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DEFENDING ONE'S OWN: PLATO'S ACCOUNT OF THUMOS

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"Vengeance on a dumb brute!" cried Starbuck, "that simply smote thee from blindest instinct! Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous.

"Hark ye yet again, --the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the moldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me, he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein."

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

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Introduction

Interpreting *Thumos*

Why another interpretation of *thumos*?

Beginning this way might give the impression that Plato's views about *thumos* have received extensive scholarly attention as a core contribution of Plato's psychological theorizing. This is not the case. However, scholarly consensus has come a long way from the summary dismissals of *thumos* that once characterized interpretations of Plato's tri-partite psychology.[1] Once, it was not uncommon for Plato's commitment to the existence of a third class of motivations on a par with reason and appetite to be seen as something of an embarrassment. "The distinction between Reason and Appetite, a rational and irrational part, is well established. . .But this third, intermediate part is novel, and when we look into it, factitious. It has all the air of being invented to suit some foregone conclusion."[2] A standing thought was that Plato's concept of a second kind of non-rational motivation was at best incoherent and at worst ad-hoc, an artifact of *Republic*'s overarching argument in favor of justice. In stark contrast to this attitude, the last generation of scholarship has seen a flowering of interpretive insight into the nature of Plato's "middle part" of the soul. There may be disagreement about how Plato's concept of *thumos* hangs together,[3] but little doubt that it tracks a real feature of human life worthy of serious philosophical inquiry.

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[1] Hobbs (2000: 3-5) provides a good overview and catalogue of these dismissals.

[2] Cornford (1912: 262), Cornford's assessment is from 1912, but it remained a prevailing attitude far into the 20th century. See for example Penner's oft quoted dismissal of *thumos* in his 1971 "Thought and desire in Plato," 112-113. A notable exception to this general tendency is Gosling's *Plato*, 1973.

[3] Gosling (1973: 41) nicely articulates what is in effect the major difficulty confronting any would be interpreter. In short, Plato's conception of *thumos* seems incoherent. It is this seeming incoherence which led many readers to the conclusion that Plato's inclusion of *thumos* in his theoretical psychology was ad-hoc. I take it as uncontroversial that Plato's account of *thumos* is not ad-hoc. However, how and whether thumoetic motivations form a coherent class remains a central interpretive obstacle to any interpretation of Plato's account.

Despite this consensus that *thumos* is worth investigating, and the resulting wealth of interpretive work, what Plato means by *thumos* remains misunderstood. In what follows, I will try to motivate this latter claim and the attendant thought that a new reading of *thumos* is called for.

The shift in attitude regarding the significance of Plato's concept of *thumos* can be traced to a shift in the dominant understanding (within anglophone Ancient Philosophy) of shame and the desire for admiration. Plato is straightforward: whatever *thumos* is, some of its clearest and most important manifestations are shame and the drive to be admired by others. Illuminating contributions have shown that shame, both for us and for the Ancient Greeks, is far more than a shallow concern for what other people actually think.[4] Instead, it has been argued that shame and what we might loosely call concerns about one's honor, constitute a robust and nuanced way of understanding human happiness, one capable of formulating serious ethical claims and playing a potentially essential role in how we become good (i.e., in moral education).

This re-appraisal of shame and honor has helped engender a move away from taking Plato's notion of *thumos* as equivalent to an individual's desire for recognition or concern for their reputation.[5] One problem with equating what Plato calls '*thumos*' with the desire for recognition is that if that is all spirit is, it is hard to make sense of Plato's grounds for claiming that the spirited part of the soul is in some sense better than the appetitive, which is to say more conducive to virtue. It is a recurring theme in Plato's explicit discussions of the tri-partite

[4] Here I am thinking primarily of Douglas Cairns *Aidos* (1992), Myles Burnyeat's "Learning to be Good" (1980), and most of all, Bernard Williams seminal *Shame and Necessity* (1993). These interpretations, especially Cairns and Williams, push back against the understanding of Ancient Greek attitudes to honor and shame made famous by Adkins in *Merit and Responsibility*.

[5] Here, recognition and reputation should be taken narrowly. The thought is that 'spirit' is not Plato's shorthand for the concern we have for what actual people *actually* think about us.

psychology that the spirited part's desires are productive of virtue and the psychic unity with which it is equated in a way that the appetites are not (*Republic* 440e, *Phaedrus* 253d, *Timaeus* 70a-b). But how is doing the right thing for the sake of praise any better than doing the right thing to avoid going hungry? Or alternatively, why think that pursuing honors is more likely to lead to a virtuous character than going in for a love of food?[6] Some scholars take these difficulties to recede when one comes to see that in line with the prevailing Ancient Greek conceptions of shame and honor, Plato understands the thumoetic part as not only concerned with others' opinions but as having the capacity to internalize those opinions. For Plato, the argument goes, the thumoetic part may start with a concern about getting caught, but it comes to care about acting in accord with prevailing opinion regardless of whether anyone is watching. Given this tendency, one can begin to see why Plato might have thought thumoetic concerns more conducive to virtue and psychic unity: public opinion and praise enshrine a particular vision of good action that then gets internalized and comes to govern our concerns and desires. On this view, a thumoetic part with the capacity for the internalization of public opinion would

[6] For a convincing and developed complaint along these lines see Rachana Kamtekar's (1998). Kamtekar's focus is the purported virtue of the non-philosophers in Plato's ideal city. One of her central claims, is that if being virtuous turns on doing virtuous actions for their own sake, then reading *thumos* as the desire for recognition conflicts with Plato's contentions that the non-philosophers of the ideal city are in a condition that approximates virtue. She points out that if *thumos* is merely the desire for praise, then both the appetitive and spirited citizens of Kallipolis will have an equally instrumental relationship to virtuous action. Moreover, there would be no basis for distinguishing the auxiliary from the timocrat with respect to the stability of their beliefs. Take away the external buttress of praise and both would stray from their evaluative commitments.

This is not to imply that any interpretation of Plato's notion of *thumos* that equates it with the love of recognition is antiquated or superficial. Some scholars still espouse this reading, and there are certainly illuminating and defensible versions. An example of the latter is the reading advanced by James Wiberding (2009). Wilberding makes the interesting suggestion that we should understand the virtue of the auxiliary as stemming from the fact that their thumoetic part has been trained to only be concerned with the opinions of reason (366). On this reading, all the thumoetic part wants is praise, but it is only interested in the praise of the agent's rational part. This, Wilberding goes on to argue, addresses many of the seeming problems with the desire for recognition reading including its seeming inability to appropriately distinguish between timocrat and auxiliary.

be the seat of a vision of happiness, perhaps an unexamined and limited vision of happiness, but a vision of happiness nonetheless.

That Plato sees the thumoetic part as motivated by the desire for praise and possessed of a concomitant capacity to internalize the value judgments codified in the culture which surrounds it is widely accepted.[7] This is all to the good, since the claim certainly tracks a central thread in Plato's discussion of *thumos*.[8] However, as a unifying interpretation of what Plato means by *thumos* it is insufficient, a fact which many of the interpretation's proponents recognize.[9] One way to cast the problem with what we might call an 'internalization' reading is that it does not capture the more determinate character of the evaluations and desires that Plato calls "spirited." On the proposed reading, *thumos* tracks culturally entrenched views about good and bad action that form the basis of the recognition it craves. The issue is that on this interpretation the evaluations internalized by the spirited part do not have a distinctive character. Any widely held value judgment or thought about what makes an action (or person) good or bad could, so to speak, be "taken in" and come to guide an individual's thumoetic part. However, on Plato's view spirited evaluations have dramatically more color. Consider, for example, an individual's sense of shame. The thought that an action is shameful or admirable has various formal features. Shame is not, simply, the thought that one has done something wrong, but rather a specific way of understanding the wrongness of one's action. One might appeal to the immediate or

[7] Some of the interpreters who advance this reading are: Burnyeat (1980, 2006), Cooper (1984), Kamtekar (1998), Hobbs (2000), Moss (2005), Brennan (2012), Wilburn (2015), and the list could be longer. There are of course those who deny that the spirited part has this capacity for internalization, e.g., Wilberding (2009). However, the thought that the spirited part can be motivated by an evaluation of an action as good or bad (to at least some extent) independent of a concern for what others will think, is a standard element of most readings. Even someone like Singpurwalla (2013), who questions the sufficiency of internalization to explain what Plato says about *thumos*, still accepts that Plato believes something like internalization goes on.

[8] Perhaps most clearly at *Republic* 400d-402a.

[9] Many interpretations of spirit which make the capacity for internalization central either tacitly or explicitly acknowledge that it cannot be the whole story.

unconsidered nature of spirited desires (due to their being non-rational) in an attempt to mark them off as a distinct class.[10] However, that does not go far enough to capture their more determinate character.[11] In short, Plato says specific things about the spirited part and what it wants. The too general content of spirited evaluations entailed by an internalization reading simply does not account for these claims.

Two of these more specific claims Plato makes about spirit are that it loves to win and that it aids reason in the work of organizing the soul. In fact, one helpful way to navigate contemporary interpretations of *thumos* is to recognize that the majority of them tend to emphasize one of these two claims.

Plato is quite clear that he sees the spirited part as the seat of our desire for competitive success. Therefore, it is not enough to say that spirit is the desire to be admired. At the very least, spirit is the desire to be admired because one stands out among others, i.e., because one is better. As he repeatedly stresses (e.g., *Republic* 545a, 550b, 581a, 586c), Plato considers *philonikia*, or the love of victory, an archetypal and ubiquitous expression of *thumos*. Emphasis on this feature of the text has led a number of scholars to read Plato's third class of motivations as unified around a desire for self-esteem, where self-esteem is understood as having an essentially competitive sense.[12] On this reading, what Plato gathers together under the rubric of *thumos* are a

[10] For example, this is the tack taken by Moss (2005: 25, 32). According to Moss, what distinguishes shame (and spirited) evaluations is that unlike rational evaluations, they a) do not rise to level of beliefs about good and bad and b) are authoritative.

[11] Sticking with the example of shame, it is arguably a formal feature of feeling ashamed that it entails some sort of explicit representation of and concern for one's self. The fact that the ashamed individual's sense of their failure is immediate, and therefore in some general sense non-rational, does not capture this feature of the evaluation constitutive of shame.

[12] Arguably the most influential version of this reading is John Cooper's (1984 and 1996). Other interpretations that fall into this camp are Gosling (1973: 42-51), Kragerud (2010), and in some sense Weinstein (2018: 19, 21). These interpretations make self-assertion and the desire for self-esteem the centerpiece of Plato's account. However, a far larger number, if not most, recent interpretations take the desire for victory and self-esteem to be an important part of Plato's account. Some examples of the latter are Hobbs (2000), Kamtekar (1998), G. Lear (2004), and Brennan

person's desires to make something of themselves, to assert themselves, to achieve, and by so doing to establish themselves as someone of worth. Given this focus on the desire for comparative self-esteem, these readings contend that Plato takes thumoetic concerns to involve and be guided by a self-conception or ideal self-image. What these interpreters stress is that the spirited part strives to live up to some ideal of what it is to be a person of worth and as part and parcel of this, acts to ensure that we are treated with the respect we think we deserve. Such motivations, they contend, depend on a sense of who we are, or might be, a sense of self that these interpretations take to distinguish *thumos* as a kind of non-rational motivation distinct from appetite.

One serious shortcoming of this family of interpretations is that it has a hard time accounting for the other claim highlighted above, namely, Plato's repeated characterization of the spirited part of the soul as the "ally" of reason in the work of establishing and maintaining psychic structure. According to Plato, perhaps the thing that most distinguishes thumoetic motivations is that they tend to contribute to psychic unity. The use of "tend" here is significant. It is not just that Plato thinks the spirited part can bring about psychic unity if, for example, it has received a proper education. Rather, his claim is that the spirited part is the "natural ally" (*Republic*, 441a) of the rational part in the work of controlling our appetites. In other words, Plato believes that spirited motivations, to some extent regardless of whether they have been well or badly educated, tend to promote psychic order.[13] Like the rational and unlike the appetitive, the thumoetic part is in some sense a principle of psychic unity. This, however, is hard to square

(2012). This last point clearly calls into question the viability of the proposed sorting of interpretations into *kalon* and self-esteem readings. (See n.15 below on the limitations of this way of carving up the literature.)

[13] Singpurwala (2013: 45-53 and especially 48) makes this point convincingly.

with the vision of *thumos* as the ambitious desire for respect.[14] Whatever the pedigree of the thought that shame and the desire to amount to something promote self-control, such desires seem equally able to engender self-destructive and rapacious behavior. Consider the tyrant who looms so large in Plato's moral imagination. Certainly, there is a case to be made that such characters are just as much the product of diseased ambition as appetitive excess. Here, the fact that spirit is the *natural* ally of reason is the sticking point. It is one thing to claim that ambition can be brought into line with a rational appraisal of the right way to live. It is quite another to propose that wanting to make something of oneself will naturally tend to align with reason's beliefs about how we should act.

It is this second claim about the tendency of the spirited part to promote psychic unity which has given rise to the second family of interpretations of Plato's notion of spirit. These readings cast Plato's notion of *thumos* as a desire for, or sensitivity to, the *kalon*.[15] The view takes two forms. One claims that spirit simply is a desire for the *kalon*, the other that Plato believes the spirited part can be educated so as to desire what is *kalon*. This significant difference aside, the views are united in arguing that Plato sees the spirited part's relationship to the *kalon*, whether as formal object or possibility, as its defining characteristic.[16] The central idea is that

[14] Which is not to say that proponents of the self-esteem view do not try to accommodate Plato's understanding of *thumos* as the ally of reason. See, for example, Cooper (1984: 135). Nor are these attempts without merit. However roughly speaking, the more an interpretation tends to stress *philonikia*, the more it has a hard time finding grounds for Plato's claim that the spirited part is the *natural* ally of reason. Nor is this the only issue with this reading. At least in their current form, they too do not do justice to the violence Plato sees in *thumos* .

[15] At this point I should stress that dividing the majority of contemporary readings of Plato's concept of *thumos* into those that make self-esteem spirit's formal object, and those that emphasize *to kalon* is a heuristic. Most of the interpretations referenced here see both self-esteem and *to kalon* as figuring centrally in understanding the spirited object of desire. Therefore, it is more accurate to read this distinction as picking out the point of emphasis of each reading. Some stress *to kalon*, some the desire for self-esteem. In a similar vein, the narrative of these interpretations growing out of either Plato's claims about spirit being the natural ally or wanting victory is simplistic. Many other factors and features of the text have given rise to these readings.

[16] Examples of the former position are: Kamtekar (1998), G. Lear (2004: 138), although she shifts to the latter position (2006: 118), and in a qualified sense, Singpurwalla (2013). Wilburn, whose interpretation of *thumos* as the love of the *oikeion* is closest to my own, was, also, at first, a proponent of this kind of *kalon* reading, see his

according to Plato we want to be *kalos*. As a result, we are attracted to actions we see as *kalon* and spirit either is or can be this desire. *Kalos* can be translated as fine, beautiful, noble, but however one understands it, one thing is clear—for Plato *to kalon* is a fundamental value. For Plato, something's being beautiful is, with the exception of its being good (*agathon*), not only the best thing a person, action, or thing can be, but an articulation of its value that explains more kind-specific evaluations. So, for example, a self-controlled action is worth doing because it is noble (*kalon*), and a statue is well-proportioned because making it that way would be beautiful.[17] On one dominant interpretation, what makes being beautiful so valuable according to Plato is that beauty is equivalent to good order. More exactly, Plato believes a thing is *kalon* when it is well-ordered such that it excellently fulfills its function.[18] Given these points, we can see a rough outline of how the proposed interpretation of spirit is meant to work. Plato claims that the spirited part has some capacity as a principle of psychic unity. He believes this because he believes that the spirited part of the soul pursues what it takes to be *kalon* and through this pursuit orders (in a good way) a person's soul (i.e., unifies it).

Although the emphasis on spirit's capacity to produce psychic unity is well placed, and it is true that Plato finds worth in spirit at least in part because it can find *kalon* actions attractive,

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dissertation (2011: 21). Examples of the latter position are, Hobbs (2000: 38-39), Moss (2005), Brennan (2012: 111), Weinstein (2018: 22).

[17] For a sampling of the debate surrounding how to understand Plato's conception of *to kalon*, see G. Lear (2004:123-137, and 2006a), Rachel Barney (2010a), and Terence Irwin's (2010). Dover (1994: chapter 2) provides a useful overview of Classical Athenian understandings of the concept. I mention these particular discussions because they are the ones which have most shaped my own thinking. All that is required for the argument above, is that one grant that Plato saw a concern for the *kalon* as a sufficient, or near sufficient, guide to good action, which I take to be a less contentious claim.

For support that fineness is distinct from goodness but has the same extension the *locus classicus* is *Symposium* 204d-e. For support that Plato sees beauty as a matter of being ordered so as to be able to excellently perform its function, *Republic* 353c-e, *Hippias Major* 290c-d, *Timaeus* 87c.

[18] For example, G. Lear's (2004), who further develops a line of thought put forward by Cooper (1996). Both Cooper's and Lear's articles focus on Aristotle's conception of the *kalon*. Lear, however, extends the conception to Plato and argues that Plato's conception of the *kalon* is roughly equivalent to that found in Aristotle.

the interpretation has a serious problem. The problem is that it makes the spirited part out to be *too much* of an agent of psychic unity. If *thumos* were a desire for the *kalon*, then it would not need any oversight, and Plato unwaveringly maintains that left to its own devices the thumoetic part will incline to viciousness and savagery (*Republic* e.g., 375e-376c, 411c-e 548e-549b and 590b). For Plato, the thumoetic part is *not* a principle of psychic unity. It is a *limited* principle of psychic unity—and the proposed reading of *thumos* as the desire for the *kalon* does not accommodate this central aspect of Plato's account.

This is a stumbling block for the reading regardless of whether one thinks pursuing the *kalon* is what the thumoetic part always does, or only what it does once it has been well educated. If it were possible to shape a person's spirited part such that it only pursued *kalon* actions as such, then having arrived at this condition the spirited part would not need reason's oversight. Moreover, there is at least some ground for thinking (depending on one's understanding of Plato's views about the *kalon*) that in this condition the thumoetic part would be able to rule a virtuous soul, i.e., that on their own healthy thumoetic desires and concerns could keep appetite in line and unify a psyche. At least from Plato's perspective, this is a far too rosy picture of spirit. It is worth stressing that there is nothing in this objection which cuts against the possibility of the spirited part pursuing *kalon* ends under a different description. The spirited part becomes too much of a principle of psychic unity only when it is seen to pursue the *kalon as kalon*. If, say, it pursued competitive success, and it was the case that doing what is noble is intelligible as a victory, then there is no problem. However, if the thumoetic part does not pursue actions as *kalon*, that reopens the question of how and why it functions as a principle of psychic order. If it is some other end that the thumoetic part is after, then we need an explanation of why pursuing that end helps establish psychic unity.

Stressing this lack of fit between the thumoetic part as limited principle of psychic unity and thumoetic part as lover of the *kalon* is not, on its own, enough to invalidate the interpretation. Many advocates of this view are aware that if spirit is the love of the fine, then one needs an explanation of why this is not enough for virtue and psychic unity. Explanations in this vein tend to focus on the fact that for Plato, being *kalos* is intimately connected with how one appears. Plato thinks the *kalon* is showy, and that is seen to offer two routes to explaining the shortcomings of pursuing it. The first is to stress the particular vulnerability of concern for what is fine (or admirable) to public opinion. The second is to point out that so understood, the love of the *kalon* will only lead to an agent performing a subset of virtuous actions. The desire to be *kalos* is the desire to be outstanding, and therefore the agent will not be attracted to the more humdrum demands of virtue.[19] This first response does not seem to me to do much to address the difficulty with proposing the *kalon* as a possible/formal object of *thumos*.[20] The second, while more promising, does not appear capable of explaining why the spirited part would need continual oversight. However, irrespective of these assessments the reason we should reject these attempts to save the reading of *thumos* as love of the *kalon* is that Plato has something to say about why the spirited part is limited in its ability to establish psychic structure—and it is not that it cares too much about appearances. Plato believes that if we are to understand the element of human life he calls spirit, we must face up to the fact that it is violent, and it is this violence which he believes bars the spirited part from ever being able to unify the soul.[21]

[19] For example, G. Lear (2004: 142), and Wilburn (2011: 20 and 138-140). Lear offers an explanation of the second kind, Wilburn the first.
[20] That is, once one accepts that Plato takes *to kalon* to be something more than "what is admired."
[21] In describing the spirited part as violent, I am not claiming that Plato thinks that the spirited part only pursues violent actions. Rather, my claim is that Plato believes the spirited part *inclines* to violence. In Plato, the spirited part often issues in violence, and, more importantly, becomes excessively violent when left ungoverned. It is this internal tendency to violence which is central to Plato's understanding of *thumos* and which stands in need of explanation. I attempt to offer such an explanation in chapter 2, and again, and to a greater extent, at the close of chapter 4.

When Plato introduces spirit in *Republic*, nearly the first thing he points out is its potential for savagery (376b-c). Uncontrolled, spirit is *agrios*. The term can be translated as savage but also as wild. Spirit without some sort of guidance or tempering cannot live with others. It will, claims Socrates, turn citizens against their fellows. For Plato, spirit may be a source of great benefit to human beings, but it can also tear down civil and psychic order. Like a wild animal that has been domesticated, it must be treated with care and respect. It is never safe, and its predilection to violence and potential for savagery are something that can never be trained away. This is a thought in evidence throughout *Republic*. For example, when Plato turns to describing what a community and individual dominated by spirited concerns looks like, he stresses that both are shot through with a similar violence. Spirited men and women love hunting and fighting, and above all else revere excellence in war (547d-e, 548e-549a). It is this focus on war and the use of force that is a, if not *the*, source of their undoing. They choose the wrong rulers and downplay the essential role of cultural education (547-e-548b, 549b). As a result, whatever psychic and civil structure they have established is doomed to collapse. Nor is the violent character of *thumos* something that Plato believes is restricted to its imperfect or improperly educated manifestations. In Plato's ideal city and ideal soul, the job of the spirited part will be to fight. In this city, the spirited class—the auxiliaries—are the police and soldiers. They are, to paraphrase Elizabeth Anscombe's wonderful phrase, the servants of the law fighting.[22] In the virtuous soul, the well-educated spirited part is cast as reason's loyal subordinate, one that follows orders and advances reason's ends, but one that does so through the appropriate application of force up to and including violence (*Republic*, 442a).[23]

[22] Elizabeth Anscombe (1957: 6).
[23] The connection between *thumos* and the use of force has of course not gone unnoticed. Less common, is a recognition of the central place of violence in Plato's account of spirit. Even interpreters who stress this feature of

Therefore, we need another interpretation of *thumos*. We need an account that captures the following core elements of Plato's view:

a) Plato's understanding of the spirited part as a *limited* principle of psychic unity.

b) Plato's belief that the limitations of spirit *qua* principle of unity are due to its being violent regardless of whether it is in a good or bad condition.

The aim of this study will be to provide just such an interpretation, one that accurately reflects Plato's sense of the strengths *and* shortcomings of the spirited part, and which throughout cleaves to Plato's conception of *thumos* as violent.[24]

Although part of its goal will be to capture Plato's belief in spirit's great potential to make us happy and whole, this study will be intent on bringing into view Plato's thought about the nature of spirit's limitations and their connection to violence. In a sense, I will be bringing the bad news about *thumos*. As Plato understands it, *thumos* is inescapably inclined to violence, and though he does think there is a place for the judicious use of force, he does see the restriction to force as a defining limitation of the thoughts and desires he calls *thumos*.[25]

Plato's views, such as Weinstein (2018), see the violent manifestations of spirit as something that can be left behind. Thus, for Weinstein, violence is a feature of *thumos* in its "primitive state" one that can be developed such that violence ceases to typify thumoetic actions. Wilburn (2011) initially endorses a similar view, and while his later work (2021) recognizes the centrality of aggression, it argues that Plato's understands *thumos* as having a gentle side. By contrast, I am arguing that Plato sees violence as something that permeates *thumos* throughout, and that it is this feature of his view which explains why he believes the spirited part cannot unify the soul.

[24] Given its prioritization of the violence of *thumos*, the interpretation provided here, namely that Plato understands *thumos* as the defense *to oikeion* or one's own, is a development of the "self-esteem reading." Such a description has the potential to be misleading. Along with sidelining Plato's claims about spirit's capacity as a principle of psychic order, self-esteem readings, perhaps surprisingly, tend to underplay the extent to which Plato sees *thumos* as violent. Typically, when these readings move to account for a) spirit's capacity to produce psychic order and b) Plato' seeming attribution of a rich content to spirited thought, they leave behind the violent aspect of *thumos*. (I would argue that this is what happens with Cooper (1984) and Gosling (1973)). Two exceptions are Kragerud (2010) and perhaps Tarnopolsky (2015). Although as these readings bring out, when interpretations emphasize violence it leads to another issue, namely, interpretations that emphasize spirit's violent character downplay Plato's attribution of a rich cognitive content to thumoetic desires. By contrast, it is my belief that Plato never sees desire as brute in this way (as in, "I just want it).

[25] The fact that Plato thinks an ideal psychic and civic constitution will involve fighting—and have a fighting part—is decisive proof that he is not opposed to the use of force, *per se*.

If, as I suggest, Plato does see a darker side to *thumos*, why have other commentators over-looked it? To be clear, my claim is not that recent scholarship has ignored either Plato's claims about the violence of the thumoetic part or its limitations as a principle of psychic unity. Rather, what has been overlooked is the centrality of violence to Plato's understanding, and the link between spirit's irreformable restriction to the use of force and its limitations *qua* principle of unity. I would like to offer two reasons for this.

One reason for the de-emphasis of the darker aspects of *thumos* is that Plato himself focuses on the fact that spirit constitutes a class of non-rational desire conducive to virtue and psychic unity. One can cast this is as a point about the development of Plato's theoretical psychology across multiple dialogues. As the story goes, Plato initially distinguishes between rational and non-rational motivations (*Phaedo*, 66b-e). However, what he then came to think is that a distinction should be drawn within the domain of non-rational motivations: namely, that among such desires there is a class which encourages rational self-governance and the development of virtuous character. In taking this line Plato was not inventing so much as finding a place for the culturally entrenched assumption that a healthy sense of shame is critical to the development of good character.[26] The result is the tri- (not bi-) partite psychology of *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. However, one does not need a developmental story to see that in the dialogues where Plato explicitly endorses a tri-partite psychology, he focuses on the beneficial aspects of *thumos*, typically contrasting it favorably with appetite (*Republic* 442a, *Phaedrus* 246b, *Timaeus* 70a compared with 71a). The spirited part is the good element of unreason, the white and not the black horse. Given that Plato spends most of his time lauding the spirited part, it is quite understandable that scholars have followed suit. Now, perhaps Plato recognized his

[26] Plato's *Charmides* reflects both the Classical Athenian presumption and Plato's sensitivity to it.

own point of emphasis and trusted that his readers were familiar enough with what he was calling *thumos* that they would not lose sight of its shortcomings, or perhaps he simply was not sensitive enough to the potential for misunderstanding. However, though Plato may stress the potential benefits of *thumos* and its superiority to appetite, I will argue his account reflects a developed sense of spirited desires as non-rational and decisively inadequate to the task of making us happy.

A second reason for the de-emphasis of the darker facets of *thumos* has been the focus on moral education. Much of the recent scholarship which attempts to make sense of Plato's views about *thumos* takes as its main theme Plato's understanding of the role of *thumos* in moral education. That Plato sees the education of the spirited part as playing an integral role in the process by which a human being becomes good is undeniable. The vision of acceptable poetic content which he advances in Books II and III of *Republic* is clearly curated with half an eye to its effects on *thumos*. In fact, it has been contended that the spirited part and its desires are the primary target of the entire revisionary cultural program.[27] This is not an unreasonable thing to think, given the concern of the spirited part for others opinions and by extension cultural values. It is certainly a central aim of *Republic*'s educational program to shape these shared values as well as what counts as admirable. It stands to reason that the part of the soul this will most influence is the part that acts for the sake of admiration. The problem with this approach to Plato's views about *thumos* is, again, one of overemphasis. It is typical for analyses to start from

[27] Hobbs (2000: 59-76) makes a good case for seeing Plato's concern to revise the content of poetry as aimed at educating the spirited part by providing appropriate role models. She also endorses the further claim, namely that *thumos* is the primary target of the early educational program. This is a far more contentious claim. See Wilberding (2012) who persuasively argues that the education of the would-be guardians is just as concerned with their appetites. The prevalence of the thought that Plato's ideal cultural education is primarily focused on shaping *thumos* can be traced to Burnyeat (1980). It is also in Gosling (1973: 77), Kamtekar (1998), Lear (2004: 140-4), Reeve (2013: 99), Weinstein (2018: 17) and others.

the presumption that Plato theorizes *thumos because* of its role in moral education.[28] There are two problems with this. First, it tends to paint an overly laudatory picture of *thumos*.[29] The specter of bad education is always present, but when moral education is emphasized, *thumos* generally comes across as a cognitively sophisticated source of great benefit. Once again, *thumos* becomes the "good" kind of non-rational desire, one worth taking seriously because it constitutes the majority of our pre-reflective thoughts about virtue. Second, prioritizing spirit's role in moral education encourages seeing the desire for recognition as the centerpiece of Plato's account. If what matters to Plato about *thumos* is that it can be shaped by cultural products, then what matters about spirited desire is that it is for the admiration which can be found in conforming to these values. But what if the desire for recognition is not the core of Plato's view? Generally speaking, focus on spirit's role in moral education has distorted our understanding of Plato's account of *thumos*. In this study, Plato's views about moral education will not come in for much analysis. In part, this is because the topic has been well and excellently canvased, and in part it is because when one sets aside the topic of moral education, it paves the way to seeing *thumos* in a different light.

The fact that many scholars have over-emphasized Plato's interest in the role of spirit in moral education points to a further issue. At the outset I claimed that it has become a thing of the past to believe that "spirit," if it even exists, pales in importance when compared to reason and appetite. But perhaps that is too hasty. One possible explanation as to why interpretations of *thumos* have spent too much time trying to find spirit's place in Plato's account of moral

[28] There are of course exceptions, e.g., Brennan (2012) and Weinstein (2018, chapters 14 and 15), and Wilburn (2021).
[29] At very least, this emphasis tends to cast *thumos* as more malleable than Plato believes. See the related point above about the way in which a focus on the mechanism of internalization obscures the determinate character of thumoetic thoughts and motivations.

education is that it reflects an enduring insecurity about *thumos* as an object of inquiry. Or, if it is not an insecurity about the significance of *thumos*, then at the least an oversensitivity to the summary dismissals that once predominated in understandings of Plato's theoretical psychology. Reconstructing the tacit motivations driving an interpretation is difficult. However, the emphasis on moral education has all the feel of an attempt to justify interest in *thumos*, as if to say, "Look, moral education is a serious philosophical topic, and *thumos* is connected with that, so it too is a fitting object of philosophical inquiry." There looks to be an enduring doubt here, a doubt that *thumos*—on its own—is something worth investigating.

In contrast, along with interpreting *thumos* as a limited because violent principle of psychic unity, a second overarching aim of this study will be to pursue an understanding of Plato's notion of spirit guided by the assumption that spirit defines human life as decisively as reason and appetite.[30] Plato certainly thought this was the case. It is true that he may have thought so as a result of the more agonistic character of Classical Greek society.[31] However, that does not undermine the veracity of the thought. The truth is that the place of *thumos* in human life and action is as significant now as it was then. To accept this thought is to posit understanding *thumos* as an end in itself, instead of arriving at an interpretation shaped by the place of spirit vis-a-vis some further more significant subject matter (e.g., moral education, non-

[30] A brief note here about terminology, and the meaning of the term '*thumos*' in this dissertation. Plato's typically refers to the spirited part of the soul as *to thumoeides* (e.g., *Republic*, 441a, 548c, 581a), not *thumos*. In keeping with Plato's usage, I draw a distinction between the spirited part (*to thumoeides*) and spirit (*thumos*). I will use 'spirit,' and '*thumos*' to refer to, loosely speaking, the kind of desire which, according to Plato distinguishes one part of the soul. By contrast, I will reserve 'thumoetic (or spirited) part,' for the part of the soul distinguished by this kind of desire. Therefore, in describing this dissertation as focused on, and committed to, the significance of *thumos*, I am claiming that my focus will be on Plato's understanding of the class of desires he calls *thumos*. For more on this terminological distinction and the conceptual distinction which warrants it, see chapter 1 below.

[31] A feature of Classical thought and mores summed up by Dover in his wry remark on Xenophon's approach to addressing social ills. "It seems that crowns were his solution to everything" (1994: 166).

rational thought, mereology, or even psychic unity).[32] When one does so, the result is a better understanding of both Plato's views and of the way in which they represent an illuminating insight into the kinds of creatures we are. Therefore, this study begins by trying to explain why Plato thought the spirited part a violent and limited principle of psychic unity—in other words, it aims to meet the two interpretive goals articulated above as (a) and (b)—but it continues, and is guided throughout, by the aim of trying to understand the feature of our lives that Plato calls *thumos*.[33]

[32] Plato's teleological conception of the parts of the soul and their characteristic desires might seem to speak against such an approach. Plato understands the parts of the soul and their respective desires as having a function, namely a distinctive role determined by the end of human life, i.e., happiness, rational rule, virtue, what have you. (This thought is most apparent in *Timaeus*, but it is also surely at work in *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Consider, for example, the claim that the spirited part is the "natural ally" of reason.") Plato takes this function, namely, the way in which the part (or desire) contributes to the possibility of happiness, to define the part as the part that it is. Nevertheless, that does not mean that his account of the soul proceeds from the question, "What is required for virtue?" Rather, we can and should read Plato as also moving from the diagnostic to the normative, so to speak. Plato does believe that at some level of description every aspect of our psychology is meant to contribute to our overall good. However, that does not mean that his account of the psychic parts proceeds from the specification of their function. Instead, we should read Plato as someone who first identifies a regularity in human life, and only then, once the outlines of the psychic kind are already in place, asks: "And what is it good for?" Applying this to *thumos*, the thought would be that the facts of human life understood as such constitute an independent source informing Plato's account of this third class of desires. So, to the question, "Why a third part of the soul?" Plato's response would be, "because that is what you see when you look at human beings."

[33] See, also, Wilburn (2021: 26), who similarly understands *thumos* or "spirited motivations" as the focus of his monograph.

Overview of the Argument

The main claim of this study is that Plato interprets *thumos* as defending one's own (*to oikeion*). In keeping with the two aims articulated in the introduction, the dissertation has two parts.

The first part of the dissertation (comprised of Chapters 1-3) argues that reading *thumos* as the defense of one's own meets the interpretive demand of explaining why *thumos* is a limited principle of psychic unity. In broad strokes, the structure of the argument is as follows: Plato's guiding presumption about *thumos* is that it is a limited principle of psychic unity. Given that this is the case, explaining why *thumos* is a limited principle of psychic unity is the primary interpretive hurdle that a reading of Plato's views must get over. The text of *Republic* suggests a reading of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, and such a reading can meet this interpretive demand. Therefore, there is good reason to think that Plato did in fact understand *thumos* to be the defense of one's own.

This conclusion, however, is treated as provisional, since Plato has a lot more to say about *thumos* other than that it is a limited principle of psychic unity. Thus, the second part of the dissertation (comprising Chapters 4 and 5) aims to more firmly establish the proposed interpretation by arguing that an account of *thumos* as defending one's own also captures the diverse claims Plato makes about *thumos* and the thumoetic part. Doing this work establishes the proposed interpretation in two senses. First, it shows that a reading of *thumos* as defending one's own fits the text. Second, it shows Plato to be in possession of a rich account of *thumos* capable of illuminating the phenomena from which it is drawn. What emerges from fitting the account to the text is a flexible, sometimes surprising, and always deep understanding of a significant facet of human life. As a result, this second part of the dissertation meets the aim outlined above of

reading Plato as a potential source of insight into the nature and significance of the facet of our psyche he calls *thumos*.

Below is a chapter by chapter overview of the argument.

Chapter 1 introduces the premise that Plato understands *thumos* as a limited principle of psychic unity by situating it within a general overview of his tri-partite theory of the soul. Much of the chapter is taken up with this overview, which also clarifies the concepts in terms of which this project's interpretation of *thumos* is pursued. The chapter maintains that the tri-partite psychology is Plato's attempt to theorize his dual commitments that happiness is unity, and that the vast majority of human beings are characterized by enduring psychic conflict. Three claims are identified as comprising the core of the theory. First, the theory claims that the human soul is constituted by three faculties of desire. Second, the theory claims that there are three distinct sources, or subjects, of action corresponding to these kinds of desire. Third, the theory claims that these three different kinds of desires and psychic agencies structure our personalities. The chapter argues that given the fact that the theory is an attempt to conceptualize happiness as unity and unhappiness as conflict, we should read Plato as distinguishing the three kinds of desire on the basis of their ability to unify the soul, i.e., make us happy. Following out this contention, the chapter concludes that Plato's orienting thought about the thumoetic part is that it is a limited principle of psychic organization lying "between" an appetitive part that cannot directly unify the soul and a rational part that can.

Chapter 2 introduces the main claim of the dissertation, namely that Plato understands *thumos* as defending one's own (*to oikeion*). The argument, that starts in this chapter and finishes in

chapter 3, is that this reading explains and captures Plato's understanding of the spirited part as a limited principle of psychic unity.

Chapter 2 focuses on Plato's sense of the spirited part's positive contributions to the work of establishing psychic unity. It begins with the textual basis for the proposed interpretation of Plato's notion of *thumos*. This it finds in the passage about the well-bred hound which Plato uses to introduce *thumos* into the conversation of *Republic*. There, the hound—the stand in for a well-educated thumoetic part—is described as discriminating between what is *oikeion* and *allotrion*. After expanding on the sense of *oikeion* in this context, the chapter argues that an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own explains why Plato believes the spirited part is the "natural ally" of reason. Plato believes that because it defends *to oikeion,* the thumeotic part (1) provides unique and needed assistance to reason in the form of perseverance, (2) will necessarily side with reason in cases of explicit conflict with appetite, and (3) will tend to support reason's desires more generally because of its attraction to the stability aimed at by rational desires.

Chapter 3 argues for the other half of the main claim advanced at the outset of Chapter 2. It contends that attributing to Plato a conception of *thumos* as defending one's own, also explains Plato's understanding of the limitations of the spirited part's ability to promote psychic harmony. The chapter pursues this conclusion by first arguing that Plato characterizes spirited self-control as forceful or violent. It then argues, that Plato believes spirited self-control has this character, because it is an instance of defending *to oikeion*. Its claim is that Plato believes the spirited part is restricted to violently repressing desires because it sees disruptive desires as *allotrion,* and therefore, as irredeemable threats. Having established that Plato believes the spirited part is restricted to maintaining control by force, the chapter then argues that Plato considers this

forceful repression of desire a limited form of self-organization. It does this, by situating Plato's claims about spirited self-control within his broader framework for thinking about self-organizing activity as either a force or persuasion. Building off its interpretations of Plato's notions of intra-psychic force and persuasion, the chapter concludes that Plato believes the spirited part is decisively limited because, in its defense if one's own, it cannot see through conflict to reconciliation, or make sense of a different sensibility as beneficial.

Chapter 4 picks up the interpretation of *thumos* as defending one's own and argues that this reading explains not only Plato's belief that the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic unity, but Plato's other central claims about *thumos* and the more familiar psychological phenomena with which it is identified. Moving through many of the significant mentions of *thumos* in *Republic,* the chapter contends that Plato's understanding *thumos* as the defense of one's own explains why he believes that war is the *ergon* of the thumoetic part, anger and loving victory some of its archetypal manifestations, and perhaps surprisingly, shaping an individual's attachments is an education of their spirited part. This application of the interpretation to the text, reveals in Plato an understanding of *thumos* as a distinctive form of non-rational thought, one with its own logic, and on a par with reason and appetite with respect to its significance in human life. More specifically, *qua* defending one's own, *thumos* emerges as defined by a vision of the world at war, a concern for a distinctive sense of self, and—because it is a power for attachment—a force for bringing us together, albeit one that is always defined by a note of hostility.

Chapter 5 continues the task of arguing that a reading of *thumos* as the defense of one's own both fits the text and yields a rich understanding of this facet of our psychology. The chapter's

focus is Plato's repeated association of *thumos* with the love of honor. The chapter argues that despite this repeated association, we should reject the scholarly consensus that the spirited part is "essentially social." Doing so, the chapter maintains, brings into view Plato's understanding of *thumos* as at bottom an identification of oneself as what is good.

The chapter first challenges the contention that *thumos* is essentially social. It looks at *Republic* and argues that in this text, (1) the centrality of honor to Plato's conception of spirit is not as strong as it first appears, (2) Plato identifies as spirited a number of non-social concerns and emotions, and (3) there is an identification of spirit with perseverance equal to the emphasis on its association with honor and victory. The chapter then argues that this reading of *Republic* is, in different ways, supported by *Laches*, *Timaeus*, *Symposium*, and Plato's belief that *thumos* is the defense of *to oikeion*. Having established that Plato does not conceive of the spirited part as fundamentally the seat of social concerns, the chapter then explains how Plato sees the love of honor fitting into his account. It concludes, by arguing that the payoff of rejecting the essentially social interpretation, is that without its distorting presence, we see that for Plato *thumos* is fundamentally a form of thought which identifies the self with the good and is therefore structured by a sense of the self as perfect.

Chapter 1
A Limited Principle of Psychic Unity

Republic is an argument for the just life. It is also an argument for the rational life. It is an attempt to maintain that a life guided by, and organized around, the pursuit of knowledge is the happiest life for a human being. Plato's argument for this conclusion takes the form of an attempt to cash out the superiority of the rational life in terms of goods more readily associated with human happiness. We are told that the life of reason is the most pleasant, the most free, the most efficacious and the most unified a human being can hope for.

It is this last claim that will figure prominently in what follows, namely, that unity is only possible for a soul guided by reason. As Plato both recognizes and stresses, a corollary of his claim about the power of reason is that no other desires, faculties, or principles constituting the human mind are able to bring about psychic unity. In the tri-partite theory of the soul articulated by Plato in *Republic*, the non-rational mind is theorized as *thumos* and appetite.[1] This means that however else Plato views appetite and *thumos*, it is central to his understanding of both that neither can unify the human soul.

My focus is on *thumos*, or spirit. As one facet of the non-rational soul, *thumos* is unable to unify the soul. However, that is not the end of the matter. While appetites and the appetitive part are consistently cast as sources of psychic disorder, Plato's characterization of *thumos* is mixed. Not only does Plato understand the thumoetic part as having a positive role in the work of unifying the soul, he also views it as having its own internal tendency to bring about psychic order. Thus as Plato understands it, *thumos* in some sense can, and in some sense cannot, unify

[1] I distinguish between thumos and the thumoetic part. See below, and "Introduction," n. 29, for more about this terminological and conceptual distinction.

the soul. This aspect of *thumos* is formative for Plato's conception of this element of the human psyche, so much so, I will argue, that understanding what Plato means by *thumos* depends on viewing it as soul that functions as a limited principle of psychic unity.

Another way to put this point is that Plato's account of *thumos* aims to explain how and why the thumoetic part functions as a limited principle of psychic unity. If that is right, then the first thing to settle is what it means for the thumoetic part to be such a principle. This chapter starts in on that task.

The chapter has two main goals. The first is to introduce an overview of Plato's tri-partite psychology and argue that Plato's theory of soul aims to account for enduring psychic conflict. The second is to use the introduced overview of the tri-partite psychology to articulate the sense in which Plato views the thumoetic part as a limited principle of unity. Pursuant to these goals, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first argues that Plato views human beings as nearly universally torn by enduring psychic conflict. The second introduces the fundamentals of the tri-partite psychology as Plato's attempt to theorize this conflict. The third deploys this theoretical framework to flesh out the sense in which Plato considers *thumos* a limited principle of psychic unity, and argues that Plato comes to theorize *thumos* because of his primary focus on enduring psychic conflict and the possibility of its resolution.

1. Enduring Psychic Conflict

In *Republic*, happiness is psychic unity, or the absence of internal conflict. The tri-partite theory embodies a network of concepts for articulating an account of happiness as the unity of that complex whole which is the human soul.[2] Plato is quite clear that this unity is, to borrow a

[2] My view is not that the conception of happiness as (psychic) unity is introduced with the tri-partite psychology. Instead, the tri-partite psychology develops a conceptual framework for articulating the conception of *eudaimonia* as

metaphor from *Republic*, an "inner harmony" (401d-402a, 443e, 554e, where it is explicitly contrasted with mere self-control, and 519e for a parallel description of civic unity as harmony). It is the robust nature of this unity that can make it seem unproblematically an account of happiness. The life held out here is not one of managed conflict, a life wherein the individual wills himself to pursue a coherent set of ends in the face of conflicting urges (554e, for just such a description of the oligarch's life). Such a life is continence on a global scale, and one form of the enduring conflict of desire that Plato identifies as unhappiness. By contrast, for Plato, true unity is the coherence of desire. It is not just acting in such a way that one's actions or projects fit together, but acting in such a way because those actions flow from a hierarchy of wants and values that come together as a coherent whole. Realizing this condition, and therefore living free from the pain, self-frustration and confusion of psychic conflict is, transparently, a life many of us would call happy.[3]

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unity (e.g., *Gorgias* 482b-c). This reading is in keeping with my view that the dialogues show a consistent awareness of internal conflict as both a possibility and significant phenomenon (see below).

[3] One can see Plato trading on the antecedent acceptance of such harmony as a great good at several points in *Republic*. When filling out his account of the kind of person he calls oligarch, one whose life is dominated by the pursuit of wealth, Plato paints the picture of an individual who lives just such a life of managed conflict (554b-e). On Plato's picture, the self-control of the oligarch is fraught, and even his successful self-restraint painful. He is an individual who lives a life dominated by fear, most notably, fear of himself and his own desires (554d). Plato does flesh out this description. However, it can only show up as a decisive criticism of the oligarch against a background of Socrates' interlocutors, and Plato's readers, taking such a life to be bad—and believing that one free from such conflict is far happier. This line of thought is sharpened in Plato's criticism of the kind of person he calls a tyrant (in part because he believes that most tyrants, in the sense of those who acquire absolute political power by extra-legal means, are tyrants). Plato argues that, contrary to appearances, the tyrant is a seething, disorganized mass of appetites (e.g., *Republic*, 573d-e). Plato casts such an individual as living a frenzied life, one full of disorder, internal conflict, and painful frustration, and he does so in the attempt to argue that the tyrant is unhappy (573e-574a, 577e). Plato's claim about the tyrannical individuals, and especially those who achieve political power (578b-c), is that their purported happiness is a façade. They may look happy but look closer (577a) and one sees that in fact they are miserable (in part), *because* they are dragged every which way by conflicting needs, desires, and commitments. Plato can only think this will work as an argument against the tyrant if he believes the revelation of the truth of the tyrant's internal conflict will show up to his readers as misery.

This is a representation of the tyrant's life as a nightmare (574e), and it is in part aimed to puncture the confusion of those who take the tyrant to be "living the dream." Strikingly, Plato appears to believe that the mistaken appeal of the tyrant is in part due to the tyrant's seeming to embodying the ideal of harmony Plato attributes to the just individual. If that is correct, it is further evidence Plato recognizes in his audience an already present admiration for the sort of psychic unity (harmony) he will identify with justice and happiness. The view that

Coordinate with it being a theory of happiness, the tri-partite psychology is equally a theory of unhappiness. It is a theory put forward by Plato as a diagnosis and diagnostic tool,[4] one that aims to describe the way most of us are even as it offers a vision of what we can hope to become. Unity, according to *Republic*, is an achievement, and thus we are not born that way. That Plato thinks this is a direct outgrowth of his view that the unified life is the happy life. *Eudaimonia* is not something granted to human beings as a matter of course; rather, the fully rational and virtuous life that Plato equates with happiness is a rare and difficult achievement. If only the happy are unified, then as Plato sees it, the vast majority of human beings live lives of a different sort—and possess souls in a different condition.

In contrast to the unified, the unhappy are in conflict with themselves. Plato believes that the vast majority of humankind in fact live lives torn and shaped by internal, psychic conflict. If the rational life is psychically harmonious life, and such a life is exceedingly rare,[5] then Plato must think that most of us live a different, conflicted kind of life. A central aim of the tri-partite theory of soul is to do justice to this fact by articulating a conceptual framework that captures the nature and pervasiveness of our internal conflicts.

This view of human beings as by and large conflicted is not unique to *Republic*, or the dialogues which overtly espouse a tri-partite psychology.[6] In *Phaedo*, Socrates casts the "desires

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the tyrant is happy because unified is arguably at work in the views of Thrasymachus' (e.g., 348d-349a), and explicitly present in Glaucon's development and articulation of Thrasymachus thought that injustice is beneficial. One can see this in the so-called ring of Gyges story (359c-360d). At work in the story is a thought that part of what makes the tyrant or ruthless politician appealing, is their "honesty." According to the story, we all want to be tyrants, but hold ourselves back. Thus, what makes the unreservedly unjust appear admirable and happy, is that they are not dishonest or deluded about who they are and what they want. As Plato envisions the imagination of people who admire the unjust, this admiration is founded on the supposed psychic harmony of such individuals (Callicles long, introductory speech in *Gorgias*, 482c-486d, manifests a similar belief about the unabashedly unjust.) Thus, Plato is assuming that Thrasymachus and those like him, be it vaguely or intuitively, accept and recognize the value psychic harmony.

[4] As reflected by the catalogue of vicious constitutions in *Republic*, 547d-579e.

[5] See *Republic*, 496a-b, 497e-498a, and for a sense of how rare even in an ideal community, 537a-541a.

[6] Namely, *Phaedrus and Timaeus*.

of the body" (66c) as frustrating, and interfering with, the soul's desire to know the forms (66b-d). Even though *Phaedo* rejects a view of the human soul as composite (e.g., 80b), the dialogue presents a view of human beings as, in some sense, internally conflicted. Not only does Plato theorize this conflict in *Phaedo*, he presents it there as an inescapable feature of human life. In *Phaedo*, human beings are *essentially* conflicted. Since both the unhappy and the happy have their better desires frustrated by their bodily nature, it is not just the vast majority of human beings whose lives are conditioned by internal conflict, but all human beings.

The possibility of internal conflict also figures prominently elsewhere in Plato's writings, and outside the context of his psychological theory. It is a central presupposition of the *elenchus* that it reveals, and seeks to treat, the internal conflict of the one being cross examined. Simplifying dramatically, the interlocutor is typically revealed as having affirmed a contradictory set of claims. In short, they are shown to be in conflict with themselves. In fact, Plato himself is happy to cast the confused state of the interlocutor as one of internal conflict. One can see this, for example, in *Gorgias* where Socrates describes his method of cross-examination as a special kind of refutation where the interlocutor refutes himself (474a, 476a), and later in that dialogue describes his cross-examinations as aiming to bring an individual into agreement with himself. (In the latter passage, 482b-c, Socrates is speaking with Callicles whom he strongly suspects is contradicting himself despite his candor and confidence.) If the *elenchus* aims to uncover and remove a form of internal conflict, its benefit is predicated on a conception of human beings as by and large in conflict with themselves. Again and again, Plato gives us interlocutors who contradict themselves, and who, whether willing or resistant, would stand to benefit from the resolution of their discord into unity. Therefore, neither the notion of internal conflict, nor Plato's sense of this conflict's pervasiveness comes onto the scene with *Republic*, or with

Republic's account of the soul. Rather, it is a consistent feature of Plato's understanding of human beings.

One does find an internal conflict of a particular kind assuming central importance in Plato's tri-partite account of the soul, namely, conflict among an individual's desires (e.g., *Republic*, 436a-441c, 548a-b, *Phaedrus*, 253e-254e). As a result, for the remainder of this project I will focus primarily on this "conflict of desire," and when I mention "internal" or "intra-psychic conflict" I will be referring to this particular type of internal conflict. Importantly, conflict among an individual's desires still describes a tremendously wide range of phenomena. As I am using the phrase, it covers any case of one (or more) desires impeding or disrupting the pursuit of some other desire (or desires). In one type of such conflict two of the agent's desires necessarily conflict: I want to be just, and I want to reduce my political opponents to abject poverty. However, two desires need not be necessarily opposed to one another to conflict, as we see in the well-worn example of wanting to eat a lot cake while also wanting to look good. Moreover, it is important to note that in order to qualify as the relevant kind of psychic conflict, the agent need not be overtly aware of how some one thing he pursues frustrates his pursuit of some other of his ends. Even if I do not recognize the tension, it is still an internal conflict if my vigorous pursuit of a promotion comes at the expense of the stable home-life I simultaneously prize. In fact, there can be a conflict even if I understand the sought-after promotion as a way of providing security for my family.[7]

[7] *Akrasia*, then, is one form of this conflict among desires. Though this claim depends on one's definition of *akrasia*, it is a far narrower phenomenon then the conflict among desires which appears in *Republic* and which I take the tri-partite theory to be aimed at explaining. For one, the kind of conflict Plato mentions is not solely conflict between reason and the non-rational. The tri-partite psychology also describes, and is concerned to explain, conflict within the non-rational (notably, 439e-440d). Second, the notion of psychic conflict central to *Republic* covers *enkrateia* (e.g., 441b) and vice (see below), just as readily as *akrasia*. Third, Plato's account of the degenerate characters in Books VIII-IX of *Republic* is an account of psychic conflict at the level of psychic structure (at the level of

This last case is worth dwelling on, for it brings into relief a central feature of the internal conflict Plato is concerned to understand, namely that it is *enduring*. When most of us imagine the case of someone caught between family and work, we imagine a conflict that plays a significant role in the person's life. There are countless versions of this trope. From working mother to disaffected "salaryman," the image is of a person struggling to manage a consistent tension in their life that issues from and gives structure to their character. It is this kind of internal conflict that looms large in Plato's understanding of imperfect human beings. These people are not just torn by conflicting desires, they suffer from conflict that rises to the level of their character. This is not the one-off desire to eat this desert, despite a new-year's resolution, but the politician with publicly unacceptable sexual proclivities that take him from tryst to tryst even as he furiously composes a life that denies them. Though Plato is also concerned to draw attention to and understand one-off psychic conflict, as he sees it, the notable feature of human beings is their reliable manifestation of enduring conflict.[8] Plato focuses on these internal conflicts because he thinks these are the conflicts that make the difference between happiness and unhappiness.

The most straightforward evidence of Plato's focus on enduring psychic conflict is his articulation in *Republic* of a catalogue of vicious psychic constitutions. These psychic constitutions—timocrat, oligarch, democrat, and tyrant—describe increasingly unhappy and

individual's character). Thus, this section of *Republic* amounts to an extended diagnostic of psychic conflict that depends on the vicious agent's rational endorsement (in some sense) of their own conflicted character.

[8] This is not to deny that a particular kind of one-off psychic conflict is central to the argument for tri-partition in Book IV of *Republic*. For an account of the nature of this specific kind of conflict of desire see Lorenz (2006, part I, Chapter 2). My claim is that we ought to distinguish between the kind of psychic conflict that figures in Plato's argument for his theory, and the features of human life that the theory casts as demanding recognition and explanation.

conflicted individuals. These are conflicted people, in the sense that enduring elements of their psychic structure (or character) conflict with one another (*Republic*, 554a).

In addition, support for the claim that Plato's focus is on enduring conflict can also be found in his account of the fully rational and virtuous individual. The rational man is "unified" and therefore free from psychic conflict. Yet, in *Republic* this virtuous individual is still presented as running afoul of local conflicts among their desires. We see this in the dialogue in at least three places. First, even the fully rational, well-educated individual is described as having to watch over certain of his desires throughout his life, where this includes stamping them out or moderating them if they become problematic (442a-b). This thought is repeated in Plato's comparison of the rational part to a farmer who must raise up healthy appetites and "prevent savage ones" from growing (589b). On this picture, savage appetites are born but put down before they are able to grow, like the sickly or savage animals that impede a farm's functioning. In both passages, the strong implication is that even the conflict-free individual will need to manage local conflicts among his or her desires. What distinguishes the *eudaimon* is that they have the character to prevent these more attenuated conflicts from becoming enduring. Second, Plato identifies a class of desires that by their nature conflict with other of an individual's desires (571b-572b). He further claims that these "lawless appetites" can never be fully extirpated, even by the virtuous. Thus, according to Plato, even the virtuous, rational individual will endure local conflicts between his harmonious personality and the occasional lawless appetite.[9] Finally, in *Republic* there is a moment where Plato is happy to portray Socrates as losing control of himself and getting inappropriately angry, a fact Socrates recognizes and for which he immediately

[9] This second form of local conflict may seem identical to the first, but they are importantly different. Plato is claiming that human beings, even the virtuous, will both generate disruptive appetites and possess them (i.e., the lawless appetites that show themselves in our dreams).

chastises himself (536c). If the character Socrates is intended as an exemplar of a unified individual (i.e., the fully rational philosopher), then here we have an instance of a virtuous, rational individual exhibiting a local conflict among his desires. In sum, Plato's willingness to make room for localized psychic conflict in the lives of the happy reflects a view that happiness is primarily a matter of escaping enduring psychic conflict.[10]

That said, it is not essential for my argument that Plato be even primarily interested in human beings' capacity for enduring psychic conflicts (although I do believe that to be true). Rather, it is enough if one grants that Plato sees the vast majority of human beings as suffering from both local *and* enduring internal conflicts. Local conflicts need not be reduced to insignificance. However, for Plato they are only part of the story—and arguably the lesser part. This matters, because as we shall see, enduring conflict is different in kind. It assumes an underlying psychic structure, a conflicted 'thing,' in a sense. But this is to anticipate. At present, all I hope to have established is that Plato starts from the thought that we—as a rule, without much success and over the course of our lives—struggle to navigate the enduring and local conflicts that arise between our various desires.

2. Theorizing Conflict

Plato's tri-partite psychology is an attempt to theorize the various forms of conflict described above. At the core of the theory are three claims.

(1) The human soul is constituted by three faculties of desire.
(2) There are three distinct sources, or subjects, of action corresponding to these three kinds of desire.
(3) The different kinds of desire and psychic agencies[11] come to structure our

[10] That Plato believes even the virtuous develop psychic conflicts of some, minimal, sort shows just how pervasive and difficult a feature of human life Plato takes these conflicts to be.
[11] The notion of agency here is limited, and my use of the term does not indicate an interpretation of the psychic parts as *robustly* agent like. For example, my calling each part of soul an 'agency,' does not mean I believe Plato thinks each part of the soul is capable of means-end reasoning. However, I do believe the term is licensed. Plato

personalities.

I will discuss these three claims in this order.

2.1 Three Kinds of Desire

In the tri-partite theory, the soul is presented as constituted by three kinds of desire: reason, spirit and appetite. In this context it is not possible to explore and defend the substantive claim that these desires "constitute" the human soul.[12] Thus, I will recast Plato's claim as the less contentious thought that there are three kinds of human wanting (*Republic*, 580d). This is still, of course, a broad claim about the character of human life, since it entails that all human intentional action, and surely much thought, is guided by reason, spirit and appetite.

Plato distinguishes these three kinds of desire on the basis of each being for a distinct formal object. This formal object distinguishes and unifies each kind in that each instance of the kind, each particular desire, can rightly be described as a desire for the relevant formal object. Thus, if the desire for a drink of water is an appetitive desire, water is, at least in this case, an instance of appetite's formal object—whatever that may be.

Importantly, this definition by Plato of the kinds of desire by means of a formal object is not just a distinction of these three kinds of desire on the basis of the things in the world they motivate us to pursue, but on the basis of the way in which objects of pursuit are understood to be desirable. Plato's thought is that there are three different ways in which human beings take

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believes the parts of the soul can motivate action independently of one another and are independent subjects of thought that admit of specific conditions which explain an individual human being acting and desiring in the way they do. In this sense, they are agencies. See below for a more extended account of this understanding of Plato's position.

[12] Two implications of this view are that Plato believes the soul as a whole, and reason in particular, are best understood as, in some sense, faculties of desire. See Kahn (1987) for a similar contention and attempted argument for the latter thesis that Plato understands reason as fundamentally a kind of desire.

ends to be desirable.[13] His view is that human beings set ends for themselves, and they do so on the basis of three possible understandings of those ends as worth pursuing (desirable, valuable, mattering, etc.). An example may help provide a clearer sense of Plato's view. Say I want to drink a glass of champagne. I might want the champagne because I love its taste (appetite). Or, I might want to drink the glass of champagne because champagne is what sophisticated people drink (spirit). Or, again, I might want, and drink, a glass of champagne because it encourages the convivial atmosphere and measured excitement so productive of good conversation (reason). In this example, drinking a glass of champagne, the desired activity, is a possible object of any of the three kinds of desire.[14]

The above example also offers a way into clarifying more exactly what it means to attribute to Plato the view that appetite, spirit and reason are themselves kinds of desire. Take appetite as an example. For Plato, there are token appetitive desires that motivate and guide our pursuit of particular ends. We have an appetite for this piece of cake, or for that glass of

[13] It is a point of contention in the scholarship, whether Plato conceives of the lower parts as pursuing the good in some form. In an influential view, Terence Irwin (1995: 206-211), argues that Plato defines appetites as "good independent" desires. On the other side of this debate, Rachana Kamtekar (2017) maintains that "The way *Republic* represents soul-parts' good directedness is to represent each soul-part as an agent pursuing the good under some conception: knowledge, honour or bodily pleasure (143)." I should stress that the question at issue is not whether, say, the appetitive part pursues what are in fact beneficial ends, but whether it makes sense to think of appetite as pursuing ends *as* good. By using 'desirable' I am attempting to sidestep this contentious issue, but only because engaging it would distract too much from the current line of argument. I believe Plato understands all human desire, including the non-rational, to be a pursuit of the good as such, and am happy to have the phrase "three ways in which human beings taken ends to be desirable," be read as "three ways in which human beings take ends to be good."

[14] Given Plato's account, an understanding of the desirability of the end can be mistaken, and the fact that there are three different ways in which an end can be understood as desirable complicates the ways in which an agent can go wrong. The agent's understanding will be mistaken when what is wanted is not desirable, i.e., not valuable or good, in the way the agent takes it to be. Given the speciation of desire, there are importantly two types of mistake the agent can make here: the agent can take some end as desirable when it is—full stop—undesirable, or they can take some end to be desirable which is in fact worthy of pursuit but misunderstand the end's desirability. It is, for example, the latter kind of mistake that is at work in Plato's account of the transition from timocracy to oligarchy (*Republic*, 550c-e). The timocrats come to honor money, i.e., they start to view wealth as a measure of a person's overall excellence relative to others, and this leads to their adoption of a wealth requirement for their rulers. Their error is not that they find wealth valuable, but rather they are mistaken because of the way in which they see it as valuable, namely as the mark of a distinctively superior individual.

champagne. In addition, on Plato's analysis the right thing to say about appetite in general, as well as about spirit and reason, is that it is a kind a of desire.[15] What I mean by this can be helpfully brought in view by considering not a one-off desire for a piece of cake, but what we ourselves might call an appetite for cake. The latter is a standing desire for cake, one that describes a relatively enduring feature of a person's personality and entails a sensitivity to the world. When someone has such an appetite, they act so as to get and eat particular pieces of cake, but they are also on the lookout for cake, notice it when it is on the menu, think a meal is not a meal without it, and so on. Plato's notions of appetite, spirit, and reason can similarly be read as standing desires, albeit for far more general formal objects than the (more) determinate object of the appetite for cake. To return to appetite, like the standing desire for cake, appetite in general embodies a sensitivity to the world which picks out and pursues various ends which are perceived as appetitively desirable, where "appetitively desirable" describes a way of seeming desirable, namely, the one that satisfies the standing desire that is appetite.

Plato's analysis of human desire distinguishes three kinds of desire, each constituted by a formal object that is a way of understanding an end as desirable. Or more carefully, given that the notion of understanding is best restricted to the operations of reason, each kind of desire is distinguished by a way of thinking of ends as desirable. If this is right, then providing an account of the various kinds of desire will center on developing an account of their formal objects. My aim in this project is to do just that with regards to spirit. Given Plato's understanding of the nature of the formal object of these desires, accomplishing this task will not so much be a matter

[15] It might be objected that describing faculties of the soul distorts the concept of desire beyond recognition. However, the point here is not wedded to a particular and developed account of the nature of desire. If the term desire seems misleading, feel free to set aside and substitute an alternative, such as drive, faculty of desire, etc.

of identifying a particular end. Instead, the work will be to identify and articulate a form of desirability, the way of thinking things good that defines what Plato calls spirit.

However, distinct from, and in order to make progress towards, this more developed kind of account, I will assume the following rough and ready description of the three kinds of desire.

As emphasized by many scholars,[16] Plato understands reason as having its own desires. Rational desire is the desire for knowledge (e.g., *Republic*, 581b), including knowledge of how to live (e.g., *Republic*, 589a-b). The knowledge pursued by rational desire is knowledge of the explanatory universals Plato calls the forms. In an everyday register, Plato's rational desires are those that involve the judgment that some course of action or end is "in truth good."[17] Alongside these desires of reason, Plato takes human life to be shaped by two types of non-rational desire. The first of these is appetite, or appetitive desire. Food, drink, sex and physical comfort are paradigmatic objects of appetitive desire (*Republic*, 439d, 580e). Speaking generally, appetites are desires for bodily pleasure or satisfaction.[18] This does not mean that appetites are restricted to desires for bodily needs. For one thing, Plato is adamant that human beings can, and typically do, develop a powerful appetite for money (*Republic*, 580e). According to Plato, this is not a matter of money being desired as a means to the satisfaction of bodily needs.[19] Rather, this is the desire of an individual who finds a physical satisfaction in the making of money. The appetite for

[16] E.g., Singpurwalla (2010: 880-881).
[17] Plato often refers to the rational part of the soul as the λογιστικόν (e.g., *Republic* 441a). Given the translation of this term as, roughly, "that which calculates" it might seem more accurate to gloss rational desire as desire which is the product of calculation (or, perhaps, deliberation). First, I do not take my preferred description of rational desire as at odds with an understanding of rational desire as the product of calculation. Rather, I take understanding some end as in truth good as the kind of understanding that could—but need not—be the outcome of deliberation. Second, what Plato means by calculation or deliberation is a difficult issue, and the above gloss of rational desire is also an attempt to sidestep this thorny topic.
[18] Though not pleasure full stop. See *Republic*, 583c-587b where Plato distinguishes among kinds of pleasure arguing that the satisfaction of non-rational desire brings with it a distinctive type of pleasure (one predicated on the existence of a pre-existing pain).
[19] Lorenz (2006: 44, 47-48).

money is not viewed as a strange exception either; Plato's thought is that a normal adult possesses a wide variety of appetites for ends that do not directly satisfy bodily needs.[20] Lastly, there is spirit or spirited desire. Compared to appetite and reason there is less of a consensus regarding how to frame the account underlying this class of desires.[21] Spirited desires include our desires for honor, recognition and competitive success (*Republic*, 581a). They are also the desires that explain our capacity to feel anger and embody our sense of shame (*Republic*, 439e-441c). As a start, one could gloss Plato's understanding of spirited desires as narcissistic, since it seems that an important feature of the aforementioned desires is that they are guided by an agent's concern for some image or representation of themselves.[22]

A central feature of the above sketch, is that Plato's theorization of three kinds of desire is also characterized by a bi-partition of desire into rational desire on the one hand, and non-rational desire on the other. On one influential reading of this distinction, what differentiates non-rational from rational desire is that non-rational desire is wholly or partially "good independent."[23] I do not believe this way of glossing this distinction is correct, primarily because it misrepresents Plato's understanding of non-rational desire. For Plato, all desire, including appetite and spirit, is for the good in the sense that it motivates action by representing an end as in some sense good or desirable.

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[20] This account of appetites' possible objects receives further support from *Phaedrus*, where the character Phaedrus is presented as driven by a "hunger for speeches (235d-237a)." Socrates is not just being whimsical. He means this literally. Phaedrus has an appetite for speeches, and that is a problem, for the value of *logoi* is not properly grasped by trying to eat them—i.e. taking them as sources of bodily pleasure.

[21] Compare for example Wilberding (2009) with Cooper (1984), or for the dismissive, though now largely rejected, view that spirit does not have a principle of unity, Robinson (1970: 44-6).

[22] Lear (2005: 197), describes the spirited part of the soul as the "narcissistic" part. Given the context (Lear's focus is on Freud not Plato), Lear does not clarify what he means by this description. However, my considered view is that what Plato calls *thumos* closely parallels the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism, especially as it appears in the work of Heinz Kohut (see chapter 5 of this study).

[23] Irwin (1995: 206, 212), Kahn (1987: 85), and Watson (1975: 211-212). Watson does not use the language of rational and non-rational desire, but rather that of "desiring" and "valuing." However, he is explicit that he sees his distinction mapping onto Plato's notions of rational and non-rational desire in *Republic* (219).

According to proponents of the alternative interpretation, Plato distinguishes between desires that are for the good in the sense that they issue from an all things considered judgment (or belief) that some course of action is best, and desires that are either wholly or partially independent of such evaluation. The former, according to the reading, are our rational desires and the latter, our appetitive and spirited desires respectively. The primary point of disagreement between this reading and the approach I adopt in this project concerns Plato's principle for distinguishing between rational and non-rational desire. This difference of understanding expresses itself most clearly in the resulting construals of appetitive desire. As a result, my focus in what follows will be appetite.

On the view I reject, what distinguishes appetite is that it is a "good independent" desire. Unlike spirit, which is typically glossed as having some form of evaluative content, Plato's notion of appetite is taken to describe desires which are wholly devoid of any evaluation of their desired ends. So, to take the example that figures prominently in book IV of *Republic* (*Republic*, 439a-d), to have an appetite for drink, i.e., to be thirsty, is to want a/this drink, absent any further specification of why it might be desirable, such as its being pleasant. Given this reading, one natural way to construe Plato's conception of appetitive desire is say that it lacks content. This, however, is shorthand that can give the impression that appetitive desire is more brute than the reading actually makes it out to be. More exactly, on this interpretation Plato believes that appetitive desire lacks evaluative content.[24] Or, more exactly still, appetite on this interpretation is desire that does not *motivate* because of its evaluative content. Rather, appetites motivate because certain bodily conditions make certain ends, such as having a drink, an object of

[24] Rather, as Watson (1975: 211-12) puts it, "It is an essential feature of the appetites and passions, that they engender (and consist in) desires whose existence and persistence are independent of the person's judgment of the good."

desire.[25] Thus, on this reading, what distinguishes the different kinds of desire articulated by Plato's psychology is that they have different sources of motivation. For rational desires, the source of motivation is our evaluation of ends as all things considered best, whereas for appetite the source of motivation is some condition of the body that causes us to find an end desirable. Here, it is the fact that appetites have a distinct source, the body, that makes them a class and explains how they can intelligibly be said to motivate and explain action even though they lack evaluative content.[26]

The foregoing is the dominant approach to understanding Plato's conception of appetite and the rational/non-rational distinction for good reason. Textual support from both inside and outside *Republic* suggest that Plato conceives of appetites as good-independent desires that issue from bodily conditions.[27] Nevertheless, the reading is importantly mistaken. For one thing, the contention that appetitive desire is good independent is sharply at odds with Plato's claim:

> That [the good] then, is what every soul pursues, and for its sake does everything. (*Republic*, 505d)

The reading is also hard to square with Plato's understanding of the psychic harmony that he considers happiness. In *Republic*, *sophrosune* (temperance), and therefore psychic harmony, is construed by Plato as the agreement among the elements of the soul that reason should have the executive function in a person's life (*Republic*, 442d). If harmony entails agreement, then it seems the non-rational soul, and this includes appetite, must be able to recognize and accept

[25] Watson (1975: 212), Ganson (2009: 188-89).
[26] Irwin (1995: 210-11).
[27] The reading appears to be born out both by Socrates description of the appetite for drink as "present because of diseases and feelings" (*Republic*, 439c), and as for "drink rather than good drink (437e)." There is also Plato's characterization of appetite on the whole as a many-headed beast that is unable to bring order to the soul, not to mention, the "the desires of the body" in *Phaedo* which appear to prefigure appetite by being desires which come to the soul through the body on account of its conditions (e.g., 66c).

reason's ordering of a person's life as for the good.[28] I believe these are insurmountable difficulties, and that a full consideration of them leads us to abandon distinguishing Plato's three kinds of desire based on the extent of their good independence.

A more decisive refutation is beyond the scope of this discussion.[29] My primary goal here is to bring my own interpretation more clearly into view by contrasting it with the approach articulated above.

An orienting assumption of this project is that Plato's tri-partite psychology takes there to be three kinds of desire, each of which is for the good in that it motivates action by representing its end as desirable. Rational desire, as outlined above, is conceived by Plato in its everyday guise as desire that motivates by judging some course of action or end "in truth" good. Thus, the way I read rational desire effectively aligns with the way it is understood by what I have been calling the dominant interpretation. Where my approach differs is in reading Plato's notion of appetite as desire that is for the good, where this does not mean in truth good, or good all things considered, but rather, as in some sense desirable. In the terminology of the dominant interpretation, for Plato, both spirit and appetite are "evaluative," and both motivate action because they represent their ends as desirable. The fact that appetite, like spirit, represents its end as valuable need not and does not preclude Plato from thinking that appetites are the product of bodily conditions. As I am reading him, Plato believes that bodily conditions (affections,

[28] See chapter 3 for my understanding of the Plato's conception of psychic unity as essentially involving the non-rational parts' capacity to conceive of rational desires and injunctions as their own lights good.
[29] Kamtekar, in "The Divided Soul," chapter 4 of her *Plato's Moral Psychology* (2017), argues persuasively and at length against reading appetite as good-independent. Particularly convincing, are her arguments against reading various claims from the book IV argument for tri-partition in support of the good independence of appetite. Kamtekar's considered view is that Plato believes all desire, both rational and non-rational, is for the good. In this respect, we agree. Where we differ, is that Kamtekar maintains Plato understands the non-rational parts as agent like, and that non-rational desire is for the good in that the non-rational parts are like agents which understand some limited good as *the* good, e.g., the appetitive part is a psychological eudaimonist which takes pleasure to be the good all things considered (155).

deprivations, etc.) cause the soul to represent an end as distinctively desirable, and it is this representation of the end which motivates and explains the action. For the Plato of the tri-partite psychology, it is only the representation of an end as desirable which motivates, and what distinguishes Plato's three kinds of desires is not their source, but the distinctive way in which they represent their ends as desirable. On this account, Plato considers appetite and spirit non-rational forms of desire not because of their source, or degree of good independence, but because they exhibit limited understandings of the good. In contrast to the desires of reason, which pursue what is (in truth) good, full stop, appetite and spirit are not guided by the synoptic ideal of what is.

2.2 Three Subjects of Action

If the first plank of Plato's tri-partite psychology is that human action is motivated by three forms of desire, the second is that there are three distinct sources, or subjects, of action corresponding to these three kinds of desire.[30] It is this latter claim which Plato takes himself to have established in the famous argument from Book IV of *Republic* (435e-436b). According to Plato, attention to people's behavior shows each kind of desire motivating action independent of input from the other faculties of desire. Thus, an appetite can issue in action independent of the (direct) input of the agent's rational desires—and without (directly) engaging that agent's rational faculties. A corollary of this thought, that the soul contains three independent subjects of action, is that each subject of action will perceive and be shaped by external influences without the cognitive and conative abilities of the other parts coming into play. It is this realization that

[30] This reading, and distinction, is argued for by many commentators. In contemporary anglophone scholarship, the first to present an extended defense of this reading as an analysis of the Book IV argument is Woods (1987). For a thorough and extended defense of this reading, see Lorenz (2006: 19-52). Kamtekar (2017: 130-143), and Wilburn (2021: 12-26), present extended arguments that follow and compliment Lorenz's reading.

colors much of the educational program put forward in *Republic*. The difficulty facing the would-be educator is that cultural influences will, so to speak, bypass reason, not only when members of a culture are young, but once they have grown to the age of reason as well.[31]

Conceptual and Terminological Distinctions

It is with the identification of three distinct subjects of desire and action within the human psyche that, properly speaking, we arrive at Plato's view that the human soul is divided into *parts*. As I will deploy the notion, the concept of a part of the soul is the concept of a distinct subject of motivation characterized by a kind of desire. In order to cleave to this understanding of Plato's psychological theory, I want to introduce a terminological distinction. When I am referring to the independent agencies of Plato's psychology, I will refer to them as the rational, spirited (thumoetic) and appetitive parts. By contrast, when I am referring to the kind of desire that characterizes each of these parts, I will refer to them, respectively, as reason, spirit (*thumos*) and appetite.

In adopting this terminology, I take myself to be tracking an important conceptual distinction in Plato's psychology. That Plato himself draws this distinction, can be seen from the preface to the argument aimed at establishing that there are three independent subjects of motivation. There (*Republic*, 436a-b), Socrates sets out the question which the argument is meant to settle, by asking whether we "do each of them [learn, feel anger, have appetites for food and sex] with the same thing, or since there are three do we do one with one and another with another." Put in the language of parts and kinds of desire, Socrates is asking whether human beings have three psychic parts, or merely pursue three different kinds of desire.

[31] One assumption driving the Book X arguments against mimetic poetry.

My reservation of 'the x-part' construction for these independent subjects of motivation, is an attempt to follow the way Plato himself describes these elements of his theory. Although I use the term part in a technical sense, as many commentators have pointed out, Plato himself is not overly consistent in his use of a general term for these three independent subjects of motivation.[32] However, Plato does consistently deploy the terms *logistikon* (e.g., *Republic*, 439d, 550b, 602), *thumoeides* (*Republic*, e.g., 440e, 547e, 581a), and *epithumetikon* (e.g., *Republic*, 439d, 550b, 580e), to pick out the specific parts of the soul. Literally translated, each of these terms means something like, "the thing which X's" where X is one of the kinds of action or desire. Thus, *to logistikon* means something like, the thing which reasons (calculates), or the reasoning thing. 'Rational part,' 'spirited part,' and 'appetitive part' is my attempt to preserve Plato's use of these three Greek terms.

Looking, instead, to Plato's specific terms for the parts of the soul has an added advantage, for it brings into view a second feature of Plato's conception of a psychic parthood. As mentioned, Plato uses the term *to thumoeides*, for example, to pick out the spirited part of the soul. However, he also uses it to refer to spirited people (*Republic*, 547e), as in people who are particularly spirited. The same goes for *to logistokon*, which Plato uses to refer to people who are (in the condition of being) able to calculate (*Republic*, 525b, 587d). These latter, less technical uses of the terms that Plato also uses for the psychic parts, suggest that for Plato, a psychic part is the kind of thing that admits of being in some enduring condition (e.g., *Republic*, 410b for *to thumoeides*, 553c for *to epithumoetikon*, and 442a-b for *to logistokon*). That Plato understands

[32] Plato is comfortable shifting between the terms *meros* (e.g., *Republic*, 442b, 581a, *Timaeus* 91e), *eidos* (e.g., *Republic*, 440e, 580d, *Phaedrus* 253c, *Timaeus*, 90a), and *genos* (e.g., *Republic*, 441c, 444b, *Timaeus*, 69d), sometimes deploying two different terms in close proximity to one another. See Wilburn (2021: 12-15) for an excellent overview of both Plato's usage and the state of the debate regarding whether Plato in fact endorses the existence of independent subjects of motivation.

the parts in this way fits with his understanding of the parts as independent sources of action. If a psychic part is what motivates the action, then the fact that a person does one thing, rather than another, will depend on the condition of the relevant psychic part. Thus, a second feature of a psychic part, one that further distinguishes it from what I have been calling a kind of desire, is that the former, and not the latter, is the subject of an individual's enduring psychic conditions. Properly speaking, it is not *thumos*, for example, which grows angry, or which is peevish (or "soft," or "brittle." *Republic*, 411a-e). Rather, the proper subject of these actions and characterological descriptions is the individual's thumoetic part.

One reason to stress this second feature of psychic parthood is that it helps clarify Plato's understanding of the other element of his psychology, namely, the psychic kind of which appetite, *thumos*, and reason are members. Up to this point, I have described this other element of Plato's psychology as a kind of desire with a formal object, or a way of understanding an end as good. However, going forward, my preferred generic term for this element of Plato's psychology will be form of soul. This coinage is my own and does not follow Plato. In the context of his psychology, Plato does not consistently use *eidos* or *eidē*, the term often translated as 'form,' to refer to appetite, spirit and reason. Instead, he is comfortable moving back and forth between using *eidos* as a term to refer to (what I am calling) parts (e.g., *Republic*, 439e) and forms (e.g., *Republic*, 437d) of soul.[33]

Nevertheless, I believe 'form of soul' best captures Plato's understanding of the kind of thing appetite, spirit, and reason are. At the very least, the term reflects the approach to these elements of our psychology which I will try my best to take up in what follows. That it is the right approach, will hopefully be born out by this study. There are, I believe, three interrelated

[33] See the previous footnote for a brief catalogue of the different terms Plato uses to pick out the parts of the soul.

reasons for preferring 'form of soul' as the generic term for appetite, spirit, and reason. First, talk of form implies a form/content analysis that accurately tracks the way in which Plato sees appetite, spirit, and reason maintaining their identity across their varied instantiations. One appetitive desire may differ from another by being for food instead of drink, or by being the appetite of a tyrant or a philosopher. These are differences of content, so to speak, and along with this varying content, Plato understands these desires as structured by an unvarying form common to all appetitive desires. Second, using the term form brings to mind the explanatory universals of Plato's metaphysics, and this is helpful for at least one reason. As Plato understands them, a central feature of the so-called forms is that they are exceptionless explanations of a class of particulars being the particular entities they are (*Republic*, 597b-c).[34] Attending to Plato's tri-partite psychology reveals that the same holds true for the forms of the soul. For Plato, each form of soul is, without exception, common to all and only the desires of the relevant type –and we should read this just as stringently as we would if Plato was making a claim about the form of the beautiful explaining the beauty of beautiful particulars (*Republic*, 478e-479b). If this is right, then any proposed definition of a form of the soul must be able to capture, without exception, all the specific desires and kinds of desires that Plato takes to have that form. Third, the term form of soul brings to mind the notion of a form of thought, and I believe we understand Plato best if we see him as thinking of each form of soul as having, something like, its own logic.[35] By this, I do not mean anything overly technical or sophisticated. My view is that Plato understands

[34] This claim is intended to be as uncontentious as possible. All my point about how to understand the elements of Plato's psychology requires is the minimal claim that Plato believes there is one universal that explains all and only the many relevant particulars. Thus, for one, this is a point that does not depend on any of Plato's beliefs about the "metaphysical" features of these explanatory universals defended in dialogues such as *Phaedo* and *Republic*. It is just as well evidenced by the sort of claim Plato makes at *Euthyphro*, 6d.

[35] I am not claiming that the terms 'form of thought,' or 'logic' were familiar to Plato. My contention is that our use of these terms tracks the way in which Plato thought of appetite, reason, and spirit and therefore calling them forms of soul has an illuminating resonance.

appetite, spirit, and reason as forms of thought, each of which describes a field of possible thoughts and actions, and, as a corollary, he understands the psychic parts characterized by these forms of soul, in terms of what they can, can't and *will* think (and want, and do).

All this said, if 'form of soul' seems misguided, feel free to read it as kind of desire, or way of understanding an end as good. What matters is not the generic label for appetite, etc., but the fact of the distinction in Plato's theory between what I will call the forms and parts of the soul. I believe my analysis of *thumos* bears out the understanding of this distinction sketched above. However, more important than the above details of my specific interpretation, is the importance of recognizing it in broad outline. Plato articulates two distinct concepts, roughly speaking, kinds of desire and independent subjects of motivation, which he then uses to understand the human soul. Even though Plato does not mark this distinction as clearly as one might like, it is central to his view.

To see one reason why it is a distinction worth marking, consider that if one does not clearly distinguish these two constituents of Plato's theory, it is all too easy to lose track of which one is investigating. The risk is not so much that one will become confused as that one takes an analysis of, say, the parts as exhausting, or providing a substantive analysis of the kinds of desire.[36] When that happens, much of what Plato has to say will be lost because overlooked. Therefore, one important reason to cleave to the distinction between the parts and forms of the

[36] Lorenz's (2006) analysis of the appetitive part is an excellent example of this kind of problematically partial account of Plato's psychology. I say "excellent," precisely because Lorenz's rigorous and persuasive discussion of Plato's conception of the appetitive part, *qua* non-rational part of the soul is so illuminating. Unfortunately, when it comes to what I am calling appetite, Lorenz has much less to say. He introduces the thought that appetite is the desire for pleasure (e.g., 1-2, 9), and largely leaves it at that. More charitably, Lorenz does unpack Plato's conception of the non-rational forms of the soul in the guise of an analysis of Plato's conception of non-rational motivation. However, this is still not equivalent to a discussion of the particular non-rational form of soul that is appetite. Substantive discussion of appetite's characteristics, such as the type of pleasure it goes for, Plato's identification of kinds of appetites, and Plato's grounds for thinking that the appetitive part tends to function as a principle of psychic disunity, are all notably absent.

soul, is that it enables one to isolate one or the other as the object of one's inquiry. In this project, my primary aim is an account of Plato's understanding of spirit, and though that will necessarily involve discussion of the spirited part of the soul, my goal is an understanding of that self-aggrandizing form of soul Plato calls *thumos*.[37]

2.3 Psychic Structure

Along with the identification of three kinds of desire and the claim that each motivates action independently, the third claim at the heart of the tri-partite psychology is that these different kinds of desire and subjects of motivation come to structure our personalities. Specifically, Plato believes that one or another of the kinds of desire or parts can organize a person's psyche (or life). In terms of the fecund metaphor deployed in *Republic*, one part or desire "rules" (or dominates) the soul (580d, 553c-d). Thus, the philosopher in *Republic* is a man who is ruled by reason. He lives a life organized by his rational desires. Similarly, in Books VIII and IX of *Republic*, Plato catalogues four alternative "degenerate" personality formations, each one organized by a kind of desire other than that of reason. These are claims about the enduring psychic structure, of these individuals. They amount to Plato putting forward the tri-partite psychology as a theory for capturing the tendencies of thought and action that define character.

The metaphor of rule is Plato's attempt to explain these tendencies and it amounts to more than the claim that individuals prefer certain goods, values, pursuits, etc. over others. The metaphor presents an account of human character as explained by the relations of primacy and subordination among the three kinds of desire. Plato's description of the oligarch, an appetitive personality type who organizes his life around amassing wealth, is instructive for understanding

[37] It is this focus on a form of the soul (i.e., *thumos*), that explains, and I hope licenses, my largely sidestepping the task of offering an extended interpretation of Plato's notion of psychic parthood.

Plato's picture. The oligarch is dominated by his appetitive part because an appetite for making money sets the end (i.e., wealth) that directs the major projects and activities of his life. This entails, and is made possible by, the fact that the activities of his other psychic parts are subordinated to the end of making money (553a-d). For example, his desire for knowledge is subordinated to, and thus circumscribed by, his desire for wealth. This is not just the claim that an oligarch is someone who would choose money over knowledge (although he would). Plato's oligarch is someone who only learns about how to make more money. Or alternately, he only learns in order to make money. Insofar as the oligarch's life has a structure, his sense of what is "in truth good" devolves into the thought that some end is in truth good (to pursue) because it makes money.

This previous point picks up a second, albeit related, sense in which Plato's metaphor of psychic rule represents character as something over and above an individual's ranking of goods. For Plato, the rule of one kind of desire or part aims to capture the explicit, self-organizing activity through which character is established. As represented by the tri-partite psychology, a decisive feature of human beings is that they engage, more and less overtly, in curating their own desires and interests. We do not just want things, we also want to want, do, value, (and so on) some things and not others.[38] Given that some desires, interests, (and so on) are endorsed and others ruled out, there must be some basis for determining which is which. These are the agent's so-called ruling desires, namely, the desires that give content to the sensibility by means of which the agent structures their own personality.[39] According to Plato's tri-partite psychology, this more and less overt, self-structuring activity produces and defines character.

[38] So understood, the notion of psychic rule aims to capture the phenomena that Harry Frankfurt (1998) investigates under the title of "care." For a concise overview of Frankfurt's understanding of this concept see his (2004: 14-16).
[39] See *Republic,* 560b, in particular Plato's description of the "citadel" from which the individual rules themselves.

2.4 Explaining Conflict

In broad strokes, this is Plato's tri-partite psychology. Namely, (1) There are three forms of soul, i.e., three importantly distinct kinds of human wanting. (2) Each form of soul can motivate action independently of the others. (3) An agent's personality is the product of self-organizing activity that is directed by these kinds of desire and psychic parts. The purpose of this psychology, I am arguing, is to capture and explain the endemic psychic conflict discussed in the previous section. And one can see how the three claims laid out here provide a theoretical framework for making sense of various ways in which human beings can come into conflict with themselves.

Because we are creatures with three independent sources of motivation (claim 2), it will be possible for us to experience direct and occurrent conflicts of desire. As Plato sees it, this happens when one psychic part desires the very thing another part rejects (*Republic*, 439c-d). If one takes such occurrent conflict to be a frequent feature of everyday life, Plato's contention that each part is characterized by a distinct kind of desire (claim 1) offers some explanation as to why these conflicts are so common. Take the thumoetic and appetitive parts: it seems like it will just be the case that an interest in being fashionable (*thumos*) will run afoul of an appetitive interest in amassing wealth.

However, the ability to capture and explain these moments of self-aware psychic conflict are just the beginning. If each psychic part is an independent source of action characterized by a distinct kind of desire (claims 1 and 2), this opens the door to one part pursuing a course of

action that decisively undermines an agent's ability to satisfy the desires of the other parts.[40] All the work I put into planning, and then taking, the Alpine vacation of my dreams has a severe impact on my finances. But, of course, it is only after the trip that the anxiety about how much money I've spent sets in. Here is thumoetic desire conflicting with appetite, and what matters is that this thumoetic desire motivated a course of action (pursued with at least the temporary help of my powers of rational calculation), independent of the input of my powerful appetite to be fiscally solvent. As a result, I act impeding the pursuit of my appetite and in conflict with myself, even if I manage to keep the conflict out of view—for a time. Or to turn to Plato's view of character formation (claim 3), the fact that one part or kind of desire can subordinate the others presents a way to explain repeated and persistent internal conflict. In some, if not all, character formations, the full range of the subordinate parts' ends will not be met. If reason's desire is to pursue knowledge, full stop, but the oligarch hopes to restrict his rational part's love of knowledge to the knowledge that concerns the making and amassing of wealth, the full range of his rational desires will be a constant source of friction in his life. Again and again the oligarch will find himself drawn to forms of inquiry that have nothing to do with making money, desires that will require constant management lest they interfere with his central projects.

The ability of the theory to explain conflict however, is not the whole story. For as described, Plato's tri-partite theory is also clearly geared towards explaining various imperfect forms of psychic coherence. Human beings may be conflicted, but they are not utterly chaotic. Even the most confused and disorganized are not amorphous masses of desire rocketing off from

[40] An important caveat to this claim, is that Plato maintains that the rational part of the soul looks to the good of the whole soul (*Republic*, 441e). For the moment, I want to leave this claim aside.

one moment to the next in different directions.[41] Instead, we are a strange mixture of conflict and coherence, and Plato's theory seeks to do justice to this fact. Thus, it is a theory also geared to explaining the 'unity' of internally conflicted individuals.

That this is a, if not the, primary explanatory goal of Plato's tri-partite psychology follows from Plato's concern to theorize *enduring* psychic conflict.[42] Such conflict, the kind that typifies the oligarch, or the politician with unconventional sexual appetites mentioned above, is conflict that recurs. This repetition assumes some psychic structure, be it idiosyncratic or representative of a personality type, which holds that conflict in place and explains why the individual is motivated to repeat, but not resolve, a given conflict among their desires.[43]

Returning to the three central claims of Plato's psychology, one can see how they are meant to explain not just the clash of desire, but personalities structured by this conflict. Plato's claim that psychic parts or kinds of desire can organize a personality is an account of character (i.e., human personality) that offers a framework for understanding the relative coherence of conflicted individuals. In the context of Plato's theory, that some of a person's desires conflict and continue to conflict is explained as the product of their flawed but not impotent attempts to maintain their current psychic structure. If, say, an individual organizes his life around the

[41] Famously, Plato calls the most disorganized sort of people "tyrants." However, even the tyrant is not utterly conflicted (i.e., disorganized). Thoroughgoing psychic conflict and disorganization would be insanity, and even that is an imperfect description since it overlooks the liminal psychic structure of the insane.

[42] Or alternatively, one can read tri-partite psychology's ability to account for imperfect psychic structure as evidence that enduring conflict is the phenomenon Plato is primarily concerned to capture and understand. The tri-partite psychology is geared to account for imperfect psychic structure. That supports thinking that such structure, and the enduring psychic conflict that depends upon it, is the primary explanandum of the tri-partite account of the soul.

[43] Earlier, at the close of the preceding section, I suggested that although Plato discusses both local and enduring conflicts of desire, one should read him as primarily concerned to explain the phenomenon of enduring psychic conflict. Hopefully, one can now see more clearly the reasoning behind my assertion. Putting the emphasis on enduring conflict as the feature of human life to be explained, keeps in view the fact that Plato's tri-partite theory is as much an attempt to pin down the elusive sense in which human beings hang together even when their personality is structured by internal conflict.

satisfaction of certain appetitive ends, and does so by ineffectively subordinating many of his other desires (including, perhaps, some of his appetites), the attempt to maintain this hierarchy of ends will be marred by repeated and consistent internal conflict.

Plato's thought that there are three kinds of desire, each issuing from an independent source of motivation, reflects a view of the particular fault lines, or patterns of internal conflict that characterize human lives. Written into the theory from the outset is a sense that it is not just particular desires, but types of desire(s) that tend to run afoul of one another. Or to make this point another way, Plato does not contend merely that there are three independent sources of human action. Rather, he claims that each psychic part is characterized by a kind of desire, and these claims reflect an eye for the patterns of human behavior. It is often the desire for wealth that interferes with the desire to be the sort of man one hopes to be, or the desire for status that tends to undermine one's sincere efforts at inquiry.

Finally, and most interestingly, Plato's claim that each psychic part is distinguished by a way of understanding ends as desirable can also be seen as an attempt to explain the imperfect or limited coherence of personalities structured by enduring conflict. A striking feature of (at least most cases of) enduring psychic conflict is that it is inescapably painful. Caught between two desires, an individual is doomed to suffer either frustration or regret. Take the aforementioned politician. When he resists his desire to pursue a sexual relationship, he will be frustrated. Then again, when he pursues his sexual appetite, he will be consumed by regret (or, at the very least, the fear of discovery). Either way, he loses. Nevertheless, and this is the striking part, people who find themselves in such painful situations typically have a *very* difficult time extricating themselves. Here Plato's contention that there are three ways of understanding ends as desirable presents a potentially fertile way to make sense of the inertia prevalent in cases of enduring

psychic conflict. If there are *three* ways of understanding ends as desirable, then there will be situations, and goods, that might be inaccurately represented or overlooked by some one of the psychic parts. This would be especially true if these ways of understanding ends as valuable were in some sense restricted, or partial (and Plato does think something like this about appetite and *thumos*). It helps to think of this point through the metaphor of a perspective. Each kind of desire amounts to a particular perspective on what makes things desirable. From this perspective, certain goods might not appear at all. Or alternatively, goods might appear desirable but have their value misrepresented. Thus, a psychic part could, again and again, paint the agent into a corner precisely because of its limited (and therefore distorting) way of representing the agent's situation.[44]

3. A Principle of Order and Conflict

I opened this chapter claiming that Plato begins from the thought that the thumoetic part and thumoetic desires are limited principles of psychic organization. With this overview of the tri-partite psychology in place, we are now in a position to see both what this claim means and why it makes sense to think of it as guiding Plato's understanding of the so-called "middle part" of the soul. [45]

The tri-partite psychology conceptualizes happiness as unity, and unhappiness as enduring psychic conflict. If this is Plato's view, we ought to read it as guiding the way in which Plato makes sense of the parts and forms of the soul. For Plato, arguably the fundamental issue to

[44] I have expanded on this last way that the tri-partite psychology can be used to explain imperfect psychic structure, because as I hope to show that it is precisely this sort of failing that explains the thumoetic part's limitations *qua* principle of psychic unity.
[45] And, of course, Plato himself describes the spirited part this way, e.g., *Timaeus*, 70a, where the spirited part is literally located between the appetitive and rational parts. The former understood primarily as an agency of disorder and the latter as a principle of unity.

be settled about any aspect of the soul is whether and how it contributes to psychic harmony. Appetite may desire bodily satisfactions, *thumos* self-glorification and reason knowledge, but equally, the starting point for Plato of any understanding of the parts or forms of the soul is his sense of the role each part plays in unifying the human soul. In fact, if one follows out this line of thought, there is reason to think that some such consideration serves as the fundamental basis upon which Plato distinguishes the forms of soul. This would be to attribute to Plato the view that, say, rational desires just are those desires that aim at unity. Be that as it may, at present my point is simply that due to his understanding of happiness, Plato's understanding of the theoretical elements of his psychology flows from his sense of the capacity of each element to unify the soul. Effectively, Plato begins by asking: "can the rational, appetitive and thumoetic parts directly act to unify the soul?"[46] And his answer, crudely put, is: "yes, no, and to an extent."

With respect to reason, Plato is adamant that the robust psychic unity he identifies with happiness is only possible for an individual ruled by his rational part (589a-b, 474c-d). In one sense, Plato's theory characterizes all (adult) human beings as governed by reason. Each possesses a rational part that naturally and necessarily acts so as to rule, i.e., organize, the whole soul (e.g., 441e-442b). Yet in another sense, Plato believes that few, if any, individuals are truly or fully, reason governed. Being fully reason governed is an achievement. To be reason governed in this second sense is to live a life organized by the pursuit of reason's characteristic desires. Drawing on the tri-partite theory's framework for discriminating types of character, an individual

[46] A word here about the use of the qualifier "directly." Strictly speaking, all three parts of the soul act so as to bring about psychic unity, at least when functioning properly. Given Plato's views about the appetitive part, this might seem farfetched. However, the necessary appetites are necessary because they maintain the body and a healthy body is in turn a necessary condition of psychic unity. Thus indirectly, the appetitive part too acts to bring about psychic unity. What appetite does not do, according to Plato, is pursue the end of psychic unity as such.

is reason governed when their rational part rules unconstrained by non-rational ends. In such a psychic condition, the desires of the non-rational parts are subordinated to the ends of reason, and the rational part's activity of self-organization is allowed to operate unimpeded (by the shortsighted or confused desires of the other parts). According to Plato, it is only when an individual's psychic parts are brought into this configuration that he will live a life free from enduring psychic conflict. Plato underscores this contention by making the striking claim that when the rational part rules, the desires of all the parts are most fully satisfied (*Republic*, 586e-587a). This, however, should not come as a surprise, for it is of a piece with the rejection of psychic unity as just another form of managed conflict. If true unity is to be the harmony of the desires of the different parts, then such a condition must be the one most attractive to each part—by its own lights. In colloquial parlance, the unified life is the happy life because it is the most fulfilling a human being can lead. And Plato's contention is that this most fulfilling life is only possible for an individual whose soul is structured by and for their rational part.

If for Plato the rational part is a principle of unity, the appetitive by contrast is a thoroughgoing principle of disorder.[47] One finds this thought in evidence throughout *Republic*. For a start, the appetitive constitutions, those ruled by the appetitive part or organized around appetitive desires, are classed by Plato as the most riven by disorder and conflict (e.g., *Republic* 551d, 556e, 573a-b).[48] Further, Plato is clear that it is the inappropriate governance, or lack of

[47] Although by and large accurate, this description of appetite does not apply uniformly to Plato's treatment of this form of soul across dialogues. In *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, appetite is cast solely as a source of psychic disunity. However, things are more complex in *Timaeus*. In *Timaeus*, Plato identifies the appetitive part as the seat of the power of divination (71d-72b). Although the benefit of this power depends on its being mediated by rational interpretation, here we have Plato claiming that appetite is capable of directly helping human beings discover the truth, and by extension achieve happiness. On this picture appetites are not merely a means of maintaining the body whose health is a necessary condition of the successful pursuit of knowledge. Rather, according to Timaeus, at least some appetitive thought shows us the way to understanding, happiness and unity.

[48] The appetitive constitutions are oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. As one moves down the scale deeper into a life dominated by appetite, Plato shifts from understanding the resultant condition as a product of the rule of one of the

governance, of appetite that in different ways brings about the collapse of each of the non-rational constitutions (e.g., Republic 549a-b and 559d-e). In keeping with this understanding of appetite as the primary source of instability in all but the reason-governed psychic and civic structure, Plato claims that in an ideal constitution, the work of spirited and rational parts will be to watch over the appetitive part. This is a task they must engage in lest the appetitive part become:

> …so filled with so-called pleasures of the body that it becomes big and strong, and no longer does its own job but attempts to enslave and rule over the classes it is not fitted to rule, thereby overturning the whole life of anyone in whom it occurs (*Republic* 442a-b).

As indicated by the passage, Plato believes that ungoverned, the appetitive part inclines towards pursuing ends that directly and/or indirectly produce conflict and disorder. This is an understanding of appetite that Plato cements in his image of the appetitive part as a shifting, hydra-like beast constantly sprouting new heads (*Republic*, 588c). In Plato's tri-partite psychology, the appetitive part is both less unified than the other parts of the soul (as represented by its having many heads) and an active principle of disorder.

Turning at last to the thumoetic part, one finds it placed by Plato "between" the rational and appetitive parts with respect to its capacity to unify the soul. If the rational part is an unqualified principle of unity, and the appetitive primarily a source of disorder, Plato's assessment of the thumoetic part is mixed. Unable to function as a principle of psychic harmony, its activity is presented as capable of directly establishing some form of psychic order.

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parts. While oligarchy is a constitution ruled by the appetitive *part*, democracy and tyranny are structures organized around enabling the satisfaction of certain classes of appetite. One way to gloss this difference between these types of vicious constitution is that whereas timocracy and oligarchy make their own unity an explicit goal, this ceases to be the case in democracies and tyrannies. See Hitz (2010) for an extended account of the degenerate personality types, one that argues for this distinction between the timocrat and oligarch on the one hand, and the democrat and tyrant on the other.

Plato makes two explicit claims that unequivocally cast the thumoetic part as a principle of psychic order that falls short of a principle of unity. In *Republic*, in the catalogue of types of cities and characters, timocracy comes second. This is significant, because Plato takes his description of the various regimes to proceed from best to worst (e.g., *Republic*, 545a). The first city and man discussed are best, the ones ruled by reason. Only such a city and man are unified. However, to place the constitution organized by *thumos* second is for Plato to claim that it is second best. "Best" in this context is happiest, and given *Republic*'s concerted attempt to interpret happiness as psychic unity, it therefore means (most) unified. As one proceeds down the list, the regimes, and the narratives of their degeneration, are more and more riven by faction and internal conflict (compare, *Republic*, 547c-548a to 562b-566c). Placing the constitution organized by *thumos* second means that Plato takes this constitution to be the most unified of the degenerate constitutions. This, in turn, indicates a sense of the thumoetic part as acting so as to establish a degree of psychic and social order. At the very least, it reflects the thought that the influence and activity of the thumoetic part is more conducive to psychic unity than the influence and activity of the appetitive part.

Even more indicative of Plato's commitment to *thumos* as a limited principle of psychic organization is his description of the function of the thumoetic part of the soul. In Book IV of *Republic*, having introduced the idea of psychic parts as distinct sources of motivation, Plato proceeds to an account of the virtues rooted in an understanding of the parts' functions. More precisely, he understands virtue as the condition of a soul wherein each of the parts performs its proper function. When it comes to *thumos*, the function of the thumoetic part is described as aiding the rational part in the work of keeping the individual's appetites in line (441e-442b). Importantly, Plato's claim is not just that when all is going well the thumoetic part acts so as to

contribute to psychic order. Rather, Plato claims that the thumoetic part acts to aid reason in the activity of ordering the soul regardless of its (the thumoetic part's) condition. This is an understanding made most apparent by Plato's contention that the thumoetic part is "the *natural* auxiliary (*Republic* 441a, emphasis mine)" of the rational.[49] Here we have a thumoetic part which, though subordinate and unable to establish psychic unity on its own, supports reason in its work of unifying the soul. This is not a thought restricted to *Republic*. In both *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* the thumoetic part of the soul is overtly understood as functioning in conjunction with reason to control appetite and maintain order within the soul (*Phaedrus* 253d-e, 254c and *Timaeus* 70a-b).

When describing the way in which the thumoetic part aids reason, Plato casts this assistance as the thumoetic part aiding reason in the work of governing appetite. Specifically, both parts are described as "watch[ing] over" (*Republic* 442a) appetite, and that implies that the thumoetic part on its own acts so as to watch over the appetitive part. If that is what the thumoetic part does, sometimes, at least, thumoetic acts are acts of self-control. This need not mean that such actions explicitly aim at self-control, but it does mean that they admit of this description. Thus, Plato thinks that similar to the way in which an agent can calculate that pursuing an appetite is not the best thing to do and act accordingly, one can have a thumoetic desire to, say pursue one end instead of another, and do so on the basis of considerations that amount to a concern to establish some order in the soul.

[49] This claim and my contention that it reflects a thought about the thumoetic part in any condition, are discussed further in Chapter 3. See Singpurwalla (2013: 48-49) for an argument to the effect that we should read "natural" in this context as entailing that the alliance of spirit with reason holds regardless of whether the spirited part is well or poorly educated.

Thinking about shame will help clarify what I take Plato to be claiming here about *thumos*. Shame, for Plato, is a canonical manifestation of *thumos*. However else Plato understands *thumos*, it is clear he thinks that when we feel shame, we feel it "in" our thumoetic part.[50] Now whatever else one thinks about shame, it can, and typically does, function as a form of self-control. Shame should be understood here as less the experience felt in response to certain actions or thoughts and more the faculty for such emotional responses (and actions). It is shame *qua* sense of shame, a sensitivity to various actions and thoughts as out of bounds—as shameful—that functions as a principle of psychic organization. The experience of feeling embarrassed may impact our future actions in all sorts of ways, but an individual's sense of shame is an active principle guiding their actions and thoughts as they unfold. It is a sense of shame that holds one back from certain courses of action and enjoins others. This, I take it, is what Plato has in mind when he describes the thumoetic part as watching over the appetitive. Seen in this light, a sense of shame is a principle of psychic organization, an understanding of shame deeply rooted in Athenian culture and one that Plato himself certainly endorsed.[51] Therefore when Plato puts forward *thumos* as the genus concept that explains the nature and operations of shame, he is in the same breath staking a claim for the thumoetic part as an agency for the establishment and maintenance of order within the soul in a specific sense:[52] the thumoetic part directly engages in acts of self-control, or more generally self-organization.

[50] Cairns (1993: 381-92) presents an extended and persuasive defense of this claim.
[51] Cairns, *Aidos* (1993: 371-8) locates Plato within the Ancient Greek tradition of understandings what we would call shame.
[52] It is worth noting, that by shifting into a discussion of the status of shame *qua* principle of psychic order, we have moved past solely considering how Plato understands *thumos*. We too take a sense of shame to be a principle of psychic order, and granting that there is such a thing as *thumos* (a more general psychological kind of which shame is a species), we too take the thumoetic part to be a principle of psychic order.

Looking to shame as a way to understand the sense in which the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic unity has a further advantage. While shame evidently functions as a means of self-control, its capacity to do so appears limited. That Plato thinks this is entailed by his beliefs that shame is a manifestation of *thumos* and the thumoetic part a limited principle of psychic unity. However, the belief that shame is a limited, or flawed, means of self-control is a thought mirrored in our own intuitions. We may not use the language of psychic unity, but we do tend to think that shame cannot unify a soul, especially if by unity we mean the harmony of desire Plato identifies with happiness. When imagining a person whose actions are primarily policed by a sense of shame, we tend to imagine someone too self-critical or concerned with appearances. In the man who will not dance, or the professor who refuses the ice cream cake, we see a person whose successes are local, and if enduring then covering over internal turmoil. In short, we imagine someone who, even as they succeed, lives a life of managed conflict. I believe that something like these very intuitions is at work in Plato's understanding of *thumos,* and by drawing on them we can see more clearly the sense in which Plato conceives of the thumoetic part. For Plato, *thumos,* like shame, can manifest as acts of self-control, but only ones that are decisively limited. Though thumoetic desires and actions may prevent some other desire from issuing in action, they cannot resolve the internal conflict among an agent's desires. They cannot establish psychic harmony. For Plato, the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic unity because insofar as it acts to establish psychic structure, it, like shame, can only manage but not eliminate internal conflict. In sum, *qua* agency of self-control, the thumoetic part is a principle of managed conflict (i.e., for merely managing enduring conflict).

Before concluding, I want to make a final point drawing together the first and second halves of this chapter. In the chapter's opening sections I argued that we should read Plato's tri-

partite psychology as an attempt to theorize enduring psychic conflict. One point I sought to emphasize was that Plato's focus centers on enduring, and not one-off, internal conflict, because he believes such conflict makes the difference between happiness and unhappiness. What I now want to suggest is that we should see Plato's orienting conception of the thumoetic part as a product of these framing concerns structuring his tri-partite psychology.

Confronted with the question of human happiness, Plato in effect asks, "What abilities (capacities, powers, etc.) do we human beings have to make ourselves happy?" Within the context of an understanding of unhappiness as enduring conflict and happiness unity, this question becomes, for Plato, a question about human beings' capacity to avoid and resolve enduring internal conflict. If this is Plato's question, then there are three distinct conclusions one might draw about the potential of some given psychic faculty to contribute to happiness.

(1) An agency might be unable to issue in acts of self-organization.
(2) It might be able to issue in acts that at best manage but do not resolve enduring conflict. Or:
(3) It might be capable of resolving enduring conflict.

That there are three possibilities, and not two, is importantly a product of focusing on enduring, and not one-off, conflict. Consider that confronted with the phenomenon of one-off psychic conflict, there is no difference to be drawn between managing and resolving the conflict. If I find myself with a desire for my fifth cup of coffee before noon, but think better of it, my success or failure is determined by whether or not I prevent this token desire for coffee from issuing in action. However, if what I want to address is an enduring psychic conflict, say a conflict between my caffeine habit and desire for peace of mind, what counts as success or failure is more complicated. Notably, in this latter case there is a distinction to be drawn between preventing the disruptive desire from issuing in action and resolving the conflict, say by eliminating or

moderating my desire for caffeine. Thus, the shift to thinking about enduring conflict complicates what counts as successful self-organization.[53] There is actual success, i.e., harmony or the resolution of conflict, and there is the management of such conflict, which though a form of self-organization is at best a limited form of success. When Plato takes this sense of the possibilities to his investigation of the human soul, he comes to recognize that many of our non-rational desires and thoughts function as a means of managing but not resolving enduring internal conflict. In *Republic*, Plato identifies this capacity with the form of non-rational soul he calls *thumos*.[54]

When we turn to *Republic*, we do see evidence that this is, in fact, the way in which Plato orients his reader towards the place of *thumos* in the human pursuit of happiness and psychic unity. As noted, the thumoetic part, and its civic analogue, the soldier class, contribute to happiness by helping the rational in its work of unifying the soul and city. When all goes well, i.e., when the soul and city are in a good condition, this relationship is hierarchical. The thumoetic part is not just an ally, it is a subordinate. It is the way in which Plato describes the

[53] It is not that with the tri-partite psychology Plato becomes aware of the phenomenon of enduring internal conflict (see section 1 above). Rather, it is with the tri-partite psychology that Plato comes to be interested in theorizing enduring conflict. It is this project, I am arguing, that leads to the *theorizing* of *thumos* as a principle for managing conflict.

[54] Two important clarificatory points are in order. First, I am not claiming that Plato at some point in his philosophical career "discovers" *thumos*. That the desire for honor is importantly different from the desire for wealth is a thought we see in *Apology* (29d-e), a dialogue lacking a developed account of the soul. Rather, one should read Plato as developing a philosophical account of a distinction he already accepts. *That* honor and wealth are importantly different kinds of goods, is a thought that Plato and his contemporaries took for granted. What Plato comes to believe, is that the difference between these two types of non-rational goods is that pursuing one of them, i.e., "honor," embodies a limited form of self-organization.

Second, I am not claiming that Plato believes all acts of self-control that manage internal conflict are spirited. In imperfect characters reason does not rule, and when this is the case, Plato thinks the rational part's self-unifying activity is perverted into mere conflict management. So, to use Plato's clearest example, the oligarch forcibly restrains his disruptive appetites out of a concern for his wealth (554c-d). We are clearly meant to understand this defective self-control as sometimes, if not often, the activity of the oligarch's rational part. As, for example, when an oligarch thinks through how much it will cost to throw a party, and then regretfully cancels. What I am claiming, is that Plato comes to recognize in human beings a faculty that can *only* manage internal conflict, not that all acts of imperfect self-control are acts of this faculty.

particular character of this subordinate/superior relationship which reflects an understanding of the thumoetic part as a force for managing conflict. According to Plato, in an ideal city the soldiers will contribute to civic harmony by preserving the dictates of reason (*Republic*, 429b-c).[55] Unsurprisingly given the role of the spirited part, this activity and the relationship of the spirited part to the rulers has a decidedly military flavor (*Republic*, 415d-e). The rulers, like commanding officers, will issue orders and the soldiers will benefit the city by executing those orders. This characterization of the thumoetic part is echoed by the *Republic's* metaphorical descriptions of the spirited part of the soul as like a well-trained hound and a sheep dog which aids the shepherd (reason) in watching over the flock (*Republic*, 375d, 440d). On this picture, the spirited part acts well when, like a well-trained sheep dog, it obeys commands aimed at preserving the integrity of the whole. Plato makes this understanding of the spirited part explicit, when summarizing the contribution of this part of the soul he states:

> [it will] do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies. . . by fighting, following its leader, *and carrying out the leader's decisions* through its courage. (*Republic* 442b, my italics)[56]

Here, again, the spirited part, like a good soldier, contributes to psychic unity by executing the commands of its superior. Like a "good little soldier," the spirited part is not good at seeing the big picture, that is the rational part's job (*Republic*, 441e). Instead, what it can do is put out fires, and productively carry our pre-defined tasks. This characterization of *thumos* as beneficial *qua* executor of rational decisions reflects an understanding of *thumos* as able to manage, but not resolve, internal conflict. The picture of *thumos* as a subordinate—good for local tasks, but

[55] Plato's exact claim is more specific and nuanced, but for present purposes this more general description suffices to get the point across that spirit is presented as able to contribute to happiness when it follows reason's orders.
[56] See *Timaeus*, 70b and *Phaedrus*, 252d-e, for parallel, albeit metaphorical, descriptions of the spirited part as the executor of the rational part's decisions.

lacking the synoptic, global perspective required for true unity—indicates an understanding of *thumos* as only capable of local or provisional successes, successes which will only contribute to happiness if embedded in the architectonic vision of reason.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that Plato takes the spirited part to be a limited principle of psychic organization. Plato believes that in contrast to the appetitive part, the thumoetic part does directly engage in acts of self-control. However, unlike the ordering acts of reason, spirited attempts at self-control are unable to bring about the harmony of desire constitutive of psychic unity. That the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic unity is far from the only thing Plato has to say about *thumos*. My contention is that this thought guides Plato's attempt to make sense of *thumos,* and that therefore a successful reading ought to make it the starting point of an interpretation of Plato's views. For readers familiar with *Republic*, it might seem strange that in this chapter introducing *thumos* there has been no mention of honor, or *to kalon*. Usually, if there is a starting point for thinking about *thumos* it is honor or *to kalon*, and one of the two is typically taken to be the defining concern of the spirited part. Nothing I have said up to this point precludes either reading. However, I am, to an extent, trying to shift the conversation about Plato's understanding of *thumos*. Whatever the formal object of *thumos*, whether it is honor, the fine or some third thing, its being the formal object of *thumos* must be able to explain why the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic unity. An interpretation of Plato's account of *thumos* must start from this thought and never lose sight of it.

In this project, I aim to do just that.

In closing, I want to briefly touch on a payoff to this approach related to the framing claims about the tri-partite psychology made in this chapter. Seeing Plato's account of *thumos* as centrally concerned to explain why the thumoetic part is a limited principle of psychic order moderates what might otherwise seem like the over valorization of reason in Plato's moral psychology. For good reason it can seem that Plato's psychology is problematically "rationalized." Plato puts *Republic* forward as an argument for the rational life. He does so on the basis that it, and it alone, is a life free from internal conflict. But why think it impossible for an exemplary oligarch or timocrat to keep it together? These two character types are ruled by their appetitive and thumoetic parts respectively. Each lives a life organized around the ends set by a non-rational part, and the result is a soul, and life, that exhibits at least a measure of coherence. Plato contends that whatever unity these two vicious character types may have won for themselves, it is merely apparent and unstable. But why must be the case?[57] Absent an account of why the non-rational parts and desires cannot unify the soul, Plato would be simply stipulating that they cannot do so.[58] The tri-partite theory is intended to justify the belief that only a soul organized by reason is happy, because only such a soul is unified. For Plato's psychology to validate the life of reason, it must be a psychology that can explain the shortcomings of the non-rational forms of soul.

[57] Or, in a similar vein, why think that only the rational pursuit of psychic order is capable of succeeding? Even if we possess the intuition that, say, shame responses do not adequately address internal conflict, who is to say that they *cannot* to do so? Maybe this is simply a shortcoming of our sensibilities as currently configured. Maybe, with the right education, a developed sense of shame by itself could be the basis of a harmonious life.

[58] If that is the case, then Plato is open to the objection that his is merely a rationalized psychology. The use of "rationalized" here is a reference to Williams's objection that Plato offers a "moralized," not moral, psychology (Williams 1995, p. 202). The objection imagined above, namely that Plato merely asserts the uniqueness of reason's capacity to unify the soul, should be read as a version of Williams's more general complaint about the, at best, incompleteness of Plato's moral psychology.

If, as I am arguing, Plato's account of *thumos* is geared towards explaining the thumoetic part's limited capacity to establish psychic order, this would go some distance to forestalling the above objection. Plato may start from the presumption that the thumoetic part cannot establish psychic harmony, but he does not end there. What one finds in *Republic* is a developed theoretical account aimed at understanding why the thumoetic part cannot unify the soul. Notice that even if one finds Plato's account unpersuasive, its mere presence weakens the accusation that he simply takes it for granted that only reason can unify the human soul. If there is more to human beings than reason, even arguing for the happiness of the rational life depends upon a generous and sustained investigation of our non-rational faculty.

Chapter 2
The Love of One's Own

The main claim of this chapter—and dissertation—is that Plato understands *thumos* as the defense of one's own. I will argue that a decisive advantage of this reading is that it explains the way in which Plato conceives of *thumos* as a limited principle of psychic unity. In this chapter, I will introduce my proposed reading and show how it explains Plato's contention that spirit is the "natural ally" of reason (*Republic*, 441a). The subsequent chapter will then show how this same reading also explains Plato's sense of the decisive limit to spirit's ability to unify the city and soul.

This interpretive approach reflects my belief that Plato's conception of *thumos* as a limited principle of unity guides his theorizing of this form of soul. That this commitment orients Plato's account is a consequence of the tri-partite psychology being a framework for thinking through the possibility of human happiness. If the soul is tri-partite and happiness unity, then a natural way to distinguish the parts of the soul is on the basis of whether they make us happy, i.e., unified. Seen from this vantage point, Plato takes the spirited part of the soul to lie between the appetitive and the rational (*Republic,* 547b-d). More capable than appetite at bringing about psychic order (e.g., *Republic*, 442a), he sees it as falling short of the rational part's ability to establish true unity (e.g., *Republic*, 443e). Reading Plato's thinking about *thumos* in this way does not entail that 'spirit' is Plato's invention, some ad hoc artifact of his psychological theory, nor does it elide the wide variety of activities, desires, emotions and thoughts Plato is happy to label thumoetic. In Plato's texts, *thumos* is many things: it is anger, the love of competition, our desire to be admired, the stuff of courage, self-assertion, snakelike, lionlike, and sometimes apelike. However, I believe we will understand Plat's account of *thumos* best if we see him as

mapping this constellation of phenomena from the thought that the thumoetic part both does and does not produce order in the soul.

Stepping back for a moment, one can, and should, see the plan of this project as a whole as an attempt to follow Plato on his route to understanding *thumos*. In this chapter and the next I will explain why Plato takes the thumeotic part to be a limited principle of psychic unity. Subsequent chapters will then build off this foundation and show how the interpretation introduced here can accommodate the other phenomena Plato identifies as acts of the middle part of the soul, and in so doing, shed light on both those phenomena and *thumos* in general.

The plan for this chapter will be as follows: I will begin by directing attention to an under-emphasized moment in *Republic* where Plato introduces his account of *thumos* as the love of *to oikeion*. I will then offer some preliminary clarification of the notion of one's own (my preferred translation of *to oikeion*) as well as stave off some initial objections. With a baseline sense of my reading established, I will show how conceiving *thumos* as the love of one's own explains the tendency of the thumoetic part, regardless of its condition, to ally with the rational in its work of ordering the soul.

1. Where to Look for *Thumos*

When commentators attempt to make sense of Plato's views about *thumos*, they typically look to *Republic*, since it is the Platonic text in which Plato has the most to say about *thumos*.[1] In particular, readers tend to base their interpretations around what Plato says about *thumos* in the

[1] One could argue that *Laws* is an equally significant resource for understanding Plato's thinking about *thumos*. See Bobonich (2001) for the argument that this is incorrect. By contrast, Wilburn (2021: 253-289), argues, I believe convincingly, that *Laws* exhibits a sustained and self-aware engagement with spirit. Although I agree and believe that *Laws* furnishes material for understanding Plato's views about *thumos*, *Laws* will not figure significantly in this project's analysis. The main reason for this is that the material in *Laws* focuses on the place of *thumos* in civic life and moral education, topics which are not substantively examined in this project.

course of the Book IV argument for tri-partition, and even more so, around Plato's mentions of *thumos* in Books VIII and IX.[2] This latter set of texts, encompassing the catalogue of the degenerate regimes and final arguments for the beneficial nature of justice, are typically read as showing that Plato understands the desires for recognition and competitive success as, in some form, the core concerns of the thumoetic part. Of course, these passages in *Republic* are taken as reflecting Plato's core conception of *thumos* for good reason. Here is Plato summarizing his description of a society dominated by the concerns of the spirited part of the soul:

> Yes, it is mixed. But because of its mastery by the spirited element, only one thing really stands out in it—the love of victories and honors. (*Republic*, 548c)

This claim, that the love of honor and victory are what distinguish the thumoetic part, is echoed in Plato's willingness to gloss the thumoetic part as the honor-loving and victory-loving part (e.g., *Republic*, 581a-b). Taken together, these passages, along with Plato's many other associations of honor and victory with *thumos* (both inside and outside *Republic*),[3] give the impression that (some version of) victory and honor are the defining objects of spirited desire.

Althogh these texts are central to understanding Plato's account of *thumos*, they are not where Plato advances his definition of this form of soul. One reason to think this[4] is that the

[2] I do think the list here includes nearly all recent, anglophone interpretations of Plato's conception of *thumos*. Some notable exceptions are Wilburn (2021), who also bases his reading on the *Republic* passage concerning the well-bred dog, as well as Brennan (2012) and Weinstein (2018). Both latter authors argue for readings of Plato's account of *thumos* as aiming to explain the necessity of *thumos* for happiness. Or, put differently, both authors see Plato's theorization of *thumos* as an attempt to explain why the human soul needs this third part (Brennan, 2012: 104, Weinstein, 2018: 148). Both Brennan and Weinstein ground their reading in an emphasis on texts outside the canonical mentions of *thumos* in Books IV, VIII and IX, such as the transition from the city of pigs to the fevered city's need for soldiers (Brennan p. 103-4), and Plato's account of courage as preservation (Weinstein, p. 213-214).
[3] So, for example, the spirited part is called a lover of victory at *Timaeus* 70a, and the white-horse analogue of the spirited part an honor-lover at *Phaedrus* 253d.
[4] Wilburn (2021: 53-54), also points out that there is reason to think that the summary account of timocracy as distinguished by the love of honor and victory is not meant as a definition of *thumos*. See chapter 5, for a more extended discussion of this claim that mirrors Wilburn's analysis.

interpretations of Plato that have drawn on these passages—interpretations of *thumos* as alternatively a desire for recognition, esteem, or the *kalon*, have not been able to account for Plato's characterization of the spirited part as a limited principle of unity.[5] Instead, I believe that Plato presents the core of his account elsewhere. The passage I have in mind is where Plato compares the nature of the best city's soldier to that of a well-bred dog (*Republic*, 375a-376c). A close reading of the passage will show that in it, Plato defines spirited activity as the defense of one's own. This speaks to the centrality of one's own for understanding *thumos*, since it is in this discussion of the would-be guardians that Plato first explicitly introduces *thumos* into the *Republic's* conversation.

2. The Well-Bred Dog

Socrates is introducing the required traits of the ideal soldier, or "guardian" (*Republic*, 374e) when *thumos* enters the discussion. Unsurprisingly, Socrates believes that the best soldiers must be courageous. He then adds that this depends on their being spirited, since spirit is what makes a person courageous. Leaving aside for the moment how exactly Socrates construes the relationship between courage and *thumos*, it is at least clear that spirit (more exactly a spirited personality) is being put forward as a necessary condition of courage.[6] And that, as Socrates points out, appears to be a problem. Working off an intuition that *thumos* is tied to violence and anger, Socrates assumes that thumoetic individuals will be savage. They will be just as violent towards their own people (τοὺς οἰκείους) as towards the city's enemies. Thus there appears to be

[5] This claim is expanded, and argued for at length, in the introduction to this dissertation.
[6] By "spirited personality" I do not mean an individual ruled by his or her spirited part. The partition of the soul, and the notion of psychic rule have yet to be introduced into Republic. Rather, I take Plato to be making a less technical claim. Everyone has some spirit, but it is those people who are often, or powerfully, moved by spirited motivations who have the ability to be courageous.

dilemma. The city needs soldiers, but to be capable these warriors need to be thumoetic, and this will destroy the city from the inside. However, the dilemma disappears when Socrates recognizes that it is possible for a spirited creature to be both harsh towards its enemies and gentle towards its own. His paradigm of such a creature is a well-bred dog.

> . . .when a dog sees someone it does not know, it gets angry even before something bad happens to it. But when it knows (γνώριμον) someone, it welcomes him, even if it has never received anything good from him. Have you never wondered at that?
> . . .
> Well, that seems to be a naturally refined quality and one that is truly philosophical.
> In what way?
> In that it judges anything it sees to be either a friend or an enemy on no other basis than that it knows the one and does not know the other. And how could it be anything other than a lover of learning if *it defines (ὁριζόμενον) what is its own and what is alien (τό τε οἰκεῖον καὶ τὸ ἀλλότριον) to it in terms of knowledge and ignorance*? (*Republic*, 375d-376b) [My italics]

The important sentence here is the last one, wherein a dog is described as "philosophical" because it takes what it knows as its own, and what it does not as alien. At one level this description is playful; however, that need not, and does not, preclude it from being sincere about the nature of well-bred dogs, and ultimately about *thumos*.Socrates does not believe dogs are philosophers, but when he speaks of them "knowing" he is speaking in earnest, for as the Greek bears out, the sense of 'knowledge' in play is that of familiarity or acquaintance. Socrates is making a rather pedestrian point about well-trained dogs: they are consistently gentle to those with whom they are familiar and fierce towards those who are unfamiliar. That dogs are capable of this two-faced disposition obviates the dilemma that momentarily impeded the inquiry and garners them the praise of having a "philosophical" nature.

What Socrates also adds in the final sentence of the quoted passage is that the dog's disposition should be understood as a product of who (or what) it takes as οἰκεῖον and ἀλλότριον.

Critically, the dog *defines* its own. The term is worth focusing in on because it implies two important features of Socrates' understanding: first, the dog takes (or sees) various entities as its own or alien, and second, there are alternative possible understandings of what is one's own or alien. Thus, the situation is as follows: a thoroughbred dog is gentle towards (or "welcomes") whomever it takes as its own, and it is a reputable feature of this creature that it takes those with whom it is familiar as its own.

The fundamental connection between *thumos* and one's own emerges when one couples the above reading with the further claim that the dog in this context is (also) a stand-in for a particular kind of thumoetic part.[7] The feature of the dog that Plato wants to highlight is that it is domesticable. Similarly, the thumoetic part in us can be educated such that it harmonizes with the other psychic parts and their desires, in particular, those of reason. Since the description of the dog picks out a particular kind of thumoetic part, the thumoetic part in general is concerned to distinguish what is οἰκεῖον and ἀλλότριον. This is not just the thumoetic part going for what is one's own or alien, but the thumoetic part *seeing* entities *as* one's own or alien. Plato's picture of the thumoetic part is that, like a dog, it marks and guards the boundary between self and other, one's own and alien. The thumoetic part can be wrong about what is in fact *oikeion* and *allotrion*, but one's own and alien is the register in which it conceives of things as valuable. Finally, the well-bred dog does not just distinguish between one's own and alien but acts so as to maintain this distinction. It "welcomes," and "grows angry." These actions ought to be seen as two sides of the same coin; both keeping out what's threatening and welcoming in what is dear are kinds of guarding. Drawing together these claims, if each of the parts of the soul is

[7] For the representation of the thumoetic part in a good condition as like a dog, see, e.g., Republic, 440d; for a parallel representation of the auxiliaries (the political analogue of a well-trained thumoetic part) as dogs, see, e.g., Republic, 416a.

distinguished by a kind of desire, then spirited desire is the desire to defend and protect one's own, and spirited activity just is this defending of one's own.[8]

3. One's Own as a Form of Value

Before arguing that this view does in fact amount to a conception of the thumoetic part as a natural ally of the rational, I want to both flesh out my reading and point out a couple ways in which it aligns with what we see Plato saying about spirit in *Republic*.

What does Plato mean here by one's own? The adjective *oikeion* derives from *oikos,* the word for house or home. It was used as a term for one's close family and friends, though it could also apply to one's property, or more specifically the "things of the house."[9] Thus the dog in the passage is, in all likelihood, guarding the *oikos*, only welcoming and allowing in those who belong.[10] As the passage itself emphasizes, whatever it is for something to be *oikeion,* Plato is clearly presenting friends as the archetypal example of the *oikeion*. Thus, as a start, it seems that spirit is cast here as a sensibility that divides the world up into friends and enemies. I say as a start, because it is not clear, exactly, what is meant by 'friend' and 'enemy' here. Extrapolating from the dog vignette, perhaps minimally, we can say that in the passage to construe someone as

[8] This interpretation of Plato's understanding of *thumos*, is supported by Alcinous in his account of the disembodied soul (*The Handbook of Platonism*, 25.7). According to Alcinous, the disembodied form of the spirited part of the soul is the *oikeiotikon*. Although it is very likely that this claim is influenced by the Stoic notion of *oikeiosis*, I believe we can, and should, read this as Alcinous claiming that *thumos* is the shape that *oikeiosis* takes in embodied human beings (see Dillon's commentary on the passage, 2002: 159).

Other interpreters who recognize the concern for the *oikeion* to be central to Plato's account of thumos are Brennan (2014: 115-118), Ludwig (2007: 222-23) and Wilburn (2021). Ludwig advances the views that the concern for one's own is definitive of thumos, though thumos is not the main focus of his argument and his account remains undeveloped. Brennan by contrast, does not make one's own the unifying concern of spirited motivations. Although, he does see it as playing a central role in Plato's account of thumos and, importantly, seeks to explain the link between one's own and the love of honor. See below for a more extended discussion of Wilburn's view.

[9] LSJ entry for οἰκεῖος, p. 1202.

[10] Evidence that such a scenario, and the entailed understanding of a well-trained dog, was part and parcel of the popular imagination of Plato and his readers can be found at *Odyssey* 14.32-36. There, Odysseus, first arriving at Eumaeus' household is almost mauled by the swineherd's dogs because he is new to them. Notably, these same dogs are then later described welcoming Telemachus who, unlike his father, is familiar to them (*Odyssey* 16.2-7).

an enemy is to see them as a threat, and to construe them as a friend is to see their good as, in some way, bound up with one's own.

Using the notions of friend and enemy to unpack the conception of *oikeion* in *Republic*, while helpful, has its limits. If, in fact, *thumos* is defined by its concern for one's own, *to oikeion*, for Plato, must mean more than friend.[11] To equate *to oikeion* with friend and *allotrion* with enemy, is to forget the fact that the thumoetic part has an *intra*-psychic function. Whatever *thumos* turns out to be, the thumoetic part is a subject of action that sometimes issues in acts of self-control. That is what it is for the thumoetic part to work with the rational in controlling one's appetites (*Republic*, 442a). Thus, if the spirited part is defined by a sensitivity to what is *oikeion* and *allotrion*, sometimes this sensitivity will be directed at oneself. Now, we do sometimes think and talk metaphorically about our one's own desires or some "part" of ourselves as a friend or an enemy. However, if Plato intended the notions of *oikeion* and *allotrion* to have intra-psychic application, there is prima-facia reason to think that his theoretical understanding of these evaluative terms outstrips the notions of friend and enemy.[12] That still leaves room for the possibility that Plato takes the notions of friend to be the paradigmatic instance of *to oikeion*, i.e., concepts which guide his more general understanding of this kind of good, but that he does have some more general understanding follows from the intra-psychic possibilities of *thumos*.

[11] Another reason to think this, is that in principle there is nothing standing in the way of things other than people being taken as one's own (e.g., certain possessions). In fact, I would argue that we see Plato casting possessions as valuable in the sense of *oikeion*, in Socrates' strictures against the guardians possessing private property (*Republic*, 416d). Plato's thought is that the guardians will take possessions as *oikeion*, and his recommendations are an attempt to make sure that the guardians only take as *oikeion* possessions which all the guardians (and auxiliaries) take as *oikeion*.

[12] It is, of course, possible that Plato is content to leave things at the level of metaphor. However, first, there is no reason to rush to this conclusion before first examining whether Plato's texts reveal a more developed, general, account of *to oikeion*. Second, there is some evidence in *Republic* that Plato believes we must treat as provisional such un-analyzed accounts intra-psychic dynamics. At *Republic* 430e-431a, Plato rejects the notion of so-called self-mastery as "ridiculous" because it uses inter-psychic terminology to describe intra-psychic relations.

Taking a step back to the (admittedly) more awkward term one's own, points a way forward. In the first person one's own is "mine." Given its connection to the household, the sense of possession carries with it a connotation of intimacy. As a first pass, Plato's thought appears to be that for something to be *oikeion,* is for it to be seen as belonging *to,* or, and this is to anticipate, belonging *with* me. In fact, I believe we should parse what Plato means by this term in the context of explaining spirited evaluations as: to see something as *oikeion* is to see it as "me." This more extreme, and contentious, reading is not one I can establish here. However, even the identification of Plato's conception of *to oikeion* with the vaguer notions of "belonging to me" or "belonging with me" entail that in attributing to *thumos* the capacity to distinguish *oikeion* and *allotrion,* Plato is claiming that spirited behaviors reflect a sense of self and a distinction between this self and some non-self other.[13]

It might be objected at this point that distinguishing between self and other and possessing a sense of self are capacities *too* sophisticated for a non-rational part of the soul. If this is what it is involved in takeing things to be *oikeion*, then the ability to take things as one's own must be a capacity of the rational and not the thumoetic part. Furthermore, the passage quoted above seems to bear out this reading. The dog's tendency to take familiar people as its own is glossed as a "philosophical" quality (*Republic*, 376b2), a description which seems to link the dog's success in taking the right things as its own with the excellent condition of the rational part of the soul (i.e., that of being a philosopher).

[13] The notion of a "sense" of self aims to pick out something more expansive than the minimal sort of self-awareness entailed by complex bodily movement. The crucial point is that what I am calling a sense of self admits of content substantive enough to explain the diverse, often reflectively sophisticated, phenomena Plato considers thumoetic.

However, there is good reason to think that this objection misses the mark. First, there is Plato's aforementioned use of the dog as a stand in for the spirited part in its best condition. If it is a dog that is able to take things as one's own and alien, this supports thinking that it is the spirited part that possesses this capacity. Furthermore, that Plato uses the figure of the dog as a stand-in for the spirited in its *best condition* cuts against seeing the passage as attributing the power to take things as one's own to the rational part. We should read the dog's being "philosophical" as meaning: this is how the spirited part operates, *when governed* by right reason. Second, if the thumoetic part is the part of the soul responsible for our getting angry, then the thumoetic part must have access to some sense of self. This seems especially the case, given that at least some of the angry actions attributed to the thumoetic part in Book IV tend to be responses to perceived slights (*Republic*, 440c-d, 440b-c, see below for further discussion of the latter). In order to take some treatment as a slight, one must think something like, "*I* do not deserve this." On the one hand, the relevant sense of self should not be construed as overly robust. However, we are not talking about some bare conception of oneself as an agent. Feeling slighted and wanting to retaliate require an articulated sense of oneself as due a particular kind of treatment. To be clear, I am not denying that Plato thinks the rational part also has the ability to distinguish between self and other and deploy a sense of self.[14] My claim is only that *thumos*, too, is a source of this sensibility.[15]

[14] Given the rational part's desire for knowledge, the rational part, in contrast to the spirited, can grasp what is truly oikeion. Furthermore, the rational part knows, and pursues the good of each of the parts and the soul as a whole (Republic, 441e, 442c), a capacity which depends on its deploying a self-understanding.

[15] The thrust of this paragraph is that Plato believes the spirited part has a sense of self, and it is more than a basic bodily awareness. However, this emphasis should not be read too far in the other direction. That the spirited part has a sense of self, need not mean that it is capable of judgments, and it certainly need not mean that it is cognitively sophisticated enough to have a theory of self, contra Wilburn (2021: 147-8). Wilburn runs together having a sense of self with these more cognitively sophisticated capacities. As I am reading Plato, the relevant sense of self is the kind of thing that animals have, at least higher animals like dogs, a claim that does not entail that the spirited sense of self

An advocate of the objection might persist and argue that I have only shown that the spirited part deploys a sense of self, but that I have left open the source of this self-conception. This revised version of the objection grants that spirited behaviors are shaped by a sense of self and a distinction between self and other, but contends that the source of the relevant sense of self is the rational part. According to this gloss, it would be the rational part that possesses a sense of self, with the thumoetic part limited to taking up the views passed on by the rational part.

However, there are two good reasons to think that this is not Plato's view. The first stems from Plato's understanding of what it is for the soul to consist of parts. The second is textual. It is a central claim of Plato's psychology that the desires of different parts of the soul can come into direct conflict with one another. The fact that thumoetic desires can come into direct conflict with those of the rational part strongly points to the possibility of the two parts possessing independent senses of self. For example, the fact that the same action can be taken to be a slight by the spirited part but not worthy of outrage by the rational, depends on the two parts having independent senses of, say, what it is to be "a man."[16] The second reason for thinking that the spirited part possesses an independent sensitivity to what is *oikeion* can be found in Plato's description of the sensibility produced by an ideal cultural education (*Republic*, 401e-402a). According to Plato, a youth raised on the right kind of cultural products will come to possess an accurate sense of which things are good and beautiful before he is able to understand why they are good and beautiful. Plato then goes on to claim, in language that closely echoes his description of the well-trained dog, that later, when such a youth encounters the explanation

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of a human being is the same in kind as that of a dog. Rather, my point is that if animals can exhibit—something like—shame, then their actions are directed by a sense of self in the relevant sense.

[16] For an example of this kind of conflict in Republic, albeit played out in the inter-personal arena, see Plato's description of the genesis of a spirited personality (Republic, 549c-550b).

behind the content of his sensibilities, he will accept the explanation because he recognizes the account as, in some sense, *oikeion*.

> And, because he has been so trained, he will welcome the reason when it comes and recognize it easily because of its kinship (οἰκεότητα) with himself (alternately, its being most his own).
>
> πρὶν λόγον δυνατὸς εἶναι λαβεῖν, ἐλθόντος δὲ τοῦ λόγου ἀσπάζοιτ' ἂν αὐτὸν γνωρίζων δι' οἰκειότητα μάλιστα ὁ οὕτω τραφείς; (402a, compare the description of the noble dog at 376a)

Here, Plato distinguishes a sensitivity to one's own from the ability to understand (i.e., the proper province of reason), and claims that the capacity to be sensitive to one's own comes into being before understanding is possible. After all, a sensitivity to one's own must already be active if an account can seem appealing before the individual understands the relevant explanation that the account provides. If this is right, and the ability to think things *oikeion* is operative prior to the ability to understand, then Plato is attributing this capacity to the non-rational soul.[17] Plato does not specify to which part of the non-rational soul he is attributing it, but that is not overly significant for the question at issue. What is relevant is that here Plato identifies the sensitivity to one's own as (at least also) a non-rational capacity. In conclusion, I believe that we need not shy away from understanding the thumoetic part as characterized by an independent capacity to distinguish *oikeion* from *allotrion*, where this amounts to an independent capacity to distinguish self from other on the basis of a contentful sense of self.[18]

To accept this view is to see Plato as thinking of *thumos* as constituted by a form of self-awareness. But this is only part of what Plato is claiming. If *to oikeion* is the formal object of

[17] Alternatively, one could read Plato as presenting the capacity to think things oikeion as a form of proto-reason, whatever this might mean.
[18] As will emerge in the following chapters, I read Plato as thinking not only that the spirited part possesses an independent sense of self, but one that is different in kind from reason's self-understanding.

thumos, then according to Plato one's own is the way in which *thumos* conceives of ends as desirable. Therefore, the spirited part's perception of things as mine and alien is not merely a description. It is an evaluation. *Thumos* does not just distinguish mine from not mine, it views mine as good and alien as bad. One feature of what one might call this "thumoetic perspective" is that if something is taken to be good, it will be considered mine, and if mine then good. Likewise, if something is seen as bad it will be taken to be other, and if other then bad. Therefore, as the spirited part sees things, it is my plans, desires, friends, customs, and city which are the good ones, and those others which are bad and to be guarded against.[19] Even speaking this way, I think, can be misleading. As Plato understands it, for *thumos*, the notions of good and one's own collapse into one another. This is exactly what we see in the passage about the dog. The dog welcomes the man with whom it is familiar, "even though it has never received anything good from him." This, I take it, is what it means for "mine" and "alien" to be the content of thumoetic evaluation. Or to put the point another way, "mine," perhaps like the analogous thought "pleasant," is in Plato a way of thinking of an end as desirable—the way of doing so constitutive of *thumos*.

Just now I switched to talking about the way in which the spirited part might view other objects as *oikeion*, and that is not at odds with the thought that *thumoetic* desires are centered around a concern for one's self. As the passage about the dog already indicates, the thumoetic part's sense of the self, its sense of what is me and mine, is educable. One axis along which it is educable is that the boundary between self and other can be extended so as to include other people and things. To see an everyday example of this kind of phenomena, think of the way we react to an insult to a close family member or friend as if it were a personal insult. Or,

[19] It is this fact that explains the attachment of the spirited part to norms and conventions, Gosling (1973: 49-50).

alternatively, consider Plato's ambitious suggestion about the best city's having children and spouses in common (*Republic*, 457c-461e). This, I will argue, is a particularly radical attempt to mold a group of human beings' sense of their own (*Republic*, 463e).[20] Thus, while Plato may believe that a person will and must identify some things, for example, their own body, as *oikeion* (*Republic*, 464d), he also believes that this sensibility is quite plastic.

The final element of the account of *thumos* we see in the passage about the well-bred dog is that along with evaluating entities as mine and not mine, the thumoetic part engages in a characteristic activity that sheds light on, and is the product of, its distinctive way of evaluating. For Plato, the parts of the soul are independent subjects of motivation. Thus, the spirited part does not just make value judgments, it does something about them, namely, it acts in some characteristic way that takes up and reflects the value it perceives in the world. Turning to the metaphor of marking a boundary that surfaced when discussing the well-bred dog is helpful here. The dog does not just mark this boundary. It acts to maintain it.[21] *Thumos* distinguishes between mine and other, and then acts to defend the *oikeion* from what it deems *allotrion*. This, in effect, is what it means for the thumoetic part to take the self as good, namely as "to be defended." If this is correct, it has important implications for the way in which *thumos* conceives of the alien: the alien is that which is a threat to one's own. Notice that from this perspective, what is seen as alien is thus conceived of as intractably a threat. To be other just is to be that threat to one's own that needs to be defended against.

[20] See chapter 4 below.

[21] Seen in this light, my reading develops the thought that thumoetic desire is a form of self-assertion and is a development of the view that the thumoetic part is characterized by the desire for self-esteem and victory, Cooper (1996: 130-136). For an allied, albeit less worked out interpretation that does not emphasize the centrality of *to oikeion*, see Kragerud (2010).

4. An Allied Interpretation

My view is that in the passage about the well-bred hound, Plato introduces an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. Recently, Joshua Wilburn's *The Political Soul*: *Plato on Thumos, Spirited Motivation and the City* has advanced a similar reading of Plato's conception of *thumos*. Because of the similarity between Wilburn's view and my own, it is worth taking a moment to identify some significant differences between mine and Wilburn's interpretations, and give some indication why I believe my reading is to be preferred.

Wilburn also reads Plato as introducing his account of *thumos* in the passage comparing the guardians to hounds. He argues that in this passage, we see Plato presenting spiritedness as defined by two faces, on the one hand, an aggressiveness towards what is foreign (*to allotrion*), and on the other, a gentleness towards one's own (*to oikeion*).[22] The rest of Wilburn's monograph then proceeds to exhibit the ways in which *Republic*, and a number of Plato's other dialogues, both support this interpretation and show a Plato who is concerned to deploy and develop an understanding of *thumos* across his corpus.

Although my focus here is on the differences between our interpretations, there are also many points of overlap, not to mention many ways in which reading *The Political Soul* has deepened and expanded my understanding of Plato's conception of *thumos*. As a result, I believe that Wilburn's book and this project can, and should, be read as complementing one another. Wilburn's focuses on the political and inter-psychic, whereas my emphasis is on the intra-psychic and content of *to oikeion qua* understanding of the good. In addition, Wilburn's text

[22] Wilburn (2021: 54). Tarnopolsky (2007: 306-309) advocates for a broadly similar reading of Plato's understanding of *thumos* as defined by two related but distinct, impulses, one aggressive and one gentle. She, however, does not interpret these two faces of *thumos* as due to its concern for *to oikeion*, but rather its desire for recognition by others (the love of honor), and desire to distinguish oneself as better (the love of victory).

engages more substantively with dialogues other than *Republic*, whereas my analysis is more of an immersion into the understanding of *thumos* presented in *Republic*. These different points of focus make it the case that the relationship between our readings is less one of direct competition and more one of mutual support.

Nevertheless, I do believe that Wilburn is, at points, fundamentally mistaken about the account of *thumos* that emerges in Plato's dialogues. As a way into seeing some of the differences between our readings, consider that according to Wilburn, Plato believes that, at bottom, *thumos* has two faces. By contrast, on my reading, there is only one face, i.e., only one thing that Plato thinks the spirited part does—it defends its own.[23]

What is at stake in this difference, in reading Plato one way rather than the other, is the gentleness of *thumos*. More exactly, at stake is Plato's sense of the nature of spirit's gentleness, and whether manifestations of spirit are ever free of the threat of violence. That the spirited part is capable of some form of non-agonistic interaction with others is clearly on display in the passage about the well-bred hound. The dog does, after all, "welcome" those it knows. On Wilburn's reading, this welcoming is, for Plato, an instance of a more general possibility, namely, caring for one's own. According to Wilburn, this is one half of what the spirited part does. It cares for *to oikeion*, and fights *to allotrion.* The issue between our readings, is how to understand Plato's conception of this caring.[24] In arguing that Plato sees *thumos* as, in every

[23] Wilburn (2021: 58) does recognize that aggressiveness towards the other, and friendliness towards one's own are complementary sensibilities. The issue is how exactly to construe this complementary relationship so as to capture Plato's view. Wilburn (2021: 60) claims that these two attitudes are "closely tied to one another." He stops short of claiming that they cannot come apart. As I hope to show, Plato's thought about *thumos* is that even where there is thumoetic care or respect for one's own (e.g., a family member), this care is coupled with the sense of some threat which calls the concern into action. Wilburn's reading denies this thought, since a central contention of his reading is that spirit has another, softer side (than what has been traditionally recognized) and can manifest as a gentle concern for others.

[24] Actually, that is not quite right, the difference between our readings applies equally to spirit's fighting as to its caring. In both cases, Plato thinks that, in an important sense, the one does not come without the other.

case, a defending of one's own, I am arguing that even where spirit is 'friendliness,' or caring, it is care conceived of as in response to some threat, and therefore always colored by the possibility or actuality of violence. In contrast to Wilburn, on the reading I am advocating, for Plato the archetypal image of spirit's concern for others is a mother dog fighting to protect her young (*Republic*, 390d, 441b, where Plato makes reference to just this image in *Odyssey*),[25] because he believes that the *thumoetic* concern for others is never free from such hostile protectiveness.

To sum up, both Wilburn and I maintain that Plato sees protectiveness, care and (something like) friendliness as an important facet of spirit.[26] However, on Wilburn's reading, Plato believes spirit can be *purely* gentle and I disagree.[27] For Plato, spirit is always a reaction to a threat and therefore is always colored by hostility (albeit hostility directed towards some distinct *allotrion* thing). At present, without more of my interpretation on the table, I cannot decisively establish that this is in fact the right way to read Plato. However, before proceeding I do want to offer two reasons in favor of my reading. Since, at least as I have glossed it here, our disagreement concerns whether Plato believes *thumos* can be wholly or purely gentle, both considerations will take aim at this contention.

The first point concerns the textual support that Wilburn brings as evidence of spirit's gentleness. Plato does describe the spirited part in a good condition as gentle (πρᾶος), and he

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[25] *Odyssey*, 20.14-16, "The heart inside him growled low with rage, as a bitch mounting over her weak, defenseless puppies growls, facing a stranger, bristling for a showdown—"

[26] This is the minority view, as Wilburn himself points out. Other commentators who argue that Plato sees some form of concern for others as a core expression of *thumos* are Brennan (2012: 115), and Tarnopolsky (2007: 299).

[27] To give some more of a sense of this difference between our readings consider the following quote from Wilburn, (2021: 54): "The innovation of my approach is that it *also* recognizes the full range of, and explains, the second, "gentle" face of spiritedness as well, which includes motivations such as friendship, shame, and obedience to rulers." This closing list of "gentle" motivations is reflective of Wilburn's view, and I am arguing, a misrepresentation of Plato's. On my reading, for Plato, shame is *not* gentle (especially when considered intra-psychically), spirited obedience to rulers is always coupled with a harshness to subordinates (*Republic*, 548e-549a), and spirited attachment to others, while it may lead to true friendship, is something importantly different (for more on this last thought see Chapters 3 and 4 of this project).

does this in the very passage in which he introduces his account of *thumos* (*Republic*, 375e2). However, the question is how to parse what 'gentle' and 'gentleness' amount to in this context. As a result, I want to set aside, for the moment, Plato's description of the spirited part as "gentle," and focus instead on some of the other descriptions Wilburn emphasizes, because I believe he oversells the extent to which they reflect an understanding of *thumos* as gentleness.[28] First, Wilburn claims that the spirited part's ability to engage in acts of self-control licenses reading Plato as identifying the spirited part as a source of moderation (*sophrosune*) and therefore gentle. This does not follow. For Plato, self-control is not equivalent to moderation. Moreover, as Wilburn himself recognizes, Plato clearly considers true moderation a rational condition of the soul which, in *Republic*, he defines as a matter of all three parts of the soul standing in the right relationship to one another (*Republic*, 442c-d). It is therefore almost as incorrect to maintain that Plato identifies *sophrosune* with the spirited part, as it is to argue that the possibility of moderate appetites shows Plato arguing that the appetitive part is also a seat of gentle moderation.[29] Wilburn also points to Plato's willingness to describe the spirited part as "soft," or capable of being softened (*Republic*, 411a-b and 590b). However, the use of soft in these contexts does not imply gentleness; rather it implies, or explicitly references, the metaphor of softening or hardening metal so as to make it more workable. In saying that, ideally, the spirited part of the soul needs some softening, or that in bad conditions it is overly soft, Plato is not claiming that it needs to be gentler or can get too gentle. Rather, Plato's point is about the

[28] Wilburn (2021: 55).

[29] I say "almost as incorrect" because Plato clearly believes the spirited part is capable of acts of self-control and that the appetitive part is not. Therefore, spirit, insofar as it can manifest as self-control, is something *akin* to moderation. However, it is not moderation, and that is what matters. Moderation is, on Plato's understanding, gentle. Self-control, read as a more general notion, need not be. To take the relevant example, the forceful repression of one's own desires is self-control and it is not gentle.

need to moderate the spirited part's tendency to fierce stubbornness, while avoiding the opposite extreme of an unstable predilection to bouts of *violent anger* that Plato claims is the product of a spirited nature which cannot stick with its commitments.[30] Then there is Wilburn's use of Plato's descriptions of the spirited part as tame, or capable of being tamed, as proof of its capacity for gentle behavior (e.g., *Republic* 411a-b and 441e-442a). Here, Plato's calling the spirited part "tame" does not appear to mean what Wilburn takes it to mean. In part, the disagreement here turns on what one means by gentle. Wilburn sometimes takes gentle to mean *acting out of a concern for others*, and sometimes as meaning *acting in a way that is not violent and hostile*.[31] Notably, both of these ways of glossing gentleness stand in tension with Plato's use of tame in conjunction with the spirited part of the soul. Here, the passage about the well-bred dog which has been our focus is informative. In the passage, tameness, which, notably, is used as a stand in for gentleness, is contrasted with savagery (*Republic*, 375b). Savage is a translation of ἄγριος, also meaning wild, or literally of the fields. Thus, when Plato calls a spirited person or part savage, the implication is that it is unfit to live with others. By contrast, in calling the spirited part in a good condition "tame," Plato is not casting such a spirited part as docile, or as caring. Rather, he is claiming that it is the kind of violent agency which can live with others as a beneficial force for its community. In describing the spirited part as tame, Plato is not casting it as an ox, but as a guard dog.

It is this sense of what Plato means by tame which should inform how we interpret the "gentleness" of *thumos*. Above, I distinguished two ways in which Wilburn understands *thumos* as gentle. One of these amounts to the thought that the spirited part can be gentle in that it can

[30] Thus at *Republic*, 411b-c, the danger of *too much* music for overly spirited people is that they will become "irascible and bad tempered, instead of spirited and filled with peevishness."
[31] For example, Wilburn (2021: 54 and 57).

motivate a person to care for others. I agree with Wilburn that this is something that the spirited part can do (*Republic,* 463d). However, even in such cases the spirited part enjoins solicitude in response to a perceived threat to the object of its concern. For Plato, the spirited part, in a good condition, can be gentle, and it can be caring, but it is these things in the way in which a police officer walking their beat is these things. The analogy is helpful. My claim about *thumos*, contra Wilburn, is that Plato understands *thumos* as violent. This does not mean he believes the spirited part resorts to violence in every instance. A police officer who acted that way would exceed even the grossest caricature of police thuggery. By contrast, the relevant comparison is to a more standard and general vision of the police. A police officer serves the community. They may be warm, they will help those in need, and they can be caring. However, on the beat they see the world through the lens of possible threats to the peace, and the use of force up to and including violence, both against them and by them, is always on their minds.

The second reason to prefer my unitary account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own to Wilburn's is that if Plato thinks spirit has two faces, then it is not clear why he thinks it is a *limited* principle of psychic unity. Thus, the tension between Wilburn's interpretation and Plato's understanding parallels the difficulty which besets interpreting *thumos* as the desire for the *kalon*. If Plato believes spirit can take shape in uncomplicated acts of friendship, why does he also believe it cannot unify the city and soul? Plato is clear that it is only the rule of reason which makes the parts of the soul friends with one another (*Republic*, 589b), and it is only reason which looks to the good of each psychic part and soul as a whole (for example *Republic*, 441e, where Plato appears to explicitly contrast this ability with the abilities of the spirited part). However, if the spirited part can be the nurturing friend that Wilburn's interpretation claims it can be, it too should be able to establish the psychic and civic harmony which Plato characterizes as (a kind

of) friendship. That Plato believes the spirited part cannot harmonize the soul is a reason to refrain from attributing to spirit the possibility for pure gentleness and uncomplicated friendship; and one further reason to prefer my reading to Wilburn's.[32]

5. The Natural Alliance

These differences between our interpretations aside, one point on which Wilburn and I do agree is that reading *thumos* in Plato as defined by a concern for the *oikeion* provides a rich and distinctive battery of resources for explaining why Plato also took *thumos* to be the "natural ally" of reason.

To start, if *thumos* is the defense of one's own, there is reason to think that the thumoetic part has the capacity to make a powerful, and distinctive contribution to the work of establishing psychic harmony. Given the thumoetic part's determination to defend what it takes to be its own from alien threats, if it were educated so as to take as *oikeion* those inclinations, thoughts, etc. which promoted psychic unity, it would be a distinct force for establishing this good condition of the soul. Put more directly in the terminology of *Republic*, Plato considers the spirited part the natural ally of the rational, in part, because he believes the sensibility of the spirited part can be educated into seeing right reason's desires as *oikeion* and disruptive appetites as *allotrion*. That this is in fact the way Plato understands the activity of the spirited part in its best condition, is

[32] In this section, I have tried to give an initial characterization of the difference between mine and Wilburn's "*oikeion* reading" of Plato's account of *thumos*. There are other significant points of disagreement. Two are worth mentioning. First, because Wilburn reads Plato as attributing to *thumos* two independent faces, he downplays the extent to which Plato's understands *thumos* as constituted by its own distinctive 'logic.' This may not seem all that significant a difference (depending, of course, on what one means by a "logic of *thumos*). However, I believe it explains a number of the more local points of disagreement between our interpretations. Second, and this I suspect is a more straightforward difference between us, according to Wilburn the spirited part of the soul is essentially bound up with political (specifically) and social (generally) concerns, Wilburn (2021: 61). I do not believe this is Plato's view. Rather, I will argue that for Plato *thumos* is a form of self-assertion which only assumes a hostile alien environment, and therefore, is *not* essentially social. This I contend, is one of the more significant consequences of coming to see that Plato conceives of *thumos* as defined by the fact that it marks the line between me (*oikeion*) and not-me (*allotrion*) and acts so as to defend this distinction. I expand on this claim at length in chapter 5.

born out by his definition of courage in *Republic*. Courage is (1) the good condition of the spirited part and (2) the *preservation* "through pains and pleasures [of] the pronouncements of reason" (*Republic*, 442c, as well as 429b-430b for the parallel description of civic courage). Spirit preserves, or defends, and when it is well educated, it preserves what it ought to defend, namely, reason's pronouncements.

Understanding the positive contributions of the spirited part in this way also explains why, and the way in which, Plato views these contributions as a distinctively valuable support to the work of rational self-governance. In the tri-partite psychology, Plato sees appetite as the primary threat to happiness and psychic harmony (e.g., *Republic*, 442a). It is a source of disorder, and one of the primary ways it disorders is by frustrating or corrupting our rational attempts to bring order to our lives. This conception of appetite, and the threat it poses, is on display in the account of courage quoted above. It is pain and pleasure which threaten reason's pronouncements, and while pain and pleasure are not the sole province of appetite (*Republic*, 580d), there is reason to think that Plato has appetitive desires and aversions in mind (440b-d). The pleasures of appetitive satisfactions, and pains of appetitive aversions often run counter to our rational desires, and this is a threat which, Plato thinks, our spirited desires are uniquely positioned to address. Grasping the full extent of Plato's claim here, depends, importantly, on correctly construing the precise nature of the threat he believes is posed by appetite. For Plato, appetite tends to interfere with reason, and while he certainly believes this interference can take shape as cases where the rational and appetitive parts are at loggerheads, one desiring and the other rejecting the same end (*Republic*, 439c-e), he does not believe that this is the primary threat posed by appetite to rational rule. For Plato, the real danger is that appetite tends to interfere with the rational part by distorting and corrupting its desires, such that, in the more extreme cases, this

influence produces an appetitive character, i.e., personalities like the oligarch's which are defined by a global subjugation of the agent's rational sensibility to appetitive goals.[33] Thus, for Plato, the problem is that the appetites *influence* and *change "*reason's pronouncements."

In *Republic*, the spirited part is cast as a potential counterweight to this influence, one that can help reason maintain its desires and judgments in the face of appetitive influence. For example, the spirited part is described as helping agents maintain their belief that they have been treated unjustly in the face of appetitive deprivation (*Republic* 440c). In the same vein, a well-functioning spirited part in general is portrayed as one that "carries out" the decisions of the rational part (*Republic*, 442b). For Plato, the spirited part helps reason order the soul by serving as a source of follow through, stick-to-itiveness, or perseverance. His point is that settling on a course of action is one thing, following through on it in the face of appetitive resistance is another. Spirit helps with the latter. Attributing to Plato an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own fits with this understanding of the spirited part's distinctive contribution to the work of establishing psychic unity. As Plato understands it, the spirited part takes certain thoughts, desires, etc. as *oikeion* and then acts so as to defend them by ensuring that they end up being pursued. In effect, this is the spirited part operating as a source of selective, localized, and beneficial stubbornness. Attributing to Plato an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, fits with, and can explain, this sense of the distinctive contribution of the spirited part to the work of psychic unity.[34]

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[33] An extended and persuasive argument for this interpretation of the nature of appetite's threat, as well as the concomitant claim that in *Republic* (synchronic) *akrasia* is not Plato's primary interest, is provided by Wilburn (2021: 170-7).

[34] Wilburn (2021: 182-93) and Weinstein (2018: 203-34) both argue for a similar understanding of the way in which the spirited part functions as the ally of reason. Although my reading is closer to Wilburn's, and I disagree with Weinstein that appetite, spirit and reason are distinguished by Plato on the basis of their concern with differing time horizons (finite, long-term and infinite respectively), one notable advantage of Weinstein's reading over Wilburn's is that it is more alive to the need to explain Plato's belief in the tendency of *thumos* to align with reason (see

However, there is, and must be, more to Plato's claim that spirit is the "natural ally" of reason over and above his belief that the spirited part can aid reason by serving as a distinct, less malleable, source of perseverance. To see why, consider that attributing this ability to the spirited part does explain why Plato considers it the *ally* of reason. However, it does not explain why Plato considers the spirited part the *natural* ally of reason. What still stands in need of explanation is the tendency of spirited desires to align with rational desires regardless of the condition of the spirited part.[35] It is this general tendency of *thumos* to align with reason which, I believe, is both harder to account for and more central to Plato's understanding of *thumos*. As with Plato's sense of the distinctive form of spirited assistance, I believe my proposed reading of spirit as the defense of one's own explains Plato's belief in the tendency of spirit to aid reason in its work of establishing order in the soul.

In the passage where Plato explicitly introduces spirit as reason's "ally" he does not offer a blanket description of spirit as a form of soul that aids reason in its work of ruling the soul, rather, he says something more specific:

> And don't we often notice on other occasions that when appetite forces someone contrary to his rational calculation, he reproaches himself and feels anger at the thing in him that is doing the forcing; and just as if there were two warring factions, *such a person's spirit becomes the ally of his reason?* But spirit partnering the appetites to do what reason has decided should not be done—I do not imagine you would say that you had ever seen that, either in yourself or in anyone else.
>
> No by Zeus, I would not. (*Republic*, 440a-b) [my italics]

below). On Weinstein's reading, thumoetic and rational desires tend to align because their concern with long term and permanent achievement respectively pre-dispose them to line up against appetites finite interests.

[35] See the introduction to this dissertation for a more extended defense and explanation of this reading.

Socrates' claim here is that in moments of explicit conflict between rational and appetitive desires, spirited desire takes the side of reason. That Plato is making this more focused claim is born out by the features of the two cases Socrates immediately goes on to describe of a man who accepts punishment (440b-c) and bridles at mistreatment (440c-d).[36] Both are situations in which a man makes a rational judgment as to what is just that calls for action which must weather appetitive discomfort. In the case of the man who believes he has been justly punished he must endure the punishment, while the man who takes himself to be unjustly treated must fight to resist his treatment despite the frustration to his appetites. In both cases, Plato maintains that anger rises to the aid of rational desire and helps the individual persevere against his conflicting appetitive impulses to avoid pain. Socrates then follows up the two cases by invoking the image of the dog to describe the spirited part. In doing so, he points back to the role of the best city's soldiers as auxillairies (ἐπικούροι, or allies) of the "sheperdlike" rulers (an allusion Glaucon immediately recognizes, *Republic* 440e). Thus, Plato locates his claim about the spirited part of the soul in his overarching portrayal of spirit as the helpmate of reason, but here advances the thought. The spirited part is an ally or comrade in arms in that it literally fights with the rational part against disruptive appetites.

If we are to understand it, the boldness of Plato's claim about the spirited part's tendencies needs to be both acknowledged and analyzed. At the end of the passage Socrates asks Glaucon if he has *ever* seen a spirited impulse "partner" with an appetite that conflicts with

[36] It is not clear whether Leontius' internal turmoil, namely, the text immediately preceding the quoted passage, is presented as a similar kind of case. There is some reason to believe it is, but it depends on how one reads the opening line of the quoted passage. The question is whether the "other occasions when appetite forces someone contrary to his rational calculation" refers back to Leontius. Leontius' is surely a case of an appetite forcing someone contrary to some other kind of desire. What remains to be seen is whether Plato understands Leontius' internal turmoil as one where his rational part objects and his spirited part rises to its aid, or more simply, a conflict between spirit and appetite.

rational desire—and Glaucon's answer is "no" (*Republic*, 440b). Socrates does moderate this absolute claim. Shortly afterwards he describes the spirited part as far more likely to align with the rational, and as a "natural ally" *if* it has not been corrupted by a bad upbringing (*Republic*, 440e and 441a respectively).[37] Nevertheless, I believe we should read Socrates as asserting something about the way in which the spirited part by and large responds. Pointedly, and this in keeping with the proposed gloss of "natural," we should read this as a claim about the way in which the spirited part by and large acts independent of whether it is in a good or bad condition. Not in every case, but in most of the cases in which our appetites and rational desires come into explicit conflict, Plato believes that our spirited impulses align with our reason.

If Plato's contention seems implausible, or at odds with his commitment to the possibility of conflict between the rational and spirited parts, it is essential to keep in view the scope of the kind of case he is describing. Plato's claim here is not that the spirited part for the most part tends to align with reason's aims full stop. Rather, it is that in cases of explicit conflict between appetite and reason, spirit sides with reason. Spirit's tendency is thus triggered in the event of conflict. Furthermore, it is explicit—self-aware—conflict that triggers the support of spirit. This leaves open what the spirited part does in cases of conflict between appetitive and rational aims

[37] It is worth asking why Plato includes the more extreme version of the claim in the first place. Especially since it both rings false and runs the risk of obscuring the fact that the conversation concerns the spirited part's tendencies independent of its education. One promising suggestion made to me, is that Glaucon's answer reflects his own experience. Glaucon answers this way because his spirited part has never taken up sides with appetite against reason, and Plato includes this exchange as a nod to Glaucon's condition as akin to that of the auxilliaries of the best city. A helpmate to Socrates and would-be philosopher, Glaucon is a man whose spirited part is in an excellent condition (e.g., *Republic* 474a-b, 548d).

That spirit does not show absolute fidelity to reason can be seen from the following kind of case (brought up to me in conversation by Gabriel Lear). Imagine an individual who is struggling to cut down on their smoking. At the end of a long day in the office they are torn between the desire for a cigarette and an aversion to that very same act. Unsure of what to do, they might be struck by the thought, "I deserve it." This would be a case of spirit partnering with an appetite in a case explicit conflict. Thus, such an alignment of desires is possible, and if Plato thinks otherwise he is mistaken. However, that these moments are possible does not preclude that they are rarer than might be expected, or that Plato might possess a principled explanation for why this is the case.

that are not explicit. For example, no claim is being made that I will most likely get angry if I mindlessly and contentedly surf the internet instead of grading my students' papers. Here appetitive satisfaction impedes my rational aims, but I do not see it. And contra the cases deployed in Book IV (to establish psychic partition), for Plato it is unnoticed conflict far more than explicit conflict that characterizes human activity. Effectively, we need to see the kind of case being described as narrower in scope than it might appear.

Yet we should not construe the case too narrowly. Given the theory of psychic structure entailed by the concept of psychic rule developed in Books VIII and IX, rational desires are often dominated by non-rational ends. So, for example, an oligarch will have a rational desire to get back to work so he can turn a greater profit. These dominated rational desires also conflict with appetites—sometimes the appetite to surf the web, and Plato's claim is that if such a conflict becomes explicit, the oligarch's thumoetic part will come to the aid of his rational desire for wealth. Regardless of whether the rational desires in question are enslaved or free, if an agent takes his rational desires to be opposed by his appetites, he will have a spirited desire to act as reason enjoins.[38]

Emphasizing that Plato is describing the purported experiences of the imperfect—the experiences of people like us—helps snap into view the phenomenon Plato is bringing to our attention. It is a familiar fact that when we experience a conflict of desire, it typically evokes some force of will to push through one of the two options. We might get angry for so much as having one of the desires, and even angrier if we give into it. We dig deep, grit our teeth—this is spirit coming to the aid of reason. Once we get clear on the kind of case Plato is talking about,

[38] We are given no indication that the individuals described at 440c-e are ruled by reason. Rather, Plato presents these figures, bridling, persevering, etc., as acting in familiar ways. They are not the seemingly daunting achievements of philosophers, but doing the kinds of things we ourselves might do in our better moments.

Plato's contention concerning its regularity gains a fair amount of intuitive plausibility. In cases of explicit conflict between a rational and appetitive desire, we do in fact tend to fight against succumbing to our disruptive appetites. The question is: why? If one accepts that Plato is picking out a regularity in human experience, what is it about this situation and *thumos* that explains the forceful thumoetic desire to will oneself to act as reason bids?

Notably, we often understand such conflicts as conflicts between what "*I* really want," and some interfering impulse. We identify with one of our desires (as the thought is often put). What *I* want is to finish the paper, not prep dinner, respond to that important email, or survey the fall selection of my favorite brand of boots. Whether and in what ways we are right to think that one desire is mine and the other somehow not mine is a further issue. All I want to bring attention to here is that we do tend to think (or at least speak) this way. We see one desire as more representative of who we are, or want to be, and the second as falling on a scale somewhere between an alien force and a concern less central to our aspirations. Plato in the Book IV discussion of the way in which the spirited part tends to support the rational involves a recognition of just this experience. According to Plato, in cases of explicit conflict between our rational and appetitive desires, we identify with our rational desires and this has decisive consequences for *thumos*.

It is this identification that for Plato explains the tendency of spirit to align with reason—given an understanding of *thumos* as the love of one's own. As I am reading it, in Book IV Plato is arguing (1) there is a familiar experience of spirited desires coming to reason's aid in cases of explicit conflict and (2) that in such experiences the agent identifies with their rational desire as opposed to their appetite. If Plato does in fact think that spirit is the love of / defense of *to oikeion* this would explain why he thinks spirit will (for the most part) align with our rational

desire in such cases. Characterized by its concern for one's own, the spirited part distinguishes between me (mine) and not-me (not-mine) and acts so as to defend me from what is viewed as alien. When an agent identifies with his rational desire, this triggers a thumoetic response. The identification presents spirit with a me (rational desire) and interfering or threatening not me (appetite). The spirited part then springs into action to defend what it perceives as its own (i.e., the agent's rational desire). Therefore, understanding spirit as the love of one's own makes sense of why Plato thinks spirit is the natural ally of reason in Book IV of *Republic*.

6. Interlude: Why We Tend to Identify One Way

I am attributing to Plato the belief that when there is an explicit conflict between an agent's appetites and rational desires, the agent will (by and large) identify with his rational desire. For my purposes, it is enough if one accepts that Plato believes this—and perhaps that he is right to do so. But one might also wonder whether Plato has a more developed theoretical justification for his confidence that we regularly identify with our rational desires over and against our appetites. Why after all be so confident that we do not just as easily identify as the subject of appetite? Plato, I believe, has a response to challenge, one that rests on his developed conception of rational and appetitive desire. The following brief remarks should both provide some support for my reading and are suggestive of the ways in which a better understanding of *thumos* can shed light on the nature of reason and appetite.

Plato supposes that a conflicted agent will identify with his rational desire for a simple reason: he does not think that there is an appetitive self with which the agent can identify. It is a central claim of Plato's tri-partite psychology that there are different kinds of desire, each defined by a distinctive formal object. For Plato, it is the decisive difference between the objects

of appetitive and rational desire that explains our tendency to identify with our rational motivations. Reason, *qua* faculty, strives to determine the truth of things (e.g., *Republic*, 581b, 602d-603a). Translated into the domain of action (how I should live), this desire expresses itself as a desire to do what is in truth good for me. As a result, Plato views the formal object of rational desire as what is in truth good for me. Internal to this formal object is a self-representation, a "me" for whom the desired end is good. In fact, it is this feature of rational desire, in conjunction with its aim of determining the truth of things, that explains Plato's claims in Book IV that the rational part cares about the good of the whole soul and its parts severally (*Republic*, 442c). Internal to each rational desire is some representation of the "me" doing the desiring, and thus reason's asking, "what in truth is good for me?" depends on also asking, "What in truth am I?" with the possible result of the inquiry being: the articulated unity of three independent subjects of action (i.e., an embodied tri-partite soul). To put the point more plainly, to know what is good for me I must also know what I am. Internal to the formal object of rational desire is the possibility of self-understanding and therefore a self-representation that can be developed into self-knowledge.

I take it that making these claims does not introduce anything overly contentious concerning Plato's understanding of rational desire.[39] More contentious, however, is my understanding of appetite, in particular my claim that Plato does not believe the formal object of appetite 'contains' any such developed representation of a self. A more standard reading would be to gloss the formal object of appetite as pleasure, or the pleasant.[40] However, there is prima-

[39] For example Singpurwala (2010: 883), who in summary mode puts forward an account of reason as aiming (in part) to determine the truth concerning how one should live and rational motivations as desires to live in accordance with this understanding.
[40] See for example, Lorenz (2006), Wilburn (2014).

facie good reason to think this cannot be right, for when Plato describes the appetitive part as pursuing pleasure, he describes it as pursuing pleasures of a certain sort (*Republic*, 439d, 442a). Thus, if appetite is for pleasure, it is only pleasure of a certain kind. Moreover, and especially pertinent given *Republic*'*s* alignment of unity and happiness, Plato's repeatedly characterizes the appetitive part as dis-unified and disunifying (e.g., *Republic*, 580d-e, 588c and effectively the whole of the account of democracy and tyranny). The appetitive part is likened to a many-headed beast, akin to Typhon the great Titan that challenged the rule of Zeus. A psychic agency that must be guarded against lest it fracture the order established by the rational and spirited parts (*Republic*, 442a-b), it is the appetitive part unchained whose divisive influence plays out over the course of Plato's accounts of the degenerate constitutions. It is appetite *qua* dis-unified and dis-unifying that should be taken as the heart of Plato's understanding of appetite. In this vein, it is just as important that the appetitive part is disunified as it is disunifying. The question to ask is, why does Plato think the appetitive part is unable to bring together even its own disparate appetites into a unity (recall the image of the many-headed beast)? The answer, I want to suggest, is to be found in Plato understanding of the formal object of appetite. For Plato, the object of appetite is the satisfaction of a lack or need.[41]

[41] Support for this thought can be found at *Republic*, 439d, where Plato describes the appetitive part as the "friend of certain ways of being filled, and certain pleasures."
Importantly, this description of appetite looks forward to the account of pleasure advanced in Book IX as part of the third argument for the superior happiness of the just man (583b-587a). However, as I am reading it, we should take the account of pleasure to be reflected in Plato's understanding of the object of appetite and vice a versa. Thus, I do not deny that appetite is for pleasure of a certain sort, but rather want to refocus attention to the way in which appetite represents an end as desirable given that it is for pleasure of a certain kind. For Plato, an appetitive end is desirable because it satisfies a felt need. Plato understands appetite in this way because he thinks appetite is for pleasure conceived on the model of bodily pleasures. On my reading, one could abandon or deny Plato's account of pleasure, while still endorsing his claim that there is a distinctive type of primitive desire, appetite, whose formal object is conceived of as the satisfaction of a lack.

On this reading, an end is desirable to appetite insofar as it satisfies some perceived need. If this exhausts the desirability of the end, so to speak, then there is no self-representation internal to the formal object of appetite. More exactly, it is rather that the self of appetite is conceived solely as the subject of the need.[42] Absent is a self-concept that might serve as a framework for characterizing the various appetites (and desires more generally) as desires of a unified whole, i.e., a self in a more robust sense of the term. Instead, as conceived (and conceivable) by appetite, the self is a set of isolated needs absent a sense of how these needs relate to one another, whether any are of greater or lesser importance, and so on. Interestingly, the self viewed through the lense of appetitive desire looks very much like the appetitive part represented in Plato's image of the tri-partite soul. As appetite understands us, we are a many-headed beast (*Republic*, 588c).

When an appetite comes into explicit conflict with a rational desire, Plato believes we identify with the rational desire because of these divergent representations of the self internal to each desire. In such conflicts the agent is presented with two contrasting visions of himself and the relationship of himself to the relevant desire. On the one hand is a desire which characterizes an end as located within a larger context of who I am and what is good for me given the kind of thing that I am. On the other hand is a desire that represents the self as an isolated need met by the desired end. Faced with these representations of the self, Plato believes that it is inevitable, or very likely, that we will identify with our rational desires. When contrasted with reason, appetite does not present enough of a self for the thumoetic part to 'hook into.' There is no "me" for the

[42] Therefore, strictly speaking, my earlier claim that there is no appetitive self is false. For Plato, appetite like all desire entails a representation of the subject of the desire.

thumoetic part to defend. Instead, the natural way for *thumos* to view the conflict is to take the rational desire as *oikeion* and to view the appetite as a brute need disrupting me and my plans.

7. The Natural Alliance Continued

I have been arguing that the "natural alliance" between the thumoetic and rational parts should be read as the tendency of the former to align with the latter in cases of explicit conflict with appetitive desire. However, this cannot be the whole story. The reason why can be found in Book VIII of *Republic* and the account of the degenerate regimes more generally. These four imperfect constitutions, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny are presented by Plato in descending order of excellence (*Republic*, 544b-c). Thus, the constitution organized around thumoetic desire is second best. This placement of timocracy, as well as Plato's description of the thumoetic constitution as a sort of compromise solution to the conflict between the appetite and reason / *thumos* that undoes the best city (*Republic*, 547b-c), indicates that spirit aligns with reason not only against appetite but in some more overarching sense. Loosely speaking, the constitution ordered by spirited desire is closer to the rational order realized in the best city and man. Think of this as something like a claim of convergent evolution. Left to its own devices, spirited desire tends to produce a social and psychic order that approximates rational order. Such convergence results in, and explains, a tendency of thumoetic and rational desires to support and advance one another.

Again, reading *thumos* as the love of one's own makes sense of Plato's views here.

In order to see why, one must first turn to the criteria that Plato uses to determine the ranking of constitutions. In *Republic* the place of each regime in the list is determined by its relative unity and stability. In pride of place is the regime ruled by reason. Only this regime

properly speaking is a unified whole. At the other end of the spectrum is tyranny, for Plato a liminal form of social and psychic structure. Between are timocracy, oligarchy and democracy, each regime more dis-unified and therefore unstable than the last.

This last presumption, namely that a lack of unity produces instability, is central to making sense of Plato's belief in the general alignment of the rational and thumoetic desires. When one examines the catalogue of regimes, what one finds is that with each new regime one is presented with a structure that is less unified, more defined by internal conflict, and therefore less stable and prone to dissolution (compare *Republic*, 545e, 550d, 554c-e, 561a-562e, 573a-574a). At the endpoint of this devolution is tyranny. Radically unstable, Plato casts it as the largely superficial forcing together of a nest of competing desires and 'citizens' (*Republic*, 578d-579b). For Plato a regime is best because it is most unified and therefore most stable.

If, then, a thumoetic regime is second best that is because Plato thinks it is second to reason in terms of its unity and stability. This makes sense given that Plato understands *thumos* as the love, i.e. *defense*, of one's own. According to Plato, the thumoetic part acts so as to defend its own from alien threats—like a dog defending its household. Understood in this way, many, if not all manifestations of *thumos* will be acts of endurance or perseverance. In a sense, what the thumoetic part does is persevere in the face of obstacles. Recall the way in which the thumoetic part intervened in the Book IV conflicts between appetitive and rational desire. For *thumos* mine or me is under threat, and this calls for action so as to defend or preserve oneself. *Thumos* defends, i.e. *preserves* one's own. As long as one does not hear this claim too broadly, *thumos* is the desire for self-preservation. Seen in this light, perseverance and endurance would not just be

descriptions of thumoetic activity but also thumoetic values.[43] By this I mean that the thumoetic part not only acts so as to defend one's own, it is drawn to actions that it can make sense of in this way. As Plato understands it, the thumoetic part wants to persevere. It wants what it takes to be its own to remain as it is. As such, it is a force for stability. It is *thumos* that will manifest as for example fighting to maintain the established social order, valorizing the individual who stands his ground, following through on a long-term plan, and so on.[44]

If one accepts the premise that Plato views stability as (also) a criterion for assessing constitutions, we can see why Plato thinks that a constitution organized by *thumos* is second best. Of course, Plato is also committed to the thought that *thumos* will fail in its pursuit of stability because it will fail to defend its own.[45] Only reason can establish a truly stable order because only through the rule of reason is psychic or societal unity possible. Therefore, though perseverance of self (in a specific sense) is its goal, the thumoetic part is doomed to fall short. Nevertheless, insofar as the thumoetic part is constantly concerned to defend what it takes to be *oikeion,* it will produce and maintain a relatively more stable psychic and social order, at least in contrast to the orders organized by appetite. Moreover, even though the thumoetic part's brand of concern for stability does not ensure psychic or social unity, insofar as being one thing entails remaining the same the thumoetic part will also indirectly be a force for unity as it strives to

[43] Among others, one might add here values such as fidelity and loyalty as thumoetic values entailed by its understanding of the good.
[44] This account of timocracy's position in the ranking of constitutions does not engage with the specific claims Plato makes about it in *Republic*. In chapter 4, I offer an account of the way in which Plato's account of the timocratic city and man align with a reading of *thumos* as the love of one's own.
[45] To name a few of the reasons Plato thinks this: *thumos* is (1) a non-rational form of soul restricted to appearances, (2) incapable of realizing the self-knowledge necessary for a happy harmonious life, that (3) does not value unity (specifically, it cannot conceptualize an articulated unity). See *Republic* 586d-e where Plato makes the general point that the non-rational parts of soul most fully get what they want when they are guided by knowledge.

maintain whatever it takes to be its own.[46] For Plato, perseverance (as conceived by *thumos*) is a value animating the thumoetic constitution and this concern to keep things the same will, he thinks, indirectly produce a relatively more unified social structure given that unity is what makes stability possible.

There seems an obvious problem with this line of reasoning if it is in fact what undergirds Plato's contention that the thumoetic cosmos is second most unified. Persevering and the value of perseverance just as readily promote the preservation of bad or harmful desires, thoughts, institutions, and so on. Or to put the same thought a different way, persevering seems neutral with respect to happiness since it just as readily promotes living badly as living well. This fact is certainly not lost on Plato. Thumoetic individuals, after all, are stubborn (*Republic* 548e).[47] Yet despite, or perhaps because of, their stubbornness, there is reason to think that a character and community ordered by *thumos* is second best.

Plato's claim about *thumos* depends on a thought about the relationship of perseverance to psychic unity and not the less determinate notion of happiness. Admittedly, persevering is just as neutral with respect to psychic unity as it is to happiness: "Yes it's a mess, but it's *my* mess." But this is as it should be if psychic unity is happiness. However, what casting Plato's claim as about the relationship between perseverance and unity does do is make more perspicuous why, relatively speaking, perseverance is a good thing (since it promotes unity and by extension happiness). And this is the second thing it is imperative not to lose sight of: Plato's claim about

[46] One obvious way in which the thumoetic part so understood would not promote unity, is that it would tend to act so as to maintain whatever psychic structure is already in place. As a result, it would also tend to motivate actions that resisted beneficial change, i.e., from a less unified to more unified condition. This is *thumos* as the harmful stubbornness that prevents, say, giving up a harmful commitment.

[47] Plato leads off his description of the thumoetic individual with this claim. This is another moment in *Republic* that supports reading Platonic *thumos* as the love of one's own.

thumos is comparative. *Thumos* is more conducive to psychic unity than appetite. Ungoverned by reason, it too is unable to bring about psychic unity.[48] However, that does not rule out its manifestations being *more* unity-promoting than those of appetite. In effect the discomfort with perseverance as promoting psychic unity stems from a limited sense of the set of possible relationships between some activity / value and psychic unity. It is not that an activity either promotes, undermines or is neutral with respect to psychic unity. Rather, Plato thinks that within the domain of those activities that are neutral with respect to psychic unity, some as a general rule are more or less unity promoting. The thumoetic city and soul are second best because thumoetic activity understood as persevering is more conducive to psychic and social stability than appetitive desires and pursuits.

Thus, Plato's reasons for thinking timocracy the second best form of constitution stem from his conception of *thumos* as the love of one's own coupled with his understanding of unity and stability as good conditions of a psychic or social order. It is this same line of reasoning that explains Plato's contention that thumoetic and rational desires will in general tend to align. Because the thumoetic part pursues stability, and because unity entails stability, reason and *thumos* will tend to support one another.[49] Therefore given Plato's understanding of reason and *thumos*, one can identify two interrelated reasons why thumoetic and rational desires will tend to align with one another regardless of whether the individual is virtuous or just one of us.

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[48] For this reason, I have sought to disambiguate perseverance from stability. Stability here is the success term. If the thumoetic part pursued and valued stability it *would* be able to bring about unity, since stability is unity. Instead, thumoetic activity is a form of trying to stay the same or persevere—one which must be specified further—that is intelligible as such but that falls short of a pursuit of stability.

[49] According to Plato, reason in its practical aspect aims at ends it represents as in truth beneficial, and this in turn translates into a concern with, and ability to, establish psychic unity. Reason cares for the good of the whole soul and its parts severally and works so as to establish the psychic harmony that is unity. The more unified the individual, the more free from enduring internal conflict, the more the individual realizes the stability of soul lionized by *thumos qua* pursuit of one's own.

First, both thumoetic and rational desires will independently pursue a version of stability and by extension courses of action that realize a stable condition of the soul. Reason will be more effective at pursuing this end, but both the thumoetic and rational parts will tend to select courses of action that are manifestations of stability. Therefore, the thumoetic and rational parts will tend to converge on similar or supporting courses of action. So, for example, the thumoetic part will recommend ends such as staying loyal to one's friends or persevering in one's projects. In another key, the rational part will be inclined to pursue these same, or similar actions based instead on the recognition that living well is a matter of living with friends and the judgment that happy harmonious life entails the pursuit of long term goals.

Second, given Plato's respective conceptions of *thumos* and reason, not only will thumoetic and rational desires tend to converge, but the thumoetic part will in general tend to support the courses of action set out by reason. As Plato understands them, the ends selected by reason will be unity—and, by extension, stability—promoting. As such they will as a general rule appeal to *thumos*. More specifically, the thumoetic part acts to persevere and endure and the courses of action set out by the rational part will—given Plato's belief in the tight connection between true benefit, unity and stability—recommend themselves as ways to effectively persevere or endure. Reason, in its search for what is truly beneficial will, to the best of its ability and dependent on its condition, seek to order the agent's life so that it is not frustrated by internal conflict. To *thumos* these desires of the rational part will tend to present themselves as the way to endure. So, to take an example, your rational desire to leave the party early so that you can do your part raising your children will appeal to *thumos* as constancy of character. After all, you did

commit yourself to doing your part with the kids, and going home early is staying true to that commitment.[50]

The inherent tendency of spirit to support psychic order that I have been discussing is, of course, only half the story. As central to Plato's understanding of *thumos* is his belief that it cannot unify the soul. An advantage of attributing to Plato an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own is that such a reading is equally capable of explaining Plato's claims about the decisive shortcomings of this form of soul. Having canvassed Plato's sense of the 'good news' about *thumos*, in the next chapter I will turn to this other half of the story. Helpful as it is, Plato believes that the spirited part is too colored by violence to serve as a principle of psychic unity. The reason for this, as we shall see, is that, because it defends its own, the spirited part sees intractable enemies where it should see friends in need of discipline (*Republic*, 471a). As a result, it cannot see through conflict to reconciliation, nor recognize a different sensibility as beneficial, and Plato believes that both are necessary to bring harmony to the articulated unity which we are

[50] If this sensibility is what explains the thumoetic part's tendency to find rational thought and action appealing, it also points to a complimentary tendency to find appetitive actions and ends unappealing. The thumoetic part's lionization of constancy and endurance will as a general rule tend to come into conflict with the love of variety and novelty Plato takes to be characteristic of appetite (e.g., *Republic* 561a-e).

Chapter 3

The Violence and Limitations of *Thumos*

Plato's theorization of *thumos* is oriented by the thought that it is a limited principle of psychic unity. In the tri-partite theory, Plato's sense of spirit's positive contributions to psychic harmony take shape as the claim that *thumos* is the natural helpmate of reason. This natural alliance, I argued in the previous chapter, is explained by the fact that *thumos* is the defense of one's own. More precisely, Plato believes that because spirit is defending one's own, it manifests as a perseverance that maintains rational pursuits and tends to align with rational ends both because of its predisposition to identify with reason (against appetite) and its love of stability.

However, just as central to Plato understanding of *thumos* is his sense that these positive contributions to the work of establishing psychic harmony are, in some sense, unequal to the task. This, after all, is what is entailed by the thought that the spirited part is a *limited* principle of psychic unity. In this chapter, I will be focused on filling out this other half of Plato's picture of the spirited part's ability to bring order to our lives. My main claim will be that attributing to Plato an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own *also* explains Plato's sense of the limits of spirited self-ordering activity. Thus, for Plato, the same nature which makes spirit reason's ally is also what explains spirit's limitations. I take this fact to count decisively in favor of attributing to Plato an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion*. To return to the thought with which I began, if the spirited part's being a limited principle of psychic unity truly is the thought which orients Plato's thinking about *thumos*, then it is explaining this aspect of Plato's view which is of preeminent importance. The reading I am proposing does just that.

In brief, my main line of argument will be that because Plato sees *thumos* as the defense of one's own, he believes that spirit can only order the soul by force, and as Plato understands it, intra-psychic violence is decisively unable to bring about the internal harmony which Plato identifies with happiness. I will begin by drawing attention to Plato's consistent characterization of spirited self-control as forceful or violent. However, the fact that Plato considers spirited self-control violent does not yet explain why he believes it violent, or why he believes such forcefulness amounts to a limitation of *thumos*. In order to provide this explanation, and better understand Plato's conception of spirited self-control, the chapter will situate Plato's claims about spirited self-control within the context of his theorization of force and persuasion as two distinct forms of self-organizing activity. The chapter will argue that Plato believes defending *to oikeion* is an activity that only takes shape as intra-psychic force, because it conceives of disruptive desires as *allotrion*. As a result, it cannot conceive of the possibility of the mutually beneficial action that is required for persuasion, and thus, by extension, required for the psychic parts to work together as "friends." For Plato, the spirited defense of one's own is too harsh—too violent—to establish the internal harmony and friendship he identifies as unity.

1. Spirited Self-Control Is Violent

Central to Plato's understanding of the spirited part is that it is the seat of acts of self-control. The thought is prominent in Plato's interpretation of Leontius' failed attempt to control his appetite (*Republic*, 439e-440a), and it explains the description of the spirited part as "watching over" the appetitive (*Republic*, 442a). More pointedly, it is Plato's sense of the spirited part as having this capacity which in large part explains why he thinks it is the "ally" of reason. Take for example, the perseverance discussed in the previous chapter. This is the spirited

part aiding reason by resisting desires that would otherwise frustrate the rational part's pursuit of its ends—and this is just self-control by another name. When Plato claims that the spirited part has an intra-psychic role (*Republic*, 441e-442c), what he means, is that a, if not the, distinctive feature of *thumos* is that it takes shape as a non-rational form of self-control.

The example of shame is helpful for illustrating what Plato has in mind. For Plato, shame is an archetypal manifestation of *thumos* (e.g., *Phaedrus*, 253d), and a sense of shame is a reflexive sensibility that governs an agent's desires. By sense of shame, I mean the agent's sense of some acts, etc., as shameful and others as admirable. This sense of shame often manifests as self-control, or the attempt at self-control. When the agent has the desire to do something they think is shameful, their sense of shame will motivate them to resist. The same goes for cases where the agent has an aversion to something they deem admirable (or something required by the admirable, such as putting oneself in harm's way). The agent will be motivated by shame to resist the aversion and go through with the action. Thus, *qua* capacity for self-control, an agent's sense of shame both restrains and enjoins action; in both cases, it does so by motivating the agent to act contrary to some other of their desires. When we are too proud to run for the bus, or stubbornly try to work out how to squeeze all our clothes into one suitcase, it is shame operating as a source of self-control that, for better and for worse, keeps us on course.

Plato believes that this analysis of shame as a source of self-control applies to *thumos* more generally. In fact, one way to understand Plato's characterization of the spirited part as having an intra-psychic role is as his pointing out that the kind of non-rational self-control we tend to associate with shame crops up in our lives in other places, and as the product of different concerns. Anger, disgust, stubbornness, the desire to win—these too motivate us to acts of self-control. In attributing these acts of self-control to the spirited part, Plato is claiming that these

attempts to bring order to our lives form a class and have a distinctive character. According to Plato, it is one of the defining features of these acts of self-control that they are violent. As we shall see, Plato believes that it is this violence that makes spirited self-control a decisively limited form of self-organization.[1] That, however, is getting ahead of things. First, it must be shown that Plato does in fact consistently represent spirited self-control as violent.[2]

In keeping with his characterization of *thumos* as in general violent (*Republic*, 375b-d, 410d-411e, 441b, 547e-548a, 549a), spirited acts of self-control are consistently cast as exercises of force. We see an example of this in Plato's analysis of Leontius' failed attempt to rein in his appetite. On Plato's interpretation, Leontius' shouting at himself and holding his eyes open are his spirited part's attempt to restrain his appetite. This violence of Leontius' failed attempt at spirited self-control is generalized in the claim that the spirited part "guards" the soul by "fighting and using its courage (*Republic*, 442a-b)."[3] This latter passage is critical for showing

[1] Here, self-organization is meant as a genus notion. It is meant to pick out any action that brings order or enduring structure to an agent's life or personality. Thus, not all acts of self-organization, are, as I am using the terms, acts of self-control. Nor are all acts of self-control spirited. (It may be the case, however, that all acts of self-control are forceful.) Plato, for example, believes that the rational part can motivate acts of self-control, and he also believes that the rational part is capable of a different, far more efficacious, kind of self-organization. Plato, to be clear, does not distinguish between these terms in this way. I have chosen 'self-control' as the label for what the spirited part does, because it is sometimes used to translate Aristotle's notion of *enkrateia*. This more limited form of self-organization is, on my view, the most that the spirited part can achieve. As Plato understands it, the spirited part is a principle for managing conflict, and in the face of internal conflict, it can motivate acts that are self-controlled, but never moderate (*sophron*).

[2] In what follows, i.e., in my analysis of spirit's limitations as a principle of psychic unity, when I speak of spirited self-control I will, for the most part, mean the spirited part's managing, and counteracting, other of the agent's desires. This, however, is potentially misleading. Plato does not think that spirited acts of self-organization are always intra-psychic. For Plato, getting angry at others is also an act aimed at establishing some form of psychic order. In getting angry I am defending, and therefore aiming to maintain, my own integrity. Thus, properly speaking, Plato believes that all spirited activity is a form of self-organizing activity, whether it is directed "inward" at one's own desires, or "outward" at potential threats to one's psychic or bodily constitution. I do not think Plato's possessing this more expansive sense of spirited self-organization undermines what I have to say here. Thus, to make my discussion of these issues less awkward, I have reserved the term 'spirited self-control' for the intra-psychic case and have largely restricted myself to discussing this more perspicuous, intrapsychic type of spirited self-organization.

[3] Admittedly, in this passage Plato is discussing how the rational and spirited parts can work together to guard the soul against *external enemies*. This does not invalidate reading this passage as some evidence that Plato sees spirit's intrapsychic activity as violent. More importantly, the context is relevant since this claim about external enemies

that it is not just in an imperfect soul, like Leontius, or the imperfect constitution of a timocracy (*Republic*, 548b-c), that acts of spirited self-control are violent; rather, even for the virtuous, whose spirited part is guided by reason (*Republic*, 441c-443e), spirited self-control is a fighting against appetite. This does make it look like Plato believes spirited self-control is *always* violent. This reading gains further support from the fact that the well-educated spirited part Plato describes at *Republic* 442b is the analogue of the auxiliary class in the ideal city. These are the citizens who will be the soldiers and the police force of the ideal city (*Republic*, 429b). In other words, these are the citizens who will be tasked with maintaining order (more exactly the constitution) by force. If the city and soul are isomorphous, and more importantly, if Plato takes the function of the psychic and civic parts to be the same, it follows that the thumoetic part will maintain psychic order in the same way the auxiliary class maintains civic order, namely, through the use of force. If that is right, then the violent repression of appetite is not solely an expression of a badly educated spirited part. According to Plato, violently repressing appetite is what the spirited part does in both its bad and good condition, and that is reason to think that intra-psychically, forcefully guarding against appetite is the only thing that spirit can do.[4]

Turning one's attention to Plato's claims about the auxiliary class seemingly widens the scope of Plato's claim from being about spirited self-control to being about all spirited attempts

follows on the heel of a description of the way in which spirit and reason guard against appetite, i.e., an internal enemy, and the descriptions are presented as parallel. In the passage, Plato is claiming that the rational and spirited parts will guard against external enemies in the same way they guard against disruptive appetites. See also, *Republic*, 440c, where the spirited part is described as "fighting" as the ally of reason against appetitive deprivation and aversion.

[4] My claim here, and in this chapter, is that spirited *self-control* is violent. This claim is distinct from the more overarching claim that *thumos*, full stop, is violent. Although I also believe the latter (see chapter 4 section 15), only the former is required for my explanation of Plato's reasons for thinking the spirited part a limited principle of psychic unity.

to establish order. It appears that in the inter-psychic case as well, when spirit maintains civil order, it does so by force. In fact, in *Timaeus* Plato makes it clear that this is his view:

> Now the part of the mortal soul that exhibits manliness and spirit, the ambitious part, they settled nearer the head. . .so that it might listen to reason and together with it restrain by *force* the part consisting of appetites. . .That way, if spirit's might should boil over at a report from reason that some wrongful act involving these [bodily] members is taking place—*something being done to them from outside or even something originating from the appetites within*—every bodily part that is sensitive may be keenly sensitized. . . (*Timaeus,* 70a-b, my italics).

First, and most importantly given present purposes, in this passage the spirited part's resistance to disruptive appetites is forceful—but so are its attempts to maintain bodily and psychic integrity in the face of external threats. This latter maintaining of the individual's integrity is, as much as the repression of appetite, an attempt to maintain order. What distinguishes them, as Plato makes clear, is whether the disruptive threat comes from the inside or the outside, and in both cases, the spirited part meets the threat with force. Thus, whether spirit manifests as self-control, maintaining one's integrity, or preserving the laws and practices of a community, it does so as fighting.[5]

2. Spirit Is Violent Because It Defends Its Own

Plato believes that the thumoetic part pursues self-control by means of the forceful repression of conflicting desires. For Plato, this belief is not a generalization about what usually happens. Rather, because the thumoetic part defends its own, Plato thinks that this is the only

[5] In making this last claim about the work of the auxiliaries, I am not claiming that the auxiliaries are reducible to their spirited desires, or even that they are dominated by spirit. However, I do think Plato believes the auxiliaries are spirited people. They are not dominated, i.e., ruled, by spirit like the timocrat. See Wilberding (2009) for a discussion of the difference between timocrat and auxiliary and the importance of distinguishing between them. However, there is reason to think that for Plato, an auxiliary is a well-educated, spirited person who is subject to reason in the form of the fully rational rulers of the ideal city. If that is correct, then there is some ground to think that it is their spiritedness that suits them for, and is exercised by, their task of policing the other citizens.

way it can manage disruptive desires. The spirited part, I have been arguing, defends what it views as *oikeion,* and therefore, by extension, possesses a sense of self, a sense of me and mine. However, internal to this spirited sense of one's own is an understanding of it as embattled, or under threat. The source of this threat is cognized by spirit as an alien other, as *to allotrion*. When these notions of mine and alien are transposed to the intra-psychic realm, they entail understanding conflicting desire as the kind of thing with which reconciliation is impossible. The alien is *essentially* hostile, and because the thumoetic part conceives of conflicting desires in this way, Plato believes it is destined to respond to all internal conflict and tension with the intra-psychic equivalent of violence.

On Plato's account, *thumos* distinguishes *oikeion* from *allotrion,* and acts so as to defend one's own from the alien. Up to this point, my analysis of this sensibility has focused primarily on Plato's understanding of *to oikeion*. Understanding why he believes defending one's own will be violent requires turning our attention to *to allotrion*.

In Book V of *Republic*, Plato's conception of *to allotrion,* comes squarely into view in the course of his argument that Greeks ought to make war against other Greeks differently than they do at present. The core of Socrates' argument is the contention that there are two kinds of violent conflict, each appropriate to a different opponent.

> It seems to me that just as we have the two names "war" and "faction," so there are two things, and the names apply to differences between the two. The two I mean are, on the one hand, what is one's own (οἰκεῖον) and kin, and, on the other, what is foreign (ἀλλότριον) and strange. "Faction" applies to hostility towards one's own οἰκείου), "war" to hostility towards strangers (ἀλλοτρίου).
>
> Yes, there is nothing wrong with that claim
>
> Consider, then, whether this too is correct. I say that the Greek race, in relation to itself, is its own kin (οἰκεῖον), but, in relation to barbarians, is strange and alien (ἀλλότριον).
> (*Republic*, 470b-c)
> . . .
> *And so they* [the Greeks] *will quarrel with the aim of being reconciled, won't they?*

> Of course.
> They will discipline their foes [when they are other Greeks] in a friendly spirit, then, and not punish them with enslavement and destruction, since they are discipliners, not enemies. (*Republic*, 471a) [My italics]

War, properly speaking, is what one wages against one's enemies, those who are *allotrion*. By contrast, waging war against one's friends, those who are *oikeion* is faction. Faction according to Socrates is a form of self-destructive error (470c). However, as the second excerpt shows, this does not mean that Socrates thinks the use of force against one's friends is never appropriate and beneficial. Rather, Socrates' point is that this "disciplining" of one's friends ought to be more restrained than the war one wages against one's enemies. So, for example, Greeks ought not enslave other Greeks, or exterminate all the citizens of a defeated city (*Republic* 469b-c, 471a). According to Socrates, what explains and guides the more restrained character of this form of violent conflict is that it aims at reconciling the two opponents. Discipline, the use of violence on one's friends, is not as harsh because it aims at reconciliation. By contrast, the clear implication is that in war, the violent conflict between enemies, such reconciliation is not possible. As a result, war may need to be unrestrained (it may need to pursue the enslavement and destruction of one's enemies). So, Glaucon is happy to claim, such warfare is the way Greeks will make war against barbarians and any others who are alien to them (471b).

The important upshot for our purposes is that in this discussion, to be an enemy is to be alien, and reconciliation is not possible with what is alien. According to Socrates, the mistake that the Greeks make at present is that because they see their fellow Greeks as alien enemies, they are unable to see them as potential friends with whom common cause is possible. However, Plato does not think that seeing others this way is always a mistake. For Plato, some people and things are *allotrion*, and the *allotrion* is essentially hostile. It is this latter fact that explains why

he thinks that extermination, i.e. destruction, is a perfectly appropriate response to something that is alien to you. There is no living or working with those people or things that are alien. This need not be the product of the alien being animated by a hostile intelligence that intentionally plots one's defeat (as is the case in war). Instead, we can gloss Plato's thought as a matter of the alien being essentially an obstacle to your doing well. If the alien does well, you and yours do not. As a result, if something is alien in this sense, there is no working through the current enmity and conflict to some later "friendship." Instead, the only course of action that makes sense is to overpower, and in the best case eliminate, the alien threat.

The passage in Book V describes the way Plato thinks the notions of *oikeion* and *allotrion* play out in our attempts to navigate inter-personal conflict, but it is not hard to see why he might believe that a similar logic applies when this way of thinking is turned on oneself. For Plato, the spirited part defends *to oikeion* from what it sees as an alien threat. This threat can be a people, a social class, another person, or one of one's own desires. This last case is the way spirit takes shape as an attempt to address internal conflict. In such cases, the spirited part sees one of the agent's own desires as a threat to something it views as *oikeion*.[6] For example, the spirited part might act to suppress an appetite that conflicts with one of the agent's rational ends. This is the spirited part in its role as the ally of reason, and Plato believes we should understand this as the spirited part seeing the agent's rational desire as good in the sense of *oikeion*, and disruptive appetite as bad in the sense of *allotrion*. In such a case, because the spirited part represents the appetite as alien, it will respond with force. Just as the only intelligible response to alien peoples

[6] When the spirited part sees one of the agent's own desires as an alien threat, what it takes to be its own need not be some other of the agent's desires. For example, I can be ashamed because my hunger for recognition hurts the people I love. However, my account of Plato's understanding of spirited self-control will only analyze this more straightforward form of internal conflict. In part, this is due to the fact that as far as I can make out, Plato himself only considers this kind of case.

is war, so too the only intelligible response to the alien appetite is to meet it with the intra-psychic equivalent of violence. The spirited part responds with force, because viewed as *allotrion*, the disruptive appetite is essentially hostile. There is no possibility, say, of moderating or redirecting the appetite to something the spirited part sees as innocuous, let alone beneficial. For the spirited part, the problematic appetite is not the sort of thing with which one could live in harmony. Faced with such a threat, the only sensible response is forceful suppression.

It is imperative not to be misled by this description and undercut the psychological necessity Plato takes to be at work in this situation. Spirit does not assess opponents, judging this one redeemable and that one irredeemable. It is precisely this kind of assessment which is beyond *thumos*. Here, in the world of spirit, if something is identified as an opponent there can be no harmony with this threat to me and mine. As a result, the spirited part *will* respond with force (either actual violence, or the intra-psychic equivalent). It will do so because, locked in the dichotomy of *allotrion* and *oikeion*, it cannot conceive any other form of response. For spirit to do something other than respond with force would make as little sense as trying to convince a player on the other team to step aside and let you score. Except, when it comes to spirit, the unintelligibility is absolute: *thumos*, as Plato understands it, sees the world as a zero-sum game. Inhabited from the inside, everyone and everything is either teammate or opponent (friend or enemy). Every success of an opponent "our" loss, and vice versa. From this perspective, *the* thing to do is try to win by frustrating the other's plans and imposing one's own. It is in this sense, and for these reasons, that Plato believes the spirited part is restricted to maintaining order by force. As Plato understands it, the spirited part defends its own. As a result, its acts of self-control will be violent, in every case, irrespective of whether the situation calls for it or not,

irrespective of whether it is aiding reason or maintaining a flawed psychic constitution, irrespective of whether it is well or badly educated. It can do no other.

3. Force in the Soul

What I take myself to have shown is that because Plato understands *thumos* as the defense of one's own, he believes *thumos* will maintain order by force. Thus, for Plato, the same activity that explains the thumoetic part's being the ally of reason also explains why spirit's assistance only comes in the form of violence. What remains to be seen is whether Plato thinks this is a problem. More exactly, so far, we have shown that spirited self-control is forceful; what remains to be shown is that Plato thinks this limits the spirited part's ability to unify the soul.

Understanding Plato's sense of the limits of force as a means to psychic unity depends on saying something more about the phenomenon in question. Force, after all, is a metaphor. One does not grab a desire and literally hold it down against its will.[7] Fortunately, in *Republic* the notion of intra-psychic force figures prominently, particularly in Plato's account of the four different kinds of vicious people and the cities who are like them. Although these constitutions present sketches of vicious personalities, I see no reason why we cannot use what Plato thinks about pathological cases to draw conclusions about his understanding of the forceful repression of desire in general.[8] Rather, looking to Plato's account of these flawed personalities, what we

[7] Although, there is some indication that as Plato understands it, it is not *only* a metaphor. Plato, in *Republic*, is happy to present examples of what is clearly meant to be intra-psychic violence shading into actual physical violence. The story of Leontius is one such case, as is, arguably, the case of Odysseus' rational part restraining his thumoetic desire to slaughter his maidservants (*Republic*, 441b). In the scene from Homer, Odysseus speaks to his "*thumos*" but he also "strikes his chest." This marrying of psychic and physical violence should not strike us as overly exotic. Leontius' response to his appetite is an extreme instance of the way in which one might physically turn one's head away from the computer screen in order to stop reading someone else's private emails. In some cases at least, that certainly feels like tearing one's gaze away from a physical force holding you to the screen.

[8] Two objections one might have to using this material, are that it is drawn from Plato's accounts of (1) vicious (2) individuals, and therefore need not apply to the activity of a (1) healthy (2) psychic part. Taking the second objection first, it is true that Plato's claims are about people, e.g., the oligarch, restraining their appetites by force.

come to see is that Plato's claims about the violence of spirited self-control are the application of a larger conceptual framework for understanding self-ordering activity in terms of whether it is force or persuasion.

A natural way to understand what it means to control a desire by force is to read this description as based on the thought that to use force is to make another person do something "against their will." To control a desire by force is, then, in effect, to control it against its 'will.' That Plato understands intra-psychic force along these lines is evident from his use of terms like "compulsion" (ἀνάγκῃ, *Republic*, 554d), "restrain" (κολάζω, *Republic*, 561c), "expel" (ἐκπίτνω, *Republic*, 560a) to describe this form of self-organization.[9] Translated into the context of an agent's desires, to use force as a means of control is to prevent the expression of a desire in action. This lines up with the notion of the 'will' of the desire, in that it describes a situation where the desire endures but is prevented from expressing itself in action. Thus, for example, the agent is thirsty, and their appetitive part still wants the drink; but the agent does not drink, because their appetite is forcefully restrained by their rational part and does not motivate action (*Republic*, 439c). Plato appears to think that this description only applies when a desire is

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However, this is only an issue if one further thinks that, for example, Plato sees the oligarch's acts of self-control as hybrid products of his rational and spirited parts. This seems very unlikely as it would fly in the face of Plato's commitment to the partition of the soul into independent subjects of motivation. Rather, I believe we should see Plato's descriptions of these people as shorthand which leaves it open whether the rational or spirited part is doing the repressing. Just as in the just person, the spirited part of the oligarch will aid the oligarch's deformed reason in frantically trying to maintain his, at least according to Plato, quasi-personality. The second objection is that these are vicious actions, and therefore that we should not take Plato's claims about, e.g., the democrat's violent acts of self-control as representing what he thinks about the forceful repression of desire in general. However, the fact that Plato is willing to describe these vicious forms of self-control as forceful, indicates that he sees them—at least to some extent—as of a piece with the managed repression he believes is conducive to psychic harmony. These acts of vicious intra-psychic force may be problematic in many ways. However, Plato still thinks they comprise a species of a larger genus, and as such, he must have thought they have a significant amount in common with all the members of the genus.

[9] In the same vein, in the argument for partition, Plato describes the agent's rational aversion as overpowering (κρατέω) their appetite to drink (*Republic*, 439c). Reeve chooses to translate κρατέω as "masters," I take it in the attempt to preserve Plato's belief in the distinctive nature of rational rule. However, overpower is more accurate given the paired description of appetite as, in this case, "driving" and "dragging" the agent.

prevented from expressing itself in action. In other words, for Plato a desire cannot be forced to express itself in action.[10] There are, then, two central features to Plato's understanding of forceful self-control. It (1) prevents a desire from motivating action,[11] and (2) the desire endures while it is being prevented from motivating action. (Although, as I will discuss in a moment, this description of forceful self-control's second feature is potentially misleading.) If this is what intra-psychic force is, two points are worth stressing. First, the fact that force only prevents the pursuit of desire parallels a point that arose earlier in the analysis of Plato's understanding of *to allotrion*. For Plato, one resorts to force to control a desire when, rightly or wrongly, one sees it as irredeemably harmful. This follows from the fact that to control it is to block it, period. Thus, the fact that the desire continues to endure is not a goal of the act of self-control. This point may be obvious nevertheless, it is worth stressing because it highlights both the nature of forceful self-control, and the way such self-control embodies an understanding of the person or desire to be controlled similar to spirit's understanding of those things that it sees as threats to what is *oikeion*. Second, a wide variety of phenomena will count for Plato as acts of violent self-control. Or more pointedly, keeping a desire down by force does not just refer to cases where an agent has an occurrent motivating aversion to another of their occurrent desires. Plato does foreground this way of keeping desires down by force in the course of his argument for partitioning the soul.

[10] This claim is complicated by the fact that Plato frequently described the four vicious personalities as "enslaving" their desires, and even, in the case of the oligarch, enslaving the entirety of their rational and thumoetic parts (*Republic*, 553c). Casting one desire as the slave of another can make it seem that Plato is endorsing precisely the kind of forcing someone to do X that I believe he rules out. However, I would argue that Plato understands the enslaving of desire, and perhaps slavery in general, as a situation where the slave is prevented from pursuing their desires, save in those situations where it furthers the ends of the master. If that is right, then the 'master' only dominates through prohibition, and their 'forcing' the 'slave' to work, is their relaxing that prohibition when doing so serves their own (the master's) ends. On this account, a slave is someone who is prevented them from pursuing their own ends, save in those situations where doing so serves the ends of another (i.e., the master).

[11] For Plato, the forceful control of a desire always prevents it from expressing itself in action. However, if this desire is an aversion, the result of this forceful control might be the vigorous pursuit of an action impeded by the aversion. Therefore, the fact that forceful self-control always prevents the expression of desire, does not mean that it cannot result in the efficacious pursuit of *other* desires.

However, many other forms of self-control fit this description. Distracting oneself, either by doing something mindless or pleasurable, shaming oneself for so much as thinking the disruptive end desirable, pursuing courses of action that one knows, or hopes, will weaken the problematic desire, reciting a mantra right before going into a situation where the desire will be activated, making it a point to not so much as talk about the object of the offending desire—all of these are, or could be, instances of an agent trying to control a desire by force.

Whatever its limitations, Plato believes this self-control has a place in our lives. Not only in our less than perfect lives, but also in the life that he considers best. That he thinks this is evident from the fact that he believes that everyone, even the virtuous, will need an intra-psychic police force to "fight" in defense of their character.

One can see several reasons why Plato thinks that the forceful repression of desire is both necessary and importantly beneficial. First, Plato believes, quite reasonably, that no matter who we are we will sometimes want things we ought not want.[12] When this happens, sometimes if not usually, the appropriate response will be to forcefully prevent this disruptive desire from expressing itself in action. Think of this as Plato's recognition that we will always have one-off missteps, and that when this happens, the desire must be prevented from making it all the way to action.

Further, it is central to Plato's understanding of appetite that not only do we have one-off problematic desires, but that we can easily develop enduring appetites for harmful and unnecessary ends. As a class, Plato calls these the "unnecessary" appetites, and makes a point of distinguishing them from those of our appetites which we must satisfy in order to live and live

[12] Although the virtuous person will experience this form of internal conflict far less often than the non-virtuous, they will experience it (*Republic*, 442a-b, 536c, 571b). I defend this claim at more length in Chapter 1.

well. (*Republic*, 558d-559c).[13] For Plato, these unnecessary appetites are irredeemable, at best distracting and at worst damningly harmful. As a result, he believes the only way to deal with them is to cut them out, or better, prevent them from developing in the first place (*Republic*, 559a, 588e). Here is another place in Plato's picture where the forceful restraint of desire will play an invaluable, and probably necessary, role in unifying the soul. For a start, forceful restraint is the appropriate, in the sense of accurate, response to such appetites. To restrain a desire by force is to represent it as wholly harmful, and in the case of an unnecessary appetite, this representation is accurate. In addition, Plato recognizes the familiar fact that our desires are strengthened and weakened by satisfying or frustrating them (e.g., *Republic*, 411b-412a, 560a, 564d, 573a-b). Of a piece with this recognition, he believes that repeatedly preventing a desire from issuing in action can, over time, eliminate that desire.[14] Taken together, this carves out a space in Plato's psychology for the forceful restraint of desire in the service of eliminating these essentially disruptive, "savage" appetites.[15] When constructing an image for the tri-partite soul, Plato likens the rational part of the harmonious individual to a farmer who "nourishes" and "domesticates" the "gentle" appetites and "prevents" (ἀποκωλύω) the savage ones from growing (*Republic*, 589b). This is a description that downplays the violence which, by Plato's own lights, is involved in the management of appetite and implied by his image. The flock will give birth to

[13] I agree with Wilberding's (2012: 135-137) interpretation of the sense in which these appetites are necessary. According to Wilberding, Plato views these appetites as necessary in two related senses. They are necessary in the sense that we will have these desires (in virtue of our embodiment), and that satisfying them is a necessary constituent of living well.

[14] This belief in the thought that satisfying a desire strengthens it, will frustrating it weakens it to the point of elimination, is clearly evident in the description of "feeding" and "starving" desires that recurs in the image of the human soul presented at the close of Book IX (*Republic*, 588e-599b). For evidence that Plato believes the forceful restraint of desire can, with time, expunge the targeted desires, see his description of the developing democrat's failure to keep his unnecessary appetites in line. Although the son of the oligarch ultimately fails to bring his unnecessary appetites under control, he is able to expunge *some* of them by force (*Republic*, 560a).

[15] Some further evidence that Plato believes intra-psychic violence plays a role in eliminating unnecessary appetites is provided by the fact that he believes that punishment can help rehabilitate the unjust wrongdoer (*Republic*, 591b).

some sickly, deformed, and dangerous offspring. A farmer does not let them live (*Republic*, 460c). This is part of what is called for in caring for a flock, and it is violent work.

Lastly, Plato also appears to have thought that the forceful restraint of desire plays an essential role in the moderation or education of all appetites, including the necessary ones. We see this in *Republic* in the discussion of the purpose of the gymnastic education received by the members of the best city (403e-404e).[16] One of the goals of this physical education is the bodily health of the citizens, and, as a part of this, moderate and appropriate appetites. Socrates points out that if they are to be in good physical condition, the prospective citizens will have to avoid "rich sauces" and "Corinthian girlfriends," training themselves to instead desire more moderate culinary and sexual satisfactions (*Republic*, 404c-d). Plato does not specify whether the actual physical training is meant to play a role in this education of appetite. However, he is clear that physical excellence depends on healthy appetites, and that developing such appetites amounts to steering the citizens away from unnecessary luxuries and inculcating a simple appetitive sensibility. The talk of rich sauces shows that Plato sees the training of human appetites as partially a matter of avoiding and eliminating unnecessary appetites. However, the kind of training Plato is describing also involves the forceful restraint of necessary appetites. Eating well, for example, is also a matter of not eating too much or too often. Inculcating this healthy orientation to food requires the frequent restraint of what is, on the whole, a healthy appetite to satisfy one's hunger (i.e., one's appetite for nourishment). Here again, the forceful restraint

[16] I am indebted to Wilberding (2012) for this interpretation. Wilberding argues that the gymnastic education is aimed at shaping the appetites of the citizens of the best city. Less clear, is whether Wilberding views this education of appetite through gymnastics as equivalent to a restraining the necessary appetites by force. This is how Wilburn (2015: 198n8) takes Wilberding's analysis. However, it is not clear that this is what Wilberding's analysis entails, or that Wilberding himself makes this claim. Wilberding's analysis is aimed at showing that Plato sees the gymnastic education as aimed, in part, at moderating our necessary appetites in the name of psychic harmony. Given that the goal is harmony, it is hard to see how this gymnastic education does not involve intentionally giving one's appetites some of what they want.

desire plays a role in Plato's account of what it takes to establish a harmonious and unified psyche. Plato seems to see appetite as like a lump of metal that can be turned into a useful tool. And as such, it needs to be beaten into shape.

I have belabored specifying the various ways in which Plato sees the use of force contributing to psychic unity in order to drive home the fact that for Plato, forcefully restraining one's desires is not in and of itself a problem. Irrespective of whether it issues from the rational or spirited part of the soul, (forceful) self-control is, in Plato's view, an essential way in which creatures like ourselves bring some measure of happiness to our lives. However, Plato believes that this activity cannot bring about the unity which he identifies as true happiness. In an ethics and psychology like Plato's, based on the thought that *eudaimonia* is the rationally governed harmonious interplay of the three parts of the soul, control by force cannot make us happy. For Plato, the soul of the happy, virtuous individual is unified in that the three parts work together as one. Harmonized like three notes of an octave (*Republic*, 443d), the parts of the truly unified individual "agree" that the rational part should rule (*Republic*, 442c-d). Leaving aside the details of Plato's understanding of this condition, this is unity conceived of as the three parts of the soul working together, each making its own beneficial contribution to the work of producing and maintaining the whole in a condition that is best for all taken together and separately (*Republic*, 442c, 586e, 590c-d). If a defining feature of this untroubled condition is that in it, each psychic part makes a beneficial contribution, then establishing this condition depends on the ability to see such a result as a possibility. This is what intra-psychic force cannot do. As Plato understands it, violent self-control prevents the expression of desire in action. Psychic harmony, however, depends on being able to recognize that the desire to be ordered is not just an impulse to be checked, but a potential (if not actual) source of benefit. The difference here is the difference

between seeing one's sweet tooth as a cross around one's neck, or as a predilection that could become a way to finish one's meals with satisfaction. Keeping a desire down by force does the former, treating the disruptive desire as a force to be resisted. As Plato understands it, psychic harmony requires something more.

In fact, Plato not only thinks that forceful restraint cannot bring about psychic harmony. He thinks that this form of self-ordering activity cannot even, on its own, effectively eliminate disruptive desires. This thought is central to Plato's analysis of the degenerate psychic constitutions. Plato portrays these conflicted individuals as forcefully restraining the appetites that threaten their personalities. According to Plato, such attempts to maintain order by force inevitably fail, and the repressed appetites ultimately collapse the constitution which the individual has struggled so hard to maintain. A clear example of this narrative is Plato's account of the way in which the oligarch degenerates into a democrat.

> Mightn't we suppose that our thrifty oligarchic man had a son brought up by his father with his father's traits of character?
>
> Of course.
>
> Then he too would rule by force the pleasures that exist in him—the spendthrift ones that do not make money; the ones that are called unnecessary.
>
> . . .
>
> And sometimes, I suppose, the democratic party yields to the oligarchic, some of its appetites are overcome, while others are expelled, and a kind of shame rises in the young man's soul and order is restored.
>
> That does sometimes happen.
>
> Moreover, I suppose, as some appetites are expelled, others akin to them are being nurtured undetected because of his father's ignorance of upbringing and become numerous and strong.[17]
>
> (*Republic*, 557c-d, and after the ellipsis 560a)

[17] It is a notable feature that Plato describes the developing democrat's character as maintained by a kind of shame (αἰδώς at 560a6). This is notable, because the democrat is presented in this passage as someone who on the whole maintains order by force. Given Plato's association of shame with *thumos*, this looks like further support for thinking that Plato believes thumoetic self-control is violent self-control.

In this passage, we see Plato maintaining that violent self-control cannot effectively eliminate unnecessary appetites. This is a striking failure. Violent self-control treats disruptive desires as *to be eliminated*. Here, where the disruptive desire is in fact the kind of desire that ought to be eliminated, control by force cannot achieve this goal. Thus, Plato believes that violent self-control cannot, on its own, achieve the very end that it sets itself. Rather, as the passage indicates, eliminating unnecessary appetites requires situating forceful self-control within an overarching strategy for establishing order in the soul. It is the oligarch's and then democrat's ignorance of education that limits the efficacy of his attempts at forcefully restraining his unnecessary appetites (*Republic*, 549a, 554b). What the burgeoning democrat lacks, according to Plato, is the kind of architectonic strategy that can be provided by reason. Absent this kind of guidance, the forceful restraint of desire cannot even eliminate problematic appetites.[18] It is worth taking a moment to point out the way Plato's understanding of this shortcoming of intra-psychic violence mirrors his sense of the role of the thumoetic part in a well-ordered soul. Whatever its strengths, forceful self-control is, in Plato's estimation, a decisively inadequate *strategy* for achieving psychic harmony. Like the spirited part, it is suited to be a soldier and not a ruler, useful in all manner of ways for executing reason's plan, but unfit to take the reins. In sum, Plato believes that forceful self-control is a tactically useful way of resisting disruptive desires which can neither wholly eliminate them, nor see through conflict to the possibility of a disruptive desire providing some benefit.

[18] In what I take to be the same vein, Plato claims that "no compulsory instruction stays in the soul (*Republic*, 536e)." In this passage, Plato is discussing the philosopher's education in the best city. Here, too, we see him claiming that establishing stable psychic structure, whether it is teaching knowledge, or eliminating problematic desires, cannot be accomplished through the use of force.

Given that this is all Plato believes the thumoetic part is capable of, it is no wonder he believes it cannot unify the soul.

4. Persuasion in the Soul

There is, Plato thinks, an alternative to intra-psychic force that is capable of harmonizing our articulated natures. Following Plato, I will call this activity persuasion. I turn to it here, because providing a sense of the form of self-ordering activity that Plato believes can establish psychic unity will allow me to contrast it with the capabilities of the thumoetic part. Seeing what it takes to establish the concordant, open-minded relationship among the parts of the soul that Plato identifies as psychic unity will bring more fully into view why Plato believes that *thumos* is decisively inadequate to the task.

In contrast to the vicious personalities discussed above, Plato maintains that when reason rules in the soul, it rules differently. This is not just the claim that rational rule achieves a different result, but that it achieves this result, at least in part, by ruling in a different way.[19] In contrast to slavery and domination—in short, in contrast to the strategic repression which maintains the psychic structure of the imperfect—rational rule procures the agreement of the ruled. (*Republic*, 442c-d). It is a picture of the ideal individual as someone whose desires are brought "willingly" into conformity with the dictates of reason. This distinct form of rule, claims Plato, is only possible when reason, unfettered, orders a person's life. Therefore, whatever else it may be, this gentler form of rule which Plato sees as enlisting the agreement of the desires it

[19] Compare Annas (1999: 124-5), who casts the matter as reason being able to "structure" the non-rational soul, and in the same vein, as its having an "internal" hold on the non-rational. This way of characterizing Plato's view leaves ambiguous the means by which reason supplies the non-rational with its "internal structure." If, the end result is a non-rational sensibility that accords with right reason, then the non-rational will have a rational structure, but that does not settle whether such a structure is established by, say, force, or persuasion.

organizes is an activity of reason.[20] Plato, I maintain, takes this alternative route to psychic structure to be a kind of persuasion. The place to start in on what he might mean by this is with the recognition that intra-psychic persuasion is something reason does.

Plato believes that the rational part can structure the soul by persuasion, but that does not mean he believes it persuades by means of arguments. He cannot think this, because in the intra-psychic case, he thinks that persuasion is of the non-rational soul. It is a way that the rational part orders the other parts and desires, and that means that though the agent of this activity is rational, its patient is not. Any thought that the rational part persuades by means of arguments which, perhaps, appeal to the long-term good of the one being persuaded would directly contradict Plato's belief in the qualitatively non-rational character of *thumos* and appetite.[21] This the case because the possibility of persuasion by means of argument entails a complimentary receptiveness to argument on the part of the one being persuaded. To be receptive to such

[20] I do think Plato's view is more complex than the above line of reasoning indicates. The complexity stems from the fact that I am drawing a conclusion about all acts of intra-psychic persuasion from a claim Plato makes about a rational *individual*, i.e., a claim about the global psychic structure which distinguishes the soul of a truly rational individual. All that Plato's claim licenses, is the conclusion that persuasion characterizes, or predominates in, the harmonious psyche. Taken on its own, Plato's claim about the harmonious individual leaves it open which psychic part is doing the persuading. While I grant that the claim above leaves the issue open, further consideration of Plato's views, of the kind I offer below, makes it clear that he thinks that only the rational part can persuade.

On a related note, I do believe that Plato sees this conclusion applying to the rational part in general, and not just the rational part of virtuous individuals. For Plato, just as the harmonious soul is ruled by a strategy of persuasion, the souls of the non-virtuous are defined by a strategy of forceful repression. The fact that this is their strategy, does not rule out their pursuing this strategy by means of acts of intra-psychic persuasion. I believe this reading is entailed by Plato's belief in the very idea of a conflicted personality. More specific evidence can be found in Plato's representation of intra-psychic dynamics in *Phaedrus.* In *Phaedrus*, the appetitive part is described as trying to persuade the rational and spirited parts to give in to the desire to have sex with the beloved (*Phaedrus*, 254c, 255e-256a). I do not believe this exchange is evidence that Plato thinks the non-rational parts can persuade, and therefore contradicts my earlier claim. Rather, I read this stretch of text as a dramatic representation of the way in which a rational part dominated by appetite might use persuasion to remove aversions to the satisfaction of sexual appetites.

[21] Many scholars disagree and read Plato as claiming that reason persuades the non-rational by means of arguments. They then take these claims about the rational part's ability to persuade as showing that Plato, at least in *Republic*, attributes robustly agent like capacities for practical reasoning to the non-rational parts of the soul. The standard bearer for this interpretation has become Bobonich (2002: 242-5, who argues for it at length), but see also, Annas (1981: 125–46); Irwin (1995: 217-8 and 2017); Carone (2001: 124–25); and Moss (2008: 64-66) for similar readings.

persuasion, the non-rational parts would have to be able to engage in a calculation from desire,[22] weighing up preferences and settling on one over the other as better means to their long-term, or perhaps overall, good. This would be Plato attributing a panoply of rational capacities to elements of human mindedness that he is elsewhere at pains to characterize as qualitatively non-rational (*Republic*, 441b, 604c-d, *Timaeus*, 70d, 71d, *Phaedrus*, 248a).

Further, Plato gives no indication that he is open to attributing to the non-rational parts a capacity for means end-reasoning. Notably, Plato's preferred adjective for the rational part of the soul is *to logistokon*, "the calculating thing, or element" with the implication being that what makes the non-rational parts non-rational is that they cannot calculate. For Plato, calculating involves regulating one's desires and actions in the light of a conception of one's overall good, *and* the non-rational parts lack this capacity. Consider the following:

> But in addition to that, our earlier quotation from Homer also bears it out [that the spirited parts is distinct from the rational]: "He struck his chest and spoke to his heart." You see, in it Homer clearly represents what has calculated about better and worse, rebuking what is irrationally (ἀλογὶστως) angry as though it were something different (*Republic*, 441b-c).

Here, according to Plato, Odysseus' rational part "calculates about better and worse," and this activity appears to be precisely the kind of choosing between courses of action that would be required of the non-rational parts if they were to be persuaded by argument. However, the passage plainly indicates that in this case Odysseus' spirited desire (his anger) conflicts with the

[22] This term is borrowed from Rödl (2003: 744-749). As I read him, Rödl does take calculation from desire to be a form of practical reasoning, although for Rödl its being such depends on a rational agent's capacity to pursue "infinite ends" (ends with a distinctive form of temporality).

desire of his rational part because this spirited, non-rational part is insensitive to, and incapable of, such calculation.[23]

Given the nature of the patient of this persuasion, we should not read Plato's discussion of persuasion in the soul as claiming that the rational part persuades the non-rational by means of argument. Intra-psychic persuasion, is, for Plato, a rational activity, but not a rational interaction. Instead of rushing to a particular interpretation of what Plato means by persuasion in this context, we should read him as developing an account of an alternative form of self-organizing activity which he understands as reason communicating with unreason. Seen from this perspective, Plato's notion of intra-psychic persuasion is an extension of his commitment to a psychology which assumes harmony as an ideal and simultaneously recognizes the existence of non-rational subjects of motivation. If reason and unreason can work together, reason must have a way to bring this about. Thus, we should read Plato's claims about this alternative, distinctively rational, form of rule as Plato's attempt to think through an essential element of his psychology dictated by some of its core assumptions. This leaves room for Plato's views about the exact nature of this activity to change and develop over the course of his engagement with it across different dialogues, and I believe they do. However, that there is some such activity, is, I am arguing, an essential element of the tri-partite psychology, and one that Plato recognizes as such.[24]

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[23] One could still maintain that the non-rational parts are independent calculators but interpret the nature of *alogismos* differently. Or one could attribute to the rational part some more robust form of calculation that justifies calling the non-rational parts non-rational. Moss (2008) is a good example of the former approach, while Irwin (less clearly in 1995 and pointedly in 2017) exemplifies the latter. Nevertheless, there is a clear tension inherent in viewing the parts as independent calculators while simultaneously maintaining that some of them are non-rational, a tension which, all things considered, warrants rejecting reading the non-rational parts of the soul in this way if other readings are available.

[24] In adopting this approach to Plato's understanding of reason's distinctive form of self-organizing activity, I take myself to be following Lorenz (2006). Lorenz argues that Plato considers the non-rational soul incapable of means-end reasoning, but capable of being affected by rational communication (2006: 108-10). Wilburn is another scholar who advances a version of this view (2021: 211-227). A difference between my reading and Lorenz's, is that I believe we can productively and accurately make sense of Plato's understanding of this distinctive form of rational

The reason to think that this activity is a form of persuasion is that Plato himself sometimes describes it this way, and because the activity he outlines, at the very least, shares some important features with persuasion as it is commonly understood.

In *Republic*, we see Plato's willingness to describe this self-organizing activity as persuasion in his analysis of the failure of the oligarch's regime of forceful repression.

> But consider this. Wouldn't we say that though the dronish appetites exist in him [the oligarch] because of his lack of education, some of them beggars and others evildoers, they are forcibly kept in check by his general cautiousness?
> . . .
> So, doesn't that make it clear that in other contractual matters, where someone like that has a good reputation and is thought to be just, something good of his is forcibly holding in check the other bad appetites within; not persuading them that they had better not, nor taming them by a word, but using compulsion and fear, because he is terrified of losing his other possessions? (*Republic*, 554b-d)

The oligarch keeps his unnecessary ("dronish") appetites down by force. However, the passage claims that there is another, better way to maintain order in the soul. Namely, one can persuade one's desires, and "tame" them with words. In claiming this, Plato is not claiming that the oligarch can persuade his desires. If he could, then he would not be who he is. Nor is Plato claiming that we can tame our unnecessary appetites. If we could, then they would not be what they are. Rather, we should read this passage as Plato being adamant that there is an alternative to violently repressing one's desires, an alternative beyond the reach of conflicted individuals like the oligarch. This alternative, at least according to the passage, is to persuade them. This

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rule by understanding it as a kind of persuasion. My understanding of communication between the rational and non-rational forms of soul as a plank of Plato's tri-partite psychology, is largely drawn from Lear (2014). Lear argues that Aristotle's ethical theory recognizes the existence and importance of reason's ability to communicate with the non-rational. While Lear's primary focus is Aristotle, he clearly sees his reading applying equally to Plato (at least at this level of generality). If I disagree with Lear, it is about the extent to which Plato has worked out some account of this distinctive form of rational communication (2014: 6). For Lear, the notion of intra-psychic communication is something of a placeholder in Aristotle and Plato's theories. By contrast, I believe that Plato, at least, makes some progress developing an account of this communication as a form of persuasion.

identification of an alternative form of soul-organizing activity and characterization of it as persuasion is echoed in Plato's description of the shortcomings of the education provided by a timocratic city.

> They [timocrats] will be stingy with money, since they honor it and do not possess it openly, but they will love to spend other people's money because of their appetites. They will enjoy their pleasures in secret, running away from the law like boys from their father, since they have not been educated by persuasion but by force. This is because they have neglected the true Muse, the companion of discussion and philosophy, and honored physical training more than musical training. (*Republic*, 548b)

Although this passage describes inter- and not intra-psychic formation, here, too, the use of force to produce psychic order is contrasted with an alternative that Plato characterizes as persuasion. A feature of this passage that is a further point in favor of the reading I am recommending, is that here, Plato is canvassing alternative approaches to educating appetite in general. Unlike in the case of the oligarch's disruptive desires, in this passage Plato is discussing the education of unnecessary and necessary appetites. Thus, some of the desires that timocracy miseducates are appetites which can, in principle, be harmonized with a life organized around the pursuit of rational ends. These necessary appetites are the kind of desires that need to be educated, as opposed to expunged, a fact that lends further credence to the thought that in this passage, Plato is suggesting that there is an alternative way to educate a non-rational form of soul and he conceives of it as persuasion.[25]

[25] Wilburn (2014) denies that these two passages show Plato endorsing the possibility of reason persuading appetite. Mapping Wilburn's claims onto my own is complicated by the fact that Wilburn takes persuasion narrowly, i.e., to mean persuasion by argument, and by the fact that Wilburn believes *thumos* (unlike appetite) can be persuaded by argument (see, however Wilburn 2021). However, on the whole, his consideration of this passage runs counter to my proposed reading. He argues regarding the oligarch, that because the passage concerns unnecessary appetites, persuasion is not being presented as a true alternative, since, as Wilburn rightly points out, Plato does not believe such appetites are the kinds of desire an agent should or can moderate. With regards to Plato's claims about timocracy, Wilburn contends that we should not conclude from them that Plato believes the rational part can persuade appetite (Wilburn, 2014: 202n17). His reasoning is that in this passage Plato is discussing how timocracy educates its citizens, i.e., how it educates individuals with a rational part of their soul. Thus, he argues, it is more

Along with Plato's explicit description of this activity as persuasion, Plato also characterizes reason's distinctive way of ruling as its "caring" for the community of parts (*Republic* 589b). This is a capacity the rational part has in virtue of the fact that it can acquire knowledge of what is good for the whole soul and for each of the parts (*Republic*, 442c). The product of the rational part's ministrations is psychic harmony. However, when it comes to understanding Plato's conception of reason's distinctive form of self-ordering activity, the specific ways in which Plato characterizes this harmonious condition are relevant. He claims that the soul of the individual free from enduring internal conflict is one whose parts are friends with one another (*Republic*, 589b). Here, the notion of friendship is meant to do more than lend color to the idea of harmony. In the harmonious soul as Plato understands it, the parts work together. Harmony is not the parts leaving one another alone to pursue their parallel tracks. It is the parts acting together and pursuing actions that are mutually beneficial. Critically, this ideal harmonious condition is defined by a moderation (*sophrosune*) that Plato characterizes as all the parts agreeing (ὁμοδοξέω) that the rational part should rule (*Republic*, 442c-d). According to Plato, this agreement is not the ruled being hoodwinked or drugged into inactivity because reason's rule is what is best. It is best for the individual as a whole and for each of the parts taken independently, a fact that Plato believes the lower parts—by their own lights—can recognize.[26]

natural to read Plato's mention of persuasion in this passage as Plato suggesting that instead of using force, the education provided by a timocracy could, and should, have engaged the rational faculties of its citizens.

I have tried to incorporate a response to these points in my readings of the passages above.

[26] That the non-rational parts are able to do this, is the conclusion of Plato's analysis of the superiority of rational pleasures (*Republic*, 586a-587a). Plato's claim is that when non-rational desires are guided by reason they achieve their "best," in the sense of "truest" pleasures (*Republic*, 586e). Truest, in the context of Plato's analysis of pleasure, means the least mixed with pain (*Republic*, 586b-c). Thus, the truest pleasures (also) means the most pleasure. Plato's claim, then, is that we find the most non-rational satisfaction, the most non-rational pleasure, in the life guided by reason. Plato's belief in this relationship between reason's rule and non-rational pleasure, undergirds his belief that the non-rational parts and desires can accept reason's rule. His contention is that when reason guides our non-rational desires it does not require a compromise. Rather, it is also the most pleasant life, by the lights of our non-rational desire. To take an example, consider the pleasures of eating. According to Plato, the moderate

The picture that emerges is not of a rational part that beats or coerces the non-rational into shape, but rather one whose ordering of the non-rational soul is a form of care that is willingly embraced because it is recognized and accepted by all as for the best.

Taken together, these claims about the character and aim of reason's way of ruling outline an activity that shares several important features with one person's persuasion of another. It is:

(1) Rational communication,
(2) Which represents some action or end as good[27] for the patient, in an attempt to
(3) Bring the agent and patient into agreement that the action or end is good, and in doing so, motivate the patient to pursue the recommended course of action.

Like the more familiar form of persuasion, this is a rational activity, by which I simply mean, it is something reason does. Moreover, it is not just rational activity, but, like persuasion, rational communication. This may seem both an obvious point, and one that does not go very far (since there are many kinds of rational communication beside persuasion), still, it is worth making. Plato is clear that this form of self-ordering activity is reason "taming" the non-rational soul "with a word." Like a politician's giving a speech as to why he should be elected, this intra-psychic activity is the rational part presenting its "audience" with a thought to be taken up.

Seeing why the activity Plato envisions entails the second and third features enumerated above starts with the thought that this is the rational part trying to get the non-rational to do

relationship to food enjoined by reason will provide the most culinary pleasure, and because it is the most pleasant way to eat, it can, and will be accepted by our non-rational appetite(s) for food as best.

[27] The use of "good" should not be taken as referring to some robust value judgment, such as one that takes a stand on the agent's all things considered good. As I argued above, Plato does not believe the non-rational soul capable of such value judgments. If one objects to the use of the term because it contentiously assumes that the non-rational parts pursue the good (e.g., contra Irwin, 1995), feel free to substitute "desirable" or "to be done" in its place. Although I do in fact think it is a mistake to attribute to Plato a conception of non-rational desire as good independent, settling this issue is not necessary to make the more basic point that in intra-psychic persuasion reason shapes non-rational desire by offering it "some of what it wants." See Kamtekar (2017: 134, and 143) for a summary of what I take to be the correct interpretation of Plato understanding of non-rational desire as for the good.

something. If this is a kind of persuasion, it is, for lack of a better term, practical persuasion. Its goal is a condition which is harmonious because the agent's non-rational desires go for some things and not others. The non-rational part comes to act this way by "agreeing" that it is best, and through this agreement becomes "friends" with the rational part. This is Plato casting psychic harmony as a condition defined by non-rational desire "willingly" following reason, acting with it, and if all goes well, benefitting both itself and reason. Central to this picture, is the assumption that (a) the non-rational acts as it does because it comes to see some benefit in doing so, and (b) its seeing this is a result of reason's communication. Thus, whatever shape it may take, or whatever the mechanism the rational part employs to communicate the thought, the thought represents some action as good.[28] This understanding of the communication between the rational and non-rational does not commit Plato to any substantive claims about what the non-rational soul is like such that it is able to heed reason's recommendation. All it must be able to do is recognize some ends as good. To put it in inter-psychic terms, the rational part says, "how about this?" And if all goes well, the non-rational part says, "yes."

In fact, turning to the inter-personal to get a clearer picture of Plato's conception of this intra-psychic communication is helpful, both for understanding what it is and why Plato considers it a kind of persuasion. What Plato sees taking place in the soul bears a striking

[28] These are significant questions, and not easily answered. Lorenz argues, persuasively to my mind, that Plato's account of the function of the liver in *Timaeus* should be read as a concerted attempt to address this lacuna in his theory. According to Lorenz, in *Republic*, Plato is willing to attribute beliefs to the lower parts, but by *Timaeus*, due to his analysis of belief in the *Theaetetus*, Plato abandons this view restricting the cognitive capacities of the non-rational soul to perception. The account of the liver as an organ by means of which the rational part transmits images that influence appetite, is, according to Lorenz, Plato working out the nature of the content of the non-rational thought that reason uses to persuade appetite (Lorenz 2006). My point is that Plato does not need to settle on an answer to these questions in order to coherently hold the view that the rational part 'persuades' the non-rational. For the latter, what is essential is the thought that the non-rational represents some course of action as good (or desirable). Plato can leave open how it does this, or the exact sense in which it is a non-rational representation of the action's goodness. Thus, I think we should read what Plato says on these matters in *Republic* as more a placeholder, and not his considered conclusion about the cognitive capacities of the non-rational soul. This, I take it, is also Lorenz's point.

similarity to the way in which parents 'persuade' their small children. Talking of persuasion in this context can seem misplaced. However, consider the difference between a small child's frustration at having a knife taken out of her hand, and the child's acceptance of the same action when the knife is replaced with a toy. On the one hand, this case is like persuasion in that the parent recommends a course of action as desirable. All cases of persuasion, no matter how rhetorically or argumentatively sophisticated, exhibit this feature. The academic submitting a paper to a journal, just as much as the parent dealing with their small child, presents an action as good. On the other hand, though the parent recommends a course of action as good, this is not an interaction between two rational agents. No appeal is made to the child's ability to consider their long-term good, nor is there engagement with the child's sense of the truth of things, or an articulation of the goodness of the action into reasons. Importantly, although the parent does not offer reasons, they just offer the toy, the coaxing of the child is not a brute act. Doing this kind of thing admits of quite a bit of skill, and can be done well or badly. There is the question of which toy to offer, when to offer it, the look to have on one's face, the tone of one's voice, and so on. These variables allow for a 'rhetoric' of this kind of communication that occupies the same place as the argument marshalled by the academic in favor of publishing their article.[29]

The fact that communication with the non-rational admits of skill highlights the extent to which it calls on the agent to recognize, engage and, I believe, in the best case accept the non-rational sensibility that it is trying to shape. If the parent is to succeed, they have to understand what the child wants. The same is true in the intra-psychic case. An agent cannot direct, or

[29] A further appealing feature of this example is that it illustrates the way in which the rational agent's sense of the goodness of the action can outstrip the sense of the action's goodness that it presents to the non-rational. The parent might present the toy as fun, but they obviously have further reasons for thinking that it is better if their child does not play with a knife.

redirect, their non-rational desires absent an understanding of what these desires are for, how they have been frustrated in the past, how gratified, and so on. To my mind, it is this, more than anything else, which explains why Plato considers this interaction a kind of persuasion. Being able to fashion an action that a non-rational desire will go for depends on the rational part recognizing and attempting to understand a different way of thinking about things. More pointedly, it depends on reason's ability to recognize and understand that it is confronted here with a different, and limited understanding of what is good. It is the rational part's recognition, understanding, and engagement with this non-rational sensibility that makes it so much as possible for reason to succeed in bringing the non-rational around in a way that is reason working with and through the non-rational desire that it seeks to shape.

Above, I glossed this success, and thus the goal of intra-psychic persuasion, as the non-rational soul "agreeing" with the rational part's recommendation. It might seem strange to call what happens in this case agreeing.[30] The strangeness comes from the fact that agreeing, as it is typically understood, is a rational activity and therefore seemingly inappropriate to a case where one of the parties to the 'agreement' is non-rational. To avoid this confusion, I have cast Plato's understanding of the goal of intra-psychic persuasion as the rational part bringing the non-rational into agreement that the action is good.[31] Doing so is meant to reflect the thinness of the

[30] We would not say about the child that "she agreed" to having the knife switched out for the toy. We should take this feature of our ordinary usage seriously. However, that is not the same thing as thinking that it rules out the applicability of the concept of agreement to this bit of everyday parenting. There is a form of agreement which involves each party making a judgment based on reasons that some course of action etc., is for the best. This kind of agreement we mark in English by linking the subject to the active form of the verb, I agree, Sharon agreed, they agreed etc., and it is only possible for, and between, rational beings. My contention is that the notion of agreement has wider applicability and that its use here brings out features of intra-psychic communication that are easily elided.

[31] Lear (2014: 77, and 78n4), working off the literal translation of "homophônei" (Aristotle's term at NE I.13 1102b27-28), calls this achievement "speaking in the same voice." Although he does not say as much, my sense is that part of why he settles on this term is, in part, because of a concern to avoid over-rationalizing the non-rational. However, this phrase, and descriptions like it, have their drawbacks. As Lear himself is at pains to point out, this "speaking in the same voice" is not the rational and non-rational "chiming in unison" independently of one another. Rather, it is a meeting of the mind brought about by rational activity. The advantage of using the notion of

relevant notion of agreement that Plato sees taking place between the rational and non-rational soul, while still capitalizing on the way the notion of agreement captures Plato's sense that there is an active coming together of the individual's rational and non-rational desires. When reason rules, the rational part says, "How about X?" and the non-rational is not a merely passive patient shaped by this recommendation the way sound waves ripple water. The non-rational part accepts the rational recommendation. It says, "Yes, that looks good."

Plato believes that this agreement amounts to the non-rational and rational parts becoming friends. We should not brush this claim aside, for it reflects Plato's understanding of this agreement as, first and foremost, an agreement that the action is good (i.e., beneficial).[32] For Plato, successfully convincing another to act entails that each party takes the recommended action to be beneficial.[33] If the patient accepts the agent's recommendation, they act thinking that the action will be of benefit for themselves (i.e., the patient). When an agent recommends a course of action, the agent does so because they think that the patient's doing this thing will be of benefit to themselves (i.e., the agent). Thus, when persuasion succeeds, there is a presumption that the patient's action is mutually beneficial, and if all goes well, it is mutually beneficial.

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agreement to capture Plato, and Aristotle's understanding of this coming together, is that it accurately represents the active interaction of reason and the non-rational in this achievement.

[32] In cases where one person persuades another, it is easy to overlook this structural feature of their agreement which Plato's analysis treats as essential, and which explains why Plato casts the outcome of intra-psychic persuasion as a friendship. If I agree to your recommendation, it is natural to see this agreement as our agreeing that: I should do X. However, given Plato's fundamental commitments about the nature of desire and action, this description of the object of agreement, while certainly right as far as it goes, runs the risk of overlooking an essential element of what it is we are agreeing about.

[33] Plato's thinking this follows from his commitment to the belief that all desire and action is for the good (*Meno,* 77b-78b, *Gorgias,* 467c-468d, *Republic,* 505d-e).

For the purposes of this discussion, it is not relevant how exactly one reads the exact content of Plato's orienting understanding of the nature of desire and action. All that is needed here, is the thought that Plato believes action and desire is for an end that is at least taken to be beneficial by the agent. Thus, whether Plato believes all desire is for what is good, or merely for what is thought to be good, does not impact the point here about his understanding of the goal of persuasion. See Barney (2010b) for a discussion of this and related disagreements regarding how one understands Plato's claim that all desire is for the good.

This sort of agreement about the patient's action guides even the most unscrupulous attempts to get someone else to do something with words. So, for example, the car salesman who manipulates the customer's insecurities, misrepresents the car they are selling, even the one who outright lies, thinks that the customer's buying the car is a good thing, and is trying to get the customer to think the same thing as well. If there is a contentful difference to be made between any form of getting someone to something with words and persuading them, and Plato believes there is,[34] more than the above form of agreement is required for persuasion.[35]

In the harmonious soul, the rational part's relationship to the non-rational is not that of a car salesman. Plato's ideal of virtue and internal harmony is that of a rational part that in fact knows what is good for the non-rational soul and persuades it accordingly. Here, reason's attempt to bring the non-rational into agreement that some action is beneficial is a sincere taking care of the non-rational soul guided by the knowledge of what is in fact in its best interests. Here, in place of the unscrupulous salesman, there is a loving parent. In this case, which Plato claims is, properly speaking, the case in which reason rules by persuasion, the agreement is tighter and the friendship truer. The friendship is truer because in this case the rational part does not just put itself forward as a friend, it actually is one. The agreement is tighter because in this case reason and non-reason more closely think the same thing. The bare notion of agreement entailed by any getting another to do something with words is here instantiated by the agent and patient thinking

[34] I take it to be uncontentious, that Plato recognizes some such distinction. *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, testify to this fact (*Gorgias*, 517a, *Phaedrus*, 261a). For my present purposes, it is not relevant how exactly Plato draws this distinction, or whether his understanding of this distinction remains consistent. My point here is the basic one, namely, that Plato believes some such distinction exists.

[35] To be clear, Plato believes the persuader is benefitted in cases of persuasion. Thus, in the case of intra-psychic persuasion, Plato believes the rational part is benefitted by its persuasion of the non-rational. Take, for example, Plato's recommendation of military service as part of the would-be guardians' education. The philosophers will be drawn from the soldiery, and this early experience and training is meant, among other things, to both gratify promising citizens' spirited love of distinction, and shape these impulses in a way that allows them to be productively deployed in the service of the pursuit of knowledge later in life (e.g., *Republic*, 486a-b, 534b-c, 537c).

the same thing about the goodness of the action. The non-rational, for its part, thinks the same thought across both cases. It sees the action as good in a way it can understand. The rational part, however, does not just think that the patient's action furthers its own aims (or perhaps those of the individual as a whole). Rather, in this case the rational part much more closely thinks the same thing about the action as the non-rational part. As an act of sincere care guided by knowledge, the rational part recommends an action that it too believes is beneficial for the non-rational, and—at least in part—believes is beneficial *in the same way the non-rational sees it as beneficial*.[36] Given that this is how the virtuous behave, Plato clearly thinks that this kind of interaction is the virtuous form of getting another to do something with words. More to the point, this communication also seems far less problematically like a case of persuasion. The reason for this, is that here, unlike, say, with the salesman, the patient is not manipulated. When one person manipulates another, they see the other's concerns as a lever that can be worked to get the other to do what they want. They stand outside these concerns, indifferent to them and their truth. By contrast, in the soul of the virtuous individual, reason endorses the concerns of the non-rational as legitimate, (more fully) works with and through them, and in so doing more truly accepts the non-rational soul as a distinct agency.

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[36] On this analysis, there are three forms of agreement that might hold between the agent and patient of persuasion:

> Agent: Good for me, no belief that good for P
> Patient: Good for me
>
> Agent: Good for me, believe good for P
> Patient: Good for me
>
> Agent: Good for me because X, believe good for P because Y
> Patient: Good for me because Y

As I read him, Plato believes the third form of agreement describes the relationship of the rational and non-rational in the soul of the virtuous individual.

One might still take issue with Plato's description of this self-organizing activity as persuasion. My hope is that I have shown why Plato, and perhaps we as well, might think the description accurate.

5. The Limitations of *Thumos*

The goal of the previous section was to provide an account of Plato's understanding of the rational part's distinctive way of ordering the soul that stayed true to Plato's understanding of it as a form of persuasion that might conceivably take the non-rational mind its patient. This may seem like a detour from the chapter's primary task. It is not. My primary reason for providing this account, here, is that it allows for a fruitful contrast with the nature and possibilities of *thumos* as a principle of psychic unity. Plato believes that psychic unity requires intra-psychic persuasion, and this form of self-ordering activity is something that the thumoetic part cannot do. Given that the goal is illuminating Plato's sense of the limitations of the thumoetic part, avoiding the pitfall of over-rationalizing Plato's notion of intra-psychic persuasion takes on a particular significance. If the claim, in part, is that the thumoetic part cannot unify the soul because it cannot persuade, a quite natural response might have been, "Of course it cannot persuade, it is not rational, it cannot make arguments," and so on. In short, the claim might seem obvious and uninformative. However, things look different once one comes to see that for Plato, persuasion is not necessarily a rational interaction. The importance of that fact here is not so much that it reopens the possibility of the thumoetic part being capable of this activity. As I hope to show in a moment, Plato clearly does not think it is. Rather, the account of intra-psychic persuasion centered on an agreement that some action is good, opens up the possibility of an illuminating comparison with *thumos* understood as the defense of one's own. As Plato understands them,

persuasion and *thumos* are not so alien to one another that a contrast between them can yield no insight. Persuasion, understood as the recognition and embrace of another's pursuit of the good, offers a route into Plato's understanding of *thumos* as a way of thinking cut off from this possibility.

I believe that at this point we can see three interrelated reasons why Plato believes that a thumoetic part defined by the drive to defend one's own is decisively unable to unify the human soul. The place to start in is with Plato's belief that *thumos* is restricted to seeing threats and harms as *allotrion*, and therefore, as irredeemably bad. Turned inward, as it is in acts of self-control, this sensibility sees opposed desires as *allotrion* and therefore cannot work through conflict to the moderation of desire required by psychic unity. As discussed earlier, for Plato, psychic unity is the harmony of desire. It is a condition in which the agent's desires work together in a mutually supporting and beneficial (in the sense of gratifying) arrangement. Given this goal, sometimes, the right response to disruptive desire will be discipline (see the passage from *Republic*, 471a quoted above), and that is something that *thumos* cannot do unless it is guided by reason. For *thumos*, a conflicting desire will be *allotrion*, an entity that is irredeemably harmful in the sense that what is good for it will be bad for what is *oikeion* and vice versa. An alien desire, then, would be one whose satisfaction was seen as essentially detrimental. This will be the case even if the disruptive desire is not in truth *allotrion*. The thumoetic part will here, as everywhere else, defend its own by force and seek to prevent the expression of the conflicting desire in action.

Plato's sense of this shortcoming comes through clearest when we consider the inappropriateness of unminded spirited self-control to the education of what he calls our necessary appetites. According to Plato, these appetites must be "fed." They are beneficial, and if

they are not satisfied, we die. However, they must also be moderated, or as Plato puts it "domesticated" (*Republic*, 589b), a turn of phrase which implies that Plato sees this moderation as rough work. For Plato, necessary appetites might be beneficial, but they are still appetites. Like all appetites, they exhibit appetite's natural tendency to become disruptive. Our necessary appetite for food is a good example of what Plato has in mind here. The appetite for sustenance is clearly necessary and beneficial. However, our lives are, even in the best case (*Republic*, 442a-b), lives where we will always be at risk of falling into the habit of eating too much or too little. This means that for Plato, even the best life will be one where the spirited part is confronted with disruptive manifestations of necessary appetites. Managing and structuring these appetites depends essentially on not over-reacting and losing sight of the fact that these appetites are, in general, beneficial. Unfortunately, the person acting on spirit, and one can extend this thought to the spirited man (i.e., the character type), treats his disruptive desires as an enemy within, and in this way precludes the possibility of psychic harmony.

As serious a shortcoming as this is for prospects of the thumoetic part as a principle of psychic harmony, there is an even more problematic consequence of the love of one's own defining this agency's sense of good and bad. In short, to *thumos* the self is only intelligible as beset by threatening forces (a feature of this form of soul that will figure centrally in proceeding chapters). Recall that for Plato understanding something as good in the sense of one's own is, in the first person, seeing it as mine. Although more remains to be said about Plato's conception of the specific content of this understanding of something's goodness (or if you prefer, value), the suggestion made in the previous chapter is that it is intimately bound up with a sense of self. More exactly, for Plato, what an individual sees as *oikeion*, proceeds from and comes to

constitute a sense of self.[37] Over time, an individual's spirited sensibility settles into a determinate shape, what we might call a determinate sense of self. Plato's claim, put in slogan form, is that what is mine (*oikeion*) makes me who I am.[38]

The issue for *thumos* vis-à-vis the goal of psychic unity is that whatever determinate sense of self comes to define an individual's sense of *to oikeion*, it is coordinate with some threatening *allotrion*. If, as Plato believes, the standing concern of the thumoetic part is to defend its own, this concern makes no sense if nothing threatens whatever happens to be one's own. Thus *to oikeion* depends for its intelligibility on the alien. In effect, we should read Plato as making a potentially familiar point about identities based on an "us" vs. "them" understanding of things. For *thumos* one is not *aristos* without the *hoi polloi,* nor progressive without backward conservatives, nor a big boy without little babies. The homespun example may seem out of place. However, its value is that it brings more clearly into view a central feature of a kind of sense of self that Plato believes is an unavoidable element of human life. The child who complains, saying, "I am not little, I am big!" Reveals something critical about what it is to be "big." To be big just is to not be "little" (whatever that may be, e.g., to be big is to not do what little children do). This is *thumos,* and the thumoetic part needs an enemy. Guided by reason, Plato believes this sensibility can be trained to take as alien only those external forces and internal features of the agent's personality that are in fact essentially threatening. However, left unminded this sensibility will multiply enemies for it to defend against. This is bad enough as a mistake about other people, but as a way of thinking about one's own desires, the consequences for psychic

[37] Plato's understanding of how this sense of self develops, and the mechanisms by which it develops, will be explored in the proceeding chapter.

[38] Therefore, I am claiming that the spirited part has an independent sense of self. I am not claiming that this is the agent's only sense of self. This, in part, is Plato's point as I read him. The rational part also has its sense of self, one that is *qualitatively* different from the embattled self of the spirited part.

harmony are damning. Here is the person who understands himself as interminably at war with 'himself,' one who sees his moments of self-control and successes generally as the triumph of his good desires over his bad ones. What is worse, his sense of which desires are good and why will be defined by these aspirations being under threat from the problematic elements of his personality. Here is a creature who will need to see "parts" of himself as alien in order to see "parts" of himself as good and thereby justify his successes as victories.

Lastly, the above analysis of Plato's conception of intra-psychic persuasion and its role in establishing psychic harmony, brings into view a third way in which Plato's conceives *thumos* as inadequate to the task of making us whole and happy. For Plato, psychic harmony requires the persuasion of non-rational desire, and that, he believes, depends on the ability to recognize another's pursuit of the good. It is this that defending one's own cannot do. Here, Plato's point, is not about spirit's inability to make sense of conflict, but of difference. For Plato, persuading one's own desires presumes an ability to see those desires as embodying a distinct sense of what is and is not good. As Plato sees it, reason's achievement is that it can recognize non-rational desire as constituting a distinct, albeit limited, way of pursuing the good (i.e., truly beneficial ends). It is this possibility that enables reason to engage the non-rational and recommend ways of gratifying its desires. In this ideal case, as envisioned by Plato, the rational part will understand and encourage this non-rational sensibility because it—rightly—sees its aims as mutually beneficial. However, it follows from Plato's articulation of the soul into three distinct forms of desire that this distinct sense of what is good and bad is different in kind—intelligible by reason, but still a different way of thinking of what is best. *Thumos*, on Plato's conception, limited as it is to protecting what it already sees as good because one's own from what is unfamiliar and bad, cannot conceive of a different sensibility, save as false and harmful. In a sense, the thumoetic

part is like the person who responds to any call to pursue an alternative course of action by endlessly repeating: "you are either with me or against me."

Above, I highlighted spirit's inability to see through conflict, and based off that shortcoming, one might be tempted to say that the problem with the thumoetic part is that it can *have* friends, but it cannot *make* them. However, what we see now, is that from Plato's perspective, putting things that way would be importantly mistaken. As Plato understands it, *thumos* cannot make friends—and it cannot have friends either.[39] It is here that Plato's description of the psychic parts as friends truly comes into its own. Friendship involves not just care for another who already shares one's opinions, but is instead an openminded commitment to that similar, but different, understanding of the good embodied by a friend. I believe it is precisely this understanding of friendship that Plato has in mind when he describes the harmonious soul as one that is unified by bonds of friendship.

In contrast, *thumos* is limited to seeing what is good as one's own, and one's own as good. This contrast comes through more clearly when one shifts into the first person. For *thumos*,

[39] This claim, that Plato believes *thumos* cannot make sense of another as a friend, is complicated by the fact that Plato explicitly identifies friends as the archetypal example of entities that are *oikeion*. This identification is on display in the passage about the well-bred hound (*Republic*, 376b), and in Plato's extended discussion of the way in which the marriage lottery and communal rearing of children will shape the guardians' sense of what is *oikeion* (*Republic*, 463b-c). Nevertheless, I believe that we should read Plato as using the notion of friend more loosely in these cases, and that his considered view is that understanding another as *oikeion* is merely a necessary condition of true friendship. It is the attachment to another which can develop into true friendship, but it is not friendship.

For evidence that Plato has this more robust conception of friendship, one can turn to *Phaedrus* (e.g., *Phaedrus*, 234d-e, and 256c-257a). See Nehemas (2007: 53-71). That said, it is not clear that in *Republic* Plato consistently has this more robust sense of friendship in view when speaking of "friends." Thus, I think that the right way to read the text on this point is to accept that it is inconsistent. Sometimes, when Plato speaks of friends, he means something less robust, namely the attachment to an intimate that is taking them to be *oikeion*. At other points, and in particular when thinking through the intra-psychic dynamics of the harmonious soul, he has this fuller conception of friendship in mind.

I stress this point, namely that Plato does not believe *thumos* can see another as a friend, because other scholars, particularly those who share my belief that *thumos* is concerned with *to oikeion*, believe that it can. As a result, they read Plato as viewing the thumoetic part as the seat of our feelings of friendship (Wilburn, 2021: 54, Ludwig, 2007: 223, and perhaps Brennan, 2012: 115).

if it is good, it is mine, and if it is mine, it is good. It can recognize and accept another; however, only if that other and their sensibility mirrors its own understanding. Therefore, for Plato the spirited part can take the dictates of reason (and appetite) as its own, and defend them, but only if they are familiar. Confronted with the different and unfamiliar, the thumoetic part treats it as a threat. What the thumeotic part cannot do, is see the other forms of soul as fellow seekers after a common, in the sense of mutually beneficial, good. Seen in this light, Plato's claim about the limitations of the spirited part is that it cannot conceive of the articulated unity that is the human soul.

At the core of Plato's psychology is the belief both that harmony is possible, and that the human soul is constituted by three distinct ways of understanding ends as desirable. These commitments translate for him into a belief that harmony is only possible as a product of a rational self-understanding that orders the soul by embracing the non-rational as a distinct, albeit limited, understanding of the human good. What I hope at this point is that it is clear that such self-understanding is far beyond the inflexible, homogenous sense of self demanded by *thumos*. In this way, looking at Plato's conception of reason's distinctive way of ordering the soul helps us understand *thumos*, a comparison that also shows how thinking about Plato understanding of *thumos* can help us understand his beautiful conception of psychic harmony.

Conclusion

I have argued that Plato understands *thumos* as the defense of one's own. Because he does so, he in turn believes that in the weave of human life the thumoetic part will function as a limited principle of psychic unity. In part, my aim has been to show how a psychic part

understood as characterized by this form of desire will serve as a legitimate bulwark of psychic organization—a fitting helpmate to reason. However, if my analysis in this chapter has an emphasis, it is on the part of the story concerned with *thumos'* failings. This emphasis is meant as a corrective to what I see as a prevailing tendency governing the way in which scholars have treated Plato's understanding of *thumos*, particularly in *Republic*.

For a moment I want to zoom out and offer a bird's eye view of the progress of Plato's thought. Doing so will help make sense of both my motivations as well as the understandable tendency to pull the teeth from Plato's account of the aspect of our psychology he calls *thumos*.[40] Among *Republic*'s many threads is a concern to rehabilitate some among our non-rational desires. *Republic* does not just recognize the existence of non-rational soul; it also marks a distinction in the non-rational psyche and singles out one of form of non-rational thought (spirit) as by nature far more conducive to human happiness. Appetite in *Republic* remains something of a villain. Yet unlike the kinds of claims he makes about non-rational desire (full stop) in dialogues such as *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, *Republic* is concerned to establish that there are non-rational desires (i.e., spirited desires) that directly promote psychic order. I have argued that these desires are helpfully brought together as desires through which we seek to defend our own. More familiarly, they are the desires we pursue when angry or ashamed, and which animate the sensibilities that constitute these emotions. Because Plato's concern is to correct a potential misunderstanding of some kinds of non-rational desire, his emphasis is on the beneficial features of spirit and the spirited desires. In *Republic*, *thumos* is something of a hero. However, this fact should not be taken to cut against Plato's sense of *thumos* as a kind of unreason and therefore as decisively limited. Thus, a sense of shame may, for Plato, serve a significant role in both the

[40] A more extended discussion of these and related points is offered in the Introduction.

development and maintenance of a healthy psychic structure, but this fact ought not lead a reader to overlook that Plato thinks shame is first and foremost a non-rational sensibility unable to cognize the possibility of psychic harmony.

Given the dialectic of *Republic*, it is easy for a reader to arrive at a reading that overlooks the darker side of *thumos*. The truth about *thumos* is that it is everywhere colored by violence. Plato himself is well aware of this fact and does not believe it precludes *thumos* from embodying a substantively beneficial form of self-ordering activity.

There is, and Plato has, more to say about *thumos* than that it is a limited principle of psychic unity. Most notably, missing up to this point has been any substantive discussion of the more familiar elements of our psychology that Plato repeatedly identifies with *thumos*. As Plato sees it, *thumos* is shame, anger, the love of honor and more besides, and it is certainly because *thumos* is these things that we and Plato think it is worth understanding. Going forward, my goal will be to show how the interpretation introduced here best captures the various other claims Plato makes about *thumos* and the thumoetic part. It will emerge that taking up defending one's own as the heart of Plato's understanding of *thumos* does three things. First, it justifies Plato's identification of *thumos* as a form of human psychology on a par with appetite and reason. Second, it opens up new ways of understanding the sense in which the thumoetic part is directly responsible for human happiness. Third, it represents Plato as steadfastly seeing a brutality at the heart of *thumos*.

Chapter 4

The Serpent in the Soul[1]

Plato conceives of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. It is worth taking a moment to review how we arrived at this interpretation. The guiding thread has been Plato's belief that the thumoetic part of the soul is a limited principle of psychic unity. In chapter one, I argued that a central if not defining feature of Plato's understanding of *thumos* is that it stands between reason and appetite, on the one hand able and on the other hand unable to directly order the soul. Building off this starting point, chapters two and three argued that Plato understands *thumos* as the defense of one's own. The core contention of the argument made in these chapters was that this unitary account explains Plato's more specific sense of spirit's strengths and limitations. It explains why Plato believes that on the one hand, *thumos* is a form of self-control predisposed to support reason (chapter 2), and on the other, categorically limited in its ability to manage conflict and difference and therefore unable to unify a human soul (chapter 3).

"All well and good," someone might say, "but what about *thumos*?" The complaint, and it is a reasonable one, is that up to this point, there has been a lot of discussion of the ways in which *thumos* is and is not a principle of psychic unity, but little to nothing has been said about the more familiar phenomena Plato identifies with this element of his psychological theory. For Plato, anger, shame, the love of honor and victory, a demanding sense of what is appropriate and the desire to shine are all manifestations of *thumos*. What do these have to do with the love of one's own? For most, it is these more recognizably significant features of human psychology which make Platonic *thumos* worth investigating. Moreover, it is the intuition that there is some

[1] The reference is to *Republic*, 590b where Socrates describes the thumoetic part of the soul as "snake-like." See below.

way in which these emotions, attitudes and character traits are of a piece which grounds countenancing Plato's contention that there is a single psychological kind here. Or, to put the point bluntly, it is one thing to explain why Plato believes a part of the soul is a limited principle of psychic unity, and quite another to explain why it is spirited. Thus, as it stands, the interpretation of *thumos* as defending one's own is provisional. If Plato does in fact understand *thumos* as the love of one's own, the account must be able to capture (and thereby unify) these more familiar psychological phenomena as they appear in Plato's text.

This chapter, and to some extent the next, will be devoted to meeting this demand. They will argue that the more familiar phenomena Plato identifies with *thumos* can be understood, and were understood by Plato, as species of the defense of one's own.[2] However, the aim of what follows is not just to show that the interpretation fits the text. Working through the ways in which anger, military virtue, competitiveness and so on, fall under the umbrella of the love of one's own will both give content to the notion of *to oikeion* and paint a potentially surprising picture of *thumos*: fitting the interpretation to the text shows that Plato understands *thumos* as more of a snake than a lion. The reference here is to the memorable image of the soul Plato uses to conclude *Republic*'s argument in favor of justice. The image, which is meant to show the benefits of justice and cost of injustice, paints our destiny as defined by the fact that we are an amalgam of human being, lion, and many-headed beast. The lion is the stand-in for the thumoetic part. However, when Socrates turns to discussing the image, he calls this part the "lion like, and snake like element (*Republic*, 590b).[3]" This addition is not meant to pick out some more base

[2] One notable omission will be the role of *thumos* in the education of the guardians. However, what Plato says about *thumos* in that context does not contravene the interpretation I am advancing.

[3] This idea that spirit is a snake is echoed in Glaucon's description of Thrasymachus (*Republic*, 358b) as having been charmed, like a snake. Thrasymachus is spirited, and Plato marks him as such in several ways. He is a lover of honor, who thinks in terms of victory and honor (338a). Given the later description of the thumoetic part as snake-

aspect of our thumoetic lives such as when a thumoetic part twisted by flattery is likened to an ape (*Republic*, 590b). In the popular imagination of Plato's day, snakes were not nefarious or deceitful. They were fierce and dangerous, but not evil. More importantly, the serpent was often cast as the guardian of sacred places, such as the snake which cripples Philoctetes, or the great Ladon which guarded the apples of the sun.[4] This is a snake that is defensive and most of all reactionary, a creature which responds to trespass with deadly force but does not leave its precincts to conquer. When one works through the ways in which Plato sees shame, anger, the love of victory, and so on, as species of the love of one's own, a similar picture of *thumos* comes into focus.

What emerges is that Plato views *thumos* as a blend of self-assertion and preservation. On its own, each term does not quite capture what Plato means by *thumos*. Self-preservation casts the net too widely, since all the forms of the soul are forms of self-preservation.[5] While self-assertion, though sometimes applicable as a description of what Plato means by *thumos* (and accurate as far as it goes), importantly elides Plato's sense of the reactionary character of thumoetic life.[6] As Plato understands it, even when *thumos* takes shape as outgoing ambitious behavior it is at bottom a defensive reaction. It is always and everywhere a *defending* of one's own. This feature of Plato's view contrasts with the way in which we typically think about many of the behaviors Plato calls thumoetic. Moreover, contra the implications of a term like self-assertion, recognizing Plato's commitment to the reactionary nature of *thumos* helps uncover that

like, the turn of phrase does not seem coincidental. Although, it should be pointed out that Thrasymachus is also likened to a lion (341c).

[4] This is an understanding of the snake we can still see today in the Gadsen flag, with its coiled rattlesnake and ominous—"Don't tread on me."

[5] This applies to appetite as well, since it is appetitive desire which preserves the body.

[6] Cooper, (1999) and Kragerud (2010).

for Plato, *thumos* is as much a force that binds us together as it is one that drives us apart. This may seem surprising, since it is Plato's identification of *thumos* with human rivalrousness that is typically emphasized (*Republic*, 548c).[7] However, in keeping with his understanding of *thumos* as a defensive love of what one sees as *oikeion*, Plato also believes *thumos* to be the source of our most intimate attachments.

Thus, this chapter pursues several interwoven aims. One goal is to establish that the interpretation of *thumos* as the love of one's own fits Plato's text and captures the more familiar thumoetic phenomena identified with *thumos*. A second is to develop this interpretation by arguing that Plato understands *thumos* as a kind of self-preservation that is a non-rational form of thought. This latter goal has two components, both of which the chapter will be at pains to establish. Part of the work will be showing that *thumos* is defensive. The other part will be to give content to the claim that Plato understands *thumos* as a 'non-rational form of thought.' The phrase is intended to pick out the way in which for *thumos* certain thoughts are possible, impossible, and necessary. The goal will be to show that Plato understands *thumos* as proceeding in accord with its own 'logic.' A version of this thought has already been encountered in the contention that *thumos* is limited to maintaining psychic unity by force. It will be an aim of the chapter to show that this is but one manifestation of a more general aspect of *thumos*.

In order to achieve these aims, the chapter will work through several of *Republic*'s most extensive discussions of *thumos* showing how each reflects an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. The chapter will start by examining Plato's claims about war-making, then move on to his discussion of the love of victory and lastly anger. Plato presents these as

[7] See Wilburn (2021: 51-62) on this point, for a helpful discussion of the dominant view in the scholarship, and reasons to question it.

archetypal manifestations of *thumos*. Each features primarily, although not exclusively, in one of the three stretches of *Republic* typically turned to in order to reconstruct Plato's conception of *thumos*. War-making figures in the discussion of the function of the thumoetic part and its related virtue (i.e., courage), the love of victory in the description of timocracy, and anger is a stand in for *thumos* in the argument for tri-partition. The three phenomena will be examined in this order and all shown to embody an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own.

The chapter will then turn to the substantive discussion of *to oikeion* in Plato's justification for the abolition of the private family. I will argue, that in keeping with his account of *thumos*, Plato views this modification of the citizens' sense of their own as an education of the thumoetic part, a conclusion that further supports the claim that *thumos* is the defense of one's own and the defense of one's own is *thumos*.

1. The War-Making Part

In *Republic*, making war is the characteristic work of the thumoetic part. If one's goal is to test the viability of the proposed interpretation of Plato's understanding of *thumos* this is a good place to start. For Plato, fighting and making war is what the thumoetic part does, and that shows he believes thumoetic activity is in every instance the defense of one's own.

There are at least three main places where Plato establishes a connection between the activity of war-making and the spirited part. The first occurs when *thumos* is introduced into the conversation of *Republic*. Spirit, we are told by Socrates, is a quality essential to an excellent soldier (375a-b). "Spirit," here, means something like the character trait of being spirited. The claim is that a spirited character is required for courage, and courage for excellence in warfare. The tie between *thumos* and war-making is also in evidence in Plato's description of timocracy,

the degenerate social and psychological structure dominated by *thumos*. Plato repeatedly states that the timocrat and timocracy valorize war-making (547c, 547e-548a, 549a), meaning that they view war-making as a pursuit of great, if not paramount, importance.[8] They devote themselves to training, they choose warriors as their leaders, and "spend all [their] time making war (547e)." That war-making holds a privileged place in the timocratic cosmos points to a special relationship between this activity and the form of soul that gives shape to this kind of psyche and city.

Finally, and most importantly, in the ideal city and soul making war is the work or "job" of the thumoetic part.

> Who would describe a city as cowardly or courageous by looking at anything other than that part [i.e., the auxiliary class analogue of the thumoetic part] which defends it and wages war on its behalf? (429b)

The thumoetic part of the city is its soldiers and police. It may also be the class from which the philosopher rulers are drawn (413c-414b, 521d), but it itself is the military class. As with all claims about the ideal city, this is not only a claim about the ideal city. The faculties of the city and soul in their ideal condition do well what they do in their non-ideal condition.[9] This is the thought codified in Plato's famous description of an ideal, just city as one in which each citizen does his own work (433d). For example, in this city those who are "by nature" soldiers serve as soldiers (434b) and do not rule or attempt to rule. Therefore, if the class of soldiers in the ideal city parallels the thumoetic part of the soul of a just individual, then the same parallel holds in

[8] That the latter is Plato view is lent support by what he has to say about Sparta and Crete in the opening of *Laws* (626b-c). There, the heart of the Athenian's criticism of these two cities is that they are wholly organized around success in war and as a result confuse courage with the whole of virtue.
[9] See my interpretation in chapter two of Plato's claim that the thumoetic part is the natural ally of reason.

the non-ideal case. In every soul, regardless of whether it is a tyrant's or a philosopher's, the thumoetic part is the part responsible for "defending the soul and making war on its behalf."

The text is clear, Plato views war-making as a defining form of thumoetic activity. The question is, why? Answering this question turns on determining Plato's understanding of the relationship of war-making to the formal object of *thumos*. One influential, and excellent, interpretation parses the connection as follows:

> Because competitiveness can be so variously directed, and the bases of self-esteem (and pride and esteem for others) can vary so widely, *thumos*, if this is what it is, can in different people support widely different courses of action and ways of life, and this Plato claims it does. But it does not seem to me unnatural to think that someone in whom competitiveness and the desire for esteem and self-esteem are particularly strong should tend toward the athletic, military and political pursuits, to which Plato says the *thumos* dominated person will especially devote himself; these are obvious, as well as traditional, activities in which a man, at any rate, can hope to make himself stand out from others as esteem and self-esteem require and competitiveness implies.[10]

This response is representative of the way many readers understand the link between *thumos* and the activity of war-making.[11] Simplifying, *thumos* is a desire for some end—here self-esteem—and the thumoetic part, and thumoetic people, are attracted to war-making because it is a conventionally established route to achieving this end. This understanding of the relationship between war-making and *thumos* has two features worth emphasizing.

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[10] Cooper (1984: 133).

[11] Along with being a representative reading on this issue, Cooper's, of the major interpretations, is closest to my own. Summarizing his own view, Cooper (1996: 263) writes, "As I have argued elsewhere [i.e., in his (1984)] the root idea lying behind Plato's introduction of the third kind of natural human desire…is that there are effectively intermediate desires having always a reference to oneself, that aim at competitive exertion—at making something of oneself, of being active and in command (of oneself, and in relation to one's fellows)." In fact, it is fair to say that my reading of *thumos* as the love of one's own is a development of Cooper's interpretation of *thumos* as self-assertion. However, Cooper does not attribute to Plato a sufficiently rigorous, and unified account of self-assertion as a form of the soul. Rather, Cooper is comfortable reading *thumos* as a collection or family of closely related desires. What he misses is precisely what I am here at pains to emphasize, namely that Plato offers an account of *thumos* as having a single form that runs through all its instances.

Examples of other scholars who read Plato's account of *thumos* similarly to Cooper are, Hobbes (2000: 30-37), and Burnyeat (2006: 20).

1. War-making is one thumoetic activity among a number of possible thumoetic activities.
2. War-making's satisfaction of thumoetic desire is mediated by convention. It is because being a successful warrior happens to be viewed by the community as a route to the formal object of *thumos* that the spirited part and spirited people are attracted to being warriors.

On this picture, war is the work of spirited people because they will be good at it. Because spirit predominates in their souls, such people find a deep satisfaction in fighting and making war. This translates into their doing it consistently and frequently and that serious practice makes them into excellent soldiers. This same promise of satisfaction is taken to explain the tendency of spirited people to be drawn to military pursuits even when such activity is not their politically mandated function.

But this cannot be the way Plato understands the place of war-making in the constellation of thumoetic interests. Plato believes war-making is the characteristic work of *thumos*, and that means he cannot view war-making as one possible way in which *thumos* finds satisfaction. Thus, he rejects the two features of the interpretation outlined above. He neither sees war-making as one possible way to achieve the end(s) of *thumos*, nor does he believe that war-making's functioning as a means to, or manifestation of, thumoetic satisfaction depends on an accident of convention. To read Plato otherwise is to sideline Plato's thought that the work of the parts defines them and misunderstand the descriptive philosophical psychology at work in the accounts of the degenerate regimes.

The work of a given psychic or civic part is an activity that is, in some sense, definitive of the part. This is a thought reflected in the account of justice as each part "doing its own work" (441d). In the ideal soul, each psychic part will engage in an activity that, in some sense, is appropriate to the kind of thing that it is. Of course, the forgoing vague account of the notion of a definitive or characteristic work could mean any number of things, several of which would

square with the proposed reading of *thumos* and war-making. A part's characteristic activity might be the activity it is meant to perform, or ought to perform, or one it will desire to perform and therefore do freely. All of these possible readings, correct as far as they go, are satisfied if war-making is an appealing and beneficial route to thumoetic satisfaction. So, for example, the thumoetic part ought to fight on behalf of the whole soul because that is what is best for the whole, and the thumoetic part, desiring to perform this activity, will be drawn to it independently and pursue it with satisfaction thereby (among other benefits) avoiding the frustration that is the engine of *stasis*. Nevertheless, cleaving to the view that war-making is one possible route to thumoetic satisfaction distorts the notion of characteristic work Plato advances in *Republic*.

The characteristic work of a part is not only an activity a part can both perform and is best if it performs. This, in effect, is what is assumed if war-making is but one possible route to thumoetic satisfaction (claim 1 above). However, for Plato the work of the thumoetic part is not merely something the thumoetic part can or tends to do. It is something it *does*.[12]

That this is the correct interpretation of a part's function can be adequately, if not fully, established by looking to Plato's construal of ruling as the characteristic work of the rational part. This understanding of the rational part's characteristic activity can then be extended to the thumoetic.

[12] It is not immediately clear to me how to line up Plato's understanding of the proper work of the psychic and civic parts with his claim that the function (*ergon*) of a thing is "what it alone can do or what it can do better than anything else" (*Republic*, 353a). The relevant part of this definition to my considerations here, is the former alternative. Plato's example of function in this sense, are the organs of the body (specifically, eyes and ears, *Republic*, 353b). This is a better analogue for the psychic parts understood as faculties of desire and action. In keeping with the definition offered above, it is also true of eyes that seeing is what they do (or are able to do insofar as they are eyes). However, translating Plato's claim about function to the thumoetic part would amount to the thought that we can only go to war with the thumoetic part. This fits better as a description of the city, for it is not clear that Plato's view is that one can only fight with the thumoetic part. It seems the rational part can also fight. This might seem to warrant shifting to the latter sense of function identified at *Republic* 353a. However, this cannot be Plato's view, at least with respect to the rational part. See below.

Ruling is the characteristic work of the rational part and its civic analogue the guardian class (e.g., 428e-a, 442c). In claiming this Plato clearly does not merely mean that the rational part is capable of ruling. Nor is he merely claiming that should the rational part rule, it would be for the best. Plato endorses both these thoughts, but he does so because he believes ruling is what the rational part is *always* doing. The rational part calculates and deliberates about what is in truth good for the agent (e.g., 439d and 442a respectively), and the actions guided by these calculations are an attempt to arrange the agent's life so as to accord with the agent's understanding of what is in truth good. Speaking more loosely, rational actions are in every case an attempt to govern, in the sense of bring order to, the agent's life.

The fact that there are many places in *Republic* where the rational part is described as a slave,[13] or as not ruling does not undermine the claim that rational activity is ruling. There are two distinct notions of rule here. In the contexts where Plato describes reason as a slave or implies it is possible for reason not to rule, it is clear that rule describes the condition wherein one (psychic) part (or desire) sets the ends around which whole (city or soul) is organized. In this sense, reason rarely rules since the vast majority of human beings and communities are not organized by the unfettered activity of reason. However, even in the cases where reason is enslaved, Plato still conceives of reason as engaged in an imperfect activity of ruling. We can see this in his account of the oligarch. In one sense, the oligarch's rational part is enslaved. It is restricted to deliberating about how to preserve and increase the agent's wealth. Yet the desires and actions guided by these deliberations are the oligarch's attempt to arrange his life in the light of his understanding of wealth as constitutive of happiness. This comes through clearly in Plato's discussion of the oligarch's form of self-control (554c-d). The oligarch, according to Plato,

[13] For example, at 553c-d where the rational part of the oligarch is described as a slave to his appetite.

possesses unnecessary and lawless appetites which conflict with this overarching goal of maximizing wealth. However, the oligarch keeps these disruptive appetites in check, and he does so through the activity of his rational part, which recognizes the threat posed by these appetites. Therefore, either directly or with the help of his thumoetic desires and necessary appetites, his rational desires resist pursuing the appetites that would undermine his pursuit of wealth.[14] When the oligarch turns away from his impulse to break a contract, he does so thinking, "I had better not; it would cripple me (meaning his business)." That is reason calculating and working to arrange the oligarch's life in line with his understanding of what is truly in his best interest (i.e., possessing and acquiring wealth). Ruling, according to Plato, is what reason does.[15]

The purpose of turning to Plato's account of reason is that it makes more perspicuous the notion of proper work, or function, that Plato is employing in his description of the ideal city and soul. If the proper work of the rational part is what it does, what it in a sense is always doing, so too with *thumos*. The work of the thumoetic part is making war. When Plato claims that war-making is the function or proper work of the thumoetic part, he is not claiming that this activity is one the spirited part can engage in, or will be drawn to engage in, or that would be best for it to engage in. Rather, he is claiming that the spirited part is always—in a sense—making war, though that this is the case may not be immediately apparent.

[14] Admittedly, when Plato describes what keeps the oligarch's unnecessary appetites in check (554c) he simply calls it "something good," thus leaving it open whether it is the oligarch's rational part or his necessary appetites (see 554e) that are doing the restraining. However, thinking through the details of what such a case would look like strongly support thinking that reasoning must be involved in the oligarch's resistance to his disruptive appetites.
[15] This account of the work of the rational part is complicated by Plato's revelation later in *Republic* that reason pursues knowledge (e.g., 518c-d). However, this latter characterization of reason and the rational part, need not, and should not, be taken to contradict the claim that ruling is what the rational part always does. Although I cannot defend the contention here, I would argue that for Plato, ruling and pursuing knowledge are two descriptions of a single activity, with the latter encapsulating a more fundamental understanding of this single activity of reason.

If this is what Plato means by characteristic work, then both the claims outlined above are wrong: the activity of war making is not one thing the thumoetic part can do, nor is its preeminence in the thumoetic cosmos a product of convention. That these conclusions are correct gains further support from what Plato claims about the place of war-making in timocracy.

To think, instead, that war-making is a "traditional," i.e., conventional, route to thumoetic ends is to think something like the following: the Greeks considered war-making and military exploits a reliable and preeminent way to win recognition, self-esteem, be a man, or whatever else one considers the formal object of spirited desires. Plato, in turn, is seen to recommend war making as a way to find thumoetic satisfaction because of this entrenched cultural attitude. Irrespective of the extent to which Plato endorses this attitude, here the draw of war-making as a source of spirited satisfaction is explained by the exigencies of public opinion (and culture in some thin sense).[16]

If making war is what the thumoetic part does, then this thought is also incorrect. If war-making is not one among many possible thumoetic pursuits (claim 1), it is also not one among many possible pursuits that rises to preeminence because of the content of public opinion (claim 2). This latter claim is further supported given the nature of Plato's claims about the degenerate regimes. The degenerate constitutions are studies in what happens when a psychic part or a class of desires structures the city or soul. To use an analogy, each study is Plato placing an element of the human psyche in a petri dish, an attempt to make its nature perspicuous by allowing it to reproduce uncontrolledly and dominate its environment. The analogy is far from perfect.

[16] See, for example, Hobbs (2000), who argues at length for a version of this view. Not only war making, but many of the characteristics of *thumos* (and courage) that Plato takes to be central, are taken by Hobbs to be products of Plato's conventional Athenian attitudes. While Hobbs is certainly right that some features of Plato's view are colored by Athenian convention, she is wrong in extending this thought to the core features of Plato's view.

However, as with a cell culture, a central aim of the study is to reveal more clearly the characteristics of the agency that produces this environment. In the case of the degenerate regimes this means revealing the activities or desires that define each part. Critically, these studies are an attempt to bring into view trans-historical features of human nature, or at least what Plato takes to be trans-historical features of our mindedness. In this respect, the degenerate constitutions are exercises in philosophical psychology.[17] They are intended, among other things, to show us what *thumos* and the thumoetic part are. Thus, when we encounter Plato identifying fundamental structures in these constitutions, we should take these structures as making claims about human nature, full stop. Plato's claim that war-making is valorized in a thumoetic constitution is one such fundamental structure of timocracy.[18] If Plato's goal is to illuminate *thumos*, it would be counterproductive to identify as a fundamental structure of timocracy a historically contingent feature of contemporary culture. Rather, Plato must believe that timocracies regard war-making as the most important human activity and therefore one that grounds an individual's right to rule (547e-548a), regardless of when or where they exist.

When the descriptions of the degenerate regimes are read in this register, it also cuts against thinking that war is one among many possible activities the thumeotic part can go in for (claim 1 above). The critical detail in Plato's description of the timocracy's relationship to war is his claim that excellence in war-making is the basis upon which timocracies select their rulers.

[17] To be clear, I am not claiming that this is the only purpose of the degenerate regimes. Among other things, they are also meant to play a key role in the main argument of *Republic*, as well as serve a diagnostic function. Regarding the latter, they enable the reader to understand the various concrete social and psychic structures encountered in daily life. Through the accounts of degenerate psychic structure, these particulars are properly grasped as the product of fundamental principles of human psychology.

[18] That it is often not treated this way but rather as a more peripheral remark, is, I suspect, due to Socrates' remark at 548c. "But because of its (timocracy's) mastery by the spirited element, only one thing really stands out in it—the love of victories and honors." This summary remark encourages readers to treat the other things Plato has to say about timocrats and timocracies as secondary, perhaps fleshing out or giving color to the claim that timocracy is structured by the love of victory and honor.

One way to read this thought is as indicating that in timocracy war-making is understood as the activity that determines whether a political community does well or poorly. To the timocrats war-making is not just important, it is the *most* important. As a result, in such a political community— and this is mirrored in what Plato has to say about the timocratic individual (549a)—all other activities are pursued for the sake of their contribution to war-making (548a). In a sense, everything the city does is for the sake of making war well, and one could extend sense this into the thought that in a timocracy everything is making war. These considerations, give further reason for thinking that making war is not just one among many possible thumoetic activities, but rather what the thumoetic part is always doing.

2. Making War Is Defending One's Own

Thumoetic activity *is* war-making. This feature of Plato's understanding of *thumos* both supports my proposed reading and develops it.

That Plato considers war-making to be the characteristic activity of the thumoetic part in the sense described presents a good reason to think he understands *thumos* to be the love of one's own. To see why, consider that if the claim about the proper work of *thumos* is true, then we are faced with the following question: "how does Plato understand *thumos* such that he thinks thumoetic activity is accurately described as (a kind of) war-making?" This question amounts to an interpretive hurdle, and not an insignificant one. Consider, for example, the commonly held view that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the love of recognition. Such a view is at odds with Plato's description of war-making as the proper work of the thumoetic part. There are many ways to pursue recognition other than by becoming a soldier, going to war, or some such. More relevantly, there are many ways of engaging in the activity of war-making which have nothing to

do with recognition. Nor is a reading of *thumos* as the desire for recognition the only interpretation that seems to stumble in the face of this interpretive demand. A similar criticism could be levelled against the interpretation (introduced in the quote above) of *thumos* as the pursuit of self-esteem.[19] What is needed is an account of *thumos* that explains why Plato takes war-making to be an accurate gloss on thumoetic activity. Reading *thumos* as the love of one's own fits this bill.

The first step in explaining why is to recall that although describing *thumos* as the love of *to oikeion* is fine as far as it goes, a more accurate description of the account I am ascribing to Plato is of *thumos* as the *defense* of one's own.[20] What the latter description brings to the fore is the essential role of the *allotrion*, or alien, in determining both the content of what is mine and the structure of spirited activity. After all, the "noble dog" introduced in Book II is a guard dog. It does not just draw a boundary between *oikeion* and *allotrion*—it defends that boundary. The dog welcomes and turns hostile, two descriptions of the same activity of guarding. The point, for Plato, is that to understand something as mine in the relevant sense is to understand it as "to be defended." But defended from what?

It is here that the essential role of the *allotrion* comes into view. To understand something as one's own is to view it as under threat, and spirited action is the response to that threat. This

[19] Ultimately, I believe this is an uncharitable reading of Cooper's position. At the very least, it does not take into account his later more considered view, see note 11 above.

[20] The importance of stressing this point can be brought out by comparing my view to that of Wilburn's (2021). Wilburn argues for a reading of *thumos* as defined by a concern for *to oikeion*. Such a reading is importantly different from the view I am advancing, namely that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the *defense* of one's own. To see why, consider that Wilburn develops his reading into the thought that Plato distinguishes two faces of *thumos*, i.e., two distinct spirited activities, aggressiveness towards enemies and gentleness towards one's own. Each of these distinct activities is a way one might *love* one's own. However, such an approach cannot accommodate Plato's claim that making war is the function of the spirited part. On Wilburn's view, Plato believes the thumoetic part has a soft side, so to speak, and this possibility, which Wilburn glosses as spirit's capacity for "gentleness" is central to his reading. I do not think this is correct. The thumoetic part, as Plato understands it, fights. This is an aspect of Plato's view that is left out when one attributes to him the more ambiguous view of *thumos* as the love of one's own.

threat is provided by the *allotrion*. Thus, to understand something as mine is to understand it as confronted by the alien. The preceding examination of Plato's sense of the limitations of the thumoetic part *qua* principle of psychic unity (in Chapter 3), sheds some light on the way Plato conceives of the alien. The alien is a force whose good is diametrically opposed to the good of one's own. If it is good for the *allotrion*, it is bad for the *oikeion*. These are the features of the frame of thumoetic action which for Plato explain the inescapably violent character of the spirited part and by extension that same part's inability to bring about true psychic unity.

Notice how readily this description of thumoetic activity applies to being at war. In war one is confronted by an enemy. One acts to pursue one's ends in the face of an enemy rightly assumed to pose an existential threat. As long as the war continues, what is good for the enemy is bad for me, and vice versa. It is this essentially hostile relationship that precludes dialogue and makes violence the form of war-making activity (an understanding of war on display at *Republic*, 469b-471b).[21] To claim that this is an overly simplistic picture of war and warfare is, I think, to miss the point. Yes, war is an incredibly variegated cultural activity fought between human beings who recognize each other as such. However, whatever its shortcomings as the final word on the nature of war, the foregoing description of the nature of activity in war captures the guiding concern that differentiates the horizon of practical possibilities in war and peace.[22] In

[21] Nor does it hurt my point that almost all wars, even those of blatant aggression, are understood by those who wage them as the pursuit of security. There are certainly other factors explaining this empirical commonplace, such as the aggressors' concern to excuse their aggression. However, we should also take the aggressors' claims at face value. Many people who take part in wars of aggression do in fact believe that they are acting to protect country, family or cultural identity.

[22] The film *Saving Private Ryan* provides a heart-wrenching dramatization of this point. In one scene, an American and German soldier are fighting in hand-to-hand combat. Eventually the German soldier gains the advantage, and slowly starts forcing a knife into the American's chest. It is slow, because the American has his hands on the German's arm and is resisting with all his strength. At some point, the American realizes he is not strong enough and says, "Wait, wait, you don't have to do this." The German, with a slight hint of confused recognition, nevertheless continues, and drives the knife into the American killing him.

war, one is confronted by an enemy who embodies an implacable threat, and insofar as one makes war one acts to resist, curtail, or eliminate that threat. With this understanding of war in place, it becomes clear why Plato thinks making war is what the thumoetic part does. As Plato sees it, war-making, like defending one's own, is activity in the face of an essentially threatening other, and as a result, war-making is an illuminating description of thumoetic activity, full stop. [23]

To review, in *Republic* Plato clearly recognizes a special relationship between war-making and *thumos*. The question is how to understand the exact nature of this relationship. I maintain that Plato does not see this relationship as dependent on convention, nor does he pick out war-making as one among many spirited activities. Rather, foregrounding Plato's claim that war-making is the proper work of the spirited part, I argue that Plato sees war-making as another name for the whole of thumoetic activity. The fact that an account of *thumos* as the love of one's own readily captures and explains Plato's thought about the characteristic work of the spirited part provides good reason to think that (in *Republic* at least) this is how Plato thinks of *thumos*.

3. The Form of *Thumos*

Turning things around, Plato's understanding of making war as what the thumoetic part does illuminates an important aspect of his theoretical account of *thumos*. Read as I am suggesting we should read it, Plato's claim about war-making is that it describes all thumoetic activity. If an account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own explains this thought because defending one's own—like making war—is activity in the face of essentially threatening other,

[23] There is an important caveat that complicates, but does not undermine, my account of the sense in which war-making is the characteristic activity of the thumoetic part. The issue here is how narrowly to construe the activity of war-making. There is good reason to think Plato considers war-making the activity of fighting on behalf of the entire city or soul (e.g., 470b). Now, all thumoetic activity is not that. If the spirited part has not been properly educated, some, or perhaps most, of the time it will act in defense of only a portion of the agent's or city's interests (375b-c). This fact appears at odds with the thought that making war is what the thumoetic part is always doing. If one construes war-making narrowly as fighting on behalf of the whole, then the spirited part does not always make war.

then Plato must believe that thumoetic activity is in each case a defending of one's own. For Plato, *thumos* has a *form*, one common to *all* its manifestations. No matter how different from one another or seemingly at odds with the general account, thumoetic phenomena are, according to Plato, a defending of one's own.

4. The World at War

I want to flag one promising result of adopting the foregoing proposal about the form of *thumos* and then pursue a second. First, that Plato believes *thumos* is in every instance a defending of one's own fits well with, and helps explain, his account of courage as a "kind of preservation (*Republic*, 429c)." In *Republic*, courage—the spirited part's virtue—is the spirited part's preservation of reason's judgments about what is and is not frightening. If spirited activity is a defending (of one's own), then the excellence of this activity would itself be a kind of defending or preserving, which is exactly what we see in Plato's account of courage. To complete the thought, when it is in a good condition, the spirited part takes reason's judgments as *oikeion*. Thus, in the earlier discussion of the spirited part's unique capacity to aid reason in the form of perseverance (Chapter 2), we already saw a version of this thought linking Plato's account of courage with his understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. Courage, Plato thinks, depends on the excellence of a non-rational form of thought that can flat-footedly be glossed as a kind of perseverance.[24]

[24] The contention that courage is a kind of preservation is a thought echoed in the *Laches* description of courage as an "endurance of the soul" (*Laches* 192c). See chapter 5 for amore extended discussion of this claim in *Laches* and its relationship to Plato's account of courage and *thumos* in *Republic*.

That courage is a kind of endurance or standing firm, is an artifact of Plato's cultural inheritance. Here I am thinking of the emergence and dominance of the hoplite as opposed to heroic conception of courage in the early Classical period. The former exemplified by Homer and the latter by the poems of Tyrtaios. This is a fact Plato himself recognizes. It is Laches the *strategos* and representative of the conventional understanding of courage who suggests that courage is "an endurance of the soul." Plato does not discard this conventional understanding of

The second striking consequence of understanding thumoetic activity as in every case a defending of one's own is that it casts *thumos* as constituted by a distinct evaluative perspective. For *thumos*, there is always a me and mine, and it is always under threat from some alien force. Thumoetic activity as Plato understands it is predicated on this construal of the agent's situation. What to us, or reason, might look like a limited sense of the possible situations in which an agent can find themselves is for *thumos* all there is. Thus Plato, in advancing his account of thumoetic activity as in each case the defense of one's own, is suggesting that to understand *thumos* we need to recognize that there is a thumoetic world—a world according to *thumos*. Fundamental to this world is that it is one in which me and mine are beset by hostile forces. In a phrase, it is the world at war.

Emphasizing hostility as the defining feature of the *allotrion* (that which confronts and defines the *oikeion*) is potentially misleading. As Plato sees it, *thumos* does not necessarily assume an intentional agent opposed to the good of me and mine (though it often does). Rather, *thumos* in every case conceives of the agent as confronted by something *allotrion*, something at best recalcitrant and always a threat to one's own. This latter definition of the *allotrion* is meant to be inclusive, covering cases of intentional hostility as well as cases such as, say, a mountain climber's understanding of the mountain which she strives to conquer. To the climber, a mountain is not hostile as an agent might be. However, the mountain is an *obstacle*, a part of the world pressed close, and to be a climber and to climb is to be confronted with the challenge of overcoming this alien force. Labeling the world of *thumos* the world at war picks up on Plato's description of the proper work of *thumos* and also concisely captures the way *thumos* conceives

courage. Rather, he metabolizes it into an account of courage as the perfection of a non-rational form of thought that acts to preserve me and mine.

of the practical situation as structured by opposing forces. War is conflict, and at its heart Plato's thought about the world of *thumos* is that it is a world defined by strife.

Plato believes that this perspective on the world is false because limited to a subset of situations in which agents find themselves.[25] For Plato, when an individual is at war, or faced with a disruptive appetite they are seeking to control, the thumoetic activity of defending one's own is both called for and potentially efficacious. In these kinds of cases the agent is confronted by an essentially threatening force, one with which the possibility of acting together is ruled out. The problem with *thumos*—and one can see this as an alternative description of why the thumoetic part is unfit to rule—is that there are many situations wherein I am not confronted by an essential threat to me and mine. Sometimes there is no opponent. Sometimes there is an opponent, but one with whom common cause is possible. The thumoetic part cannot recognize these alternatives. Incapable of responding appropriately in such cases, it is restricted to rigidly applying its template of me and mine thereby locking itself into conflict with an essentially threatening other.

Plato's sense that *thumos* should be understood as just this kind of limited evaluative perspective explains (and finds support in) his contention about the valorization of war-making in a timocractic constitution (548a, 549a). War, Plato contends, is for the timocrat the most important human activity. This is no hyperbole. For a timocratic constitution excellence at war is taken to be the basis for determining who ought to rule, and this makes perfect sense given the way in which *thumos* invariably conceives of an agent's situation. From a thumoetic perspective,

[25] However, many, including many philosophers, would disagree. Nietzsche and those influenced by him such as Bernard Williams and Michele Foucault come foremost to mind. See for example Nietzsche's understanding of "spirit" in *Beyond Good and Evil* section 230 (pp. 160-162), Foucault's account of power in *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (pp. 81-97), and Bernard Williams, as for example in his "*The Women of Trachis*: Fiction, Pessimism, Ethics."

the city (me and mine) is invariably understood as besieged by threatening forces. These may be other polities, peoples, members of one's own the community, and so on to infinity. However, for *thumos* and the psyche and community dominated by it, the structure of the situation will be the same. Me and mine are beset by forces with conflicting, or diametrically opposed interests. If that is the position the city and individual always find themselves in, no wonder war-making is the most important activity. Living will be a matter of navigating this hostile environment, and those who rule had better be good at it.[26]

This is a vision of reality—one that Plato believes issues from the dominance, or at least ascendancy, of *thumos*.

5. The Love of Victory

Thumos is defending one's own, and thumoetic activity is activity in the face of an intransigent opposition makes sense of Plato's identification of *philonikia*, or the love of victory, as a paradigmatic type of thumoetic activity (e.g., 548c, 550b, 581a). Along with the love of honor, Plato repeatedly uses the love of victory to explain what he means by *thumos*. As readers, we are meant to consider the love of victory a commonly occurring species of thumoetic activity,

[26] The criticism of the Spartan and Cretan constitutions in *Laws* shows Plato making a similar point about the metaphysics which grounds these constitutions, and the way in which their hostile vision of reality lies at the root of their shortcomings. Although there is no explicit mention of *thumos*, these constitutions would clearly be classed as timocratic by the typology of *Republic*. In fact, Plato makes it clear that the Spartan and Cretan constitutions are the inspiration for his understanding of timocracy (*Republic*, 544c). In *Laws*, the shortcomings of these constitutions are traced to their sense that the political community should be organized around the goal of achieving victory in war (*Laws*, 626b-c). This, in turn, is presented as based on the assumption that a constant state of war holds between cities. Plato has Clinias the Cretan claim: "The legislator's position should be that what most men call 'peace' is really only a fiction, and that in cold fact all states are by nature fighting an undeclared war against every other state." Again, although there is no mention of *thumos* in this context, I think we can see here the same point about the way the dominance of *thumos* produces a distorted picture of reality. At the very least, we see Plato advancing the general idea that the problems of a culture or psychology stem from, and are expressed by, its "metaphysics."

one that helpfully clarifies the nature of the genus. To begin to see why, consider Plato's thought somewhat narrowly, i.e., narrowly with respect to the meaning of *philonikia*.[27]

Plato is claiming, amongst other things, that competing is paradigmatic thumoetic activity. When one wants and tries to win some contest, that is *thumos*. Now to engage in a contest or competition is to engage in activity that has the same structure as war-making. There may not be a threat to life and limb, but one is nevertheless confronted by an opponent with opposing interests. If you win, they lose, and vice versa. One cannot work together with one's opponent; that is precisely what is ruled out by the contest. Even if one does not win, or the rules of the game allow for more than one victor, to act is to try to win, or failing that, to be better than one's opponents. So analyzed, to pursue victory, to compete, is to confront *to allotrion*. Plato takes as one of his starting points that whatever *thumos* is, the love of victory is one of its faces. His account of *thumos* as the love of one's own can explain this fact, since competing in contests is a clear and common instance of defending one's own.

This, as mentioned, is to read the notion of *philonikia* narrowly. However, when Plato contends that the love of victory is paradigmatically thumoetic, he has much more in mind than competing in contests strictly speaking. People are lovers of victory, and Plato has the adjectival form of the term in mind—i.e., competitive (φιλόνικος, e.g. 550b)—when he marks *philonikia* as a paradigmatic manifestation of *thumos*. When someone is competitive, we mean more than that they engage in a lot of contests, and more than that they enjoy contests and seek them out.

[27] Neither Plato nor his Athenian audience would have understood the term so narrowly. In late 5th and 4th century common usage, φιλονικία applied to a wide variety of activities and character traits. The term was used to pick out both praiseworthy and blameworthy behavior, Dover (1994: 233). So, for example, to love victory could be to desire to compete in an athletic contest, care about one's social position, or be problematically ambitious. This ambivalence towards *philonikia* did noticeably shift towards the negative as the 4th century progressed. By the late 4th century, *philonikia* was often contrasted with *philotimia*, the latter rising to the level of a civic virtue with *philonikia* often reserved for problematic contentiousness or ambition dangerous to the polis, Whitehead (1984: 60).

Someone is competitive when they tend to see what they do as a competition, an orientation which, when it rises to the level of a global character trait, produces a person who sees picking a restaurant, buying a gift, or taking a vacation as in some way a contest between himself and others. When we describe someone as competitive, we typically mean that the person in question tends to see what they do as a contest—regardless of whether it really is one. Plato's claim is that this tendency is spirit, and that if someone is dominated by spirit, competitiveness will, in all likelihood, be a significant aspect of their personality.

Like actual competion, competitiveness fits smoothly into Plato's understanding of spirit as the defense of one's own. In Plato's view, competitiveness is spirited because the competitive person construes their practical situation as one in which they must act in the face of an essentially opposed or recalcitrant other. This is a slight modification of the claim above that the thumoetic part and individual construe the world as hostile. For Plato, action motivated by the thumoetic part is action conceived of as responding to, or dealing with, an *allotrion* opponent. In the sphere of interpersonal relations this template for conceiving of the practical situation can take shape as seeing some real or imagined other as an opponent with whom one is in competition. In that case, giving a good gift will be giving a better gift, or the best gift, and so on. Plato's understanding is that when this happens, the giving of the gift is an attempt to defend one's own. I will return to this case below.

6. A Distinctive Self

The fit between the proposed account and Plato's repeated insistence that the love of victory is a central thumoetic phenomena is further evidence that Plato does in fact understand *thumos* as the love of one's own. However, just as with the claim that war-making is the proper

work of the thumoetic part, working out the way in which Plato's account captures the phenomena—here the love of victory—sheds light on important features of Plato's account. To see exactly how, we need to further expand the relevant notion of *philonikia*.

I suggest that what Plato means by *philonikia* is best translated as the 'love of distinction,' a phrase that is meant to describe a wide range of actions, thoughts and affective responses. One reason to prefer this term to the more straightforward 'love of victory' is that it makes clear that *philonikia* covers more than competing in socially codified competitions, seeking out opportunities to compete, or even competitiveness as that character trait is normally understood.

This broader notion of *philonikia* comes into view at several points in *Republic*, perhaps most clearly in Plato's characterization of Glaucon and Adeimantus. Both brothers are repeatedly described as thumoetic, and in particular as lovers of victory (Glaucon e.g., 548e, 357a, Glaucon and Adeimantus, 368a, Adeimantus 498c, 548e, 499e, see below). Glaucon's *philoninikia* tends to receive the attention.[28] However, it is a somewhat innocuous manifestation of the love of distinction by Adeimantus which is helpful for revealing Plato's sense of its breadth. Consider Socrates' mild rebuke of Adeimantus after he complains that the masses will never accept philosophers as rulers:

> Bless you, you should not make such a wholesale charge against the masses! They will surely come to a different belief if, *instead of wanting to win a victory at their expense*, you soothe them and try to remove their slanderous prejudice against the love of learning. You must show them what you mean by philosophers and define their natures and pursuit the way we did just now. (*Republic*, 499d-e, my italics)

[28] This is because whatever Adeimantus's virtues, it is Glaucon who is represented by Plato as the primary target of Socrates's argument and the brother with the most potential for philosophy.

Socrates' point is that Adeimantus is more concerned to distinguish himself from the masses then to consider whether in fact they could be persuaded to accept philosophers as kings. In Adeimantus' skepticism concerning the reach of his arguments, Socrates sees something like the following thought, "I, one of the few (the sophisticated, educated, *kaloi kagathoi,* whatever) might be persuaded, but they, the many (the uncultured, the *hoi polloi,* whatever) will never be won over." Here is a sterling example of what Plato means by *philonikia*: it is activity aimed at distinguishing oneself from some other as superior. As far as Plato is concerned, sometimes this activity takes shape as competition in an athletic contest, but it is just as evident in the countless everyday moments exemplified by Adeimantus' patrician contempt for the masses.

For Plato, *philonikia* refers just as readily to the various manifestations of what was once called a concern for fashion, or (perhaps) more colloquially, the desire to be "cool." These latter phenomena are a significant and near ubiquitous feature of human interactions. If Plato thought they were a form of *philonikia,* and *philonikia* a paradigmatic manifestation of *thumos,* then his conception of *thumos* would both reflect and be an attempt to capture the kind of thing we see Adeimantus doing in the passage above. If *philonikia* includes the kind of behavior exemplified by Adeimantus along with more straightforwardly competitive activity, it too must be a defending of one's own. Seeing how this is so sheds further light on Plato's conception of *thumos,* specifically the distinctive sense of self on display in much thumoetic activity.

In what way is distinguishing oneself as superior a defending of one's own? What is Adeimantus defending here? The short answer is, himself. Recall that for Plato a sense of self is internal to the notion of one's own.[29] It is this sense of himself as one of the "few" that

[29] See Chapter 2. In fact, as will become clearer below and in chapter 5, for Plato there is something to be said for simply equating one's sense of what is *oikeion* to one's sense of self.

Adeimantus acts to defend. But if this is right, then what starts to look like the more mysterious feature of Adeimantus's disdain is not what he is defending, but rather the threat that he is defending against. After all, Adeimantus's comment is effectively unprovoked (499d). Moreover, this seems to be a regular feature of many cases of the love of distinction. Often, if not typically, people try to distinguish themselves as superior seemingly absent a challenge or threat to their sense of self. Think here of the clichéd cruelty of highschoolers or the society snob. What I want to suggest is that as Plato sees it, the idea of a threat is "built into" the sense of self operative in these kinds of cases.

Irrespective of whether Adeimantus's sense of self is sufficiently established and socially recognized so as to have a label (e.g., *aristoi,* etc.), to be who he is is *not* to be one of the many. Furthermore, it is not just that Adeimantus is not one of the many: he is better than them. I take this to be the sense of himself at work in Adeimantus's comment. For ease of reference, I will label this a, or the, distinctive self. The distinctive self has two central features. First, it is a sense of self defined in opposition to some other. For example, to be one of the *aristoi* is not be one of the *hoi polloi*. Thus, it is definitional of the relevant sense of self that there is some other who one is not (an opposition that typically structures the specific content what it is to be *aristos*). Second, the framing assumption of the distinctive self is that I am good, and they are bad, which explains the assumed superiority of self to the other or others. This latter feature might be cast as the comparative judgment that one is better than some other. However, putting the thought as a contrast of a good self and bad other more readily points to the "us and them" understanding that I take be a regular product of concern for the distinctive self. In the grip of this understanding, one sort of person is seen as the repository of all the good traits an individual might have, in contradistinction to another that is taken to exhibit every vice and failure: the opposition, say, of

Greeks to barbarians, democrats to oligarchs, winners to losers—each flows from a sense of self constituted by the thought that *I* am good and *they* are bad.

Although the operations of a distinctive self are clearly on display in behavior like Adeimantus', such a sense of self can be seen at work in all manifestations of the love of distinction (*philonikia*). In adults at least, be it ambition, competitiveness or the intricacies of the exercise of fashionable taste, what drives such activity is the desire to show, prove or establish that one is of a superior sort. If Plato thinks *philonikia* a paradigmatic species of thumoetic activity, he must believe that concern for a distinctive self both reveals and is explained by the nature of *thumos*.

Again, Plato's belief that the framing orientation of *thumos* is the need to defend me and mine from the threat of an intractably opposed other, lends itself to capturing concern for a distinctive sense of self. To return to Adeimantus, his sense of himself as superior to the many can be read as an expression of the thought that the many are a threat to his being who he is. Whatever the specifics, Adeimantus views himself and those like him as at the very least obstructed by the masses. From the perspective of his thumoetic part, that is the kind of man he is and insofar as action is called for, its goal is stave off this threat. This framework can also be extended to cases where the threat to self is even less apparent, such as when an agent rigorously tries to be polite. The threat in this case may be that the agent would be, or would be taken to be, other if they acted inappropriately. Thus, from the gentleman's perspective to not act in the appropriate manner would be to be vulgar or common. Here, the other poses a threat by being a possible misidentification of the agent.[30]

[30] The foregoing analysis might appear to make too much of one, arguably offhand, mention of *philonikia* in *Republic*. I have two thoughts in response. First a clarificatory point, my contention is that the use of *philonikia* at 499d-e most clearly reveals a feature of the way Plato thinks about the love of victory in general. Namely, he

Plato identifies the desire for competitive success as an archetypal expression of *thumos*. I have been arguing that we should take the relevant notion of competitive success broadly as the love of distinction and as involving a concern for a distinctive sense of self. Further, I have been trying to show that the love of distinction is a defending of one's own because pursuing distinction is a seeking to stave off the threat posed by an other internal to the self-concept driving the agent's action. If this analysis is correct, it reveals something important about Plato's understanding of the sense of self at work in thumoetic activity. It is *always* under threat. In the case of the distinctive self, the threat takes the shape of some other who threatens my being who I am.[31]

It is, therefore, another formal feature of the non-rational thought Plato calls *thumos* that the thumoetic sense of self is of the self under threat. Again, by formal feature I mean an articulation of what is and is not thinkable for *thumos*. This second formal feature of *thumos* can be seen as an extension of the first identified above. If thumoetic activity is in every case a defending of one's own, then such activity necessarily represents the *oikeion* as threatened. Something, after all, needs to be defended against. Given that *to oikeion* is what is me and mine, the second formal feature of *thumos* is a spelling out of the thought that the relevant notion of

believes it flows from a concern for a sense of oneself as superior. Importantly, this does appear to be a viable way to think about the love of victory. Second, an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own can explain why the concern for a distinctive self along with these varied (arguably more nuanced) examples of the love of distinction are thumoetic phenomena. Even if Plato was not thinking of such cases and did not see the extent of the application of his own understanding, it would nevertheless support his account on my interpretation that it can be so extended.

[31] Notably, this is an attempt to explain the distinctive self as a version of the self under threat. It is the latter notion that is explanatorily fundamental. For Plato, insofar as a thumoetic act or thought involves a recognizable sense of self it is one represented as essentially under threat. On this reading, the notion of the self under threat and the notion of the distinctive self diverge given that the latter is a species of the former. This bears emphasis, because it amounts to a stand on the social character of *thumos*, an issue I take up at length in chapter 5. There I argue that Plato does not understand *thumos* as essentially social. For Plato, not all threats to one's own are other people, or again, there is more to the *allotrion* than other people.

"me" involves a more or less well defined sense of self that is in part constituted by an alien threat.

If true, this thought has significant consequences for our understanding of Plato's views concerning moral education and the limits of certain emotional responses. Before moving on I want to briefly outline one such consequence.

As many have persuasively argued, Plato believes that the thumoetic part plays an important role in the development and exercise of virtue.[32] This role, of course, is limited. A well-educated thumoetic part is not sufficient for virtue. My claim that Plato understands the thumoetic sense of self as one essentially under threat sheds new light on why this is. Plato clearly believes that the thumoetic part can only play a limited part in moral education because it is non-rational.[33] However, we are now in a position to give a more determinate content to this claim. Whenever *thumos* motivates action, it will represent the agent as embattled or obstructed. Sometimes, perhaps often, this will not be the case. In fact, conceiving of things in such antagonistic fashion seems to especially distort many situations in which virtuous action is called for. The distinctive self characteristic of thumoetic thinking is a significant part of this problem. Take, for example, generosity. One can readily imagine a case where an agent, motivated by his thumoetic part, does the generous thing thinking it the appropriate thing for him to do because he, as opposed to those around him, is hospitable. This is a very ungenerous thought! Even if the preceding is an example of an improperly educated thumoetic part, it does not defuse Plato's point. The thumoetic part, *qua* defender of one's own, will incline towards this sort of love of

[32] Most famously Burnyeat (1980: 78-81). The core of Burnyeat's interpretation, at least insofar as it is relevant to the discussion here, is captured by his wonderful phrase that for Plato (and Aristotle) shame is the "semi-virtue of the learner." See also Hobbes (2000) and G. Lear (2006a).
[33] Again, Burnyeat (1980: 80).

distinction because it *will* represent the self as threatened.[34] If Plato is right, this shines a sobering light on the capacity of various emotions and character traits to help us along the path to virtue. Shame, anger, modesty, fortitude, ambition, are all thumoetic, and as such, all must be treated with care. Whatever beneficial role they might play in developing a sense of responsibility or justice or dignity, they are predicated on the agent's sense of themself as threatened.[35] This does not preclude anger, say, from functioning as a stepping stone to justice, or as even being just in some situations. However, if Plato is right, there is an antagonism to thumoetic phenomena which goes all the way down. Any attempt to establish thumoetic activity as an antechamber to virtue must, at the cost of being self-undermining, face up to this fact.

7. *Thumos* Reacts

A, if not the, central conclusions of the preceding section is that Plato considers *philonikia* a species of defending one's own. This point is worth stressing since it amounts to a striking, seemingly counterintuitive, understanding of ambition, rivalrousness and the love of distinction in general. According to this view, the pursuit of distinction like all thumoetic phenomena, exhibits the structure of self under threat with action a response to that threat. Thus, for Plato the pursuit of victory is an attempt to defend or preserve what one already has or who someone already is. In stark contrast, we typically construe the desire to win, achieve, become famous as an active drive to take the initiative and impress one's will upon the world. This presumption is reflected in our popular representations of ambitious people. We typically view

[34] There is far more to say than can be covered here regarding Plato's account of moral education, his view of the place of *thumos* in moral education and the connection between the discussion of the limits of *thumos* broached in this paragraph and the account of *thumos* as a limited principle of psychic unity advanced in chapters 2 and 3.
[35] For a canonical account of how shame, at least as the Ancient Greeks understood it, develops an agent's capacity to take responsibility for and understand their own actions, see Williams (2008: 75-102).

competition, ambition and their allied behaviors as the manifestation of a drive to "make something of oneself." Plato, by contrast, sees this picture as capturing the surface of things. If defending one's own is the form of thumoetic activity, then regardless of how unprompted and creative it is, ambitious activity is a response that aims to preserve me and mine. This follows from the proposed understanding of *thumos*.[36] If *thumos* is the *defense* of one's own, then thumoetic activity in general will have this reactive, preserving aspect. According to Plato, there is something of the conservative reactionary to the thumoetic part. I will return to this thought.[37]

8. Anger as Defending One's Own

For Plato, *thumos* is the reaction to a perceived threat or attack on one's sense of self. We can see this in his identification of anger with *thumos* in the argument for tri-partition, for anger too is a reaction to a perceived attack on who one is. Spelling out this link between anger and *thumos* illustrates the richness and variability of the sense of self which Plato puts at the heart of *thumos*.

As part of his attempt to argue that the soul is composed of three different subjects of motivation (*Republic*, 435e-441c), Socrates attempts to establish that there is a thumoetic part of the soul distinct from both the appetitive and rational (439e-441c). The result is one of the most substantive discussions of *thumos* in *Republic*, not least because it centers around specific examples of thumoetic behavior and thus is a chance to see Plato's account in action. The examples discussed are the (in)famous public breakdown of Leontius, individuals who

[36] This consequence of the account might seem reason to reject it. Casting the pursuit of distinction as a reaction aimed at preserving one's own can seem like an attempt to force the text (or phenomenon) to fit the interpretation (or account). By contrast, I am maintaining that Plato's account of *thumos* offers an illuminating insight into the nature of ambition, fashion and the other faces of the love of distinction.,

[37] It will figure briefly in the following sections of this chapter, and at length in Chapter 5.

alternately think they are being justly or unjustly treated, the rage of children and animals, and the outrage of Odysseus[38] at his maids fornicating with the suitors angling to take his possessions, position and wife. What supports viewing these cases as representative of an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own is that they are all cases of someone getting angry (or in one case, not getting angry). Leontius is angry about his appetite, Odysseus with his maids, the man who resists unjust treatment with his mistreatment or the one mistreating him. And though one might want to hold off on calling the furious response of animals and children anger, it is plausibly a primitive analogue. In each of these examples the thumoetic action or impulse is an expression of anger.

That Plato himself understands the cases in this way is reflected by his readiness to switch without explanation between talk of spirit (θυμός) and talk of anger (ὀργή). He introduces the story about Leontius as evidence that there is a spirited part of the soul (τὸ δὲ δὴ τοῦ θυμοῦ, 439e3) distinct from the appetitive. After relating the anecdote, he has Socrates conclude:

> Yet surely this story suggests that anger (τὴν ὀργὴν) sometimes makes war against the appetites as one thing against another (440a).

Here Socrates comfortably equates *thumos* and anger, or as the reader will eventually come to see once they have gotten a fuller picture of the tri-partite psychology, lets the latter stand in for the former. This is Plato signaling that for the purposes of the local argument, his subject will be anger—*qua* representative manifestation of *thumos* (see also ὀργίζεσθαι at 430c).[39] The

[38] The line quoted by Plato is XX.17, but the whole of the opening of Book XX lines 1-24 is relevant as it give the full picture of the content of Odysseus's anger.

[39] Further support for this way of reading the text can be found in Reeve's translation. At several points in the Book IV argument Reeve renders θυμός and its cognates as "anger," "growing angry" or similar. These decisions clearly reflect a belief that what is under discussion in this stretch of text is anger, and they do seem like the natural way to render the Greek (as at 439e, and 441c).

willingness to use this species of thumoetic activity as a stand-in for the genus indicates that he considers anger a central manifestation of *thumos*, one recognizable as such and helpful for understanding *thumos* on the whole.

For Plato, anger is *thumos*, and that fits with his understanding *thumos* as in every case a defense of one's own that represents the self under threat. What the use of anger as a stand in for *thumos* highlights, is Plato sense that thumoetic activity is a reaction to a perceived threat or attack. Anger is a response to a (perceived) wrong or mistreatment. That this is an essential feature of anger seems very hard to deny.[40] In fact, attention to the Book IV examples *qua* instances of anger makes it all the more evident that they exhibit an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. In every case anger is a reaction that reflects a sense of self and embodies a concern for that self. So, for example, Aristotle's definition of anger emphasizes that anger is a response to a slight to oneself or one's own.[41] A slight is an assault on one's status or position relative to others. Thus, on Aristotle's account, the self understood in anger is one with a

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[40] Aristotle, for example, defines anger as "a desire accompanied by pain for an apparent *retribution* on account of an apparent slighting inflicted by people who have no legitimate reason to slight oneself or one's own (*Rhetoric* 1378a31-33 my italics)."

On the subject of the emotions, attributing to Plato a conception of *thumos* as the defense of one's own not only explains why he believes anger thumoetic, it makes sense of why Plato considers some emotions but not all manifestations of *thumos*. When first exposed to Plato's notion of a thumoetic part of the soul, some readers make the understandable mistake of thinking this middle part of the soul the seat of the emotions. The mistake is that as Plato understands it, the thumoetic part is only the seat of some of our emotions.

Those most clearly linked to the thumoetic part are anger, shame, modesty, contempt and perhaps disgust. For shame as *thumos*, see *Phaedrus* 253d, with Cairns (1993) making the case exhaustively. We have already seen the connection between *thumos* and contempt in Adeimantus's behavior, but further evidence can be found in Plato's characterization of Thrasymachus, who is both contemptuous and thumoetic. As for disgust, there is an undeniable connection between shame and disgust. Shame is a standard response to doing or experiencing something disgusting, and if the thumoetic part is the seat of shame it must be sensitive to what is, and is not, disgusting. More explicitly in *Republic*, Leontius is described as disgusted (δυσχεραίνοι, 439e8) with his appetite to gaze at corpses.

Plato's understanding *thumos* as the love of one's own explains why he sees this subset of the emotions as thumoetic and provides a means to understand them as members of a kind. In keeping with *thumos* being the *defense* of one's own, the thumoetic emotions are those that entail a reaction to a perceived threat to who one takes oneself to be.

[41] The Greek is εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ (*Rhetoric*, 1378a33). In translating this phrase as "oneself and one's own" I am not implying that Aristotle is explicitly referring to the notion of *to okeion*.

position, and this coincides with the Plato belief that the self of *thumos* is the distinctive self. However, one does not need to accept Aristotle's account of anger in order to see that it picks out another arguably uncontentious feature of anger (and something analogous can be said about Aristotle's focus on retribution): insofar as anger is predicated on an agent's sense of self, the self is more than the body. People get angry when they are struck, and they get angry when they are overlooked, insulted, or do not live up to their own expectations. Anger is a response to our sense of who we are being challenged, a response that resists or attempts to fight off the challenge.[42]

In fact, this identification of *thumos* with anger fits particularly well with the necessarily violent character of thumoetic activity that results from an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. The men in Book IV are angry, and each can be read as resisting what they view as an alien (*allotrion*) threat to their sense of self. For Odysseus, lying in the dirt of his own courtyard, his maids' actions are an affront. They are a challenge to his sense of himself as a king or master. In response, his thumoetic desire is to take immediate and violent action. His rational part restrains his anger, but as is made chilling clear later in the poem (*Odyssey*, xxii.459-470), the desire is violent. This is worth stressing, since violence, or force more generally, is how one treats what is *allotrion*.[43] Leontius, passing the corpses of those killed by the public executioner, is gripped by an appetite to look at the corpses. Whether his appetite is to engage in the ancient equivalent of rubbernecking or something sexually perverse, Leontius' ensuing anger reflects a sense of the appetite as shameful, disgusting, or just plain beneath him. He is not the kind of person who gawks at corpses. When, nevertheless, his appetite wins out, his

[42] I would also add, "violently" or "forcefully" resists."
[43] As discussed in chapters 2 and 3

thumoetic part responds with a violent, punitive expression of anger. Leontius holds his eyes open and yells at them while running over to satiate his appetite. Again, we have what can be classed as a perceived threat to his sense of who he is, and again a violent response aimed at rectifying or staving off the threat.[44] The same structure is evident in the case of the man who fights back against unjust treatment. As Plato analyzes it, the man's behavior is the product of two mutually supportive but distinct reactions. While his rational part sees an injustice (440c7-8). His thumoetic part gets angry. To make sense of the man as angry we have to attribute to him some sense that the way he has been treated is an undeserved affront. A modern variant is the person who when fired without good cause becomes infuriated and fights with every means at

[44] The case of Leontius is a very interesting one for an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. Leontius is angry with himself. If *thumos* is the defense of one's own, then getting angry at oneself is, like all anger, a defending of oneself from an alien threat. But when one gets angry at oneself there is no alien, no other. It is Leontius' own appetite that is the problem not anyone else's. To put the point another way, Plato's account of anger as a defending of one's own has the following striking consequence: it commits him to the view that one cannot get angry at oneself. Though this may sound patently false, I do not think it is a problem for the view. In fact, for reasons I will mention in a moment, I believe it counts in its favor.

Realistically, there is not enough evidence to claim that Plato himself recognized and accepted this implication of his view. However, I do think his description of Leontius provides some indication that he is aware of and thinking about the issue. One of the strangest features of the Leontius story is Leontius' angry address of his eyes. In fact, it is his eyes that seem to be the object of his anger as if they, not he, were the ones with the problematic appetite. However, strange as it may sound, that would be a natural way for the thumoetic part to be confused given its collapse of good and bad into self and other. If you will allow me a little flight of fancy, let's grant that the Leontius' story is not Plato's invention, but a well-known tale of public breakdown. Having come to understand *thumos* as the love of one's own, the story of Leontius would have presented itself to Plato as something he needed to include in *Republic* since it so clearly supported his account and the implications of the account for the shortcomings of anger as a method of self-control. One advantage of this story, is that it makes sense of what might otherwise be unnecessary, recherche features of the example. A second, related advantage, is that it also makes sense of Plato's seemingly strange decision to lead off with the story of Leontius as his example of conflict between thumoetic and appetitive desire.

Leaving what Plato actually thought aside, the idea that we cannot get angry at ourselves is worth taking seriously. It clearly needs to be defended and developed, since we do seem to get angry at ourselves all the time. However, it is also an idea that taps into a deeply held intuition we have about the limitations of anger as a means of self-control. Getting angry about something you have done or some feature of your personality, whatever its effectiveness, is a response that we tend to discourage (if not in ourselves, then in others). This is not just because we think we should be "less hard on ourselves" and avoid causing ourselves unnecessary suffering. We have the sense that reacting in this way does not fully own up to the shortcoming and is in some sense a failure to take responsibility. Why this is so is what needs to be worked out, but a very natural way to construe this failure of responsibility, is that it is a failure to properly recognize the deed or desire as one's own. Really—and everything turns on how you spell out the "really"—you are not angry with yourself. It is a virtue of coming to understand anger as defending one's own that it points to this surprising but fertile insight.

their disposal to keep their job (and when failing that, sues their employer). For them, the firing is an outrage. It does not accord with their distinctive sense of who they are, e.g., a capable and responsible employee, and to accept the firing would be a diminishment. “They can’t do this to me!” goes the thought. Motivated by this threat to their distinctive sense of self, they fight back.

9. Appropriate Given Who I Am

The details of these cases, and the association of *thumos* with anger in general, make apparent that for Plato the range of thumoetic self-understandings and possible responses are tremendously varied. In its mature forms, anger displays a delicate and perceptive sensibility to who we are and how we are being treated. Earlier, I claimed that in understanding *thumos* as the defense of one’s own Plato attributes to *thumos* an importantly limited sense of self (the distinctive self). What the cases from the argument for tri-partition make clear is that, within these boundaries, there is room for a rich and variable content.

The cases in Book IV portray a thumoetic part defined by its sensitivity to what is and is not appropriate, a sensitivity that can be recast as a guarding against the possibility of an attack on me and mine. In Plato’s examples, what the thumoetic part is on guard against is the threat of some behavior or treatment it deems inappropriate, unsuitable, or unfitting. As I use them, these last terms are interchangeable. What they aim to pick out is the notion of a perceived “fit” between a given action and something else. What we see Plato conveying through these examples is that he takes this “something else” to be a thumoetic sense of self. Odysseus, for example, gets angry because his thumoetic part sees the maids’ actions as a betrayal. Behind this response is the very clear expectation that servants are loyal to their masters. When his are not, his thumoetic part views the maids’ behavior as out of step with his sense of who he is. He is a

king, and they are not treating him as such. In all the Book IV cases, we see this same sensitivity. Plato's is a portrayal that represents this part of the human soul as always on guard, determining whether actions are appropriate or inappropriate and ready to spring into action at the sign of something that does not accord with a potentially reason-independent sense of who the agent is.

It is for Plato an essential feature of this sensitivity to what is appropriate that it not only varies across individuals, but that it is also malleable or educable. We see this both in his choice of examples and his presumption that the thumoetic part can be well or poorly educated. For Plato, different people at different times will have different senses of what is appropriate. He further thinks that this varying sense of the appropriate is explained, at least in part, by people's thumoetic parts differing with respect to what they find *oikeion*.[45] Nowhere is this clearer than in the one case in Book IV where the individual discussed fails to get angry (440b-c). Some people, Socrates points out, do not get angry when they realize they are being justly punished. (We can be confident Socrates is imagining a situation where the punishment is justified, since he brings it up in support of the claim that the thumoetic part tends to align with the rational, 440a-b). Thus, a person's rational part judges his actions unjust, and the thumoetic part following reason does not grow angry despite the appetitive deprivations caused by the punishment. This, thinks Socrates, is an achievement, a fact he stresses by claiming that the "nobler" the individual, the more able they are to respond in this manner. "Nobler" is γενναιότερος, the same term Socrates uses to describe the well-raised hound of Book II (375e). The reference to the dog *qua* image of an ideal thumoetic character cements that Plato wants us to see this kind of response to punishment as the product of a well-educated thumoetic part, a condition of character both

[45] He must also think that people's thumoetic sensibilities also differ with respect to which actions they find suitable. Or to put this point another way, fit is a two-place relation between self and action and Plato thinks both can vary.

acquired and rare. Thus, Plato assumes that the condition of a given individual's thumoetic part can vary, and what we see in Book IV is that one of the ways in which it varies is that different individuals have a different (thumoetic) sense of who they are.[46] A noble individual accepts the punishment as fitting. Not everyone will act this way. In fact, one thing to which Plato is drawing our attention is that people often get angry about being punished even when they accept (rationally) that the punishment is justified. By contrast, the noble person does not get angry, and they do not get angry because of who they take themselves to be. Plato does not give us much detail, but we can imagine the possibilities. This noble thumoetic response could be the product of the individual thinking himself unjust, dignified, a law-abiding citizen or even a criminal who accepts the rules of the 'game.' The point is that *qua* thumoetic response, we should see it as based on the thought that I am *the sort of person* who accepts fair punishment.

Thus, Plato thinks that an individual's thumoetic sense of self can vary and that it is this which often explains people's differing thumoetic behaviors. With Odysseus, Plato shows us a man whose anger is predicated on his taking himself to be a king. This is a particular sense of self, and those who do not think of themselves in this way will grow angry or stay calm about different sorts of things. For Plato, *thumos* is the defense of one's own, and what counts as one's own is determined by a thumoetic sense of self that admits of different descriptions. The picture we seem to be given in Book IV is that such descriptions may rise to the level of culturally codified and named roles such as mother, citizen, king, but nothing in the text indicates that Plato thinks they must. It is consistent with the Book IV examples that an individual's thumoetic sense

[46] Another way the thumoetic part could vary is with regards to which actions it finds appropriate. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. In all likelihood, Plato sees both at work in the education of the thumoetic part. It is both the case that such an education is meant to inculcate a sense of self with a particular content, say noble warrior, and frame certain treatments and actions, say just punishment, as appropriate.

of self be something far less coherent or marked, such as, "I am not that kind of person." However, even this vague notion attributes to the thumoetic part the capacity to conceive of the self as falling under some description, and as the discussion in Book IV bears out, this description can vary tremendously—within limits.

In sum, for Plato the condition of the thumoetic part is the condition of a sophisticated and educable capacity for self-description that in every case represents the self as under threat.[47]

10. One's Own as *Thumos*

In *Republic*, we are presented with a picture of the thumoetic part as that aspect of our personality which is fierce, stubborn, rivalrous and proud. This is the picture of the thumoetic part so vividly illustrated in the accounts of the timocrat (548e-549a) and the timocracy he resembles (547d-548a). What the preceding sections have hopefully shown is that this facet of our psychology can be re-described as the defending of one's own. However, if the aim is to establish that Plato identifies *thumos* with the defense of one's own, then this identification must be shown to run in the other direction as well. Where Plato makes his topic the concern for one's own, we should find him self-awaredly discussing *thumos*. And, in fact, this is what we find in the most substantive explicit consideration of the notion of one's own in *Republic*, Socrates' arguments for why spouses and children should be held in common (461e-466d).

Neither the connection between this passage nor its importance for understanding Plato's account of *thumos* have been sufficiently appreciated.[48] There is good reason for this. In the

[47] Contra Gosling (1973: 44) *thumos* is not always concerned to "be a man." However, Gosling is on to a facet of Plato's thinking about *thumos* in that for Plato, *thumos*' sense of self has the formal characteristic of always being under threat. Therefore, Gosling is wrong in that our *thumos* can think of us as something other than a man, but on the right track in thinking that for Plato *thumos*' sense of self is not wholly open-ended.
[48] There are certainly exceptions to this claim, most notably Wilburn (2021: 193-201). See also, Brennan (2012: 117).

passage, Socrates' calls for a redirection of (at least some of) the best city's citizens' attachments away from their family members and towards the citizen body as a whole. Concern for one's intimates seems worlds apart from the rivalrous, self-centered thumoetic part with which this section began. However, once *thumos* becomes an essentially defensive reaction, the gap is not as great. As Plato sees it, *thumos* protects. Taking up the essentially defensive character of *thumos* paves the way to recognizing a concern to protect who and what we love as just as much a centerpiece of *thumos* as the desire to shine. What it enables one to see is that in the passage justifying the holding of spouses and children in common, Plato identifies *thumos* as the form of soul responsible for our intimate attachments and familial bonds. For Plato, *thumos* properly understood is as much a power for drawing us together as it is a power for setting us against one another.

When Socrates shifts away from his account of the ideal, just constitution, Polemarchus, Adeimantus and the rest of the interlocutors (449a-d) challenge him to explain and defend his claim that the citizens of the ideal city will "have everything in common (423e-424a)." The young men are scandalized, and more than a little bit titillated, because by "everything" Socrates also means their "women and children (449c)." In response to the young men's challenge, Socrates sets out a vision of family life and the rearing of young children subordinated to the end of civic unity. He begins by discussing the role of women in the ideal city. Having established that their being women is no obstacle to their having the potential to be guardians, Socrates proceeds to argue that it is both possible and best for women to receive a guardian education. With the role of women clarified, Socrates can then lay out what marriage and child rearing will look like when spouses and children are held in common. Marriage, understood as being for the

sake of procreation, will be governed by a lottery and children will be removed from their birth parents and reared in a communal setting.

As with his views concerning the education of women, Socrates moves to justify the radical restructuring of family life by showing that it is both possible and for the best. He starts by arguing that the living arrangements are for the best. In his argument, the notion of *to oikeion* figures prominently (462a-464d).

(1) A city is in the best condition when it is unified (462a-b)
(2) A city is most unified when its citizens share in each other's pleasures and pains (462b-462c).
(3) Citizens share in each other's pleasures and pains when they "say mine and not-mine in unison (462c-d)."
(4) The suggested institutions governing family life will make it most the case that citizens say mine and not-mine in unison (463b-e, 464b-e).
(5) Therefore, the sharing of spouses and children produced by these institutions is for the best.

The key claims here are (3) and to a lesser extent (4). Although 'ὀικεῖον' may not appear in this stretch of text, Plato clearly sees these claims as claims about who (and what) citizens take as their own. We see this in Plato's use of "mine," the first-person form of one's own. We see it in the way in which the secret marriage lottery and communal child-rearing are meant to shape who the citizens take to be the members of their family, for family members (members of the household) are the ur-instance of something *oikeion*. Finally, we can see that these claims concern the citizens' sense of their own from the fact that in the course of the argument Socrates contrasts taking someone as "mine" in the relevant sense with seeing them as *allotrion* (463b), the contrary of *oikeion*.

Plato's contention is that sharing spouses and children is necessary and good because it unifies the political community. Sharing spouses and children abolishes the private family.

Guardians (459e and 460c) will neither know or spend extra time with their blood relatives nor form long-standing marital relationships. As a result, they will not form the special attachments that lead to prioritizing the interests of some subset of citizens. Plato's further thought is that such institutions not only eliminate sources of disunity, they serve as a positive source of unity by replacing the private family with nothing less than a 'civic' family.

11. The Power for Attachment

For Plato, the sharing of spouses and children is not an attempt to eliminate our intimate attachments—it is an attempt to redirect them. This is made clear by Plato's description of the beneficial end he believes will result when the proposed institutions are put in place. When spouses and children are shared, the citizens will share in each other's pleasures and pains.

> So in this city more than any other, when someone is doing well or badly, they will utter in concord the words we mentioned a moment ago, and say "*my* such-and-such is doing well" or "*my* so-and-so is doing badly.
>
> That's absolutely true.
>
> Well didn't we say that this conviction and way of talking are accompanied by the having of pleasures and pains in common?
>
> Yes, and we were right to do so.
>
> . . .
>
> Then won't our citizens share to the fullest, and call "mine" the very same thing? And because they share it, won't they experience to the fullest the sharing of pleasure and pains? (*Republic*, 462b-464a)

The citizens will share in one another's pleasures and pains *because* every citizen will take every other citizen as their own, a condition that Plato describes by way of an analogy to the way in which the individual feels pain when a part of their body is hurt.

> And isn't it [the one in which pleasures and pains are shared] the city whose condition is most like that of a single person? I mean, when one of us somehow hurts his finger, you know the entire partnership—the one that binds body and

> soul together into a single system under the ruling part within it—is aware of this, and all of it as a whole feels the pain in unison with the part that suffers. That is why we say that this person has a pain in his finger. And the same principle applies, doesn't it, to any other part of a person, whether it is suffering pain or relieved by pleasure? (*Republic*, 462c-d)

In these passages, to take someone as *oikeion* is to literally share in their pleasures and pains, not merely to recognize that harm to the other is (also) bad for oneself—but to feel it, the way one does with one's closest family members. The implication is that to take someone as one's own is to stand in a special non-rational relationship to them, one best characterized as attachment.

To anticipate: if this is right, and *thumos* is the love of one's own, then what Plato is claiming in this section of *Republic* is that the thumoetic part of the soul is also our faculty for forming intimate attachments to others. In order to better get at what the civic family discussion of attachment teaches us about Plato's conception of *thumos*, it is important that one not focus on what it shows us about Plato's beliefs regarding how and why we become attached. He clearly does have some views on this matter, and we can see them at work in his institutional recommendations. For example, he seems to believe that proximity and shared activity produce attachment. He also seems to think that we are naturally prone to be attached to our own offspring, and that caring, and being cared for, are powerful sources of intimacy. If he did not, then he would not see the need to separate the children of the guardians from their parents. However, it is imperative to distinguish between the mechanisms that cause us to become attached to various people, and the way in which our intimates are valuable to us. To focus on the latter, as I will in what follows, is to examine the content of an evaluative thought, namely, what Plato believes it means to understand something as good *in the sense of oikeion*. Or, in other words, what it is to be, not become, *oikeion*. It is easy to run these two subjects together

when examining Plato's views about *to oikeion*, and when thinking about attachment more generally. Take, for example, the translation of *oikeion* as familiar. This translation is perfectly accurate. However, it can be taken to mean those things that are valuable to us because we have spent a lot of time around them, are well acquainted with them, etc.[49] This obscures Plato's notion. Plato's point is that after we have lived with someone, we come to think of them as valuable in a particular way. What we want to understand is this "particular" way of thinking something good. Plato calls it *oikeion*, and what we see in his discussion of the civic family, is that this is how he believes we think about those to whom we are attached.

Plato's model for what I am calling attachment, i.e., seeing someone as one's own, is the relationship one has to one's close family members. The first thing to say about this relationship is that Plato sees it as a case wherein one recognizes that one's own well-being is tied up with the well-being of the other. If they do well, you do well. If they are harmed you are harmed, and to be attached to them entails an awareness that this is the case (463e). However, in Plato's view this is not all there is to being attached to someone. To take someone as *oikeion* is to see their good as intertwined with one's own in a specific way. As Plato repeatedly stresses, one feels their pleasure and pain. The relationship I take Plato to be describing is the familiar albeit strange way in which we experience the hurts and triumphs of those closest to us as if they are our own. There is a vast network of interrelated experiences here, and they are not restricted to pleasure and pain generally described. When it comes to our intimate family members, we can feel shame at their actions, and anger when they are insulted (464d-e). The strangeness here is that there is a sense, hard to pin down, in which we experience what happens to the other as if it is happening

[49] Brennan (2012: 115), makes this mistake, as does Wilburn at points (2021: 186-9). The mistake is that Plato's notion of *oikeion* is not being treated as a particular understanding of the good, or form of value.

to us, as if we are doing what they are doing. It is this distinctive way of understanding another's good as intertwined with one's own that Plato is concerned with in these passages from *Republic*. For Plato, there are some people, and perhaps things, which we understand as extensions of ourselves, i.e., those that are *oikeion*.[50]

One objection to the foregoing reading of what Plato means by *oikeion* in these passages is that by "mine" and "not mine," Plato does not have in mind some non-rational relationship of attachment. Rather, these terms and the notion of *to oikeion* in general are a way of picking out the fact that there are some people, i.e., close family members, whose interests we prioritize because we take them to bear on our own. Yes, Plato mentions the "sharing of pleasures and pains"; but this is not meant to be taken literally, rather as shorthand for the claim that each guardian will see his good as bound up with the good of every other.[51] What the imagined objection denies is that 'mine' is the specific non-rational understanding of an other which I am calling attachment.

So why think that in these passages Plato uses *oikeion* to describe a determinate non-rational understanding of another's value and not some vague(r) notion of shared interest? First, there is the aforementioned emphasis on pleasure and pain. Plato's repeated claim is that when

[50] It is worth noting, that if the foregoing description of the non-rational relationship to the other outlined above is correct, it has an interesting consequence for how one understands actions motivated by a love of one's own. One's own, as I have repeatedly asserted is best rendered into the first person as me and mine. What the foregoing discussion indicates is that in a sense, what is mine (*oikeion*) *is* me. A lot turns here on how exactly one spells out the thought that taking something as one's own is thinking it an extension of oneself. However, regardless of the exact way in which one fills out the thought, say whether one sees it as more or less metaphorical, there is ground for claiming that since my own is understood as a part of me, in truth I am the one and only object of concern for *thumos*. This conclusion, which I take in broad outline to be correct, does not conflict with the claim (that I also endorse) that Plato represents *thumos* in Book V as manifesting in concern for others. See chapter 5 for more on this issue.

[51] According to the objection, all Plato is claiming is that the guardians will have no private interests, just as they will have no private possessions or money (416d-417b). It is worth pointing out that the reading I have proposed can also be described as one in which Plato is claiming the guardians will have no private interests. The point of contention is why, or more accurately in what sense, they will have no private interests.

someone is *oikeion*, one shares in their pains and pleasures. It is difficult to explain this away as a merely figurative, or off-hand, description. If that is all it is, why would Plato repeatedly and consistently use it throughout his argument regarding the benefit of sharing spouses and children? In addition, elsewhere, when discussing *philia*, Plato is perfectly happy to define that relationship as one where the lover sees what is good for the loved as good for himself (*Republic*, 412d). The emphasis on pleasure and pain indicates that for Plato, taking something as one's own is a non-rational understanding of its value.[52]

Further, the institutions Plato recommends aim to make the guardians feel towards one another the way we feel towards members of our nuclear family. One does not need to arrange a marriage lottery or move children to a communal rearing pen if the goal is to inculcate the (rational) belief in every guardian that they share common cause with every other guardian. Plato's institutions are aimed at getting in on the ground floor, i.e., at shaping the guardians' non-rational sentiments. This interpretation of the institutions' purpose is further supported by the fact that Socrates suggests that the citizens' sense of themselves as members of one big family ought to be taken up and reflected in "the sayings chanted by all the citizens, and that sound in their ears right from earliest childhood" (*Republic*, 463d). This reads as a clear reference to the content of the citizens' musical education, an education that in its beginnings (i.e. in childhood) primarily targets the non-rational soul. More importantly, that the guardians are to feel about their fellow citizens the way we feel about our nuclear family is evidence that Plato is referring here to a specific form of non-rational concern for another's well-being. When it comes to our

[52] One might debate how literal Plato is being, or the exact experiences he has in mind, and Plato himself may not be clear on these matters. However, one need not resolve such issues in order to accept that Plato describes this condition as one wherein we share in another's pleasures and pains because he takes it to be a non-rational concern for the other's good.

close family members and loved ones, our concern for their good is more visceral, more immediate. They are our intimates, and a striking feature of our connection to them is that we act and react as if they were an extension of ourselves. This is the special form of concern that I am calling attachment. The fact that Plato views the proposed institutions as an attempt to shape who the guardians treat as parents and children is evidence that Plato believes taking someone to be *oikeion* is to be attached to them the way a parent is attached to their children.

In addition, Plato's decision to liken the best city to a single organism is suggestive of the same conclusion (462c-d, quoted above). For Plato, a city in which the citizens take one another as *oikeion* is one in which injury to one citizen is felt by all, just as when one part of the body is injured it is the person as a whole who feels pain. The point of the analogy is to illustrate the way unanimity about one's own unifies a political community. In the analogy, the unity of the city is represented as its citizens being akin to the parts of a single person or body. Members of a single corporate body, they are, quite literally, attached to one another. The strong implication of this image is that the guardians' fellow feeling is immediate. When you stub your toe, you feel it instantly. This reaction is not mediated by any thought establishing that in truth, an injury to your toe is an injury to you. Rather, your toe *is* you. Plato's choice of image here indicates that he understands an individual's taking something to be *oikeion* as their being attached to it the way one might be to one's child or the limbs of one's body. In such relationships, there is a sense not wholly figurative in which the other is thought of as a part of oneself.

Finally, the connection between *thumos* and one's own also encourages reading *oikeion* in this context as the non-rational form of evaluation I am calling attachment. When it comes to various canonical expressions of what Plato calls spirit, there is a way in which our sensitivity can extend so as to include the actions and well-being of others. Shame and anger most clearly

exhibit this capacity. We sometimes feel shame when others act. Not empathy, or pity, but shame, as when a parent acts foolishly, or a friend embarrasses themselves with a clumsy remark. Something similar is true of anger (recall Aristotle's definition). When we think someone we care about has been wronged, we get angry. Such anger need not be any less intense because it is produced by the wronging of another. Both shame and anger are unequivocally spirited emotions, and both deploy a capacity to see the actions and condition of others as if they were one's own. If one grants even the weaker claim that Plato sees *thumos* as involving the concern for what is *oikeion*, then the shaping of the guardians' sense of their own is an education of the thumoetic part of their souls. Taken together, these two thoughts provide further reason to think that Plato considers the shaping of the guardians' sense of the *oikeion* to be the shaping of a non-rational capacity to form attachments (that figure in our spirited thoughts and actions).

12. Redirecting Attachment Is an Education of the Thumoetic Part

To review, when Plato recommends the sharing of spouses and children on the grounds that it will make every guardian view every other guardian as *oikeion*, his point is that the proposed civic family will produce citizens who are attached to one another. The relationship Plato has in mind, epitomized by the bond between parents and children, is a non-rational understanding of the other's good as bearing immediately on one's own. To feel this way about another is to experience what they do and what happens to them as happening to oneself. In a sense, attachment extends the boundaries of one's self. In Book V, Plato labels such attachment seeing someone as one's own ("mine").[53]

[53] I am not arguing that Plato offers, or even has, a full account of the evaluative content of attachment. The sense in which we see the other's good as bearing immediately on our own is both more complex and varied than Plato presents it in *Republic*.

If Plato believes that one's own is the object of attachment, what does this show about his understanding of *thumos*?[54]

Take for example Plato's claim that attachment results in an immediate concern for the other's well-being such that harms to the other are perceived as harms to oneself. This is not always the case. Importantly, the feature of human intimacy Plato picks out has a hierarchical aspect. When one is attached to another one does not fully identify with them. Rather, one sees them as something like a limb of one's own body. This means that the person who is attached takes themselves to be the ultimate authority on what is and is not a harm. The other may take something to be a harm, and it may in fact be a harm, yet the person who sees the other as their own does not feel it. Or, alternatively, the attached person may feel something to be harmful to the other and therefore themselves despite the fact that the person to whom they are attached thinks the 'harm' irrelevant or even beneficial (as for example happens in gendered honor killings). Not only is this a significant feature of attachment, it is one with consequences for Plato's goal of civic unity. The guardians will only feel pleasure and pain together if they also agree with regards to what is and is not harmful. Plato, of course, believes they will. However, he does appear to overestimate what attachment to another can accomplish on its own. Attachment may entail a sense of the good of the other as bearing immediately on my own, but I, and I alone, determine what counts as good.

[54] That Plato theorizes *thumos* as the defense of one's own is the central claim of this project (see especially chapters 1 and 3). There are also moments in Plato's justification of the sharing of spouses and children which provide independent support for thinking that he sees these recommendations as aimed at the spirited part.

When cataloguing the advantages of the proposed living arrangements, Socrates argues that since the guardians will have nothing besides their own bodies that is privately their own, it will mean the end of lawsuits (464e). In order to ensure that prosecutions do not occur over bodily injury, citizens will be allowed and encouraged to physically defend themselves against any other citizen who seeks to do them bodily harm. According to Plato, one further reason to adopt this practice is that it will be beneficial for spirited people because a good fight will give them a relatively harmless way to vent their anger (465a). Plato's decision to pick out and explicitly mention a benefit to spirited people suggests that he sees the sharing of spouses and children, along with the absence of private property, as institutions aimed at the spirited part.

This thought is bolstered by Socrates claim that it is the auxiliaries who will be happy when they all take the same things as their own (466a). When saying this, Socrates makes it clear that he is responding to Adeimantus' earlier objection that the life of a guardian does not seem a very good one (419b recalled by Socrates at 465e). Adeimantus' objection was about the lives of the guardians. Notably, in responding Socrates only mentions the lives of the auxiliaries. Again, it looks like the sharing of spouses and children and the abolition of private property along with the psychological condition they establish and embody is an education of the spirited part. It is the auxiliaries who are the spirited part of the best city and Plato claims that if things are arranged as suggested this part of the city will be most satisfied and in its best condition.

This conclusion receives further support from Socrates' stated rationale for thinking that the life of an auxiliary in this ideal city will be ideal by their own lights. According to Socrates, the reason Adeimantus is wrong (about the auxiliaries at least) is that they will live lives superior to the Olympic victors (466a). This is a straightforward appeal to a thumoetic sensibility in its incarnation as the love of victory. Olympic victors were the paradigm of competitive success and the auxiliaries' lives are presented as even better than that. This attempt to justify the happiness of the guardians' life in thumoetic terms continues with Socrates suggestion that being unshackled from the responsibilities of raising children and providing for a family greatly benefits ambitious individuals (465b-d). Absent these distractions, these citizens will be more free to devote their efforts to their ambitions—just the argument one might make to an audience of ambitious, young, men. (The whole of the discussion of the first two "waves" has the feel of Socrates at the club or in the locker room.) The message is clear. If you value distinction, then having everything in common is best since it most fully enables you to pursue and possess what you desire most.

In part, this decision to articulate the benefit of holding everything in common in thumoetic terms is Plato knowing his audience, but it is not just that. It reflects a presumption on Plato's part that a concern for what is and is not one's own is proper to the spirited part (and spirited people). That Socrates goes on to argue that the education and regulation of what is *oikeion* results in the best condition of the spirited part reinforces this link between *thumos*

If *thumos* is the power for attachment, it has decisive consequences for the understanding of what gives the thumoetic sense of self its content and what it would be to educate this part of the soul. Not everyone is attached to the same things. The guardians by dint of their upbringing and the institutions governing their family life are Plato's vision for a group of people who are meant to come as close as humanly possible to agreeing in their attachments. This, however, is an achievement. The baseline assumption of Plato's program is that who and what we care about varies. Given his understanding of *thumos*, Plato also believes that this variance, at least in part, explains people's differing *thumoetic* behavior. According to Plato, *thumos* is in every case a defending one's own. What differs is who and what people take to be their own, and that is determined, at least in part, by their attachments. When you insult *my* friend or belittle *my* profession I get angry. This is a line of thought that can be extended to explain people's emotional dispositions. Thus, I am irritable because I get attached to my own suggestions too quickly. In the Book V discussion of children and spouses, it is our attachments—who and what we take to be our own—that give content to our *thumoetic* sense of self, determine the condition of the *thumoetic* part of our souls, and allow for its education.

13. My Friend, My Self

Thumos in Plato is typically understood as a desire to shine. There is a nearly unanimous consensus that the desire to show oneself better than others is a, if not the, defining feature of *thumos*.[55] If I am right, this is only one half of the story. *Thumos* is also a power for attachment,

and one's own. More specifically, it is evidence that Plato considers the education of what one takes to be one's own to be an education of the spirited part of the soul.

[55] For examples of this thought, see Burnyeat (2006), Cooper (1984, 1996), Gosling (1973), G. Lear (2004), Wilberding (2009). Wilburn initially endorses this thought (2011), but in his more considered mature view (2021) rejects it decisively.

and therefore, as the discussion of family in *Republic* indicates, it is also a power for bringing us together.

In fact, Plato believes that friendship, or *philia*, finds its beginnings in *thumos*, which should come as no surprise if what I have argued so far is true. If someone else's being *oikeion* means one is attached to them, then one experiences their hurts and benefits as if they were hurts and harms to oneself. This is one form of thinking that what is good for the other is what is good for oneself. In a eudaemonist framework, whatever else it might be for someone to be a friend, a friend is someone whose doing well is your doing well, an assumption about friendship Plato explicitly recognizes (*Republic*, 412d). For Plato, both *philia* and *thumos* involve linking one's own good with the good of another. Moreover, when one turns to Plato's introduction of *thumos* into *Republic*, one sees that the link between friendship and *thumos* was there from the beginning. The noble hound which serves as a model for the guardians and image for the well-educated thumoetic part (chapter 2) treats those it knows as friends. In re-describing this disposition, Plato is happy to substitute for "friend" someone taken to be one's own.

> It [the dog] judges anything it sees to be either a *friend* (φίλος) or an enemy on no other basis than that it knows the one and does not know the other. And how could it be anything other than a lover of learning if it defines what is *its own* (τό τε οἰκεῖον) and what is alien to it in terms of knowledge and ignorance? (*Republic*, 376b) [My italics]

For Plato, to understand *thumos* as the love of one's own is to see it as the wellspring of human intimacy. Our attachments to our children and our parents are in Plato's view manifestations of *thumos*. No wonder, then, that he thinks love (*philia*) and friendship are rooted in *thumos*.[56]

[56] Understanding the thumoetic part as the subject of *philia* has decided Homeric overtones. Thus, among the many 'soul' or mind terms found in Homer, *thumos* is the exclusive subject of φιλέω and its cognates, Caswell, (1987: 34-35). That this connection between *philia* and *thumos* can be found in Homer lends further support to the thought that

Seeing *thumos* as the source of friendship is supported by, and makes sense of, what would otherwise be a perplexing claim that Aristotle makes in *Politics*. Aristotle writes:

> In fact, some say that guardians should have this very quality, namely, friendly to those they know and fierce to those they do not, and *spirit is what produces friendliness, since it is the capacity of the soul by which we love*. (ὁ θυμός εστίν ὁ ποιῶν τό φιλετικόν. αὕτη γαρ εστίν ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς δύναμις ᾗ φιλουμεν. *Politics*, 1327b 41-2)

What is striking in this reference to *Republic* is Aristotle's explanation of why the purportedly good disposition of the guardians is a condition of their spirited sensibilities. According to Aristotle, being friendly to those you know and fierce to those you do not is a state of spirit because it is through spirit that we make friends. This brief remark both underscores the connection between *thumos* and *philia* and offers a promising way to understand the relationship between them. The tenor of the passage is that friendship is a modification or development of spirit (Aristotle's claim is that spirit makes us friendly to others.), a thought that fits well with an understanding of *thumos* as a power for attachment. Being attached to someone is not the same as being their friend. However, it is out of these sorts of attachments that our friendships develop. This, I take it, is Plato's view. Friendships, as in the enduring relationships built on a reciprocal understanding of one another's good as one's own, are made possible by our ability to form attachments. This leaves room for *philia* in the latter sense to be a more complex

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Plato too takes *thumos* to be the source of friendship, and by extension that he understands *thumos* in general the love of one's own.

The fact that Homer's use of *thumos* lines up with Plato's understanding of the thumoetic part as that with which we feel *philia* broaches the larger issue of the extent to which Plato's conception of *thumos* bears the mark of Homer's influence. This is too large a question to take up here. However, if you will permit a little speculation, one interesting result of interpreting *thumos* in Plato as the love of one's own is how closely it brings Plato's account of *thumos* in line with the use of the term in Homer. Couple this with Plato's references to Homer (for example, Plato's repeated use of the Homeric phrase κατά φρένα καί κατά θυμόν) and Homer looks more and more like Plato's primary source for his conception *thumos*. In Plato's account of *thumos* we can see an attempt to not only capture Homeric usage, but the psychology of his heroes. For Plato, the thumoetic part is something like the "Homeric man" in all of us.

relationship that draws on other of our capacities and therefore is something more than a manifestation of *thumos*.[57] Attachment is not friendship, and we need not see Plato as overlooking this distinction.[58] Rather, for Plato *thumos* is in part those feelings of attachment that bind us in concern to the well-being of others, an identification of interests that in some cases becomes the foundation of a friendship.

14. Two Faces of One Coin

Attachment links us together, and competitiveness sets us apart, yet Plato thinks both are manifestations of the same form of soul. Explaining why this is reveals that we, too, share the intuition that loving distinction and forming attachments are two faces of a single form of self-assertion.

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[57] However, given the way Plato and Aristotle use *philein* and *philos* in these contexts, it appears that they sometimes consider attachment to be a kind of *philia*. If that is correct, I take it to reflect a broader sense of *philia*, wherein anytime an individual identifies their interests with those of another it is *philia*.

[58] One significant difference between what I am calling attachment and friendship is the way in which friendship embodies a more complete concern for the *other's* good. (See my chapter 3 for a similar point made about Plato's understanding of intra-psychic harmony as a "friendship" among the parts.) In a friendship, one cares about the other's wellbeing as they themselves understand it. You might help your friend in their project yet question their sense of the project's importance or whether they should be pursuing it. This is taking the other's doing well as your doing well, but we also think that insofar as it is a friendship, friends show us things about what counts as doing well which we ourselves did not realize. Things are not always so cut and dry, but the contrast with attachment is telling. When I am attached to someone it is my conception of the good that dominates. Their well-being bears directly on my own, but my conception of what is in their/our interests is determined by my sensibilities. As a result, I can feel slighted when someone I am attached to is insulted, even though they themselves took no offense. Or, in a more sinister vein, my child can act in a way that I feel deeply humiliates both of us, even though they undertook the action freely and joyfully and see no shame in it.

It is not clear to what extent Plato is tracking these features of attachment. Plato does not equate *philia* (in the robust sense) with being *oikeion*. Or, at the very least, what he has to say about *thumos* and the *oikeion* leave room for a distinction between these two notions. For Plato, someone *oikeion* is someone whose good is felt to bear immediately on one's own. However, there are many related phenomena here and I do not think Plato is differentiating among them, nor does he have his eye on the precise nature of the relationship he has picked out. His concern is to bring into view our non-rational capacity to take another's good as bearing on our own, where the model for this thought is the way close family members feel about one another. The further fact that such attachment involves, in some way, an extension of one's own conception of the good to the other, is either something he does not seem to recognize or think important. If the latter, then he has made a mistake given the role he sees attachment playing in the production of communal unity. Our attachment to other's can be a source of unity, but in non-virtuous cases it can just as easily be a source of domination and discord.

Plato's view looks less paradoxical when one attends to the fact that he believes that the attachments we make through *thumos* give content to a distinctive, thumoetic sense of self. The account of *thumos* as the love of one's own is an account of *thumos* as self-assertion, or more properly, self-defense. Plato's point about *thumos qua* power of attachment is that this self can be expanded, so to speak, to include other people and things. Thus, for *thumos* the self defended through anger is me, but me understood as including my friends, family, country, etc. For Plato, the preceding description is more than a metaphor. As the thumoetic part understands things, there is a sense in which certain distinct objects are a part of who I am. This is what it means for one's attachments to give content to one's thumoetic sense of self. To be a parent is to be attached to one's child such that the battery of thumoetic sensibilities centered on one's body and person are extended to the child. *Thumos* is the love of me and *mine* (*to oikeion*). The inclusion of "mine" marks the fact that some of what is *oikeion* is, in fact, an independent existence, or at least that is the view from the outside. From the inside, i.e., from the perspective of *thumos*, there is only me. In this way, thinks Plato, self-defense takes shape as concern for others.[59]

The foregoing makes sense of how *thumos* could be both essentially a form of self-concern and manifest as concern for others. However, aligning these two aspects of *thumos* is the first step, to fully see the fit between *thumos qua* concern for others and *thumos qua* the love of distinction, we must add in Plato's commitment to the reactionary or defensive character of *thumos*, for it is then that the rivalrous and unifying aspects of *thumos* come together. For *thumos*, the *oikeion* is always under threat. If, as happens, this sense of what is *oikeion* is

[59] This is too simplistic. Although he does not make the point explicitly, Plato likely thinks that *thumos* understands things as more and less *oikeion*, for example my body versus my fellow Greeks. As far as I can see, the fact that *thumos* has this possibility does not undercut the important point, namely that what is mine is me. See chapter 5 for my argument that some version of this thought, namely, that *oikeion*=me, lies at the core of Plato's understanding of *thumos*.

extended to other people, then this group will be understood as under threat by some alien other. The presence of an *allotrion* is dictated by the representational limitations of *thumos*. For *thumos,* attachment entails the need for protection, because where there is a thumoetic us, there must be a them to be protected against.

In fact, we see this very logic on display in the brief endorsement of pan-Hellenism that follows on the heels of Socrates' discussion of guardian family life. The Greeks, says Socrates, should not treat one another as enemies, but rather as friends in need of discipline (470b-471a). His rationale, as the language of friendship already intimates, is that "the Greek race [is] in relation to itself is its own and kin." Here Plato is deploying the same mechanism for unity and appealing to the same sensibilities he discussed earlier. In this case, instead of the best city's citizens understanding one another as *oikeion,* the circle of self is expanded to include all Greeks. There may be no marriage lottery or communal rearing, but the idea is the same: the Greeks, like citizens of a city, are in truth *oikeion* to one another and should treat each other as such. This attitude is sharply distinguished from how Greeks should treat barbarians. The barbarians are the outside, the "natural enemies" dictated by the kinship of Greeks (470c). With the barbarians fighting is war, and the plain implication is that the reason Greeks need to treat Greeks as kin is that they are surrounded by a sea of foreign nations. This is Plato both appealing to his audience's *thumos* and imagining how their thumoetic sensibilities could be a vehicle for bringing about a united Greek world.

It is therefore the distinctive self that dissipates the seeming tension in Plato's view. For Plato, the self as understood by *thumos* is everywhere under threat from alien forces. The boundary of the self may be extended, but a threat will remain. It is this that explains how Plato can see attachment and competitiveness as manifestations of the same form of soul. For Plato,

binding oneself more closely to an intimate relation and struggling for victory are both attempts to defend this essentially embattled sense of self.

It is one thing to point out that Plato's linking of attachment and competitiveness is coherent. It is another to claim it is worth taking seriously. However, the feature of human life Plato is pointing out is not unfamiliar. It is the sense of ourselves revealed in talk of one's "connections." Although this phrase may be antiquated, the phenomenon it picks out should immediately strike a chord. Our friends and acquaintances are an abiding source of self-esteem, as well as social position. This understanding of the role others can play in constituting our sense of self is beautifully captured by Proust in a passage from *Swann's Way*.

> But, by virtue of his intimacy, already time-honoured, with so many of them, the people of fashion, in a certain sense, were also a part of his house, his service, and his family. He felt when his mind dwelt upon his brilliant connections, the same external support, the same solid comfort as when he looked at the fine estate, the fine silver, the fine table-linen which had come down to him from his forebears. And the thought that, if he were seized by a sudden illness and confined to the house, the people whom his valet would instinctively run to find would be the Duc de Chartres, the Prince de Reuss, the Duc de Luxembourg and the Baron de Charlus, brought him the same consolation as our old Francoise derived from the knowledge that she would, one day, be buried in her own fine clothes, marked with her name, not darned at all (or so exquisitely darned that it merely enhanced one's idea of the skill and patience of the seamstress), a shroud from the constant image of which in her mind's eye she drew a certain satisfactory sense, if not actually of wealth and prosperity, at any rate of self-esteem.[60]

Not only people but things play an integral role in constituting Swann's and Francoise's self-esteem. These are things to which the characters stand in the relation I have been calling attachment. As in the quote, these are things and people which provide a sense of worth, of solidity, of amounting to something in life. It is this that Plato is drawing upon in the Book V

[60] Proust (1956: 447).

discussion of the civic family, for plainly the identification of attachment and self-esteem is not restricted to the domain of social climbers. A child is for a parent an incalculable source of self-esteem, and even more so the parent for the child.

An illuminating feature of the quote from *Swann's Way* is that it brings into relief not just how maintaining one's attachments but forming them in the first place might be understood by Plato to be a manifestation of the same drive that animates our ambitions. Making friends is carving out a social position for ourselves.[61] However, this explanation of the genesis of human attachment sharpens a potential concern about the accuracy of this picture. It is one thing to claim that a concern for self sometimes colors our attachments, and quite another to claim that it always does so. The view is not, I think, as extreme as it might first appear. Plato is not suggesting that all love is surreptitious pride: nothing in Plato's understanding of *thumos* as the power for attachment rules out the possibility of our loving and coming to love others independent of how they figure in our sense of self-esteem. Plato's contention is that wherever there is attachment, there is concern for the embattled self, and he does think that such attachment is the foundation of an intimate relationship. However, that does not mean he believes that it exhausts those relationships.[62]

The worry that there is something problematic here rests on a mistaken assumption the tacit acceptance of which threatens to minimize some of the more interesting implications of Plato's view. Plato's understanding of attachment seems a problem only if one assumes the

[61] This can make it sound as if self-esteem is the actual aim of *thumos*. That would be a mistake. *Thumos* is defending one's own. This necessarily involves identifying those things that are one's own. Therefore, we should not see our forming attachments and making friends as a pursuit of self-esteem. Rather, what we should see in *thumos* is a faculty reaching out to determine and maintain who I am. In this picture, we form new friendships in the attempt to identify that part of the world that bears directly and intimately on our own well-being.
[62] The, point here mirrors the one made above about the relationship between *philia* and *thumos*.

priority of distinction to attachment in the universe of thumoetic concern. What makes the view seem premodern or false is that Plato is taken to be claiming that caring for and protecting the ones we love is just another way of pursuing distinction. But Plato's claim is that attachment and the love of distinction are coeval in the mind of *thumos*. It is only if one overlooks this fact and assumes that Plato takes the love of distinction to be more fundamental that his view looks cynical. However, if attachment and the love of distinction are equally fundamental forms of defending one's own, then one can just as easily read Plato's linkage of distinction and attachment in the other direction. Perhaps the conclusion we should draw is not that we typically form attachments in order to develop a sense of self-worth, but rather that we typically compete in an attempt to belong.[63] If forming and maintaining attachments and the pursuit of distinction are equivalently basic manifestations of *thumos*, the latter is just as much the case as the former. Thus, one interesting consequence of Plato's conception of *thumos* is that it construes ambition as a form of human activity that aims to establish a sense of one's own which, if all goes well, includes other people.

15. The Violence of *Thumos*

It is important, however, not to misconstrue Plato's belief in spirit's ability to form attachments and defend others. For Plato, spirit may bring us together, but it is still violent. It is

[63] Nor is this a merely speculative suggestion. We see this very kind of thinking at work in the perceived exigencies of seasonal fashion (and fashion more generally). The goal is to figure out and wear what is "in." This is an attempt to stand out in distinction from those who are not as sophisticated or current, *and* it is an attempt to locate oneself among those who are up to date on the latest trends. This explains what might, perhaps, seem like a strange feature of seasonal fashion. Namely, everyone is wearing the same thing! If the desire here was simply to distinguish oneself from others, there would not be so many people dressing alike. Or, to take another example, consider the currently popular refrain about being a "winner." There are losers, one does not want to be one of those, and there are winners—plural. Here, the pursuit of achievement is an attempt to belong to a group, the group of those who win. In Plato, I believe we see a version of this thought in his contention that timocrats are on the one hand "harsh to slaves," and on the other "submissive to rulers" (*Republic*, 549a)

this latter thought which explains Plato's belief in the thumoetic part's inability to unify the soul (see chapter 3), and it explains why his univocal account of *thumos* is that it *defends* one's own. Plato's belief in spirit's orienting vision of the world as hostile does not conflict with the more expansive sense of spirit's possibilities developed in the last several sections. With both of these features of Plato's view now on the table, we can at last give a clear account of the sense in which Plato takes spirit to be defined by violence.

As a start, if one wants to argue that Plato sees *thumos* as—in some sense—defined by violence, one has to align this claim with Plato repeated willingness to call the spirited part gentle. We saw this in the passage about the well-bred hound that introduced Plato's account of *thumos* (*Republic*, 376b), and we see it elsewhere in *Republic*. For example, at *Republic*, 440d, where the spirited part is made gentle by reason, and in Plato's claim that it can be tamed by education (411a-b and 441e-442a). However, the context provided by the passage about the hound, provides a clear sense of the kind of 'gentleness' Plato is describing in these contexts, and it is not that gentle. Plato's main claim about the hound, and one can see this extending to his claims about the effect of education on the spirited part, is that it can be trained to only attack certain people. In this respect, the gentleness of the hound is its capacity to acquire a reliable disposition regarding who, or what, is a threat. One can readily see how this lines up with what I am arguing is Plato's account of *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion*. The spirited part can be made gentle in that its attachments can be molded to take as *oikeion* the members of its community or the right sorts of desires (i.e., reason's and the necessary appetites). Plato believes that so trained, it will fight in defense of these 'others.' Thus, the spirited part in its good condition is gentle in that it can live peacefully with others, while remaining always on guard ready to violently fend off anything *allotrion*. It is worth stressing that the dog Plato uses as his

model is not the kind of animal with which most of us are familiar, but rather a fierce hound raised to fight wild animals.[64]

There is, however, more to Plato understanding of spirit's gentleness than that it can be trained to only fight some and in defense of others. The claims we considered above show that Plato also believes *thumos* explains why we build relationships, why we share in another's pleasure (and not just react to their pain), and how it is we come to see people as members of our family. Or, to return to the image of the dog, the dog does not just ignore those with whom it is familiar, it "welcomes" them (*Republic*, 376a).

The issue here is that it at least seems that Plato attributes to *thumos* the ability to take shape in acts of care for others, a thought that accords with the view that friends and family are the archetypal species of one's own (*Republic*, 463d, where κηδεμονία, or solicitude, is what one shows to one's *oikeioi*). I do not want to deny this possibility. What I want to point out is that this possibility does not conflict with Plato thinking that *thumos* is in every case a defense of one's own against a threatening other and therefore always hostile and fierce. For a start, Plato does not emphasize such care, but focuses instead on the way we defend, respect, and obey those we take to be *oikeion* (e.g., *Republic*, 463d and 465a). Moreover, the same can be said for Plato's description of the way the thumoetic part acts in the intra-psychic domain when it functions as the ally of reason. It is a dog that obeys (*Republic*, 440c-d), a soldier that follows orders (*Republic*, 442b), not a mother who cares for her children.[65] I believe we should read this

[64] To give a sense of the kind of animal Plato has in mind and takes to be a part of the popular imagination, one can again look to *Odyssey* 14.29-48. Eumaeus' dogs are dangerous animals, and at least Eumaeus thinks that had he not intervened, they would have savaged Odysseus.

[65] The exception that proves the point is the vignette from Homer that Plato refers to when arguing for the independence of the spirited part from the rational (*Odyssey* 20.1-21). In the scene Plato refers to, Odysseus strikes his chest to quite his "heart" which is stirred to anger, a response which Homer likens to the way "a bitch mounting over her weak defenseless puppies, growls at a stranger, bristling for a showdown." This is a mother taking care of her offspring—by protecting them from a stranger (ἄνδρ᾽ ἀγνοιήσασ᾽).

emphasis as a product of Plato's understanding of *thumos*. For Plato, *thumos* is the defense of one's own, and this means that all spirited acts, including acts of care, are a defending of one's own from a perceived alien threat.

This, in turn, means that Plato believes some form of hostility, and thus the possibility of violence, is at play in every spirited act of concern. Take, for example, the contention that *thumos* motivates us to form attachments. The claim was that we should read this spirited possibility as an outgrowth of the fact that our attachments (e.g., friends and family) are a deep source of self-esteem. As I tried to suggest, this does not mean that we should see these spirited attempts to build relationships as somehow insincere or faulty. However, it does mean we should see them as predicated on a sense of oneself as situated in a social world structured by a concern for distinction. Plato does think that spirit draws us together, and that it motivates us to strengthen our attachments, often by means of acts of care. He also thinks that it does this in an attempt to secure and protect the position of oneself and one's *oikeioi*. I take this example to be illustrative of the way Plato's sees *thumos* in general as both able to take shape as care and gentleness, while remaining committed to his belief that *thumos* situates the agent in a hostile world.

Spirit, according to Plato, unfailingly perceives a threat, and it is this fact which explains why, and the sense in which, Plato believes that spirit is violent. Violence is the harmful or destructive use of force.[66] This harm caused by violence need not be the aim of the act for it to be violent. Rather, a decisive indifference to the well-being of the one harmed is perfectly sufficient. For Plato, *thumos,* in every case, posits the presence of some threat to me and mine, a

[66] My hope is that this very broad strokes account of violence is sufficiently plausible to license the claims I want to make about *thumos*.

threat which need not be conceived of as a malicious intelligence, though it may often be. Even in cases where the agent's spirited part motivates them to care for their own, this care will take place against the backdrop of some threat. As a result, even when it is not overtly fighting, the spirited part is primed for violence and will readily transition to the destructive use of force because it is, at best, radically indifferent to the well-being of the *allotrion* threat entailed by its activity.

The foregoing explains why Plato believes the spirited part *tends* to violence. This internal tendency of *thumos* is one way to understand the sense in which spirit *is* violent. However, the same line of thought can be taken further to mount the claim that all manifestations of spirit are colored by violence, even if they are explicit acts of care. Given Plato's analysis, there is an inescapable note of hostility to spirited activity, because it takes place against the backdrop of a perceived threat. When the spirited part cares for another, it does so because it casts that other as threatened. Thus, spirited care is an act of solidarity. It aims to help those it takes to be *oikeion* in their struggle, and by aiding them rebuffs, frustrates, damages etc., the other and alien. Just as when I supply weapons and humanitarian aid to my warring ally, I harm their opponent. At the least, an act of spirited care embodies something like the thought, "consequences be damned, they need my help!" and that, as pointed out above, can be enough for the act to be violent.

Ultimately, I am not so sure how far one can and should push this thought. The fact that the spirited part tends to violence is sufficient to establish that it is violent, and violent in a way that debars it from being a viable principle of psychic and civic harmony. That said, this further contention that violence might be an inescapable feature of spirited activity does appear to follow from Plato's analysis. This is significant, because if spirit is the defense of one's own, then the

kind of care we are talking about here is the kind of care we often take of our intimates, and first and foremost among them our children. For lack of a better word, *thumos* on Plato's analysis is always fierce, even when it takes shape as a parent's love for their child.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. One goal is establish that the reading of *thumos* as the defense of one's own is borne out by Plato's text. Following out the presumption that Plato considers *thumos* a limited principle of psychic unity led to an interpretation of *thumos* as the love of one's own. This chapter seeks to show that what Plato says about *thumos* throughout *Republic* harmonizes with such a reading. Valorizing war, anger, shame, the love of victory—Plato sees all of these as forms of defending one's own. In short, this chapter maintains that in *Republic*, Plato presents an account of *thumos* which unifies its variegated manifestations. In every case, *thumos* is a defending of one's own.

A second aim of this chapter is to use Plato's discussion of the more specific spirited phenomena he mentions in the text to show the extent and richness of the content of his account. In pursuit of this aim, the chapter looks not only to the explicit discussions of *thumos* in *Republic*, but also to the discussion of *oikeioi*, and therefore *to oikeion*, that Plato uses to justify abolishing the private family and replacing it with a civic family. Once recognized as an expression of Plato's views about *thumos*, this discussion shows us a Plato who believes *thumos* is just as much a force for bringing us together as it is for setting us apart. The understanding of attachment that Plato exhibits in these passages, taken together with his understanding of the

other species of spirited activity discussed in this chapter, reflects an understanding of *thumos* as a way of making sense complete with its own logic and its own limited world, a world best summed up as the world at war. Plato believes that spirit is the defense of one's own, and what that means is that he believes it has a single form. Spirit is in every case a defending of one's own which represents the self as essentially under threat. Along with this unvarying aspect, Plato also sketches the outlines of what we could call spirit's functional variable. Here we find Plato identifying attachment and an articulable sense of self as two kinds of content that explain why one person might get angry while another does not.

Speaking more loosely, my aim in this chapter is to show that Plato advances a nuanced and developed account of *thumos* in his tri-partite psychology. However, I do not want to oversell this point. *Thumos* is not the focus of *Republic*, and what we see in *Republic*, and the tri-partite psychology in general, is the beginning of a view. What I have been at pains to establish in this chapter is that Plato's is a view which both exhibits the extent and importance of *thumos* to human life, and has the potential to illuminate the phenomena from which it is drawn.

Chapter 5

The Essence of *Thumos*

For readers familiar with Plato's tri-partite psychology, it is probably surprising that up to this point, there has been little to no mention of honor in this extended study of Plato's understanding of *thumos*. Most interpretations start from the thought that the thumoetic part of the soul is the seat of our desire for admiration, or concern for the opinions of others, and tie this belief to Plato's repeated identification of *thumos* with the love of honor (*philotimia*). These desires, and a related, more general concern with one's social standing, are typically taken to be fundamental to what Plato means by *thumos*.[1]

I do not think this is correct. A concern for one's place among others, and a desire to stand out among them is not fundamental to Plato's notion of *thumos*. The main claim of this chapter will be that Plato does not consider *thumos* to be essentially social,[2] and that clearing

[1] Among scholars, there is wide agreement on this general point. Some scholars equate *thumos* with the desire to be seen well by others, for example, Moline (1978: 10), Singpurwalla (2010: 884), and Wilberding (2009), who argues that the thumoetic part is not capable of internalizing this other. Other scholars maintain instead that the core of *thumos* is the desire to stand out among others as superior, Gosling (1973: Ch. 3), Cooper (1984: 14), Hobbs (2000: 30), Lorenz (2006: 151), Reeve (2013a: 159-61). Authors who read *to kalon* as the formal object of *thumos*, maintain that their interpretation is recommend by the fact that it can accommodate the spirited part's fundamental concern for others and their opinions, Lear (2006a: 117-8), Singpurwalla (2013: 56). Even authors who make the concern for *to oikeion* central to Plato's account of *thumos*, still maintain that it is fundamentally, or essentially structured by social concerns, Wilburn (2021): xii and 73n18, and perhaps Brennan (2012: 105-6), although Brennan's emphasis on the spirited part's intra-psychic role calls this reading of him into question. There are, of course, exceptions to this general trend, although they are decisively in the minority, for example, Kragerud (2010), and Weinstein (2019: 237-245).

As the brief overview makes clear, these readings are, also, quite different from one another with respect to how they construe the sociality of *thumos*. Nevertheless, I do think this is a family of views held together by the assumption that the concern about one's relations to other people is fundamental or essential to Plato's conception of *thumos* (by which I mean they take this concern to be basic, i.e., not a vicissitude of some other concern). In addition, I believe the assumption that spirit is concerned with others orients these interpretations towards the text. It is this feature of these views which I have tried to capture with the phrase that they "start from" this assumption. There is a thought, common in the literature, roughly along the lines of: "whatever *thumos* turns out to be, the first thing that needs to be accounted for is its concern with social position, and admiration."

[2] The phrase is not without its limitations. Talk of something being essentially X is often vague. Even when this is not the case, different authors often give the term different meanings. I cast the issue this way following Kragerud

away this assumption brings into view the love of self that Plato sees at the heart of *thumos*. For Plato, *thumos* is a form of soul organized around a sense of the self as perfect, and not a thought about one's place among others.

To start I will specify more exactly what I mean by "essentially social." Once this is done, I will turn to Plato's texts in order to show that they do not bear out a reading of *thumos* as essentially social. It is here that one starts to see how reading *thumos* as the defense of one's own offers a new perspective on Plato's conception of spirit's relationship to others. Notably, the act of defending one's own need not involve other people. This allows one to come to Plato's claims with fresh eyes. When one does so, one finds that an awareness of other people, while important for Plato's conception of *thumos*, is not essential. I will begin with *Republic*. First, I will argue that Plato's characterization of the thumoetic part of the soul as honor-loving is not as decisive as it is often taken to be. Second, I will point out that in *Republic*, Plato identifies as thumoetic kinds of desires and actions which do not make any reference to other people. Third, I will argue that an equally prominent theme in Plato's discussion of *thumos* in *Republic* is his identification of *thumos* with endurance or perseverance. Building off this final point, I will turn to *Laches* and *Timaeus* and argue that this conception of *thumos* as a drive to endure is also evident in these dialogues. The characterization of *thumos* as a drive to persevere aligns with Plato's understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own (and therefore also supports my proposed interpretation). I will close my consideration of spirit's essential sociality by arguing that the account of spirit as the defense of one's own verifies a thought encountered in *Timaeus*. For

(2010), who does so because it picks up the way Burnyeat (2006: 8) and others, e.g., Wilberding (2009: 368), and Wilburn (2021: xii), describe their own position.

Plato, spirit's sense of *to oikeion* at times only extends as far as the body and therefore, need have nothing to do with other people.

Having established that Plato does not take a concern for others to be fundamental to *thumos*, I will then flesh out what I take to be the right way to read Plato on this issue. Plato may not think *thumos* is essentially social, but he surely thinks that socially mediated concerns such as the desire for recognition and distinction are tremendously important and ubiquitous expressions of *thumos*. If one is to argue that an awareness of others is not essential to Plato's account of *thumos*, then one must work out how caring about the place of others, and especially their opinions, enters into Plato's picture. I will argue that Plato sees the love of recognition fitting into his more general account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, because he sees this desire to win the admiration of others as at bottom a desire for validation.

When we clear away the assumption that Plato considers *thumos* essentially social and fix his sense of the role that social standing plays in the thumoetic cosmos, the true heart of Plato's account of *thumos* as the defense of one's own comes into view. Plato's tri-partite psychology develops an account of a non-rational form of thought organized by a sense of the self as perfect and defined by a reactionary drive to maintain this perfection in the face of threat. It is this that gets obscured by the characterization of social concerns as fundamental to Plato's account. In the final part of the chapter, I will set out why I believe this to be the case.

1. Essentially Social

I am suggesting that we shift our understanding of Plato's conception of *thumos*. Since the plausibility and content of my line of thought depends so centrally on what it means for

thumos to be, or not be, essentially social, the place to start is with giving this phrase a determinate sense.

> Essentially social: Spirit is essentially social if what makes a spirited desire spirited is, at least in part, that its content represents another person or social being.[3]

The first thing to notice about this construal of the question at issue is that it makes it about the representational content of spirited thoughts and desires, and not their etiology. The question is not whether Plato believes spirited desires at some point in their history manifested a concern about others and what they thought, but whether he believes that what makes spirited desires spirited, is that they entail some thought(s) about others.[4] What I am asking us to reconsider is the content of spirited thoughts and desires, not where they came from.

My claim about this content, is that Plato does not believe it is essentially social. I want to take a moment to clarify what I am, and am not, denying.

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[3] A brief word about the qualifier, "social being." A social being is a member of a larger ordered group. I include the qualifier here to allow for the fact that non-human animals are often social beings in the sense relevant to thinking about what Plato calls *thumos*. However, for ease of presentation, in what follows I will for the most part leave out mention of animals.

As for the claim that animals can have a place in a social hierarchy, this is true both imaginatively and actually. For example, in our imagination animals are often an *allotrion* figure, as when we think (and say) things like, "that is acting like an animal," or, "they are animals." Then there is the fact that domestic animals in particular have social standing, and that some animals themselves distinguish between *oikeion* and *allotrion*, both facts which Plato himself recognizes (*Republic*, 563c, and *Republic*, 376b).

[4] Attributing to Plato a view that thumoetic desires are social because of their history results in an unstable conception of *thumos*. The difficulty, is that if spirited concerns are constituted by the fact that they grow out of worrying about what other people will actually think, it is hard to see why we or Plato should see such desires as a distinctive class. This is a danger that threatens any interpretation of Plato's account of spirited phenomena which puts too much weight on the fact that we "internalize" our concern for the judgment of others. For spirited desires to form a coherent class distinct from rational desires, for example, something in the present must mark them as thumoetic. For, why should I think that my desire to repay your insult is spirited, if what makes it so is that once upon a time I acted out of a concern to never let my friends see me put down? The lesson to draw here is that if a particular instance of spirited desire is social, it is because of its representational content. Thus, *thumos* would be essentially social if, for example, the content of thumoetic desire necessarily referred to other people.

One author who sees this tension in the idea of internalization is Bernard Williams (2008: 84), as evidenced by his attempt to develop an account of shame that walks the line between a shallow concern for what others actually see, and a featureless internalized evaluation whose content makes no reference to the existence of others. According to Williams, what makes our sense of shame essentially social is that even in its mature form, it is a consideration of how one's life with others will go as a result of one's actions.

My claim is not merely that Plato's notion of *thumos* is more than an individual's concern for how they are seen. Yes, Plato would think that it is a mistake to equate what he calls *thumos* with the desire for recognition, but that is not my point here. My claim is that irrespective of whether the other person is real or *imagined*, other people are not a necessary feature of the content of thumoetic thoughts. As a result, my claim also does more than deny that Plato equates *thumos* to a problematically selfish pursuit of a sense of one's own superiority. Plato does not think that *thumos* is equivalent to selfish ambition,[5] but again, that is not my point. My claim is not that Plato believes ambition can be 'good' as well as 'bad,' it is that Plato does not believe that spirit necessarily situates the agent in a social world wherein one could so much as be ambitious.

At the same time, my reading allows for concerns about others to figure centrally in Plato's conception of *thumos*, as the "necessarily" in the concluding sentence of the preceding paragraph indicates. In denying that Plato believes *thumos* is essentially social, I am denying that Plato believes a concern with other people is a necessary feature of spirited desires that explains their being spirited. This denial leaves room for Plato to think that social concerns typify many, if not the huge majority of spirited desires. More specifically, the fact that Plato does not believe *thumos* is essentially social does not conflict, or even stand in tension with, his belief that *thumos* is the source of human attachment, and a force that brings us together into communities (chapter 4),[6] nor does it preclude Plato from thinking that certain species of spirited desires are essentially social. So, for example, Plato might think that shame is essentially social, but spirit, on the

[5] As we have seen from his belief that the relevant sense of mine (*oikeion*) can be extended to other people (chapter 4).

[6] See Wilburn (2021: 231), "[The spirited part] is the political and social part of the soul," in the sense that "it is responsible for the motivations that make political communities possible."

whole, is not. Finally, my contention about the sociality of *thumos* still allows for spirited concerns to be, in various ways, the most important for our political and social lives.[7] In fact, I believe that Plato endorses and develops some version of just this thought across a number of his dialogues.[8] However, despite all this, he does not believe that spirit is essentially social.

2. A New Perspective?

There is good reason for the widespread agreement about Plato's understanding of the spirited part. Plato repeatedly associates *thumos* with the love of honor (*philotimia*) and victory (*philonikia*), and more to the point, defines the spirited part as the honor- and victory-loving part of the soul (*Republic*, 581b, 586d: *Phaedrus*, 252d: *Timaeus*, 70a). Both honor and arguably victory are essentially social goods, and the fact that Plato is willing to present them as at least stand-ins for the formal object of the spirited part explains why most scholars have taken it as a given that Plato considers *thumos* essentially social. My goal in what follows will be to try to undermine this very reasonable consensus by showing that it is not supported by Plato's text. Contrary to expectations, when one looks at what Plato says about *thumos*, it does not paint a picture of an essentially social set of concerns. At the very least, it calls such a reading into question.

Here, the main claim of this study, namely that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, plays an important role, because it gives one fresh eyes for Plato's texts. Consider: if Plato does in fact believe that *thumos* is defending me and mine, then, at least on the face it, he

[7] Or, as Joshua Wilburn (2021: 231) puts it: "In preceding chapters I have argued that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the social and political part of the soul. Within the framework of the tri-partite theory, it is the part responsible for the motivations that make political communities possible, and addressing central problems related to social and civic life requires attention to the spirited desires, emotions, and tendencies of human beings." If this is what it means for the *thumoeides* to be the "distinctively social and political part of the soul, Wilburn (2021: 61)," then I agree.
[8] I believe that Wilburn's (2021) arguments aimed at establishing such an understanding of Plato's corpus are convincing and illuminating. See preceding note.

does not believe *thumos* is essentially social. One can defend one's own from something besides other people. Or, to put the same point differently, when Plato conceives of the *oikeion* as defined in contradistinction to what is *allotrion*, there is nothing which, on the face of it, precludes the alien from being something other than a human being. Therefore, if one believes or suspects that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, one comes to Plato's claims about *thumos* from a different perspective. From this perspective, one is not oriented to Plato's conception of *thumos* by his claims about honor and victory, but rather by his understanding of the spirited part's sense of self. As a result, it is at least an open question whether honor and victory stand at the heart of what Plato thinks about *thumos*, or are just one (albeit important) part of the story.

3. *Republic*

I will start by trying to make the case that the evidence from *Republic* does not support attributing to Plato a conception of *thumos* as essentially social. First, I will argue that we have reason to doubt that Plato's claims about honor and victory are presented as definitive of his conception of *thumos*. Second, I will bring attention to the fact that in *Republic*, Plato identifies as spirited a number of phenomena which are not social in the relevant sense. Third, I will maintain that in *Republic* the identification of of *thumos* with endurance or perseverance is an equally prevalent theme in Plato's characterization of *thumos*.

Turning first to Plato's description of the spirited part as distinguished by its love of honor and victory: this way of referring to the spirited part only comes to the fore at the end of *Republic*, after the introduction of timocracy. About this constitution dominated by *thumos*, Plato says:

> Yes, it is mixed. But because of its mastery by the spirited element, only one thing really stands out in it—the love of victories and honors. (548c)

Having introduced this thought, Plato then continues to refer to the spirited part of the soul as the honor- and victory-loving part for the remainder of *Republic* (the thought then codified at 581b).[9] However, the context of this introduction ought to give us some pause before concluding that Plato believes the love of honor and victory lie at the heart of his understanding of *thum*os. Compare the parallel way in which Plato distinguishes, and chooses to refer to, the appetitive part of the soul in the concluding portions of *Republic*.

> As for the third, because it is multiform, we had no one special name for it but named it after the greatest and strongest thing it has in it. I mean we called it the appetitive element because of the intensity of its appetites for food, drink, sex, and all things that go along with them. We also called it the money-loving element, because such appetites are most easily satisfied by means of money. (580e)

As the passage makes clear, these labels for the lowest part of the soul are imperfect. (Even the description of it as appetitive is described as provisional.) Nevertheless, Plato believes that they can be productively used to pick out this part of the soul. In particular, the fact that Plato calls it the money-loving part is significant. Clearly, money is not the formal object of appetite in the sense that all appetites are for money; rather, Plato believes that money is a useful stand in for the object of appetite, because it is a good around which appetitive people (and cities) organize their lives. He thinks money plays this role, because it is a culturally mediated means to the satisfaction of all appetitive desires. Suppose we approach Plato's parallel description of the spirited part in the same way: on this reading—which I believe is correct—Plato describes the spirited part as honor- and victory-loving, because these are goods around which a relatively

[9] We certainly see evidence of this understanding of spirit beforehand, both in *Republic* and elsewhere. (*Republic*, 475a-b, and, e.g., *Apology*, 29d, see Chapter 1). However, it is only with timocracy that this understanding comes to the fore as *the* way to refer to the spirited part.

stable, spirited individual can organize their lives. They can do this because the pursuit of these goods, like the love of money, can support an adult life and provide the requisite kind of satisfaction. Like money for appetite, Plato believes that honor and victory are the goods that a spirited sensibility tends to settle on as of utmost importance. He is not claiming that all spirited desires are either directly, or indirectly for these essentially social ends.[10]

While these considerations are not on their own decisive,[11] further features of *Republic* call into question the essentially social reading of *thumos*. There is the fact that, for example, the association of *thumos* with the love of honor and victory that dominates in the latter parts of *Republic*, does not do so earlier in the dialogue. In the first half of the dialogue, many of the archetypically thumoetic phenomena do not necessarily entail an awareness of others or their opinions. In fact, it is in large part this disjunct between the characterizations of *thumos* in the first and second halves of *Republic* that led earlier scholars to claim that Plato's notion of *thumos* was incoherent.[12]

[10] Wilburn (2021: 53-4), also makes this point in attempt to loosen the tightness of the connection between *thumos* and the love of honor and victory.

[11] Two ways in which a believer in the centrality of victory and honor might push back on my reading, would be by emphasizing Plato's description of the spirited part in *Phaedrus*, and his parallel description of the rational part in *Republic*. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates describes the white horse, i.e., the image of the spirited part of the soul, as a "lover of honor with modesty (αἰδώς or shame)." Not only does this emphasis on the love of honor dominate Plato's characterization of the white horse, it is here a description of the spirited part in its disembodied state, and therefore absent any education. Second, in *Republic* Plato calls the rational part a "lover of learning" and "philosophic" (*Republic*, 582b). These descriptions, distinguish the rational part by way of its love of knowledge, and Plato does think that the love of knowledge is the essence of reason (*Republic*, 518c).

[12] For example, Gosling (1973: 41), see the introduction of this study for more on this at one time prevalent attitude towards Plato's notion of *thumos*.

Interestingly, one can read scholarly interpretations of *thumos* as, in effect, an attempt to reconcile this seeming split between Plato's treatments of *thumos* in *Republic*. The majority of previous interpretations have, in effect, attempted to read the second half discussion of *thumos* backward into the first half of the dialogue. By contrast, my interpretation of *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion* (as well as Wilburn's (2021)), maintains that we should read Plato the other way around. For Plato, it is not that self-assertion is an expression of the love of honor and victory. Rather, as I am trying to argue here, Plato believes that the love of honor is an expression of self-assertion.

First there is Plato's identification of anger (ὀργή) with spirit and his willingness to use anger as the spirited phenomenon par excellence in the argument for tri-partition (440a). Anger is an emotion which does not necessarily embody an awareness of others or one's social standing. It is true that anger is often a response to a slight (as captured by Aristotle's definition of anger in *Rhetoric* II.2). However, Plato's discussion of the rage of infants and non-human animals (441a) indicates that he does not have something like Aristotle's narrower sense of anger in mind. "Anger," in the context of the argument for tri-partition, refers to an emotional or proto-emotional reaction that is not exhausted by status concerns. The kind of anger Plato is talking about is also meant to capture the outrage we feel when our bodies are violated, or our movements frustrated. It may be true that for a human being, the body, at least that of an adult, is through and through colored by status concerns. However, even if this is in fact the case, and I am not sure it is, there is both little indication that it is Plato's view, and it is hard to attribute this sort of bodily self-understanding to infants.

A second example is Plato's claim that disgust is spirited (439e-440a). In the story of Leontius, Socrates describes Leontius' spirited part as disgusted with **(**δυσχεραίνω**)** his appetite to gaze at corpses. Even more so than anger, disgust is an emotion that does not appear to represent other people or involve a concern for status. We do sometimes find other people disgusting, and we may often feel disgust because our social status is impugned, but to say this is always the case seems debatable at best. Disgust often seems to just be about our bodies, about something getting on them, or in them. In these cases, the harm done is not to the individual's status, but to their bodily integrity.[13]

[13] See for example Nussbaum (2006: 88-89), for a developed account of disgust that supports my claim. As Nussbaum puts it, "disgust is about the borders of the body." Although, Nussbaum does go on to argue that the particular shape of this concern with our own bodies amounts to a recoil from our non-human animal nature. It is not

Finally, worth noticing is Plato's characterization of the spirited part of the soul as the part that fights and uses force. Force does not necessarily take another person as its target. That Plato has this more expansive understanding of fighting can get obscured if one focuses on the function of the spirited part of the city. The spirited part of the city is the part that makes war and keeps the peace. However, the spirited part of the soul is the part that fights against others, but also against appetite (see chapter 3). This latter use of force does not target other people, and absent a commitment to a particular account of *thumos*, does not at first blush reflect an individual's concern for their social position.[14] Moreover, once one recognizes that Plato's claim about the spirited part is that it is the forceful part of the soul, his claims about its attraction to physical training appear in a different light (549a). One can read Plato's claims about physical training as an extension of the love of victory, or as a desire to look good. However, if spirit is the use of force, then perhaps sometimes the appeal of physical training is that it is activity in which one can deploy and increase one's physical power.

clear to me whether this feature of her view imports something like a concern for status. It is possible that on her account, disgust entails something like the thought: "I am not an animal, I am something else."

[14] One might generalize from this fact and argue that Plato's belief in the spirited part's *intra*-psychic function also undermines a "social interpretation" of his conception of *thumos*, Weinstein (2018: 19-21). However, I agree with Wilburn (2021: 73n18) that this conclusion does not follow, although for different reasons. The fact that the spirited part has an intra-psychic function does not impugn its potentially social nature. Interpretations of *thumos* that emphasize the spirited part's love of the *kalon* bring this out nicely. If *thumos* is attracted to *kalon* actions, and what makes an action *kalon* is that it makes the agent as whole well-ordered and beautiful, acts of spirited self-control that promote harmony will be *kalon* (see Lear, 2004: 130-3). Add in the further claim that being *kalon* makes one stand out from others, and one sees how this interpretation has the resources to bring together the spirited part's intra-psychic role with its social nature. When I resist my desire to eat a second helping at a dinner because it is the noble thing to do, I stand out from the others around me because of my self-control.

Although the fact that the spirited part has an intra-psychic role does not *preclude* it from being essentially social, I do think that approaching Plato's conception of spirit from this angle does lead to a different, 'less social,' picture of *thumos* emerging from the text. Brennan (2012), who reads the thumoetic part as explained by the human need to control appetite, is a good example of this. This thought is similar to the claim I made above about the way in which attributing to Plato an account of *thumos* as the love of one's own allows for a fresh perspective on the text.

In addition to these species of spirited phenomena which are not essentially social, running through Plato's descriptions of *thumos* is the characterization of it as endurance or perseverance. This thread is just as prevalent as Plato's association of *thumos* with the pursuit of honor and victory, and unlike them, the act of enduring need not involve an awareness of others. We saw this understanding of spirit as perseverance in Plato's sense of the way in which the spirited part functions as the "ally" of reason (chapter 2). If you recall, Plato believes the spirited part can make a unique contribution to psychic unity, by functioning as a source of follow-through, effectively maintaining the rational course of action in the face of internal and external obstacles and distractions. This picture of the spirited part as the well-spring of perseverance is mirrored in Plato's account of civic courage (429c-430b). Courage at the level of the city is a well-trained army and police force, one which reliably and effectively preserves the rulers' laws and judgments. Further, this theme of perseverance or endurance is not restricted to Plato's descriptions of what the spirited part is like in the best case. Stubbornness is a pathology of the spirited part (411d, 548e), and this is a corollary of the fact that it is a "lover of control" (581a),[15] the latter which should be read, not as control over others, but rather, getting one's way. In line with these claims, Plato's metaphorical descriptions of *thumos* as "hard" and unyielding (411a-b) also paints a picture of *thumos* that makes it look more like perseverance than a concern about others. The metaphor is central to Plato's account of the way in which musical and gymnastic education can be mixed together for the best results. The fact that Plato believes this "hardness" of *thumos* can be tempered by a good cultural education is all the more to the point. Spirit is "hard," and the more spirited one is, the less flexible. It takes the right kind of cultural education to make this drive to persevere workable. Lastly, in *Republic* this conception of *thumos* as a force

[15] τὸ θυμοειδὲς οὐ πρὸς **τὸ κρατεῖν** μέντοι φαμὲν καὶ νικᾶν καὶ εὐδοκιμεῖν ἀεὶ **ὅλον ὡρμῆσθαι.**

for gritting one's teeth and pushing through in pursuit of one's goals is also dominant in Plato's attempt to distinguish a spirited part of the soul (439e-441c). When Plato offers examples of *thumos* aligning with reason, he reaches for men who buckle down and endure appetitive deprivation (440a-b). Even the reference to *Odyssey* (441b) is thick with the concept of endurance. Although Plato does not quote this part of the passage from Homer (he does do so at *Republic*, 390d), Odysseus, in his attempt to control his anger at his maidservants, tells his heart, to "endure (*Odyssey*, 20:17-18)!" This is still the spirited part as an athlete, but the athlete who—with a yell—forces himself over the finish line.

4. *Laches* and *Timaeus*

Understanding *thumos* as an endurance that need not represent other people or exhibit a concern for social standing is mirrored in *Laches* and *Timaeus*, dialogues which are typically believed to pre- and postdate *Republic*. The fact that we see Plato endorsing a similar, not essentially social conception of *thumos* in these dialogues is evidence that the assumption is a consistent aspect of his understanding of *thumos*. (This is a consequence that holds even if one is not moved by claims about the chronology of the dialogues, since *Laches* is a dialogue that does not show evidence of a tri-partite theory of the soul, whereas *Timaeus* explicitly endorses the framework.) Arguably over time, and certainly across theoretical frameworks, Plato's thinking about *thumos* is oriented by the belief that it is not essentially social.

In *Laches*, Plato's identification of *thumos* with endurance (καρτερία) can be seen in the eponymous character's definition of courage as "an endurance of the soul" (192c). While it is true that there is no tri-partite theory in *Laches* and therefore no technical concept of *thumos*, the subject of the dialogue is courage, the virtue that *Republic* defines as constituted by the

perfection of the spirited part of the soul. Laches' definition of courage is found wanting on the grounds that endurance is not a virtue, since enduring can be both a good and bad thing to do (*Laches*, 193c-d). However, the failure of Laches' definition takes place within the context of an inquiry into courage which ends in aporia, and which presents the knowledge of right and wrong (good and bad) as an equally inadequate account (199e). Thus, the failure of Laches' definition should not be read as Plato giving up on the thought that endurance is in some way definitive of courage. More precisely, *Laches* looks like an attempt to articulate a difficulty which *Republic*, by way of the tri-partite theory, attempts to solve. In *Republic*, courage is the perfection of the spirited part of the soul explained by its allegiance to a rational part with the requisite knowledge of how to live (442a-c). Read back into *Laches*, this account seems an attempt to navigate and reconcile Plato's sense that courage is defined by two seemingly competing features: on the one hand, courage is a form of wisdom, and on the other, the perfection of the human ability to endure. In *Republic*, the element of courage which *Laches* casts as endurance is identified with the spirited part of the soul. Thus, while there is no mention of *thumos* in *Laches*, there is an awareness of a value-neutral capacity to endure and a belief that this capacity plays an important role in making us courageous. In *Republic* Plato develops his understanding of this capacity into the more theoretically articulated notion of a thumoetic part of the soul. This identification of the endurance of *Laches* with the *thumos* of *Republic* need not be exhaustive. Even if endurance is only a part of what Plato comes to understand as *thumos*, it is still a part, and one that floats free of his purported belief in the social nature of the middle part of the soul.

We also, arguably, see Plato identifying *thumos* with endurance in *Timaeus*. Unlike *Laches*, *Timaeus* does defend a tri-partite theory of soul. While the dialogue may not make any

explicit mention of endurance, its account of the thumoetic part makes an activity that sounds very much like enduring central to *thumos*.

> Now the part of the mortal soul that exhibits manliness [courage] and spirit, the ambitious (φιλόνικος) part, they settled nearer the head, between the midriff and the neck, so that it might listen to reason and together with it restrain by force the part consisting of appetites, should the latter at any time refuse outright to obey the dictates of reason coming down from the citadel. The heart, then, which ties the veins together, the spring from which blood courses with vigorous pulse throughout all the bodily members, they set in the guardhouse [i.e., the spirited part's location in the body]. That way, if spirit's might should boil over at some report from reason that some wrongful act involving the members is taking place—something being done to them from outside or even something originating from the appetites within—every bodily part that is sensitive may be keenly sensitized, through all the narrow vessels, to the exhortations and threats and so listen and follow completely. (*Timaeus*, 70a-b)

Leave aside, for the moment, the ways in which this passage aligns with Plato understanding the thumoetic part as the part which defends the *oikeion*. Here is Plato describing the function of the thumoetic part, and it does not give the impression of a capacity that is dominated by social concerns. There is a brief mention of the love of victory, but this is drowned out by the characterization of the spirited part as the part that fights. What is more, it does not just fight; it fights in the name of defending the body and preserving the "dictates" of the rational part. In Chapter 2, I cast the beneficial function of the spirited part as resting importantly on its capacity to help reason get its work done in the face of external and internal threats and obstacles. This passage from *Timaeus* echoes that thought. In other words, Plato is here identifying spirit with perseverance.

Particularly noteworthy is Plato's emphasis on the spirited part's role in defending the integrity of the body. In the *Timaeus* passage above, the spirited part guards the boundaries of the body. It is defined by its sensitivity to the body as a whole, and depending on how one construes its relationship of the heart and circulatory system, produces an agent's sense of their body being

a whole.[16] In the passage, Plato builds off this understanding of spirit to paint a picture of it as defending an individual's integrity in the broader sense. We see the latter in the inclusion of the agent's own appetites as potential enemies that might trespass on the precincts ("limbs," μέλος) of the body. The fact that the spirited part is *also* concerned with the body in the passage is further reason to think that Plato does not believe its concerns are essentially social. This is a different point than the one about perseverance. Not only does the excerpt's emphasis on perseverance undermine the social interpretation of *thumos*, since one can persevere in the face of non-human threats, but the fact that the body is what is sometimes preserved against those threats also conflicts with a social interpretation, since an awareness of one's own body need not involve the representation of others.

Plato's connection of spirited concerns for bodily integrity with spirit's more expansive integrity concerns undercuts a natural reading of *thumos* and the tri-partition of desire in general. Myles Burnyeat gives a clear rendition of the view I have in mind when he writes:

> For the middle part of the soul we need to take account of the fact that we are not only animals, but also *social* animals.[17]

Burnyeat's claim about *thumos* reflects a wider view of tri-partition, one which recommends itself when one emphasizes social concerns as fundamental to *thumos*. As Burnyeat reads the tri-partite psychology, appetite is what Plato believes we have because we are embodied animals, spirit what we have because we are social animals, and reason what we have because we are (like) god. This way of understanding the forms of soul is appealing because it is a recognizable

[16] Which is not to say that it is the only part that Plato sees as responsible for an agent's sense of their body as whole and their own. In the passage, the rational part guides the spirited part's sense of the body and therefore, at the very least is partially responsible for it.
[17] Burnyeat (2006: 8).

way to distinguish the kinds of things we care about that explains Plato's division of the human soul into three, and only three, parts. Because it seems a natural division, I suspect it encourages some version of an essentially social reading of *thumos*. When confronted with the fact that Plato distinguishes a third class of desires distinct from our bodily appetites and rational aspirations, social concerns present themselves as a reasonable candidate for what Plato has in mind. However, Plato's emphasis on the spirited part's concern for bodily integrity paints a different picture. Instead of the desires we have because we are social animals, the *Timaeus* passage gives the sense that Plato conceives of spirited desires as desires we have because of our embodiment – a sense that is confirmed by Timaeus' narrative of the genesis of these desires. In *Timaeus*, the appetitive *and* spirited parts of the soul are a consequence of human embodiment (69b-d, 70d-e).[18] Both are the work of the mortal gods, left to them by the demiurge after he finished fashioning all things divine. It is not a two-step process, first embodiment, then living in communities with other people (such as Plato describes in the myth of *Protagoras*, 320d-328d).

[18] Brennan (2012) takes a similar position on the spirited part being a product of embodiment. One place I part ways with Brennan is in my understanding of the independence of the function of the spirited part from appetite. As Brennan reads it, *Timaeus* casts the thumoetic part as the outgrowth of the mortal need for an appetitive part of the soul. The thumoetic part is necessary in order to (1) navigate our interactions with others and (2) police our own appetites (105). According to Brennan, the former is also a case of *thumos* coming to be in response to appetite, because appetitive goods are scarce and will lead to conflict. Thus, for Brennan, spirit is a product of embodiment because with the body comes appetites, and once one has appetites one needs spirit to manage them. On my reading by contrast, spirit is a direct product of embodiment. The gods created a spirited soul because mortal beings are spatially finite and vulnerable. This different reading of the origin of the spirited part has a number of consequences, not the least of which is that Brennan's view leads him towards the essential sociality of *thumos* and away from an understanding of *thumos* as the love of one's own (although he does take the notion of *to oikeion* to be central to understanding Plato's concept of *thumos*, 115-118). However, the difference between our readings which I want to note, is that Brennan's underplays the independence of *thumos* and thus Plato's sense of the extent to which *thumos* is fundamental to understanding our humanity. For Brennan, the desires that matter to Plato are, at bottom, reason and appetite. Spirit comes in later as a help to reason and check to appetite. This description of spirit is fine as long as one, in a sense, removes the "later." We get the most out of Plato when we come to see that irrespective of the genesis of his views, say from *Phaedo* into *Republic*/*Phaedrus*/*Timaeus*, Plato's mature thought is that *thumos* is as fundamental and independent an aspect of our psychology as reason and appetite.

According to *Timaeus*, at least, the spirited part of the soul is a sensibility we have not because we are social animals, but because we are discreet, corporeal—and therefore vulnerable—beings.

5. Defending One's Own, Other People and the Body

If Plato does not consider *thumos* essentially social, I believe, for reasons I will get into in a moment, that it further confirms the reading I have been at pains to establish over the course of this study. Importantly, this justificatory relationship can also be read in the other direction. If Plato believes that *thumos* is the defense of one's own, it seems to entail that he does not consider it essentially social. This is the line I want to take here. My hope is that by this point, I have provided at least some independent grounds for thinking that Plato conceives of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. If one accepts that this is in fact how he understands *thumos*, it supports thinking that he does not consider thought about people or position fundamental to this form of the soul.

The reason for this is that defending one's own need not involve any representation of other people. Plato believes that me and mine can just as easily be threatened by a force of nature as by other people. Plato also believes, that the relevant sense of me and mine, while it *may* refer to other people, does not need to do so. It is true that the huge majority of even our solitary acts of endurance seek to preserve a sense of ourselves as social beings. In these cases, an agent, motivated by spirit, pushes through the obstacle in order to preserve their sense of themselves as one kind of person and not another: a winner not a loser, etc. However, in understanding *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion*, Plato is claiming that such cases do not exhaust spirit's possibilities. For Plato to think that defending what is *oikeion* is essentially social, he needs to think that the spirited sense of me and mine is in every case a sense of myself as one among others, and that is

not his view. For Plato, an individual's body is paradigmatically *oikeion,* and this bodily sense of self is a sense of oneself that is not constituted by any thought about other people.[19] We already saw some indication that this is Plato's view in the passage from *Timaeus*. There, the body is what the spirited part defends. Admittedly, the general strategy of *Timaeus* is to explain psychological phenomena in physiological terms and in terms of physiological features, and that ought to moderate our readiness to draw conclusions from this passage. However, Plato also uses the body as an exemplar of the *oikeion* in *Republic* and *Symposium*.

In *Republic*, When Socrates is extolling the purported benefits of doing away with the private family and holding everything in common, he lists among these benefits the elimination of "lawsuits and accusations" (464d). Socrates' thought is that without private property, there will be nothing for the citizens to file suits about. However, Socrates does feel the need to qualify this claim, since the citizens will have at least one private possession, namely, "their own bodies (464d)."[20] Here, Plato is claiming that an individual's body is something paradigmatically and inalienably their own (*oikeion* for them). This is a belief that fits with Plato's sense of the more familiar phenomena he associates with *thumos*. Anger, shame, disgust, these swirl about the body. If the province of *thumos* is outrage, arguably the deepest most unalloyed outrages are those which result from trespass on the body. For the guardians and auxiliaries, their bodies are *oikeion* and thus who they are in way which is not defined by position.[21]

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[19] Therefore, my claim here, that *thumos* is not essentially social, does not conflict with my earlier claim (chapter 4), that Plato conceives of *thumos* as defined by a "distinctive self." Internal to the spirited part's sense of self is some other (*allotrion*), this other need not be another person.

[20] Although this might seem like an obstacle to the elimination of civil suits Plato has solution. The proposed solution is that the citizens will fight it out (465e). Socrates reasoning is that these are soldiers, and they need to both stay in shape and be comfortable with physical confrontation. One might question the quaint barracks-room masculinity behind this way of handling assault, or any trespass upon an individual's body (e.g., rape).

[21] One might object by contending that perhaps Plato believes our sense of our own bodies is always socially determined. Gendered bodily awareness would be an example of this phenomenon. For example, insofar as I

In *Symposium*, Plato's identification of the body as an exemplar of something *oikeion* is even more plain. Although Plato does not defend a tri-partite account of the soul in *Symposium*,[22] *to oikeion* figures centrally in Aristophanes' speech in praise of love, and it does so as a form of value.[23] When it comes time for Aristophanes to praise love, he does so by relating a myth. According to the myth, human beings were once perfect, circular beings of immense power, who challenged the gods and were punished by being split in two. As a result, they yearned for their lost other half, and so do we. This yearning is love, and Aristophanes' central claim about it is that it is the desire for wholeness (192e). Later in his speech, when Aristophanes recasts this thought, he claims that love is the desire for "one's very own young man" (193c).[24] When Socrates, in the course of his own speech about *eros*, responds to Aristophanes, he makes it clear that he takes Aristophanes to have constructed an account of *eros* around the belief that we

understand my body as a man's body it is *not* a woman's body. Attributing such a view to Plato, however, seems speculative at best.

Alternatively, one might argue the kinds of trespasses on the body that Plato mentions, make one angry, i.e., are *thumos*, because they are slights. What matters in these cases, as in the passage from *Republic*, is that it is another person who is doing the trespassing. Now, it may be that because of the shape of human life the huge majority of threats to one's body perceived by the thumoetic part come from other people, but that is not the same thing as claiming that they all do. Plato might even think that anger (*orge*) is an essentially social emotion. That is, after all, the definition Aristotle goes in for. However, what Plato calls spirit is more than anger. It is also a swimmer's furious determination to keep their head above water. Burnyeat (2006:9) seems to have this very thought in mind when he admits, "the truth is anger straddles the divide between social and non-social animals," Burnyeat just thinks that Plato does not recognize this.

[22] That said, the three kinds of pregnancy and offspring identified by Socrates (*Symposium*, 208-210a), parallel Plato's notions of appetite, spirit and reason. Socrates first distinguishes between psychic and bodily pregnancy, and then later distinguishes within psychic pregnancy between the higher and lower mysteries. The offspring of these three pregnancies are children, laws/poems, and thoughts, respectively. Each type of offspring is connected to the way in which the agent makes sense of the good and therefore pursues their erotic longing for immortality.

[23] As will become apparent below, I believe that this myth is very revealing of Plato's sense of the nature and limits *to oikeion* as a form of value. In Aristophanes' myth, equating the good with one's own results in a sense of the self as perfect. I believe we see this in Aristophanes' characterization of humanity before its fall, we were circular (i.e., perfect) beings of immense power, and the fact that when he tries to explain why the people we love matter so much to us, what he comes up with, is that they are (a long, lost part of) us.

[24] εἰ ἐκτελέσαιμεν τὸν ἔρωτα καὶ τῶν παιδικῶν τῶν **αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος**, my bold.

ultimately desire *to oikeion*, and therefore understand the beloved as such. Socrates argues that this is a mistake.

> "Now there is a certain story," [Diotima] said, "according to which lovers are those people who seek their other halves. But according to my story, a lover does not seek the half or the whole, unless my friend, it turns out to be good as well. I say this because people are even willing to cut off their own arms and legs if they think they are diseased. I don't think an individual takes joy in what belongs to him personally unless by 'belonging to me' (οἰκεῖον) he means 'good' and by 'belonging to another' (ἀλλότριον) he means 'bad.' That's because what everyone loves is really nothing other than the good." (*Symposium*, 205d-e)

In this passage Plato presents *to oikeion* as a way of understanding entities as valuable, holds up the way we think about our own bodies as exemplifying this understanding, and maintains that this understanding can be applied to things other than one's body. At present, my focus is the second of these three thoughts: here is more evidence that according to Plato, one's own body is an exemplar of an entity that is *oikeion*. And, if the body is the kind of thing that is *oikeion* to an individual, then the activity of defending one's own does not necessarily involve a thought about other people.

For Plato, in the act of defending one's own, both the threat (*to allotrion*) and what is threatened (*to oikeion*) need not be another person, nor even involve thoughts about another person.

6. Taking Stock

Plato does not believe *thumos* is essentially social in the sense articulated above. Since the remainder of this chapter will go forward on this assumption, it is worth briefly reviewing how we arrived at this point. What I have been arguing against is the thought that Plato conceives of the spirited part of the soul as fundamentally concerned with our place among other

people. Some version of this thought is almost universally accepted by scholars of Plato's tri-partite psychology, which is not surprising, as Plato explicitly marks out the love of victory and honor as central to his conception of *thumos*. However, I maintain that reading Plato as understanding *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion* prompts one to reconsider this reading. I argue that when one does so, one finds in *Republic* not only a not essentially social conception of *thumos*, but an emphasis on the identification of *thumos* with perseverance equal to the emphasis on honor and victory. This is a reading of *Republic* which, in different ways, is supported by *Laches*, *Timaeus*, *Symposium*, and Plato's belief that *thumos* is the defense of *to oikeion*.

I want to stress again that my claim about the place of social concerns in Plato's conception of *thumos* does not rule out Plato thinking that such concerns dominate *thumos*, nor does my claim entail some more general sense of such concerns as unimportant (either on my part or Plato's). My claim is about the essence of *thumos*. It is perfectly in keeping with this claim that Plato believes the education of the spirited part of the soul critical to social life. He can believe that *thumos* is not essentially social and think that the majority—even the huge majority—of spirited thoughts are colored by a sense of life as lived with others.

7. The Love of Victory, Honor and One's Own

The remainder of the chapter will be taken up with answering two questions. If Plato does not believe *thumos* is essentially social, then how do social concerns, and in particular the love of honor, fit into his conception of *thumos* as the defense of one's own? Answering this question will be the focus of the remainder of this section. I will then turn to question of what is gained by insisting that Plato does not consider *thumos* essentially social. Why does seeing this matter,

especially if, as is likely, Plato believes that the great majority of the spirited actions of adult human beings are through and through shaped by thoughts about others?

Plato believes that *thumos* is the defense of one's own, and this means that he does not believe *thumos* is essentially social. If that is the case, why does he believe that pursuits of honor and victory are such prevalent and typical manifestations of this form of soul? It is relatively straightforward to see why Plato might have thought that the love of victory was in fact the manifestation of a more general drive to defend one's own. For Plato, the spirited part of the soul is motivated to defend what it views as *oikeion* from an essentially threatening other. If Plato believes that *thumos* situates the agent in an essentially hostile world, it is natural and inevitable, given the social nature of human life, that the spirited part's sense of mine and not mine will come to define others as *oikeion* and *allotrion*. Once this happens, the spirited part will pursue competitive excellence as way of defending oneself and one's own from others, effectively defending one's own by asserting or establishing that I, or we, are better than them.

When one turns to the love of honor, or more exactly, the desire for recognition, things are far less straightforward. For Plato and his contemporaries, the love of honor (*philotimia*) was not equivalent to a desire of recognition,[25] yet, this latter desire is surely part of what Plato has in mind when he calls spirit the honor-loving part of the soul (e.g., εὐδοκιμεῖν. . .ὡρμῆσθαι at

[25] Dover (1994: 230-32), Whitehead (1984). One significant aspect of the evolution of the term's use was a gradual shift from it being one of censure to one of approbation. In fact, by the 4th century *philotimia* comes to be seen as a civic virtue (Whitehead, 60) so much so that in many contexts *philotimos* is best translated as patriotic (Dover, 231). What explains this shift is the fact that once the *polis* was established as the only source of τιμή, and service to the city the only way to win it, being a lover of honor became synonymous with caring for the good of the city as a whole. Whitehead glosses this change as a change in attitude regarding whether *philotmia* was praiseworthy or blameworthy, with the core meaning of the term remaining stable *qua* desire for recognition (1984: 55). However, his own analysis undercuts this contention. At the very least, once *philotimia* becomes a civic virtue, the virtue lies not in the fact that an individual wants to be seen to help their city, but in their wanting to actually serve. The fact that the notion could shift between a concern for how one looks to what one accomplishes, points to the fact that an ambiguity about what the honor lover actually wanted was present throughout (i.e., praise or accomplishment).

Republic, 581a). By the desire for recognition, I mean the desire to look good to other people. It is clear from Plato's descriptions that he sees this desire dominating both spirited people and the spirited part of the soul, (e.g., *Republic*, 338a, and 582c). However, it is precisely this desire that starts to look mysterious on the account of *thumos* I have attributed to Plato.[26] How is recognizing that one is recognized a defending of me and mine? And why would Plato think that the desire to be recognized inevitably comes to dominate the concerns of the spirited part of the soul? These are the features of Plato's view that stand in need of explanation.

I believe there is an explanation to be provided, although it is, admittedly, speculative. If Plato believes that the desire for recognition is, in truth, a desire for validation, then the mystery dissolves. Seen as such, the desire for recognition is another form of defending one's own. In response to a threat to oneself and one's own, the agent pursues confirmation of who they are and (or) their high opinion of themselves. To my knowledge we do not see Plato explicitly advancing this interpretation of the desire for recognition (and we definitely do not see him doing so in an attempt to square *philotimia* with an understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own). Nevertheless, it does not seem a stretch to attribute such a view to Plato. Aristotle, for one, endorses the view in *Nicomachean Ethics*,[27] and it is it is a common enough thought

[26] This difficulty is not sufficiently appreciated by Wilburn (2021). Once one recognizes that Plato conceives of *thumos* as concerned with what is *oikeion* and *allotrion*, it becomes less clear why it should care about recognition. Wilburn does not address this tension, and sees it as readily explained by, what he describes, as spirit's aggressiveness (54). It is one thing for the spirited part to desire to be better than others. It is another for it to desire to be seen as such.

[27] When Aristotle canvasses commonly held opinions about the nature of *eudaimonia*, he brings up and then rejects the "life of honor" as a potential answer to the question, "what is happiness?" Part of his justification for doing so is that "people seem to pursue honor in order to be convinced they are good (*NE*, 1095b28)." The verb translated by Reeve as "convince" is πιστεύω. In conjunction with an infinitive, "to be convinced that" or "believe that" is a perfectly accurate translation. However, this use of the verb also has a connotation of reinforcing an already extant belief (see LSJ entry for πιστεύω). Bearing this out, the LSJ also recommends "made confident that," and I suspect it is with these kinds of considerations in mind that Ross instead translates the cognate infinitive as "in order to be assured that." This evidence is not decisive, but it does offer support for thinking that Plato was part of a conversation wherein it was thought that people who pursued praise did so in order to verify their (high) opinion of themselves.

about lovers of recognition. Whether or not Plato himself recognizes that his account of *thumos* could be extended in this way is not clear; that it *can* be speaks to its veracity and its being Plato's.[28]

Attributing to Plato the belief that the pursuit of recognition is the agent's desire for confirmation of their own excellence closes the gap between the love of recognition and defending one's own. The desire for confirmation of one's goodness conforms to the basic structure of the defense of one's own. There is a self—an *oikeion*—that is under threat, and the activity of *thumos* is an attempt to stave off this threat. More exactly, the agent has some sense of themselves which, for whatever reason, is challenged, and the thumoetic response to this challenge is to seek verification of the challenged sense of self in the opinion of some other person or people. In this way, the pursuit of praise reflects Plato's understanding of the form of thumoetic thought.[29]

One virtue of such an explanation is that this construal of the desire for recognition applies just as readily to threats to one's physical person. In response to a perceived threat to

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[28] *Republic* may represent a serious attempt to articulate a theoretical account of *thumos,* but doing so is not among its primary concerns. Plato might simply have been happy to leave some things at the level of unexplained appearances. When one looks at thumoetic people and behaviors, it seems clear that the desire for admiration and the fierce protectiveness of one's self and one's own are of a piece. The same people who care deeply about how they appear to others, are the very ones who tend to be most sensitive to trespass (consider, for example, Achilles). Plato, perhaps, was happy to leave things at this level of analysis confident that though he had not provided an explanation, one could readily be found.

[29] Another way would be if Plato understands the love of recognition on the model of the desire for immortal glory. This would fit the overarching interpretation of *thumos* as the love of one's own, and Plato was obviously familiar with the thought that the pursuit of honor might be best understood as an imperfect pursuit of immortality (*Symposium*, 208c-e). On this gloss, the lover of honor pursues admiration as a way of preserving an agent's cherished sense of themselves and thereby defending their own. "Act well and I will immortalize your name in song" promises the poet, and in this way a thumoetic sense of self is preserved against the threats which unceasingly challenge the agent's sense of their worth. The thought here is not that all desire for admiration is secretly identical to the towering ambition of Homeric heroes and Olympic athletes, but that it is like this ambition in that it is an attempt to preserve a sense of self in the minds of others. This explanation of the link between defending one's own and wanting recognition should not be seen as an alternative but a complement to the suggestion offered above.

Interestingly, if Plato believes that the desire for admiration is often akin to the desire to immortalize oneself in cultural memory, he is claiming that from the limited perspective of the thumoetic part, the opinions of others appear a more stable vehicle for the sense of self *thumos* furiously strives to protect.

one's body, it is not nonsensical for someone to respond by looking for confirmation from another that they are in fact whole.[30] Furthermore, if this is how to understand the desire for admiration, it would make sense of why certain others loom so large in an agent's concern for how they are seen. It is a notable feature of the desire for recognition that we do not care about everyone's opinions, but only those of the people we respect.[31] The focus on the opinions of those we respect, of those which carry the weight of authority, would be in part explained by the fact that only such people have the power to reassure us that we are in fact who we take ourselves to be. Lastly, my proposed gloss on the desire to be admired has the resources to explain why this desire comes to loom so large in the cosmos of spirited concerns. Given the extent to which we depend on other people, we are often unable to defend our own. In the course of a human life, and especially when we are young, the agent's spirited part will perceive threats to *to oikeion* which it itself cannot meet. The confirmation provided by recognition is a way for the spirited part to meet this need through the assistance of others. Given the extent of human dependency, it is inevitable that such recognition become entrenched in the agent's spirited sensibility as of supreme importance.[32]

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[30] This might be especially true of little children. The understanding of the desire for admiration being proposed, closely aligns with that embraced by the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (the influential progenitor of Self-Psychology). For Kohut, admiration is pursued as a means of confirming or mirroring a person's grandiose sense of self. Thus, Kohut calls one form of transference essential to shaping and addressing narcissistic psychopathologies "the mirror transference" (2009: 115-9). More generally, much of what Kohut says about narcissism tracks the conception of *thumos* we see in Plato, and Kohut's views, especially those in *The Analysis of the Self*, have influenced this study. My belief is that what Kohut calls narcissism in that text and what Plato calls *thumos* are one and the same. This identity of Plato's understanding of *thumos* with Kohut's understanding of narcissism lessens as Kohut develops his account of narcissism in his later works (for example, *The Restoration of the Self*).

[31] Williams (2008: 84-85) offers a moving account and analysis of this concern to be seen well by *certain* others.

[32] It is worth pointing out that this proposed explanation emphasizes our social nature, i.e., our dependency on others, but reads Plato as thinking that this aspect of human nature is something distinct from *thumos*. In the narrative proposed above, our social nature plays an important role in explaining the determinate shape that a thumoetic sensibility takes in creatures like us.

I take Alcinous' claim that the disembodied form of the thumoetic part of the soul is the *oikeiotikon*, to be an attempt to make a similar point (*The Handbook on Platonism*, 25.7). On Alcinous' account, *thumos* is the shape that *oikeiosis* takes in embodied beings like us.

8. The Essence of *Thumos*

The reason to argue against attributing to Plato a conception of *thumos* that is essentially social—the reason to maintain that Plato does not consider the desire for recognition fundamental, but rather a permutation of the drive to defend one's own—is that if one does not, one loses the heart of Plato's understanding of *thumos*. Reading *thumos* as essentially social has the potential to obscure Plato's belief that *thumos* is reactionary, and it necessarily obscures Plato's belief that the essence of *thumos* is a sense of oneself as perfect. [33]

Giving Plato's account of *thumos* an extra appendage, so to speak, might not seem too much of a problem. Unfortunately, when one does so it also obscures core features of Plato's understanding of *thumos*. The first thing that is lost when makes social concerns fundamental to Plato's conception of *thumos* is Plato's belief that *thumos* is reactionary. Admittedly, merely conceiving of *thumos* as essentially social need not do this. One could, for example, believe that Plato conceives of *thumos* as defending what it finds *oikeion*, and maintain that the spirited part's sense of *to oikeion* entails some thought about other people.[34] The problem is when one makes the desire for recognition fundamental to Plato's conception of *thumos*.

When the love of recognition is made basic, the thumoetic part appears as the source of desire to come into possession of a good, i.e., the recognition one believes one does not yet have.

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[33] Part of the problem here is caused by a tendency of scholars to read non-social instances of spirited activity (e.g., *Republic*, 441a) as primitive and therefore liminal, see, for example, Cooper (1999). By contrast Singpurwala (2010: 884) and Wilburn (2021: 52) are examples of scholars who read these cases as primitive, but do not use the notion to read them out of Plato's account. In and of itself, calling these cases primitive is not a mistake. On Plato's view they are primitive, both in the sense that they come first in the course of a human life, and in the sense that their content is simpler than most of a mature adult's spirited thoughts. The mistake is to think that because they are primitive, we do not need to give them much, or any, weight, when trying to work out Plato's conception of *thumos*. My claim is that Plato believes the form of *thumos* is equally in these cases as in the more mature expressions of a spirited sensibility.

[34] This is a version of the view I discussed above (section 6). It construes *thumos* as the essentially social defense of one's own.

This fits with the sense that we have of spirt and spirited people independent of Plato. They are bold, ambitious and most of all assertive. This reading also fits a prevailing framework for interpreting Plato's tri-partite psychology. In this framework, interpreting (what I have been calling) the forms of soul is conceived of as a matter of identifying the formal objects of the desires which characterize each psychic part. Thus, to understand Plato's conception of reason, we must understand rational desire, and that in turn is a matter of identifying and providing an account of the formal object of this desire.[35] A common presumption about these formal objects is that whatever they turn out to be, they are some good "out there" which the agent then aims to possess through their actions. When it comes to *thumos*, it is this assumption which forms the basis of accounts of *thumos* as the desire for honor, or self-esteem, or *to kalon*, and so on.

It may be that this picture applies to Plato's conceptions of appetite and reason, but it does not fit his understanding of *thumos*. For Plato, the good of *thumos* is not "out there." For *thumos*, out there is the alien threat, and that is precisely what is not good. What is good to *thumos* is *to oikeion*—me and mine. And if the metaphor of possession applies, then this is a good which the agent already possess. In effect, *qua* defending one's own, *thumos* does not seek to possess its good. Rather, it reacts and responds in the name of preserving a good which it already has. I will come back to this thought that from the spirited part's perspective it already "has" the good. For now, I want to emphasize the way in which this account construes *thumos* as reactionary. On Plato's account, when the spirited part acts, it does so in response to a perceived

[35] There are many reasons which recommend using this framework as the way to make sense of Plato's psychology. For one, in books 8 and 9 of *Republic* Plato himself uses this approach, identifying the parts of the soul as the money-loving, honor-loving, and wisdom-loving (e.g., *Republic*, 580d-581c). Nor do I think that the point I am making here about Plato's belief in the reactionary nature of *thumos* necessarily rules out using it. Nothing, in principle, rules out trying to read Plato's account of *thumos* as a desire for a formal object (say as the *love* of one's own). However, such an account would have to capture Plato's belief in the reactionary nature of *thumos*.

allotrion threat. This is it *defending* one's own. No matter how bold, assertive, creative, etc., thumoetic activity is a reaction to some alien threat, with the work of *thumos* being to defend what is mine in the face of this threat. Make the desire for recognition basic, and this reactionary feature of Plato's understanding is lost.[36] Instead of reacting to a threat or attack, the spirited part instead (or also), seeks to acquire some good.

Once the reactionary character of *thumos* is obscured, the link is cut between Plato's account and the repeated characterization of *thumos* as a form of perseverance discussed above. These descriptions of spirit recede into the background, and thus Plato's sense that such expressions of perseverance are central to *thumos* disappears as well. In addition, with the reactionary character of spirited phenomena goes Plato's rationale for thinking the spirited a *limited* principle of psychic unity (chapter 3). Central to Plato's belief that spirited self-control is limited is his more basic understanding of the spirited part as always acting to ward off an *allotrion* threat. As Plato sees it, it is this understanding of one's own desires as *allotrion* that limits the spirited part. Because it does so, Plato believes that it cannot see working together with any version of these desires. If spirit is not always reacting, then it is not always seeing something as an alien threat, and Plato's account of the limitations of spirited self-control is obscured. Another loss is Plato's sense of the spirited part as what we might call the conservative part of the soul. Plato is clear that he thinks the spirited part is both a source of our boldness and of our respect for authority (*Republic*, 548e-549a). The latter is explained by his belief that the spirited part defends me and mine. In this respect, the spirited part is truly something of a conservative reactionary: it is the source of our attachment, not just to others, but to our

[36] It is in part because of this way that the desire for recognition can obfuscate Plato's view that I worked to give an account it as a manifestation of the desire to defend one's own (section 7 above).

traditions, of country, our family in that it thinks "our way of doing things is good and needs to be preserved." On Plato's reactionary conception of *thumos,* these form an important branch of spirited phenomena. Absent the recognition of Plato's conception of *thumos* as something that reacts, and defends, one does not see this important facet of his conception of *thumos*.[37]

A second, even more serious consequence of attributing to Plato a conception of *thumos* that is essentially social is that it obscures the extent to which Plato sees the spirited sense of self dominating the world of spirited concerns. Plato conceives of *thumos* as the defense of one's own, and that means that for *thumos* it really is all about me. Or, to put Plato's thought more carefully: for the spirited part of the soul, I determine what is valuable, not other people.

This way of putting things also has the potential to be misleading, and to an extent I do so here to sharpen the issue. However, consider that when one casts *thumos* as essentially social, it is other people who give content to the spirited part's sense of what it is for something to be good (or valuable). I take this to be a more specific version of a fairly well-worn claim. If recognition is what matters, then it is other people who make things good, as it is their judgment and approbation in general that give actions, achievements, possessions—everything—their value. If what we are talking about is an agent's concern for social position, then we are inhabiting a field of concerns wherein good and bad are defined in relation to other people. To be good is to be better; to be bad, worse. This better and worse, often, if not always, includes others in a second sense. "Better" often means with some, and not others, and vice versa. To think this way is for one's sense of what is valuable to be dependent on other people. What other people

[37] As an example of why not seeing this facet of *thumos* might matter, consider that recognizing it paints a different picture of why Plato might think that the spirited part of the soul is the primary target of the early cultural education outlined in Books 3 and 4 of *Republic*. On the proposed reading, part of why Plato thinks the spirited part is the target of the musical education is because it is the seat of our attachments to our homeland, our culture, and our upbringing in general.

do, how they think, how they live—these things constitute this sense of what it is for something to be valuable. The others may be real, or they may be imagined; either way, it is other people who determine what is valuable and the way in which it is valuable.

On the alternative reading I am suggesting, Plato does think the desire for recognition (*philotimia*), and concern for position (*philonikia*) are spirited. But as such, he believes they are the expression of a way of thinking about the good wherein I am the sole arbiter of what is valuable, in that I, and I alone, am good. I take this to be the upshot of attributing to Plato the view that *thumos* is defending one's own. For Plato, what makes spirited desires spirited is that they see me (and mine) as valuable in a way that entails a sense of oneself as perfect.

The fact that Plato understands *thumos* as circling around a sense of the self as perfect is a thought that has been there from the beginning of this study, or at least since I argued that Plato understands *thumos* as defending one's own. My main claim is that Plato believes one's own is the thumoetic good. This latter formulation bears emphasizing, because to claim that one's own is the thumoetic good amounts to claiming that this is the way in which *thumos* understands what is for something to be good. In Plato's psychology, *thumos* is a form of soul. As such it is constituted by a particular understanding of the good.[38] My contention is that *thumos* understands what is good as *oikeion* (me and mine). This amounts to claiming that for *thumos,* what is me is good, and what is good is me. From a thumoetic perspective there is no possibility of value and self coming apart. To take the first half of the biconditional, anything that is me is good, and worth defending. This is the side of *thumos* that manifests, for example, as the conviction that my idea is the right one, or my country the best. According to the other half of the biconditional, what is good is me. In other words, anything that is valuable is something I already am. It is this

[38] See Chapter 1.

thought that explains why it is not hyperbole to claim that the thumoetic sense of self is a sense of the self as perfect. If something is independently conceived of as good, then the thumoetic part will understand it as something I already am, possess, etc., and in this way the self is, and becomes, the bearer of all perfections.[39]

It is this sense that I am what is good which explains the reactionary structure of *thumos*. On Plato's account, spirited actions do not seek to make me good. Rather, as represented by *thumos*, I am already good. This is the Archimedian point from which all thumoetic thought proceeds.[40] As Plato understands us, all the furious, creative, and impressive activity motivated by the thumoetic part is an attempt to preserve an already good self. "I am perfect, now change!" is the motto of *thumos*. For action as *thumos* understands it is the work of bringing the world into accord with one's wholly good self.

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[39] The fact that Plato considers shame a paradigmatic spirited phenomenon, might make this claim seem like a non-starter. Shame is what we feel when we think have fallen short of who we are, or ought to be. If Plato thinks that such feelings are spirited, how can he believe a sense of the self as perfect is essential to all spirited activity? I do not think this objection undermines my reading. Its value, is that it prompts a reinterpretation of shame, from the vantage point of Plato's theoretical understanding of *thumos* as the defense of one's own. Understanding shame as tied to a sense of the self as perfect, is not as paradoxical as it might seem, and other authors have defended it, e.g., Nussbaum (2006: 182-84). In fact, it is on Plato's view the spirited part's sense of the self as perfect, which explains the limitations of shame and spirited self-control in general. The problem with shame, from a Platonic perspective, is precisely that whatever value it has, it cannot make sense of an agent's problematic action, desire, etc. as his own. Thus, the feeling of shame is, at a deeper level, a not taking responsibility for one's bad, or purportedly bad, actions. I would argue that we can see this thought in Plato in his interest in the story of Leontius, specifically, the way in which Leontius attributes his shameful, or disgusting, appetite to his eyes.

[40] Here, again, Plato's views parallel the theoretical understanding of narcissism advanced by Kohut (2009). For example, when discussing low self-esteem, Kohut claims that it is typically due to what he calls a "vertical split" in the person's psyche (177-178). According to Kohut, the lack of self-esteem is due to a (primitive) grandiose sense of self having been split off from the remainder of the person's conscious psyche. (The lack of psychic unity here does not involve the activity of the unconscious, such conflict, i.e., between the conscious and unconscious mind, Kohut calls a "horizontal split.") As a result, operating in the person's psyche is a sense of themselves as perfect, which because it is unrealistic and unintegrated finds no satisfaction in the thoughts and abilities the person has developed through living their life. What stands out is Kohut's account of the genesis of this split-off grandiose self. This split is invariably taken by Kohut to be the result of an *attempt to preserve* the person's narcissistic sense of self. Thus, in Kohut's estimation, if a narcissistic sense of oneself as good cannot find support it is not abandoned. Rather, narcissism splits off this grandiose sense of self in an attempt to protect or preserve it. On this account, even low self-esteem is understood as flowing from a sense of the self as perfect, albeit one that is poorly integrated with the main of the individual's personality. The striking presumption of Kohut's etiological story is that whatever the vicissitudes of narcissistic thought, whatever its forms and transformations, the narcissistic sense of oneself as good is inviolable.

For Plato, *thumos* is a limited understanding of the good defined by a self that expands to cover the whole field of value. It is this vision of *thumos* that is obscured when the spirited part is made the seat of an essentially social form of concern. Yes, Plato believes that this sense of self can be shaped through a good education, and that the spirited part's sense of its perfection can be put to good use in the service of oneself and others. He also believes that through the development of attachments, the spirited part can come to care deeply about other people and things. However, as Plato interprets them, these attachments are at bottom the extension of a spirited sense of self. As a result, he does not think they conflict with his belief in the fundamental self-centeredness of *thumos*. Rather, they confirm it. That Plato thinks this is in keeping with his wider view of *thumos* as the defense of *to oikeion*. Throughout, I have translated *oikeion* as one's own, or in the first person, me and mine. Doing so has the benefit of capturing Plato's thought that the spirited part's sense of what is valuable can be extended outward. What the considerations of this chapter have shown is that this rendering of Plato's notion of *to oikeion* also has its shortcomings. If Plato had a complaint, it would be that to talk of me and mine is to be too influenced by the way things look like from the outside. From the inside, i.e., from the spirited part's perspective, there is nothing that matters because it is "mine." There is just (more) me.[41]

[41] I should add, in closing, that a further casualty of conceiving of *thumos* as essentially social is (what I have been calling) a form of soul. To my mind, this is the greatest loss that comes from the overemphasis of the social dimension of *thumos*. Although I do not expect others to share this conviction. I believe it is deep insight of Plato's theoretical account of the soul, that it sees human thought as distinguished by three distinct ways of thinking about the good. It is my belief that Plato truly does see these as different forms of thought, each defined by its own logic, its own representation of the self, its own vision of reality, and its place in that reality. This is a hugely rich, arguably unexplored, aspect of Plato's tri-partite account of the soul. When it comes to Plato's conception of *thumos*, Plato builds his account on, what he takes to be, spirit's fundamental identification of self and good. Spirit is for him, a non-rational –*because* circumscribed—understanding of the good as *oikeion*, and he believes that all of the more sophisticated forms of spirited behavior, along with the spirited part's vision of a hostile universe, its sense of the self as always under threat, and its inability to manage personal failing, follows from this form. Thus, when one makes the desire for recognition fundamental, Plato's idea of a form of thought in general, recedes from view.

Instead, one is left with a collection of related desires and concerns, and with that substitution, so goes Plato's distinctive, aspirationaly theoretical way of thinking about the human soul.

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