *pride* belongs in spirit, it appears. And, in Book IX, Plato observes that there are certain “lawless” appetites that probably everyone has, though they are usually kept quiescent by “the better desires in alliance with reason” until they come alive in dreams, when reason is inactive. That is when, he says, the savage part of the soul, “free of all control by shame and reason (*aischunes kai phroneseos*),” gives vent in fantasy to incestuous and homicidal wishes (571b-d). This

suggests Plato thinks shame is among the “better desires” that normally ally with reason to keep back the lawless ones in waking life. Thus it is clear that shame lies outside of the *lawless* region of appetite at least, and that it also lies outside reason. Given all this, and the fact that *pride* belongs to spirit, it would be odd for Plato to put shame anywhere else.

It would be interesting to examine in detail which of those various states most would classify as emotions are spirited in the sense just articulated. But the current priority is to determine further whether my conception of spirit’s motivation coheres with and elucidates what Plato says. And one might worry that it does not, because my conception of spirit is too inclusive. For the “spirited” person is supposed to be confident, without fear, and courageous, as well as particularly moved by a concern with honor. But if spirit includes all value-responsive desires, and we say that someone would be spirited in virtue of having very strong and active desires of this sort, then someone could be spirited in virtue of a strong propensity to feel terror, and a paralyzing shame. But surely timid or fretful or pathologically shy people are the very opposite of Plato’s spirited souls. Does my interpretation risk wrongly identifying being spirited with being emotional?

This objection can be answered, if we reject the assumption that having a highly active *thumos* is sufficient for spiritedness and predominance of spirit. One might reasonably suppose instead that a spirited soul is one whose powerful activity moves one to *take action*, not to shrink from it, in this sense: it makes one prone to face or embrace conflict or sources of resistance to one’s desires, not avoid or flee them. Spirit predominates then only in those whom it *excites* rather than *inhibits* such action.

But while I believe this response wards off one doubt about the interpretation of *thumos* I propose, it makes only more pressing the need to fit that interpretation with spirit’s role vis-à-vis courage, honor, and victory-seeking. Some commentators explain this role by, in effect, characterizing spirit in a way that appears to make its concern with honor and victory a matter of definition. Thus Cooper (19xx) says that spirit’s motives are competitive desires for esteem, or desires that can mature into these. And Gosling (19xx) proposes that spirit is distinguished by motives that issue from an unreasoned admiration of a certain personal ideal—paradigmatically an ideal of *manliness*, where this is associated with a propensity to secure others’ approval and avoid their scorn in competitive activities, especially those involving the use of physical force. These accounts build into the very notion of a spirited desire an interest in competitive achievements that attract others’ esteem—which is to say, it simply builds into this notion a concern for honor and victory.

While these approaches rightly bring out important aspects of Platonic psychology in the Republic, it seems to me their main shortcoming is that they do not adequately explain why anger, the paradigmatic spirited motivation, is spirited, and just what the connection is between anger and honor. For not every case of anger involves a desire for *esteem*, nor is anger always associated with admiration for “manly” displays

of dominance. This point is also illustrated importantly by the anger of young children and non-human animals, where, I would claim, evaluative conceptions required for caring about others' esteem are either as yet undeveloped or forever unattainable. This is true, even where we are dealing with adult anger. Also, reason can be concerned with esteem as well.

Cooper's view guards against some of these concerns by including in *thumos*-type desires those that can *develop into* desires for esteem. But then the question arises of how what's distinctive of *thumos* gives its desires this developmental potential. I now wish to argue that my interpretation of spirit suggests a way of answering this question, via the idea that such desires are value-responsive, and that this provides additional evidence in its favor. Here, it must be admitted, I can make only indirect appeal to textual evidence: I will propose that, given my interpretation, Plato can answer certain questions he does not actually address about spirit and honor-love, in a way compatible with what he does say. But it seems much the same situation will arise for any interpretation of spirit that recognizes that the link between spirit and honor-love cannot be adequately accounted for by construing spirited desire in terms of a desire for honor from the start.

What then does Plato give us to work with? What we are concerned with is how spirited desires like anger may exist in a form as yet unshaped (but shapeable) by value-concepts, and our capacity for such desires may develop in such a way as to give rise to strong concerns for honor, esteem, and victory. Since we are asking about psychological development, we should consider how Plato thinks spirit is involved in the education of character. Now, for Plato, a central aspect of this is the formation of spirit by physical (including military) training—*gymnastike*—on the one hand, and poetry and music—*mousike*—on the other. The basic contention is that, while rigorous and demanding physical training in competitive athletics and fighting skills is needed to make the soul properly spirited, there is a danger that such education will also nourish a tendency to resort too readily to force, hence a disposition to "savagery" and anti-social aggression. Thus it is important that, from a young age, spirit also be trained in *mousike*. By inculcating an appreciation of rhythm and harmony and exposing a child to proper stories about gods and heroes, the harshness of the one's juvenile spirit is tempered, and it will be better prepared for influence by reason, when later one develops the capacity to think rationally about what is best.

Given this, and my "value-responsive" conception of spirit, how might we explain the connection between spirit and honor Plato sees? We might think about how learning to participate, and then engaging in competitions involved in physical training arouses and directs the young soul's capacity for anger. One acts in such a way to earn the approval and disapproval of on-lookers (teachers, peers), and at the same time one learns how to make evaluative judgments of one's own performance, by adopting the norms and standards of one's observers. (Children can, let us assume, recognize and respond to approval and disapproval before they can really be said to have grasped evaluative concepts, so as to wield these in judgments of their own.) In this process

then, you have aroused strong desires to frustrate the desires of those (your competitors) who seek vigorously to frustrate you, where the content of these desires is guided by the standards your observers, teachers, and judges impose. But to feel such desires is to feel what—in its strongest and most intense forms—is anger. Since anger is a value-responsive desire, a disposition linking anger and value judgment arises, persists and can be continually reinforced, as you go on to make such judgments and perceive others' evaluative regard. The result is this. You develop dispositions to feel anger in response to frustration of desires whose satisfaction requires you attract the positive regard of others, and avoid their negative assessments. And as you internalize the norms guiding their evaluations, and so begin to acquire the capacity for making them yourself, tendencies are implanted, strengthened and refined to respond with anger (or perhaps with some less intense precursor of anger) to perceived threats to the positive appraisal's of your performance in competition,. Note that the psychological link between value responsive feelings like anger and an awareness of others' evaluation of what one does is originally forged in a way that does not depend on one's exercise of independent evaluative judgment. For that reason, these feelings can continue to be elicited by the thought of how others do or would evaluate one, even when others' actual or imagined assessment fails to match up with one's own reasoned judgment about what is best overall.

I propose this explains how Plato can see anger as belonging to a special part of the soul especially tied to a concern for honor, and in potential conflict with reason. For the very process by which the responsiveness of such feelings to evaluative thought is awakened is also one by which their satisfaction is made habitually to require we secure *recognition* for having done well, and avoid *exposure* as having done badly. That is to say, this process inculcates dispositions to seek honor and esteem. And, since the route by which these desires for recognition are activated need not pass through reason's synoptic judgment, and since they can remain active in defiance of it, they cannot always be banished by reason—sometimes they can only be endured.

Could this account be expanded to take into consideration other forms of *thumos* motivation? Suppose we allow that a child's experiencing certain somatic feelings that manifest intense discomfort in perceiving the strong disapproval of one's care-givers can constitute shame, at least in primitive form. And suppose we recognize as a form of pride, the child's intense pleasure in perceiving their strong approval. Then we might say: also, by harnessing pride and shame, the value-responsive nature of spirit's motivational power is exploited, as we are socialized through competitive activities implanting emotional dispositions that make us seek honor and avoid its opposite.

Clearly more elaboration is needed of this proposal, and I cannot claim to find it asserted in Plato's text. But it does begin to explain and unify the role Plato assigns to spirit in relation to honor-love and moral education, in a way that is consistent with his claim that it is both reason's natural ally and its potential opponent. And the plausibility of this suggestion should be granted, I submit, by anyone who recognizes how children's capacity for anger, pride and shame are aroused and channeled as they

engage in competition.

8

Elsewhere I have argued there is a reasonably clear, univocal interpretation of Platonic justice, applicable to both city and soul, free of homuncular absurdities, that explains why Plato needs to divide the soul.¹³ Applying the framework developed there to the present discussion of spirit or *thumos* completes the project of finding a defensible argument for the tripartition of soul Plato needs. For if we apply Plato's principle of opposition in a way his views about the workings of the soul suggest, we can derive divisions in the sources of motives from their conflicts. In doing this, we are led to interpret the distinctions among the motive types of reason, spirit, and appetite, so as to yield an argument that gives us three parts of the soul, corresponding to these types, as Plato requires.

I have not addressed the question of whether this account of Plato's soul division will save the *Republic's* grander argument for the desirability of the just life, or even whether it yields an acceptable characterization of the just soul. And while I have argued that the case for dividing the soul into three parts is much better than it may appear, the strength of certain crucial assumptions seems much in doubt: in particular it seems to me likely that no good sense can be made of the mental command model of desire.

But even if ultimately we reject Plato's argument that the three types of motivation arise in three distinct regions of the soul, something valuable would remain: namely, this way of classifying our desires and understanding their relationships. On the view I have extracted from Plato, there are at least three very general kinds of human desires it is important to distinguish. There are, first, *desires of reason*, which are desires one has to do something one thinks is best on the whole, because one thinks it best, for certain reasons. To think it is best on the whole to do something, involves, in part, being able to evaluate the comparative worth of satisfying two competing desires. Since what distinguishes a desire of reason is its integration of (potentially conflicting) sources of motivation into an evaluative decision, one's desires of reason are not themselves subject to internal conflict. However, they can conflict with *non-evaluative sensory desires* of the sort Plato assigns to the appetite, such as hunger, thirst, sexual lust, and desires to avoid extremes of hot and cold. These are desires one can have, even though what would satisfy them one does not believe to be good, and their strength is determined independently of the value one's judgment accords their satisfaction. Since they are in this way distinct from desires of reason, they can conflict with them, and for that matter with one another. In fact, since they do not themselves arise from evaluative integration like reason's desires, they are prone to conflict among themselves in ways that create frustration and disorder in one's life, unless their motivational influence is inhibited or guided by thought about what is best on the whole for oneself.

Finally, there is a third, spirited, kind of desire. These desires involve feelings such as anger—but also pride, shame and disgust, among others—that can, like appetites, be non-evaluative, and conflict with the desires of evaluative reason. But they are also essentially *responsive to evaluative judgment* in a way that appetites are not. They can be trained to occur and be strengthened, or to cease or diminish, without the intermediary of further action or desires, because of what one thinks best, in ways that increase one's desire to do what one rationally endorses. To say that such desires are by nature so trainable is to say they are what I have termed *value responsive*. That they are *actually* trained into such an alliance is essential to a decent upbringing. Taking part in social activities that elicit such desires, so as to motivate performance in accord with others' recognition of one's success, forges their alliance with the values we acquire. In this process, one develops emotional dispositions that specially contribute to one's developing a concern for honor, which, if one's education goes well, will further, rather than hinder, the expression of one's desires of reason.

[This suggests a view about what *emotions* are. These are experienced desires subject to a certain training that is an important and inevitable part of human psychological development. The ability to make judgments distinguishing better from worse arises through a process wherein these feelings are sensitized to such judgments, often in ways that dispositionally tie our emotional satisfaction to others' approval, or else to what we suppose *would* be their approval, were they apprised of our situation. While this process ultimately puts such non-rational sources of motivation under reason's influence more directly than are others (the appetites), the origin of this influence tends to leave the harmony of our emotions with our better judgment well short of guaranteed. If this picture is roughly correct, the psychology of Plato's *Republic* suggests to us an important way of unifying that amorphous topic of inquiry, the human emotions, and of understanding the crucial role they play in moral development and motivation.]

Though this taxonomy of desire does contain substantive points, it leaves out much that is central to Plato's moral philosophy, and leaves undecided a number of key questions we may care to pose. One is this. Our discussion suggests that moral education inevitably involves making a broad class of desires responsive to value, by our coming to direct them in ways that make their satisfaction depend on others' recognition of our success. But does this tie between our affective responses and others' evaluative judgment not only make our own evaluations influential in directing and arousing these feelings, but also put such judgment, to some extent, inescapably under the influence of such emotions, and by this means, under the influence of other *people*? It would, if the role of value responsive emotions in evaluative thought were not purely developmental. Perhaps, however mature we are, without some susceptibility to emotions of a kind responsive to others' approval and disapproval, our evaluative judgment would become fatally disoriented, and we would be unable, by "pure" intellect, to discern differences in value successfully. But if that is right, it seems our evaluative reason cannot function entirely independently of a concern for others' satisfaction with

us, and reason cannot always be the leading partner in its alliance with emotion, even in the mature adult.

This would take us away from Plato.¹⁴ One reason is that it would strain considerably against his ideal of harmony in the soul. For this internal harmony, Platonic soul justice, is supposed to be achieved, and its benefits enjoyed, even while one undeservedly attracts the contempt due the wicked. But if reason's evaluation is not fully independent of honor-craving spirit, we cannot escape the need that our worth be recognized, and when the world scorns us we cannot always hope to keep turmoil from our souls by means of a sovereign reason that rises above feeling's frustration.¹⁵

NOTES

¹ See Annas (1981), Penner (1971, 1990), Robinson (1970).

² See Damasio (1994), Evans (2001), Sousa (1987), Stocker (1996).

³ A recent author writes that emotions are not "...obstacles to intelligent action, as Plato believed" (Evans 2001, p. xv). Evans argues, in opposition to what he sees as a pernicious Platonic tradition, that emotions are "reason's ally, not its enemy" (Ibid, p. xii). It is ironic that Evans purports to oppose Plato using the very image of an "alliance" between reason and emotion that Plato himself coined.

⁴ Siewert (2001)

⁵ Note on Hoffman and Anagnostopoulos

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⁷ Drawing on the Stoic tradition, Martha Nussbaum (2001) has recently argued this is true of anger and other emotions.

⁸ This, roughly, is Nussbaum's (2001) view. She opposes her "neo-Stoic" view that anger (and emotion generally) consist in certain kinds of "eudaimonistic" value judgments or appraisals, to the "reductionistic" error of confusing anger (and other emotions) with the variable sensations, "unthinking movements," or physiological states that sometimes just happen to accompany them. .

⁹ My proposal should also be distinguished from Irwin's (1977) and Reeve's (1988) conceptions of *thumos* desires as part (or partly) good dependent. If one understands this dependence in Irwin's manner, by saying that *thumos* desires are influenced by one's beliefs about *some* goods, there is the difficulty first, that we will deprive young children and beasts of anger and other spirited desires, unless we assume they have some conception of what is good for them—which appears doubtful. We could meet this by saying such desires are ones *capable* of being influenced by beliefs about some goods, but then to distinguish these desires from appetites, we must still specify the *kind* of influence involved, since appetites can be instrumentally influenced by one's conception of goods.

One might then follow Reeve, and understand a part good dependent desire as a desire for the good of only *part* of the soul. But then one needs to specify *which* part, so as not to include, e.g., a desire for good nutrition. And if to this one answers, "*thumos*," then we are left with an unhelpfully circular account of what is special to *thumos*. Also, in my view, Reeve's proposal does not, fit well with Plato's attribution of spirited desire to young children and beasts, whom I think lack even "unsophisticated" beliefs about what is *good* for them, or for some part of them.

¹⁰ Nussbaum does try to accommodate what may look like emotions' conflict with reason in her neo-Stoic view. She portrays such cases as involving a debate within

one's mind, an oscillation of evaluative judgments (p.86ff). Such oscillation undoubtedly occurs, and in connection with emotions. But there are also cases of real conflict (e.g., Odysseus' anger, and the case of being angry at having to work over the weekend) that are not well represented as a "change of one's mind" (or as changing one's mind back and forth) about how good or bad, important or valuable something is.

¹¹ One may doubt this. For example, can't someone's lust be excited by the thought that it would be bad for them to have sex with a particular person, and dampened by the thought that some potential partner would be "good for them"? I suspect that here it is not so much that one is excited by the sincerely judged *badness* of the object of one's sexual desire, as by his or her perceived (scare-quotes!) "badness." That is, the excitement is due to one's belief that this is the sort of person who would be *conventionally regarded as bad by others* (e.g., one's mother, perhaps). But this is not to say one really endorses this judgment oneself: in fact here one thinks being "bad" is good, and being "good" is bad. But it should be admitted that human sexuality and values have a complex relationship relevant here, which deserves a complex discussion of its own.

¹² One might be puzzled by a certain lack of parallel between my treatment of the division of reason and spirit, and my treatment of the appetite/spirit split. I have argued that even if the source of some anger is distinct from the source of the appetitive desire it opposes, this still leaves open the possibility that the source of every angry desire is the same as the source of *some* appetitive desire or other. So I said one needs to argue that the anger-feeling part of one's soul can oppose all the appetitive directives one's soul issues. Why then do I not similarly treat the division between reason and spirit? That is, why do I not say that even if the source of some anger is distinct from the source of the desire of reason it opposes, this still leaves open the possibility that the source of every angry desire is the same as the source of *some* desire of reason or other? This problem does not arise, and the two cases are not parallel, because, as I argue in a previous paper (Siewert 2001), reason is not susceptible to the same internal conflict as appetite—thus *reason does not have within it distinct motivationally functional parts*, as does appetite. Therefore, if the source of some anger is distinct from the source of some desire of reason, then the anger-feeling part of the soul is distinct from the source of any desire of reason.

But there still seem to be a couple of loose ends. I have argued that spirit lies at least partly outside appetite. Doesn't this leave open the possibility that every appetite-generating part lies within spirit? And if appetite is wholly contained in spirit, then won't it be impossible for appetite to avoid doing spirit's work—in which case the soul cannot be Platonically just? Arguably, this does not follow. For even if appetite is wholly within spirit, part of spirit is outside appetite—the part that can oppose all appetites. And *that* part of spirit should be adequate to do spirit's job: to ally with reason against appetite. So appetite and spirit can each do their proper work without also doing the work proper to the other.

A final worry. If spirit may overlap with appetite, while lying partly outside it, then mightn't that part of spirit outside of appetite lie *wholly* within the *rational* part? I would reply: spirit's anger is capable, not only of opposing all one's appetites, by leading one to self-destruction, it is *at the very same time* capable of opposing one's rational desire for what is best on the whole. (This is what would have happened if Odysseus' reason had failed to defeat his anger at the maids.) If spirit can in this way fight appetite and reason simultaneously, the territory of spirit cannot be exhaustively partitioned between reason and appetite.

¹³ Siewert 2001

¹⁴ Richard Kraut characterizes as "weak Platonism" "the thesis that the goodness of human life depends heavily on our having a close connection with something eminently worthwhile that lies outside of ourselves." (Kraut 1992, p. 329) But for Plato this something outside ourselves lies, ultimately, not in other people, but in the Ideas, and the intellectual communion with them.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Bernard Williams for his comments on a remote ancestor of this paper. I am grateful also to Samuel Rickles, Josh Weinstein, and to many colleagues and students at the University of Miami for discussion of its more recent predecessors.

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