

Akrasia: Plato and the Limits of Education?

Colm Shanahan

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Dublin, Trinity College

Supervisor: Prof. Vasilis Politis

Submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College, August 2017

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Colm Shanahan)

Summary

In this dissertation, I shall argue for the following main claim: (1a) the motivational neutrality of reason. I will show that this concept reveals that, for Plato, (1b) reason is itself a necessary condition of the possibility of *akrasia*, and a central explanatory element in his account of *akrasia*. In presenting the soul with the capacity to take account of the whole soul, the motivational neutrality of reason seems to be the precondition of moving from having such a capacity, in a speculative manner, to generating desires and actions based upon such considerations. If this were not so, then how could the rational part of the soul, for example, put its good to one side, where such is required, to achieve the good of the whole soul? This distancing from the good associated with the rational part of the soul is precisely the grounding upon which the rational part of the soul generates the space to assess the goods of the other soul parts.

In this way, the rational part of the soul must bring this motivational neutrality to the soul. It is by such that a desire for food, for example, can be assented to in the presence of the greater good of learning; that is, where the former desire represents the greater good of the soul. In this case, even if the desire for food is pursued on the basis of generating the optimum conditions for the greater good of learning, it nevertheless remains that the soul can act for the greater good of the soul, and this can be achieved by forgoing the greater good of learning. This is an instance in which there is a positive outcome to the motivational neutrality of reason. However, since this motivational neutrality facilitates the selection of the lesser good at the cost of the greater good, this positive outcome is not the only possible outcome.

Since the motivational quality of the greater good is present – but in a way that removes its motivational aspect – it does not necessarily have to exert force over the soul. This opens the floodgates for taking motivation from the lesser good, even when such is not concomitant with the good of the whole soul. In this way, the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul brings with it the capacity to assess the goods of each soul part as goods. It is by such that the greater good of the whole soul can be determined by assessing these goods' values in relation to each other, and this is what is weighted against the good of the whole soul. Yet, this means that, after the floodgates have been opened, the lesser good can be chosen in the presence of knowledge of the greater good. From this it follows that the pursuit of the lesser good can be knowingly opted for, in spite of the fact that this does not serve the good of the whole soul.

This ascribes a necessary role to the rational part of the soul in generating *akrasia*. This necessary role is a functional one, in which the rational part of the soul facilitates the very antithesis of the good of the whole soul – the lesser good, or the bad of the soul. As such, any explication of Plato's conception of *akrasia* requires taking account of the rational part of the soul in generating the conditions by which the lesser good can be opted for. Hence, I attribute a central explanatory element to the rational part of the soul in accounting for *akrasia*. To outline this thesis, I will be relying, in the first instance, on the *Protagoras* and *Meno*, and, thereafter, the *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. I will refer to the *Protagoras* and *Meno* to generate a sense of the view that the motivational neutrality of reason shall be contrasted with. In the case of the *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, I will show how the concept of motivational neutrality is utilised by Plato. I will be particularly concerned with showing how, with the case of Alcibiades, Plato presents us with an instance in which reason is outlined as the key to generating the akratic experience. Indeed, this insight in the *Symposium* will set the grounding for my interpretation of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*.

By holding 1a, I will engage with the debate in the literature about the relationship between reason and the non-rational parts of the soul, particularly: (i) whether the non-rational parts are good-directed, and, (ii) whether they have a conception of their own good, independent of reason. In this debate, there are two polarised views: on the one side, the appetitive part's desires are brute and do not take a good as their object. On the other side, these same desires are good directed and have a proper conception of their own good. I shall argue for a middle position which holds that: while these desires are good-directed, only reason has a proper conception of the good of the non-rational parts. I will also argue that the non-rational parts have, nevertheless, a primitive conception of their own good, such that they can recognize when they are opposed by something outside of themselves.

The non-rational soul parts operate within specific modalities that confirm 'good-directedness' without them having to be ascribed anything such as an understanding of good *per se*. The capacity to recognise anything as being in opposition to them confirms that the non-rational parts of the soul are good-directed and that this good-directedness represents their 'good'. Yet, it is also clear that Plato does not hold this good-directedness to be equivalent to the quality of good-directed desires that the rational part operates with. The middle position I shall hold differentiates between the good-directed natures of the rational and non-rational parts of the soul by arguing that the specific modalities of good that the non-rational parts operate within are such that they display no awareness of the good of the whole soul. This is so because they do not have the capacity to consider a good that is not their own. The good of the non-rational parts of the soul can be opposed by the goods of the other soul parts but there is nothing to suppose that the non-rational parts of the soul understand the grounding of this opposition to be predicated upon a 'rivalling' good.

This demonstrates the primitive nature of their good-directed desires: they are good-directed, but from within a limited conception of good which does not elicit a good of the whole soul and, as such, does not elicit the greater good of the soul. It is precisely this capacity of the rational part of the soul to assess the good of the other

soul parts that allows it to pursue the good of the whole soul. This is an outcome which may well entail the curtailment of its own desires/goods, and so the rational part of the soul must be attributed the motivational neutrality with which to assess the merit of any good claim. In this way, the rational part of the soul has the ability to step outside of the motivational force of any good claim in order to determine if it represents a good. This is the most defining characteristic of 1a, and it is this ability that allows the soul to knowingly take motivation from the lesser good. Hence, 1a holds that reason is what facilitates *akrasia*.

The defence of 1b will build on 1a, and on the defence of 1a (as in B above). I shall argue that *akrasia* remains unaccounted for in Plato's *corpus* so long as the role that reason plays in facilitating the akratic experience is not discerned. This is a most unsatisfactory outcome since, by my reading, the building blocks for an understanding of *akrasia* are to be found in Plato's work. Understanding the limited nature of the good-directed quality of the non-rational soul parts suggests that they are not good-independent. Rather, it suggests that, if they are to generate a real good, this will merely be a chance occurrence. It is the task of the rational part of the soul to utilise this 'chance' and to ensure that only goods that are congruent with the good of the whole soul should be pursued. However, this capacity requires the removal of the motivational force of the good of each soul part, and it is this that opens up the possibility of the akratic experience. As such, the very nature of 1a requires 1b, since the capacity to understand *akrasia* necessitates the discernment of the rational part's culpability in generating *akrasia*.

The rational part of the soul does not, therefore, necessarily pursue rational ends or ends that represent the greater good of the whole soul. Consequently, the presence of the rational part of the soul and, indeed, the activity of the rational part of the soul, is no longer sufficient to conclude the exclusion of the possibility of *akrasia*; rather, it is the very requirement of the opposite. In order for *akrasia* to be generated, the soul must have assessed the lesser good, concluded that it is so with reference to the goods of the other soul parts, and nonetheless assented to the pursuit of the lesser. All of this is the outcome of the presence and activity of the rational part of the soul. Hence 1b requires that the rational part of the soul be given a central explanatory element in the account of *akrasia*.

It is a consequence of my main claim (that is, 1a and 1b) that in the *Republic* Plato gives up *both* the claim that knowledge is the sufficient condition of virtue, and the claim that knowledge of the known greater good must be pursued (these two connected premises shall be referred to as **SV**). For now, knowledge of the greater good cannot underwrite the pursuit of the greater good in a way that is not mediated by the rational part of the soul. This mediation facilitates the negation of these claims. This goes against the view now held by many critics that Plato holds onto Socratic intellectualism (SI), and the view that reason is what unifies the psychologies of the *Republic* and SI. Yet, as I will hold with 1a and 1b, in one case, the presence of reason represents the removal of the possibility of *akrasia* and, in the other case, it is the very condition of generating *akrasia*. The psychology of SI asserts that reason and knowledge are the 'cure' for ignorance and wrong-doing. By the sharpest of contrasts, in the psychology of the *Republic* the very condition of knowingly pursuing the lesser good is the application of reason.

However, I argue that, even in *Protagoras* – about which it is generally thought that Plato defends SI (or **SV**, as I would prefer) – he raises some serious misgivings about these claims. Indeed, the claims of **SV** are advanced by Plato in a manner that demonstrates a high degree of scepticism about the validity of what they assert, and about his willingness to commit to them. Having outlined **SV** in this way, I will argue that Plato may not ever have embraced the tenets of **SV** to the extent that we are given cause to hold that he was fully convinced of them at any point.

In this dissertation I shall be relying on the following dialogues: *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*; I shall pay particular attention to the following passages: *Protagoras* 339e and 345b-c, where I shall present what I will refer to as the 'Socrates example'; this is an example in which Socrates exemplifies a counter-example to the view he defends. In other words, he has an akratic moment of particular significance. I will concentrate my reading of the *Symposium* on the end of Agathon's speech up to the end of Alcibiades' eulogy. I will argue that this shows that the *Symposium* holds a key position in Plato's moral epistemology and, in particular, the role that reasoning comes to be assigned in generating *akrasia*. I will also focus on the role that Alcibiades' shame plays in signifying and signalling the akratic experience. The difficulties with **SV** that the position of the *Symposium* is addressed to are already identified in *Protagoras*; and the position is further developed in *Republic* (particularly, the Allegory of the Cave and 518e-519a), and *Phaedrus* 256a and 237a-243b.

In the case of *Republic* 518e-519a, I will outline *akrasia* as the only plausible way to understand how and why Plato states that the virtue of reason can be either helpful or harmful. I will read the Allegory of the Cave as an example of how both the negative and the positive consequences of reason can ensue. This will be outlined as the starkest criticism of **SV** since, as I hope to show, the knowledge that generates the grounds for taking up the ascent is the same knowledge as that which facilitates the rejection of the ascent. This yields a contradictory outcome for possessing knowledge – an outcome that is contrary to **SV**. In the case of the *Phaedrus*, I will show that the characterisation at 256a of the way hubris comes to take motivation from its goods/desires betrays concepts that only the rational part of the soul can generate. This ability to make the lesser good easier to 'live with' is also extremely dissonant with **SV**. *Phaedrus* 237a-243b will show just how far-reaching and applicable the negative import of reason can be, particularly regarding how it at least appears to be what motivates Socrates into giving a false speech while hiding his head in shame.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my supervisor, Prof. Vasilis Politis. His sound advice, keen insights, and unwavering belief in the project here undertaken have been invaluable to me. Additionally, the level of support that he always offered so readily was more in keeping with that of a close friend than a supervisor. As a supervisor, his ability to actualise one's potential is his most defining characteristic; he has a unique ability to present one with comments that challenge one to reply with the full weight of one's creative insights delivered within the most formalised and technical language.

Also, I must acknowledge all of the ceaseless help and support that my wife provided me with during the writing of this Ph.D. She is a true source of inspiration to me, who somehow retains the ability to motivate me and, at the same time, re-infuse my self-belief where and when such is required. There are no words that would convey my debt to her: she encouraged me to return to education to undertake both my B.A. and MLitt, and to complete this Ph.D.; she has always supported me in every way possible.

Finally, I wish to thank the Philosophy Department at Trinity College Dublin for providing me with the funding required to undertake and complete this Ph.D. I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement I received from the research community – both staff and graduate students – in the Department.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Sufficient Condition of Virtue?	27
1.1 Introduction	27
1.2 Outlining SV and the Import of Reason	29
1.2.1 The ‘Socrates Example’, Knowledge, and Reason without Virtue?	37
1.3 Constructing Knowledge and Motivation from Experience	47
1.4 Further Reflections on the Significance of the ‘Socrates Example’	52
1.4.1 A Note on <i>Akrasia</i>	58
1.5 Conclusion	59
Chapter Two: Alcibiades, <i>Akrasia</i>, and the Fetish for Falsity	62
2.1 Introduction	62
2.2 Socrates-Diotima: The Labours of <i>Eros</i> and Treacherous Love	64
2.3 Alcibiades’ Treacherous Love and <i>Akrasia</i>	69
2.4 The Easy Good and Inverted Intellectualism	78
2.4.1 Reflecting on Alcibiades and the ‘Socrates Example’	94
2.5 Conclusion	97
Chapter Three, The <i>Republic</i>: <i>Akrasia</i> and the Limits of Knowledge	100
3.1 Introduction	100
3.2 Parts and Rule of the Soul	102
3.2.1 The Appetitive Part: Understanding the Limits of its Knowledge	102
3.2.2 The Spirited Part: No Shame without the Rational Part	111
3.2.3 The Rational Part: Motivational Neutrality and the Possibility of <i>Akrasia</i>	122
3.3 The Freedom of the Neutrality of Reason Embodied: The Case of Alcibiades	128
3.4 Conclusion	132
Chapter Four, Valuing the Lesser Good: The Currency of the Cave	134
4.1 Introduction	134
4.2 The Allegory of the Cave and <i>Akrasia</i>	135
4.2.2 Commitment to Goods and the Significance of Turning the Soul	138
4.3 The Cave: How Final is the Escape?	145

4.4 Commitment to Weakness: Reason Ruled and the Whole of Vice	149
4.4.1 The Power of Destruction	153
4.5 The Implausibility of Good-Independent Desires: Rationally Mediated Goods	160
4.6 Conclusion	177
Chapter Five: Learning to Live with the Lesser	179
5.1 Introduction	179
5.2 The Need for Reason to Live with the Lesser Good	180
5.2.1 Hubris' Rational Entitlement to its Good	184
5.3 Socrates' <i>Akrasia</i> : Grounding Erotic Motivation in Reason	188
5.3.1 The Damage of the Old Good	199
5.4 The <i>Phaedrus</i> : A Stronger Delivery of the Argument	203
5.4.1 The Cause of <i>Akrasia</i> : Two Points of Departure from SV	210
5.5 Conclusion	212
Conclusion	214
Works Cited	226

General Introduction

The idea of possessing the capacity to disregard what we have judged to be our greatest possible good seems perplexing, especially when it is knowingly disregarded for some known lesser good. Yet, most people would claim to have had such an experience, and would most likely explain it as the outcome of being ‘overcome’ by the force of the desire for the lesser good. This type of explanation might be rendered with reference to diverging or contradictory desires that arise after committing to the greater good, where the initial desire is opposed by some immediate desire for pleasure. It might be suggested that the will to attain the greater good is removed or temporarily replaced by a new desire, where the latter was such that it was too intense to overcome or simply ignore. However, this pitting of desire against desire seems unsatisfactory or paradoxical since it ultimately appears to correspondingly pit the will against the will. This type of problem is referred to as *akrasia*: the weakness of the will to attain the known greater good.

In the case of Plato’s handling of *akrasia*, the debate tends to predominately focus on the following: his thinking in the earlier dialogues, the notion of Socratic intellectualism (hereinafter SI), and the question of whether or not in the *Republic* he has come to reject his earlier position. The strategy that I will employ in this thesis shall be to utilise Plato’s *Symposium* (with a particular emphasis on the case of Alcibiades) to generate a new reading of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. My reading of these dialogues will also endeavour to shed new light onto the points of divergence between, on the one hand, the *Protagoras* and *Meno*, and, on the other hand, the *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Rather than engaging in unnecessary arguments regarding what exactly constitutes Socratic intellectualism,¹ I will argue only that,

¹ Numerous scholars engage with this topic. For examples of the viewpoint that reason sets the foundation for that which desires will be orientated towards, see: Gerasimos X. Santas, *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato’s Early Dialogues* (London: Blackwell, 1979); Rachel Barney, ‘Plato on the Desire for the Good’ in Sergio Tenenbaum (ed.), *Desire Practical Reason and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); John M. Cooper, ‘The *Gorgias* and Irwin’s Socrates’, *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 35 (1982), pp. 577–587; Terence Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias, (translated with notes by Terence Irwin)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). For a contrary reading, see: Terry Penner, ‘Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*,

with the latter dialogues, here listed, Plato comes to reject both the idea that knowledge is the sufficient condition of virtue and the idea that no one can act against their known greater good (I refer to the conjunction of these two claims as **SV**).

While I will discuss Plato's turning away from **SV** (that is, the conjunction of the claim that knowledge is sufficient for virtue and the claim that that no one can act against their known greater good), I will outline my thesis on foot of what I take to be his dissatisfaction with **SV**. Crucially, this dissatisfaction is to be found in the *Protagoras*, a dialogue in which Plato seems to be holding **SV**. As I will show, even within Plato's formulation of **SV**, he casts at least a shadow of doubt. Due to the constraints of this thesis, I shall not answer the question of whether or not Plato actually held **SV**, such that he can be thought to later reject it. Rather, I will simply take it to be the case that when he advances **SV**, he gives us enough to conclude that he is doing so with caution.²

Rather than labouring this thesis with questions regarding the chronology of the dialogues, I will take the *Protagoras* and *Meno* to have been written prior to the *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Additionally, since the *Protagoras* outlines **SV** in a cautionary way, I will suspend consideration of whether or not the *Meno* is written after the *Protagoras*, and so it

vol. 16 (1990), pp. 35–74; Terry Penner, 'Desire and Power in Socrates: The Argument of *Gorgias* 466a-468e that Orators and Tyrants have no Power in the City', *Apeiron*, vol. 24 (1991), pp. 147–202; Terry Penner, 'What Laches and Nicias Miss; and Whether Socrates Thinks Courage is Merely a Part of Virtue', *Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 12 (1992), pp. 1–17; Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, *Plato's Lysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, 'The Desire for Good: Is the *Meno* Inconsistent with the *Gorgias*?' *Phronesis*, vol. 39 (1994), pp. 1–25; Terry Penner, *The Ascent from Nominalism: Some Existence Arguments in Plato's Middle Dialogues* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987); Christopher Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Rachana Kamtekar, 'Plato on the Attribution of Conative Attitudes', *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 88 (2006), pp. 127-162. For a thought-provoking interpretation of Socratic intellectualism, see: Thomas C. Brickhouse & Nicholas D. Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For an additional, contemporary examination of the dominant position regarding Socratic intellectualism, see: Agnes Callard, 'Everyone Desires the Good: Socrates' Protreptic Theory of Desire', *The Review of Metaphysics*, no. 70 (June 2017), pp. 617-44.

² For an historical yet pertinent discussion of Plato's 'position' regarding Socratic intellectualism, see the following set of articles by Henry Jackson: 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas', I-VII, I. *Journal of Philology* 10 (1882), pp. 253-98; II vol. 11 (1882), pp. 287-331; III Vol. 13 no. 1 (1884), pp. 1-40; IV vol. 13 no. 2 (1885), pp. 242-72; V vol. 14 (1885), pp. 173-230; VI vol.15 (1886), pp. 280-305; VII vol. 25 (1897), pp. 65-82. For more contemporary discussions of the details of SI, see: Debra Nails, *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Springer, 1995); C. C. W. Taylor, 'The Origins of our Present Paradigms' in Julia Annas and C. J. Rowe (eds.), *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 73-84.

will not trouble my argument *per se*. Considering the *Protagoras* to have been written first yields the following: if Plato asserts but does not affirm **SV** in the *Protagoras*, then his thinking in the *Meno* should be read in the light of the suspicion with which it is delivered in the *Protagoras*. If the *Protagoras* is written after the *Meno*, then it would be far from tendentious to assert that the *Protagoras* advances a scepticism about a theory aired in an earlier work, since what follows in *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* can likewise be read through the lens of scepticism.

I. Motivationally Neutral Reasoning: Alcibiades Setting the Context for *Republic* 442b and 518e

While appealing to the case of Alcibiades to inform a reading of the *Republic* is not necessarily a new approach, my particular slant on this is an original one. Thus, while Joshua Wilburn also has much to say about how Alcibiades can inform a reading of the *Republic*, he does so only to outline an example of the dangers of the spirited part in moral education.³ Yet, as I see it, without pointing to the necessary role that reason plays in moral stagnation and *akrasia*, Wilburn does not adequately address Plato's thinking in this regard. By overlooking the negative role that Alcibiades' reason and the rationally generated conclusions he arrives at play in his opting to reject the ascent, Wilburn risks misreading the psychology of the *Republic*.

On the question of the will, it at least appears that, if it is to lead to informed or intelligible action, it – regardless of whether it is called the will or desire – needs the assistance of some function or capacity that would allow for internally conflicting desires to be overcome. This would allow the soul to generate a unified objective or end such that the greater good would be pursued. By the lights of the *Republic*, this is precisely the role that is assigned to the rational part of the soul. It is by the application of reason that conflicts of the will *can* be positively resolved. Yet, crucially, since Plato holds that there are parts of the soul, the origins

³ Joshua Wilburn, 'The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato on Moral Education and The Many', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 49 (2015), pp. 1-36.

of conflict between desires is also due to each soul part being possessed of a characteristic type of desire. That the soul is accounted for as having three distinct parts allows Plato to provide an account of internal conflict; such conflict is itself ultimately predicated upon desires for a particular type of end or good. Yet, I will argue that this sense of conflict is only possible because the rational part of the soul brings goods together in order to determine their respective merits.

On Plato's thinking, if the soul is to operate optimally (that is, towards its greatest possible good), then the rational part must be utilised to formulate intentions or goals since only it can take account of the good of the whole soul (see *Rep.* 442b). It is the task of the soul to overcome opposing goods, and it is the rational part of the soul that can achieve such. This is so as only the rational part of the soul can adopt something of a 'neutral standpoint' to its own good. As such, what is key to understanding Plato's psychology of the tri-partition of the soul is how this motivational neutrality allows the rational part of the soul to attain the good of the whole soul. It does so by distancing itself from the motivational or coercive aspects of desires, including its own. If a soul part can pursue the good of the whole soul it must be furnished with the capacity to assess the good of each soul part from a non-biased position, such that, where appropriate, the rational part of the soul can set to one side any particular good that it may have in pursuit of the good of another soul part where such represents the 'greater good' of the whole soul.

It is precisely with reference to this 'motivational neutrality' of the rational part of the soul that I shall present a new reading of Plato's consideration of *akrasia*. I will apply this concept of motivational neutrality to, on the one hand, the *Protagoras* and *Meno*, and, on the other hand, to the *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. I will demonstrate that what is outlined in the *Protagoras* and *Meno* – which is in keeping with **SV** – is very much at odds with the concept of the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul as outlined in the *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. For this reason, I will argue that Plato comes to reject **SV**

in these later works. Crucially, however, I will also outline the case of Alcibiades, and his contribution in the *Symposium*, to inform an understanding of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Ultimately, I will argue that the motivational neutrality that is evident in the case of Alcibiades sets the foundation upon which Plato will present a position that opposes **SV**.⁴

When read in relation to the motivational neutrality of reason, the case of Alcibiades demonstrates Plato's acute awareness of the limitations and problems that I will show to be inherent to **SV**. Moreover, by allowing the case of Alcibiades to inform a reading of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, and the concept of motivational neutrality, the *Symposium* can provide a key insight into understanding why Plato presents a view that opposes **SV**. As I will show, the case of Alcibiades demonstrates an alternative perspective on this topic. In particular, it suggests that Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* demonstrates the rational grounding – or, indeed, freedom – for knowingly and wilfully rejecting the ascent to knowledge/virtue.

As I will show, it is only by Alcibiades rationally coming to de-value his previously considered good(s) that he experiences shame at continuing to engage in 'shameful' activities in order to secure that which he knows he would be better off forgoing (216a). Indeed, as Alcibiades outlines it, the very condition of his arriving at the experience of such shame is that Socrates engages him in the philosophical enquiry required to learn the value of goods *per se*. It is only by such a rational process of analysing the merits of goods that he comes to realise that his life is not worth living. He states that the cause of such is the slavish quality of his desire to please the crowd (216b). I will argue that it is by reasoning, with Socrates' assistance, that Alcibiades comes to some knowledge of virtue, where it is precisely such that causes him to realise the true value of his devotion to his known lesser good. Yet, what is absolutely crucial

⁴ I will not, therefore, investigate *eros per se*. Rather, I will focus on the psychology Plato presents on foot of the role of reason in Alcibiades' account of his experience of love. For a thought-provoking reading of Plato's account of *eros*, see Gregory Vlastos, 'The Individual as Object of Love in Plato', in Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, second edition), pp. 3-34. For an alternative reading, see: Mary P. Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis* (Cambridge, et. al.: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

is the fact that, from this knowledge and insight, Alcibiades does not generate, within himself, a desire to break from his previous conception of good in search of the greater good of virtue. Rather, what he opts for is to continue to live a life that is predicated upon his known lesser good. This is most significant for many reasons, and contains the most startling of insights for **SV**.

With reference to the *Protagoras* and *Meno*, I will show that the most essential feature of **SV** is the capacity of knowledge of a greater good to be the sufficient condition for action. Yet, in the case of Alcibiades, none of this seems to be in effect. Indeed, it seems as though knowledge of the greater good, rather than being the sufficient condition to determine action, at best merely troubles Alcibiades about his decisions. Yet, as I will show, it is also very much the case that Alcibiades' shame about his decisions should be read as holding authority prospectively (as shame at what he will continue to choose to do in the future) as well as retrospectively. This is signified by his blatant rejection of the assistance that Socrates provides him with *vis-à-vis* his ascent to knowledge/virtue; hence we read of his blocking his ears from listening to Socrates' rationality.

It is precisely this rejection of the ascent that, as I shall outline it, represents Alcibiades' *akrasia*: he knowingly rejects his greater good on the grounds of his pursuit of his known lesser good. While the latter provides a keen insight into understanding why Alcibiades rejects the ascent, the most pivotal point is that it is the choice to reject the ascent that is the very event of his *akrasia*. This point is paramount for my thesis: it is not with reference to any force of desire, or even by being in the presence of the objects that might evoke such desire, that Alcibiades comes to reject his greater good. Rather, it is from within the presence of his rationally coming to knowledge of the true merits of goods that he knowingly pursues the known lesser good. Indeed, as I will outline it, it is from within the motivational neutrality of reason that Alcibiades can knowingly opt to *not* take motivation from the knowledge of the greater good of virtue. It is by reason that Alcibiades comes to de-value his old concepts of good and, simultaneously, it

is by reason that he can opt to take motivation from the type of good that is most familiar to him.

Thus, I suggest that the terms in which Alcibiades outlines his situation go far beyond Terry Penner's idea of 'diachronic belief-akrasia'.⁵ It is not simply the case that Alcibiades, having chosen to pursue some desire, comes to consider his actions as wrong at some later time. For, from this it would follow, in keeping with **SV**, he never acts akratically in a synchronic way. His weakness is not just that he returns to seek out his old goods but that, in addition to this, he forcibly stops himself from listening to Socrates and thereby rejects philosophy and virtue. He may have a negative feeling in relation to his actions but why should his shame be thought to carry its authority only retrospectively? Indeed, my reading of the case of Alcibiades, and the import that his application of reason has for the curtailment of any possibility of the development of knowledge and virtue, is not one that I have encountered in the current literature.

My position also stands in opposition to Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, who argues, along lines that are extremely similar to Penner, that Alcibiades cannot be considered to be akratic because his feelings of shame at his previous actions only occur in the company of Socrates. As such, he was not conflicted as he acted and so his shame is retrospective and occurs as a result of actions that he had already committed. Sheffield writes: "We do not witness in this case a man who chooses the worse option when *at the same time* he is persuaded of the fact that it is the worse option".⁶ Yet, as I will show, since Alcibiades' rejection of philosophy is motivated by a desire to continue in a form of living that he knows to be lesser, Sheffield's position is compromised.

It is, I will suggest, this capacity that represents Plato's eventual rejection of **SV**, for now it is through reason, knowledge of virtue, and knowledge of the value of goods that

⁵ Terry Penner, 'Knowledge vs. True Belief in the Socratic Psychology of Action', *Apeiron*, vol. 29 no. 3 (1996), pp. 199-230.

⁶ Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 238.

Alcibiades can reject his greater good. With this insight outlined, I shall present a reading of the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* which outlines how the motivational neutrality of reason is the very thing that makes *akrasia* possible. As such, the case of Alcibiades will allow me to demonstrate a context in which to understand *Republic* 518e, where Plato writes of the virtue of reason being “either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful”. The harmful exercise of reason will be shown to be that which sees the known lesser good being opted for, so that, while the akratic life might not be a very happy or fulfilling one, it is, nonetheless, a very possible one.

It is precisely when the choice between the familiar good – which, in the case of Alcibiades, is power – and the good of the ascent results in the choosing of the former that the ascent is rejected. I will outline this as an attempt to protect the lesser good, at the cost of the greater good. Yet, this attempt, whether effective or not, demonstrates a considerable latitude within the soul, regarding the motivational quality of knowledge of any good. What Alcibiades demonstrates is the ability to stand outside of the motivational aspect of a knowledge claim regarding the good. Rather than knowledge of the greater good being the sufficient condition for action, the very activity of reasoning seems to generate the capacity to relate to opposing knowledge claims regarding the good, with a view to choosing the good under which he shall act. As such, Alcibiades can select the knowledge and quality of good – greater or lesser – under which he will act.

The motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul that is evident in the *Republic* can be read as an in-depth outline of Alcibiades’ capacity to opt for *a* good, from which he will take motivation. In this sense, the virtue of reason can indeed be harmful, as it is by reasoning that the soul can come to protect its lesser good and, in so doing, knowingly opt for moral and epistemic stagnation. Of course, since this is a known and intentional option, the culpability for such cannot be overlooked, and cannot be understood with reference to ignorance, as **SV** would have outlined it. As I will show, in the context of *akrasia*, the enslavement of the rational part

of the soul is generated by the very assistance of the rational part of the soul itself, such that it is involved in the process of negating the possibility of developing knowledge and virtue. In this manner, the rational part of the soul comes to negate the possibility of attaining its own good.

Moreover, Alcibiades' rejection of the ascent is mirrored by those who would reject the prospect of being liberated from their imprisonment in the Cave (*Republic*, Book VII). The prospect of the ascent is hindered by the possibility of surrendering the old conception of good, where such is in opposition to the good of virtue. Rejecting the ascent, on these grounds, is a superlative example of *akrasia* since it represents the rejection of the greatest possible good in order to attain a good that pales in comparison. Read in this way, as is the case with Alcibiades, it must be by knowledge of the value of virtue, and the true value of their old conception of good, that results in individuals rejecting virtue. In the absence of such, there would be no possibility of the good of virtue undermining their previous conception of good.

For this reason, I hold that it is by knowledge and the application of reason that the ascent is rejected: it is by generating rationally based judgements about virtue and the value of the old good, in relation to such, that the enterprise of the ascent is rejected. Paradoxically, it is by philosophising, to the extent that someone imprisoned by ignorance can be said to do so, that philosophy comes to be rejected. As I will show, this philosophising and knowledge need not involve anything more than arriving at the knowledge that one is imprisoned by ignorance. From this knowledge, the option of taking up the good of the ascent or rejecting it is generated. That this is an option rather than being a sufficient condition for taking up the ascent is very much at odds with **SV**, as it would appear that knowledge of the greatest good does not now necessarily lead to its pursuit. What this suggests is that only *a* good is required for action; this good can be considered in quite a general way, and it is this generality that represents the freedom to knowingly will a state of epistemic and moral stagnation.

My reading of the *Symposium* and *Republic* presents reason as having the capacity to generate quite a negative outcome for the soul. Yet, none of what I present should be understood as casting reason in a completely negative light. What I hold is only that there is a function or application of reason that can lead to a negative outcome, one in which the lesser can be knowingly pursued as such. This does not mean that reason is a ‘bad’ but only that a soul, so disposed, can apply reason to ‘achieve’ such ends. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, such an application of reason requires at least as much effort as applying reason to the tasks of the ascent. Yet, in the case of the akratic, there is not any realistic possibility of achieving a real or lasting happiness. The good of the akratic is both temporary and full of known illusory goods that can lose their appeal each and every time they are considered by the rational part of the soul. That stated, I will also show how the rational part of the soul, even when enslaved, retains the capacity to rebel against such.

II. The *Republic*: No Shame in Knowing

As I read Plato, there is a backdrop to the rational part of the soul that allows for the possibility of *akrasia*. The part of the soul that can achieve moral and epistemic development and can generate *eudaimonia* can also facilitate the negation of any and all of these goods. Yet, the faculty of reason is also outlined as follows: “reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power it is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned” (518e-519a). The real difficulty in coming to understand this passage is determining how something divine can be harmful, and, at the same time, is said to never lose its power. Surely if its power is never removed, such would make it necessarily divine and thus it could not be harmful. Moreover, why should its orientation determine its harmfulness or helpfulness if it is, in fact, divine?

Additionally, the more straightforward reading of this passage – which posits that the harmfulness of reason is due to its capacity to simply learn of bad things – seems unsatisfactory.

It might be suggested that this reading at least accounts for the orientation of reason, in that it may be the case that being turned towards learning of bad things is what makes it divine and harmful (divine in having the capacity to learn, but harmful in what it learns). Yet, this is unsatisfactory for the same reason. It would be strange if the knowledge of any form of bad or injustice were sufficient to be harmful *per se*. Surely knowledge of such would have to be involved in, for example, seeking to overcome bad or injustice? Indeed, the text is itself far more nuanced than this reading would suggest.

The harmfulness of reason, in and of itself, would seem to involve it allowing the soul to take motivation from the bad/unjust of which it learns. This point is crucial. If reason simply generated the knowledge that another soul part would go on to take motivation from, then this would not be equivalent to reason *per se* being harmful. In such a framework, it would be knowledge, and necessarily the soul part that took motivation from such, that would be harmful. Yet, since it is reason that is outlined as that which can be harmful, I will argue that the only grounds upon which Plato can hold this is by positing that the rational part of the soul can both generate knowledge of a lesser good and simultaneously provide the motivational neutrality to support the choice to be motivated by the lesser/bad. I will hold this to be the case regardless of the soul part that actually takes motivation from the knowledge of the lesser good, since, by my reading, the rational part of the soul is required to achieve such ends.

As to reason retaining its divinity while, at the same time, facilitating the selection of the lesser good: the case of Alcibiades shows how reason allows him to re-evaluate his goods in the light of the value of virtue, and to continue to pursue the known lesser good. Yet, additionally, it is also evident that Alcibiades does not ever attain a sustainable happiness from such. Indeed, each and every time that his reason seizes upon the true merits of his old concept of good, he experiences intense shame. As outlined, this is such that it causes him to feel as though his life is not worth living. That he attributes this sense of shame to Socrates (see 216b) is most significant, since it is by reasoned argumentation that Socrates allows him to realise for

himself the limitation of his conception of good. As such, it is by, or in the presence of, reason that Alcibiades' shame is generated, and not in the presence of the objects of his desires.

While reason can be utilised to attain lesser ends and, according to the psychology of the *Republic*, be enslaved by other parts of the soul, it does not ever lose its capacity to 'fight back' or rebel by generating the negative experience of shame. The rational part of the soul will never be a contented or happy slave. Moreover, this power to generate shame also presents the soul with a choice: to continue to opt for the lesser good, and in so doing enslave the rational part of the soul, or to break from this slavish attachment to familiar or easily attainable goods. As I will argue, it is the capacity of the rational part of the soul *alone* to generate the experience of shame. Therefore, where there is shame there is also the presence of the rational part of the soul, and the culpability that comes with knowingly acting badly.

The sense in which the rational part of the soul retains its power is not simply with reference to its capacity to learn but with reference to its capacity to adjust or modify its choices predicated upon the knowledge that it generates. Since shame brings an awareness of ill-judgement, it also presents the possibility of acting otherwise. Indeed, it is by the knowledge that is intrinsically made manifest by the experience of shame that the rational part of the soul invites the alternative. This is another sense in which knowledge cannot be harmful but it is also one in which reason has the potential to be so since it provides the motivational neutrality to 'overcome' shame and pursue the lesser goods. This is typified by the rejection of the ascent, in which all the lesser goods are protected at the cost of virtue. Yet, reason, via the capacity to generate shame, retains the capacity to act well as much as it does the capacity to act harmfully.

Taken in isolation this passage is most perplexing. However, as I will show, the case of Alcibiades is most informative in coming to terms with, and reconciling, the contradictory statements about reason at 518e-519a. Indeed, as I will endeavour to show, the case of Alcibiades is most informative for understanding a multitude of passages from the *Republic*,

especially regarding the topic of *akrasia*, the enslavement of the rational part of the soul, and the psychology of the *Republic* more generally.

III. Good-independent or Good-dependent?

I will argue that each soul part operates with its own particular modality of good. Each can be identified in a given situation of motivational conflict with reference to the presence of its modality. The motivation towards an end will be characteristic of each particular soul part's modality, and so motivation towards ends will also be cast within the limitations of each soul part's modality to understand or to recognise its good. I will show that the very capacity to recognise an end that is characteristic of a particular soul part is sufficient to conclude that each soul part operates with a concept of good. These concepts will be stronger or weaker relative to that particular soul part's capacity to take instruction from the rational part of the soul. The latter, of course, is the only soul part that has an adequate and self-generated understanding of *both* what *is* good and the particular good under which it operates. It is the capacity to recognise its own good as learning, knowledge, and virtue, and, in addition, knowledge of good *per se* that allows the rational part of the soul to care for the whole soul. Indeed, such requires a knowledge of good *per se*, since care of the soul requires goods outside of learning.

Contrarily, the good of the non-rational parts of the soul are such that they are limited, or, we might say, locked into their own good, and cannot consider any good outside of their own. It is for this reason that I refer to the goods of soul parts as modalities: these modalities are binding and, as such, are paramount in determining what soul part(s) are required to generate certain experiences. For example, in the case of the spirited part of the soul, while it is outlined as having something of a sense of shame, it would be misguided to conclude that it 'knows' or has a concept of shamefulness. I will account for Plato's describing it in this way by alluding to the fact that what the spirited part knows of its good is generated by the import of the rational part of the soul. Moreover, it merely 'knows' its good as that which is to be pursued, and its

bad as that which is to be avoided. Therefore, where and when it avoids its bad, it is merely a contingency that its bad happens to be what the rational part knows is shameful, and so the spirited part *per se* should not be thought to have the capacity to either generate or to understand a concept such as shame.

A concept such as shame presupposes knowledge of alternative goods, which only the rational part of the soul can consider. Indeed, comparing goods (or at any rate goods of different modalities) at all is within the remit of the rational part of the soul alone, and so it is the rational part of the soul that has the capacity to generate shame. Such shame is generated at recognising misgivings regarding the goods that were attained with reference to those that could/will be attained. On these grounds, the appetitive or spirited part of the soul may be the very subject of shame (that is, that which the shame is aimed at) but they cannot be the soul parts that are responsible for generating the experience of shame.

As I will show, while the appetitive part of the soul can conflict with the rational part of the soul, it would be misguided to conclude that the appetitive part needs to understand the rational part's good (that which opposes it) to be a good. The appetitive part need only know that that which opposes it signifies the negation of its own good. In which case, the modality of the appetitive part of the soul's good is extremely restricted and cannot conceive of a good that is not immediately congruent with its own. I will show it to be the case that the appetitive part of the soul can be thought to necessarily have a three-part conception of its good, where the modality of its good can be generated under the guise of pleasure, power, and the ease with which the former two can be achieved.

My attributing the good of pleasure to the appetitive part builds upon the work of Jessica Moss.⁷ A comparable view is also outlined by Christopher Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*. Yet, my position accounts for the good of pleasure, and the internal power to form these desires,

⁷ Jessica Moss, 'Appearances and Calculations: Plato's Division of the Soul', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 34 (2008), pp. 35-68 (p. 62). See also, Moss, 'Pleasure and Illusion in Plato', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 72 (2006), pp. 503-35.

as being part of this very good. My argument is, therefore, contrary to the concept of good-independent desires presented by Terence Irwin and others. Plato states that the rational part of the soul comes to reject the impulses of the appetitive part of the soul and “regards the beliefs that oversee it as ignorance” (*Republic*, 443e). While Plato does outline a type of desire that is not for this or that type of good or bad at 437e-439e, it would be astonishing if he here intended the reader to take the idea of good-independence from this, since at 443e he will attribute beliefs to the appetitive part of the soul. Indeed, it would be surprising if, between these two very close passages, Plato had unwittingly contradicted himself. It would also be curious if he did not intend the reader to infer that the beliefs that the appetitive part of the soul had were not limited to beliefs regarding its own good. What other type of belief would a non-rational soul part be in possession of, other than that which saw to its immediate ends?

There are two passages which, when taken together, signal Plato’s thinking regarding the limits of the modality of the appetitive good: (1) “the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites, the irrational appetitive part, champion of certain indulgences and pleasures” (439d); and (2) capable of strengthening itself by the following means: “if it finds any beliefs or desires in the man [the rational part] that are thought to be good or that still have some shame, it destroys them and throws them out, until it’s purged him of moderation and filled him with imported madness” (573b). I do not take these passages to be presenting opposing modalities of goods, where the latter suggests something over and above the former. Rather, the good of the appetitive part of the soul is pleasure; to generate these desires freely requires possessing internal power, which is tantamount to the modality of the appetitive part of the soul’s good/modality incorporating, as part of its good, the ease with which its ends can be achieved.

Taking 573 together with 443e renders it rather difficult to agree that the sum of the appetitive part of the soul’s cognitive abilities is limited to that of good-independent desires (or

that it is as cognitively limited as it is suggested by F. M. Cornford, Penner, or Julia Annas).⁸ Indeed, as I read these passages, the *requirement* of the pursuit of any end by any soul part is presupposed by a specific good. Such a requirement makes all desires good-dependent.

On this point, I am very much in agreement with Lloyd Gerson's conclusion that the attainment of any desire presupposes that it be taken as a good.⁹ Yet, where my position is completely at odds with Gerson's is that I take it that the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul is that which distinguishes the middle Plato (the *Republic*) from the early Plato (*Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *SI*). As I will argue, it is not by the soul possessing either brute, good-independent desires, or that the soul is comprised of a part that is the champion of indulgences that differentiates the middle Plato from the early Plato. Rather, it is because Plato has come to the view that the rational part of the soul is that which can be used to facilitate the pursuit of the known lesser good: *akrasia* is possible not because of the possession of goods that are in opposition to rational goods, but because the rational part of the soul is itself that which allows the soul to take motivation from such.

IV. *Akrasia*: Rationally Mediated Motivation

On my reading, there is no desire that is sufficient, in and of itself, to lead to its immediate pursuit, where such implies that the rational part of the soul can be completely side-stepped. I will argue that if reason is to retain its power, it will be with reference to its capacity to retain the ability to force the choice between the greater and lesser good, which the experience of shame makes manifest to the soul. Once reason has generated an awareness of this type of conflict, regardless of how subtly such is felt, the soul must re-commit itself to the pursuit of the known lesser good. By this process, the rational part of the soul instantiates the very

⁸ See F. M. Cornford, *The Republic of Plato* (translation, introduction and notes) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); Terry Penner, 'Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 16 (1990), pp. 35-74; Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁹ See Lloyd P. Gerson, 'Plato's Rational Souls', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 68 no. 1 (2014), pp. 37-59.

possibility of acting against knowledge of the greater good by recognising such as a choice. This is precisely the level of latitude that is evident in the account of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. Yet, what the issue of being just or unjust hinges upon is not the possession of knowledge but the capacity, after realising the alternative, to opt to take motivation from the knowledge of the known greater good of virtue.

Within this framework it is not the possession of knowledge that makes a person just, but rather their capacity to only take motivation from such knowledge. As I will outline it, the experience of shame need only be felt to the degree that the presence of the known greater good is realised. From this, if the lesser good is pursued, Plato intends the reader to understand that the rational part of the soul is ultimately responsible for any and all actions undertaken. As such, when it comes to moral culpability, there is no ‘get-out clause’ that would absolve a person from wrong doing. All desire is ‘mediately’ assented to by reason, and so there is no sense in which an action can be thought to be the output of ignorance, in the manner that **SV** holds. Moreover, the very question of ‘to do’ or not ‘to do’ is evidently a constituent feature of any decision, and is facilitated by the rational part of the soul. Casting the ‘to do’ side with the ‘not to do’ side requires, in necessary terms, the rational part of the soul since only that part of the soul can assess goods as goods. This is the case as only the rational part of the soul can polarise goods *per se*, because only it has a complete conception of good (that is, of a good that is independent of any particular modality of good).

Therefore, at the very heart of *akrasia* is the motivational neutrality of reason and it follows that all desires are ‘mediately’ assented to by the rational part of the soul. People may attempt to account for their moral weakness with reference to the force or the intensity of a particular desire, yet, technically speaking, where the experience is accompanied by any sort of conflict between one desire/good and an alternative good/desire, it is necessarily by rational choice that the force was assented to. Indeed, as I will show, the only possible irrational choice is itself predicated upon rational foundations and upon solid epistemic grounding. This very

choice amounts, of course, to opting for the akratic option: the known lesser of two possible goods. As such, it is not sufficient to conclude that Plato accepts the possibility of *akrasia* due to the possession of goods, or soul parts, that oppose one another, but that the rational part of the soul can generate an unfavourable outcome from such conflict.

V. Overview of Chapters

Objectives of Chapter One

In each of the five chapters in this thesis I will work towards outlining the various steps required to achieve the conclusions mentioned above. In Chapter One, I will be concerned with providing an outline of the major tenets of **SV** regarding the texts that are sourced in order to outline this view. I will not enter into any unnecessary debates that exist in the literature regarding what constitutes **SV** in every detail. Rather, I will present a reading of the *Meno* and *Protagoras* that demonstrates the most universally accepted tenets of **SV**. Chief among these tenets shall be the view that knowledge is the sufficient condition for action. It shall be with direct reference to showing how this tenet is at odds with the middle works of Plato that I shall formulate my thesis.

Once I have outlined what **SV** entails, I will attempt to show how, in the case of the *Protagoras*, Plato demonstrates an awareness of the weaknesses that I take to be inherent in **SV**. This awareness is presented by Socrates presenting what is quite an un-Socratic conclusion at 345b-c. I will argue that this conclusion is formulated when Socrates takes motivation from his desire to seem knowledgeable at 339e, rather than his being motivated towards coming to knowledge. I will refer to this as the ‘Socrates example’. I will outline the characteristics of the ‘Socrates example’ with a view to considering how he could have avoided reaching his un-Socratic conclusion. Yet, as I will argue, since the error is generated by Socrates himself, there is no application of reason that would be sufficient to guarantee virtue, even where knowledge of the good of virtue is present. To generate this conclusion I will outline three distinct

applications of reason that may secure the claim that knowledge is virtue. However, by the end of Chapter One, I will have shown each one of these applications of reason to be inadequate to this purpose.

Objectives of Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, I will present my reading of the case of Alcibiades, as it is outlined in the *Symposium*. My first concern will be to provide a reading of Socrates-Diotima's¹⁰ speech in order to show how it should be understood as setting some of the groundwork for what shall be delivered in Alcibiades' account. This will allow me to show that the case of Alcibiades and his account of his experiences are also endorsed by Plato. It is, therefore, not the case that Plato intends the reading to reconcile Alcibiades's account, in some way, with **SV**. I will argue that the tension that exists between Alcibiades' account and **SV** is a tension that Plato is very much aware of, such that this tension inevitably manages to also find its way into the Socrates-Diotima account. Indeed, the Socrates-Diotima account will be shown to be such that while it fits some of the general parameters of **SV**, in other regards, it flies in the face of **SV**.

I will then turn to Alcibiades' own account of his *akrasia* as a legitimate rendering of the akratic experience, and as one that demonstrates legitimate features of *akrasia*. What I shall make clear about Alcibiades' account is that it is by his application of reason, and by the presence of the knowledge that such an application of reason generates, that he comes to reject the ascent and the greater good of virtue. I will outline his previous conception of good in

¹⁰ That Socrates recounts a conversation he once had with Diotima has interested and intrigued many scholars. For perspectives on this topic, see: R. E. Allen, *The Dialogues of Plato: Volume 2, Symposium* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), especially p. 46. See also: F. M. Cornford, *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), especially p. 71. For a reading of how Plato's understanding of love steps outside of the 'traditional' Greek understanding of love, see David M. Halperin, 'Why is Diotima a Woman?', in D. Halperin, (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 113-151. For an interesting feminist perspective on the role of Diotima in the *Symposium*, see Luce Irigaray, 'Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium, Diotima's Speech', in Nancy Tuana, (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Plato* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 181-195. See also, Susan Hawthorne, 'Diotima Speaks Through the Body', in Bat-Ami Bar On (ed.), *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Readings in Plato and Aristotle* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 83-97

various ways, all of which will amount to an understanding of good as power. Where power signifies nothing more specific than the capacity to attain whatever good that may take Alcibiades fancy. It is this conception of good, and all the pleasures that may go along with it that is undermined by the good of virtue. Moreover, it is by the presence of knowledge of virtue and an application of reason that see Alcibiades' rejection of the ascent in order to 'protect' his lesser good(s).

Additionally, I will show that the rejection of the ascent also represents a rejection of the future experiences of the good in virtuous actions. This means that his shame is not exclusively derived from past events but is the outcome of his knowingly pursuing ends that will be shameful in the future. It is his possession of a previous understanding, and a wealth of experience, of a previous concept of good that sees Alcibiades applying his reason to lesser ends in the future. This, of course, means that Alcibiades opts for this lesser good simultaneously to his realising it as such. I will refer to this previously attained knowledge as the 'problem of self-association'. I will return to this topic in each chapter in an attempt to determine the status of Plato's understanding of the negative role that reason may play.

The key points that I shall endeavour to show are: (1) it is by reason, and, (2) the knowledge that results from reasoning that Alcibiades comes to be akratic. Within the rational space of reason, Alcibiades demonstrates the capacity to take motivation from the knowledge of whatever good he wishes to be determined by. As I will show, the shame that Alcibiades experiences due to his selecting the lesser good and thereby rejecting the ascent is itself the output of the capacity to reason about and evaluate goods in relation to other goods. This 'capacity' to take motivation from the lesser good, in the presence and consideration of the greater good, is completely at odds with the idea that knowledge of the greater good is the sufficient condition for action. As such, I will outline the case of Alcibiades as Plato's initial rejection of **SV**.

Objectives of Chapter Three

In Chapter Three, I will turn my attention to the *Republic* and therein present a reading of Plato's psychology that is informed by the case of Alcibiades. I will appeal to the *Republic* to demonstrate how *only* the rational part of the soul can generate shame. This conclusion will initially be outlined to lend weight to my argument that it is by reason alone that Alcibiades generates his akratic experience. The shame that he outlines, I will show, is *necessarily* the outcome of the application of reason. As such, the akratic experience and the enslavement of the rational part of the soul will be outlined as the outcome of an application of the rational part of the soul itself.

I will develop this line of thinking with reference to the three parts of the soul, and by characterising their corresponding goods as the modality within which they must operate. With these modalities in place, it will be possible to determine the suitability of each soul part's capacity to generate the experience of shame. While any soul part may be the very subject of shame – as the part that has acted shamefully – it is only by rationally evaluating goods as goods that shame is generated. This account of reason is congruent with Alcibiades' account of his experience, and of his rationally generated shame.

Additionally, I will further outline how it is the motivational neutrality of reason that facilitates the akratic experience, and begin to develop the sense in which this application of reason can be harmful to the soul. A condition of reason that allows it to be viewed as a step removed from its own good, in order to assess the goods of each soul part, is precisely the motivational neutrality required to engage in the pursuit of the known lesser good of the soul. As such, it is not because the soul is comprised of opposing parts, or that it is in possession of opposing goods, that the akratic experience is generated but because there is a function of the rational part of the soul that allows the soul to take motivation from the known lesser good. Therefore, I will argue throughout Chapter Three for what I term the 'insufficiency claim'. This argument holds that it is not sufficient to conclude that because of the existence of soul parts,

or opposing goods, *per se* that *akrasia* is possible; rather, *akrasia* is possible because there exists within the soul the capacity to bring about an unfavourable resolution to opposing goods on the basis of an application of reason.

Objectives of Chapter Four

Seeking to further demonstrate the relationship between the case of Alcibiades and the psychology of the *Republic*, in Chapter Four I will present a reading of the Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and those who would reject the prospect of the ascent. I will hold that the knowledge of their imprisonment, going on **SV**, ought to be the sufficient condition for taking up the ascent, once such has been outlined as a possibility. Yet, there are a number of reasons outlined by Plato that would make the prospect of ascending seem less than appealing to certain character types. The possibility of rejecting the ascent will be informative in a number of ways. Chief among them, however, will be that those who take up the ascent and those who come to reject the ascent will do so based on the same knowledge: the knowledge of their imprisonment by ignorance and their enslavement to illusory goods. Yet, as is the case with Alcibiades, this knowledge will not take root in a positive way and it will therefore be rejected for the sake of the very things that imprison and enslave him.

The knowledge of the true value of the illusory good which comes from the initial stages of the ascent should result in providing the grounds to begin the ascent proper; that is, commitment to the development of knowledge and/or virtue. Yet, as I will show, this outcome is far from assured. Knowledge of being enslaved by illusions and illusory goods will, in one case, lead to a rejection of the ascent and, in another, lead to a commitment to taking up the ascent and to forsaking unnecessary lesser goods.

Yet, the crucial point is that the grounds for rejecting or taking up the ascent are predicated upon the same knowledge. If knowledge of the greater good itself can produce, in certain cases, antithetical outcomes, then surely this means that knowledge of the greater good

is not sufficient for action in pursuit of this good. With this in mind, I will outline virtue not as knowledge *per se* but as the commitment to live by the dictates of knowledge. I will argue that the idea of the commitment to goods can make sense of the contention that the orientation of reason will determine the outcome of the quality of actions and character. Thus, neither knowledge nor reason *per se* qualify as virtue. Indeed, in the absence of the commitment to live by the dictates of knowledge/reason, virtue is absent.

Additionally, in this chapter I will take issue with Irwin's conception of good-independent desires by examining the textual evidence in the *Republic* regarding the good of the appetitive part of the soul. This good will be outlined as a singular good situated within the three-fold modality of the good of pleasure (439d) and the power to easily desire it (573b). The capacity to assent to the good of pleasure, over and above the good of the rational part of the soul, will be outlined as a consequence of the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul that is presupposed by the capacity to care for the whole soul. The consideration of the good of the whole soul, as I will outline it, will require the rational part of the soul assessing and, in certain circumstances, assenting to the good of the appetitive part of the soul. Within its motivational neutrality, the rational part of the soul generates its own vulnerability to being enslaved by the appetitive part of the soul. Therefore, since the condition of generating desires for pleasure requires taking pleasure as a good, the desires of the appetitive part of the soul are good-dependent rather than good-independent.

Objectives of Chapter Five

In this final chapter, I will examine the *Phaedrus* whilst bearing in mind the conclusions reached in Chapters Two, Three, and Four in relation to the *Symposium* and *Republic*. Specifically, I will apply the modalities of goods of each soul part to determine the quality of the shame that Socrates begins to experience at *Symposium* 237a, when he begins to deliver his first speech. This is confirmed at 243b when Socrates states that he covered his head while delivering his

speech in shame. By my lights, this signifies that there has been a rationally generated experience of shame. I will outline this shame as the result of Socrates' desire to be considered knowledgeable by Phaedrus (this notion, it must be noted, bears a relation to the 'Socrates example' outlined in Chapter One). This lends a prospective sense to Socrates' shame, and, as such, this example can be taken as an example of Socrates' *akrasia*.

However, this charge of *akrasia* in Plato's new framework, is not be as damning as it would have been in the framework of **SV**. In the *Phaedrus*, there is no sense in which the beauty of one's beloved (or would-be beloved) will not undermine the dictates of knowledge, at least not in the immediate experience of beauty. At 255b-c Plato outlines the potency of the beautiful to be such that it will necessarily unsettle the rational part of the soul. This sets the rational part of anyone's soul at a disadvantage, regardless of the level of knowledge that the soul may have attained. What is decisive here is not the possession of knowledge but the degree to which a person can be committed to the good of knowledge and virtue such that, once the beautiful has been experienced, the soul will, through sheer commitment of the will, come to react in a just or appropriate manner. While I will outline the motivation behind Socrates giving a false speech to be of an erotic variety, it is crucial to note that he attempts to make restitution for such by delivering a second speech. Therefore, while Socrates' commitment to knowledge does slacken, it is of such strength that it is not removed to the degree that he will engage in erotic activities, or to the degree that he will not make restitution for his erotic motivation.

In many ways, the Phaedrean account of *akrasia* and the harmful application of reason will go further than what is outlined in the *Republic*. For example, the rational part of the soul is outlined as having the capacity to generate a sense of entitlement regarding the appetitive part of the soul having its fun (256a). Yet, as I will argue, a concept such as entitlement is something that steps outside of the appetitive part of the soul's modality to experience, or to consider, good. As such, the rational part of the soul, due to its being enslaved to the appetitive part of the soul, can work in tandem with the appetitive part of the soul to attain the lesser good

with increased ease. Where it was once the power of the rational part of the soul to rebel with the experience of shame, it can, at least in this case, provide a way to make it easier to live with opting for this lesser good.

VI. Anticipated Outcomes of the Argument

- (1) The ‘problem of self-association’: this problem refers to the negative import that previous experience and knowledge of a type of good can have on the ascent. This point goes straight to the heart of how it is habituation and familiarity with a previous good that can hinder the development of virtue. As such, the character formation that emerges in relation to the lesser good can come to be overly valued by the soul. The problem of moral weakness, therefore, no longer has to be thought of as the outcome or consequence of ignorance, since knowledge and reason are the requirements for rejecting the greater good of philosophy and virtue. It is precisely this problem that is at the root cause of Alcibiades’ *akrasia*, the *akrasia* of those who reject the ascent in the *Republic*, the Phaedrean lovers’ choice to act against their better knowledge (256 b-c). As such, the ‘problem of self-association’ is at odds with **SV**.

- (2) The ‘problem of self-association’ represents Plato’s rejection of the dichotomy between reason/knowledge and *akrasia* that is at the very centre of **SV**. Since the rejection of the ascent presupposes a level of true knowledge regarding virtue, such that the old goods can be threatened and subsequently defended, it is clear that Plato has abandoned the dichotomy he posited in **SV** between knowledge/reason and *akrasia*. By my lights, the very condition of *akrasia* is the application of the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul and the possession of real knowledge of virtue.

(3) The overwhelmingly positive role assigned to reason by Plato is effectively rejected because, at the very least, it contains the possibility of knowingly forgoing any and all of the positive ways in which reason and knowledge can enrich the soul. It is not, of course, the case that reason is bad or that it is ever completely ‘at home’ with its enslavement. However, reason can generate *akrasia* due to the role that it must be assigned in generating the conditions under which it will be enslaved. This is precisely the sense in which reason can be harmful. Additionally, as a consequence of this, the rational part of the soul demonstrates the capacity to ‘mediately’ take motivation from a knowledge claim. From within this very process of motivationally neutral assessment, it is possible for the lesser good to be pursued, and for *akrasia* to be generated. The case of Alcibiades introduces these ideas which are elaborated and expanded upon in much more detail in the *Republic*. In the case of the *Phaedrus*, this negative consequence of an application of reason will be shown to furnish the soul with the capacity to ‘power through’ shame and justify the attainment of the lesser good.

In sum, in this thesis I seek to show that the case of Alcibiades is considerably more significant to determining the Platonic account of *akrasia*, and the related consideration of what I take to be the rejection of SV, than has been suggested in the literature to date. As contrary as it may be to ‘traditional’ Platonic philosophical sensibilities, it is the rational part of the soul coupled with knowledge of the value of goods that are responsible for generating *akrasia*. As I will endeavour to show, the case of Alcibiades rationally rejecting the ascent, and the demise that this signals for SV, strongly suggests that he is perhaps the most instrumental character in Plato’s thinking on *akrasia*.

CHAPTER ONE

The Sufficient Condition of Virtue?

1.1 Introduction

To begin, I want to establish what the term **SV** entails.¹¹ To do so, I will firstly give a brief consideration of the accounts of **SV** to be found in the *Meno* and the *Protagoras*. Having outlined the major tenets of **SV**, I will move to outline how Socrates can be understood to be motivated by concerns that are not directly related to his knowledge of his greater good but of his lesser good. This instance occurs at *Protagoras* 345b-c, which, as I will show, is directly related to what is stated at 339e. I will refer to this occurrence as the ‘Socrates example’. I will argue that, with the ‘Socrates example’, Plato is pointing to certain problems that he is beginning to discern within **SV**. These problems relate to the types of experiences that the soul can have regarding goods. These experiences have a direct and negative import into the soul’s

¹¹ When I use the term **SV**, I am referring to the types of philosophical comments that Plato seems to be making within his own texts, and not necessarily to how a particular commentator has sought to interpret them. The passages of Plato’s dialogues often cited within the discussions around **SV** are as follows: (a) everyone desires the good (for example, *Meno* 77e, *Gorgias* 467c-e, and, since good can be substituted for happiness, *Symposium* 205c), (b) that knowledge of our greatest good can motivate in a direct, deterministic manner (for example, *Apology* 38a, *Euthydemus* 280b), (c) that no one knowingly/voluntarily does wrong (for example, *Meno* 77e, *Apology* 25d-26a), (d) that knowledge is the sufficient condition for action (for example, *Protagoras* 352b-c), and, (e) that knowledge cannot be dragged around by the passions and that contradictory preferences are not possible (for example, *Protagoras* 352b-c). However, while I will, for the most part, be concerned with the *Protagoras*, it is important to note that what I state in relation to it, the case of Alcibiades, and the *Republic* will be sufficient to reject **SV** in general and not merely its presentation in the *Protagoras*. As I shall show, the positive outcome of knowledge and interaction with Socrates is not what results in the case of Alcibiades. As I will argue, Alcibiades’ contribution to the *Symposium*, when read in relation to the Allegory of the Cave, displays Plato’s refutation, in both *Republic* and *Symposium*, of principles a–e. Finally, since in the text *eros* is ultimately bound up with knowledge and the ascent, I equate the transformative effects of *eros* with the transformative effects knowledge would be thought to possess within **SV**.

C. D. C. Reeve and Pierre Hadot each offer relatively straightforward examples of these transformative effects. Reeve notes of the transformative aspect of love: “[a]gain this cognitive achievement [marked by the progression on the ascent] is matched by a conative one” (*Plato on Love: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades, with Selections from Republic and Laws* (London: Hackett Publishing, 2006), p. xxxii). In addition, Hadot notes the transformative aspect of the knowledge generated by conversing with Socrates when he states the following: “the interlocutor, too, is cut in two: there is the interlocutor as he was *before* his conversation with Socrates, and there is the interlocutor who, in the course of their constant mutual accord, has identified himself with Socrates, and who henceforth will never be the same again” (*Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises From Socrates to Foucault* (Malden, Oxford, Melbourne & Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), p. 154).

capacity to reason about goods/ends, such that the lesser good can remain a source of motivation for the soul.

I will argue for two related points: reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are 'good', and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad (**T1**); it is possible to pursue a contingent aspect of a true good without any direct recourse to pursuing the greater good (**T2**). I will show that **T1** and **T2** are the very bedrocks upon which Plato presents the 'Socrates example'. As such, the 'Socrates example', **T1**, and **T2**, represent a way of demonstrating the inadequacies that are present in the claim that knowledge is virtue. Moreover, **T1** and **T2** represent a significant critique of **SV** because they demonstrate a way to understand how the lesser good can be pursued, even when the lesser good is something which, at least in the 'Socrates example', *should* be seen as something which is merely contingently related to the greater good. The 'Socrates example' displays Socrates' pursuit of the experience of seeming virtuous without him being concerned with actually being virtuous (that is, he is here, as per **T1** and **T2**, more concerned with his reputation than with his actual state).

Contrarily, I will outline three distinct ways to understand how reason could be utilised to support the claim that knowledge is virtue. However, by relating these applications of reason to the 'Socrates example', I will show that their application is not something that holds in necessary terms. As such, reason cannot be used to underwrite the claim that knowledge is virtue, in the terms that **SV** presents, since knowledge of the greater good does not necessarily have to generate desires/actions. Furthermore, I will outline how the capacity to perceive contradictory preferences could be limited to the capacity of perceiving opposing goods, without having the power to remove the 'good' aspect (as per **T1**) of the lesser or apparent goods. As such, the lesser good may be thought to retain the potential to generate desire (as per **T2**). Crucially, however, I do not wish to argue that Plato is presenting us, in the *Protagoras*, with anything other than his understanding and awareness of the problems of **SV**. Yet, with this

criticism in hand, it will provide a keen understanding of the types of ‘solutions’ that Plato formulates and present in works like the *Symposium* and *Republic*.¹²

1.2 Outlining SV and the Import of Reason

As a philosophical position, SV is presented in extremely clear and unambiguous terms. What it purports to show is that knowledge, in each and every case, is the only motivational grounding upon which actions/desires are based. The soul is fundamentally orientated towards its greatest good and so what is pursued necessarily represents what was taken to be the known greatest good. Below I provide a detailed outline of SV, with reference to the manner in which it is presented in the *Meno* and *Protagoras*. Before I begin my initial outline of SV, it is important to note that the problems that I formulate regarding SV will depend heavily on the *Protagoras*. I will, however, outline these problems in such a way as to demonstrate how the account of SV in the *Protagoras* can be used to problematize SV.

Michael Morris, who makes a significant contribution to this topic, has noted that the *Protagoras* “is in fact a very poor expression of the thesis that virtue is a kind of knowledge”.¹³ Morris’ insight was fundamental to my coming to the view that the *Protagoras* may be read as an articulation of SV that contains its own set of problems. However, with this insight in mind, I have come to the view that the problems that are to be found within the *Protagoras* are sufficient to understand Plato’s reasons for rejecting SV more generally. This view, however, is at odds with that of Morris. I shall return to this issue a little later but, for now, I will turn my attention to the *Meno*. At 77a-e we read: “So I say that virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them ... [a few lines later, Socrates asks] Do you think, Meno, that anyone, knowing that bad things are bad, nevertheless desires them? [After Meno states that he thinks people do indeed desire bad things, Socrates asks] And do you think that those who

¹² Although arriving at a rather different conclusion to my own, Wilburn makes a similar point regarding how the *Republic* is helpful in arriving at an understanding of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. See, ‘The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato and Moral Education and the Many’.

¹³ See, Michael Morris, ‘*Akrasia* in the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*’, *Phronesis*, vol. 51 no. 3 (2006), pp. 195-229.

believe that bad things benefit them know that they are bad?”, to which Meno replies that he cannot think so. From this, Socrates states: “It is clear then that those who do not know bad things to be bad do not desire what is bad, but they desire those things that they believe to be good but that are in fact bad.” Shortly after this, Socrates links the desire for good things with a desire to be happy (78a) and states that “no one then wants what is bad, Meno, unless they want to be such.” As such, no one has a desire to be unhappy, and, therefore, everyone always desire happiness and thereby always desires the good.

Due to the level of complexity contained in this short passage, it is crucial to set down in cogent terms what 77e actually asserts. I suggest that this passage intimates the following:

- (1) all desire good;
- (2) all desire the greatest possible happiness;
- (3) no one desires what is bad;
- (4) knowledge of the good (whether accurate knowledge or not) is the sufficient condition of action/desiring;
- (5) since all desire the greater measure of happiness, all must desire the real good;
- (6) the attainment of true knowledge of the good assures good/happiness;
- (7) no one, of their own volition, desires the bad;
- (8) as per (2), the real good is the only possible object of desire.

A similarly complex account is to be found in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates tells us that: “no one who knows or believes there is something else better than what he is doing, something *possible*, will go on doing what he had been doing when he could be doing what is better” (358c). From this (which is a summary of 355c-356a), we can add the following to our interpretation of SI:

- (9) since the greater good is not thought to be opposed by the lesser, contradictory preferences are not possible;
- (10) knowledge of the greater good is, therefore, *always* necessarily pursued;
- (11) since the pursuit of a lesser good in favour of the greater good is not possible, *akrasia* is not possible;
- (12) weakness of will (*akrasia*) is not possible because it cannot be voluntarily entered into;
- (13) the pursuit of the lesser is always involuntary and predicated upon ignorance.

Indeed, based on this reasoning, Socrates argues that “knowledge is a fine thing capable of ruling a person” and cannot be “dragged around” (352c).¹⁴ Yet, in a much broader sense, the claim being made by **SV** is that in knowing the good, the knower is compelled to act according to his knowledge. There is, as it were, no possibility of holding x to be the greatest good and simultaneously acting to attain action y (where y negates the attainment of x). It is not possible therefore for a person to be ‘overcome’ by desire to the extent that this would prevent a person from pursuing what they know to be the greater good. For example, as **SV** holds, if I am engaged in any course of action that will lead to my good, weakness of will cannot cause me to deviate from this.

¹⁴ This formulation of **SV** is such that it does not draw upon the question of Plato’s commitment to either psychological hedonism or the quantitative conception of value. Following Morris, I suggest a reading of **SV** that requires neither of these aspects to be necessary components of the *Protagoras*. For my purposes, the question of whether or not pleasure is the only measure of good, or that the quantity of such is the requirement for action, is not entirely relevant to my thesis. Indeed, the opposition that I assert exists within the soul regarding goods relates to how goods that are qualitatively distinct and superior from lesser apparent goods can be forsaken for apparent goods. For a detailed exploration of these issues, see also: Charles H. Kahn, ‘Plato and Socrates in the Protagoras’, *Methexis*, vol. 1 (1988), pp. 33-52; Santas, ‘Plato’s Protagoras and Explanations of Weakness’, *Philosophical Review*, vol. 75 (1966), pp. 3-33; David Wolfsdorf, ‘The Ridiculousness of Being Overcome By Pleasure’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 31 (2006), pp. 113-136; David Wolfsdorf, ‘Desire for the Good in *Meno* 77b2–78b6’, *Classical Quarterly*, vol. 56 (2006), pp. 77–92; Kevin McTighe, ‘Socrates on Desire for the Good and the Involuntariness of Wrongdoing: *Gorgias* 466a–468e’, *Phronesis*, vol. 29 (1984), pp. 193–236; and Rachel Barney, ‘Plato on the Desire for the Good’ in Sergio Tenenbaum (ed.), *Desire Practical Reason and the Good*. A contrary position is outlined by several scholars, including: Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and, Raphael Woolf, ‘Consistency and Akrasia in Plato’s Protagoras’, *Phronesis*, vol. 47 (2002), pp. 224-52.

In cases where I pursue a bad or a lesser good it can only be that it was some misunderstanding about the object of my desire that led to my pursuing it. As such, pursuing something other than my real good can never be explained with reference to a lack of motivation since my real good is necessarily what I seek. On this line of thinking, real goods cannot be thought to be such that they can stand in opposition to one and other. Of course, the occurrence of error is explained with reference to a lack of knowledge regarding the good. As such, where the many may hold, as per the *Protagoras*, that they are akratic because they were overcome by passion in the action undertaken, they are simply mistaken about the priority they assign to that particular end.

Nonetheless, as I will show, there are fundamental ways in which **SV** is misguided: I will argue that when new knowledge of the good is not congruent with an older conception of good, **SV** cannot readily resolve this problem, in the necessary terms that it seeks to employ. Moreover, if knowledge is virtue and the source of motivation, then opposing knowledge claims regarding the good would generate motivational conflict. This would mean that knowledge is potentially, inherently self-contradictory, a conclusion, which, of course, **SV** seeks to deny. To avoid this conclusion there would have to be an aspect of the claim that ‘knowledge is virtue’ that provides a way to explain how knowledge itself contains the capacity to assess opposing knowledge claims in order to avoid conflicting forms of motivation. But can this be a feature of knowledge? Of course, it may well be, but Socrates says very little to substantiate such a view. Yet, as I will outline, there may be a way to conceive of Socrates’ view that can lend credence to the principle that knowledge is equivalent to motivation. However, as I will show, such a reading will not be sufficient to ‘rehabilitate’ **SV**.

It might be suggested that when Socrates argues that knowledge is virtue, he necessarily always implies the application of reason, such that it would be a requirement of the principle that knowledge is virtue. Even if knowledge were attained by being taught by another, it would be clear that knowledge requires rational justification. That is, in being presented with

knowledge of x, knowing x would also presuppose having been presented with the grounds for accepting x, for the reasons a, b, and c. Additionally, if such knowledge granted the ability to perceive aspects of x in some thing or situation (as it contains a feature of x, in the form of a, b, or c) then the knowledge of x could also be thought to generate the capacity to rationally perceive the relevant aspects of some thing/situation. This understanding of knowledge implies the ability to rationally perceive some thing/situation and, almost simultaneous to perception, to apply reason to assess and recognise the relevant aspects of some thing/situation.

By such a process the relevant aspects of a situation could present themselves as the components that would allow for correct judgements regarding actions. In this case, knowledge and reasoning about specific things/situations can be understood to present the capacity to make the correct judgments because it generates the capacity to perceive the relevant aspects of a situation. From this we can discern a specific application of reason that seems vital to the claim that knowledge is virtue:

(R1) Reason can be thought of as an integral aspect of virtue because it generates the capacity to make the correct observations that lead to correct or moral judgement

In the framework of **SV**, all that would be required to act well would be the discernment of the true good, and action/desire would necessarily follow. In which case, **R1** would result in the corresponding course of judgement and action, and would seem to strengthen the claim that knowledge is virtue. Yet, what remains to be seen is whether or not **R1**, in and of itself, will lend validity to the claim that knowledge is virtue in every case, or whether it can, from within the terms of **SV**, be supported by some other feature of reason.

If **R1** is something that Plato believes to be a constituent feature of that which makes measurement something such that “it must definitely be an art” (357b), because knowledge, in the sense outlined, presents the capacity to discern the true from the apparent, then it is not at

all over-reaching to assert that reason is what underlies the claim that knowledge is virtue. This is very congruent with the text and the manner in which knowledge could be brought to the perceptual example that Plato presents (356d). That is, ‘knowledge’ that is possessed, in this capacity, is something that is ‘responsive’ to the various contents of perception, rather than something that is static or something that is without import in the changeable nature of the experienced world.¹⁵

With this in place, Socrates may be justified in thinking that knowledge is virtue because it generates the capacity to relate to things virtuously in and through the application of reason. The appeal to reason, in **R1**, might also be thought to be sufficient to overcome the problem of rivalling knowledge claims generating contradictory sources of motivation. As well as reason performing its role in assessing how to act, it may also be utilised to assess the content of knowledge claims and beliefs about the good that a person possesses. This further application of reason that relates to the claim that knowledge is virtue can be outlined as follows:

(R2) Reason is a part of virtue because it can be used to assess knowledge claims regarding the good, to identify the possession of contradictory goods.

This may mean that the Protagorean position regarding the impossibility of holding contradictory preferences would hold true, without reference to the possession of absolute knowledge. This would be most helpful for **SV** since it holds that knowledge is always responsible for motivation, and not merely that correct knowledge is the requirement for action.

R2 holds that an appropriate or genuine application of reason could be made to avoid

¹⁵ Moss outlines a position in which the rational part of the soul is that which can overcome appearance, and, as such, I take her position to be akin to my own. She argues that reason, in being capable of assessing the content of perception, can be understood as a correlate to experience. She writes: “The non-rational parts are those that unreflectively accept appearances; the rational part is that which can calculate, where calculation involves reflecting on and where necessary resisting the way things appear”. If reason is fundamental to the deployment of knowledge, as I hold, then reason and knowledge can be understood as ‘responsive’ in the manner that I outline. Likewise, Moss’ suggestion that reason can bring intelligibility to the content of experience is very much in keeping with my own view. See Moss, ‘Appearances and Calculations: Plato’s Division of the Soul’.

contradictory preferences, even where the knowledge claims reasoned about turn out to be false. In this case, the agent could be thought coherent, but simply wrong. Nonetheless, in addition to **R1**, reason could also be understood to grant the capacity to relate to the contents of opposing goods. If this is an appropriate way to understand the art of measurement, then the capacity to avoid contradictory preferences could be an additional aspect of measurement. The claim that knowledge is virtue, understood with reference to **R1** and **R2**, would grant a twofold capacity to make relevant observations and judgements about the contents of the experience and the capacity to discern the presence of contradictory goods within the soul itself.

In this framework, reason could be applied to avoid contradiction without it having to guarantee the validity of the knowledge claims it was reasoning about. Much like in the study of logic, this can all be thought to follow without the premises having to be true. On this reading, as per **R1** and **R2**, the agent of **SV** that acts in error, but not in contradiction, can be thought to be rational, in the event that he applies reason to avoid contradictory preferences and, on the basis of those, form rational judgements (as per **R1**). Opposing knowledge claims would not have to lead to contradictory preferences as reason could analyse and remove this error. Knowledge *per se* would not be thought to oppose itself motivationally because it cannot, with the application of reason, be thought to oppose itself epistemically. As such, for the claim that knowledge is virtue to hold true, both **R1** and **R2** *must* be applied.

Yet, whatever else this ‘epistemic resolution’ might involve, it is clear that since knowledge cannot be thought to oppose itself, the new knowledge claim would remove the emotive force of the older conception of the good. If this were not so then knowledge would not be a cure for ignorance and could not lead to virtue, since it would still be possible to take motivation from the lesser/bad and thereby act in ‘ignorance’. However, if neither reason nor knowledge had the capacity to render some experiential good, pleasure for example, into a bad then the ‘epistemic resolution’ assigned to reason would prove to be vacuous. That is, if knowledge of a greater good cannot be thought to render the previously good into a bad, within

the very modality of its being good, then an epistemic solution may not bring motivational resolution.

Indeed, if pleasure or honour may retain the ‘shine’ of the good without being so, it may well be the case that the soul can know *x* and perceive it to be the qualitatively greater good, but the presence of *x*, the application of reason notwithstanding, would not then be sufficient to necessarily remove the possibility of pursuing the lesser. As such, knowledge and reason may have the capacity to perceive contradictory ‘goods’ but, since they are insufficient to ‘transform’ a ‘good’ into a bad, they cannot, in and of themselves, ‘down-grade’ one good’s status. Since neither reason nor knowledge have any import into the status of goods *per se*, then contradictory goods and preferences may ensue, on the basis of their being perceived as such. In which case, neither knowledge nor reason would be sufficient to remove the possibility of *akrasia*. From this I outline the following proposition:

T1: Reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are ‘good’, and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad.

Therefore, if **T1** holds then the soul can, at the very least, be thought to retain the capacity to generate and ‘harbour’ contradictory preferences. As such, by the end of this chapter I will have formulated the first step in my argument that **SV** is deemed untenable by Plato. Indeed, with reference to the ‘Socrates example’, Plato can be understood as demonstrating his dissatisfaction with the major tenets of **SV**. That is, **T1**, coupled with **T2** (outlined below), can represent Plato’s presenting a line of thinking that suggests **SV** is untenable, and they are the bedrocks of his ‘Socrates example’.

1.2.1 The 'Socrates Example', Knowledge, and Reason without Virtue?

The main bone of contention, in the debates regarding the development of Plato's thinking between the period of writing the dialogues associated with *SV*, and the *Republic*, focuses on the *Protagoras*' denial of *akrasia* and what the *Republic* has to say about the possibility of a non-rational part of the soul possessing desires that do not seem to aim at a good. The *Republic* appears to provide an account of desires that categorises them as brute, lacking any sort of value judgement. By sharp contrast, the *Protagoras* ascribes just such a capacity to them. Indeed, the *Protagoras* seems to present the view that, since all desire is in pursuit of our good (the object of our desire), then the good must be known and, as a consequence, desired. Yet, as I will show, Socrates' reasoning in the *Protagoras* betrays a somewhat un-Socratic conclusion. This lapse in reasoning can be discerned at 345b-c, but, I will argue, is predicated upon Socrates' experience of being perceived as ignorant at 339e. I will refer to the lapse in Socrates' reasoning (due to him being motivated by the lesser good of seeming a certain way) as the 'Socrates example'.

Socrates argues that it is only by generating knowledge that a person can become good.

As he states:

[A] good man may eventually become bad with the passage of time, or through hardship, disease, or *some other circumstances* that involves the *only real kind* of faring ill, which is the loss of knowledge. But the bad man may never become bad, for he is so all the time. If he is to become bad he must first become good.
(*Protagoras*, 345b-c)

It seems evidently correct, and far from tendentious, to state that the absence of knowledge – ignorance – is how we are at birth, but it is not how we ought to remain. This must be the case since we need to develop some knowledge before we can desire a good. In the absence of such,

we would not be able to pursue any object. Hence, knowledge is an imperative since it is the precondition of desiring any end or object as such. Moreover, as **SV** holds that only accurate knowledge of a good can be associated with intentional action, the imperative to know and learn becomes more forceful. Yet, while much of the argument seems reasonable and Socratic, it is very much at odds with the other Socratic principles.

Indeed, there is something myopic about the line of thinking in this passage. For one thing, the significance of whether or not a good person cannot become bad seems to pale in comparison to the notion that the only real ill is the loss of knowledge. Yet, I am compelled to ask: ignorance is the state from which there can be no good but would not ‘continued ignorance’ also be a ‘faring ill’? Is it not, after all, this project of showing all the ramifications of their ignorance regarding virtue and the true good, that led him to act as the gadfly (*Apology* 30e), calling all to take up the path of philosophy? Hence he refers to coming to know virtue/the real good as: “the greatest good for a man [is] to discuss virtue every day...and [test himself] and others” (*Apology*, 38a). In light of this, the question of ills is one that forces a closer examination of the context in which Socrates is arguing. The line of thinking that Socrates is advancing is delivered within a discussion about poetry, but in the ‘heat’ of the discussion, it seems as though Socrates has ‘forgotten himself’.

Crucial to my claim is the motivation that Socrates appears to be drawing on in order to make his point. Consider 339e:

At first I felt as if I had been hit by a good boxer. Everything went black and I was reeling from Protagoras’ oratory and the others’ clamour. Then to tell the truth, to stall for time to consider what the poet meant, I turned to Prodicus, calling on him “Prodicus,” I said, “Simonides was from your hometown, wasn’t he? It’s your duty to come to the man’s rescue, so I don’t mind calling for your

help, just as Homer says Scamander called Simois to help him when he was besieged by Achilles: “Dear brother, let’s buck this hero’s strength together.”

Socrates is, perhaps, initially too concerned with the manner in which he will be perceived due to his ostensible inability to understand the poem.¹⁶ Indeed, there is a strong sense that Socrates, in addition to going on to be overly concerned with his reputation, may have already been motivated by such and speaking about something that he does not understand. Yet, rather than admitting his ignorance, he goes on to try to outdo Protagoras. However, he is motivated to do so not by his desire to learn or know but by his desire to regain the admiration of his peers, and not, as he states, due to a desire to understand the poem. If he does want to understand the topic, the context of the sentiments betrays that this desire relates more to his desire to *seem* knowledgeable and to be reputed for such, hence the reference to the ‘toppling of a hero’. Ultimately, Socrates is concerned with his reputation, where such relates to overcoming the intellectual capacities for which Protagoras is renowned. In doing so, he presents the view that the only ill is loss of knowledge (see 355c), and he does not think to include, as a real ill, the possibility of remaining ignorant. In this instance he is not motivated by a desire to know, as much as he is by his desire to not be thought of as ‘simple minded’. As a result of the knowledge that he was once held in high regard, and the fear of that he may not be held so in the future, he continues to argue simply to save face.

Socrates is therefore an example not simply of forgetting but also of being motivated by a secondary or lesser good: his reputation or his social standing. Yet, this good may well stand

¹⁶ Indeed, it is difficult not to see the significance of Agathon’s comment in the *Symposium* that: “Everyone turns into a poet, ‘even though a stranger to the Muses before’, when he is touched by Love” (196e). This point is much criticised by Socrates who shows that “love was neither beautiful nor good” (201e). As William S. Cobb notes, Agathon’s speech is: “elaborate [and] poetic [in] style and its superficiality of content”, *The Symposium and Phaedrus: Plato’s Erotic Dialogues (SUNY Series in Greek Philosophy)* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 68. Socrates, as a desperate lover, becomes very inventive upon recognising what he lacks. Yet, the arguments that he produces cannot be thought to be anything other than what might have attained his apparent good. Just as Agathon’s ‘god of *eros*’ turns out to be ill conceived, so too does Socrates’ position here in the *Protagoras*.

in opposition to the production of knowledge and virtue. It is for this reason that knowledge claims regarding the good, or rather what is taken to be knowledge, can be of such importance in being and becoming virtuous. Therefore, this self-knowledge, the knowledge we are accepting as grounds for action/desiring relates directly to what is considered to be the good in a particular event. The good of repute, in a way, is the good of others standing in a particular relation towards *oneself* and does not require any actual manner of relating towards them, other than, of course, what *seems to them* to be the case. That Socrates was not analysing the grounds of his motivation meant that his good presented itself without challenge. This lack of scrutiny regarding the quality of goods, allows goods to appear as unquestionably good. As such, **T1** refers not to goods that are unquestionable but to goods that simply have not been questioned.

Socrates is considered to be an intelligent person by all of the characters of the *Protagoras* and it seems that his identifying of himself as such is what leads to his forgetting himself; the good, in this case, is not simply the manner in which the others relate to Socrates but also his associating himself with that view. The latter point suggests that what is familiar – the manner in which Socrates and his friends are used to thinking of him – is the source of this good and it thus presents itself as being a real good. Self-knowledge, in the sense of Socrates remembering ‘his ignorance’ and not desiring to mask the said, would lead to a more fruitful conclusion.¹⁷ Contrarily, another type of self-knowledge can also, as is the case in the dialogue, be an encumbrance to the true development of knowledge and virtue. Here self-knowledge relates primarily to the type of good that the person is associating themselves with in a particular instance. Yet, as **SV** holds it, this type of self-knowledge, as a problem, can be ‘cured’ with the

¹⁷ Indeed, Hans-Georg Gadamer makes a similar point when he writes that: “Knowing one does not know is not simply ignorance. It always implies a prior knowledge which guides all one’s seeking and questioning” (*The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 57). Therefore, it is the knowledge that is determining Socrates’ desire to look impressive which determines the somewhat negative outcome of his enquiry. Elsewhere, Gadamer writes: “But this agreement regarding ignorance is the first precondition for gaining genuine knowledge” (*Plato’s Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 50). These sentiments are extremely reminiscent of the points that I am driving at here.

presence of genuine knowledge. However, in the *Protagoras*, Plato seems to at least, by presenting Socrates in this light, be aware of this problem.

As such, if virtue involves – in a necessary way – the manner in which we relate to others, it seems as though reputation may justifiably issue from virtue but this could not be its objective. Had Socrates been aware of the opposition between his ‘goods’, he may have formulated the point at 355c differently. The real danger here is that the familiar good by which Socrates understands himself can motivate action in an *almost* automatic sense. Hence Socrates transitions seamlessly between going “black” or concussed and outlining his argument with a view to seeming knowledgeable. Yet, the conclusions drawn are foreshadowed by an unnoticed motivation and an unexamined good.

Therefore, it is what is taken to be knowledge that is the real issue. Socrates takes motivation from the knowledge of how he is perceived and so, I argue, goes somewhat off the Socratic path. Had he taken motivation from true knowledge of the nature of the soul as lacking and the good he could have arrived at a more ‘Socratic’ conclusion. It is not the case that what Socrates presents as involuntary action necessarily involves a lack of knowledge of the good but, rather, that it is concerned with what is *taken* to be knowledge of the good.

Socrates seems to transition from his ‘black’ state of forgetting himself to retaking his project of learning what virtue is. His desire to appear as though he is knowledgeable and his desire to know what virtue is, in this instance, are contradictory. However, while they turn out to be contradictory, they are not in an intentionally so since his motivation seems to be somewhat undetected by him. However, it still remains the case that he holds contradictory preferences, but he simply does not perceive them as such. Therefore, it seems that if knowledge of the good is to be a source of motivation then there should not be any plurality of knowledge claims regarding the good within the soul. Since good now seems to be related to what is taken to be a good it can motivate us contrarily to what we would otherwise know to be our greater good. At the very least, this demonstrates a way to understand how it may be possible to hold

contradictory preferences: instances in which only one side of the contradiction is possible and can be pursued without reference to its counterpart. This will be particularly troubling for **SV** in the event that an unintentional/associated consequence of a real good, could be pursued as the good. For example, while good reputation (a contingent aspect) which may issue from being virtuous (the greatest good), it would be a contradictory preference to take motivation from simply being perceived to be virtuous/knowledgeable. Since this very example is what is present in the ‘Socrates example’, the following proposition can be applied to support Plato’s criticism of **SI**:

T2: It is possible to pursue a contingent aspect of a true good without any direct recourse to pursuing the greater good.

Indeed, it is by **T1** and **T2** that the soul has the capacity to accept a knowledge claim regarding the good as a good, without question. While this does not trouble the idea of contradictory preferences being held simultaneously, regarding the same event, it is nonetheless curious that knowledge of the greater good did not, in and of itself, as per **SV**, remove the lesser contradictory good as a source of motivation. As stated above, this would have been the outcome of the type of epistemic resolution that **R2** *could* bring. However, as mentioned above, there may be an additional application of reason that would remove this problem for Socrates’ principle that knowledge is virtue. For one thing, it is clear that Socrates is not himself knowingly pursuing his lesser or illusory good. The passage says enough to conclude that he is not aware of that which is really motivating him. As such, though it might be thought to simply be anomalous to **SV**, this could, it might be argued, be overcome with reference to a particularly dynamic application of reason. Reason could have been applied in a dual sense in order to deploy knowledge, as per **RI**, and also to continually examine the content and quality of the motivation that lead to the application of **R1**. This would mean that **R2**, the capacity to perceive

contradictory preferences, would be deployed on a continuous basis to ensure that new knowledge and motivation would always be assessed with reference to previous/current knowledge of the greater good. This application of reason can be outlined thus:

(**R3**) Reason can be applied, as a form of self-surveillance regarding the quality of goods, on a continual basis, so that contradictory goods are neither admitted into the soul nor are not experienced by the soul.

Additionally, to avoid the charge that my threefold categorisation of reason, as **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**, does not adequately reflect the ways in which reason can be said to be involved in securing the argument that knowledge is virtue, it must also be stated that there are no grounds for supposing that **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** cannot work in conjunction with each other. Moreover, since **R1** is not to be misconstrued as something other than a genuine application of reason *per se*, I understand the knowledge claims contained within **R1** – claims that lead to the capacity to make the correct observations upon which it forms moral judgements – to be such that this can, of course, be revised by the soul. The capacity to revise knowledge claims is, of course, a vital aspect of what reason is, and so **R1** would need to be open to the revisions that **R2** and **R3** may bring.

From this it follows that reason (as **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**) is a requirement of knowledge as it sees the deployment of knowledge (even that which may be generated by the most theoretical type of reason) in action (**R1**), the discernment of held contradictory preferences (**R2**), and type of self-surveillance, or self-governance, in each and every instance in which a good is pursued (**R3**). In the case of **R3**, reason would be responsible for monitoring the contents of the current motivation that pre-empted the interaction in the first instance. For example, a ruler may have a high level of knowledge regarding military strategy, act under this knowledge, but not have fully examined the moral content of the reasons for going to war. In this instance, such a ruler

would be acting under knowledge (**R1**), but the virtue of the enterprise undertaken would remain an open question (as **R3** is not present).

The ‘Socrates example’ makes it clear that motivation can be derived from sources unknown or obscure to the agent. Socrates applies reason to develop his position but he does not apply it to understanding the grounds for continuing with his point. As such, **R3** might be a possible exercise of reason and knowledge that would have generated the appropriate response from Socrates. Yet, that it did not places it fundamentally at odds with the theory that knowledge is virtue. For one thing, the ‘Socrates example’ suggests that Plato is at least aware of the manner in which knowledge of a greater good (learning) can be ‘put out’ of one’s mind, in certain instances.¹⁸

Simply put, Socrates came to take motivation from his known lesser good because he was not paying attention to his greater good. As such, while **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** could indeed have assisted Socrates, and, while they may lead to virtue in a broader sense, the ‘Socrates example’ shows that neither the presence of knowledge, nor **R1**, **R2**, or **R3**, have to be applied. That is, while **R1** may hold true, if **R2** and **R3** does not have to hold true then **R1**, in and of itself, cannot be thought to guarantee the validity of the claim that knowledge is virtue. Moreover, the idea of measurement is similarly incapable of validating the claim that knowledge is virtue. Indeed, if **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** were necessary features of knowledge, and thus a determined precondition of the claim that the presence of knowledge equates to virtue, Socrates would not, in the scenario of interpreting the Simonides poem, have argued under the motivation that he did. As such, if knowledge were to qualify as virtue, and the source of all motivation and action, in a

¹⁸ As such, where **T2** is applicable, consideration of the known greater good of virtue does not factor in coming to the judgement to pursue the lesser, as it is the knowledge of the greater good that has been forgotten. In this case, it is a momentary slip of the mind, so to speak, that is motivating the action and not that the agent has changed their minds about what is best. It is not the case, for example, that an agent can know that virtue is the greater good and then opt to be determined by a lesser good, the attainment of which being the negation of virtue. It is for this reason that my argument is limited to instances of *akrasia* where it is the good of philosophy/virtue that is being rejected in pursuit of lesser goods. Additionally, while this might seem like a weakness in my position, it is important to state that I hold it also to be the case that Plato’s thinking on *akrasia* is likewise limited to this concern. One of my reasons for this, as shall become clearer as I progress in this thesis, is that, for man, the only *real* goods are related to the development of the soul and, for this reason, to reject this is to reject the most decisive root towards that end. In this regard, the case of Alcibiades, which I outline in Chapter Two, is most informative.

deterministic manner, then surely the preconditions of knowledge and of measurement, understood as **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**, would likewise have to be determined by the same principle. Yet, as the ‘Socrates example’ shows, such a precondition does not have to be met.

It is precisely for this reason that Socrates can be motivated by something other than his knowledge. This is an extremely peculiar example, one in which Socrates draws un-Socratic conclusions in a text in which he advances Socratic principles. Yet, that the sharpness of contrast between his findings regarding poetry and the view that remaining in ignorance is not a genuine ill implies that Plato is attempting to draw the reader’s attention to something significant. I am not arguing that, when writing the *Protagoras*, Plato already had in mind the answers to these problems, only that the problems themselves seem to be concerning him in the dialogue.¹⁹

Yet, the ‘Socrates example’ can be read as presenting an instance in which neither knowledge nor reasoning could be considered virtue. For the reasons stated, it is clear that while knowledge, coupled with a three-step application of reason, may have the capacity to generate virtue this is not something that holds necessarily. As stated, it is the good with which Socrates associates himself that leads to his being motivated to seem knowledgeable to his companions, as per **T2**. As such, the ‘Socrates example’ suggests that it would be possible to pursue *a* good from the plurality of goods, as opposed to pursuing the greatest good. For, surely, it would have been a good for Socrates to state his ignorance and, from this, attempt to come to knowledge rather than being deterred from such by the opinion of his companions.

¹⁹ For a stronger view than this, see, Morris, ‘*Akrasia in the Protagoras and the Republic*’. Morris argues that, among other reasons, the idea of “knowledge being a fine thing capable of ruling” (352c) is at odds with what Socrates is arguing for in the *Protagoras*, since knowledge, as per **SV**, has to be that which rules in the soul. Yet, the language is better suited to expressing “the effects of appetites in the *Republic*”, and so we ought to conclude that Plato’s thinking in the *Protagoras* was not held by him “even at the time of writing the *Protagoras*.” I am not persuaded by this line of thinking. The statement could just as easily be interpreted as pointing to the level of difficulty of attaining knowledge in the first instance. That is, if the soul could be considered capable of attaining knowledge, then knowledge would be capable of ruling the soul. I will return to this topic in Chapter Three. I am, however, in agreement with the view that Plato is dissatisfied with **SV** at the time of writing the *Protagoras*. Yet, I argue that the problems that he identifies with **SV** in the *Protagoras* will, of course, shape the type of solutions that he subsequently formulates.

As to the contents of the plurality of goods, from which the lesser motivates Socrates, perhaps the most familiar principle or statement that is automatically associated with Socrates is his ‘admission’ of his ignorance. This is a characteristic of Socrates’ engagement with others in an attempt to gain knowledge, that which he lacks. In the case of Socrates it is as though the desire to know is the only possible outcome of him knowing that he lacks knowledge. Of course, this fits perfectly with the idea that knowledge is the sufficient condition for action and desires. Knowing that one lacks knowledge should lead to the pursuit of knowledge, without which, after all, there would be no way to attain any good. As such, this extremely Socratic notion is not quite knowledge but is rather the admission or realization of one’s lack of knowledge, where the knowledge of ignorance generates the desire to know.

It may very well lead to the desire to know virtue and even make it an imperative. From a Socratic point of view, this is the most edifying way to consider the outcome of such a realization. Yet, should not the knowledge of ignorance, and the resultant desire to know, also be sufficient to yield that outcome? **R2** and **R3** would not have been necessary if the knowledge of ignorance itself were sufficient to determine Socrates’ desires and actions by removing lesser knowledge claims and corresponding goods. That knowledge of the greater good did not accomplish this is strange indeed and it suggests that knowledge alone does not determine the soul in an immediate or automatic sense. How could Socrates have ‘forgotten’ his known motivational source, if such were guaranteed by knowledge, where **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** were conditions of such?

Indeed, given this occurrence, would not **R1**, **R2** and **R3**, likewise only have to be applied in a contingent manner, making both knowledge and reason unsuitable to determine action/desire and therefore not qualify as virtue, in the terms outlined by SI? Whatever the cause, the conclusion that Socrates desires to know virtue (coupled with **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**), can fail to determine action. It is for this reason that Socrates’ primary knowledge, and the resultant desire to know, can be overshadowed by a lesser good. As such, since neither reason nor

knowledge determine action in the manner **SV** purports they do, a plurality of goods and potential sources of motivation follow.

This conclusion is of the highest importance since it bears direct relevance to the question of whether or not the attainment of knowledge is sufficient to overcome, through some means, the possibility of being motivated by goods that are contrary to the greatest known good. The ‘Socrates example’ demonstrates that even the most dedicated philosopher could find himself in a situation in which his greatest good is undermined or undone by a lesser desire, which is itself based on an obscure knowledge of motivation and lesser good. As such, it is clear that knowledge itself, at the very least, seems insufficient to generate desires or action.

Moreover, since reason does not have to be exercised in order to oversee the deployment of knowledge regarding motivation, it is clear that reason cannot be used to underwrite the claim that knowledge is virtue. If reason is used in such a capacity its being so is certainly not a necessary feature of knowledge in the terms presented. That is, reason does not have to be considered necessary in either a sufficient or a deterministic sense. These points suggest in the strongest terms that, if the soul is thought to be determined in a sufficient sense, such will have to be found outside of reason/knowledge. Yet, this in no way shows that reason and knowledge are not fundamental features of virtue, only that the possession of both does not necessarily guarantee virtue. It seems as though there is some additional feature required to apply reason in the self-surveying sense outlined, which would ensure that motivation is drawn from knowledge of the greatest good, as opposed to *a* good.

1.3 Constructing Knowledge and Motivation from Experience

I must state that, from the aforementioned conclusions, it does not follow that knowledge is ‘dragged’ around by passions. It may just as easily turn out to be the case that the very pursuit of *any* good (where **R2** and **R3** are not applied) may presuppose a knowledge claim and that, as such, all goods are ultimately bound to knowledge claims. That is, after already assenting to

pursue any good, the knowledge of this good, as per **T1** and **T2**, might be used as the motivation for its pursuit. The passions themselves play an epistemic role such that learning of these passions, in and through experiencing them, may generate knowledge regarding a good. It is not invalid to hold that, in this sense, knowledge of the passions and the extent of their ‘goodness’ are derived and justified as good by experiencing them as such. **T1** and **T2** problematize SV because they suggest how the lesser good retains its capacity to be experienced as a good, even in instances in which this ‘good’ is simply a contingent aspect of the good of virtue. As the ‘Socrates example’ shows, **T2** presents the possibility of pursuing the good of seeming virtuous to others, and **T1**, in the absence of **R2** and **R3**, allows the experience to be had as an unquestionable good simply because it has not been examined. Yet, for these reasons, the good that is experienced as a good, whatever other shortcomings it may have, plays a vital role in coming to know what is good. In such a framework, it may be permissible to hold that the passions do not drag knowledge around since the passions themselves represent an essential part of constructing knowledge derived from experience. However, it would be incoherent to hold, if the passions are thus understood, that knowledge drags itself around.

Also, with knowledge and reason not being sufficient to guarantee virtue, it is evident that the presence of previously held knowledge can trouble the development of virtue. As such, there exists in the soul the problem of reconciling new knowledge with old knowledge regarding the good. In the ‘Socrates example’, Socrates demonstrates how previous experience with a contingent aspect of virtue could lead to the pursuit of a contradictory good. Since it holds that in the presence of the greater good, this was not sufficient to overcome the lesser good of seeming knowledgeable, would it not also follow that the presence of a previously held, lesser good, would potentially not be overcome by the new awareness of a greater good? (While I will provide a preliminary response to this question here, in the chapters that follow, particularly, Chapter Two, I will outline a detailed response to this question). This would be more likely, of

course, as per **T1**, if the passions were also involved in the epistemic process (where **R2** was not applied), as the passions would be a potential candidate for qualifying as a known good/bad.

A clearer sense of how knowledge can be derived from the experience of good, in a way that seems to generate epistemic, justified knowledge will be most helpful. Consider for example: a person decides that given their desire to live a healthy life, they should give up sugar. This is based on the knowledge that healthy living is a better kind of life. This desire is therefore predicated upon the desire to achieve what they lack and is thus a plan to remove a problem. However, as the days pass, this solution now becomes a 'new problem'. The level of pain and discomfort that goes hand in hand with this project is such that it is becoming too much to handle. They then state that this is a level of discomfort that they did not know was part of the project and so, with this new knowledge, consider their greater good to be the abandonment of the project. In this case, it is not simply their desire for pleasure that overcomes their knowledge. Rather, their knowledge heretofore was insufficient for making the judgement that they did. In this case, the opposition between goods and desires pertains as much to knowledge as it does to pleasure or discomfort. That is, their knowledge of the pain associated with their new course of action could be the knowledge required for abandoning the project.

The knowledge of the good of healthy living is therefore insufficient to over-ride the original goods associated with everyday living and everyday pleasures. It might be objected that the original view of what was the best way of living was supplemented by the knowledge of the pain of overcoming the old, and so the old conception of good, did not, by itself lead to the greater good being abandoned. Yet, this objection speaks for my point rather than speaking against it. The weakness of such an individual is explained to themselves as something other than weakness, but as ignorance overcome by knowledge. Such is to be found in the sentiment: 'if I had known the work involved, I would not have even bothered'. It is difficult indeed to see how this sentiment is not, at least, characteristic of *akrasia* generated by reasoned knowledge claims regarding the good. From this, it might be said that the rational capacity to perceive and

overcome contradictory preferences, the desire to change one's lifestyle, and the desire to remain as one was, are also capable of generating the capacity to pursue the lesser good.

Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith argue that Socrates holds the view that the onset of an appetitive desire can cause one to change one's belief "about what is good, but it never "drags around even belief..."²⁰ On this view, the idea of changing beliefs is outlined to show how acting with a new belief means that one is not acting against one's former belief. As it were, between time 1, time 2, and time 3, it is possible to move from time 1 (holding x to be bad), to time 2 (doing x because of a new belief that x is good), and then to time 3 (returning to the view that x is wrong). This is due not to dragging belief around but to changing one's mind about what is good and then at a later time reaffirming one's original belief. In such a case, why should the individual think that they are *akratic* because their pleasure overpowered them? Yet, a person could, as exemplified by my comments on the akratic above, perceive these positions, apparently held at different times, in one instant. This, of course, is not taking issue with Brickhouse and Smith, but rather highlighting how accounting for, and providing an explanatory interpretation of Socrates' position, will not surmount the problems of **SV**.

Therefore, Brickhouse and Smith's suggested solution is not entirely satisfactory as it is not only with reference to the temporal and proximal relation to the object of the desire that our beliefs regarding x change. Central to *akrasia* is not simply the opposition of pleasures and knowledge but the manner in which pleasure relates to knowledge. Objects of desire have the power to appear as good precisely because as they appear they generate new experiences and new levels of knowledge. Namely, what it is like to be in the presence of a desired object after a greater period of abstinence. In *akrasia*, the grounds for allowing the will to weaken are possible because knowledge and desire present themselves as opposing sides of the same coin such that the rational part of the soul *can* understand the situation not purely as an appetitive one but also as epistemic. As I will show below, the idea of measurement discerning the portion

²⁰ Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, 'Reply to Rowe', *Journal of Ethics*, vol. 16 (2012), pp. 325-338.

of reality and validity to be assigned to an object in order to remove the power of appearance is also insufficient to yield the conclusion that knowledge is virtue. This is to do with the idea of how the experience of engaging with objects of desire – where the agent attempts to reject them by not giving into temptation – can be taken to generate an epistemic aspect.

Where such is the case, knowledge could quite easily come to be the source of motivation for engaging in a course of action which, as per the example of our person who desires to live a healthier life, is both knowledge based and an instance of *akrasia*. This means that in generating knowledge claims regarding the good, the soul could come to take motivation from a knowledge claim regarding the good after, or simultaneous to, it being chosen. The grounds for it being chosen can be explained with reference to the ease with which it could be attained. Here the easy good and the greatest known good are completely at odds and contradictory. (This is a line of thinking that I will return to and better develop in the chapters to follow). Yet, that reason is assigned the capacity to perceive such, where the preconditions of virtue are not met, does not lead to the greatest good motivating action or desires (even in a contingent way).

Returning to the ‘Socrates example’, it is clear that Plato holds that something like identity is, in one way or another, the outcome of previously unreflective forms of interacting with the world around us. Moreover, it is clear that *this* particular type of ‘known’ good can stand in opposition to what philosophy reveals to be the good. Indeed, it is by such that Socrates, as per **T1** and **T2**, perceived his seeming ‘simple-mindedness’ as a necessary bad, and from this desired the contingent aspect of the good of virtue, namely seeming knowledgeable, as his only possible good. It is my argument that this opposition itself, between types of knowledge/motivation and genuine knowledge, comes to be perceived by Plato and, for this reason – among others – the position he comes to present opposes **SV** in the strongest terms. Something can be understood to be deterministic if, and only if, the idea of choice has been

removed. Yet, since it seems evident that there is something to oppose new knowledge claims regarding the good, this demonstrates the existence of a plurality of goods.

Furthermore, in different circumstances, this would present the possibility of the choosing of a good. This would trouble the idea that measurement would ensure virtue, especially where the good of social standing or identity is an option. This is so as the lack of insight on Socrates' part regarding the quality of his motivation, in an instance where his self-identity was threatened, could not be thought to be overcome in necessary terms. As per **T1** and **T2**, his contingent good was all that he considered and so he was motivated by it in an unexamined manner, and hence it appeared as his only possible good. Neither his desire to know, based on his knowledge of ignorance, nor the application of reason in a self-surveying sense, *had* to hold true. As such, the latter, if it were to be related to measurement being applied to the soul itself, in order to discern motivation, it would likewise not *have* to be achieved, since this is precisely what the example of Socrates shows.

While it is plausible that someone of the renowned mental fortitude of Socrates would perhaps have acted according to this knowledge of the greater good, had he not temporarily been absent minded, there is much to suppose that this would not have to be the case. This may mean that someone less suited to philosophy, in the sense in which Plato understands it, could know that they lack knowledge and the good of learning, understand the achievement of their greatest good, and nonetheless continue with the activities characteristic of their earlier good.

1.4 Further Reflections on the Significance of the 'Socrates Example'

Thus far, I have analysed the 'Socrates example' primarily with a view to showing how it allows us to determine what would have been required for Socrates to have avoided the situation in which he found himself. Yet, the significance of the 'Socrates example', when read directly in relation to Socrates, is most startling. The short-sightedness of Socrates' statement, as I outlined

it, refers to the vast amount of people who may not have any real knowledge, *per se*, to lose, in the first instance, such that the loss of it would be something to consider a bad or an ill. There is, of course, an additional sense in which the statement is short-sighted. The example itself is a demonstration of how a knowledgeable and rational person can come to take motivation from the lesser good. That this is not the consciously known lesser good does little to detract from the fact that this is, itself, an instance in which someone with knowledge can temporarily lose knowledge of the greater and take motivation from the lesser.

Indeed, read this way, Socrates' own words, no less than **SV**, can be understood to be troubled by the example. The 'Socrates example' can be interpreted as Plato seeking to 'bring the house down' from the inside, where the very terms of **SV** are rendered contradictory by the speaker who propounds them. This would mean that it is not the many who claim to have had the experience of their knowledge being dragged around by the pleasures who undermine Socrates' position, but Socrates himself who technically does not knowingly have an akratic experience, *per se*, but who unwittingly has one nonetheless.

By these lights, the loss of knowledge is generated by the absence of **R2** and **R3**, facilitated by **T1** and **T2**. That is, when reason is absent, in the form of **R2** and **R3**, there are aspects fundamental to the experiences of certain goods that have the capacity to suggest themselves in a manner that is most suited to seduce the temporarily absent-minded soul. That Socrates was in pursuit of a 'good' is enough to induce the presence of **R1**, since he worked rationally towards the object of his desire. In this sense, virtue will not follow by the presence of both knowledge of a good and the application of this type of reasoning. Judgments were made in relation to the appropriate objects of his knowledge but Socrates could not be thought to have been virtuous in the 'Socrates example'. Where reason is deployed to acquire the objects of experiential knowledge, the rational pursuit of these knowledge objects will not generate virtue in a way that is in keeping with **SV**. Indeed, that **R1** can be exercised in the deployment of knowledge and not count as an instance of virtue brings the entire project of **SV** into question,

in such a manner that it seems as though the claim that knowledge is virtue is, in fact, contradictory.

If there is any opposition within Socrates' soul, it is to be found with reference to the epistemic resolution that **SV** seeks (by **R2/R3**). That is, it is between what I have referred to as self-knowledge (which is exemplified with reference to **T1** and **T2**) and the greater knowledge/good that the former keeps beyond conscious awareness. That the soul can simply accept a knowledge claim without reference to reason or to another greater good that would negate the lesser is at the very core of the 'Socrates example'. That **SV** holds that knowledge is virtue, and that the 'Socrates example', when examined, presents itself as highlighting the conditions under which the greater can be ignored, yields the contradiction that knowledge/reason is both virtue and the absence of virtue.

It might be retorted that, to conclude, as I have, that Socrates' possession of knowledge would, in other instances, seem to have the capacity to meet the criteria to qualify as virtue, does not mean it follows that it generates a contradiction, in any direct sense. For something to be contradictory it has to be of the sort that the possession of the one negates the possession of the other. If Socrates, in the one instance, can be thought to be in possession of knowledge because he knowingly accepts motivation from it, and, in another instance, does not, would it not be more appropriate to speak of him being in contradiction on the grounds that he both has knowledge and does not have knowledge? This line of thinking, it might be argued, would make a much easier paring with the idea of the loss of knowledge statement, but, additionally, for this reason, Socrates is not in contradiction since in one instance he is in possession of knowledge and in another he is not. As such, he is not in contradiction at the same time, although he expresses contradiction in relation to the same thing. The claim of contradiction is removed, therefore, by simply appealing to the temporality of the unfolding events.

Yet, I would respond to this by pointing to the fact that the cause of Socrates' contrariness regarding the **SV** claim that knowledge is virtue, is 'rooted' within the very

phenomenon that he outlines as generating the solution to being motivated by the apparent good. Consider, for example, that Plato outlines the art of measurement as a one size fits all type of solution to overcome the apparent goods by generating the capacity to discern them, as such. While it may be the case that all apparent goods can be categorised on these grounds, it is in no way clear that all of the apparent goods would present themselves in a similar fashion. Moreover, this is likewise true for **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**. They too are assigned a ‘unified capacity’ to overcome the knowledge of the lesser, ‘a’ lesser that is not a unitary phenomenon and, therefore, does not present uniformly. This is further troubling to **SV** when we consider that an experiential good might not be detected by reason until the experience has already begun. Thus I must ask: would reason, considered in any way, be sufficient to yield the conclusion that knowledge is virtue? Indeed, measurement, as per the ‘Socrates example’, can be understood as the capacity to *both* generate the knowledge by which someone would be virtuous, and, as per **T1** and **T2**, generate knowledge/motivation that is ultimately predicated upon the apparent good.

All of the above occurs because there is no necessity, in either knowledge or reasoning, to relate the ‘goods’ that are currently being considered to other greater goods. For this reason, knowledge of the greater good, which would, in other circumstances, qualify as virtue is predicated upon the unsteady foundations of the soul’s application of reasoning about ends/goods. As outlined with **T1** and **T2**, the reasoning process can occur after having already experienced some of the good that it seeks to examine. Thus, reason must attempt to forgo the good of the experience being had, from ‘within’ the activities of engaging in the experience itself. It is from this disadvantageous position that reason can be forced to begin, having, unwittingly or otherwise, already assented to the experience itself. From this perspective, **T2** can be understood as simply continuing with the experience of a good, the experience of which is itself undeniably a good (**T1**).

While reason may have the capacity to take the soul ‘out’ of the experience to assess it properly, there is no guarantee that this capacity will always be exercised. What we see here is the undoing of **SV**, in the terms of the necessity that it outlines; Socrates (and the soul’s inherent susceptibility to goods) generates the conclusion that his possession of knowledge cannot guarantee the conclusion that knowledge is virtue. As such, since this susceptibility is always present within the soul and because the soul will ultimately encounter situations in which this susceptibility will be exposed, the soul is fundamentally ill equipped with measurement to assure and secure their greater good. That measurement cannot secure virtue in the presence of knowledge reveals that Socrates, no less than anyone else, is an example of contradiction for **SV**. Understood thus, Plato could be thought to be presenting the view that it is the soul that contradicts **SV**.

The merits of this claim, as I will outline throughout the rest of this thesis, are to be found with the applicability it bears for subsequent works of Plato. Consider, for example, that had Socrates’ error been pointed out to him, his character seems to be such that he would or at least could have acted differently. Socrates’ motivation and experience seems to have been generated by the absence of **R2** and **R3**, hence he seems to have been motivated by his honour, but how would their presence have overcome his situation in the case of someone whose ‘character forming good’ was that of pleasure?

T1 and **T2** represent the capacity to pursue lesser goods even for someone who possesses knowledge of the greater good because, in the case of **T1**, the soul cannot undermine the good of the experience from within the modality of the particular good itself, and **T2** allows the soul to take motivation from that singular, and unchallenged good. Indeed, it is by this process that a knowledgeable and rational person such as Socrates could be considered to have generated a situation in which he can interpret as an example of the only true ill, the loss of knowledge. That is, the ‘Socrates example’ presents an account of how the lesser, by the

singular application of reason towards a singular unjustified end, can usurp knowledge of the greater good in pursuit of the apparent good.

This framework readily lends itself to the idea of soul parts, and their respective goods, in the *Republic*. While the appetitive part of the soul does not yield to the rational part of the soul in a direct manner, the spirited part (the part suited to explain the ‘Socrates example’) can be understood as an ally of the rational part. The ‘Socrates example’ is an instance in which a person takes motivation from the spirited part without recourse to the rational part’s ‘blessing’. It is the absence of **R2** and **R3** that facilitates **T1** and **T2** so that the greater good is forgotten. This is comparable to stating that the soul has the ‘capacity’ to act without recourse to the rational part of the soul, as the guiding ‘authority’ on that which should be considered a good. That the modality of goods such as honour or pleasure cannot be undermined from within their modalities calls for reason to assess their merits from ‘outside’ of themselves. In the same way, each soul part, when experiencing its respective good is not fully suited, in and of itself, to undermine its good. This is very much akin to that which led to Socrates’ not perceiving his being motivated by a lesser good (as per **T1** and **T2**). As stated, going on the ‘Socrates example’, this would only seem possible when **R2** and **R3** are not exercised. Stated in the language of the *Republic*, the non-rational parts of the soul are free to desire and hold preferences that are not compatible with the rational part of the soul. Hence the requirement for the rational part to rule in the city (444e-445a) and in the soul in order to avoid disharmony (577c-578a).

Additionally, I cannot overstate the point that in the *Protagoras* it seems evident that Plato does not have any type of solutions in mind as to how to resolve these problems, outside of presenting a way to understand the problems themselves. Yet, in presenting the problems with **SV** in the ‘Socrates example’, Plato seems to present a critique of his earlier position regarding **SV**. In the *Protagoras*, through the ‘Socrates example’, Plato demonstrates an acute awareness of the negative effects that the modalities in which apparent goods present

themselves can have on the soul, character, and the pursuit of virtue. Indeed, that measurement is outlined as a uniform ‘instrument’ to debunk a phenomenon that does not present itself uniformly can be read as further pointing to his dissatisfaction with **SV**. As such, the problems in the *Protagoras* set the context for the type of ‘solutions’ and answers that Plato will have to go on to develop, in order to reconcile his new thinking with the problems of **SV**. As such, given the breath of its application to subsequent works, it would be strange if my reading of the ‘Socrates example’ represented a complete misreading of the text.

1.4.1 A Note on Akrasia

From what I have stated regarding the ‘Socrates example’, it is evident that Plato is aware of the manner in which experiential modalities can prevent the soul from immediately applying the full spectrum of reason to better understand the situation. Therefore, the type of theorising that he will engage with will: (1) account for these modalities rather than attempting to simply deny them as possibilities; (2) present a way to understand what an obscure motivational source would entail; (3) discern any potential ways for the soul to overcome the obscurities of (2); (4) reconcile the conclusions of (3) within his account of knowledge and motivation; (5) reassess his stance in relation to *akrasia* to determine whether it is possible; (6) if *akrasia* is possible, determine how it can be avoided; (7) account for how *akrasia* relates to moral development. As indicated above, the *Republic* takes on these issues directly, yet, it will be with reference to the case of Alcibiades, as he is presented in the *Symposium*, which will allow me to better set the context for interpreting much of what is presented in the *Republic*.

In the case of Alcibiades, we are presented with a first-hand account of the experience of *akrasia* that sees Plato providing an account of how previously held knowledge regarding the good can stifle the attainment of any higher grade knowledge/good. As per the modalities of experience that trouble Socrates in the *Protagoras*, the account of *akrasia* in the *Symposium* aptly accounts for it as an experience with a corresponding way of relating to knowledge claims

regarding the good. What we will clearly see is that, for Plato, the way to understand *akrasia* is not to situate it within an epistemic system, like he had done in *SV*, but to account for the experiential conditions and emotive/epistemic drives that propel the experience in the first instance. To this end, the *Symposium*, no less than the *Republic*, informs all seven points above, and presents a rich and vibrant account of the very puzzling experience that is *akrasia*.

While I will be committed to the view that, for Plato, *akrasia* is an experience generated by a particular way of relating to knowledge, I will be seeking to show how the soul can opt to be determined by the type of good/knowledge that it ‘likes’. I will not seek to explain *akrasia* as a type of experience that is fundamentally concerned with a lack of knowledge, or the realisation of such. As such, in Chapter Two, I will have much to say *contra* Agnes Callard – who likewise focusses on explaining *akrasia* as experiential – with a particular focus on her essay, ‘Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras’.²¹ I will argue that, though this work sheds new light on the topic, Callard has not done enough to explain the akratic experience that Alcibiades displays. I am therefore unconvinced that her position is sufficient to explicate Plato’s thinking on *akrasia*.

1.5 Conclusion

The reading of the *Protagoras* that I have presented, and my reading of the ‘Socrates example’, demonstrates an instance in which much of *SV*, and that which it purports, can be called into question. That Plato uses Socrates as an example of the problem with holding that Knowledge is virtue is extremely pertinent. For one thing, it suggests that Plato was indeed aware of the problems with *SV* and, for another, it provides us with an example that can reveal the characteristics of these problems themselves. While the *Protagoras* does not provide answers regarding the ‘solution’ to these problems, in presenting these problems, and their

²¹ Agnes Callard, ‘Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 47 (2014), pp. 31-80.

characteristics, Plato provides us with an understanding of the nature of the problems themselves. The preconditions of the claim that knowledge is virtue, measurement, with reference to **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** outlined above, for example, can be supplemented as a means to assess what would have avoided the problems that Socrates encountered. Indeed, that **R2** and **R3** were absent from the ‘Socrates example’ suggested a way to understand how his error occurred, and which further suggested may use of **T1** and **T2** as an explanation as to why Socrates comes to his error. Such will be most informative regarding coming to an understanding of the texts that follow the *Protagoras*, in the manner in which it relates to the *Republic* and *Symposium*. Moreover, using the *Protagoras* to provide a context for these dialogues, may allow us to better understand these dialogues themselves.

Indeed, what the *Protagoras* provides is a way to better understand the significance of the concept of *akrasia*, because it contains the first insight into the nature of the problem. This topic, in the *Symposium* and the case of Alcibiades, can be read as generating a monumental shift in Plato’s thinking in relation to his understanding of the soul, and the role and effect that reason and knowledge have on the will, and the soul. Yet, it is here, that the *Protagoras* can be read as presenting the initial problems that Plato comes to have with **SV**. This will provide the sharpest of tools to allow the reader to come to an understanding of his new position.

As argued above, **SV** takes the presence of knowledge and ignorance to be binary and mutually exclusive, such that the presence of the latter negated the presence of the former and the presence of the former, understood as the ultimate ‘cure’ for the latter, removed the latter. However, that the ‘Socrates example’ problematizes this, leaves it an open question as to whether the presence of knowledge would be the cure to ignorance. Indeed, that Socrates is in possession of knowledge/goods that are contradictory and that he applies **R1** to obtain the object of his knowledge forced me to conclude that the rational deployment of knowledge was generated but, in doing so, the claim that knowledge is virtue had been reduced to contradiction from within its own terms. Where **SV**, more generally, employs the sharpest of dichotomies

between knowledge/reason and *akrasia*, it is clear that Plato may no longer hold this to be the case.

CHAPTER TWO

Alcibiades, *Akrasia*, and the Fetish for Falsity

2.1 Introduction

The scholarship in the area of SI and *akrasia* has recently been revitalised via input from numerous prominent philosophers. The overwhelmingly dominant strategy within the literature has been to focus on the question of whether or not the Plato of the *Republic* comes to reject intellectualism. However, I will argue that the question of the possibility of *akrasia* has not yet been adequately formulated. This is, in no small part, due to the level of credence given to comparing and contrasting **SV** with the status of desires in the *Republic*. For this reason, rather than beginning with an investigation into the *Republic*, I will concentrate on Plato's *Symposium* and the manner in which it can contribute to the question of *akrasia vis-à-vis SV*. My reading of the dialogue situates Alcibiades within the core of Plato's thinking here and so I will suggest that, once the full significance of his contribution is discerned, this dialogue can yield new insight into this question. Specifically, I will contend that Alcibiades rejects philosophy on the grounds that it requires him to surrender much of what he had, up until that point, known or considered to be good.

This idea of a 'prior good' is precisely the 'good' that he pursues in the full knowledge of how detrimental it is to him. I am, of course, taking it as something of a given that Plato assumes that the reader is familiar with the intricacies of Alcibiades' life: his infamy, noted capacity to pursue his greater interests (the numerous times that he switched sides in the Peloponnesian War, notwithstanding),²² and his apparently unwavering ability to cunningly

²² Moreover, that Alcibiades' death (404BC) occurs in the same year as Athens eventually loses the Peloponnesian War, is most significant. For the fate of Alcibiades, his political aspirations, his desire for power – no less than those of Athens itself – are intertwined and, ultimately, lead to abject defeat and death. These matters, of course, would have been apparent to Plato's contemporary readers, and so it would be curious indeed if Plato, in including Alcibiades, did not intend the reader to perceive him in this way. In light of this, the presence of Alcibiades, his contribution to the *Symposium*, and the much commented upon dramatic effect he has upon the dialogue, can and

side-step anything that hinders his attainment of what he perceives as his good. Thus, I will outline his good in direct relation to his desire for power, where power itself can be understood as being a constituent feature of his good. This good is precisely the prior good that leads to him side-stepping his knowledge of the greater, but much more difficult to attain, good of virtue.

That being stated, an obvious objection to my argument is the following: while Plato does indeed have Alcibiades describe his experience as he does, it would be misguided to think that Plato supports it. Plato may well intend us to reinterpret it from within the parameters of **SV**. Yet, there is good reason for thinking that Plato does not have such in mind. Therefore, I will argue that, along with Alcibiades' description of freely choosing his bad, Plato intends the reader to accept the description as his own. To address this issue, I will outline how Socrates-Diotima's speech can be read as Plato preparing us for Alcibiades' contribution. The text itself can be read as displaying something of the tension that exists between **SV**, the denial of *akrasia*, and the manner in which Plato comes to reject these viewpoints. Moreover, that Alcibiades' description can be read as fitting into the Socrates-Diotima account suggests that this tension is intended as such and that, in addition, we should accept Alcibiades' description as representing Plato's thinking just as much as Socrates-Diotima's account does.²³

should be read with a tremendous sense of foreboding (especially by contemporaries of Plato), from reflecting on the already noted tumultuous past.

²³ For this reason I cannot agree with sentiments which privilege Socrates-Diotima's account over Alcibiades' contribution to the dialogue. This view is so pervasive in the literature that iterating it here would be rather pointless. However, one example which typifies this view is Thomas Gould's suggestion that "Diotima...is the high point of that dialogue" (*Platonic Love* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 1-2). See also Kenneth Dover, who writes of Alcibiades' speech that it contains: "so much unjustified and impulsive assertion and so little rigorous argumentation" (*Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 6). However, I am in agreement with Martha Nussbaum when she notes of Alcibiades' speech that "there are some truths about love that can be learned only through the experience of a particular passion of one's own" (*The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 185). Elsewhere she writes, of Alcibiades' account, that it "contains the most serious objection raised in the *Symposium* against Socrates' programme for the ascent of love" ("The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*", *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 3 no. 2 (1979), pp. 131-172). While I agree with this sentiment I do not read the speech of Alcibiades to be presenting an alternative account of love. Rather it presents the unfortunate problems that emerge when trying to incorporate new levels of knowledge into an already existing understanding of the good. Indeed, as I will show, Alcibiades' love is that which Socrates-Diotima refers to as "treacherous love". Sheffield argues, contrarily to Nussbaum, that Alcibiades' speech "works closely together with Socrates" (*Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire*, p. 185) because it "shows us the philosopher is a complex mixture of the human and the divine" (p. 196). And so, "we need not choose between the pursuits of the divine wisdom and the engagement with others" (p. 206). However, as was the case with Nussbaum, while I can agree with these sentiments, I must add that there is a very palpable distinction that can be drawn between the manner in which Socrates relates to the struggle of living by his knowledge and the manner in which Alcibiades does. Not to mention

For the purposes of clarity, I have separated this chapter into three parts. In 2.1, I will examine Socrates-Diotima's account of love, focusing on how actively working towards higher levels of knowledge of the beautiful demarcates the stages of the ascent. In 2.2, I will outline Alcibiades' love for Socrates, and his simultaneous rejection of philosophy, as an account of *akrasia*. I will argue that Alcibiades, in refusing to 'surrender' the application of his previous good (even though his interaction with Socrates has led him to the knowledge of its value), demonstrates that he knowingly acts under a lesser conception of good.²⁴ Finally, in 2.3 I will argue that Alcibiades' account displays abilities that set his experience outside of the framework of **SV**, such that he can be thought to knowingly, and voluntarily, pursue what he knows to be bad. Ultimately, I will argue that the case of Alcibiades is a case of *akrasia* precisely when he refuses to continue in his philosophical dialogue with Socrates. Yet, crucially, I will show how it is from within this rational activity that he clearly discerns the demise of his previously understood good, and from this he forcibly takes himself away from Socrates' company. This represents an instance of inverted intellectualism and is utterly at odds with **SV**. It is by reason that Alcibiades comes to see his greater good, and it is by his rationality that he can opt to continue to be motivated by and towards his earlier conception of good.

2.2 Socrates-Diotima: The Labours of *Eros* and Treacherous Love

Socrates begins his contribution to the *Symposium* by outlining a facet of love that seems to have gone unnoticed by the previous speakers, namely that love is love of something that is not

Alcibiades' blatant refusal to continue engaging in the process of generating new levels of knowledge, particularly when 'new' requires surrendering his previously 'obtained' goods.

²⁴ It might be objected that I am reading Alcibiades' description of his love of Socrates inaccurately due to him being an honour-lover rather than a lover of wisdom (for a reading of Alcibiades' lack of suitability for being akratic, see Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire*, especially p. 238. I take issue with her on this point, see n. 19). Yet, my argument suggests that, whatever else he may love, he also displays love for virtue and, by the sharpest contrast, the good that both his looks and his reputation for bravery (however difficult this may have been to achieve) can bring him is attained with the greatest ease. It is this easy good that he seeks to preserve and it is for this reason that he refuses his known greater/real good (a good that only philosophy can generate for him). Since Alcibiades displays love of honour and virtue, neither his knowledge nor his love of virtue are sufficient to cause him to do what he knows to be best. That he is, in some fundamental way, a lover of honour does not detract from the point, for in instances in which honour is not a factor he acts against his knowledge of virtue in favour of his lesser good.

already possessed (200a). Love is love of something (as opposed to love of nothing (199e)) and it is clear that Socrates intends us to think of love as the desire to possess the good that we lack. Since love needs beauty (201b) and good (201c), the objects of its affection are those that are believed to be good/beautiful. The act of loving therefore suggests that it is precisely the nature of love, and of those who love, to be fundamentally in need of the beautiful and the good. In love, it seems, no one desires or pursues objects that are bad, ugly, or fearsome.

After arguing that love is best characterised as being “in between [a] god and a mortal” (202e), Socrates-Diotima progresses quickly to add that love is love of the beautiful and, since “wisdom is extremely beautiful” (204b), love is a lover of wisdom. Wisdom is an object of love precisely because the possession of this extremely beautiful ‘thing’ will generate happiness (205a). The latter is said to be a desire that “is common to all” (205a). As such, *qua* loving, the embodied soul is thought to be fundamentally lacking in goodness, beauty, and wisdom. It is this wisdom which is thought to be the object of love since it relates to the best way to satiate love. Therefore, there are objects which will satiate love and generate true happiness and there are those that will not do so.

This introduces the idea of loving correctly; that is, of pursuing objects which can be thought to ‘fill’ this lack. As Socrates-Diotima states at 205d: “every desire for good things or for happiness is ‘the supreme and treacherous love’ in everyone.” It seems, therefore, that love must pursue what is thought to be good but only certain objects will or can, in fact, generate the good. This point relates directly back to the speech of Aristophanes who stated that love is the pursuit of wholeness achieved by union with one’s other half (193a). But as Socrates-Diotima would have it: “a lover does not seek the half or the whole, unless...it turns out to be good as well” (205e). This, again, is an extremely Socratic point given that what individuals pursue is not some illusion of good but rather their actual good. Nevertheless, since there is a contrast referred to between types of love – in that one can love correctly or incorrectly – it is clear that Plato does not intend us to infer that love will, in and of itself, lead to “supreme” love.

“Supreme” love is related to the desire for wisdom and happiness and also to having the good forever. The object of love is linked to the good and immortality on the grounds that individuals “want the good to be theirs forever” (206a)”. All love is a manifestation of “wanting to possess the good forever” (206b) and this is achieved in reproduction “and birth in beauty” (207e). Love’s object, therefore, is not beauty but generating in beauty. This goal is achieved by giving birth to physical children and to children of the soul. The latter kind of ‘children’ are “wisdom and the rest of virtue...and the most beautiful part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of cities and households, and this is called moderation and justice” (209a-b). Such children are said to be more desirable (209e) than physical children. Yet, Socrates-Diotima’s account does not say that reproducing physical children is bad; indeed, this is also a route towards immortality and, as such, it is at least an adequate manifestation of love. Therefore, this type of reproduction in beauty should not be thought of as the “treacherous” form of love. The only substantial candidate for such a designation, I will argue, is the love that will not surrender the lesser good for the greater good.

Those who are pregnant in mind will, under the correct conditions, develop the ability to bear such children but there are various conditions outlined regarding how this process must be undergone if virtue is to be generated. The generation of qualities is outlined as an ongoing process; in the same way as a body continually regenerates itself over time, so too the soul (re)generates its qualities over time. As Socrates-Diotima explains: “And it’s not just in his body, but in his soul, too, for none of his manners, customs, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, or fears ever remains the same, but are coming to be in him while others are passing away” (207e). The first point that I wish to stress here may seem somewhat facile: it is clear that neither the body nor the soul can achieve this type of reproduction automatically. The body needs to be provided with nutrition to sustain itself (and this requires both knowledge and action) and

the soul too needs education (knowledge and instruction) if it is to flourish and attain both happiness and the good.²⁵

For these reasons, there is no passive sense to reproduction; reproduction involves knowledge, work, and the commitment to bringing about all that the soul lacks. Of course, since any activity that can be undertaken can be done poorly or well, it follows that there will be productive and non-productive ways of achieving the objects of love. Indeed, just as poor nutrition will lead to poor health, so too the soul will likewise be undernourished in the absence of the proper nourishment: education in relation to virtue. Indeed, Socrates-Diotima outlines how this education should be undergone: if these matters are pursued correctly and the leader “leads aright” (210a-b) then there is a specific ordering of how to progress in developing an appreciation of the beautiful.

The phrase, ‘leads aright’, is quite significant here. For one thing, it suggests that learning involves more than the simple transference of knowledge since the subject matter, as stated, refers to ways of loving and appreciating beauty. Therefore, leading correctly on the ascent could refer to something other than teaching in a purely epistemic manner. It might, as I outline below when discussing Alcibiades’ attempted seduction of Socrates, involve teaching by example²⁶ (where ‘by example’ signifies allowing one’s actions to embody appropriate

²⁵ This point is well made by Sheffield when she writes: “[i]f we desire to possess good things and happiness, or anything at all for that matter, this is something that must be realized in various actions and productions if it is to be had at all” (*Plato’s Symposium: The Ethics of Desire*, pp. 109-110; see also: p. 105, p. 107, and p. 112). This point will be of significance when discussing what motivates Alcibiades to reject his interactions with Socrates. If the reproduction of virtue requires work, of a particular sort, it is this work that Alcibiades will not engage in.

²⁶ Irwin refers to the educational effects of love as follows: “Plato speaks of the effects of love as ‘educating’ or moulding” (*Plato’s Ethics*, p. 311). See also, John M. Rist, *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), especially p. 24; and, Paul Friedländer, *Plato, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 68. Commenting on how Plato understands the nature of the philosophical way of life, John M. Cooper states that it would involve “the attendant restriction of bodily gratification and the curtailment of other sorts of pleasant pursuits” (‘Psychology of Justice in Plato’ in John M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 138-149). Or, as Gould cogently notes: “[w]hatever the historical Socrates [the Platonic lover *par excellence*] was like, in the *Symposium* he is deliberately depicted as having been totally without sexual desire” (*Platonic Love*, p. 41). My point here, however, is not that Socrates does not possess such desires but that he does not allow them to motivate him. Rather, it is much more in keeping with Irwin when he writes: “that the just man chooses just actions...because it fulfils his desire to embody justice in his actions and in the world” (*Plato’s Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 256-257). Indeed, it is, as A. W. Price notes, by such that: “The lover’s potential ideas and virtues are to become actual as part of the mental life of both lover and beloved” (*Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford:

forms of valuing and appreciating beautiful objects). As such, the activities involved could themselves be understood to be, in a specific relationship, conditions for loving correctly.

As it were, in being committed to the good and happiness, we are committed to the beautiful in all of its guises and to beauty in itself. If the various stages on the ascent involve work, both the work of generating knowledge and of living by this knowledge, then it is by engaging in this work that happiness and the good are attained. At no stage on the ascent is the preoccupation with possessing the good and happiness not a conscious factor. Indeed, at the beginning of the ascent it is conceivable that it may be the only factor. Reproducing in beauty is the means by which this is achieved and so it is fitting that every stage of the ascent will be represented by a conception of beauty and a resultant good. Virtue signifies, among the other qualities mentioned, appropriate ways of valuing and interacting with beautiful objects.²⁷ Moreover, as each stage of the ascent also marks new appropriate ways of engaging with beautiful objects and beautiful bodies, there would seem to be a very fixed ‘modality’ of interacting with and appreciating beautiful objects. Such ‘modalities’ need to be engaged with if the interaction is to be deemed virtuous. Beautiful bodies can be said to motivate others into desiring to generate the good but it would be misguided – as will emerge through the case of Alcibiades – to think that a beautiful individual can use their beauty to motivate others into doing what they wish. I will return to this point below.

For now it suffices to state that what might be termed the modalities of beauty/virtue can be misapplied and, by so doing, generate a concern for a good that does not lend itself to

Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 28). Thus, were Socrates to ‘give in’ to pleasure, the significance of temperance and virtue would be lost on Alcibiades. Yet as I will argue, the guide’s desire to transfer knowledge might not be unproblematic.

²⁷ This is an idea that was first introduced early in the *Symposium*, when Phaedrus argued that love can motivate soldiers into acting finely before their beloved, and there is little said in Socrates-Diotima to contradict this quality of love (cf. 178e-179b). I take such comparisons to justify a reading of the text that seeks to relate the speeches to one another. That Alcibiades’ speech should be read as significant is captured in spirit by Stanley Rosen when he states that “every speech within the *Symposium* attempts to make something visible” (*Plato’s Symposium* (Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), p. 198). Indeed, the strategy of reading the speeches as interconnected is employed by several scholars: see Eva Stehle, *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece: Non-dramatic Poetry in its Setting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 222; W. S. Cobb, *The Symposium and Phaedrus: Plato’s Erotic Dialogues* (SUNY Series in Greek Philosophy), p. 12. See also, Reeve, *Plato on Love*, p. xxii.

the good or immortality. In this manner, Socrates-Diotima's account can be read as providing a philosophical grounding for understanding what a negative type of love would look like. As I will show, Alcibiades is not working towards his greatest known good. Hence his good and love are, from a Platonic framework, self-defeating or impotent. Yet, crucially for my argument, these cannot be considered to be such in an involuntary manner, as **SV** would explain it, since his approach is self-defeating in the full knowledge of it being so. And it is this type of love that is best suited to Socrates-Diotima's reference to treacherous love.

2.3 Alcibiades' Treacherous Love and *Akrasia*

In the case of Alcibiades, this treacherous love resides in a desire, as I will show, to avoid giving up the devotion to the easily attained good. By contrast, the work of love that leads to the possession of the good, and any of the constraints that this might involve, must be completed even if this negates the attainment of the 'good' of treacherous love. Indeed, the conditions of reproduction on the ascent require not simply knowledge of the objects of love but also action that adheres to this knowledge. If knowledge does not of necessity generate a commitment to acting upon this knowledge, it seems that our commitment to acting upon this *new* knowledge must be understood to be separate from this knowledge. That is, as something dependent upon our *also* already desiring to act on knowledge, where the new necessarily somehow replaces the emotive force of the old knowledge of the good. As demonstrated by the 'Socrates example', outlined in Chapter One, it is clear that for this process to occur it is something of an achievement rather than something which automatically follows. As such, and this point resides at the very core of 'treacherous love', our previously held knowledge of what is good, now seen as inadequate or even incorrect, could continue to govern our desires and actions. Treacherous love should not be understood to be motivated by misconceptions of good but by holding the said love in reverence. As I will show, it is Alcibiades' previous knowledge of good (though seen to be a source of his problems) that continues to motivate him.

A further aspect of the *Symposium* that displays a contrast between it and dialogues that appear to outline an intellectualist position is the mention of the Form of Beauty. Even the most undiscerning of readers will no doubt see that the object of love, now said to relate to the Form of Beauty, is more akin to the Plato of the middle period than it is to the earlier period. Consideration of the Forms is, of course, discussed in detail in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, to name but two dialogues from the middle period. Reference to the Form of Beauty suggests just how closely related the *Symposium* is to the middle work of Plato. Yet, does Plato intend us to read this ‘merger’ of the early dialogues and the middle dialogues as unproblematic? There is much to suggest that Plato is keenly aware of the disjoint between **SV** and what he suggests with the case of Alcibiades. As it were, in arguing that Plato does in fact come to reject some of the major tenets of **SV**, I suggest that Alcibiades’ eulogy of Socrates should be understood, by definition and intention, to be Plato’s farewell to **SV**.

SV demands that we strive for our actual good, and from this it follows that our actual good should be something that is attainable. This is where commitment on the ascent or, more to the point, where transitioning from a basic understanding of the soul, beauty, and the good to a more comprehensive understanding is pivotal. Indeed, if such a transition is not possible then the ascent might be an effective theoretical way to understand love without it being something that can be ‘cashed out’ in everyday life. Luckily, Plato present us with an in-depth outline of how a person in love – Alcibiades – experiences and understands virtue, beauty, and the good. As I will show, in one regard Alcibiades does, in fact, fit the mould of **SV** but, in fitting it in this way, he shatters it.

After agreeing to give a eulogy of Socrates, Alcibiades strangely moves almost immediately to criticise him by stating that he is: “impudent, contemptuous and vile!” (215b). Alcibiades’ reason for this, however, is soon made clear and he goes on to outline what he takes to be the negative impact that his love for Socrates has had on him. He states that, although he had heard speeches by powerful and compelling speakers such as Pericles, none of them ever

had the effect on him that Socrates' thinking has had. As he states: "they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul started protesting that my life – my life! – was no better than the most miserable slave's" (216a). Thus it appears as though Socrates' thinking at least stirs in Alcibiades the ability to reconsider the value that he places on the quality of his life. In fact, he states numerous times in the subsequent passages that Socrates makes him feel ashamed of the life that he had been living prior to his encounters with him (see, for example, 216b).

It seems that, in his ascent, Alcibiades vacillates between the 'good' that he had previously taken to be an accurate measure of his life, and the good of virtue that Socrates helps him to see. Alcibiades states that "I know perfectly well that I can't prove him wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet, the moment that I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to please the crowd" (216b). This passage is quite significant in many regards: it shows that although Socrates shows him that his preoccupation with pleasing the crowd is almost slavish (216b), such that he has thought he would prefer to die, he is still drawn to viewing it as a good (albeit a good that Socrates has shown him to be unfounded). As such, it is clear that: (1) Alcibiades has the ability to reevaluate the quality of his life in the light of the knowledge that Socrates has shown him (as per progress on Socrates-Diotima's ascent), but, (2) there still exists within him a conflict between this new good that Socrates has shown him and the old 'good'.

That the previously unchallenged good persists might entail more than him simply seeking to please the crowd is also evident, I suggest, in his repeated reference to his good looks (217a, 219c).²⁸ It is clear that the type of good that Alcibiades' good looks have 'earned' him

²⁸ As David F. Greenberg notes: "[I]n his adolescence he drew away the husbands from their wives, and as a young man the wives from their husbands" (*The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 144). Or, as Paul Cartledge adds further, Alcibiades was "egoistic and egotistic" ('A Patriot for Whom?' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 101 no. 1 (October, 1987), p. 19). It therefore seems an uncontentious view to hold that Alcibiades may have somewhat overvalued his looks and what they afforded him. Support for this view is also offered by Robert J. Littman, who writes that: "The stories of his sexual penchants are plentiful, ranging from the tale of his incestuous *ménage à trois* relationship with his uncle ... to the seduction and impregnation of the queen of Sparta" ('The Loves of Alcibiades', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 101 no.1 (October, 1987), pp. 263-276). Further to this, Michel Foucault notes of Alcibiades: "that in his adolescence he drew the

relates to both sexuality and to what the promise of sex might bring him. Yet, crucially, Alcibiades' previous understanding of the good can be made explicable, as I will outline below, with reference to several types of good. However, these goods share a common theme: Alcibiades' understanding of his already 'having' full possession of the qualities that are best suited to attain these goods. His understanding of good can be thought to be his easy good precisely because he understands it with reference to having the power to attain what he wants. Regarding his beauty, for example, it is clear that he takes himself to physically possess the power to attain certain goods due to its power. Ultimately his understanding of his good is intrinsically linked to his having the power to attain it.

In this light, Alcibiades can be understood to be a lover of possessing the power to attain *whatever* he deems good. In this regard, the goods he desires and the power to attain them can be thought of as opposing sides of the same coin. That is, Alcibiades is as much a lover of power as he is of the things he desires to obtain. This view that power is something that takes a generic approach to that which is deemed good is completely at odds with the type of power that Socrates provides a positive outline of in the *Gorgias* (see especially, 491d-e). Rather than power being that which generates self-control and self-mastery, Alcibiades' conception of power lends itself to the very antithesis of such. Understanding his good in this way provides a clear picture regarding the confusion and negative experience which arise when Socrates rejects his advances. The good of virtue, regardless of one's suitability to reach the summit of the ascent, will involve a continued effort to reject the lesser goods/activities which stifle progression on the ascent. However, this would remove much of the previous good that Alcibiades believes himself to be in possession of, and hence would make him realise that, in this regard, he is powerless. Such a state is not at all desirable for Alcibiades.

husbands away from their wives, and as a man the wives away from their husbands.” (Trans. R. Hurley, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume II The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 188.)

That this good is in contrast to the type of good that Socrates wanted for him is also conveyed when Alcibiades outlines his astonishment at his failed attempt at seducing him. As he puts it: “I swear to you [the other members of the symposium] by the gods, and by the goddesses together, my night with Socrates went no further than if I had spent it with my father or older brother!” (219c-d). It is clear from this passage that Alcibiades may indeed have experienced his good looks as a good since he had thought that they would motivate Socrates into providing him with the knowledge by which he is virtuous and that, similarly, would make him virtuous.

However, in another passage Socrates states that he is also lacking such knowledge but adds the following: “Dear Alcibiades, if you are right in what you say about me, you are more accomplished than you think. If I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you see in me a beauty that is really beyond description and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison” (218e). Aside from whether or not Socrates is correct about having such knowledge, in a complete or exhaustive way, it is clear that he has some knowledge of these things and so Alcibiades can see such beauty and virtue in him (see, for example, 215b, 218d and 219d).

Given Socrates’ suggestion, it does not seem tendentious to suggest that Alcibiades’ aforementioned insights display a genuine understanding of virtue as inner beauty.²⁹ To go further: it is Alcibiades’ new knowledge which makes these insights and evaluations possible. Yet, in another passage Alcibiades states – demonstrating the tension between his knowledge of the good of virtue and his previous understanding of the good – that:

²⁹ That this would have been a somewhat conventional understanding of *eros* and a ‘reasonable exchange’ is well outlined by Dover when he states that: “Since the reciprocal desire of partners belonging to the same age-category is virtually unknown in Greek homosexuality, the distinction between the bodily activity of the one who has fallen in love and the bodily passivity of the one whom he has fallen in love with is of the highest importance” (*Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 16). That Socrates does not accept Alcibiades’ offer signifies the presentation of new moral standards. This also displays how closely related the *Symposium* is to Plato’s middle period. Consider, for example, that in the *Republic* Socrates states that the way in which a lover should love his beloved “must not go any further than” a father’s love for his son (Book III, 403b-c). The *Phaedrus* likewise cautions against sexual activity between lover and beloved (256a-e), and, in the *Laws*, Plato argues that homosexual activity should (a) be abolished “entirely” (*Laws* VIII, 841d), and, (b) further, “anyone who violates a free woman or boy, *he shall* be killed”, (*Laws* IX, 874c).

And yet that is exactly how this Marsyas here at my side makes me feel all the time: he makes it seem that my life isn't worth living!...He always traps me, you see, and he makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is just what I most neglect: my personal shortcomings, which cry out for the closest attention. So I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die. (216a)

Alcibiades both wants and does not want to become virtuous. This is so because, for him to do so, his life and his previously known good would “pale in comparison”, a situation which, as per 216b, he has already perceived. Hence, it is not so much that he does not understand virtue or the role that knowledge can or should play in this regard but that, in fully realising this, he knows that he must surrender his previously ‘attained’ good.

If love represents a commitment to one's self and the new levels of knowledge and understanding that the ascent brings do not, of necessity, remove something of the corresponding emotive force that is involved, then an unfavourable conclusion might follow. Alcibiades may well find himself with knowledge of two selves and be committed to their corresponding goods, where the commitment to one in some way nullifies the other. As it were, Alcibiades does indeed have contradictory preferences, something that SV denies as being possible (see, *Protagoras* 352b-c), but not because he does not understand virtue, as SV would hold. He understands all too well the consequences of this and does not have a desire to give up his previously considered good. Yet this could not be the case since it is not so much that he would have to relinquish the good of his physical beauty or even the response he receives from those who were moved by this but rather that he himself must learn to react appropriately to said responses. This implies that since he does not have to give up his physical beauty, he would

have to give up some feature of his beauty that might not, technically speaking, fit the appropriate modality of such beauty. If it is the case that it is the manner in which he applies his beauty to obtain what he wants, as in the case of his seduction of Socrates (217b–219d), then he would indeed be guilty of stepping outside of the modalities of his beauty. That Socrates does not acquiesce means, of course, that, in the *Symposium* his actions accord with **SV**. That Alcibiades knowingly tries to ‘acquire’ Socrates’ virtue by offering him lesser for greater reveals the contrary about Alcibiades.

Indeed, his attempting to exchange the lesser for the greater (“gold in exchange for bronze” (218e-219a)) shows that Alcibiades is, at least to some degree, aware of the value of virtue. However, he is committed, more than anything else, to the good that he is most familiar with: the social elevation that his physical beauty and reputation bring him, as exemplified by his desire to please the crowd (216b). This reference to social elevation relates directly to Alcibiades’ love of possessing power as it will lead to his increased power to attain what he desires. Here again, Alcibiades’ good finds expression with reference to his love of power. Indeed, an increase in political power might be the very thing that most decisively and dramatically increases his power for it expands his capacity to exert influence. Hence, Alcibiades states that this is an issue that Socrates takes him to task over.

This, of course, is not to suggest that the good of social reputation and physical beauty are neither good nor based on the knowledge of the ‘success’ that his beauty may have brought him in his previous endeavours, quite the opposite. It is indeed the case that Alcibiades is acting on his knowledge of the said and that his desires do not step outside of these very parameters. As such, Alcibiades is pursuing things *contra* to his *new* knowledge of beauty and so he is acting according to his *previous* knowledge and experience of his beauty. The exchange suggests two things: (1) that he is motivated by his previous knowledge of beauty (that is, the goods and/or experiences of pleasure that he can receive for his own); (2) that he is unwilling to engage in the work required to generate such virtue via his own efforts. The reason that he

steps outside of the limits that his own beauty can afford him are extremely congruent with his unwillingness to surrender his ‘easy good’.

Striking here is that Alcibiades seems to meet the Socratic condition of action put forward in **SV**, where knowledge is the sufficient condition for action. Yet, somehow, he still chooses to refuse to listen to Socrates and so he opts for a good which he, through his own testimony, knows to be a lesser good than the good of Socrates’ virtue (216a). It seems to be the case that Alcibiades both meets the criteria of **SV** by being motivated by a certain type of knowledge but, at the same time, wills his own ignorance. As such, he has knowledge of the beauty of virtue and the good, and he knows the value of a virtue such as temperance.³⁰ Yet he does not seem to be committed to living by the dictates of such knowledge, and the cause of this seems to be the knowledge of the good that he held previously. This suggests, in the strongest terms, that Plato is now committed to the view that, in addition to knowledge of some sort having a motivational aspect, the soul can also be motivated by the good that is most familiar to it, and hence easier to attain than the higher goods on the ascent.

As stated, to ‘possess’ the content of our character we must continually generate it. The character and the good that we desire to possess are actively pursued. This is itself the bedrock of self-understanding and identity. For example, individuals know that they are of x or y character precisely because they know that they do x or y. The role of the habitual, I argue, is presupposed by Plato in reproduction. As such, Plato should no longer be considered as asserting – as he does with **SV** – that knowledge of the greatest good *per se* is sufficient to lead

³⁰ Oddly for **SV**, Alcibiades’ comments regarding the value of virtue and philosophy are reminiscent of Socrates. For example, consider 218d, when Alcibiades states: “Nothing is more important to me than becoming the best man that I can be, and no one can help me more than you [Socrates] to reach that aim.” Compare Socrates in the *Apology*: “the greatest good for a man [is] to discuss virtue every day...and [test himself] and others” (*Apology*, 38a). Perhaps it is unsurprising that the criteria Plato uses to outline **SV** is the same criteria he would use to assess what would signify **SI**’s undoing. That Plato puts Socrates, and indeed Socratic sentiment, alongside Alcibiades is most helpful. Indeed, much of the contrast that exists between **SV** and the reasons behind Plato’s rejection of it are highlighted by the contrast between Socrates’ account of how knowledge motivates him directly and, as I will argue, the indirect way Alcibiades’ knowledge motivates him.

to action in pursuit of this good. It now seems that the role of the familiar good (due to the known ability to generate it) can play a part in impeding the pursuit of the known greatest good.

Alcibiades understands his character and its corresponding good to be attainable and knows it to be so with a level of ease that is not present in relation to the greater good of virtue. This suggests that Plato recognises there to be an alternative to being motivated by the greater good. Ultimately, it is this alternative that sees Alcibiades never quite being able to pursue the good of virtue because he has another option: allowing himself to be motivated by the ease of pursuing his familiar, easily attained good. It is in Alcibiades' refusal to surrender his lesser good for his greater good that we can see Socrates-Diotima's reference to 'treacherous love' finding its full expression. For he pursues a good that is not in line with either the good or immortality.

Moreover, as suggested at the outset, for this reason we should read Alcibiades' description of his akratic love experience as a position that Plato is endorsing. As it were, Socrates-Diotima's account presupposes the development of new knowledge but, with the case of Alcibiades, Plato sees that there remains the problem of situating this new knowledge within the way of life and the good that is most familiar to the soul. That Alcibiades also meets the principle of knowledge being the sufficient condition for action conveys the extent to which he is intended by Plato to oppose **SV**. Indeed, Alcibiades' treacherous love sets him at a distance from both SV and the attainment of his real or greatest good.³¹

³¹ Before leaving this point, it is also worth mentioning the following: much as Socrates had done previously, the agreed-upon topic (201d) of delivering a speech in praise of love is modified by Alcibiades so that he can deliver a speech in praise of Socrates. Alcibiades agrees to this and, after a brief exchange of concerns between the two men, he states that "I'll only speak the truth" (214e) and, furthermore, he instructs Socrates to correct him if he deviates from this promise (214e-215a). I would suggest that with this condition in place, in spite of Alcibiades' "condition" (215a) (his drunkenness), and given that Socrates does not object, we should accept Alcibiades' account. That is, along with it fitting with Socrates-Diotima, as outlined, the description of his experience of love, to Socrates' mind, is an adequate account of Alcibiades' experience. Socrates would, indeed, know both the level of Alcibiades' knowledge and that, after developing this knowledge, he then returned to a type of life that was predicated upon his previously considered good. This was done in the light of his new knowledge of the good, showing him that his old knowledge of the good was a source of his bad. That Socrates goes on to criticise the motives behind Alcibiades' speech (222c-d) does little to suggest that any part of the speech, at least any part that I have been focusing on, was itself a misrepresentation of Alcibiades' akratic experience.

2.4 The Easy Good and Inverted Intellectualism

Thus far, I have shown that an opposition exists within Alcibiades and that he can favour the lesser over the known greater good. The weight of Plato's insight, however, is discerned upon attempting to see *how* the lesser can be pursued in the presence of the known greater good. Alcibiades has knowledge of the value and the good of virtue but it still remains the case that he is not, unlike Socrates, *motivated* by this.³² If this knowledge (of temperance, for example) requires not just abstinence but also the abandonment of previously exercised 'goods' then this is the work that must be undertaken to generate it in this type of beauty. It is this task, and all that it entails, that Alcibiades does not want to engage in. This represents a monumental event in the work of Plato: Alcibiades accurately sees the greater good of Socrates' beauty, good, knowledge and virtue but, nonetheless, knowingly chooses to settle for his lesser good.³³

³² That Alcibiades' attempt to seduce Socrates fails is extremely pertinent for a multitude of reasons. For one thing, it seems to suggest that, if we are correct in accepting that what Socrates desires for Alcibiades, over and above any other desire he may have towards him, is his progression on the ascent, then we should also conclude that Socrates has progressed on the ascent such that he is a lover of "learning beautiful things" (211c). As such, Socrates acts under the purpose and confines of what his knowledge of this good suggests. Therefore, I cannot agree with the spirit of Nils Rauhut's argument: "If my interpretation of Alcibiades' speech... is correct, Socrates does not emerge as a completely virtuous role model who has completely integrated all of his desires with the help of a comprehensive vision of the good." ('How Virtuous Was Socrates?' in Georgios Anagnostopoulos and Fred D. Miller, Jr. eds. *Reason and Analysis in Ancient Greek Philosophy: Essays in Honor of David Keyt* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), pp. 109-123 (p. 122)). For one thing, it is clear that in this instance Socrates, in leading by example, can indeed be thought of as something of a role model who leads and teaches. We can glean Socrates' commitment to the work that is involved in reproducing virtue and, thereby, leading Alcibiades "aright" (210a-b). This is unsurprising since even if Socrates were to yield to his baser desires and then provide Alcibiades with the knowledge that would make him temperate, he would also, by example, be telling him that such knowledge can be ignored in such and such a case. This would fly in the face of the Socratic notion that it is knowledge that motivates, thus Socrates remains strong and resolute in the face of temptation. Indeed, were Socrates to acquiesce to Alcibiades' advances, he could not be said to be in pursuit, or in possession, of his own virtue since having any quality refers to the reproduction of it (207e).

³³ It is also worth noting that many scholars discussing *akrasia*, outside of the context of Plato, would likewise take Alcibiades' rejection of philosophy (the very grounds that would generate within him the capacity to be moral) to be an example of 'clear eyed *akrasia*'. As such, at least in the act of rejecting philosophy, regardless of the moral status of any of his resultant immoral acts, which emerge due to his ignorance, he is morally blameworthy. For discussions on *akrasia* and ignorance being situated within the sphere of moral blameworthiness, see: Michael J. Zimmerman, 'Moral Responsibility and Ignorance', *Ethics*, vol. 107 no. 3 (1997), pp. 410-426; Michael J. Zimmerman, *Living with Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Gideon Rosen, 'Culpability and Ignorance', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 103 no. 1 (2003), pp. 61-84; Gideon Rosen, 'Skepticism about Moral Responsibility', *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 18 no. 1 (2004), pp. 295-313. For discussions that criticise this viewpoint as being too free to exonerate ignorance from moral blameworthiness, see: Elizabeth Harman, 'Does Moral Ignorance Exculpate?' *Ratio*, vol. 24 no. 4 (2011), pp. 443-468; William J. Fitzpatrick, 'Moral Responsibility and Normative Ignorance: Answering a New Skeptical Challenge', *Ethics*, vol. 118 no. 4 (2008), pp. 589-613; Alexander A. Guerrero, 'Don't Know, Don't Kill: Moral Ignorance, Culpability, and Caution', *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 136 no. 1 (2007), pp. 59-97.

Ultimately, I will argue that this is possible because the ‘neutrality’ of reason that Socrates supposes, in his role as ‘gadfly’ (*Apology* 30e), is, in fact, the neutrality required to opt for the lesser good. Here ‘neutrality’ refers to reason’s capacity to assess the merits of one’s understanding of the good in such a way as to present the possibility of overcoming a previous conception of good. As such, Socrates must have considered reason to be the capacity to allow the soul to overcome any emotive force that would make a previous conception of good binding. If this was not presupposed by Socrates, calling others to take up the path of virtue would have been fruitless in the extreme. However, the implication of this motivationally neutral reasoning, I will argue, is that Alcibiades can choose to be determined by his lesser knowledge/good in the presence of his greater knowledge/good or supposedly greater motivational source. However, since my argument finds direct opposition in Callard’s ‘Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras’, I will also consider the merits of her argument, at least in the way she relates her viewpoint to Alcibiades.

Alcibiades knows the value and social standing that his beauty can bring him but he consciously opts to allow this knowledge to determine his desire for this lesser good. However, as I have shown, Alcibiades does have the capacity to know virtue and he is capable of valuing it accurately. The problem resides in the fact that Alcibiades’ attachment to his previously considered good seems greater than his commitment to his new concept of virtue.³⁴ Also worth stressing here is the fact that Alcibiades’ commitment to virtue is reignited every time he hears Socrates speak; hence his desire to potentially sit by him until death. Yet, the consequences of this, as I have stated throughout, would be the giving up of another good. This means that in opting for one type of good over the other – the lesser for the greater – he is able to select the type of good that he wants. That is, he is acting under knowledge but he is also knowingly

³⁴ The role attachment can play in *eros* is suggested by Kahn when he states the following: “Because *Eros*, as the most potent form of desire, can play a decisive role in fixing the goal of a human life, it is of much greater significance for Plato than the concept of ‘*philia*’” (*Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 260). Yet, such attachment does not have to yield positive outcomes. It is because he is unwilling to surrender his previous goods that Alcibiades does not develop on the ascent.

choosing the knowledge of the good that he wishes to be determined by. It is by this means that he knowingly pursues that which he knows to be contrary to his good.³⁵ Indeed, taking a stance in relation to knowledge claims regarding the good, I will argue, is facilitated by the faculty of reason itself. It is by the activity of reasoning that the soul generates knowledge of the greater good, irrespective of the outcomes of previous pursuits/goods.

Thus, since we can take a stance in relation to the knowledge which we opt to be determined by, we cannot conclude that knowledge motivates in either an immediate or direct sense. If it did, then it might be possible that new levels of knowledge on the ascent bring with them a way of overcoming the motivational force of previously held conceptions of the good. Yet, that Alcibiades can choose the knowledge under which he will act, suggests that it must be the case that within the soul there exists the capacity to assess knowledge claims regarding the good, without these claims exerting any emotive force that would automatically lead to action. It is this capacity that sees Alcibiades demonstrating the capacity to choose between knowledge claims/goods and ultimately opting for the lesser.

Knowledge is still thought to be a condition of action but only in the highly qualified manner that I am arguing for. It is also the case that neither knowledge nor desires *per se* seem to be such that one kind of knowledge or desire, in and of itself, is sufficient to take precedence over another. If this were not the case then knowledge of the greater would simply replace knowledge of the lesser. The real criteria for a new knowledge claim regarding the good being pursued also seems, at least in the case of Alcibiades, to be the ease with which it can be attained. That is, how much of it will 'fit' the lifestyle and identity that a person already possesses. If the soul can knowingly limit itself to the appearance of the good, what aspect of the soul does Plato believe generates the capacity to limit its own development? The answer to

³⁵ Callard, citing Santas and Watson, makes a valid point when she writes: "in order for the akratic to count as acting *willingly*...he must see what moves him as having some value to it. Otherwise what we have is not akrasia but psychological compulsion" ('Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras', n. 11). Yet, since Alcibiades can value, in one instance, his previously understood conception of good and, in another, the good of virtue that Socrates has shown him, it seems that he is compelled in two directions. Crucial here, however, is that Alcibiades can knowingly move between one 'good' and another.

this question resides within the very activity of reasoning that allows Alcibiades to both re-evaluate his previous knowledge of the good and to choose the knowledge under which he acts. Examining this will allow us to move from the reasons *why* he chooses the lesser to *how* he can do so and how knowledge can still be thought to provide a mediated form of motivation in the soul.

It is regarding the ability to choose the type of knowledge of the good that we can see Plato's reconsideration of the way in which **SV** presents the relationship between knowledge and desire.³⁶ Plato holds that, in order to assess them, reasoning puts the soul at a distance from both desires and knowledge claims regarding the good. That is, I can reason about what desire or good to pursue but, if I am to reason about them adequately, I must do so in the absence of motivation. Therefore, if I am to reason correctly, I cannot allow motivational force to prejudice my findings.

That reasoning is required to make a genuine change in the soul is extremely Socratic in spirit. As stated above, if Socrates did not suppose that reason did not have the capacity to stand outside of the motivational force of conceptions of good, then his project would have been strange indeed. For, if a person wishes to apply a limited form of reason to assess the merits of their actions, then the circularity of self-justification ensues. Moreover, Socrates' enterprise of engaging his fellow citizens in philosophical dialogue, with a view to assisting

³⁶ Gerson argues that Plato, at least in the *Republic*, does not abandon SV. He contends that scholars who hold the contrary do not discern how Plato understands desire to be necessarily both a rational agent and an embodied rational agent. As he states: "In no sense does someone who identifies himself primarily as the subject of his appetites abandon rationality or even abandon himself to irrationality." ('Plato's Rational Souls', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 68 no. 1 (Sept., 2014), pp. 37-59 (p. 54)). Elsewhere, he writes: "The person who makes a normative judgement about his own appetites, either endorsing them as good or rejecting them as bad, is exactly like the intellectualist Socrates who cannot but desire that which he believes is overall in his own interests" ('The Myth of Plato's Socratic Period', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 96 no. 4 (2014), pp. 403-30). And, qualifying this a little later on in the same paper, he adds: "This dualism is not soul/body, but rather disembodied soul/embodied soul, where the former is a sort of paradigm of which the latter is an image." The embodied soul is the 'manifestation' of soul in which what is best might not be in line with what is best for it as a disembodied soul. Yet, as I see it, Alcibiades' commitment to his embodied good, his known lesser good, is sought over and above the greater good of his soul either embodied or disembodied. By this process, when it comes to *eudaimonia*, Alcibiades – a rational agent – abandoned himself to irrationality. I hold this view on the grounds that Alcibiades' irrationality (though he has judged it so) represents a complete surrendering to the bad and to irrationality. The question of whether or not Plato, in the *Republic*, would countenance Gerson's application of reason, here quoted, is one that I hope to apply to my reading of Alcibiades' rationality and *akrasia* in subsequent papers.

them in self-examination and change, requires that reason has such a neutral aspect.³⁷ Therefore, the neutrality of reason is already present in **SV**, but what is crucial is how Plato will recast the role that it brings to the soul *vis-à-vis* how the soul relates to the knowledge that it generates.

Alcibiades' 'ascent' generates new levels of knowledge which suggest the abandonment of his previous good; hence he experiences the development of virtue in a negative manner. From this he desires to break away from the project, in spite of everything he knows about the value of Socrates' virtue. Yet, all of this is realised and facilitated during his discussions with Socrates and the time he spends on the path of philosophy and virtue. Indeed, it is his reasoning, no doubt brought out by Socrates' questioning, that presents his heightened capacity to evaluate any belief. As it were, the gadfly succeeds in forcing Alcibiades to subject his hitherto unchallenged conception of the good to a robust evaluation under the light of reason. Of course, while this is extremely Socratic sounding, the fact that Alcibiades does not take up the path of virtue, even in the light of knowledge of the true value of virtue being present, is incredibly un-Socratic. From a Socratic perspective, it is almost as though there is a fault in Alcibiades' ability to reason about his good. Yet, the conclusion drawn from Alcibiades' reasoning is that the good of virtue is the greatest good and that all other goods (shown to be merely apparent goods with direct reference to the greatest good) *should* be surrendered, at least where they conflict with the greatest good.

Callard takes Alcibiades to be an akratic and argues that "The akratic is ignorant because he lacks knowledge, and, more fundamentally, he is ignorant because he lacks a kind of self-understanding".³⁸ Furthermore, she holds that akratics hold a misconception of knowledge (she refers to as the 'container view'). She explains that: "I can't straightforwardly give you knowledge or even belief, unless you do some of your own thinking about what I have

³⁷ Socrates speaks of his role within the city as being "always concerned with you, approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother to persuade you to care for virtue", *Apology*, 31b. As such, Socrates should be thought of as considering reason to have a neutral aspect such that it allows for the capacity to re-orientate a person's understanding of the good by way of taking a step back from motivational sources.

³⁸ Callard, 'Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras'.

said”.³⁹ She argues that the ‘many’ (and Alcibiades), as outlined in the *Protagoras*, hold this view and for this reason they experience what they take to be akratic experiences. Of course, since they lack any real knowledge to ‘act’ under or, indeed, against, they are not truly akratic. Yet, could this be the case with someone who has engaged in discussion with Socrates? And, would Plato count Alcibiades among the many? Indeed, much of the literature would suggest that Socrates’ *elenchus* would force his interlocutors to think about what had been said.⁴⁰ That Alcibiades was involved in a relationship, of sorts, with Socrates suggests that he would have been subjected to the full force of the *elenchus*, on more than one occasion, and would also have been forced to examine his understanding of the good and his way of life.

On this point, it might be objected that, in the *Symposium*, Socrates does not subject Alcibiades to the *elenchus* at all, and that if Plato intends the reader to make the inference just mentioned, he would surely have had Socrates dialogue with Alcibiades directly, as he did with Agathon. Firstly, I will deal with the claim that my reference to the *elenchus* is unwarranted or misguided. Having clearly outlined the significance of my position on this, I will return below to the question of why it is Agathon, and not Alcibiades, that Plato has Socrates question. There is sufficient suggestion in the text to support my claim that Plato does intend the reader to understand Socrates to have subjected Alcibiades to the *elenchus*. Worth reflecting on again is 216a. Here Alcibiades’ account of the shame Socrates makes him feel is outlined as something that happens “*all the time [my italics]*”. He claims that Socrates “*always traps [my italics]*” him to force him, through reasoning, to “admit that my political career is a waste of time”. When Alcibiades’ previous understanding of good – being fundamentally related to power – is threatened by rational examination, he chooses to reject philosophy, his experience of Socrates’ *elenchus*, and thereby rejects his known greater good of virtue. Admittedly, it may be an overstatement on the part of Alcibiades, purely for dramatic effect. Yet, it is strange that

³⁹ Callard, ‘Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the *Protagoras*’.

⁴⁰ For examples of such, see Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (especially p. 261); Sheffield, *Plato’s Symposium*, p. 123; Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, p. 311; and Colm Shanahan, ‘Virtue as a Lesser Good?’, *Philosophia*, vol. 42 (2012), pp. 106-120.

Socrates does not interject, if this type of event does not at least happen on several occasions. As such, within the text there is evidence to support the view that it is Alcibiades' experience of the *elenchus* that has generated his level of understanding of the greater good of virtue.

As stated throughout, it is through examining his experiences of good, under the light of Socrates' *elenchus*, that he comes to an understanding of the nature of the good and the nature of the soul. Indeed, it is by his self-understanding that Alcibiades realises the consequences that one understanding of the good generates for another. This causes his internal conflict and his resultant *akrasia*. Callard argues that: "The akratic's pain and regret are signs that he hears the rustlings of his ignorance, rubs up against it, glimpses it out of the corner of his eye, catches a whiff of it. When Socrates describes the akratic's pathos/pathēma as ignorance, he means to point out that ignorance is something you can feel, being the kind of thing that appears".⁴¹ Yet, since it is clear that Alcibiades derives reasoned conclusions in relation to his rivalling knowledge claims, then he could not be thought to fit the container view of knowledge. That is, with Socrates' assistance, Alcibiades moves from simply having a feeling of ignorance to knowledge of the good of, and true value of, virtue. This alone suggests that Alcibiades' understanding of virtue should count as knowledge of the soul.

When Alcibiades states that "Nothing is more important to me than becoming the best man that I can be, and no one can help me more than you [Socrates] to reach that aim" (218d), we can take it that he has concluded that he lacks knowledge and virtue. Moreover, he knows that working with Socrates is the most direct route towards that end. Indeed, Alcibiades' attempted seduction of Socrates seems to have characteristics of the container view of knowledge. However, Socrates' exercise of moderation was demonstrated for Alcibiades as an example of virtue as 'knowledge enacted' and this forces him to see that knowledge must be divested in action if it is to count as virtue proper. Alcibiades was perfectly happy to pursue

⁴¹ That stated, her insight that "Socrates wants us to rethink our ordinary conception of *akrasia* because, more fundamentally, he wants us to rethink our ordinary conception of knowledge" ('Ignorance and *Akrasia*-Denial in the Protagoras') is, for the most part, in keeping with the spirit in which I attempt to rethink the concept of *akrasia*.

virtue up to this point, and it is only after he has learned this lesson that he refuses to engage in philosophy with Socrates. Indeed, he had appraised Socrates' strength of character in the following terms: "his moderation, his fortitude – here was a man whose strength and wisdom went beyond my wildest dreams!" (219d). It is only after learning the nature of virtue that he rejects philosophy and thus can be said to break from the container view of knowledge.

It is not, therefore, the case that I am rejecting Callard's thinking in relation to the container view, or even that it does not relate to Alcibiades, in the manner in which I outline it. My view is that Alcibiades' love of power, and his desire to possess his goods, do indeed represent a type of container view. However, he is also aware of the value of his previous understanding of good and its impotency regarding the capacity to generate a measure of the real good of virtue. As such, the shame Alcibiades experiences is due to the conflict between his opposing conceptions of virtue.⁴²

This conflict supports the view that Alcibiades 'possesses' genuine knowledge, generated by proper motivationally neutral reasoning. Yet, that he is not motivated by the knowledge of the greater good suggests that the neutrality of reason is still in effect when he relates to his knowledge claims. If it were not so the greater good would simply exert its greater force and lead to action. Developing this point will show how knowledge can provide a mediated sense of motivation *after* reason has chosen the knowledge under which it will act. This will present an outline for understanding *akrasia* as an instance in which reason can be said to oppose itself. Indeed, it is within such a framework that Alcibiades refuses to surrender his lesser, in the presence of the greater good.

⁴² On the question of Alcibiades' possessing genuine knowledge of virtue, it is most interesting that Reeve has pointed to the manner in which Alcibiades "unwittingly" speaks of virtue in a way that is similar to that of Diotima (see, 'A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*' in J. H. Lesher, D. Nails and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield eds. *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 124-146). However, the question of whether or not Plato intends the reader to recognise the parity between Alcibiades' comments and Diotima's as his suggestion that Alcibiades had previously received a similar account from Socrates, is an open one. Nonetheless, Reeve demonstrates that Alcibiades is not entirely clueless about the true nature of virtue.

When Plato considers the possibility of *akrasia* he does not display the view that the ‘weakness’ of the will is entirely ‘cashed out’, so to speak, by the force of any desire over another, or of a desire over knowledge or reason. It is not that Alcibiades’ will weakens at the sight of some pleasurable end; his will weakens upon consideration of the level of effort required to attain the greater good when compared to his ‘easy good’. After all, in the first instance, it is his reasoning that revealed to him the greater good and the implications this has over his earlier understanding of good. From this he judges that he will continue to pursue his lesser good, now understood as a bad. Through comparing the merits of goods, reason forces the conclusion that he must surrender his earlier conception of good and, as such, it is by reasoning that he perceives the potential surrendering of that which he is unwilling to surrender. As such, his *akrasia* is not as a result of one desire ‘battling’ with another.⁴³ In this regard, the neutrality of reason can be understood to relate to Alcibiades’ future pursuits as much as to examining his past endeavours. Moreover, since this arises out of a comparison of goods, it is clear that Alcibiades’ contradictory preferences are held simultaneously, both causing his shame, and forming the basis for his future pursuits.

Thus, the terms in which Alcibiades outlines his situation go far beyond Penner’s idea of ‘diachronic belief-akrasia’.⁴⁴ It is not simply the case that Alcibiades, having chosen to pursue some desire, comes to consider his actions as wrong at some later time; from which it would follow, in keeping with **SV**, that he never acts akratically in a synchronic way. His weakness is not just that he returns to seek out his old goods but that, in addition to this, he

⁴³ Which, as per Brickhouse and Smith, is completely at odds with **SI**. Brickhouse and Smith’s idea of strong and weak passions allows me to further highlight just how far away from intellectualism Plato is with the case of Alcibiades. As they state: “Socrates wants us to understand that when the “appearances lose their power” they cease to have any significant motivational force” (*Socratic Moral Psychology*, p. 85). Another example of this is Daniel T. Devereux, who states that: “Knowledge of the good does not eliminate non-rational desires; rather it produces a desire or motivational force that is stronger than any non-rational desire or emotion” (“Socrates’ Kantian Conception of Virtue” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 33 no. 3 (July, 1995), pp. 381-408 (pp. 404-5)). It is not battling desires that causes Alcibiades’ turmoil but that he has reason to act on opposing knowledge claims regarding the good. It is the neutrality of his reason that facilitates his pursuit of the lesser good in the presence of the known greater good. Additionally, it is evident that Alcibiades realises what his apparent good is but continues to pursue it.

⁴⁴ Penner, ‘Knowledge vs. True Belief in the Socratic Psychology of Action’, *Apeiron*, vol. 29 no. 3 (1996), pp. 199-230.

forcibly stops himself from listening to Socrates and thereby rejects philosophy and virtue. He may have a negative feeling in relation to his actions but why should his shame be thought to carry its authority only retrospectively? He may just as easily feel shame at what he knows he will continue to do. As such, his shame can be read prospectively as a statement of purpose; that is, as shame for that which he will do. His reasons for rejecting philosophy and virtue can be read as pertaining to that which he *ought* to surrender but knows that will not, and that confirms that his shame is also prospective. Therefore, it is the reason behind his refusal for continued philosophical dialogue with Socrates that brings his *akrasia* to light.⁴⁵ It is from this position that Alcibiades then comes to choose the type of ‘good’ that he is already orientated towards. Indeed, the case of Alcibiades carries with it the very explosion of the terms *akrasia* and intellectualism, such that he could be termed an inverted intellectualist.

Crucially, Alcibiades makes his decision to reject virtue because of the difficulty that he has surrendering the ‘benefits’ – his character and lifestyle – attained *via* his easy good. His shame is thus generated by rationally comparing the new good with the old. Moreover, it is not the case that he rejects virtue because it is, in and of itself, too difficult to attain. Indeed, he demonstrates a level of progress regarding coming to know virtue. Yet, he allows the implications of this knowledge to lead him to the rejection of philosophy and virtue. Alcibiades’ experience of shame suggests that he understands his choice to be *exclusively* between the lesser and the greater good, on the grounds that the one negates the other. The choice is, after all, either to live absolutely by the dictates of knowledge of the real good and possess/pursue virtue (in the manner outlined by Socrates-Diotima), or not to. Alcibiades’ shame, holding

⁴⁵ This point brings my thinking into direct opposition to with Sheffield who argues, in lines that are extremely similar to Penner, that Alcibiades cannot be considered to be akratic because his feelings of shame at his previous actions only occur in the company of Socrates. As such, he was not conflicted as he acted and so his shame is retrospective and is as a result of actions that he had already committed. Sheffield writes, “We do not witness in this case a man who chooses the worse option when *at the same time* he is persuaded of the fact that it is the worse option” (*Plato’s Symposium*, p. 238). Yet, as I have shown, since his rejection of philosophy is motivated by a desire to continue in a form of living that he knows to be lesser, Sheffield’s position is compromised.

prospectively, shows that when he chooses to abandon his greater good he does so because he has chosen to pursue his lesser good.

Indeed, Alcibiades inverts the framework of **SV** such that he has a negative experience of virtue and knowledge (see, 216b). Only in this situation does he feel the intense negative experience of the demise of his previously considered good. And this alone is what forces him to leave Socrates' side. What Alcibiades comes to realise is, of course, generated from within a rational framework and so he comes to reject the good of virtue *not* from an emotive standpoint but from within the confines of a rational one. Alcibiades' *akrasia* is not 'triggered' by some tempting pleasure but by his actively reasoning about the nature of the good. It is therefore by reason itself that he opts for his lesser good, as a direct consequence of his perceiving what the real good forces him to surrender. Moreover, it is from within this exact rational exercise that he opts to be determined by his old knowledge of the good. It is by his reason and not simply by his desire that Alcibiades qualifies as an akratic.

In presenting the soul with the capacity to assess goods, reason, free from being motivated directly by these goods, allows the soul to return knowingly to the familiar even though it is the lesser. Yet, Alcibiades reasons from within a position that is 'liberated' from emotive force and it is for this reason that the greater good does *not* exert its force over him. Indeed, the opposition between Alcibiades' knowledge claims regarding the good is as a consequence of having engaged in un-prejudiced reasoning. Yet, it is by motivationally neutral reasoning that he can opt to be determined and motivated by his previous conception of good. Such neutrality must be in place if the greater good carries with it the greater motivational force and it is, somehow, 'side-stepped'. Yet, that Alcibiades can opt for the lesser good demonstrates the following: the motivational neutrality that reason brings to the soul is also what allows the soul to not be motivated by the emotive force of the greater good. On this matter, Plato's thinking is completely at odds with **SV**.

I am not arguing that desires themselves must disappear in order to reason, only that the decision-making process that reason proper engages in is not infiltrated by desires. Indeed, we might say that the motivational aspect of knowledge **SV** ascribed to it regarding the good is reignited upon reason making a decision about what end to pursue. In this matter, Plato has not changed his mind: knowledge of a good is required for action. Once a good has been chosen (on the conditions that it is familiar, easily attainable, and fits the individual's understanding of their own character) the motivation for action can be thought to already be contained within the knowledge claim that reason has selected. That is, knowledge of the good selected can be thought to contain the motivation required to pursue the specific end. Yet, reason, in being that which allows the soul to select the knowledge under which it acts can, by the same token, be thought to be selecting the motivation under which it acts. That is, if the soul considers the merits of knowledge claims a, b, c and d regarding the good, Plato could still hold that, after the fact, knowledge could be a source of motivation. Of course, this is how the soul *can* come to a decision, where and when a genuine application of reason is exercised.

The case of Alcibiades suggests that the soul's capacity to reason about ends can be where the initial cause of action originates. Plato can still hold, as **SV** purports, that knowledge is a source of motivation, but he can no longer hold this to be the case in anything other than the mediated sense that I have been outlining. With Alcibiades, Plato seems to present the view that along with reason having the capacity to liberate the soul from ignorance, it can also be the cause of the soul's capacity to knowingly stagnate its development. It is reason that, coupled with an irrational adherence to the familiar, leads to *akrasia*. It is in this regard that we find a way to understand how reason can be said to stand in opposition to itself. Plato's understanding of *akrasia* displays consideration of Alcibiades' weakness in the face of the activity of philosophy and not, (1) in the face of pleasures or desires, or, (2) due to Alcibiades having a misunderstanding of knowledge. Therefore, Plato does not seem to be concerned by questions of what makes this or that action an example of *akrasia*, but with how *akrasia* is divested from

within a commitment to a way of living. Thus Plato is concerned with investigating what would make an akratic form of life possible in the first instance. To this end, Plato could not have selected a finer example than Alcibiades to examine what *akrasia* would consist of.⁴⁶

For now it is the case that reason, or at the very least the motivational neutrality that the activity of reasoning generates, makes *akrasia* possible. This is exactly how Alcibiades can continue to pursue a lesser way of living. Plato's thinking on *akrasia* seems to be concerned with how reason can stand in opposition to what is rational, namely the pursuit of the greatest good. The object of Alcibiades' treacherous love is the pursuit and maintenance of an easy good which itself is representative of an action that generates and maintains a lesser form of life. Alcibiades has developed a life, character, and identity around an understanding of the good as fundamentally related to the possession of power. This love of power is treacherous because it is such a love that Socrates cannot, by any means, remove from Alcibiades. Moreover, it is this treacherous love of power that Alcibiades is unwilling to surrender, as to surrender it, by his understanding, would remove his good.

Reason has revealed to Alcibiades the greater good which should manifest as a greater source of motivation than the lesser good, and it may well do so. However, since reason operates in a way that is not subject, in a direct manner, to emotive force, it facilitates the selection of any end contrary to the greater good. In effect, *akrasia* is thought to be possible not with reference to the presence of a type of desire but with reference to an individual who is overly attached to that which they had already considered good. In these instances, reason is as a double-edged sword that presents the knowledge of the greater good but, by the very same token, the possibility of forgoing it. Paradoxically, it is by philosophising that Alcibiades has

⁴⁶ I assign a knowledge claim to the 'good' that Alcibiades pursues and so I cannot suggest that he is possessed of the type of good-independent desires that dominate much of the literature on the question of *akrasia* and intellectualism. For examples of this view, see Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 78 and p. 117, and Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, pp. 208-9. Yet, although I am not discussing the *Republic* here, I can state that in the *Symposium* Plato does not require good-independent desires, or desires at all, to suggest that *akrasia* is possible.

arrived at the conclusion that philosophy is not in his best interests, though he also knows concretely that it is.

Before concluding, in light of Alcibiades' pursuit of his known bad, and having outlined the role of reason in his *akrasia*, I will briefly return to the question of why it is Agathon instead of Alcibiades who is subjected to Socrates' *elenchus*. Above I posed the following objection: if Plato intended the reader to suppose that Socrates had subjected Alcibiades to the *elenchus*, is it not strange that Socrates does not subject him to the *elenchus* in the dialogue? That Plato chose to have Alcibiades enter the *Symposium* after Socrates had finished his speech, and after he had finished questioning Agathon, is unsurprising for the following reason: Socrates knows Alcibiades has knowledge, and that, as per **SV**, his work, or, indeed, his battle with Alcibiades *should* be over. That it is not confirms two things: (1) Plato rejects **SV**, because (2) Socrates knows that, while he may have won many battles against Alcibiades and caused him to experience shame, the presence of knowledge will not be sufficient to cause Alcibiades to take up the pursuit of the greatest good. As such, Plato may be simply pointing out that not only will Socrates not be able to help Alcibiades but, by Alcibiades' own account, he does not wish to hear Socrates' reasoning.

The latter speaks to why Agathon was subjected to the *elenchus* and not Alcibiades. That stated, what Socrates concluded from his questioning of Agathon, and subsequently outlines, is extremely relevant to Alcibiades. Socrates showed Agathon that since *eros* is the desire for beautiful and good things, it cannot be thought to be in possession of them (200e-201c). This conclusion is the bedrock of much of what Socrates-Diotima will outline regarding the implications of the related concepts of desiring and possessing qualities. Similarly, it seems likely that any measure of power that Alcibiades may attain will be ill suited to generate the real good or happiness.

The good and reproduction in beauty are activities, not possessions as such, and, as per Socrates-Diotima, whether a god or mortal desires them, such a desire confirms that they do

not possess them. The god of *eros*, presented by Agathon as both desiring and having good and beautiful things, is a misconception (one which Socrates did not once recognise, 202e), which Alcibiades' understanding of the good shares, for he takes himself to be beautiful and powerful and, at the same time, these are the qualities that he is in pursuit of. Indeed, whether or not Alcibiades is aware of it, he does a fine job of imitating the god of *eros* that Agathon has outlined. This is extremely significant in understanding Alcibiades' rationally generated *akrasia*.

Consider, for instance, that Plato states elsewhere that the soul can justify its good and its pursuit by pointing to the 'fact' that 'I act in a way' that seeks to best mimic the good of the appropriate god. Such a position is presented in the *Phaedrus* (248a, especially), where souls seek to act, and pursue, the good most associated with the god whose train they followed in. Indeed, that Plato makes a similar point about the soul mimicking the divine at *Republic* 500b-d suggests that he does assign a practical role to understanding action and desires in relation to an understanding of the gods. As such, action and desires can be explained with reference to conducting action based on an understanding of the gods. Of course, what is significant about the prior understanding of the good, in the case of the god *Eros*, is that the god that is mimicked turns out, in fact, to be a false one.

In the absence of a god to justify actions and desires it would seem that the only way to justify actions is with reference to nothing outside of the soul itself. That is, with nothing outside of the soul's capacity to generate the rational grounding upon which to determine the quality of actions, desires, and the good(s). Plato may have attributed Alcibiades' devotion to a false good to have been understood/explained as devotion not to a false god but to the good of power itself. Moreover, since Alcibiades rejects philosophy and proper reasoning, his good is justified neither on the grounds that it relates to something divine nor the grounds of his reasoning but is, instead, 'justified' and deemed to be a good simply because he wants it. This point relates directly to what I argued above when I outlined the neutrality of reason; the soul can freely

pursue whatever end/ 'good' it desires, even if the desired object is a known source of bad. Indeed, in this sense, any development of power signifies an increase in Alcibiades' capacity to attain his bad.

The cost of such an error will turn out to be the impossibility of Alcibiades attaining any measure of the real good or happiness. Such is the significance, for Socrates, of acting with a conception of the good so thoroughly steeped in error that, even upon discovery of the error, one (in the case of Alcibiades) carries on regardless towards a known bad. By these lights, whether underscored by a false god or not, the good of power is what the akratic Alcibiades has knowingly and 'rationally' devoted himself to.

Reeve points out that there is an obvious opposition between the physical beauty of Alcibiades and the ultimate beauty of the Form,⁴⁷ yet, as I read it, this opposition can be found within the soul of Alcibiades himself. This is why he states that he "shall never forgive" (213e) Socrates, for it is he who assisted Alcibiades in generating a new good. Yet, while the presence of the knowledge of the greater good does not lead to Alcibiades desiring to attain this good, in the sense outlined by Socrates-Diotima, it does present him with a contradictory preference regarding his good. This outcome is expressly rejected as being made possible by SV, and yet with Alcibiades it seems to be the very cause, and condition, of his *akrasia*.

This new/real good is referred to by Alcibiades as more "vicious than a viper" who makes people do "the most amazing things" (218a). Alcibiades refers to the other members of the *Symposium*, who are endeavouring to come to knowledge in the following way: "all shared in the madness, the Bacchic frenzy of philosophy" (218a). On my reading of the *Symposium*, it is difficult not to understand the madness of philosophy as anything other than the pursuit of new knowledge that could undermine one's previous understanding of the good. Alcibiades blames Socrates for assisting him, through the *elenchus*, to generating knowledge of a new good, and considers him akin to a viper, forcing people/Alcibiades to do amazing things, such

⁴⁷ Reeve, 'A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*'.

as giving up their previous conception of good/power. However, had Alcibiades followed through on the Socratic elenchus, he could truly have achieved the amazing things by acting upon knowledge of the greater good, overcoming or replacing his previous good, and not applying the neutrality of reason to facilitate or generate the akratic experience. Instead, Alcibiades conflates the rational with the irrational in order to retain his previous good, resulting in the inversion of **SV**.

2.4.1 Reflecting on Alcibiades and the 'Socrates Example'

To take full cognisance of Plato's thinking on *akrasia*, it is crucial to note the ways in which Alcibiades' account stands in relation to the 'Socrates example', as outlined in the previous chapter. In so doing, I will pay particular attention to the way **R1**, **R2**, **R3**, **T1**, and **T2** relate to the case of Alcibiades. Recall that I outlined these as follows: (**R1**) reason can be thought of as an integral aspect of virtue because it generates the capacity to make the correct observations that lead to correct or moral judgement; (**R2**) reason is a part of virtue because it can be used to assess knowledge claims regarding the good, to identify the possession of contradictory goods; (**R3**) reason can be applied, as a form of self-surveillance regarding the quality of goods, on a continual basis, so that contradictory goods are neither admitted into the soul nor are not experienced by the soul. All three were outlined with a view to lending credence to the view that knowledge is virtue.

However, I then outlined **T1** and **T2** as troublesome for this view. I defined **T1** as follows: reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are 'good', and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad. **T2** was outlined as follows: it is possible to pursue a contingent aspect of a true good without any direct recourse to pursuing the greater good. I also stated that the 'Socrates example' left it as an open question regarding

whether or not **R3** is sufficient to overcome both **T1** and **T2**. As I will show, the case of Alcibiades will be most informative on this topic.

The first point of comparison that can be drawn is Alcibiades' statement that he only feels shame when he is in Socrates' presence. As I noted in relation to the 'Socrates example', a central problem with **SV** is that reason cannot make an experiential good into a bad *qua* experience (**T1**). Thus, previously experienced goods can retain their capacity to motivate action and, in certain circumstances, represent the persistence of contradictory preferences. Alcibiades only feels shame in Socrates' company because only here does he apply his reason to reflect on and assess the merits of those experiences. As such, the modalities of the experiential goods are not undermined from within the experience itself. Alcibiades could have applied his reason to assess the merits of the experience while in the experience itself, as Socrates could have in the 'Socrates example', but he does not. Moreover, in both the 'Socrates example' and the case of Alcibiades, **R1** is present. However, since it only requires the pursuit of goods based on the knowledge of these goods, the application of **R1** seems completely unsuited to guaranteeing the claim that knowledge is virtue. As such, the application of **R1** is presupposed by the pursuit of any good and so its application is, in a sense, somewhat moot. Yet, in another sense, since it is an instance in which reason and knowledge are the governing principles of action that can lack virtue, this is a significant problem for **SV**.

Neither Socrates nor Alcibiades apply reason to continually assess the quality and content of the good in every sense (as per **R3**), and so, at least in the experience itself, they are unbridled in their respective pursuits/goods. For this reason, the idea that reason can guarantee the claim that knowledge is virtue is again, in the case of Alcibiades, weakened. However, in this case, it is weakened to the extreme – to the extent that such a claim can be understood to be contradictory. Now it appears as though reason, while being no guarantor of virtue, presents, at the very least, the capacity to choose the knowledge of the good under which Alcibiades will be determined, where such represents the known lesser of two contradictory goods: virtue and

power. Yet, along with **T1** holding in the case of Alcibiades as it did in the ‘Socrates example’, it is also clear that Alcibiades is aware, at least when he engages in reasoning in Socrates’ presence, that he holds contradictory preferences, and so he demonstrates the application of **R2**. This was also the case in the ‘Socrates example’ since Socrates must have known that a lesser good is contradictory to a greater good. However, since he was unaware of the contradiction at the time, it is clear that he did not apply **R3**.

Yet, it is also evident that, in demonstrating the capacity to select the good/knowledge claim that he will be determined by, Alcibiades seems to demonstrate both the application of **R2** and **R3**, and the capacity to override them. This represents a sharp contrast between the case of Alcibiades and the ‘Socrates example’. It is clear from the ‘Socrates example’ that Plato does not intend the reader to take Socrates to be an example of *akrasia* because there is nothing to suppose that Socrates was knowingly aware of the quality of his objective. Hence, I concluded that had Socrates applied **R3**, it is more likely than not that he would have given up his pursuit of reputation. Yet, Alcibiades, in having the capacity to opt for his known lesser good, seems free to apply **R2** and **R3**, know the quality of the goods that he pursues, and pursue them nonetheless.

To this it may be objected that there is nothing to suppose that Alcibiades applies his reasoning in the absence of Socrates, and in the presence of his lesser good. However, as stated above, Alcibiades’ *akrasia* is not generated by the presence of the lesser and easy good but by the suggestion of their being curtailed or being made extinct by the presence of the greatest good, virtue. While his *akrasia* is signified by his return to his lesser goods, it is facilitated and generated by his rationally coming to assess his previous good with reference to his greater good. For this reason, **T2** can be understood to be irrelevant to the case of Alcibiades since he demonstrates the capacity to not simply pursue apparent goods – contingently associated real goods – but to knowingly pursue the lesser as the lesser. As such, in the ‘Socrates example’ I showed how reason did not have to be applied and so it was not suited to guarantee the claim

that knowledge is virtue. However, with the case of Alcibiades, Plato has dispensed with **T2** because the presence of **R2** and **R3** seem to be complicit in facilitating the akratic experience. As it were, where Socrates' philosophising generates within him a commitment to this greater good, the same generates a commitment to his lesser good in the case of Alcibiades. Where the 'Socrates example' presents Plato's awareness of the problems of **SV**, the case of Alcibiades confirms that Plato has come to reject **SV**.

In Chapter Three, I will ground the claim that *only* reason can generate Alcibiades' capacity to choose between the knowledge claims/goods under which he will be determined. Moreover, by examining the role of the rational part of the soul in the *Republic*, I will present the philosophical grounding that supports my argument that reason *must* be the cause of generating *akrasia*. With this demonstrated, my reading of the case of Alcibiades will be greatly strengthened. Furthermore, in Chapter Four I will present a way of interpreting Plato's Allegory of the Cave as an example of *akrasia*, where *akrasia* refers not to giving into the force of pleasures, but to the 'rationally' generated conclusion that the labours of virtue are too great to forgo the easy goods that are available in the cave.

2.5 Conclusion

As I have shown, when the work of generating in virtue begins to signify the demise of more than Alcibiades is willing to sacrifice, he seems to simply give up on the project. In so doing, the **SV** principle that knowledge is the sufficient condition of action holds true but only in a way that undermines its significance. Thus, the deterministic aspect of **SV** seems, in the case of Alcibiades, to be true but to also be lacking its moral potency. This is a somewhat strange conclusion, but one that can be overcome by pinpointing the difference between the Socratic tendencies in Socrates-Diotima and what is essentially Socratic.

The speech of Socrates-Diotima does contain passages which suggest a fit between the *Symposium* and **SV**. But it is misguided to consider such intimations as essentially Socratic.

There is a suggestion throughout Socrates-Diotima that new levels of knowledge/stages on the ascent bring with them corresponding desires but they are outlined from the outset as being conditional. For example, 210a states “*if* the leader leads aright [my italics]”, which suggests at the very least that there is in fact a correct way of pursuing these matters such that if this way is not followed by the leader (the one with knowledge) then development will not occur. Indeed, this very language is quite at odds with the deterministic account of knowledge that is to be found in **SV**. For one thing, it is clear that the leader on the ascent is the person with the greater share of knowledge regarding the Form of Beauty. To lead, in this regard, has very obvious connotations of ‘to instruct’ or ‘to teach’, which implies that the leader has knowledge of the matters of love but the ‘if’ confirms that this knowledge might not, in and of itself, be sufficient to motivate him into leading correctly.

Moreover, it also seems to be the case that lovers must have a correct understanding of the soul and its good. Without such, knowledge and desire might very well be committed to something other than the soul’s greatest good. There seems to be a sharp distinction that can be drawn between the soul’s good and the individual’s experience of (pleasure) good. Whatever Plato’s position in the *Republic*, it is clear from the *Symposium* that there is a certain latitude in terms of the stance that the knower can take towards what he knows; knowledge of some sort might determine action but it does not immediately lead to the pursuit of the known greater good.

Paramount here is that which allows Alcibiades to choose between goods and the knowledge which he is acting under: a hitherto unknown neutral aspect to the soul such that it has, so to speak, ‘room to breathe’ between acquiring knowledge of the good and desiring a certain course of action. For if there is a duality in the types of good that can be had, such that in certain instances the one negates the other, it is clear that having the ability to choose one or the other presupposes such neutrality. The *Symposium* presents us with an account of knowledge and love that seeks to demonstrate the potency of knowledge. Such potency, as I

have argued, does not necessarily lead to the development of virtue. In the *Symposium*, it seems clear that Plato has come to the view that familiarity and ease can be opted for by Alcibiades in the full light of the knowledge that they are the source of his ills.

In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades' account shows that it is possible to relate to categorically distinct goods (the good of social standing and the good of virtue), and also that their corresponding knowledge claims regarding the good can be related in ways that step outside of the framework of **SV**. It seems that the work of giving up or surrendering lesser goods in pursuit of the real good, coupled with Alcibiades' association with the goods which he would stand to 'lose', sees him opting for the lesser. Of course, it is reasoning that brings this conclusion to light for Alcibiades and it is by his rational activity that he can opt for a lesser good. The neutrality of reason that is simply supposed by Socrates' project, as outlined in Plato's earlier dialogues, is presented as the very phenomenon that can both liberate the soul and lead to its stagnation via the refusal to engage in the philosophising that would lead to the development of virtue.⁴⁸ Finally, as I will show in the next chapter, the capacity to assess categorically distinct goods is only possible with the application of the rational part of the soul.

⁴⁸ Indeed, Alcibiades' outlining his desire to become virtuous is delivered in the spirit of St. Augustine's prayer in *The Confessions*, "Lord, make me chaste, but not yet!" (Book VIII, Chapter VII). The obvious difference being, of course, that the moment at which Alcibiades would actually forgo his known lesser good, unlike the case of Augustine, never materialised.

CHAPTER THREE

The Republic: Akrasia and the Limits of Knowledge

3.1 Introduction

In Book Four of the *Republic* (436b), Plato famously applies his principle of non-opposition to distinguish what he takes to be three parts of the soul: reason, spirit, and appetite. These parts should explain how it is the case that the soul can, in fact, be conflicted by opposing sources of motivation *vis-à-vis* a course of action. However, as I will show, what is crucial to understanding Plato's psychology is that this motivational conflict is the outcome of reason. To better demonstrate this negative experience, I will outline my thinking in relation to the concept of *akrasia*. Specifically, I will argue that Plato presents the view that *akrasia* is itself possible, and that it is the outcome of a specific function of reason (which I refer to as the motivational neutrality of reason) and the knowledge that this function of reason generates. Ultimately, I will show that this negative outcome of reasoning is precisely what Plato has in mind at *Republic* 518e, when he writes of the virtue of reason being "either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful". I will refer to my argument that reason facilitates the *akrasia* as the 'akratic argument'.

To ground the akratic argument, I will also argue that: all three parts of the soul are best understood with reference to their corresponding types of good, and their capacity to attain the objects of these desires. As such, each soul part, in terms of its good, operates within its own modality. Crucially, in the case of the non-rational soul parts, outside of this modality, they can neither consider goods nor even recognise them as such. It is the capacity of the rational part of the soul only to have the capacity to care for the whole soul, precisely because this is what it is to be a rational part: to be capable of assessing the prospective goods of each soul part in order to determine whether or not its satiation will be beneficial to the whole soul. While the spirited

part is given a role in this process of pursuing the good of the whole soul, there is much to suggest that this particular role may be outside of its modality and its understanding. Additionally, the modalities of the non-rational parts of the soul will be shown to lack the cognition required to generate either internal conflict, or shame, or *akrasia*. Although, as I will show, the non-rational parts may, of course, be the subject of all three.

That the soul can pursue its whole good, successfully or unsuccessfully, is the very premise upon which the harmony of soul parts as justice is constructed. Yet, as I will show, none of this would be possible if the soul were not also capable of assessing the goods of the other soul parts from within a motivationally neutral space. It is the rational part of the soul that generates the conditions that allow for the selection of goods to be pursued, either for the benefit of the whole soul or to its detriment. Thus, I will argue that every instance of shame is generated by the rational part of the soul.

Additionally, there is a type of shame that is completely grounded within the rational part of the soul: shame that results from one's inability to take motivation from the knowledge of the greater good. I will outline this 'akratic shame' only with reference to this rejection of the good of virtue, and the good associated with the ascent. The grounds for selecting goods other than this good relate to previously having experienced these lesser goods. Where there is motivational conflict, in this regard, such is itself the outcome of an intellectual weakness of one's own choosing; that is, not choosing to take motivation from the higher, epistemically derived goods.

Since *akrasia* is generated as a result of an application or function of the rational part of the soul, and not simply because the soul is comprised of parts that can be the subject of motivational conflict, I will also argue that the possession of such parts is insufficient to generate the conclusion that *akrasia* is possible. Since *akrasia* is generated by a specific application of the rational part of the soul, I will also argue that the possession of such parts *per se* is insufficient to generate the conclusions that *akrasia* is possible. I will refer to this as the

‘insufficiency claim’, since *akrasia* is the outcome of a specific way in which these parts can be made to relate to each other.

3.2 Parts and Rule of the Soul

3.2.1 *The Appetitive Part: Understanding the Limits of its Knowledge*

In this subsection, I will outline what I take to be the modality of the appetitive part of the soul regarding its good. Based on a reading of the text, I will designate the extent to which it knows its good, and its bad. Additionally, I will outline the implication that this level of knowledge has regarding the appetitive part of the soul’s capacity to interact with that which opposes it, namely, the goods of the other soul parts that negate the good of the appetitive part of the soul. With this in place, I will present a preliminary account of why the appetitive part cannot be that which causes internal conflict, shame (even though such is generated at it the appetitive part), or *akrasia*.

It may be suggested that Plato’s most stark presentation of those ruled by the appetitive part is not delivered until Book Ten of the *Republic*. Here, as well as likening this part to a “many-headed beast” (589b), he also states that a person who praises injustice is praising the rule of the appetitive part and thus the demise of the soul. In pursuing injustice, such a person is “saying that it is beneficial ... to feed the multi-coloured beast well and make it strong” (588e). In so doing, he weakens the rational part “so that he is dragged along wherever either of the other two leads; and ... to leave the parts to bite and kill one another rather than accustoming them to each other and making them friendly” (589a).

This description may seem to be an unnecessarily severe account of desires but it fits quite well, at least, with the description which Plato has offered in Book Four: “the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites, the irrational appetitive part, champion of certain indulgences and pleasures” (439d). This account suggests that allowing the appetitive part to rule, in the place of the rational part, means that, for the sake of indulgences,

the soul is left to be in a state where the rational part is subjected attack. Yet, my question is, would this be possible if the soul were not comprised of a rational part? In other words, is there something fundamental to the capacity of the rational part, *per se*, that makes it susceptible to attack in the first instance?

Consider the following: a person so ruled by the appetitive part would strengthen his appetitive part to such a degree that “if it finds any beliefs or desires in the man [the rational part] that are thought to be good or that still have some shame, it destroys them and throws them out, until it’s purged him of moderation and filled him with imported madness” (573b). This passage forces the following question: how is it within the remit of a non-rational soul part, such as the appetitive part, to consider or analyse anything such as a belief about a good, particularly a good that might be categorically distinct from an appetite?

It is worth noting that, since it is within the appetitive part’s capacity to not only desire certain pleasures or indulgences but, through some means, bring them about, it also follows that the appetitive part must possess some cognitive abilities.⁴⁹ Even in the case of 438, and the thirst example, while drink is outlined as the natural object of thirst, this must also be learned through experience. Such knowledge must be remembered and applied at the onset of thirst if it is to manifest itself as the desire to drink.⁵⁰ This type of experiential knowledge is precisely what I have in mind when I state that the appetitive part is itself predicated upon knowledge. In this case, learning through experience is concomitant with gaining the ability to recognise desirable objects which correspond to the alleviation of certain undesirable states. Moreover, this experiential knowledge is precisely how the appetitive part’s understanding of the good can

⁴⁹Contrarily, many have argued that the most significant aspect to the appetitive part of the soul is brute and devoid of rational calculation. A key proponent of this line of thinking is Irwin, who argues that: “The appetitive part ... [is] entirely good-independent and non-rational, uninfluenced by beliefs about goods” (*Plato’s Moral Theory*, p. 192). In the next chapter, I will address this thorny issue of good-independent desires directly.

⁵⁰That the appetitive part knows what it requires and what to desire has been well argued by Moss in ‘Appearances and Calculation’. See also: Gabriela Roxana Carone, ‘Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change his Mind?’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 20 (2001), pp. 107-148; Kevin McTighe, ‘Socrates on Desire for the Good and the Involuntariness of Wrongdoing’; Roslyn Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and, ‘Killing, Confiscating, and Banishing at *Gorgias* 466–468’, *Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 12 (1992), pp. 299–315.

be generated. This, as stated, would not be possible if the appetitive part did not have access to memory.

The fact that the appetitive part can formulate its desires based upon memory of what it has experienced as a good suggests that it can ‘know’ its good. For this reason, no less than the other parts of the soul, the appetitive part of the soul can have some knowledge of its good. That the cognitive capacity to recall should be attributed to the appetitive part is also evident when Plato discusses how this state can operate in dreams. At 571c-d Plato writes:

Those that are awakened in sleep, when the rest of the soul – the rational, gentle, and ruling part – slumbers. Then the beastly and savage part, full of food and drink, casts off sleep and seeks to find a way to gratify itself...it doesn’t shrink from trying to have sex with another, as it supposes, or with anyone else at all, whether man, god, or beast.

That the appetitive part can bring to bear, in relation to itself, the objects that it desires, even in their absence, confirms that Plato does accord the appetitive part the capacity to remember. Indeed, it would be quite a counter-human experience for him to deny the appetitive part such a capacity since almost everyone can arouse their appetitive part simply by thinking about desirable objects. Additionally, this knowledge should be considered to issue from experience.

However, the suggestion that the appetitive part’s knowledge is limited to experience, in the way that I am arguing, requires investigation into how the appetitive part comes to weaken reason, ‘examine’ reason’s beliefs, and “destroy” them (that is, finds shame in) to “import” (573b) madness into the soul. This is so as, taking account of the very modality of the appetitive part, what it can know and experience, there does not yet appear to be any straightforward way to understand how it can analyse beliefs, let alone beliefs that might not relate to appetites at all. By this, I mean rationally generated beliefs about what is fine, which would oppose certain indulgences.

Is Plato suggesting that the appetitive part is capable of analysing a rational belief? At first glance, this question seems unsatisfactory. Since it is reason that can take account of the other part's good, and not the other way around, it would be strange for the appetitive part to have access to what reason takes to be good. For it has no direct access to reason or its beliefs. That is, it is possible that an appetite would be opposed by a rational belief but, at the same time, it would not understand this opposition to be a conflict, *per se*, if the rational part did not bring the conflict to conscious awareness. The conflict is generated by the rational part actively impeding the appetitive desire. In which case, the appetitive part, while knowing its own good, must also know that its negation is its bad. This ability need not be anything more than the response to a memory of the rational part commanding the soul to carry out certain actions; actions that negate the appetitive part's desires.

Since the outcome of this process is outlined in experiential terms (*vis-à-vis* conflict or shame, for example) then the appetitive part must be considered 'only' to have the ability to recognise its good and its negation. Therefore, in this manner, the appetitive part of the soul can interact with goods that oppose it, without any reference to its knowing them as goods (that are opposed to it) as such. In which case, the appetitive part can 'assess', or rather, it can experience reason's beliefs as bad, and something to be destroyed, in the sense that reason's beliefs have been experienced as involving the negation of the appetitive part's good. The conclusion that follows is that it is not possible for the appetitive part to assess goods that originate in the other soul parts. This is a key limitation to its very modality.

This limitation is, in fact, in keeping with 573b which asserts that the appetitive part itself can 'recognise' that which it takes to be shameful within the rational part (that which it seeks to destroy). Yet, it would be a misrepresentation of Plato to conclude from this that the appetitive part of the soul knows or can understand a concept such as shame. The appetitive part comes to know 'only' through experience of its good, or being denied its good (which it understands to be its bad). Moreover, the experience of shame does not, therefore, amount to

the appetitive part having the capacity to assess the rational part's good as a good, such that it should feel shame in their presence. That is, while the appetitive part of the soul can experience its bad, it is neither the soul part that generates shame nor a soul part that can understand even the concept of shame.

In fact, it does not even suggest that the appetitive part knows that that which seeks to oppose it is the good of anything. The only thing that follows from this account is that the appetitive part can come to know its bad, because it experiences its bad. It is simply the case that the appetitive part of the soul's bad is, in fact, what the rational part of the soul has deemed shameful. Therefore, Plato can talk of the appetitive part's capacity to recognise shame in beliefs simply because it knows and recognises its bad. Shame is directed at the appetitive part but this does not imply that the appetitive part has the capacity to understand or recognise shamefulness *per se*. As such, the appetitive part of the soul's modality is limited, as argued, to knowledge that is generated through experience of its good and its bad.

This confirms two points that speak further to my characterisation of the modality of the appetitive part of the soul's good: (i) the appetitive part of the soul knows its good and bad because it can experience them both; (ii) the appetitive part's mere awareness of its experiences, furnished with memory, means that it can know its objects and that which opposes it. It need not know, *per se*, what reason's good is, outside of the fact that it causes it to have a negative experience. In which case, it should not be thought of as having the ability to 'assess' reason's beliefs (as good or otherwise), over and above having the ability to recall it as standing in opposition to it.

Therefore, I suggest that the appetitive part of the soul's knowledge is a midway point between the purely brute⁵¹ and an openness to rationality. The appetitive part is not brute in that

⁵¹ Cooper, in a similar vein to Irwin, limits the distinctive feature of the appetitive part to experience its capacity to desire without reference to their being good. See, 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation' in Gail Fine (ed.), *Plato 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 186-206. Kahn refers to this as Plato's understanding of "brute" desire (*Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, p. 244), although he also ascribes to these desires a level of cognition. See Kahn, 'Plato's Theory of Desire', *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 40 (1987), pp. 77-103.

it can be thought to know its good and bad; it is not open to rationality *qua* rationality but has, nonetheless, a capacity to learn of its good and bad through its negative experience with the rational part of the soul. Therefore, the appetitive part knows what it takes to be good.⁵² Hence, when a person is ‘ruled’ by the appetitive part, though they engage in a process of depriving the rational part of ‘exercise’ and destroying the beliefs that are contrary to it, this does not have to entail knowledge of another soul part’s good.

As such, the appetitive part of the soul’s cognition seems to be loosely akin to what I outlined in Chapter One as **R1**.⁵³ Yet, it would be a fundamental misreading of the *Republic* to assume that Plato would attribute to the appetitive part of the soul the capacity to reason, even in this regard. A distinctive feature of the rational part of the soul, and of reason *per se*, is that it can provide a grounding for its actions with its capacity to justify its conclusions with rationally founded judgements.⁵⁴ Yet, it also seems evident that the appetitive part of the soul

⁵² I do not address the question of whether or not the lower parts of the soul have possession of means ends reasoning since, for my argument, all I claim is that the lower parts can have a conception of their good and that they ought to pursue them. Further, I offer no suggestion as to how these ends would be attained. For interesting perspectives on why it is misguided to ascribe means-ends reasoning to the lower parts of the soul see: Hendrick Lorenz, ‘Desire and Reason in Plato’s *Republic*’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 27 (2004), pp. 83-115; Julius Moravcsik, ‘Inner Harmony and the Human Ideal in Republic IV and IX’, *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 5 (2001), pp. 39-56; Mariana Anagnostopoulos, ‘The Divided Soul and the Desire for Good in Plato’s *Republic*’, in Gerasimos Santas (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato’s Republic* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 166-88; R. D. Parry, ‘The Unhappy Tyrant and the Craft of Inner Rule’, in G. R. F. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 386-414. For those who argue to the contrary, see: Christopher Bobonich, *Plato’s Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Cooper, ‘Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation’.

⁵³ While I will not go into as much detail on these theses in this chapter I have done in others, it may be of help to restate the contents of them here: (**R1**) reason can be thought of as an integral aspect of virtue because it generates the capacity to make the correct observations that lead to correct or moral judgement; (**R2**) reason is a part of virtue because it can be used to assess knowledge claims regarding the good, to identify the possession of contradictory goods; (**R3**) reason can be applied, as a form of self-surveillance regarding the quality of goods, on a continual basis, so that contradictory goods are neither admitted into the soul nor are they experienced by the soul.

⁵⁴ The appetitive part of the soul can be thought to have ‘knowledge’ of its good where knowledge goes beyond that which is stated at 550e-551a, 553d-554b, 555b, 562b, and leads to the type of experiences discussed but does not fit the esteemed value placed on knowledge at 509d. In addition, since the appetitive part of the soul, in having the capacity to remove certain rational desires, experiences shame as directed towards it, and knows its own good, it is clear that Plato goes to considerable lengths to outline its nature *both* in relation to the city part that it corresponds to and its nature *per se*. Therefore, Morris’s suggestion that “the real difference between the *Protagoras* view and the *Republic* view is the big, obvious one: the *Republic* offers a political conception of the nature of the person” (*Akrasia* in the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*) seems to be overstating the case. Plato does account for the nature of the soul from within a political context, but he also presents cogent insights into the nature of the soul and how soul parts can generate experiences such as shame by the way in which they relate to one and other. While Plato outlines his thesis on the nature of the soul in a political context, he also seems acutely aware that the relationship between the nature of the soul and the city is obviously a non-symmetrical one: for surely the soul would have its nature without being ‘in’ a city state, as a city could have no nature without souls.

is ‘knowledgeable’, such that it can desire its objects.⁵⁵ This implies that it is knowledgeable to the extent that, if it has an experience of an object that it thinks desirable, and it turns out not to be so, then that object would no longer be desired.⁵⁶

For this reason, while the appetitive part may operate in the domain of appearances, it does not continue to accept appearance as, for example, the eye does. It is the subject of *experience* and so, once something such as an artificial drink of water is experienced by the appetitive part, it will not appear to it as pleasurable and hence it will no longer desire it *per se*. In which case, the appetitive part itself, in generating its knowledge by sense perception in conjunction with the experience of pleasure, far from being receptive to one type of input, can come to view such objects or appearances with disdain.

Indeed, if the experience of pleasure, and not simply the appearance of said, were not the kernel of the appetitive part’s goals, it would be difficult to understand how the rational part of the soul could educate the appetitive part. As Plato puts it:

⁵⁵ It is also crucial to note the ways in which the appetitive part of the soul’s knowledge and capacity to desire are not limited. In an attempt to understand Plato’s thinking about *akrasia*, it is paramount that we come to a clear understanding of what the appetitive part of the soul knows and can know, in order to distinguish between its abilities and deficiencies. In this regard, the Müller-Lyer illusion will be quite helpful. Penner uses it as an example of such cognitive *akrasia* in ‘Thought and Desire in Plato’ (in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays; II: Ethics, Politics, and Philosophy of Art and Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 96-118). I refer to this example to show: (1) that the appetitive part is not limited to perception, and, (2) that *akrasia* is not limited to some form of cognitive *akrasia*. The Müller-Lyer illusion shows that the eye will continue to see a straight stick submerged in water as bent because it is only this that the eye can see and therefore conclude. Yet, the appetitive part is not at all like this; it is not limited in this way – it has an object of desire which it is in pursuit of because it knows it to be pleasurable. If it ceases to be considered so, it will cease to be an object of desire. However, while accepting things as they appear is germane to the eye, which is related to the appetitive part of the soul, it would be misguided to conclude that the appetitive part, more generally, would be similarly limited. Although the appetitive part may operate in the domain of appearances, the appetitive part does not continue to accept appearance as the eye does. As such, I am arguing that in the *Republic* Plato is not *just* outlining some form of cognitive *akrasia*: where belief is thought to be passive to perception and perception is, in turn, unquestionably powerless to the content of what it perceives. This ‘cognitive *akrasia*’ does not account for the type of *akrasia* that I am outlining.

⁵⁶ Lorenz, in seeking to hold that the non-rational parts of the soul do not have beliefs, concludes that since the appearance continues to appear to the eye, *contra* measurement, as what it is not, the non-rational parts are “very much like beliefs” (*The Brute Within: Appetitive Desires in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 73). Penner argues that it is within the capacity of measurement to cause us to no longer be confused about whether or not what we see corresponds to what is real. See: ‘Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351b-357e’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 79 no. 2 (1997), pp. 117-149. Yet, surely this should not yield the conclusion that we no longer see it as it presents to sight.

[H]e should take care of the many-headed beast as a farmer does his animals, feeding and domesticating the gentle heads and preventing the savage ones from growing; and ... that he should make the lion's nature his ally, care for the community of all his parts, and bring them up in such a way that they will be friends with each other and with himself. (589b)

The manner in which such 'feeding' of the better desire of the appetitive part is achieved is surely by the rational part acquiescing to the appetitive part's better desire for pleasure, and not simply to the appearance of this pleasure.⁵⁷ Yet, as I have shown, what is crucial to the appetitive part is the experience of the pleasurable, and not the appearance of it. As such, the appetitive part is not at all limited to appearances in the way that perception is. If it were the rational part of the soul, as per 589b, could feed it with appearances. Therefore, denying the appetitive part the level of cognition and knowledge that I ascribe to it would yield the conclusion that it does not know either its good or its bad.

Additionally, it would not be capable of realising that it is in conflict with anything and therefore could not destroy any of reason's beliefs, since a condition of such is that it can perceive its bad in anything that seeks to deny it its good. The point of significance being, holding contradictory preferences requires, it would seem, that these preferences be compared by being placed side-by-side. Tri-partition or, for that matter, the very notion of soul parts and opposition, do not bring us to the conclusion that *akrasia* is possible. This is so as it does not even follow that the possession of opposing goods will necessarily lead to internal conflict. Rather, it is precisely because one of the soul parts is the rational part of the soul that internal conflict is generated out of opposing goods. The rational part of the soul can assess and compare

⁵⁷ While I am, for the most part, in agreement with Moss' thinking in 'Appearances and Calculations', and her outlining what I call the modality of the appetitive part to that of appearance, I cannot say that I am in complete concordance with her view that the appetitive part of the soul is limited to appearances to the extent that perception is. Of course, it cannot act, as it were, outside of appearances, but it does have the capacity to step outside of desiring this or that appearance if, for example, something appeared to be pleasurable but turned out not to be, it is difficult to imagine that the appetitive part of the soul would continue to desire it as such.

goods and, in so doing, bring knowledge claims regarding goods together, and it is this procedure that generates internal conflict. This must be so since the appetitive part *per se* cannot understand or even perceive goods that do not originate from within itself. Indeed, the very condition of its knowing its bad is that such be experienced by it. This again presupposes that the rational part of the soul would have to literally bring its beliefs about what is good into contact with the appetitive part of the soul. The rational part of the soul does so by imposing its good upon the appetitive part of the soul to curtail its good.

For internal conflict to be experienced as such, the rational part of the soul must bring beliefs and goods together to assess them and then determine which should lead to action. It is only after this procedure has been carried out that conflicting goods are perceived, as it were, side-by-side, within the same, single, unified whole. Where the rational part of the soul rules the soul such a unity becomes a harmonious unity by the very application of its exhorting its good over certain appetitive goods. Indeed, it is by this very application of the rational part of the soul that the soul “puts himself in order, is his own friend ... and having been many things becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious” (443d-e).

By contrast, beings that lack rational self-awareness, may be possessed of contradictory preferences but never be troubled by such. That is, an animal may love to run all day long and eat to excess, to the degree that they are opposing goods. Yet, these goods do not generate internal conflict until they are assessed in relation to each other, and it is seen that the latter goods come at the expense of having the capacity to engage in the former. Only after such rational assessment does internal conflict ensue. By this I mean that for opposing goods to generate the experience of internal conflict, such can only be generated by the application of a rational part of the soul; that is, a part of the soul that brings goods together in order to assess the good of the entire soul. Only the rational part can bring knowledge claims into a realised or actualised conflict. As such, the appetitive part of the soul’s goods may be responsible for the conflict in the soul and for the experience of shame, but the appetitive part, in keeping with the

modality of its good, is not exclusively response for either. In both cases, it is the rational part of the soul, being so disposed as to relate to the appetitive parts of the soul in a certain way, that generates both internal conflict and shame.

The appetitive part's modality is limited to experience, and to reacting to the objects that bring about its good or its bad, where bad means only the negation of its good. For this reason, the appetitive part, by lacking the capacity to abstract from its situation, or its good, should not be thought to be the soul part to generate *akrasia*. For *akrasia* to be possible the soul needs to knowingly opt for its lesser good, and this capacity is outside of the appetitive part's modality, since it cannot take its good to be lesser, because it cannot understand it to be so with reference to any other type of good; that is, it cannot understand the good of another soul part's good. This is a point that I will continually develop as I proceed.

3.2.2 The Spirited Part: No Shame without the Rational Part

While it is the case that the spirited part of the soul can possess knowledge such that it can be said to recognise something as shameful, it cannot, by any measure, be responsible for generating the akratic experience that Alcibiades outlines. I will argue that reason is in every sense responsible for the knowledge that the spirited part of the soul operates. Furthermore, this knowledge need not be understood as anything other than the spirited part of the soul's capacity to know its good and its bad. Therefore, if the spirited part of the soul is said to have a sense of shame, this sense can be explained with reference to the terms 'good' and 'bad'. Where and when this good and bad become understood in term of the fine and the shameful, this is due to the application of the rational part of the soul.

I will present a strong and a moderate version of this thesis. The strong thesis will hold that each and every time the spirited part attains its good, and such is understood as the fine, the rational part supplements the soul with these categorisations. On the moderate version, the spirited part, having learned what the fine and the shameful are, in this or that respect, can

operate within these parameters, independently of the rational part of the soul. Yet, as I will show, on either thesis the akratic sense of shame that Alcibiades outlines cannot be understood as anything other than a rationally generated shame. Moreover, by the end of this chapter, my reasons for favouring the stronger thesis will be apparent.

The spirited part is said to have the capacity to become an ‘ally’ with the rational part (440b) when there is a conflict between the rational and the appetitive part. The spirited part is characterised as loving honour and pursuing it, along with what it takes to be fine. That Plato gives this part of the soul the role of being an ally to reason is unsurprising since it is by education that this part comes to be concerned with “things that are to be feared” (429b). Therefore, the spirited part is concerned with keeping what is to be feared at bay and deems this practice to be honourable. Also, educating this part involves a level of habituation – as outlined by the rational part (that which is suited to rule in the soul and city) – such that it can perform its acts without being coerced by pleasure or pain (442b-c). The spirited part is therefore fortified in its pursuits in and through the assistance of the rationality behind the laws that the “lawgiver” sets down (429c). It is by such that the spirited part arrives at an understanding of what is fine and honourable, and so it learns of its good by the dictates of the rationality. It should not, therefore, be deemed controversial that I hold it to be the case that the spirited part of the soul operates with knowledge of its good.

Regarding how the spirited part can be thought an ally to the rational part of the soul, Plato holds the following: when conflict arises between reason and the appetitive forces, spirit can, in siding with reason, cause or generate feelings of self-loathing and anger. As Plato states: “don’t we often notice in other cases that when appetite forces someone contrary to rational calculation, he reproaches himself and gets angry with that in him that’s doing the forcing, so that of the two factions that are fighting a civil war, so to speak” (440a-b). Moreover, if the spirited part of the soul can generate feelings in relation to something within the appetitive part – such that ‘civil war’ may ensue – the spirited part must be considered to be operating with

knowledge of its own good. That which distinguishes the spirited part of the soul from the appetitive part, *vis-à-vis* their goods, is that the spirited part's 'knowledge' of its good, where such is in fact honourable, is that its knowledge is a derivative of the rational part of the soul's capacity to know.

It is by this importing of an understanding of good through habituation that the spirited part can be educated and this is what makes it a natural ally of the rational part (unlike the appetitive part). The strong thesis in relation to this is as follows: the good of the spirited part of the soul can know its good, and when this is what is really fine, this is the outcome of the rational part of the soul successfully importing knowledge into the spirited part of the soul. It is the application of **R1**, **R2**, and **R3**, which the rational part supplements the spirited part with that allows it to have the capacity to recognise its good as being the fine. It is not that it knows that its good is the fine *per se*, but only that it reacts to the fine in a particular manner by the rational part of the soul. Additionally, the active output of the rational part is evidenced by the fact that the soul knows that the good and the bad, of the spirited part of the soul are in fact the fine and the shameful. As such, if the spirited part of the soul has a sense of shame *qua* shame it is only so due to the education that the rational part of the soul has furnished it with.

This point is crucial for my thesis as, by my lights, it is reason alone that generates the capacity to have the experience of shame. The spirited part is said to have a sense of shame, but it is very important to have a clear understanding of what this sense of shame amounts to, given that the spirited part of the soul is a non-rational part. Since the good of the spirited part of the soul is concerned with the admiration that comes from fine action, it follows that its bad would not achieve this end. This is precisely how the spirited part comes to avoid the shameful, as it represents the negation of what it knows experientially as admiration (for appropriate anger).

For example, cowardice is shameful because it is the opposite of courage and, therefore, cannot gain admiration. Yet, knowing that something is fine, even in the derivative sense outlined, does not really rely upon the spirited part, *per se*, having a concept of shame. For the shame

experience to ensue, the spirited part need only recognise its bad and have an experience of such as that which will not gain admiration but ridicule. In reality, the bad of the spirited part of the soul, and the shame that the rational part perceives are one and the same thing, and are generated by the same event. Therefore, when the spirited part of the soul's good is not generated, this is known simultaneously to the rational part perceiving the resultant shame.

For this reason, it is permissible for Plato to speak of the spirited part having a sense of shame and honour. The sense of shame, properly understood, refers to a fear of not attaining its good, which it understands as its bad.⁵⁸ This would be so even if the energy for, and site of, the shame experience were the spirited part. In which case, it is the rational part that causes the shameful experience, since it perceives what the spirited part knows only as a bad, as shameful; hence the experience of shame ensues. Where and when the soul is open to ridicule, due to cowardice (in the case of the spirited part) or some indulgent behaviour (in the case of the appetitive part), it is the rational part that tells it that it should be ashamed.

That the spirited part of the soul is said to experience shame at certain appetites presents a further point that speaks to the strong thesis: it is clear that in the event that a shameful desire represents the bad/negation of the spirited part of the soul's good, this can be explained with reference to the spirited part knowing its bad without it knowing that such represents a good of another soul part. That is, the spirited part could react to the negation of its good without knowing that it does so because that which opposes it is either shameful or a type of good. Since both the appetitive part of the soul and the spirited part are both non-rational, it is surprising that this parity exists between the two: they are both limited to the modalities of their goods,

⁵⁸ Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that the sense of shame attributed to the spirited part of the soul is anything other than a refinement of its good, understood as knowledge derived from the experience of its good. Therefore, while the *Phaedrus* states that the spirited part of the soul responds to the verbal commands of the rational part (253e), this is a capacity that the rational part has through habituation and education. Similarly, *Symposium* 178d, where Phaedrus' speech outlines the positive role that shame can have over the spirited part of the soul, *vis-à-vis* generating courage, should be thought of as the outcome of the rational part of the soul, and education. If this were not so, it is not clear how the spirited part of the soul would come to think that courage in the presence of a loved one was more admirable than, for example, mutual cowardice (where such also secured the safety of both parties).

and cannot know or recognise the goods of other soul parts. As it were, both non-rational parts of the soul are such, among other things, due to their being ‘locked in’ to the modalities of their good.

The more moderate version of this thesis holds much of what I outlined as the ‘strong thesis’, but here the import of reason – understood in any form, including as **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** – requires that the derivative aspect of the rational part of the soul is sufficient to allow the spirited part to know and pursue its good and avoid its bad, independently of the rational part of the soul. In which case, that the rational part of the soul grants the spirited part of the soul the ability to recognise its good and its bad, derivative or otherwise, is simply irrelevant. That the rational part of the soul recognises its good and bad is sufficient to generate the experiences that it will delineate however it wishes. The spirited part can act and generate experiences of its good/bad regardless of any subsequent determination that the rational part of the soul might make. Therefore, the outcome would be the same: a shameful experience would ensue (regardless of it being referred to as such).

On this view, that the spirited part knows its good means that it knows that its good is the fine and its bad the shameful, simply because the rational part of the soul has told it so on a prior occasion. Therefore, it knows its good and recognises and refers to it as fine, without any corroboration or agreement from the rational part of the soul. That the rational part of the soul is the root cause of the spirited part’s capacity to do something does not account for the spirited part currently being able to do or not do something. However, it must be stated that the spirited part would still be limited to the modality of its good, and would not need to know the good of either the appetitive or the rational parts of the soul. This might seem strange, yet, it is important to note that the manner in which the rational part of the soul educates the spirited part is by conditioning it via experience such that, in the end, the spirited part comes to associate its good with that which has been imposed upon it. It is not that the spirited part understands the fine in

anything other than the experiential manner outlined. Yet, as I proceed, I will present lines of argumentation that will reject this moderate view.

The point is that on neither thesis can it be propagated that Alcibiades' akratic shame is generated by the spirited part of the soul. Akratic shame is such that it steps completely outside of the remit of the spirited part of the soul's comprehension. Therefore, even if there are situations in which the spirited part of the soul can generate shame, independently of the rational part's assistance, it will not have the capacity to do so in this case. For example, it would be strange for the spirited part of the soul, a non-rational part, to generate shame at the rational part of the soul's failing to give a genuine picture of its capacities. There is no sense, after all, in which the spirited part could perceive such failings since it necessarily lacks the capacity to assess rational arguments. As such, in this case, if shame is generated at the presence of a good, it is outside of the modality of the spirited part of the soul to have any import on the experience. Therefore, in the case of akratic shame, the rational part of the soul must be the cause of the shame, in a direct way, since only it has the capacity to provide the assessment to make such a determination. As such, the rational part of the soul is, in either case, the efficient cause of shame, or the total cause of generating the experience of akratic shame.

To this point the following objection may be posed: if the spirited part is distinct from the appetitive part due to its capacity to have a good imported into it, and since I hold that **T2**⁵⁹ is applicable here in the manner just mentioned, does this not qualify as an example in which the spirited part of the soul can have two distinct goods, such that it can know goods outside of its modality? Furthermore, is this not sufficient to conclude that the spirited part, in opting for the lesser good, can generate shame and *akrasia*?

In relation to the appetitive part of the soul and the conflict that its desires can generate within the soul, I noted that this is only possible in the event that the appetitive part of the soul

⁵⁹ Recall that I outlined these theses as follows: reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are 'good', and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad (**T1**); it is possible to pursue a contingent aspect of a true good without any direct recourse to pursuing the greater good (**T2**).

has another soul part react to its desires and judge them to be shameful. As such, while it is the appetitive part's desires that were the focus of the shame, such should not be taken as the very cause of the shame. It is by this that the appetitive part of the soul comes to know its bad as bad, without understanding it to be another type of good. There are a plurality of ways in which this explanation will not adequately deal with the objection just posed. Chief among them being that it would seem that it is within the spirited part of the soul's capacity to 'hold' rationally ascertained beliefs about the good or the fine, over and above the desire simply to be admired. Yet, the real question is: can the spirited part, in and of itself, be thought to have the capacity to both recognise its good and bad in the world of experience *and* also have the capacity to discern contradictory beliefs that it may hold?

At the very heart of this question is the issue of whether or not the spirited part, based upon the knowledge that the rational part has generated within it through habituation, is self-correcting. It is clear from the text that the spirited part of the soul is correcting when it encounters certain desires of the appetitive part of the soul. For example, at 439e we read of Leontius:

[He] was going up from the Piraeus along the outside of the North Wall when he saw some corpses lying at the executioner's feet. He had an appetite to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned away. For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, overpowered by the appetite, he pushed his eyes wide open and rushed towards the corpses, saying, "Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!"

Therefore, it is clear that the spirited part of the soul can recognise certain types of desire as unacceptable, and that shame and internal conflict issue in such experiences. Yet, it is also evident that the knowledge that the spirited part may have is insufficient to overcome or subdue

the desire. This confirms that in the case of this soul part knowledge itself is not sufficient to ensure its corresponding virtue. Even if the spirited part of the soul's assistance by the rational part of the soul is in the moderate thesis above, and the rational part of the soul is merely responsible for the spirited part of the soul's judgements in a derivative way, it remains, at the very least, that reason is culpable for the spirited part's failings and for the internal conflict. The latter must hold since in the absence of knowledge that the desire is, in fact, shameful, there would be no grounds for the spirited part to be at war in the first place. In which case, it is the rational part of the soul that is ultimately the cause of the very possibility of war (internal conflict) between the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul.

That the very grounding of this conflict is facilitated by the rational part of the soul is informative in the following regard: for conflict of this sort to be understood, the soul must understand it in terms of possessing contradictory preferences (**R2**) which require resolution in the presence of the attainment of the opposing goods/desires (**R3**). This is, of course, a further instance which requires an application of the rational part of the soul. It is also important to recall, as outlined, that the spirited part of the soul's knowledge is of the sort that it relates to such and such a situation, or to react to such and such a type of action in such and such a way, as specified by the rational part of the soul having educated it. Outside of this, at best, the spirited part could operate with knowledge that merely provides guidelines for the spirited part of the soul's anger to be deployed. Therefore, for spirit to be effective outside of very specific sets of prescribed circumstances, it would require the assistance of the rational part of the soul in the form of **R2** and **R3**.

This, of course, means that while the spirited part of the soul can operate – even in the absence of reason – in a way that appears to be in keeping with **R1**, this is not the case. The spirited part knows its good and it can recognise it and that which would negate it, as in Plato's example above. Yet, as is the case with the appetitive part, in being limited to experiential knowledge, the spirited part should not be thought to know to the extent of **R1**. What the spirited

part knows it desires, hence the rational part of the soul imposes its knowledge upon it via habituation; that is, by providing it with the requisite experience such that it will come to take this good as a good. Yet, the spirited part cannot give a grounding for its good outside of the fact that it knows what to pursue and to pursue it, in the absence of the capacity to rationally justify the end pursued.

Therefore, in non-prescribed situations, **T2** is as likely as not.⁶⁰ This is so as the rational part would have to have set down that a, b, and c are expressly related to X and that, never the less, in the absence of X, no part of a, b, or c are to be pursued for themselves. Without such a directive, the spirited part of the soul would be blind to quality of a, b, and c. This allows for quite wide parameters for error to occur, and for the possibility of unwittingly holding contradictory preferences. This suggests that the spirited part, much as is the case for the appetitive part, though it is ‘furnished’ with directives from reason – however well these may be habituated – should be thought to be merely reacting to the perception of goods. This must be so since it does not assess goods as goods. Rather, a good is good due to the experience of honour, either from what reason may deem the empty praise of others, or by the experience of adhering to the good that reason had caused it to habituate within itself. The presence of **T2** as a possibility confirms the need for **R2** and **R3**, the presence of which, however, will not, as I will show in the next section, guarantee virtue.

In cases where the spirited part deviates from the knowledge of the good that the rational part of the soul has provided it with, such is the outcome of the rational part of the soul not overseeing the spirited part’s motivations and experiences. Where this occurs, the spirited part of the soul should be not be thought of as acting with one type of good over or against another good. This is so as, in this case, there was no consideration of the knowledge the rational part

⁶⁰ My categorising of the spirited part in this manner is already outlined in detail by Wilburn in ‘The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato on Moral Education and The Many’. While Wilburn also has much to say about how Alcibiades can inform a reading of the *Republic*, he does so only to outline an example of the dangers of the spirited part in moral education. Yet, as I see it, without pointing to the necessary role that reason plays in moral stagnation, Wilburn cannot adequately address Plato’s thinking in this regard.

provide the spirited part with, and, in this sense, such knowledge was not factored in by the spirited part.

Moreover, where and when the spirited part is in need of correction, it seems to be unable to provide it without the application of the rational part of the soul in the form of **R2** and **R3** re-instantiating the spirited part's capacity to *act as though* it had the capacity to genuinely act as **R1**. Whereas, in reality, the spirited part's good and the avoidance of its bad, are fundamentally contingent upon what the rational part of the soul has made to coincide with what actually is fine or shameful. Moreover, in the absence of the rational part of the soul, internal conflict could not be understood as such, and might never even, in and of itself, lead to any awareness of conflict. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sense of shame that is attributed to the spirited part of the soul is, in every way, rooted in the rational part of the soul. As such, it cannot be concluded that the spirited part of the soul can, in and of itself, generate the experience of shame.

Plato states that when the rational part of the soul and the spirited part are educated sufficiently and have "truly learned their own roles ... [they] will govern the appetitive part" (442a). Having stated this, a line or two later, he asks, in a rhetorical manner, "wouldn't these two parts do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies – reason by planning, spirit by fighting, following its leader, and carrying out the leader's decisions through its courage" (442b). The reason that I cite these passages together is to highlight the extent to which the spirited part's knowledge of courage is dependent on the rational part, even when it comes to generating its own good or virtue. Therefore, it would seem unlikely that the manner in which the spirited part could govern the appetitive part is in some way independent of the rational part's governance (without, in Plato terms, "the declarations of reason" (442c)). These passages all support the strong thesis in favour of the moderate thesis, since the spirited part seems to be rendered somewhat impotent in the absence of the rational part of the soul, even when it comes to courage.

This means that the failings of the spirited part of the soul go hand-in-hand with the failings of the rational part of the soul's capacity to instruct and govern the spirited part of the soul. Crucial, however, is that this relationship of mutual indemnity works only in one direction: the rational part is responsible for the spirited part of the soul but the spirited part is not responsible for the rational part of the soul's misgivings. Hence, the spirited part of the soul is not responsible for (akratic) shame, since such is outside of its modality while it is within the modality of the rational part to assist the spirited part with its good. As such, the rational part of the soul can generate shame at the spirited part of the soul's inadequacies but the spirited part of the soul cannot generate shame at all, let alone shame at the rational part of the soul's inability to reason. In this way we can understand the spirited part as providing the energy by which shame is generated and the rational part as that which highlights instances of shamefulness; as that which self-directed anger should be pointed at.

Finally, by the lights of this argument, it is clear that if either the appetitive or the spirited part of the soul pursue ends that are contrary to the known greater good of the rational part of the soul, this does not qualify as *akrasia*. This is a key feature of the limitations of the modalities of the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul: in lacking the ability to generate a justification for the pursuit of a good, such that its pursuit is currently the greatest possible good, understood as such with reference to other alternative goods, the non-rational parts of the soul cannot knowingly pursue the lesser good. This is so as they lack the capacity to assess the merits of their good with reference to another type of good; that is, with reference to the goods of the other soul parts. This capacity to know the goods of the other soul parts is what makes the rational part of the soul unique and what makes it best suited to rule in the city and in the soul. Yet, it is this very capacity, properly understood, that opens up the possibility to make an informed decision to opt for the lesser good.

3.2.3 *The Rational Part: Motivational Neutrality and the Possibility of Akrasia*

That the rational part is set above the other two parts is expressly stated in Book Four: “isn’t it appropriate for the rational part to rule, since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul” (441e). It is only the rational part that has the capacity to take into account what represents the good of the entire soul. It can do this because it is wise, due to its natural capacities and its corresponding desire for learning and knowledge.

This desire to know is also an integral aspect of reason and of the need to attain “things that *are* really good and disdain belief” (505d). Also, and with a strong tone of support for SV, Plato writes that “every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake” (505e). Reading 505d, 441e, and 505e together suggests that the rational part can concern itself with the entire soul and that, as a result, it must have or desire the knowledge to attain the good *if* it is to achieve caring for the whole soul. In so doing, the soul, through the function of reason, can relate to the opposing desires that issue from each part of the soul. Moreover, once the goods and desires of each part of the soul are understood as predicated upon motivational knowledge claims, it becomes easier to understand how the rational part of the soul can assess something as non-rational as a desire for sexuality, in the case of the appetitive part of the soul, or the anger of the spirited part of the soul.

Indeed, the capacity to assess such emotive drives as knowledge claims would require that these prospective goods be assessed in the absence of their motivational quality. If this were not so, it is not all clear how the rational part of the soul could, in fact, care for the whole soul, since it would seem to make caring for the non-rational parts impossible. This absence of motivation is best understood as the motivational neutrality that the rational part of the soul generates. Moreover, a further point that supports this is that it would seem that this motivational neutrality also be applicable to the rational part of the soul’s own understanding of the good. If this were not so, it would make it incredibly difficult for the rational part of the soul to forego its good in favour of another soul part’s good.

Indeed, Cross and Woozley make a salient point when they state that:

This [the caring function of reason] is important for Plato because, if reason just has its own particular desires, while they might be more elevated than the desires of appetite or of spirit, they would simply be in competition with them, with no authority for resolving or harmonizing the competing interests. It is in its second capacity as the overruling authority, caring for the whole soul, that reason has the function of controlling and harmonizing the particular desires of all the element (including its own).⁶¹

The rational part can assent to certain appetites but it does so with a view to not giving the appetitive part free reign. This is made clear when Plato outlines the appetitive attitudes (558d-559c, and 571a -572b), stating that a person ruled exclusively by the appetitive part tyrannically pursues pleasures, which it understands as the good. As such, reason should be sure to only assent to necessary appetites, so as not to allow the appetitive part to be in a position to rule the soul. Yet, none of this undermines the motivational neutrality of the rational part of the soul, in acting for the good of the whole soul, it is apparent that any desire that would be detrimental to such would be removed. This seems to be a condition of the very possibility of generating harmony within the soul.

Those ruled by their lawless attitudes are most unhappy and are least in a position to do what they want because they are full of disorder (577c-578a) and so are unlikely to attain happiness, or the greater or actual good. It is for this reason that Plato asserts that it is the philosophers who should rule the city (444e-445a). By contrast, the philosopher is the person who is led by the rational part of the soul and, as such, has the capacity to act for the good of

⁶¹ R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 119.

the soul. A skill it would seem, which is transferable to acting on behalf of the good of the whole city.

Reason, in having the capacity to assess desires and motivations, should be thought of as presenting the soul with the ability to stand outside of a desire, irrespective of what soul part it originates from. Such is required if reason is to adequately assess the desire of a soul part, and to determine its merit in relation to the good of the entire soul. As such, where a desire is assessed – which is confirmed by designating a desire as greater or lesser – and then assented to, the rational part of the soul *must* have been applied. Additionally, that the rational part does assent to certain appetitive goods means that the rational part does not operate with any sort of completely negative pre-judgments about the merits of these goods.

Therefore, since reason is such that it can, to some degree, stand outside of desires – even its own desire to learn – to determine their merit, the soul has the capacity, when governed by the rational part, to select a course of action without bias regarding the part of the soul from which it originates. This is not, of course, to state that the rational part does not view its own desires as ultimately a greater good than the goods that are associated with the other parts of the soul. Yet, this aside, the care for the body, in practical terms, needs to be met if the rational part is to devote complete attention to its own activities. Therefore, if justice is to be achieved in the soul, then reason must be considered to be neutral when it comes to assessing the goods of the other parts of the soul.⁶² If it did not, it would be extremely difficult to understand how the goods and desires of the other parts of the soul could be satiated such that there can be harmony in the soul.

⁶² Vasilis Politis cogently notes of accepting this principle of SI, “To accept this would be to think that if a person knows what is good, then this is sufficient for his or her acting for the sake of it – that knowledge is sufficient for virtue. This means that either the acquisition of this knowledge involves the acquisition of an adequate desire to act in accordance with it, or a desire for virtue is already present in us by nature and the acquisition of the knowledge serves simply to steer it in the right direction.” However, since it is reason that facilitates the capacity to make decisions free from desires, it is evident that neither of these desire ‘based’ considerations *have* to factor in choosing to take action. Hence, Plato can be thought to have come to reject SV, and much of what Socrates outlines in the *Protagoras*. See, ‘What do the Arguments in the *Protagoras* Amount to?’, *Phronesis*, vol. 57 (2012), pp. 209-239.

Therefore, without the rational part there would only be parts desiring what they take to be good without ever having the capacity to discern where and when these desires negate each other. The inability of the non-rational parts of the soul to provide a grounding for their goods, because they cannot justify their pursuits as greater or lesser than another type of good, confirms that the rational part of the soul is that which allows conflict in the soul to be realised as such. From the awareness of conflict, however, comes the possibility of harmonising these otherwise disparate soul parts. Indeed, in bringing internal conflict to conscious awareness, the rational part of the soul generates the very possibility of overcoming such.

Yet, since Plato is explicitly clear that this does not have to be the result and that it is equally possible to act shamefully, and to therefore feel ashamed of desires *and* actions, it is clear that the neutrality of reason does not guarantee a positive outcome. Indeed, for shame to issue requires, in the terms outlined, a comparison of goods as goods, and this confirms the application of the rational part of soul. As such, there is an application of reason that leads to a negative experience, in this context, the experience of shame is what comes of the rational part of the soul failing to generate a harmony within the soul. Where internal conflict is realised and, rather than being overcome, is compounded by the soul's inability to harmonise itself, shame ensues.

The causes that lead to disharmony in the soul are outlined in detail in the *Republic* but consideration of the following is most informative. At 518e-519a, Plato writes: "the virtue of reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned" (518e-519a). Therefore, there is no doubt that Plato holds that reason can generate a negative experience and be harmful. Indeed, as I have been arguing, it is by the neutrality of the rational part of the soul that the greater good can be knowingly overlooked in favour of the lesser good.

In the *Republic*, the notion of association with a particular understanding of the good is outlined as something that can be harmful and degenerative, where this good does not represent

the greatest possible good. In the *Republic* (see Books VIII and IX) Plato outlines how, for example, the tyrant is thought to be the son of a democrat. For Plato, this represents a case of going from bad to worse. Crucial, however, is the fact that Plato posits a link between a particular understanding of the good, and the experience of such, over time, affects a person's character. Identity is generated and gradually developed in and through what is taken to be the good. One is a tyrant or a democrat depending on one's understanding of the good. It is associating and experiencing certain types of goods that allows the idea of a person's history to determine the good that they will continue to opt for. In providing the soul, and city, with such an outcome, reason is indeed a negative and harmful.

As I have argued in Chapter Two, what is familiar to a person can be opted for simply on the grounds that familiarity brings with it a certain disposition over a good, where its quality as good is increasingly reinforced and the means to attain it become increasingly familiar. Therefore, associating with a particular good reinforces the quality of a person's character such that character and this good become increasingly difficult to separate. Once the soul is granted the capacity to assess goods from within a motivationally neutral standpoint, coming to know that the familiar good is the lesser good, would not necessarily be any impediment to the continued pursuit of such. With these aspects of the *Republic* in mind, the 'akratic argument' seems to find *terra firma*. In this motivationally free rational space, the will has no force and so the greater can be submerged underneath considerations of the ease with which the familiar good can be attained. Therefore, where the rational part of the soul, in generating internal conflict in a conscious way, brings about the possibility of harmony, such can be rejected by the very same application of reason's neutrality.

As such, **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** are not sufficient to ensure virtue. This is highlighted especially by the case of Alcibiades, who generates his *akrasia* from within a rational standpoint. Consider also that the 'Socrates example' shows that such an application of reason does not have to be applied, even where knowledge of a greater good is present. Yet, that

Socrates is evidently unaware that he is taking motivation from his lesser good, makes it clear that it is possible to know and yet not cash out this knowledge by any necessary applications of reason.⁶³ Indeed, even where reason is applied, this is no longer any guarantee of virtue. The roles that **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** were assigned to potentially overcome the problems of **SV**, seem to be insufficient. This is so as now the very condition of *akrasia* is the application of the rational part of the soul, thus reason itself is the very condition of *akrasia*.

Moreover, having outlined the validity of the ‘akratic argument’, and having shown that only reason can generate *akrasia* out of internal conflict being increased by the selection of the lesser good in the presence of the known greater good, it follows that it is a specific mode of the rational part alone that grounds the ‘insufficiency argument’. It is not the case that, because the soul is comprised of parts that are in opposition to one another, *akrasia* is possible. Rather, it is because the rational part of the soul can be so deployed as to relate to the lesser good of the other soul parts in a way that generates the capacity to assent to such. Therefore, only in this specific application of the rational part of the soul, and not because there are disparate soul parts *per se*, can *akrasia* be generated.

Finally, while internal conflict, shame, and *akrasia* are negative experiences that are generated by the rational part of the soul, it is important to note that these experiences also serve to highlight a person’s failings. In this sense, they all present the possibility of overcoming moral shortcomings simply by bringing them to conscious awareness as that which would have negated the negative experience in the first place. Indeed, moral culpability is not something that the soul can necessarily hide from, as internal conflict, shame, and *akrasia* are reminders of these failings. The rational part of the soul, as I have shown, is precisely the part of the soul that ultimately generates these experiences and it should be taken as a constituent feature of the virtue of reason and the manner in which it retains its power. That is, in generating these

⁶³ It might be objected that it is not permissible for me to apply an aspect of the *Protagoras*, a dialogue which supports **SV**, to corroborate a thesis that rejects **SV**. To this I would reply that I read the ‘Socrates example’ as Plato’s own criticism of **SV**.

negative experiences which can serve as the beginnings of moral development, the rational part of the soul retains its capacity to enact positive change within the soul.

3.3 The Freedom of the Neutrality of Reason Embodied: The Case of Alcibiades

That reason is required for internal conflict, shame, and *akrasia* may still seem an extremely curious conclusion to draw in relation to Plato, arguably the champion of reason *par excellence*. Yet, this does not show that reason is the cause of such, only that it is essentially involved in the process, or, at the very least, that a ‘function of reason’ is involved. It is still the case that reason, in working towards a unified singular good, is the only part of the soul that can conceive of the other parts’ desires as potential goods, work towards the good of the whole soul, and work towards generating a harmonious unity in the soul.

That the neutrality of the rational part of the soul means that reason has the capacity to take motivation from whatever knowledge claim regarding the good that the soul assents to. As I have shown this can cut either way, but it is crucial to note that, by the process of its assessment, the rational part of the soul can take motivation in a mediate manner, regardless of the guise that motivation may present itself in. This mediated sense of motivation is what comes of the motivational neutrality that reason brings to the soul, and it is for this reason that Plato should not be thought to be holding a position where by the quality of any desire necessarily determines action.

Indeed, by the same token, the rational part of the soul retains the capacity to take a speculative approach to its own desires, such that it can react to any force within it that has the capacity to drive it. Therefore, by these lights, no motivation can force a person into action; the rational part of the soul simply assesses the motivations of the appetitive part as would-be knowledge claims regarding their potential to lead to the good of the whole soul.

On my reading of the *Republic*, it is reason, and only reason, that can allow Alcibiades to generate his *akrasia* which is generated by his rejection of philosophy, virtue, and the ascent.

It is clear that he believes himself to be in possession of a number of goods; the good of physical beauty (in the sense of the attainment of bodily pleasure), and the good of being revered by his society, and, of course, the power he believes this lends him. It is also clear that he knows that it is these goods that he must surrender, if he is to attain the good of virtue. Yet, this is precisely what he does not do, despite his ‘knowing’ better. However, the *Symposium* outlines the ‘possession’ (cf. 207e) of qualities, physical and mental, as that which must be actively reproduced, and so we must conclude that it is the prospect of surrendering his familiar good that leads to his weakness of will regarding the development of virtue. That is, for Alcibiades to generate virtue, he must surrender the activities that would instantiate much of his old good. (As I outlined it, this old good was, in various ways, reducible to the good of power).

This suggests that opting to reproduce a good, from a plurality of goods, does not fully remove the other good’s capacity to motivate the soul at some later time. Hence Alcibiades’ reason is that which simultaneously generates the capacity for him to select the lesser good and cause him to be racked by his shame. Consider that Socrates is also said to be sexually attracted to beautiful boys (216d). His temperance must, therefore, relate to the strength of his will to overcome this desire. Indeed, to be so full of moderation (219d) or temperance suggests that his virtue involves the conquering or a mastering of his will or desires, and not the absence of them. If we are to suppose that Alcibiades’ desires are felt much more intensely than Socrates’, this merely restates the point that what he lacks is not knowledge or rational capacity but the will to act on what he knows to be his real good. If either Socrates, Alcibiades, or any individual wished to possess virtuous qualities, then possession must refer to continually regenerating them by one’s commitment to ‘having’ them.

As such, it is Alcibiades’ lack of commitment to his known greater good that sees it being out of reach for him.⁶⁴ Indeed, one might say that all of the conditions have been put in

⁶⁴ Eric Voegelin argues that: “[there is a] ... clear distinction between the divinity of “wisdom” and the humanity of “love for wisdom”, the philosophical orientation of the soul becomes the essential criterion of the “true” humanity” (*Order and History, Volume II: The World of the Polis* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press,

place to allow him to escape from his ignorance and yet he is still unwilling to do so. If Alcibiades would only commit to it, he could achieve it in some sense – perhaps even to the extent that Socrates has – but, since what he lacks is the willpower to do so, then he is correct in thinking that he cannot attain it (where ‘cannot’ refers only to choosing not to).

The issue that stifles his development and progression on the ascent is not his lack of knowledge, nor his capacity to learn, but his refusal to break from previous patterns of behaviour. The historical formation of his character and the affinities that go with this refer only to what he has been, and not to what he can become. Yet, that he must apply reason to facilitate his *akratic* choice suggests that he *could*, at least, opt or choose to become the type of person he wants to become.⁶⁵ The point that I am driving at regarding the association with a good, and having an individual history with a particular good, is that we should not be thought of as choosing in some sort of vacuum. That is, while reason itself can generate the neutrality for a choice between alternative goods, it does not necessarily follow that we opt for what is ‘new’.

The decisive feature in progressing on the ascent, therefore, is not the capacity to reason, but the extent to which one can generate an openness to new knowledge, as this will, as per the ascent, require a necessary revision of previously considered goods. Such a revision, as the case of Alcibiades makes plain, will inevitably require the curtailment of aspects of limited conceptions of good. Since all of this was in Alcibiades’ power to achieve, he cannot take refuge behind any sort of platitudes such as ‘I couldn’t help myself’, he merely would not help himself. For this reason he should be considered morally culpable for any short comings in his character since it is these that he opted to maintain, rather than pursuing his known greater good and the ascent.

1964), p. 227). Alcibiades seems to know this and yet he is not motivated by it as he cannot attain the good of virtue that he can see in Socrates.

⁶⁵As A. E. Taylor writes of Plato’s understanding of the human condition: “we are only truly men insofar as we are becoming something more” (*Plato: The Man and His Work* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 226). As such, Alcibiades’ desires represent a certain type of failure since he wants only to remain as he has always been.

Therefore, the philosophising in the *Republic* can provide an account of how it *has* to be the case that Alcibiades generates his *akrasia* by the application of reason. This is fully conveyed by his capacity to relate to his knowledge claims regarding the good and to selecting the good he wanted to be determined by. Alcibiades acts under knowledge but he is also *choosing the knowledge and the corresponding conception of the good that he wishes to be determined by*. That he does so confirms the presence of the application of reason prior to his choosing to be determined by the lesser good. Rendered in the psychology of the *Republic*, Alcibiades engages in the neutrality of the rational part of the soul such that he can provide a grounding for his resultant *akrasia*.

Alcibiades can ‘justify’ his choosing the lesser good, in the sense that he has assessed his lesser good and has learned that it is so with reference to its greater good, and he has concluded that due to the level of difficulty on the ascent, it would be better to continue to operate with his known lesser good. While this is not an option that Plato would countenance, it is clear that Alcibiades is making an informed decision that is based upon actual knowledge of the ascent; for example, he knows he is courting a good that renders him feeling like a slave, and he knows, and has been shown by Socrates, that the virtue he seeks requires the negation of his old good. Therefore, Alcibiades knows the value of his lesser good based upon his knowledge of the value of virtue. This means that, with regards to reason and knowledge, what distinguishes the unjust man from the just man is not the capacity to apply a genuine application of reason, or the capacity to generate knowledge, but the capacity to endorse the knowledge of the greater good that reason has generated. In the next chapter I will outline this commitment to endorsing the knowledge of the greater good with reference to the idea of turning the whole soul as it pertains to the Allegory of the Cave.

3.4 Conclusion

This neutrality of reason is precisely how I accounted for Alcibiades' ability to opt for his lesser good or bad. Moreover, since he literally displays the capacity to assess his opposing goods which, according to my interpretation of the *Republic*, can *only* be achieved by using reason's neutral aspect, the rational part must be present for *akrasia* to be possible. Indeed, there is no part of the soul which could, in and of itself, be responsible for generating shame, let alone the akratic shame that Alcibiades outlines. Coming to an understanding of the modalities of the non-rational parts of the soul, and the limitation associated with such, precludes the possibility of anything other than reason being at the very heart of Alcibiades' shame and *akrasia*.

As we saw in Chapter One, in the *Protagoras* Plato presents knowledge, understood as the sufficient condition for action, as, among other things, having a deterministic aspect in precisely the way that is antithetical to Alcibiades' relating to knowledge claims. As I have shown in this chapter, **SV** is completely at odds with the manner in which Plato outlines reason in the *Republic*. *Akrasia* is possible not because the passions can drag knowledge around *per se*, rather it is generated because the rational part carries with it the capacity to assess goods as good in a neutral manner. From within this motivational neutrality, the soul has the capacity to opt to be determined by the lesser good.

Indeed, that the rational part of the soul generates conflict, such that it can be understood as such, implies that only the rational part of the soul can generate, on the one hand, the possibility of internal harmony, justice, and *eudaimonia*, and, on the other hand, the very conditions that would allow all of the former to be knowingly rejected. In the next chapter, I will present a reading of Plato's Allegory of the Cave to show how those who reject the ascent can be read as examples of akratic shame. Those who are presented with the possibility of the ascent, if they come to reject it, can only do so by the application of reason and the possession of knowledge, in the way that I have outlined in this chapter. This will serve to strengthen my

linking of the case of Alcibiades with the psychology of the *Republic*, and to better outline the benefits of reading the *Symposium* and *Republic* in relation to one and other.

CHAPTER FOUR

Valuing the Lesser Good: The Currency of the Cave

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that the Allegory of the Cave is Plato's example of how the rational part of the soul may be harmful due to the motivational neutrality that it generates in order to assess the suitability of goods to contribute to the betterment of the whole soul. To do so, I will examine the potential reasons why, when the option to leave the cave is presented but rejected, this qualifies as an example of *akrasia*. It is quite clearly the case that reason can cause the soul to turn from the appearance of goods towards the real good associated with the ascent. Yet, as I seek to show, prior to this complete reorientation of the soul, reason can be so encumbered that it can also be enslaved by the appetitive part of the soul so as to facilitate the production of the appetitive good over the greater good. In this case, reason shall be outlined as that which facilitates the *akrasia* involved in rejecting the ascent.

I will suggest that the pain associated with the ascent and the reorientation of the soul is ultimately predicated upon surrendering or devaluing the goods of the cave. However, when such devaluation becomes apparent, the prisoner may deem it to be easier to retain these qualities ('shadows') and, since the goods of the cave are rewarded (516c), it is clear that they may well think it more beneficial to remain in the cave. It is also crucial to note from the outset that the prisoners in the cave are not merely being presented with an alternative good *per se*; they are being presented with a new conception of reality which undermines everything that they know. Yet, it also seems clear that if they did not take their view of reality to be of value, then they would not react negatively to its demise. Considering that this new reality represents the demise of all that they hold dear, it is clear that their response is an emotive one. This response is not elicited with reference to epistemic or metaphysical account arguments *per se*,

but with reference to the consequences these accounts have for the goods that they refer to. It is precisely the point at which the protection of these goods becomes the basis of rejecting the ascent that I will be concerned with.

I will argue that any attempt to protect these goods presupposes a certain level of knowledge regarding that which puts them under threat; if this were not so then there would be no need to protect these goods, since it would not be known that such was required. To feel threatened, and to respond in a defensive manner, confirms the presence of knowledge regarding one's adversary. While much has been written about the import of the Allegory of the Cave for Plato's epistemology and metaphysics, I will instead focus on the negative role that knowledge and reason play in the ascent. As I will show, the soul can be more committed to this original orientation and willed ignorance than it is to an orientation towards knowledge, reason, the ascent, and the known greater good. However, at the same time, it is by the application of reason and the presence of knowledge that the original (and lesser) orientation is sustained, even in the presence of knowledge of the greater good.

The overarching objective of this chapter shall be to generate the conclusion that the Allegory of the Cave can be read as an example of reason's capacity to cause harm (518e-519a). I will argue that the commitment to a lesser good is part of the grounds for not turning the soul towards the ascent, and that such presupposes knowledge of the ascent, generated through a genuine application of reason. Moreover, it is by this process that the soul can come to will its own enslavement. This is the very heart of the akratic shame demonstrated in the case of Alcibiades. Yet, as I will show, the *Republic's* account of the enslavement of the rational part of the soul generates an insight into *akrasia* that goes beyond the limits of the case of Alcibiades.

4.2 The Allegory of the Cave and *Akrasia*

In this section I will outline Plato's Allegory of the Cave with a view to arguing that neither the presence of knowledge nor the application of reason are sufficient to lead to progression on the

ascent. I will argue that knowledge, at every point of the ascent, can be used to inform action but it is not sufficient to necessitate action appropriate to the soul's current level of progress on the ascent. I will be particularly concerned with showing how it is the soul's reaction to the knowledge of its 'enslavement' in the cave that determines whether it will ascend or seek to protect the goods associated with the cave. In the case of the former, the soul turns towards knowledge of the supreme good and, in the case of the latter, the soul reaffirms its commitment to the cave goods that it is familiar with.

At the very heart of the ascent passages in the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic* there is an unquestionably positive role assigned to reason (the rational part of the soul). In all three dialogues, the soul cannot develop in virtue, knowledge of the good, or come to see the true nature of reality without the import of reason. That is, without the application of reason, the philosopher cannot come to perceive the grounding of the worldly instances of, and, subsequently, the reality of the Forms. The *Republic*, as we know, grounds the Forms within the nature of the Form of the Good. However, in order to discern this, the philosopher must engage in a considerably difficult 'expedition' of reason. As Plato puts it:

When one of them [the prisoners] was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before. What do you think he'd say, if we told him that what he'd seen before was inconsequential, but that now – because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned towards things that are more – he sees more correctly? ... And if someone compelled him to look at the light itself, wouldn't his eyes hurt ... And if someone dragged him away from there by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight, wouldn't he be pained and irritated at being treated this way? And when he came into the light, with the sun filling his eyes,

wouldn't he be unable to see a single one of the things now said to be true? ...
[H]e'd need time get adjusted before he could see things in the world above.
(*Republic*, Book VII, 515c-516a)

Bearing this in mind, I take it to be far from tendentious to assert that the rational part of the soul is the only part of the soul that can lead it out of ignorance to a state of virtue and *eudaimonia*.⁶⁶ Yet, the troubling case of Alcibiades still remains, which forces the question: should reason be deemed, in and of itself, to be that which will lead to knowledge of the Forms? As I have shown with the case of Alcibiades, there are moments when reason can 'see' but choose to forgo the greatest good (where such is characterised as progression on the ascent to knowledge of the Form of Beauty). This rejection of the greater good occurs when the soul can discern it with reference to its lesser, where the negation of the latter is the 'cost' of retaining the former. As I have been arguing, this plurality of already known and experienced goods allows Alcibiades, in and through the application of reason, to knowingly reject his greater good.

In the *Republic* it is clear that, while there are those who will, in fact, see the ascent through to its conclusion, such may not necessarily be achieved. Given that all begin in relative

⁶⁶ While it extends far beyond the limits of this thesis to outline and catalogue the scholars who would disagree with my thinking here, it is worth mentioning Annas' position as it speaks to much of what I will be arguing against. Consider the following: "The Cave is Plato's most optimistic and beautiful picture of the power of philosophy to free and enlighten. Abstract thinking, which leads to philosophical insight, is boldly portrayed as something liberating. The person who starts to think is shown as someone who breaks the bonds of conformity to ordinary experience and received opinion, and the progress of enlightenment is portrayed as a journey from darkness into light. Unlike the passive majority, people who start to use their minds are doing something for themselves; after the first (admittedly mysterious) release from bonds it requires the person's own utmost effort to toil upwards out of the Cave. Few thinkers in philosophy or fiction have given a more striking, and moving, picture of philosophical thinking as a releasing of the self from undifferentiated conformity to a developing and enriching struggle for the attainment of truth. With this picture, and necessary as the other term of the contrast, goes Plato's darkest and most pessimistic picture of the state of those *not* enlightened by philosophy. They are helpless and passive, manipulated by others ... They [the unenlightened] do not inhabit the same cognitive world [as the enlightened philosopher(s)]." (*An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, p. 253). Yet, as I will show, those who opt to remain in the cave are not necessarily either helpless, or lacking in knowledge, or devoid of the capacity to reason *per se*, since it is by their knowledge that they choose to remain as they are. Moreover, I will also show how, in the *Republic*, it is not until the ascent has been completed and the Form of the Good is learned of that the person who leaves the cave is completely freed from the pull of the cave goods.

ignorance (whether perpetual cave dweller or potential ruler), it must be the case that some will be better suited to take to the prospect of their own freedom and liberation than others. Therefore, in the initial stages of development, the prisoners presented with knowledge of their state are faced with several possible outcomes.

There are, for example, those prisoners who will react so negatively to the knowledge that they are enslaved that they are prepared to kill the person who tries to help them. Their level of commitment to what they already take to be their good is so strong that they will not stop at any lengths to protect the good they associate themselves with (see 517a). This reaction to knowledge may be enacted both by those who have not given any consideration to what the new good entails (outside of the knowledge that it would remove the familiar good) and by those who come to reject the new good after giving it a fair hearing. That is, it is conceivable that there are those who will react in an unreflective and severe manner, and those who will come to this conclusion after a process of having ‘entertained’ the possibility of pursuing this new good. Investigating the grounds involved in generating both of these outcomes will allow me to determine the role that reason and knowledge play in the ascent, whether successful or not. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Plato considers each of these possible reactions.

4.2.2 Commitment to Goods and the Significance of Turning the Soul

On my reading, every possible outcome regarding the role knowledge and reason play in being presented with the ascent is reducible to the extent to which a person is committed to new knowledge and an alternative understanding of the good. As I will show, since knowledge of the ascent can lead to either the rejection or the acceptance of the ascent, it follows that knowledge *per se* is not sufficient to motivate action. If knowledge of *x* were sufficient to lead to the pursuit of *x*, then no alternative outcome could be yielded. Yet, in the case of the ascent, this is expressly what follows. Crucially, however, it is not the case that failure to take up the ascent or to develop on the ascent must be explained with reference to an insufficient capacity

to reason. The individual's potential liberation, and their rejection of it, can just as easily be understood by their *refusal* to reason beyond the demise of their goods. Just as is the case with Alcibiades, a refusal to take up the ascent can be related to having already built a life and a character around a particular understanding of the good.⁶⁷

Such is an example of the weakest form of commitment to knowledge. Of course, it does not follow from this that a person necessarily lacks a capacity to reason *per se*. Nor does it follow that the knowledge generated by their reasoning is not genuine knowledge. It merely shows that they do not take motivation from the knowledge they possess. As such, rejecting the ascent is not necessarily due to a lack of either knowledge or reason. Indeed, that they have perceived an alternative good as a threat to their pre-existing good demonstrates, as per Chapter Three, that they must have applied their reason to understand it as such.

Therefore, if the prisoners reject the ascent and knowledge (confirmed by their prospective liberator being, at best, ridiculed for his perspective (517a)), they can only do so after hearing about this alternative good. The problem is that this alternative good seeks to rid them of their established good, and this problem can only be discerned upon applying reason to assess both goods. From this it follows that, while they applied reason to the assessment of the alternative good, the outcome was insufficient for them to take up the ascent. While, in the *Republic*, all are said to have capacity to learn (cf. 518c: "the power to learn is present in everyone's soul"), I would add that the desire to live by the dictates of the knowledge attained is required for knowledge to have a positive effect on the soul. Where such is absent, engagement in the ascent is not really possible. Therefore, it is possible that neither knowledge nor reason will suffice to engender within the soul an appropriate reaction to the knowledge

⁶⁷ That a soul's personality may trouble moral development is well discerned by I. M. Crombie when he writes that: "A human personality thus becomes something more complicated, and much more potentially tumultuous, than a soul is in its true essence. The task for man is to "re-establish the revolutions" of his soul, to recapture the love of wisdom and harmony alone which is his proper activity, disregarding all other impulses except in so far as they indicate to him what his duty, as one responsible for the good order of a corner of the universe, happens at any moment to be." (*Plato: The Midwife's Apprentice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 79.)

attained. It is commitment to knowledge that will ultimately lead to the beginning of the ascent, and to its conclusion.

Importantly, individuals who find themselves in this precarious situation suspect that the goods that they ‘have’ will be lost if they attain the new good presented to them. It is this factor – the previously held conception of good – that renders the prospect and the knowledge of the possible good of the ascent impotent. It is for this reason that Plato writes: “reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power it is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned” (518e-519a). This passage suggests in quite strong terms that Plato does indeed hold the view that reason will not always have a positive effect on the soul. This is so, in this case, reason is used to the preserve and protect the familiar (and lesser) good.

The point I am making is that, in order for individuals to take up the ascent or to refuse to begin it, surely they know and understand this new good, in however limited a way. This must be so since the reasons that lead to the rejection of the ascent relate to the consequences the ascent has for their old good. As such, on the basis of knowledge of virtue generated by the rational part of the soul, the very justification for rejecting the ascent ensues; it is by such that the individuals conclude that they would be better off remaining in the cave, with their easily attainable goods. This is, indeed, suggestive of the harmful sense of the application of reason that Plato points to above.

Indeed, the reference to having to be “dragged” towards knowledge and moral development is sufficient to conclude that there would clearly be a sense of turmoil at the prospect of surrendering the familiar good. It may even be plausible to hold that all would experience turmoil as they transitioned from one understanding of the good to another, however suited their nature may be to the task of the ascent. Moreover, that not all are capable of overcoming this turmoil suggests that the old good has a particular allure of its own.

At this point it is worth considering 515d, which presents the case of the freed prisoner who has 'seen' with pained eyes the truth of their situation in the cave. This individual has perceived the life of the cave dwellers as a slavish devotion to what is, at the very least, a questionable or, at worst (and in reality), an illusory good. Arriving at this judgement requires only the truth of apparent goods, conceived as such upon seeing the objects carried by the puppeteers (515d). This is outlined as one of the first pieces of genuine knowledge that the freed prisoner comes to. Moreover, since what s/he sees is unclear to them, the prisoner would initially experience this as a kind of uncertainty in relation to their reality. Further reflection would yield the conclusion that what they had heretofore taken to be reality is something of an illusion. Knowledge of their imprisonment by such seems to be required for continuation with the ascent. Yet, underlying this realisation is a supposition that is somewhat suppressed: for the ascent to be engaged in properly, the freed prisoner must also come to the view that knowledge of their imprisonment is itself a good. That is, the knowledge that they are enslaved provides them with the potential to achieve their liberation.

However, it is not at all clear that this knowledge provides an incentive for the prisoner to completely reject her/his easily attainable good, even if they are, in part, considering knowledge of their imprisonment to be a good. Abandoning the cave, on the other hand, and the 'goods' therein, will generate a catalogue of pains associated with such, so the good of knowledge of imprisonment must be sufficient to incentivise a person to take up the ascent. As Plato writes: "The freed prisoner, having looked at the light, would turn around and flee towards the things he's able to see, believing that they're really clearer than the ones he's being shown" (515d). At this point, the prisoner has seen the fire but he is still drawn to comfort of his familiar, previously considered goods. Yet, as this example highlights, the decisive feature to beginning the ascent is not simply knowledge of enslavement, if it were all would at least begin the ascent. What is most significant for beginning the ascent is being more committed to the good of knowledge than to the goods of the cave.

In one sense, this difficulty is not at all surprising because, as per **T1**,⁶⁸ the cave and its familiar (though lesser) goods can, nonetheless, remain experientially pleasing. As such, the familiar good can be understood to be a valid good even after its true value is learned. What is surprising, however, is that it can be desired and attained at the cost of the greater good. My thesis is that this is not possible without the motivational neutrality of reason; it is by such that, even in the presence of knowledge of a greater good, the soul retains the capacity to opt simply for *a* good. All knowledge claims regarding good carry a motivational quality but the motivational neutrality of reason (required to assess the merits of goods) is the very thing that allows for the selection of the lesser good. In which case, the only criteria for pursuing a good is that it is a good in some respect (as per **T1**).

From this perspective, the freed prisoner has a choice to make: either s/he can continue to engage with her/his known lesser goods, or s/he can fearlessly take up the unfamiliar path of the ascent. Thus, at the heart of the idea of the turning of the soul resides the choice of either beginning the ascent or remaining in the cave. Escaping from the cave requires more than the mere knowledge of imprisonment; it also requires taking a positive attitude towards the knowledge itself such that one ‘loves’ it. Therefore, both the person who leaves the cave and the one who remains possess the same knowledge and will present such as justification for their actions. That is, they both arrive at the insight that they are enslaved in the cave; one uses this knowledge to justify remaining (with reference to the difficulties associated with the ascent), the other to justify escaping (with reference to the real good associated with the ascent). Ultimately, I am suggesting that this demonstrates that knowledge cannot be a determinant in the manner in which **SV** purports, given that both parties have the same knowledge and, standing outside of it, as per the motivational neutrality of reason, assess it and choose very different courses of action.

⁶⁸ As outlined in Chapter One, **T1** holds the following: that reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are ‘good’, and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad.

The task of the ascent is the more difficult option and is outlined as too difficult for most. Consider, for example, 493e, where Socrates asks: “Can the majority in any way tolerate or accept the reality of the beautiful itself, as opposed to the many beautiful things, or the reality of each thing itself, as opposed to the corresponding many?” It is replied: “Not in any way”. Indeed, there is sufficient reason for concluding that this is so due to the demise of the familiar good. Moreover, this conclusion cannot have been reached without the application of reason and knowledge of the new good (such that it is thought to signal the demise of the old).

This conclusion is not as surprising as it may first seem. For one thing, while Plato also states: “Every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake” (505e), he adds:

It divines that the good is something but it is perplexed and cannot adequately grasp what it is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things, and so it misses the benefit, in any, that even those other things may give.

This lack of clarity regarding the good introduces a spectrum of ways in which aspects of certain experiences are good (where plurality also signifies opposing goods). This follows even where the familiar good is threatened by the presence of knowledge that suggests this ‘good’ to be part and parcel of one’s enslavement. Therefore, while Plato will refer to this as confusion regarding the nature of the good, all are, in fact, in a state of confusion regarding the good until the ascent is completed. Therefore, not knowing the nature of the good cannot be used to factor in the judgement of those being presented with the ascent. As such, the only factor that leads to the ascent and to overcoming the goods of the cave is the extent to which a person can be committed to knowledge of imprisonment by ignorance. Since this is no longer a given, as **SV** would assert, Plato is pointing to the inadequacy of the view that knowledge should qualify as virtue.

Yet, even at this point it seems to be clear that knowledge claims regarding the good can be related to. Moreover, it is the manner in which we relate to them that determines our character and not simply the possession of them. The quality of the reaction has a direct relation to the way the soul is turned, which, as I have shown, is tantamount to the extent to which a person can commit themselves to the view that knowledge of their imprisonment is a good. For example, if the soul is turned towards knowledge it takes knowledge of its imprisonment as its cue to develop knowledge, and engenders within itself the ceaseless desire for knowledge that Plato associates with philosophy. Contrarily, if the soul is turned towards the goods of the cave, it protects the goods that it is already familiar with, or the goods that it is already in possession of. This surely suggests that it is no longer the case that, for Plato, knowledge itself is sufficient to determine action, since the manner in which the soul relates to knowledge is a factor to be considered. This suggests that, if desire is contained in knowledge, such desire is not sufficient to motivate the soul in the terms that **SV** outlines. In the *Republic*, knowledge of the greater good does not immediately qualify as a form of motivation that is sufficient to ensure the pursuit of any type of end.

As such, reason is required in the following regards: (i) to assess the merits of an alternative good; (ii) for motivation by any good (the lesser of which notwithstanding); (iii) since its neutrality is required in both the negative and positive reactions to the knowledge of imprisonment and ignorance, it is required to both protect the lesser good, and to transition to the greater good. In the absence of the correct orientation towards knowledge, the possession of knowledge or reasoning adequate to the soul's progression on the ascent will be rendered impotent to this task. Yet, by contrast, it will be extremely potent to the task of generating the akratic experience.

My thesis throughout has been that reason is a requirement of *akrasia*, and that *akrasia* represents an intertwining of reason, knowledge and desire. From what I have shown, I can generate the following conclusion: *akrasia* is possible each and every time the soul seeks to

protect its lesser good, and it does so necessarily with knowledge and reason. While *akrasia* requires knowledge of a good and the application of reason, such an outcome of reason confirms that reason is not the ruling part of the soul. Instead, such souls are ruled by the parts that are either “victory-loving or profit-loving” (580d-581e). It is this commitment to a lesser good that leads the rational part of the soul to generate *akrasia* and, at the same time, results in moral and epistemic stagnation. Such a quality renders the soul completely ill-suited to rule in Plato’s city.

4.3 The Cave: How Final is the Escape?

In this section I will argue that even if knowledge of enslavement leads to taking up the ascent it is not sufficient to conclude that such a person will necessarily act in accordance with knowledge of their greater good. Indeed, as I will show, it is not until the ascent has reached its conclusion and the Form of the supreme Good is learned of that the erotic drive is overcome. The part of the soul that most of all rebels against the dictates of reason – the appetitive part – continues to be a source of struggling for the would-be philosopher ruler (though he *should* know better than to take motivation from such a source). Therefore, until the ascent is completed the rule of the rational part of the soul is indeed precarious.

The defence of the lesser good is generated from within the same rational activity that leads to the rejection of the greater good, and is a key to determining whether or not the allure of the cave is still present in the soul. In this sense, it is reasonable to hold that both the rejection of philosophy and the defence of the lesser good are co-terminus. Fear of losing the treasured easy and familiar good can re-emerge at any point in the process of the ascent until it has been completed, determining action and thereby scuppering the candidacy of the potential philosopher ruler.

It would be both implausible, and at odds with the text, to assume that arriving at knowledge of the Forms, and the goods associated with them, would not generate a struggle within the soul regarding the goods. At 490a-b we read:

[I]t is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle towards what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he move on, he neither loses nor lessons his erotic love until he grasps the being of each nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it...

This passage suggests that it is possible to continue to seek to protect lesser goods once the ascent from the cave has already begun. Therefore, the appetitive part of the soul and its good are not removed by knowledge of the greater good, or even by knowledge of the Forms. It is not until knowledge of the Form of the Good is arrived at that the struggle within the soul is overcome. Hence, at the very least the possibility of holding contradictory preference remains until the Form of the Good is learned. Such is the potency of the appetitive part of the soul that its good, though known to be the lesser good, is only removed by the highest possible knowledge that can be attained. It is not, therefore, the case, as **SV** would suggest, that the lesser good is always removed by the known greater good. Indeed, it is for this reason that the fine nature required to become the philosopher king, though rare in any case (491a-b), is corrupted by poor education and by associating with the wrong types of people (cf. the negative role on society that Plato attributes to the Sophists; see especially 493a-495c). These factors, coupled with the potency of the appetitive drive towards its good, compound the capacity to protect certain cave goods.

Therefore, commencement on the ascent should not be understood as a complete break from the goods that are associated with the cave. Indeed, while the ascent is outlined as a developmental process, it is also the case that, while progressing away from illusory goods, there remains the propensity to engage in such. Indeed, with the increase of knowledge, the struggle between goods might be experienced with higher levels of intensity on both sides.

This is a very precarious stage for our would-be philosopher. Indeed, his association with character types, typified by some of the Sophists, might be the very thing that will hinder and, perhaps, undo his progression on the ascent. Thus, it is the extent to which the soul is committed to knowledge, and living by its dictates, which will determine whether or not it continues to knowledge of the Form of the Good. As such, it is the extent to which the soul can remain orientated towards true knowledge as its only good that dictates progression on the ascent.

What knowledge brings to the soul, prior to the soul eventually coming to know the Form of the Good, does not necessarily amount to virtue. This is so as knowledge alone cannot be, and is not, characterised as having the capacity to overcome the erotic drives associated with the appetitive part of the soul. As such, it is clear that in possessing a previous conception of good the soul has already attained a certain understanding of what is good; in overcoming this type of good, it must arrive at the view that knowledge and virtue are, in reality, the only real goods. Until such is achieved, the soul can be motivated by the lesser good and the lesser type of knowledge which corresponds to it. The most difficult part of virtue is not the attainment of knowledge – at least until the Form of the Good is attained – but inculcating within the soul the capacity to forgo the goods of the non-rational parts of the soul.

The notion that the direction that the soul is facing determines whether or not reason will be beneficial or harmful (518e-519a) does not simply refer to the soul's capacity to know, but to the soul's commitment to live by knowledge, if and when it is attained. As outlined in the previous section, fear of having to surrender the old good, and the type of imprisonment involved in this, can continue to plague the philosopher until the ascent is complete. Once fear of having to surrender the slavish (yet enticingly easy) good (as per **T1**) is acquiesced to, the rational part of the soul is, as it were, cut off from achieving its own good. That is, the rational part of the soul becomes ruled by the appetitive part and is deprived of its epistemic climax.

As it were, the rational part enters into a process of assessment and consideration with a view to generating understanding, but the fear that the appetitive part experiences causes the soul to break off from this process. At this point, the soul's orientation becomes aligned with the good of the appetitive part and returns to erotic pursuits. Yet, it is also evident in the *Republic* that the manner in which the rational part comes to be enslaved by the appetitive part ultimately results from the alignment of the soul itself, since it is by such that the reaction to new knowledge will either be fearful or will reinforce the commitment to knowledge. Where there is fear, the soul will relate to real goods negatively. In this situation, reason brings opposing goods together but, because the soul has aligned itself with the appetitive part in fear, the known lesser good is opted for and the akratic experience is generated. It is by such a process that the part suited to rule, *ipso facto*, comes to serve.

As such, turning towards the light of the Forms also implies turning one's back on the good of the cave, yet this does not imply that the soul cannot glance around from time-to-time. Hence the beginning of the ascent does not automatically lead to its completion. As such, the knowledge attained on the ascent, up to attaining knowledge of the Form of the Good, is not sufficient to negate the erotic drive or the goods of the cave. Therefore, if knowledge is to qualify as virtue, then the soul must only take motivation from the knowledge of the greater good of virtue.

The true philosopher, both by definition and application, is not simply someone who knows, but is a lover of learning. Yet, allowing the desire to learn to find its fullest expression in the knowledge of the Form the Good is not achieved simply by leaving the cave, or by learning of this or that Form. As such, leaving the cave does not imply complete liberation from it. For this reason, the rule of the rational part of the soul is best characterised as turbulent, and continually tested by the other parts of the soul.

Additionally, there are those who are capable of leaving the cave, but who do not see the ascent through to its conclusion. Where there is the possibility of deviating from the ascent,

there is the possibility of again re-orientating the soul, this time from knowledge and virtue to lust and the passions (which might best be termed, ‘cave goods’). If this is possible then, in keeping with the *Symposium*’s account of qualities having to be generated to be had at all, the orientation of the soul can be shifted in each and every instance in which there is a possibility to attain the goods that are associated within the non-rational and rational parts of the soul.

4.4 Commitment to Weakness: Reason Ruled and the Whole of Vice

In this section I will outline how and why Plato characterises the whole of vice as the outcome of the rational part of the soul being ruled by the other soul parts. Such a characterisation is extremely compatible with my view that *akrasia* is the outcome of the rational part of the soul being put to ends that are known lesser goods. When the neutrality of reason allows one to choose to be motivated by a lesser good, the rational part of the soul is knowingly put at the service of the non-rational parts of the soul. Effectively, this is how the rational part of the soul becomes enslaved by the other soul parts.

However, to avoid confusion, I will not argue that *akrasia* represents the whole of vice, only that *akrasia* represents cases of vice where such is the intention of the individual. For example, the individual may be licentious, where and when they had intended the opposite, without any recourse to the motivational neutrality of reason. Yet, when this occurs it requires that the knowledge of what is greater is forgotten. If it is not forgotten and the soul experiences internal conflict and shame, this presupposes that the current desire is compared with the good of the other soul parts. As outlined, this is the sole capacity of the rational part of the soul. Yet, for the enslavement of reason to qualify as ‘the whole of vice’, as per the *Republic*, it must also include cases where the vice is intentional.

That the soul can ‘house’ a plurality of rivalling knowledge claims regarding the good means that being virtuous involves the task of only opting to be motivated by the knowledge of virtue. Moreover, being virtuous requires the orientation of the soul towards the truth, in

addition to the possession of knowledge; it is by this process that the soul comes to be ruled by the rational part of the soul. As a result, it is evident that the soul must fortify itself against the fear of new knowledge and allow itself to gain the experience of completing a full 'cycle' of reasoning.

It is for this reason that those in the cave who reject the ascent and, indeed, knowledge of reality, can be considered, by this very act alone, to be akratic. As it were, after rejecting the ascent, though they do continue to 'know better', they may simply put this information to the back of their minds and carry on regardless. It is, therefore, in the very moment of their perception of the truth and their ultimate decision to forgo it that their *akrasia* is fully palpable. As such, it is by 'philosophising' that the prisoners come to knowingly remain enslaved to their cherished and pre-experienced goods.

Since the ascent can be deviated from, it is not knowledge itself but the decision to live by such that is the decisive feature of acting virtuously. As such, it follows that there will also be those who struggle or vacillate between being committed to a type of good. Therefore, the current rule of the soul will not be determined by the possession of knowledge or the capacity to reason but by type of good that is being pursued.

This commitment to the lesser good is a pivotal point in understanding how the soul can be ruled by the non-rational parts. If the rational part of the soul is ruled by a non-rational part, where such is a state that the soul is committed to, this is tantamount to the soul attempting to knowingly will its own ignorance. Yet, while this may be something of a contradiction in terms, such is the objective of a soul that engages in irrationality so that it can attain irrational ends. That the whole of vice is attributed to the subjugation of the rational part of the soul by the non-rational parts, in every case confirms that action is taken in ignorance, or for the purpose of acting in ignorance in the future.

After the prospect of the ascent has been presented and considered, the greater good is side-stepped in favour of protecting the lesser. As such, willed-ignorance cannot be done in

ignorance but is undertaken with a view to the possibility of acting in ignorance in the future. This means that the attempt to act in ignorance at a later time without being troubled by the rational part will be successful (this speaks to the effectiveness of the current akratic rejection of the ascent). If this attempt at rejecting the greater good, by removing it from future awareness is unsuccessful, the possibility of *akrasia* re-emerges. Yet, as the case of Alcibiades shows, knowledge of the good of virtue cannot be fully ignored. This means that, in the case of the former, the effect, other things being equal, is never completely achieved and this re-opens the possibility for the same akratic attempt/option to become a cyclical event. It is by such a process that the akratic personality is committed to their lesser good, as their lesser good is continually presented to them in the same context as their greater good. That is, any question of the value of their lesser good is known with reference to the new value that the greater good has placed on it. Put differently, to know that any X sets the value of any Y, means that any consideration of the value of Y will bear reference to X. This makes the project of continued ignorance, as an intention, quite a weak and contradictory endeavour. Nonetheless, it is an endeavour that requires continued commitment to the lesser good.

Gerson argues that Plato, at least in the *Republic*, does not abandon SV.⁶⁹ Gerson contends that scholars who hold the contrary do not discern how Plato understands desire to be necessarily both of a rational agent and an embodied rational agent. As he states: “In no sense does someone who identifies himself primarily as the subject of his appetites abandon rationality or even abandon himself to irrationality.”⁷⁰ Elsewhere, he writes:

The person who makes a normative judgement about his own appetites, either endorsing them as good or rejecting them as bad, is exactly like the intellectualist

⁶⁹ It is crucial to note that Gerson argues only that “‘intellectualism’, thought by some to be a feature of Socratic as opposed to Platonic philosophy, is in fact a constant feature of Plato’s moral psychology”. He is not seeking to argue either way in the discussion as to the whether or not Plato changes his mind about the possibility of *akrasia*. See, ‘Plato’s Rational Souls’.

⁷⁰ Gerson, ‘Plato’s Rational Souls’.

Socrates who cannot but desire that which he believes is overall in his own interests.⁷¹

And, qualifying this a little later on in the same paper, he adds: “This dualism is not soul/body, but rather disembodied soul/embodied soul, where the former is a sort of paradigm of which the latter is an image.”⁷² The embodied soul is the ‘manifestation’ of soul in which what is best might not be in line with what is best for it as a disembodied soul. Yet, since it is the case that “the akratic is caught between the two “men”, external and internal, seemingly identifying with bought at once”,⁷³ it nonetheless remains that “the satisfaction of an embodied appetite can seem best to us at the same time that we believe our good is achieved by resisting that appetite is a condition for which, according to Plato, philosophy is the only real cure.”⁷⁴

Yet, as I see it, the prisoner’s commitment to her/his embodied good is sought over and above the greater good of his soul, either embodied or disembodied. By this process, when it comes to *eudaimonia*, these prisoners – rational agents – abandon themselves to irrationality. Yet, it is the application of proper reasoning and knowledge of the true value of virtue that sets the context for the surrender to the irrational.⁷⁵ While Gerson’s position does provide insight into the question of the possibility of *akrasia* in Plato’s work, he does not discern the shift in Plato’s thinking regarding the negative role attributed to reason and knowledge in generating *akrasia*. Of course, the person who reasons about desires in both *SV* and the *Republic* is one and the same rational agent. Yet, it is the additional manner of relating to desires via the motivational neutrality of reason that distinguishes the soul in the *Republic* from that of *SV*.

⁷¹ Gerson, ‘The Myth of Plato’s Socratic Period’.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Gerson, ‘Plato’s Rational Souls’, p. 56.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ For similar reasons I cannot agree with Martha Nussbaum when she argues that: “There is one more irrational desire that Plato never considers. He never entertains the thought that there may be in human beings a desire simply to act in a perverse and irrational way” (‘Plato on Commensurability and Desire’ in *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 106-124).

The person in **SV** reasons incorrectly about their desires due to desired objects/activity itself and hence is said to act in ignorance. Contrarily, the person in the *Republic* – and, for that matter, the character of Alcibiades – are morally weak through the act of their choosing. Indeed, while Gerson is correct to argue that in both cases rationality is being engaged in to generate the pursuit of desires, he does not seem to be aware that it is the new modality of reason's neutrality that represents the change in Plato's thinking.

That stated, in the *Republic*, Plato again retains the view that knowledge of a good is required for action but, since there is a plurality of goods available, it is clear that the pursuit of the known greater or real good does not have to be pursued. As such, knowledge of the greater and attainable good can no longer be viewed as the sufficient condition of virtue, since it is also the root cause of its opposite. If reason is that which can liberate the soul from ignorance, then it also represents the possibility of forgoing the heights of virtue and the nature of the Good. Since it is the response to knowledge of being enslaved by appearance and ignorance that provides the grounds for choosing to begin or forgo the ascent (that is, re-orientate the soul or not), it is by an intentional action that the soul comes to pursue the known lesser good. This is precisely why the akratic options must be met with a commitment to the lesser the good, as it will continually be presented with the greater good. The latter must, of course, be continually forgone.

4.4.1 The Power of Destruction

As discussed in Chapter Three, there is an additional capacity attributed to the soul that lacks in virtue, which provides a keener insight into the negative role that is assigned to reason. At 573b, Plato writes of such a soul's capacity to remove desires and beliefs that seem shameful to it, such that it can achieve its ends: "If it finds any beliefs or desires in the man that are thought to be good or that still have some shame, it destroys them and throws them out, until it's purged him of moderation and filled him with imported madness." Therefore, along with

reason generating the capacity to pursue the lesser, it does so by allowing for the interaction between the appetitive part and the rational part of the soul such that the former can ‘assess’ beliefs (achieved simply by the reaction that it causes in the appetitive part) so that it can destroy those that generate conflict by opposing the appetitive part’s good.

Additionally, the most appropriate way to destroy the motivational aspect of a good claim, of the rational variety, is to simply remove its import in judgements, in the manner outlined above. Yet, in so doing a person generates an “imported madness” within the soul. This sense of imported madness, read in conjunction with the idea of reason having the capacity also to be “useless and harmful”, can be understood regarding the soul’s capacity to knowingly be the source of its own lack of virtue. This negative outcome, no less than the positive experience of the ascent and the development of knowledge and virtue, as argued throughout, is ‘achieved’ by the rational part of the soul.

Plato goes to considerable lengths to outline the positive role that reason can play in the generation of justice.⁷⁶ However, while coming to know the Form of the Good is the ultimate *telos* of the ascent, and represents the terminus of philosophical enquiry (518c-d), there is much to hinder this end that is not related to his capacity to reason *per se*. This is not due to an inability to reason but to the role that reason can play by facilitating ends/goods that are not in keeping with its nature. In this regard, the soul has the capacity to knowingly pursue the lesser good, and to become an enemy to itself, rather than acting as its “own friend” (443d). As Plato puts it:

The rebellious part is by nature suited to be a slave, while the other part is not a slave but belongs to the ruling class. We’ll say something like that, I suppose,

⁷⁶ Indeed, at 487a he provides a list of the qualities required to rule, all of which presuppose a good application of reason: “no one can adequately follow us unless he’s good by nature at remembering, quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, and a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and moderation”.

and that the turmoil and straying of these parts are injustice, licentiousness, cowardice, ignorance, and in a word, the whole of vice. (444b)

The rational part of the soul can be read as an enemy to itself or to the entire soul – thereby generating the whole of vice – when, in being subjugated by the other parts of the soul, it facilitates the generation of goods that are not its own. The rational part of the soul’s good is associated with learning and possessing knowledge. Moreover, in generating access to the ‘real world’ of the Forms, knowledge of such is itself both the real good and the greatest possible good the soul can attain. Here the greatest good, and knowledge of such, can be considered to be opposite sides of the same coin. Yet, this is quite at odds with the idea of the rational part of the soul being a slave to the non-rational parts. However, this contrast suggests that if the rational part of the soul is subjugated, it can only be so with reference to the pursuit and attainment of its lesser goods: the attainment of this goods is something that reason facilitates.

Indeed, with this in mind, it is difficult to conceive of a way in which the rational part of the soul itself would not know that it is facilitating such. Therefore, if Plato holds that it is possible to act in ignorance – in a non-akratic way, as per the ‘Socrates example’ – then by the idea of the enslavement of the rational part, he must be suggesting something far greater than a singular lapse in judgement. Rather, it is the commitment to the lesser good, signified in the attempt to protect the lesser good that is deserving of a concept such as enslavement.⁷⁷

This point lends further weight to my grievance with Gerson. He argues, correctly, that only philosophy has the capacity to orientate us towards that which we, in pursuing our real good, should identify ourselves with. This good, for Plato, is represented by the internal, or

⁷⁷ In the last chapter, I showed with the ‘insufficiency claim’ how *akrasia* is not reducible simply to conflicting parts of the soul vying for their respective goods, but through the rational part of the soul perceiving such conflict. This is only possible once the rational part of the soul has generated the motivational neutrality required to assess the goods of each soul part. This is palpably absent from the ‘Socrates example’ because he does not bring his knowledge of the greater good to bear on the judgements he makes. If he had, he would not have been akratic in that instance.

‘disembodied’ good. Yet, whatever merit is to be found within Gerson’s thinking here, it is difficult to see how something might present itself as an embodied appetitive good, distinguishable from our real good, and be pursued without contravening **SV**. To this, Gerson would no doubt object that this is expressly not the outcome, since it is pursued on the grounds that it is the best good. Yet, that something is thought best surely implies that it has been cast as such with reference to other alternatives. Therefore, if the soul arrives at the mistaken view that the embodied good is the best good available to it, and does so with consideration of the real and greater good, surely this must contravene **SV**. Should not consideration of the real good have led to the motivation required to pursue it? According to **SV**, if knowledge of the greatest good, *x*, is brought to bear in a judgement, *x* should lead to action.⁷⁸

Would not the pursuit of embodied desires be an irrational endeavour, in this set of circumstances? Moreover, since Plato is outlining the way in which the rational part of the soul comes to be a slave to the non-rational parts of the soul, and not instances in which the soul simply misjudges what is best, it seems evident that he is considering something more significant than simply being misguided in this or that case. Indeed, since Plato is discussing

⁷⁸ Indeed, it is this lack of consideration of the greater good that is alarmingly absent from Socrates’ mind in the ‘Socrates example’ and, for this reason, my suggestion that such would have remedied Socrates’ error seems justified. Yet, I can agree with Gerson when he writes: “But since all desire is for a good, that is, for an end, this judgment amounts to a judgment not just in regard to the desire but also, and necessarily, in regard to the desire for a good. Thus, Leontius desires a good, a good rationally conceived as such, at the same time as he has a second-order desire following upon his second-order judgment that the first-order desire should not be satisfied because it is not a good, or, to put it more precisely, not a real good, but only an apparent one. The mistake, I think, made by those who support the presence of good-independent desires in the argument for the possibility of incontinence, is to suppose that the distinction between a desire for drink and a desire for ‘good’ drink means that there can actually be desires that are not for goods” (*Plato’s Rational Souls*, p. 12). While I agree with classifying the appetitive good as an apparent good, it is difficult to understand how, as far as **SV** is concerned, the knowledge of it as such would not automatically lead to its negation. To classify the position as an intellectualist position because all desires are goods, seems to be beside the point, since the quality ‘good’, in the case of apparent goods, renders their real quality a step removed. Yet, going on **SV**, if the soul knows this, it must follow that the apparent good cannot be taken up as a motivational source that leads to action. However, as I argue, the very process of enslaving the rational part of the soul requires the rational part’s own self-subjugation in order to take motivation from the lesser good, the weaker motivational source. Hence rationality is required to assess apparent goods if they are to be determined as such. It should be a superficial good, where they are determined to be bad, that their apparent good would remain. Yet, since experiential goods can be pursued simply on these grounds – in the case of those ruled by the appetitive part of the soul – after reason has determined their quality, *akrasia* must follow. This point goes well beyond that of 602c-603b, where the very nature of that which is apparent cannot be questioned by the part of the soul that operates on appearances. For example, where the apparent end is pleasure, if this experience is not generated, then the object in question would no longer be desired. I noted this point in Chapter Three in relation to Moss’ position, but it is worth mentioning here also.

the very rule of the soul, and not simply instances in which the apparent good can blindly motivate us, as is the case in the ‘Socrates example’, it seems evident that the set of circumstances that I have outlined are, in fact, the set that he is considering. The enslavement of the rational part requires the application of the motivational neutrality of reason and the assessment of the corresponding goods as goods. In opting for the known lesser good, the soul, by the application of reason, comes to enslave its rational part and knowingly wills its own moral and epistemic stagnation.

That the non-rational soul parts can come to rule over the rational part, and intend this outcome, implies that **SV** is no longer a position that Plato defends. According to **SV**, the presentation of our embodied appetites as good should surely be irrelevant given the knowledge we have of its inadequacies *vis-à-vis* our actual desire for the real good. The embodied soul, in having a rational part, should not be thought of as a ‘rational soul’ *per se*, but as a soul that has the capacity to be rational. It also has non-rational parts which can subjugate the rational part and enslave it so that it will act irrationally in generating the conditions to knowingly pursue the lesser good. It is for this reason that Plato refers to individuals who are continuously subject to conflict (see *Republic* 544c-d, cf. 445c), for they can experience the whole of vice by allowing the rational part of the soul to degenerate into irrationality.

The lesser good, as per **T1**, may forever retain its appeal and status as a good. It is a good that carries with it a known bad such that, as soon as reason perceives it as an illusory good, it loses its shine, disappears, and generates a tremendous sense of shame. As such, where there might have been a positive experience, such is sacrificed for the easy attainment of the familiar good. The whole of vice, therefore, is reducible to the rational part of the soul not assuming the rule of the soul. In other words, the soul exercises the capacity to be motivated by the lesser goods associated with the non-rational parts of the soul.

Akrasia represents the soul’s opting to remain in the cave and wilfully desire to – as contradictory an end as it is – live in ignorance. This is a commitment to the known lesser good

which is generated by the manner in which the rational part becomes enslaved by the appetitive part. Yet, more than this, it is by being committed to the known lesser that reason moves from being ‘utilised’ in this or that situation, to being at the very disposal of the appetitive part. This is not, contra Gerson, simply about having an affinity with desires, such that the soul recognises that it is the ‘subject’ of them. Instead, it concerns how overindulgence in one type of desire leads to the enslavement of the rational part and the imprisonment of the greater good.

Thus, at 588e-590c, Plato outlines the difficulties that emerge from habitually relating to negative ‘goods’, where motivation derived from the appetitive part leads to weakness. This increase of familiarity through experience is precisely what makes “the multiform beast well and make it strong” (588e). For this reason, it is the task of those who seek to become just to “domesticat[e] the gentle head and [prevent] the sage ones from growing” (589b). Since fear of the unknown is what stifles progress on the ascent by leading to a return to the old goods, and since fear itself has the capacity to rob anyone of good sense, I take it as being far from tendentious to hold that in taking motivation from fear, a person comes to nourish their most savage part and thereby enslaves the rational part of the soul. Therefore, to be committed to the lesser good is to be committed to the enslavement of the rational part, a process which, as I have shown, the rational part itself facilitates. By commitment to the lesser good, the soul, in continually choosing the lesser good, weakens its own capacity to attain the greater good.

In this way, the unjust person commits to weakness by continually engaging in the attainment of the easy good. In so doing, the weakness manifested in opting for the lesser good not only subjugates the rational part of the soul by strengthening the appetitive part but, correspondingly, increasingly weakens it. In the case of the prisoners presented with the nature of their state, and those who have through some means discerned their reality, such an option, for Plato, represents the knowing selection of the lesser.

If the erotic forces within us motivate us, it is only on the grounds that we have already predisposed them to do so, depending on the orientation of the soul that we have chosen. This

is so as the commitment to the good, which is fundamental to Plato thinking regarding the orientation of the soul – which is chosen – allows the soul’s reaction to goods to be ‘pre-decided’ upon. This very process relates to the “whole of vice”, because it is another way of formulating or understanding how the rational part of the soul plays a role in its own enslavement.

Yet, it is also worth restating the contribution that the *Republic* makes regarding the way in which knowledge provides motivation. If the motivation for action necessarily comes from the knowledge of the greatest good, the reaction to such would be self-contained within the knowledge itself, and there would not be any possibility for a plurality of reactions to the greater good. However, in the *Symposium* and *Republic*, the quality of the action, and a person’s character, issue not simply from the mere possession of knowledge but their reaction to knowledge. The manner in which the soul is turned does not preclude the possibility of the soul coming to freely take to the task of turning towards knowledge and the ascent. This is the more difficult option, but an option nonetheless. Taking motivation from the lesser good may be the easier task because it avoids fear of the unknown and provides security from within the familiar, but this is a far cry from being cut off the option of turning the soul to the ascent. This reaction to knowledge, as I have outlined, can change at any point on the ascent, yet what is crucial is the immediate reaction to knowledge, as per the *Republic*, of their imprisonment by ignorance, and how the valued, and previously unchallenged goods, are part and parcel of their imprisonment. Coming to realise ignorance, as per the *Symposium*, is outlined as coming to realise that the soul is fundamentally lacking.

In a similar manner, in the *Republic* imprisonment in the cave (by ignorance), and overcoming such is outlined as a process of ascending towards knowledge. It is the knowledge gained on the ascent that will be the source of liberation. Yet, achieving such will require, as a precondition, coming to react to knowledge that one is ignorant by allowing the soul to act upon this knowledge (that is, to inculcate a desire to know that leads to its pursuit). In this regard, for

Plato, Socrates represents a fine example of the way in which the soul *should* allow such knowledge to be the very makings of the philosopher. That is, the knowledge of ignorance presents the possibility of taking up the path of the philosopher and one becomes so if, and only if, one comes to relate to this knowledge by allowing it to re-orientate one's whole soul towards knowledge.

4.5 The Implausibility of Good-Independent Desires: Rationally Mediated Goods

In this section I will work towards the conclusion that the idea of good-independent desire⁷⁹ is rendered implausible by a reading of 437e-439e. I base this conclusion on the fact that, at 443e, Plato explicitly states that the appetitive desires have an accompanying belief that oversees the desire. I will show that this accompanying belief refers to the view that the appetitive part operates within a modality of its own good, such that, if the appetitive part has a desire, it necessarily takes it to be a good. Moreover, that the rational part of the soul assesses the quality of the appetitive part's good, as a belief, is precisely how something rational can assess something that is essentially is exclusively driven towards experiential ends/goods. This will also demonstrate how the motivational neutrality can 'neutralise' the force of the appetitive part's drive towards goods. In this way every soul part can be understood to provide motivation to the soul that is mediated by the rational part of the soul.

As I will show, the experiential ends of the appetitive part of the soul, even when these ends do not step outside of the 'natural objects' of desires, represent three distinct ways that appetitive part understands its ends as goods. These three goods are: pleasure, power, and the

⁷⁹ This phrase is presented by Irwin in *Plato's Moral Theory* (see especially, p. 192). For similar views see: Michael Woods, 'Plato's Division of the Soul', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 73 (1987), pp. 23-47, and, Kahn, 'Plato's Theory of Desire'. Others, such as John Moline, reject this view, see: 'Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 60 (1978), pp. 1-26. Others still argue that each part is outlined as being so close to agency that they should be accorded an almost primitive or basic form of cognition (allowing anything further than this would suggest that they are in fact rational). For a proponent of this view see: R. F. Stalley, 'Persuasion and the Tripartite Soul in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 32 (2007), pp. 63-89. Finally, on this topic Moss notes that: "despite Plato's misleading silence on the matter, most of the activities he attributes to the lower parts are mediated by the rational part" ('Appearances and Calculation'). What I am adding is an account of precisely how it is that the rational part of the soul can assume a mediated role in relation to the appetitive part, even when the rational part of the soul is enslaved by it.

ease with which any of its ends can be attained. Indeed, it is by such goods that the rational part of the soul assesses the appetitive part's beliefs; that is, the beliefs that the rational part assesses are the appetitive beliefs about how its ends are goods. As such, there is nothing to suppose that when Plato talks of the additions required to go beyond 'natural objects' – to objects of this or that sort – he means that goods of pleasure, power, or of ease of attainment require any additions even from the appetitive part itself. That is, these three goods are immediately confirmed simply by possessing an appetitive desire *per se*.

To better justify my position, I will outline my thinking in relation to the following objections. People who are sympathetic to the idea of good-independent desires may posit the following objections: (1) I have argued that, on the basis of an application of reason, the soul aligns its current decision with the good of the appetitive part by opting to take motivation from the appetitive good. Yet, allowing to the soul to make current decisions that bring alignment between the desire and the way the soul is already facing generates the following question: does it not follow that, after the fact, the soul can come to take immediate motivation from desires predicated upon knowledge claims regarding the good?

(2) Since the weight of my argument seems to stand or fall with reference to the ascent, is not my argument overly committing Plato to a view that is not really fit to be an explanation of the real world? That is, the Allegory of the Cave and the possibility of the ascent do not seem to be things that people are ever really concerned with and, therefore, if *akrasia* requires rejecting the ascent, have I committed Plato to a position that does not speak to the akratic experience that the many would claim to have had?

To better outline why I hold both of these objections to be without solid foundation it is worth reflecting on the text itself. Between 437e-439e Plato presents the following position:

[E]ach appetite itself is only for its natural object, while the appetite for something of a certain sort depends on additions. Therefore, let no one catch us

unprepared or disturb us by claiming that no one has an appetite for drink but rather good drink ... so that if thirst is an appetite, it will be an appetite for good drink.

This passage is manifestly arguing that the very root of any appetite for this or that sort of thing is such that it is not, in fact, for this or that sort of thing but for something that is not characterised in these additional ways at all. Yet, what this passage does not argue is that the natural objects are not themselves predicated upon an understanding of good. What 437e-438a precludes is only the consideration of what would be a real good; that is, a good that would be of benefit to the whole body and soul.

Of course, the modality of the good of the appetitive part of the soul will be restricted in keeping with its limitations in that it cannot determine whether or not its good is a real good or something that will be beneficial to the whole soul. Yet, this does not negate the conclusion that the appetitive part can and does operate with a weaker conception of good, one that is predicated upon experience, as outlined. Also, since even the pursuit of a 'natural object' object of desire may contingently achieve a good that represents the real good, it is the job of the rational part to assess such drives as potential goods. Indeed, since the drive may contingently represent a good that is conducive to the good of the whole soul, the rational part of the soul interacts with the appetitive part of the soul in a way that is not immediately dismissive of drives.

Moreover, if the rational part did not consider the appetitive part's drive to be a potential good, or rendered in the language that I have applied, as a knowledge claim regarding the good, other passages delivered in very close proximity to the thirst passage would be extremely difficult to interpret. For example, at 443e Plato writes that where and when the rational part determines the drives to be endorsing unjust behaviour, the soul "regards the belief that oversee it as ignorance". This passage makes it extremely difficult to see the validity of Irwin's thinking

when he writes: “The appetitive part ... [is] entirely good-independent and non-rational, uninfluenced by beliefs about goods”.⁸⁰ Plato makes it plain not that the appetitive part of the soul will yield to beliefs about what is really good – such is completely outside of its modality – but that the appetitive part itself has beliefs about what it takes to be goods. Indeed, understood in this way, the appetitive part of the soul’s possession of beliefs about its ends as goods provides a clear way to understand how the rational part can assess the quality of the appetitive desire in the first place.

On the topic of good-independent desires, Moss makes the following cogent point:

Only one passage has been taken to show that at least some non-rational desires are not for things qua good: the argument that ‘thirst itself’ is for ‘drink itself’, rather than for hot or cold or wholesome (χρηστικὴν) drink (437 e–438a). But the claim that drink is the proper object of thirst is perfectly consistent with the view that being thirsty involves taking drink to be good.⁸¹

I add the following: even if a drive is not towards a ‘real’ good *per se*, such is the determination of the rational part of the soul after it has assessed its quality under the guise of it being so. This would seem to be a requirement of the rational part if it is to care for the whole soul in an unbiased manner. Where a desire is determined as endorsing unjust conduct, the rational part of the soul “regards the belief that oversee it as ignorance” (443e). Therefore, this belief that oversees the good of the appetitive desire is, I will argue, that of pleasure; a belief that might well turn out to reflect the good of the whole soul. This is most significant. That the belief the appetitive part of the soul possesses regarding the good of pleasure is received by the rational

⁸⁰ Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory*, p. 192.

⁸¹ Moss, ‘Appearances and Calculations’, p. 62. Moss also presents a similar line of thinking in her paper, ‘Pleasure and Illusion in Plato’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 72 (2006), pp. 503-35. A similar view is also outlined by Bobonich in *Plato’s Utopia Recast*.

part confirms that the relationship between the two soul parts is such that the appetitive part's good yields a decision in terms of the assessment of the rational part to pursue or not to pursue this or that end. In which case, it is a determination of the rational part to pursue the ends of the appetitive part. This is a conclusion that I will show, holds even in the event that the good that is ultimately pursued does not reflect the greater or real good. Indeed, it is by such that the rational part of the soul comes to be subjugated by the appetitive part of the soul.

It would be astonishing if, between 438a and 443e, Plato had unknowingly moved from the position that the appetitive part of the soul's desires are good-independent desires to the view that it can also have a belief that grounds such desires. Yet, it is clear that Plato does seem to hold both that there are such desires and that desires have corresponding beliefs. The appetitive part of the soul cannot have any concept of good but it can have beliefs that oversee these goods. Of course this means that while the appetite may take all of its ends to be good due to the experiential quality they yield, yet it is an open question – that the rational part must answer – as to whether the experience itself represents the good of the whole soul.

The qualities of pleasure, power, and ease of attainment as the end of the appetites, however, seem to be an 'addition' of the sort Plato appears to be denying. Yet, there is nothing to suppose that additions of this sort are not supplied by the appetitive part of the soul itself, in its desiring a natural object in the first place. It is also crucial to note that the desire for thirst is itself, surely, the plain response to a necessity of the body, such that the absence of its natural object causes a painful experience. Thirst is a desire that is surely predicated upon this 'observation' and so, in this case, would it not also follow that the avoidance of this pain be a good, even by default? That is, as some state that necessarily needs to be resolved, and is resolved by a natural object.

Indeed, such drives, when ignored for too long, are experienced as imperatives, where imperatives, within the modality of the appetitive part of the soul, are a necessary good. This necessity applies to the need to have the desire satiated, to remove the associated pain, and to

such being necessarily a positive experience. As such, would not this necessity of the body be equivalent to an embodied or experiential good? Thus, the appetitive part of the soul's desires, within its own modality, are both necessary and good, and experienced as necessary goods.⁸²

This capacity to recognise its good, even where such is limited to 'natural objects', is sufficient to conclude that the appetitive part of the soul, within itself, operates within a modality of good that is fully equipped with a working model of good that is experienced in experiential terms. If the good of the appetitive part of the soul were limited to natural objects, it would still remain that it is operating with a conception of good. This capacity to recognise goods, and to react to them appropriately, is enough to attribute not good-independent desires to the appetitive part of the soul, but a good that is limited to that of experience.

Even if the natural object is sought, based upon an awareness of the fact that it was merely bringing the body to its anticipated state of equilibrium – restoring a deficit and not adding anything above this – surely this means that, compared to the current state of pain, this state of equilibrium would be a pleasure and a good. Two points issue from this: natural objects of desire are binary linked to goods, especially since they are generated out of a desire to overcome a bad experience; the idea of pleasure is, as it were, always already built into the very foundations of the appetitive part of the soul. This means that in going towards the removal of a negative quantity of hydration, pleasure is the outcome and the objective. The appetitive part cannot attain or desire even its most basic good without recourse to pleasure. As such, the orientation towards natural objects are appetitive goods, of an instinctive variety, that necessarily suppose a conception of good, as an experiential phenomenon.

Therefore, the good of the appetitive part of the soul, as pleasurable experience, is not an addition to an instinctive drive for its end. Indeed, even if these ends are good by default, they are completely contained within the appetitive part itself. This is so to the extent that while

⁸² Others, not outlined directly, who have articulated the idea that Plato was not endorsing a concept such as good-independence include: Carone, 'Akrasia in the Republic: Does Plato Change His Mind?'; and, Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies*.

all appetitive desire may have their root origins in the desire for natural objects, any experience of such would have to be, after the first experience of such, be also a desire for the natural object as a known (remembered) pleasurable experience. In this manner the appetites themselves, even within the limitations of its understanding of the good, are self-developing. This is so as the good of pleasure, from its initially being part of a desire to remove a painful experience, becomes the very barometer for future, enhancement of pleasurable experience.⁸³ Of course, when I say that the good of the appetitive part can be developed, in line with the experiences that certain objects may yield, I am referring to nothing other than the development of the capacity to desire objects that best fit into this modality of good. It is not, however, a development that will necessarily lead to a real good, such is the capacity of the rational part of the soul alone.

Additionally, it is also important to note that the good of power, as an appetitive good, is something that is generated by the appetitive part itself, in the sense that such a good does not have to be generated by another soul part. As outlined, the neutrality of reason beings opposing goods to conscious awareness such that they can generate internal conflict. In this framework, the appetitive part of the soul has the opportunity to remove or destroy any beliefs which it perceives may bring about the demise of its good. As such, the appetitive part has the opportunity to enslave the rational part of the soul, upon the very application of the rational part's capacity to assess goods. It is here that it can come to determine the pursuit of its good, unencumbered by its potential demise. In this interaction, the power of attaining its good is co-terminus with the capacity to enslave the rational part of the soul, by removing anything that would oppose it.

⁸³ In the next chapter I will outline how part of the enslavement of the rational part is cogently outlined in the *Phaedrus* as providing the appetitive part of the soul both with the means-ends reasoning that it requires, and concepts that justify such. As I will show, while the appetitive part of the soul understands it good, in the manner outlined, since the soul, in its totality, relates to the motivation and ends, the rational part of the soul, when enslaved, can assist the appetitive part in its ends, in whatever way necessary.

The appetitive part's solution to internal conflict is such that it can, through its own devices, and still operating within the limitation of its own modality, come to experience power over the rational part as a good, since it is a condition of achieving such with ease. As such, the good of power, at least in the soul itself, is something that the appetitive part of the soul will take as part of its good. This good is almost as inherent to the appetitive part of the soul as that of pleasure. Yet, it is contingent upon the rational part of the soul applying its neutral quality. Once this interaction is guaranteed so too is the appetitive concept of power, in this internal sense, as a pre-condition of easily coming to its experiential ends.

Additionally, the idea of taking motivation from the 'easy good', as something that the appetitive part itself recognises as its good, is intrinsically related to the conception of power that it attains. The very idea of internal power is attributed, to the ease that comes of taking power of the soul. As such, the easy good and the good of power, in this basis, experiential context, are also predicated upon nothing other than the appetitive part and its capacity to know its good through experiences, internal and external. Therefore, I hold that where Plato refers to additions to the basic desires of the appetitive part of the soul, he does not mean that pleasure, power, and ease of attainment qualify as addition, in the sense that they must originate in other soul parts. (Although it is given in a different context, that Plato states that desire for money-making is a part of the appetitive part's good, due to its capacity to easily attain its ends (580e), I take this to be an indication of Plato's outright associating the ease of attainment as being intrinsically related to the good of the appetitive part of the soul.)

It could be objected that what is presented at 573b might not be intended, by Plato, to be related to what he outlined at 437 e–438a. Yet, that 443e outlines the appetitive part of the soul's desire in terms of a belief brings these two passages together. The appetitive part operates with a belief (as per 443e) and it interacts with that which opposes it (as per 573b). Indeed it is by belief that the appetitive part of the soul operates; it responds to, rather than considers, goods. This is in keeping with its modality, since it cannot determine goods outside of its own, or even

interact with them under this premise. Knowledge of virtue, for example, will be taken as a belief; a would-be 'contingent' negation of its own end, suitable to be destroyed. Since 573b is expressly related to the way in which the appetitive part reacts to beliefs, it confirms that Plato's understanding of the internal life of the soul is nuanced, even if such manifests itself in terms of conflicting beliefs.

The point that Plato is making is only that these additions cannot be automatically thought of as something that the rational part of the soul will accept as good. It is not that the appetitive part of the soul would not accept its own 'additions' (predicated upon the original good of overcoming the experience of pain) as goods (pleasure, power, of ease of attainment) but that the rational part could not, unquestioningly, accept them as such. Since these desired experiential goods can, in fact, turn out to represent the good of the whole soul, the rational part of the soul does not view them as good-independent but as real good-contingent. Hence, what it takes to be its good is characterised as a belief; that which may or may not yield truth. Therefore, since it is the task of the rational part to assess these goods as good, not even the rational part of the soul interacts with them as being good-independent. This makes the case for my position since there is no way in which the appetitive part of the soul operates without a conception of good. In its own right, all of the appetitive goods are necessary goods, and in the case of the rational part of the soul, all of the appetitive goods are at least potentially good, and hence have the capacity to be a contingently real good.

On the much debated topic of the appetitive part of the soul being cognitively impoverished,⁸⁴ I wish to add the following contribution. It is important to recall that the very idea of desiring – natural objects or otherwise – represents a necessary problematic for Plato. In the *Symposium*, this is characterised as the soul's recognition that it is in some way deficient. When generalised, this argument relates to the idea that desire *per se* demonstrates that the soul

⁸⁴ For examples of scholars who articulate views sympathetic to the idea of the appetitive part's cognitive 'lack', see: Cornford, *The Republic of Plato*; Penner, 'Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will'; and, Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*.

is fundamentally lacking in relation to the good. Hence, all desire aims at a good. It is also crucial to remember, however, that desire for this or that end represents and confirms a lack specific to that end or purpose. As such, the appetitive part in the *Republic*, for the reasons outlined above, can recognise its goods by way of recognising its deficiencies, because it desires certain qualities.

In this manner, the appetitive part is as an ill-equipped doctor who can only diagnose and treat a very limited amount of ailments. Where the cure might not actually work, the absence of any rational input would provide a grounding for his/her prescriptions. While not many would willingly consent to treatment from such a person, such a practitioner would not be completely absent of cognition since he/she may contingently cure certain ailments. What he/she would lack, however, is the capacity to rationally provide a grounding as to why what they prescribe will work. Similarly, in the case of the appetitive part of the soul, it can recognise its good and from this pursues it. As such, the very recognition of its good represents an awareness of some deficit, where the attainment of its good also signifies a way to rectify this deficit. This confirms two things: the appetitive part of the soul is not lacking a good but is, for the very purpose of being appetitive, good-dependent. What makes this soul part ‘non-rational’ is not some inability to recognise goods but rather its inability to provide a justification for that which is taken to be good.

The transitioning from a desire for a natural object to that of ‘this or that’ type represents a refinement of the appetitive part of the soul’s initial instinctive drive towards an additional good. Yet, this additional good is predicated upon nothing more than the initial impulse which is now furnished with the simple memory of having past experiences of satiating these desires. That natural objects yield pleasurable experiences of the sort outlined means that the appetitive part will come to recognise these natural objects as pleasure yielding objects. As such, that pleasure is an intrinsic aspect of the appetitive drives, regardless of how basic they may be, makes the appetitive part what it is: a non-rational part of the soul that operates with an

experiential conception of its corresponding good. Read in this way, the point Plato is making with the idea of natural objects is only that *even* these desires are predicated upon conceptions of goods, and not that they are good-independent. As such, they represent a rejection of **SV**.

It is precisely when the rational part assents to a pleasure that is not in the best interest of the whole soul that it chooses its own enslavement by accepting the lesser good as the real or greater good. That the soul can err, and do so knowingly, means that every time a good is pursued the option to forgo it is confirmed. Indeed, if this were not so the ascent itself would not be possible, since it presupposes a transitioning from one type of good to another. Since this possibility to overturn the good is retained, then the rational part always retains its ‘power’ via its import into the nature of assenting to any good. As such, every pursuit of good represents a choice regardless of how subtly this may be felt or experienced.

To be a rational soul, therefore, does not imply the necessary pursuit of the known greater good but the capacity to always have the choice of doing to so. Therefore, as per objection 1 above, it is clear that the orientation of the soul cannot signify the immediate pursuit of any good. This is so as the commitment to a type of good must be reaffirmed every time that it leads to pursuit, rather than the commitment being something that is law.⁸⁵ Even in cases where the commitment is to the lesser good, which the soul is orientated towards, adhering to such is equivalent to self-governance. The appetitive part can recognise its good but it would be misguided to conclude that, from this, that the rational part of the soul does not factor in the attainment of this good.

Indeed, it would be misguided to ascribe to the appetitive part of the soul the capacity for self-governance, as such requires knowledge of the goods of the other soul parts. That a person may be aware of internal conflict and experience shame, as I have shown, pre-supposes an application of the rational part of the soul. Therefore, if someone who is ruled by the

⁸⁵ This is another line of thinking that is reminiscent of the *Symposium*, where Socrates-Diotima outline the view that for any quality to be possessed it must be continually regenerated by the process of reproduction. I outlined and discussed this point in Chapter Two.

appetitive part, without any import from the rational part, it would be difficult to understand how this sort of conflict could arise within them. Moreover, that this is plainly an experience that is fundamental to the human condition confirms both that it cannot be removed and that it is caused by the rational part of the soul. From which it follows that, even if a person is ruled by the appetitive part, self-governance does not imply the removal of the rational part's import but rather the subjugation of such.

Plato's point is that all who pursue do so on the grounds that it is a good, set among other possible goods. As such, it is this that allows for the possibility of overcoming the lesser good and beginning or progressing on the ascent. It is also this which allows culpability to be ascribed to those who pursue the lesser good, instead of the charge of simple ignorance. As such, I conclude that the appetitive part of the soul's desires are not good-independent, since it believes its desires represent the good of pleasure, power, or ease of attainment, which must be chosen from within a set of possible goods. The choosing of which requires that the rational part of the soul has set this good among other goods that are qualitatively distinct and would otherwise serve to negate the appetitive good of pleasure, power, or ease of attainment.

As such, however fluently it may appear in experience, the desires of the appetitive part of the soul are mediated by the rational part of the soul. If this were not so, the soul could not ever correct itself because it would not ever be in a position to discern its error. Yet, since the capacity to generate shame is a capacity of the rational part of the soul, the soul retains the capacity to amend its behaviour by retaining the capacity to opt for ends, in a mediated manner. Hence, all motivation in the soul is mediated by the rational part of the soul.⁸⁶

As to objection 2, it is clear that Plato assumes that the good of the individual is set necessarily within the context of the goods that any given society uphold as virtuous. Indeed, the *Republic* itself would be an ill-conceived project in the extremes if Plato did not hold that

⁸⁶ This point will be supported in the next chapter, where I shall provide an account of Socrates' presenting a false speech in the *Phaedrus* as an example of how the presence of a desire is not sufficient to forgo the capacity to allow reason to 'mediately' take motivation from a desire, *after* determining its quality *before* action.

the good of a society is, or at least ought to be, a representation of its citizen's subjective aspirations. In which case, the type of *akrasia* that Plato is outlining requires only the knowledge of an alternative good to the 'good' that would come from their own immoral action. From this, the type of *akrasia* that Plato is concerned with is 'cashed out' in terms of internal conflict, which is overcome by the application of reason towards a lesser good.

Indeed, in a similar vein to that just mentioned, breaking away from or rejecting the ascent requires nothing other than a sentiment akin to that of Leontius' knowing better but allowing himself to take motivation from his lesser good by an accompanying sense of 'I do not care' what quality this 'good' has. While this example is compelling in many ways, that it is a rejection, or suspension, of the ascent in a society that is set outside of that of Plato's ideal city is significant. That is, it serves to show that *akrasia* only requires a deviation from a greater good that is agreed upon implicitly by being a member of a society. Understood thusly, all that is required to relate Plato's thinking regarding *akrasia* to the rejection of the ascent is that an individual be aware of an alternative to their desire, and that this alternative represent the virtues upheld by a society.

The sentiments that place an unjust motivation/good over that of the socially agreed upon good is sufficient to conclude that *akrasia* has been generated. Therefore, since the soul retains the capacity to act otherwise, where a person may state, and feel as though their desire overpowered their reason – in a complete sense – is something that would not be accepted by Plato's psychology in the *Republic*. All that would be required would be even the slightest sense that an unjust action should be curtailed, and this would be sufficient grounds for the capacity to do so to present itself. A person may account for this sort of action with reference to the intensity of the passion but if the slightest hint of its being inappropriate is present then they had the capacity to do otherwise. Hence, the Leontius example betrays all of these traits and, as such, he could have acted to negate his desire to act as he does.

In this manner we can understand knowledge itself to have a motivational component but, in addition to this, the soul must opt to be determined by such. Therefore, the re-orientation of the whole soul requires enacting the soul's capacity (via the motivational neutrality of reason) to opt for a motivational source. As outlined, knowledge of ignorance must come to be viewed as a good, in order to generate the desire to know. It is in meeting this pre-condition that the soul has come to understand knowledge as its good.⁸⁷ Indeed, it by meeting this precondition that the philosopher is engendered. Yet, this option would be possible if Plato had not come to think of knowledge as having the capacity to generate motivation in a mediated manner; that is, after the rational part of the soul has facilitated opting for that end. It is this mediated manner of relating to motivational forces from within the motivational neutrality of reason that allows Alcibiades to opt to be determined by his familiar and easy to attain good. Yet, as I will outline in detail in the next chapter, while Alcibiades acts against his better knowledge and judgement, unlike the case of Leontius, many of Alcibiades' old goods are of value to his fellow Athenians and, as such, his society assents to these prescribed goods. Thus, he retains his desire to protect his old conception of good.

That stated, in the *Republic*, Plato's view regarding how knowledge of the greater good comes to motivate the soul, in a sufficient way, seems to have been thoroughly revised from what is presented in *SV*. In the case of the *Republic*, it is now only the highest possible knowledge that can determine action, and not simply the knowledge of the greatest known good. As such, it is evident that the applicability of the deterministic aspect of knowledge is reduced in the extreme. For now only the philosopher of the highest nature, and highest development of this nature through education, can be said act in a way that is fully determined by the content,

⁸⁷ Gadamer also notes the significance of reacting to the knowledge that one is ignorant: "But this agreement regarding ignorance is the first precondition for gaining genuine knowledge" (*Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to The Philebus*, p. 50). The genuine knowledge of ignorance, in relation to the *Symposium*, is knowledge of lack and this is what sets the foundation for both genuine knowledge and the development of this knowledge. Elsewhere, Gadamer also states that: "Knowing one does not know is not simply ignorance. It always implies a prior knowledge which guides all one's seeking and questioning" (*The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 57).

or rather, the dictates of knowledge. Those who opt to remain in the cave, in rejecting the ascent, do so by the presence of reason and knowledge, and it is by such that they come to generate *akrasia*. Just as is the case with Alcibiades, *akrasia* is not generated necessarily by the presence of the objects that elicit the lesser desire but by rejecting the greater good of philosophy in favour of the sum of these lesser goods.

Considering, the parity between those who reject the ascent and Alcibiades provides an in-depth understanding of how it is by reason that Alcibiades can be deemed akratic and as Plato's farewell to **SV**, with the eulogy of Socrates in the *Symposium*. As such, the *Republic* provides an account of how it is only by reason that Alcibiades generates his *akrasia*, and how it is only by both reason and knowledge that the ascent can be rejected. This rejection is itself the very inversion of **SV**.

That stated, there remains one final point to be made by drawing a comparison between Alcibiades and Plato's account of the tyrant's inability to attain his ends. Plato describes the tyrannical soul as lacking the capacity for intentional action with regard to the good of the whole soul. Consider *Republic* 577d-e, where he writes: "Then a tyrannical soul – I'm talking about the whole soul – will also be least likely to do what it wants and, forcibly driven by the strings of a dronish gadfly, will be full of disorder and regret." This, however, does not make any suggestion that the appetitive part of the soul does not enlist the help of the whole soul – the rational part notwithstanding – in order to come to attain its ends, once it has imported madness into the soul by enslaving the rational part of the soul. What the passage does confirm, as outlined, is that the akratic's life, regardless of the manner in which it may seek to justify opting for the lesser good, will ultimately prove lacking in true or lasting happiness precisely because such a soul does not give any consideration to its holistic good.

Plato discusses the tyrant lacking the ability to attain his ends, with reference to the real good, and consistently hold that the tyrant knowingly wills their lesser good by the application of knowledge and reason. What the akratic lacks is not so much the capacity to utilise the whole

soul in pursuing its ends, but to act in the interest of every soul part. As such, the akratic individual can intentionally ‘maintain’ their character but this does not incorporate any good outside of the appetitive part of the soul. None of this should be too surprising since this is exactly what it is to be a tyrant: to pursue the subjugation of anything (rational ends included) that would remove the capacity to attain ends that are appropriate to the desire for power. It is by such that the tyrannical city is as enslaved as the tyrannical soul. In both cases, the soul and city of the tyrant are ruled by the usurping of rationality and replacing it with madness, where madness is the very process of applying reason to achieve irrational ends. Such ends, as I have shown, are not non-intentional in themselves, as they are not absent of a good; it is simply that these ends are not supported by a real or rationally justified good. That is, a good that is representative of the good of the whole soul or the whole of the city’s inhabitants.

Taking Alcibiades to have a tyrannical character would yield the following conclusions: the rational space within which Alcibiades rejects philosophy/virtue is sufficient to determine that he does so in an intentional manner. This point would also hold for all of those who reject the ascent, the only difference being that the case of the tyrannical soul represents the superlative case of rejecting the good of the whole soul. Relating the argument of the prisoner who rejects the ascent to the tyrant and to Alcibiades shows that knowledge cannot be thought to guarantee virtue since it is the extent to which the soul can commit to knowledge that determines the quality of knowledge.

It is this commitment to a known lesser good that determines the quality of the akratic character. Plato’s thinking on the tyrant does not suggest that the tyrant cannot do what he wants *per se*. Read in the proper context, 577d-e states that s/he is free to do as s/he wishes, but that these types of wishes will not generate happiness. In this light, the criteria for happiness is distanced from that of intention. Now the soul can, by rational commitment, intend ends that knowingly do not generate happiness. This is precisely what we find in the case of Alcibiades: a person who is knowingly willing the very cause of his unhappiness and “regret”. As shown,

this regret – or shame, in the case of Alcibiades – holds true as much for future actions as it does for past action. Taking *akrasia* and the rejection of the ascent as the superlative form or example of self-tyranny suggests that the point Plato is making here is as frightening as it is profound. The akratic regrets his entire life before it is lived, as, due to his blatant refusal to generate within himself the power/commitment to change himself or his life, he takes his future to be as determined and finite as his past.

Indeed, on what has been shown, the regret experienced by the tyrant and the akratic are not symptomatic of their lacking the power to change, but rather serve to confirm the capacity to change by highlighting a conflict in the soul to be overcome by alternative courses of action. While tyrannical souls *per se* may not have the vantage point that Alcibiades has gained with the assistance of Socrates, this merely proves that having such a perspective on their situation may not necessarily change anything.

As such, where knowledge of the greater good of virtue is not itself sufficient to determine action, it is very much possible, by Plato's lights, to endeavour to will unhappiness. Indeed, in a framework with the motivational neutrality of reason and mediated sense of motivation already in place, the only condition to be met to generate unhappiness is that there is at least one sense in which that which brings about misery and regret is, in fact, good. As outlined, **T1** is sufficient to ensure that this condition can be met with ease. The tyrannical soul and the akratic Alcibiades demonstrate that the whole soul can be involved in generating an irrational decision. It is simply the case that the decision that the rational part of the soul facilitates is not one that will generate either its particular good or the good of the whole soul.

Those who reject the ascent do so on the basis of the same knowledge as those who are motivated to take up the ascent. As such, it is the extent to which a person can be committed to knowledge, as a good, that determines whether or not knowledge or the greater good will determine action. This, of course, suggests that his commitment to knowledge cannot be contained within the knowledge itself, and so knowledge is no longer considered by Plato to be

as deterministic as the position of **SV** purports. Indeed, on my reading, the *Republic* and the case of Alcibiades generate such a distancing from **SV** that it requires quite an effort to discern the links that connect the two positions.

4.6 Conclusion

In the *Republic* and *Symposium* we are provided with a way to understand how reason is at the very least complicit with moral weakness. It is not that the force of one type of desire is enough to overpower another type of desire – a desire for pleasure, for example, overpowering a rational desire – that leads to the pursuit of the lesser good. For an action to be deemed *akratic*, the lesser has to be contradictory to the greater, in a simultaneous way, and the lesser has to be pursued. These conditions, as I have shown, are met by Alcibiades' rejection of virtue and philosophy, his known greatest good. As such, his moral weakness is generated out of his own choosing and, without recourse to claims of ignorance, he is culpable for his choices in a direct manner. With such in place it would be difficult indeed to understand how Plato could still be adhering to **SV** (other than the partial way outlined) in any substantive way.

As I have shown, the Allegory of the Cave can be read as a comprehensive example that displays the negative application of reason that I have been outlining. Reason can indeed, as I have argued, generate progression on the ascent, and can lead to the development of virtue. Yet, as I have shown, this outcome is not guaranteed by either the application of proper reason or the presence of knowledge, unless the soul is also furnished with the desire to live by the dictates and mandates of the knowledge they already possess and the knowledge that they will develop. The latter, of course, requires the demise of their original conception of the good. This is precisely the point at which reason, and the soul, need to have a desire to learn and live by knowledge that exceeds their desire to retain the original good.

Going 'astray' on the ascent does not necessarily have to be explained with reference to an inability to reason. Indeed, the capacity to reason to such an extent that the Forms themselves

can be discerned is not sufficient to unburden the soul from the antithetical force of the erotic drive. As such, the commitment to and drive toward lesser, cave goods, is not removed by the development and possession of knowledge that would surely carry with it a true valuation of such lesser goods. That the greater good is known, and that it does carry with it a considerable measure of force itself, and that opposing goods can be assessed as potential goods by the rational part, yields the conclusion that I have been working towards throughout: a specific application of reason is a requirement of *akrasia*.

My analysis of the Allegory of the Cave shows that the adherence to the lesser good, in the full knowledge of it being so provides insight into how this rebellion in the soul, and the whole of vice, is generated. While, contrary to its nature, the appetitive part, in setting down the soul's 'primary good', becomes the ruler of the soul. Where such is the objective, *akrasia* results due to reason generating a mediated sense in which knowledge can motivate the soul.

CHAPTER FIVE

Learning to Live with the Lesser

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have a twofold objective: (1) to outline how the enslavement of the rational part of the soul is characterised in the *Phaedrus*. To do so I will show how the rational part of the soul can be utilised to allow the soul to abide by its decision to live a life that is predicated upon a commitment to the known lesser good. Specifically, I will examine *Phaedrus* 256a-c to show how hubris' claim to be entitled to its "fun" (good) steps outside of the modality of its good, such that its understanding of this concept signifies the assistance of the rational part of the soul. That the rational part of the soul seeks to justify the appetitive end with concepts confirms its enslavement to hubris in the extremes. In this regard, building upon the conclusions arrived at in Chapter Four, I will take the example of how the akratic, those who reject the ascent, and the tyrant use their whole soul without taking the good of the whole soul as their end.

(2) Having outlined the more extreme ways that the rational part of the soul is enslaved by hubris, I will be concerned with showing how this enslavement is never such that it can be final or absolute. To demonstrate this I will argue that, between 237a and 243b, Plato presents Socrates as taking motivation from his hubris and not from his knowledge of virtue. This is pointed to when Socrates admits, from the outset of his false speech, that he hides his head in shame. Yet, while Socrates subjugates his rational part in this instance, the fact that he experienced this as shame confirms that he knowingly acted for the lesser good. However, I will argue that since this is pre-empted by his experience of shame, this very observation makes it plain that such was chosen by Socrates after having assessed it and concluded that he would pursue his lesser end, in any case.

The decision to do so suggests that his desire was subjected to rational assessment and represents an akratic decision. This means that, if his desire is to lead to motivation, then it must have been subjected to the type of mediated motivation that I have been arguing for throughout. If Plato is endorsing a conception of good-independent desires in his middle dialogues, then this example is very curious. As I will show, even when the soul is perturbed by the presence of beauty, what is paramount is the manner in which the soul comes to respond to such. That Socrates acts in a knowingly inappropriate way means that his desire to do is already subjected to the motivational neutrality of reason. As such, Socrates' desire is mediated by the rational part of the soul in opting to take motivation from it.

My investigation of the *Phaedrus* will begin by addressing the more straightforward question of whether or not the dialogue countenances *akrasia*. I will then turn to the question of Socrates' *akrasia*, drawing on my readings of both the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. However, rather than allowing this chapter to be unnecessarily troubled by the many established problems with the *Phaedrus*, I will limit my discussion to a consideration of the role that reason plays in *akrasia*, and particularly the question of Socrates' *akrasia*.

5.2 The Need for Reason to Live with the Lesser Good

Before turning to the *Phaedrus*, it will be helpful to recap the key arguments of the *Symposium* and *Republic*, to better determine the ways in which I take the Phaedrean account to develop Plato's thinking. There is a tremendous sense in the *Symposium* that Alcibiades and Socrates are as unable to understand each other as they are dissatisfied with one and other. On the one hand, Socrates states that he is fearful of Alcibiades due to the "fierceness of his passion" (213d) and, on the other hand, Alcibiades replies to this by stating that "I will never forgive you for this" (213e). From this, Alcibiades then moves immediately to give Socrates a portion of the victory ribbons. That Socrates' instruction seems to leave Alcibiades' desires to become virtuous unsatiated is strange. As outlined in detail in Chapter Two, Socrates can assist

Alcibiades with his insights and he also actively demonstrates the virtue of moderation for Alcibiades, and so is a teacher and a role-model. Yet, this knowledge does not motivate Alcibiades into giving up his old good; he will not turn his back on this though he knows that this is a source of his enslavement. If Socrates is the ambassador of **SV** *par excellence* this indeed would be most confusing for Socrates.

Moreover, if Socrates had outlined the deterministic nature of knowledge to Alcibiades in the way **SV** does, it would be as confusing to Alcibiades. He would have been told, after all, that knowledge would make him virtuous, and he has a certain level of knowledge, yet he remains without virtue. From this, he would have to conclude that Socrates was not telling him everything that he needed to know to overcome the allure of his old good. As such, Alcibiades' unfulfilled passion increases and Socrates' inability to help him continues to frustrate the situation for them both.

While the very drama of the scene demonstrates the intensity of the effects of this on both men, there is a point that is potentially obscured by it. It is clear that Alcibiades' account demonstrates that his negative experience of the relationship is greater than that of Socrates. This is not surprising since it is, as it were, Alcibiades' problem in a first person manner; he is the very subject of his own *akrasia*. Yet, behind this relationship there is the fact that Alcibiades' inability to return to the cave and, as it were, live happily ever after seems to be most troubled in the presence of Socrates. Recall 216b, where he states that "Socrates is the only man in the world who has made me feel shame". Yet, nonetheless, he goes back to his "old ways". The knowledge that makes him feel ashamed does not motivate him into taking up the ascent, but it is crucial to note that he acknowledges his discomfort at acting shamefully when such knowledge (of his slavish devotion to his lesser good, 215e) is considered. It is for this reason that he can find no peace within himself: he knows better, and where and when such knowledge is factored into his judgment, it retains the capacity to generate shame.

It is with this inability to live with opting for the lesser good in mind that I turn to investigate the *Phaedrus*. Since the *Phaedrus* examines the benefit of a kind of madness, referred to as a divine madness (“madness ... is given as a gift of the gods”, 244a), it is unsurprising that reason is given a lesser status than Plato would characteristically attribute to it.⁸⁸ Irwin outlines the way this madness is related to reason as follows: “The *Phaedrus* explains the lover’s madness as an aspect of recollection. When the rational part of the soul is reminded of the Form of Beauty (249e-250b), its reaction is mad, since it is moved to neglect the normal requirements of instrumental prudence”.⁸⁹ There is a palpable sense in the dialogue that this divine madness is such that, at least in the initial reaction to the beautiful, reason is somewhat overpowered by beauty, hence the soul’s response is presented as ‘mad’. Therefore, in the experience of beauty, reason’s capacity to analyse the experience is troubled due to the very subject of the experience itself. It is precisely from this disadvantageous position that the soul begins to experience beauty.

It would seem that, in the experience of beauty, the soul, in a similar manner to the eye,⁹⁰ is stunned or blinded by the radiance of the Form of Beauty which emanates from the beautiful individual.⁹¹ At 255b-c, Plato describes beauty’s effect on the soul, and the eyes’ part in ‘delivering’ them: “It enters through his eyes, which are its natural route to the soul”. Just a few lines earlier we read that: “when the charioteer looks in the eye of love, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire” (253e).

⁸⁸ In fact, four types of madness are outlined in the dialogue: prophecy, prayer, poetry, and erotic love. In each distinctive case, a brief account of the type of madness is provided, and so we read that: prophets are “the finest experts of all”, those who pray uncover “mystic rites and purifications”, poets are ‘possessed’ by “a Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry that glorifies the achievements of the past and teaches them to future generations”, whilst lovers experience a “sort of madness is given by the gods to ensure our greatest good fortune” (244b-c).

⁸⁹ Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, p. 305.

⁹⁰ In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle notes a similar point when discussing how the eyes can be thought to place order on the objects of experience: “All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.” (980a)

⁹¹ As Plato puts it: “[one] looks in the eye of love” (253e).

This passage holds a wealth of significance in its own right and for the wider discussion of the role that reason plays in the Platonic rendering of *akrasia*.

While the eye plays a causal role in affecting reason, it is the light of beauty that it allows to ‘enter’ which generates, within the “entire soul”, the warmth that leads to the “goadings of desire”.⁹² The reference to goading is quite apt and captures the means which the hubristic part can use to attain its own good; for it is a situation in which the rational part of the soul’s good is most obscure to it. I argue that this heightened sense of desire does not remove the soul’s capacity to rationalise in a permanent way, and so that which the rational part of the soul assents to can be thought to be predicated upon selecting the lesser good. The point that Plato is stressing here is that the presence of beauty can disorientate the rational part of the soul and, given the very nature of disorientation, there is no way for knowledge or reason to fortify itself against such.

Reason cannot generate in the soul a ‘guaranteed’ moral response in the immediate experience of beauty. Yet, the pivotal point is the manner in which reason, after the initial experience of perceiving the beautiful, reacts to such. It is here that the rational part can either take the bait of the hubristic part’s goading the soul towards its own ends, or it can take the time to regroup and act appropriately (that is, morally). Indeed, from the context of the subject matter, temporarily abstaining from all action may be the best option. Moreover, since Plato outlines both positive and negative reactions to the experience of beauty, it is clear that reason does at least have the capacity to resist the erotic force of the hubristic part of the soul. It is clear, then, that where the appropriate action is generated, the soul has reacted in a positive or

⁹² Without wishing to stray too far from my point, it is worth noting that, as per the *Republic*, a tripartite definition of the soul is offered in the *Phaedrus*. Here, the soul is compared to a chariot that is pulled by two winged horses (one white – representing spirit and moderation – and the other black – representing hubristic excess) and driven by a charioteer (representing reason). As Plato writes: “To describe what a soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like is humanly possible and takes less time ... Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture. To begin with, our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business.” (246a)

temperate manner. Moreover, it is clear that, in the initial aftermath of the experience of beauty, the soul is presented with a choice to act in a particular way, however obscured this choice may be in the presence of beauty.

5.2.1 Hubris' Rational Entitlement to its Good

Yet, in the *Phaedrus*, the hubristic aspect of the soul's experience is distinct from that of spirit or reason. That is, while the other parts of the soul struggle in the presence of the beautiful, the only way that the hubristic part struggles is that it has not 'had its way' with the beauty that is present. Seeking to overcome this the hubristic part attempts to contribute the following to the experience: "When they are in bed, the lover's undisciplined horse has a word to say to the charioteer – that after all its suffering it is entitled to a little fun" (256a). This passage is somewhat curious. If we go on my reading of the *Republic*, it is clear that the hubristic soul part knows two things: its own good, and that the pursuit of its good is binary linked to a desire to overcome its suffering. Yet, that the hubristic part of the soul could present its understanding of what is good to the rational part in terms of entitlement is somewhat strange. For it to do so, it would have to understand the negation of its good as some form of worth-while pursuit, in the form of 'if I abstain now, such may grant me access in the future'. This would indeed be strange, since to do so it would have to be aware that the very nature of its current desire is at odds with the good of the whole soul. Further to this, all things considered – namely the goods of the other soul parts – it would be better to abstain from its current desire in the hope of future endeavours. Only the rational part can come to such conclusions because only it can engage in contemplating the wider good of the whole soul.

Additionally, *Republic IX* sets out in clear terms that the capacity to understand the temporality that is suggested by the concept of entitlements is outside of the appetitive part of the soul's remit. At 572a, it states of the appetitive part of the soul that, of the things it perceives and desires, "it knows not what, whether it is past, present or future". Indeed, by this line of

thinking it is clear that, for the appetitive part to operate under a conception of entitlement, such must be facilitated by the soul part that is fundamentally equipped to understand and deploy such concepts: the rational part.

If we apportion the appetitive part of the soul an awareness of its good as the successful attainment of its object of desire, and its suffering/bad as the denial of its good, it is evident that, while it can have an experiential knowledge of its good, it has not generated such with reference to any other good *per se* (as outlined in Chapter Three). That is, it cannot arrive at its conclusions with reference to any good outside of its own. Thus, if the soul is considering the suffering of a soul part with reference to concepts such as entitlement, then such contemplation necessarily requires the presence of the rational part of the soul. That is, this can only be so *after* the neutral aspect of reason has been extended to a consideration of a lower soul part's good.

Moreover, the rational part of the soul comes to accept and assist the pursuit of a lesser good by generating concepts such as entitlement, where such functions as the grounds to justify these lesser ends. Indeed, such justification suggests that the soul knows that this end is far from ideal, but is such that, due to the suffering of enduring appetites, their satiation is now seen to be permissible. By the same token, reason has cast the good of the hubristic part of the soul against the greater good of virtue. In the absence of such a comparison, it would not be able to determine that the lesser good is in fact the lesser to the greater good of virtue. Yet, reason nonetheless concludes that, in these circumstances, it is 'right to do the wrong thing'. This is very much at odds with **SV**, and with the account of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*.

In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades attempts to gain the virtue that he praises Socrates for possessing; one of these is moderation. I noted in Chapter Two that it would be a strange thing indeed if Alcibiades could gain this virtue from Socrates by causing him to act in a way that was devoid of moderation. Moreover, since the *Symposium* outlined an account of how qualities

must be generated if they are to be possessed, it is clear that, were Socrates to give in to Alcibiades' advances, he would not be moderate and, as such, could not 'give' moderation to Alcibiades. Hence, on that occasion Socrates reacted to the beauty of Alcibiades in a way that was virtuous. Therefore, on that account it would seem that it can never be right to do the wrong thing, and the sense of entitlement elicited in the *Phaedrus* would seem to be vacuous grounds for the justification of intemperate action. This is so as acting badly, as per the *Symposium*, necessitates the possession of bad qualities that lead to the ascent in the first place. By such, reason would be responsible, by generating the concept of entitlement, for justifying the pursuit of the lesser good. This would amount to the rational part generating the very antithesis of the virtue of self-control or moderation. As such, it is possible to better understand Alcibiades' 'solution' to the pursuit of virtue by appealing to the Phaedrean account of reason's assent to the selection of the lesser good.

From this it follows that, regardless of the force of desire, or the presence of beauty, the soul knowingly opts for the lesser good due to the application of the rational part of the soul. Hence, Plato states that when the charioteer looks at the beautiful boy (253e), it is the rational part of the soul which generates the "goading of desire". The rational part of the soul is also required to generate the grounds for justifying the pursuit of the known lesser, as per the deployment of the concept of entitlement. It thus plays a functional role in actively generating *akrasia*, and, as per leading to the "goading of desire", the rational part of the soul is also given a cause to do so.

We can infer further that, where there is a suggestion of the hubristic part's entitlement, it has already been generated with reference to the rational part's capacity to neutrally assess goods as goods. Of course, this would mean that when consideration of such entitlement occurs, the individual has, with the assistance of the rational part, assented to the hubristic part's desires. Therefore, it is the freedom of decision-making that reason's neutrality brings to the soul which allows it to choose that which it will be determined by. This freedom is outlined in the *Phaedrus*

as freedom from being determined exclusively by the dictates of knowledge of the greater good. This is so since the very nature of the experience of beauty renders the rational part of the soul and knowledge at a disadvantage, whereby for knowledge to determine action it must be chosen from within the context of appetitive goods, in the presence of the object of these very desires.

To demonstrate this, and as a counter balance to the lovers who adopt the ‘perfect’ philosophical regimen, Plato also provides the example of philosophical lovers who do not fit this description. Hence at *Phaedrus* 256b-c, it is possible to read in the context of *akrasia*:

If, on the other hand, they adopt a lower way of living, with ambition in place of philosophy, then pretty soon when they are careless because they have been drinking or for some other reason, the pair’s undisciplined horse will catch their soul’s off guard and together bring them to commit that act which ordinary people would take to be the happiest choice of all; and when they have committed it once, they will go on doing this for the rest of their lives, but sparingly, since they have *not approved of what they are doing with their whole minds*. (256 b-c, my emphasis)

Eventually, they come to pursue this form of life in the knowledge that they could have engaged in the higher path of the philosophical lovers (256a-b). They must be in possession of this knowledge or else their whole souls would be able to consent to their lower form of living. It must also be stated that the lower form of living they once entered into sets them on this path “for the rest of their lives” (256c). This entire way of living is extremely congruent with the type of self-understanding and self-association that they, the lovers, would already have been working with.

As such, it is their old conception of good, and their self-association with it, that makes it easier for them to choose this than the “regimen of philosophy” (256a). Yet, that they cannot

consent to this with their whole soul means that their love for each other has at least suggested to them the existence of a higher form of living. As such, that they ‘know better’ reveals that they choose the known lesser. As was the case with Alcibiades, and the cave dweller who rejected his/her freedom, the choice is based more upon the ease of attainment than on the notion of which form of life will yield the greater good.⁹³

This passage contains some quite startling insights that stand in sharp contrast with SV. In fact, the passage, typified by the final sentence in the aforementioned passage, demonstrates that Plato accepts the possibility of *akrasia*, the possession of contradictory preferences, and the soul’s capacity to act in ways that contravene its better knowledge. Hence the soul is said to act in a way that is not agreeable to the “whole mind”. Indeed, this single passage is so strongly opposed to the major tenets of SV that it might well be permissible to assume that their author wrote them with the intention of expressly distancing himself from SV.

5.3 Socrates’ *Akrasia*: Grounding Erotic Motivation in Reason

Having outlined how the experience of beauty puts reason in a disadvantageous position to reply adequately to beauty, and how this is copper-fastened by the import of reason to assent to the inappropriate hubristic response, what remains is to show how this is not a necessary outcome. As I will show, when Socrates reacts to Phaedrus in a way that betrays he is being motivated by hubris, but, at the same time, hides his head in shame, this confirms that this motivation did not have to ensue. As I pointed to in the last chapter, I will use this to show how no experience or desire of the appetitive sort is sufficient to completely negate the import of the rational part of the soul’s capacity to mediate any form of motivation by its assessment of such.

⁹³ Gerson makes a salient point when he states that: “This divided self aims for two apparent goods, though we may wish to stipulate that one of these is in fact the real good. The possibility of the conflict arises because of the agent’s uncertainty at the crisis moment about his own identity” (‘Plato’s Rational Souls’, p.14). However, what is also apparent in the case of Alcibiades, the psychology of the *Republic*, and here in the case of the *Phaedrus* is that individuals come to be familiar with a good related to the ease with which it can be attained. As such, it is the grounds that generate association, and the role that reason plays in facilitating the known lesser good, that provide an understanding for how and why someone would continue to be drawn to such,

I will outline this with a view to lending support to my idea of motivation over and above the idea of good-independent desires, or, as I have outlined such, as desires that have the capacity to immediately lead to motivation without recourse to a conception of good.

In Chapter Four, I outlined how, for Plato, the erotic drive is the last thing to be overcome by the philosopher. Furthermore, I argued that the condition of overcoming the influence of this fundamental human drive is not simply attaining knowledge of a greater good but the possession of knowledge of the supreme form of the Good. For this reason, a philosopher's 'ascent credentials' can be measured by the presence or absence of erotic drives. Yet, this line of thinking is very much at odds with what is presented at *Phaedrus* 237a.

Here, Socrates agrees to give a speech but states that he will cover his head as he delivers it. Subsequent to this, at 243b, he admits that it was a false speech, and that he had hidden his head in shame. I will argue that this shame is experienced by Socrates prior to his speaking, and this is why he hides his head from the outset, and so his shame is a prospective. By doing so, it is clear that Socrates' shame was due to his opting to take motivation from a known lesser good. I will show this shame to be caused by his erotic drive, such that Socrates opts to take motivation from this drive, and that this leads both to his delivering a false speech and his shame at doing so. This is most surprising given that, in the *Republic*, Socrates outlines, in some detail, the nature of the good and the consequence of being in possession of such knowledge (the removal of such motivations). This is due, I will argue, to an issue with SV that Plato redresses in the *Republic* but never fully ties down. Namely, that there is no sense in which knowledge, of any quality, is sufficient to determine action.

By contrast, in the *Phaedrus* there is an exploration of the new levels of 'interconnectedness' between reason, the hubristic part of the soul, and *akrasia* that sees the complete rejection of the view that any knowledge necessarily determines action. To better determine whether or not Socrates can be interpreted as an example of *akrasia*, I will initially assess his motivation for action with reference to the *Republic*'s account of temperate action

(Book IV, 443c-e). Following on from this, I will examine his motivation in light of Socrates' second speech. Having shown Socrates' lack of temperance, which suggests that he does not know the good that he outlined in the *Republic*, I will conclude that, in holding that Socrates can be *akratic*, Plato successfully rejects **SV**.

Crucially, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato presents us with an example that matches this criteria for *akratic* action: Socrates' false speech (237b-241d). Mirroring the effect that shame has on Leontius (*Republic* 439e), we read of Socrates' needing to hide his head in shame: "I'll cover my head while I'm speaking. In that way, as I'm going through the speech as fast as I can. I won't get embarrassed by having to look at you and lose the thread of my argument" (*Phaedrus* 237a). Additionally, at 243b, after he has delivered his false speech, "I will try to offer my palinode to Love before I am punished for speaking ill of him – with my head bare, no longer covered in shame". The parallels between these passages must surely be intended by Plato, hence I read them together. Just as was the case with the 'Socrates example', Socrates is presented as motivated by a desire which he must surely know is for his lesser good. Yet, in this instance, it is clear that Socrates knowingly pursues it, thus he hides his head in shame.

This is most surprising. In the *Protagoras*, Plato goes to considerable lengths to show how Socrates is unwittingly taking motivation from his lesser good. However, in the *Phaedrus*, such a lack of awareness is not present. Indeed, it is now the case that Socrates demonstrates a prospective account of shame regarding the action he is consciously going to undertake. This fits the criteria for *akrasia*, in the case of Alcibiades, with the absence of one very obvious point: the manner in which both Socrates and Alcibiades can be understood to be committed to this type of action. While Alcibiades knowingly blocks his ears from the truth of Socrates' instruction, and is, for the want of a better term, 'happy' to be *akratic*, Socrates' own *akrasia* is something that he is unwilling to accept. As soon as Socrates gives his false speech, his commitment to truth is such that he compels himself to make amends for his 'false speech' by delivering a true speech (the Palinode, 244a-257b) in its place. Yet, as shown in Chapter Four,

since it is the commitment to knowledge and not the knowledge itself that determines action, it is clear that where Socrates' commitment to knowledge of the greater good weakens, he can act in a way that sees him providing a false speech.

Moreover, this act of restitution (or “purification”, as it is referred to in the dialogue, 243a-b) can, I suggest, be related to what I have already outlined in relation to the Phaedrean philosophical lovers. That Socrates, the lover, in attempting to generate admiration from his beloved, displays the capacity to act in a way that is contrary to the ascent makes it clear that knowledge of the greater good does not necessarily have to be pursued. Socrates is, after all, the person who describes the Form of the Good in the *Republic*, yet, his erotic drive has not been so removed as to have lost all of its vivacity or force. He is willing to act against his better knowledge and judgement, which he refers to as shameful, while he is unwilling, it would seem, to pursue Phaedrus for any favours in return. This does not amount to the absence of the erotic drive, but to the capacity to be so driven as to act in error, and with shame, without, as it were, allowing the erotic drive to find its fullest expression.

Nonetheless, the shame that Socrates experiences is sufficient to qualify as an instance of *akrasia*, and so it is unsurprising that his second speech accounts for philosophical lovers who come to act in ways that their “whole souls” cannot assent to. To the argument that the false speech and the associated shame that Socrates outlines qualify as an instance of *akrasia*, it might be objected that this is somewhat at odds with the text itself. For example, Socrates also states that he was not fully aware of what he was doing, and so claims that after committing the offense that “I recognize my offense clearly now” (242c-d). It might just as easily be the case that Socrates casting his shamefulness as such comes after the event because only then does he realise that it was shameful. Hence, when he states that he is a kind of seer “like people how are just barely able to write – I am good enough for my own purposes” (242c). Yet, it is not clear that this objection speaks to the heart of the issue.

It is evident that Socrates is, to some extent, aware that he is about to engage in an activity that is not praiseworthy, although, at least a portion of what he wants is the praise and admiration that he seeks from Phaedrus. This is evident at 236a, where Socrates, full of lofty sentiment, criticises the speech of Lysias, stating that “we cannot praise their novelty but only their arrangement; but we can praise both the arrangement and the novelty of the nonsensical points that are harder to think up.” While, just a few lines later, Socrates states that he had spoken these words “in order to tease you” (236b), there is also a very palpable sense that he is suggesting, in reality, that he could do much better were he to make a speech on the same topic.

There are, therefore, four instances in which Socrates can be understood to be motivated by Phaedrus to deliver his own speech: (i) that he refers to Lysias as Phaedrus’ beloved betrays a hint of jealousy, for perhaps Socrates would like to be so admired by Phaedrus;⁹⁴ (ii) Phaedrus’ suggestion of physical force (236d); (iii) Phaedrus’ claim that he will not read another speech to Socrates ever again (236e); and, (iv) Phaedrus’ statement that he will be forced to trade “jibes” with Socrates like “they do in comedy” (236c).

However, since Socrates is a lover of wisdom, I do not take the second option to have been so forcefully delivered as to motivate him to knowingly act against his better judgement. And since the third and fourth motivations seem to also rid Socrates of the opportunity to demonstrate his own philosophical prowess to Phaedrus, I take the threat of never speaking of speeches to Socrates again, or to speaking only in jibes to him, in part to be represented in the first motivational source: to receive the admiration of Phaedrus. Indeed, that Socrates, in his haste to seem knowledgeable, provides a false speech further betrays his true motivation: to be admired by Phaedrus. With this in mind, Socrates’ retrospectively classifying his shame as such, does not mean that he did not also recognise it as such for the beginning. Hence he covers his head from the outset.

⁹⁴ There is an interesting parallel with the *Symposium* here. At 222b Alcibiades states that Socrates “has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you’re in love with him yourself! I warn you, Agathon, don’t let him fool you! Remember our torments; be on your guard: don’t wait, like the fool in the proverb, to learn your lesson from your own misfortune.”

Indeed, what is apparent from this aspect of the *Phaedrus* is that Socrates is not acting according to his words in the *Republic* where, in Book IV, he remarks to Glaucon:

And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However, it isn't concerned with someone's doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own ... He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes on a musical scale – high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act. (443c-e)

It is clear that, in the case of the false speech, and his shame, he cannot be said to have acted thusly.

For the action/motivation to be *akratic*, Socrates has merely to know that it is a shameful motivational source at the outset and then choose to act on it in any case. He does not have to have considered the true extent of the consequence of his action, only that it is his lesser good, and that he must recognise it as such with reference to his greater good. Therefore, that he does cover his head from the outset is enough to confirm that he knows that his action is shameful because his *reason* has shown him that it goes against his better knowledge of what is good. That he goes on to develop a clearer understanding of how to atone for his shamefulness is beside the point.

However, it might be objected that this line of thinking can easily be undermined by an opposing yet straightforward interpretation of the text. Could it not be the case that Socrates' shame is generated by the spirited part of his soul (or the white horse, as it is characterised in the *Phaedrus*) recoiling from something shameful? (I addressed this issue, in a different context

in Chapter Three, yet, there is more of benefit to be stated here.) While the *Republic* outlines the spirited part of the soul as an ally to the rational part, here the metaphor that Socrates uses lends a much clearer presentation of how to understand the relationship between these soul parts. Consider that, in the tri-partite account of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, both the black and the white horses are always linked to the charioteer. Their relation is unbroken, in that the charioteer retains his hold of both via their reins.⁹⁵ In this framework, as I pointed to the case in the *Republic* in Chapter Three, the soul of each person is tri-partite, but unified by the rational part of the soul.

In the *Phaedrus*, it is plain that the idea of the spirited part being an ally to the rational part does not mean that it could act as a substitute for reason. Rather, the knowledge and education that the rational part has provided the spirited part with means that, in conjunction with reason, the spirited part can come to pursue its true good, the fine, and not pursue anything to the contrary. Of course, as outlined in Chapter Three, Plato writes of the spirited part rejecting what is shameful, since such is the outcome of the rational part of the soul outlining what this is for the spirited part. That the spirited and the rational parts are allies allows Plato to refer to the spirited part ‘knowing’ what is shameful, without it, in and of itself, having the capacity to generate the experience of shame due to its lacking a true concept of such. As outlined in Chapter Three, the bad of the spirited part is shameful, but only the rational part has the capacity to perceive it as such.

The spirited part recognises something as bad or shameful where such is co-terminus with the rational part’s capacity to designate the bad as the shameful. In this way, the spirited part of the soul knows its good and its bad, in the same way that the hubristic part of the soul knows its bad as being denied its good. The spirited part’s sense of shame therefore need not

⁹⁵ Explaining this interesting dynamic, Plato writes: “The horse that is on the right, or nobler, side is upright in frame and well jointed, with a high neck and a regal nose; his coat is white, his eyes are black, and he is a lover of honour with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone. The other horse is a crooked great jumble of limbs with a short bull-neck, a pug nose, black skin, and bloodshot white eyes; companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears - deaf as a post - and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined.” (253d-e)

extend even to its having concepts such as shame, or that this shame represents the good of another soul part. Therefore, since the spirited part of the soul's bad turns out to be the good of the hubristic part of the soul, and as that which the rational (or whole soul) knows to be shameful, the spirited part is granted only the capacity, and not the rational understanding required, to avoid what is shameful. It does not know what is shameful *per se*, it only knows that which negates its good which, *ipso facto*, turns out to be what is shameful. It is therefore not within the spirited part's capacity to generate the experience of shame without, of course, the rational part's provision of the conceptual analysis to do so. That is, in being a non-rational part of the soul, it cannot conceive of the goods of the other parts of the soul as goods, only the rational part can do so; hence, while the rational part can educate the spirited part, it does so by experiential means. It is therefore unsurprising that Plato states of the white horse that: "he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone" (253e).⁹⁶ This is so as the modality of the white horse's good is limited to admiration or ridicule which are, of course, verbally generated. It is therefore unsurprising that Plato holds that the white horse will yield to verbal commands, as this is the very modality of its good.

Moreover, the sense of shame attributed to the spirited part, as stated in Chapter Three, refers only to its being denied its good. That the white horse is said to shy away from the beautiful does not have to be predicated upon its sense of shame *per se*. This lack of understanding is supplemented by the rational part of the soul so that the white horse can act in accordance with the rational part of the soul's desires.⁹⁷ Indeed, this reluctance to approach beautiful people could be just as easily accounted for by the white horse's inability to

⁹⁶ Eva M. Buccioni also notes the more temperate nature of the white horse: "The noble, white horse is a lover of honour (*time*) with *sophrosyne* and a sense of shame (*aidos*), and a companion (*hetairos*) of genuine opinion (*alethines doxes*), who needs no whip but obeys the word of command of the driver (253d-e). The black horse, a companion (*hetairos*) of hybris and false pretension (*alazoneia*), is so disobedient that he hardly yields to whip and spur (253e)" ("The Psychological Forces in Plato's *Phaedrus*", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol. 10 no. 3 (Sept. 2002), pp. 331-357).

⁹⁷ On this point, it is crucial to note that in the *Republic* the spirited part is considered, in a fundamental way, to act in ways that benefit the city in providing security. By contrast, in the *Phaedrus* the spirited part is considered in the ways in which it relates to beauty, something that is outside of its primary good and corresponding modality.

understand or recognise it as something that would lead to a good. This is so as it is outside of the modality of the spirited part of the soul's good. Therefore, that Socrates knowingly acts shamefully, such that he even attempts to conceal it, means that the rational part of his soul must be what has generated the shameful experience.

This must be the case as Socrates' shame is ultimately derived from his motivation and the limited manifestation of his rational faculties in the delivery of his false speech. Moreover, Socrates' shame is brought about by an erotic motivation and this leads him to knowingly give a poor account of his capacity to reason. Indeed, it is possible that Socrates' shame may also be due to presenting a limited account of his rational faculties. It is not possible that the white horse could be ashamed of the weakness of an argument and so it could not generate or feel a sense of shame in this regard. In this case, since the white horse cannot take the place of the rational part of the soul, it follows that Socrates' shamefulness confirms his reason generated *akrasia*.

Indeed, that Socrates is ashamed of the poor line of thinking that he delivers on the grounds of wanting to be admired by Phaedrus is conveyed by the fact that he presents two speeches (one purportedly false, the other purportedly true) on the topic of what type of lover is best for the beloved to have.⁹⁸ That the second speech is one that he has heard before is highly significant. For one thing, while it is a superior speech, it is not one that he can take the credit for having composed. For another, since it is a speech that he has already heard, he is fully

⁹⁸ That Socrates would be so driven to be admired by Phaedrus is very much in keeping with the cultural norms of his day. Dover writes: "It is easy enough to see why Socrates should handle a doctrine of eros predominantly in homosexual terms: in his ambiance, intense eros was experienced more often in a homosexual than in a heterosexual relationship, and it was taken absolutely for granted that close contact with a beautiful, grateful, admiring young male was a virtually irresistible temptation. It is equally easy to see why an eros which perpetually restrained itself from bodily gratification should be homosexual: it was after all the prescribed role of women to be inseminated, whereas popular sentiment romanticised and applauded the chastity of an *eromenos* and the devotedly unselfish *erastes*" (*Greek Homosexuality*, p. 164). Indeed, that Socrates is so disposed, in this instance, as to be admired for holding a thesis that Phaedrus is impressed by also speaks to another aspect of the first speech that he delivers. James L. Kastely has argued that the Socratic lover of his first speech is an individual who wishes to make the beloved dependent upon him. He notes that: "The purpose that orders the actions of the lover is the achievement of complete power over the beloved" ('Respecting the Rupture: Not Solving the Problem of Unity in the *Phaedrus*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 35 no. 2 (July 2002), pp. 138-152). If Socrates' motivation bares this hallmark, then perhaps his casting his first speech as shameful is appropriate.

aware that he is familiar with a stronger thesis than the one that Phaedrus had. Yet, though he knows it contains a weaker thesis, Socrates opts to deliver his own false speech. His shameful motivation to attain the admiration of Phaedrus is coupled with knowingly giving a limited account of his own faculties. And, while the second speech is not his creation, it does not bear the mark of Socrates being persuaded by weak lines of argumentation.

There is a final significant point regarding Socrates' erotic motivation that can be made in relation to his false speech. Going on Socrates-Diotima's account of the proper educational aspect to the love relationship (see *Symposium*, especially 209e), the beloved's beauty should function as a source of inspiration to the lover, and should lead to the production of speeches that will benefit both the lover and the beloved.⁹⁹ The mutual benefit that comes from the inspiration of the beauty of the beloved is also outlined in the *Phaedrus* at 256a: "Now if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding."

Describing the process of both the lover and the beloved being positively affected by the encounter with beauty, Plato writes: "It enters through his eyes, which are its natural route to the soul...and fills the soul of the loved one with love in return" (255c-d). Therefore, if the soul acts as it should, a mutually beneficial love is generated. At 256a, Plato characterises the benefits of this love as follows:

⁹⁹ This aspect of the love relationship in the *Symposium* is well documented in the literature. Sheffield notes that: "guiding others to contemplation of the divine form, one also practices those rites and can, again, realise the good for oneself" (*Plato's Symposium*, pp. 179-180). A similar insight is to be found in the work of Price, who notes that: "To value friendship highly without relating it to the needs of *both* parties is to invent values in a vacuum created by the expulsion of motivation" ('Chapter I: Friendship and Desire in the *Lysis*', *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 1-14). He also writes: "The lover's potential ideas and virtues are to become actual as part of the mental life of both lover and beloved" (p. 28). For an account of why lover's assisting his beloved should not be taken as a secondary motivation for him see, Shanahan, 'Virtue as a Lesser Good?'. Elsewhere, I have argued for a similar position, see: 'Plato: The Humanity of Ethics' in *An Ethics of/for the Future?* Ed. Mary Shanahan (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014), pp. 1-16.

Now if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding. They are modest and fully in control of themselves now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue.

This suggests that the quality of the soul's reaction to the beautiful can be discerned by the resultant quality of the relationship's output. If the soul reacts appropriately, then the lover will be filled with a heightened sense of beauty and the beloved will benefit from sharing in this with his lover. It is for these reasons that Plato regards the appropriate love relationship in such high regard. It is by this divine madness that the soul can come to generate increasingly high levels of relating to the beautiful, in all of its incantations, and it is by such that the soul can develop and come to possess virtue.

Yet, since the opposite of this outcome is what initially ensues, in the form of the first speech, such that Socrates has to deliver a second speech, it is clear that Socrates' original motivation cannot have been of the sort that Socrates-Diotima outlines. If Socrates had been motivated by something fine, then he would not have had to hide his head and, for this reason, it is clear that Socrates' motivation – to be admired without necessarily being admirable – is of an erotic kind.

Indeed, by the lights of the *Phaedrus*, the reference to “sparingly” engaging in erotic acts “for the rest of their lives”, demonstrates that Socrates' knowledge of the Form of Good does not motivate him in the way that **SV** purports it should. Rather it shows that, even when the commitment to living by the dictates of knowledge is strong, it is still possible to act in ways that are contrary to knowledge; hence Socrates attempts to conceal his shame by covering his head while giving his false speech. As such, since Socrates has some knowledge of the Form of the Good, and can be driven by erotic motivations, I take it as a given that Plato holds it to

be the case that, in the experience of beauty, no knowledge is sufficient to guarantee a moral response. Yet, that a response is impending, and that it is possible to reply morally or immorally to this, presupposes that the rational part of the soul is the soul part that provides the grounding for the selection of a motivation source in the first place. As such, it is reason that facilitates both responses and it is for this reason that Socrates' *akrasia*, signified by his shame, is generated by the rational part of the soul.

5.3.1 *The Damage of the Old Good*

That this greater ease would have been present prior to attaining knowledge of the Form of the Good, as per my argument, goes quite a way towards accounting for how erotic goods could continue to motivate action after knowledge of the Form of the Good has been attained. The *Phaedrus*, no less than the *Symposium* and *Republic*, provides a keen insight into why Plato considers habituation as potentially bad. The experiential good of erotic interaction is so potent that, once the wayward philosophical lovers engage in it once, they do so for the rest of their lives. It is not that the philosopher is laboured with erotic drives or that the goods of such are so potent that makes the ascent so difficult. It is rather that he/she is presented with the ascent and its nature after having already engaged in/with both prior to being made aware of the good of the ascent. For this reason, Plato provides an account of *akrasia* in the case of a 'committed *akratic*', Alcibiades, and, in the case of Socrates, someone who by definition is a lover of learning. The decisive feature in distinguishing both men is not knowledge or reason, or the capacity to act against better knowledge and judgement, but the extent to which both can generate the resources to break from old goods and habits, and form new ones.

As I have argued, commitment and motivation are not contained within knowledge itself, since one man's reason for abstaining from the greater good is the other's reason for pursuing it. That is, while both men know that attachment to the apparent good is a form of slavery, it is only Socrates who commits himself to achieving freedom from illusion.

Alcibiades, with the same knowledge, seeks the means to become ‘at home’ with this slavery. He does so, having rejected philosophy in and through his philosophising (recall that he claims to have been “bitten by philosophy” (218a)), and from here continues to knowingly pursue the goods that are the very source of his entrapment. The commitment to knowledge, now understood by Plato to be something outside of knowledge *per se*, is acknowledged as having its own sort of setbacks, namely that which ensues from experiencing illusory goods. To apply Plato’s own allegory, if both men discovered they were imprisoned in a cave, only one, seeing the dangers of climbing out, would reconcile himself with such and the chance of freedom.

The retention of old habits, predicated upon known lesser goods, is precisely the way in which reason, in the *Republic*, can be deemed harmful (518e-519a). Such is also personified by Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. In the case of the *Phaedrus*, where and when the soul engages in the experience of lesser goods in terms of entitlement, we can understand such as being the output of reason. This is the case as neither of the non-rational parts of the soul could, through their own resources, generate a conception of good that necessarily requires knowledge of the good of the other parts of the soul. This means that reason, in addition to providing the motivational neutrality to assess the goods of each soul part, without immediately leading to action, must have conceded to pursuing the good of the other parts of the soul. That reason is thought of as a slave, in these circumstances, means that it has already, prior to perceiving the lesser value of lesser goods, yielded to the non-rational goods of the lower parts of the soul.

Reason cannot be harmful simply by providing the motivational neutrality required to assess the good of the entire soul. Rather, reason must also be involved in an actively harmful way. In the previous chapters, I outlined how reason provides the possibility to opt for the lesser good. This option, I argued, is confirmed by the attempt to defend the lesser good, at the expense of the possible attainment of the greater good; hence the significance of the case of Alcibiades and his *akrasia*, not in the presence of the lesser goods but in the very act of rejecting the greater good of virtue and philosophy. The *Phaedrus* sheds further light on how reason can be thought

harmful and enslaved. If reason also supplements the hubristic part of the soul's good with grounds that would justify the selection of the lesser good, this is an additional level of participation in the *akratic* experience.

Yet, this new level is one that allows for the rational part to be actively culpable in *akrasia*, rather than it simply being a constituent feature of generating the *akratic* experience in the casual and functional manner already outlined above. This is due to the fact that, by 'entitlement', the rational part of the soul seeks to justify the weakness that leads to *akrasia*, such that reason is seeking to justify *akrasia*. This amounts to reason making it easier to live by the hubristic part of the soul's good and, as such, this should be understood as the rational part of the soul sanctioning the rule of the hubristic part of the soul. Put differently, this amounts to the rational part of the soul willing its own enslavement.¹⁰⁰ Not only has the rational part of the soul already conceded to the hubristic part of the soul's dictates, but, in addition to this sense of defeat, it also can be thought to endeavour to remain at the service of a soul part that is not, by its very nature, suited to rule in the soul. In such a soul, the rational and hubristic parts of the soul, in the *akratic* experience, become so intertwined that the rational part of the soul can be thought to take on the hubristic part's good as its own.

This forces an unfamiliar conclusion: in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates' *akrasia* – manifested in his delivering a false speech – is accounted for, and justified by, the content of his second speech. On the reading that I have presented, and the arguments that I have formulated, Socrates must be thought of as having a tendency to be *akratic*. Yet, this does not have to amount to anything other than Plato holding that *akrasia* is an experience that is fundamental to the human condition. That Socrates is also outlined as being capable of *akrasia*, therefore, does not have

¹⁰⁰ There is something almost Sartrean about this notion. Consider, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre's description of love as sort of conflict, in which the 'winner' enslaves the 'loser' (his/her beloved): "He wishes that the Other's freedom should determine itself to become love – and this is not only at the beginning of the affair but at each instant – and at the same time he wants this freedom to be captured *by itself*, to turn back upon itself, as in madness, as in a dream, so as to will its own captivity. This captivity must be a resignation that is both free and yet chained in our hands" (*Being & Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 434-435 (tr. p. 367)).

to imply that Plato is presenting some form of indictment against Socrates' character. Rather, in presenting Socrates as having the capacity to be akratic, Plato is merely showcasing the applicability of *akrasia per se*. Is this not a clear facet of the second speech?

As I noted, there is no effective way to safeguard against the immediate effects of experiencing the beautiful. The decisive feature of the experience relates to the manner in which, after weathering these tumultuous effects, the person comes to react. In one instance Socrates' shameful reaction is signified by his covering his head, yet, in another, he is unwilling to leave and endeavours to atone for his shamefulness. That his second speech provides insight into why he acted as he did, therefore, speaks to the truth of the experience itself. In this sense, the 'justification' of Socrates' shamefulness is not to excuse his actions or motivations, but to highlight the very presence and possibilities of his (and anyone else) being so disposed.

Since it is the rational part of the soul that grounds any response to beauty, Plato should not be understood as endorsing anything like good-independent desire as a type of desire that automatically allows for erotic motivation to necessarily lead to erotic pursuits. Moreover, since the appetitive part is necessarily in possession of the belief that its ends are goods – as per pleasure, power, and ease of attainment – the rational part of the soul determines actions that are always orientated towards, and predicated upon, a particular understanding and type of good. The rational part of the soul, from within its motivational neutrality, can remove motivation from its consideration in order to determine the quality of any end of any other soul part.

As such, Socrates' delivering a false speech, in the manner that he does, is of the highest significance, since it strongly conveys the role that reason plays in generating shame and *akrasia*. As the passages from the *Phaedrus* show, it is clear that neither knowledge nor the application of reason will determine an appropriate response to the beautiful without the soul's willingness to opt for the greater good, and recommit itself to this end in each and every experience of beauty.

5.4 The *Phaedrus*: A Stronger Delivery of the Argument

In Chapter One I noted that the beginnings of Plato's dissatisfaction with **SV** are contained within the *Protagoras*, and the relevance of the 'Socrates example' serves as something of a guide to comprehending what an instance of *akrasia* would entail. As such, the 'Socrates example' allowed for a clear understanding of the obstacles that are to be found with **SV**, particularly with the view that knowledge or reason would be sufficient to qualify as virtue. The strongest opposition that Plato formulates in rejecting **SV** is not, ultimately, to be found in the *Republic*'s psychology, or the example of those who reject the ascent, or with the Phaedrean lovers, but with Socrates himself qualifying as an example of *akrasia* via his presentation of a false speech.

In Chapter One, I outlined the following thesis as that which fundamentally troubled **SI**:

(**T1**) Reason and knowledge are fundamentally incapable of undermining the good of pleasure and honour, from within the experiential modalities in which they are 'good', and so they cannot make an experiential good *qua* experience into a bad.

(**T2**) it is possible to pursue a contingent aspect of a true good without any direct recourse to pursuing the greater good.

By contrast, I outlined the following thesis, as applications of reason that might overcome both of these problems (**T1**, and **T2**):

(**R1**) Reason can be thought of as an integral aspect of virtue because it generates the capacity to make the correct observations that lead to correct or moral judgement

(R2) Reason is a part of virtue because it can be used to assess knowledge claims regarding the good, to identify the possession of contradictory goods.

(R3) Reason can be applied, as a form of self-surveillance regarding the quality of goods, on a continual basis, so that contradictory goods are neither admitted into the soul nor are not experienced by the soul.

While I have tested the validity of these theses in each chapter, it is also important to assess them one last time in relation to the *Phaedrus*. What I will be clearly emphasising is the passive role that reason can play in a soul where a non-rational part of the soul is the dominant part. However, seeking to avoid reiterating lines of argumentation, I take it as plain that what I showed in Chapter Three, in relation to the psychology of the *Republic*, also has validity in relation to the Allegory of the Cave. Specifically, that the idea of soul parts represent, in the case of the non-rational parts of the soul, the presupposition of the validity of experiencing a good that cannot be undermined from within the modality of that soul part (T1), is as applicable to the Allegory of the Cave as it is to the psychology of the *Republic*. That is, I take it to be far from tendentious to hold that the psychology of the *Republic* will relate to every instance in the *Republic* in which Plato considers the soul.

Moreover, that the Allegory of the Cave makes it clear that the struggles of abandoning the cave, or illusory goods, remain long after leaving the cave, also suggests that lacking in knowledge or lacking a capacity to reason cannot be the cause of moral error. This must be so as those with the capacity to reason their way out of the cave perceive the Forms and are still subject to, for example, the erotic forces that might cause stagnation in coming to knowledge of the Form of the Good. What I shall comment on is how T2 can contribute to an understanding of how the passive nature of reason, as the ruled part of the soul, should be interpreted.

As outlined above, in the *Phaedrus* there is a reference to the hubristic part of the soul demonstrating an understanding of entitlement. I showed how this could not be so, going on the

more detailed psychology of the *Republic*. Indeed, the lack of fulfilment would not yield anything like a concept of entitlement for the non-rational parts of the soul, but rather the increase of want and desire. This is so as the non-rational parts of the soul, knowing only their corresponding experiential good(s), could not attribute their lacking in good to another part of the soul's having or attaining its good. In this sense, both the hubristic and spirited parts of the soul are very much engulfed by the limitations of **T1** types of good. As such, for a concept such as entitlement to be generated, the rational part of the soul must be involved.

In Chapter One, I outlined how no application of reason could secure the position that knowledge is virtue because, as the 'Socrates example' makes plain, **R2** and **R3** do not have to be applied to knowingly pursue a good. All that is required to pursue a good is **R1**, and since such merely requires that something be taken as a good, without reference to its being the greatest good, **R1** is insufficient to yield the conclusions that **SV** demands. Yet, the presence of any form of reason, and the knowing pursuit of a good, are sufficient to call into question the validity of **SV**, since, in a very obvious way, it calls into question the idea that knowledge and reason will necessarily lead to virtue.

However, by the time Plato is writing the *Phaedrus*, not only does reason seem to have the capacity to furnish the non-rational parts of the soul with concepts that will, it may be suggested, make it easier for the soul to live with the known lesser good, he writes of Socrates doing exactly that. This allows me to add this final thesis:

(**SA**) Not only does Plato come to accept the possibility of *akrasia*, he finds it to be so fundamental to the embodied soul that he even presents the philosopher, Socrates, as an example of such.

For **SA** to hold true, Socrates must have, unlike in the 'Socrates example' of the *Protagoras*, unwittingly engaged in **T2**, and he must have applied **R2** and **R3** knowingly to attain and pursue

his lesser end in order to generate the good of **T2**. Yet, this is precisely what has occurred in the dialogue. In covering his head, and acknowledging that this was done in shame, Socrates admits to knowingly pursuing or taking motivation from a shameful, lesser good. In order for him to do so, he must know that his lesser good stands in contradiction to his greater good (**R2**). That he does so in the presence of the contradiction suggested to him means that he must have applied **R3**. That is, Socrates' reason is deployed so as to detect contradictory goods and preferences, and he manages to do so in the presence of these lesser goods. This ultimately means that he is utilising this capacity in an on-going and self-surveying manner.

This stands in the sharpest of contrasts to both **SV** and the 'Socrates example'. In the case of the latter, **R2** and **R3** were insufficient for the purposes of guaranteeing virtue, since their application was thought to be contingent. Yet, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato presents Socrates as actively applying reason in a dynamic way, so as to involve at least **R2** and **R3**, and still an akratic motivation and action follows. As such, in **SA**, Plato has progressed from a dissatisfaction with **SV** to its fullest rejection, where Socrates, the philosopher, behaves akratically, even for the most fleeting of moments. In pursuing the admiration of Phaedrus, with the false speech, Socrates knowingly pursues that which contingently issues from the greatest good of knowledge. As such, Socrates knowingly generates **T2** with the application of **R2** and **R3**.

This is what I take to be the final step required of Plato in opposing **SV** to successfully break from it. It is no longer the case that Alcibiades, a person with limited knowledge (though he certainly knows better), can be thought to act akratically. Moreover, as I outlined in Chapter Four, all those who had left the cave but had yet to see the Form of the Good, and subsequently failed to do so, could be thought of akratic insofar as they wilfully opted to retain a measure of their old, lesser good. In which case, it is no longer the case that knowledge of this or that type of good is sufficient to overcome a desire to engage in lesser goods. Rather, it is only the highest possible knowledge that would be sufficient to rule out the possibility of *akrasia*. Yet, since

Plato now presents Socrates as being akratic, this can also be read as his presentation of a line of thinking to support the case that *all* can be akratic, I take this to signify Plato's rejection of the last remaining aspect of **SV**. For now, no level of knowledge can be thought to necessarily negate the possibility of *akrasia*, in this or that case, or for this or that person.

Casting Socrates as an example of an akratic person (**SA**), and the reasons why Plato does so, presents a clear picture of both the most essential and enduring philosophical principle of **SV**, and Plato's rejection of it. Namely, that the sharpest dichotomy exists between reason, knowledge, and *akrasia*, and it is exactly this principle that Plato comes to reject in **SV**. In the case of the *Phaedrus*, not only is Socrates considered an akratic, but, in addition to this, he outlines a line of thinking that opens up *akrasia* as a possibility for all, regardless of their level of knowledge.

In the *Symposium*, Socrates' rejection of Alcibiades' attempt to exchange bronze for gold – his rejection of Alcibiades offering sexual gratification for knowledge – can be interpreted as an example of him acting in a way that is appropriate to his knowledge. By the sharpest of contrasts, however, in the *Phaedrus* a similar outcome is not immediately or automatically generated, as a result of Socrates' knowledge; knowledge or reason are no longer, regardless of the content of such, the guarantors of virtue. Yet, this is precisely the point that Plato presents in the *Phaedrus*: since beauty impacts upon the soul so strongly, neither knowledge nor reason can fortify the soul against its immediate effects. The decisive feature is how the soul responds thereafter.

However, this line of thinking does exhibit a certain level of synergy with the *Symposium*. In Chapter Two, I noted how the Socrates-Diotima account could be read as preparation for the account that Alcibiades will subsequently deliver. Reading the *Symposium* in relation to what I have outlined regarding the *Phaedrus*, and the notion that no level of knowledge, in and of itself, will determine action, fits well with the idea of reproduction. That the soul has to reproduce qualities, if it is to possess them, seems to presuppose that the very

possession of knowledge *per se* will not lead to reproduction. Indeed, if the knowledge that is already attained were sufficient to determine the soul's qualities and actions, then it would seem that such would be all that is required to be virtuous.

Yet, this is not the case, since the only way the soul or the body is said to possess any quality is by actively regenerating them. It would seem necessary that the possession of knowledge *per se* could do neither. If it could, it would be sufficient for this purpose, but since there are additional steps required of the soul to be virtuous and to act virtuously, the possession of knowledge cannot be thought to be sufficient to these ends. The latter point is conveyed, in the two cases outlined, by the hit-and-miss type of success that Socrates has regarding the reproduction of his virtue, via his reaction to the beautiful.

Yet, one question remains. In Chapter Four, I asked if the appetitive basic understanding of power, as the good, was completely self-contained, and self-generated, from within the appetitive part itself. The answer to this question, as I will show, is both yes and no. In the previous chapter I spoke to the 'yes' aspect of the question, showing how a concept of power (in a sense that is limited to internal power) is generated from within the resources of the appetitive part itself. Now, with the pertinent passages of the *Phaedrus* outlined, I will refer to the 'no' aspect of the answer. It is also clear that the limitations of the appetitive part mean that it cannot really be attributed any form of reasoning *per se*. Yet, since it already has the capacity to enslave the rational part, this would not present much of a barrier since, in the *Phaedrus*, reason's assenting to appetitive goods also sees it furnishing the soul with the concepts required to justify assenting to known lesser goods. It would seem far from over-reaching, in this framework, to hold that part of the rational part's function, while enslaved, would be to allow for a means-ends type of reasoning, in which the appetitive part could, *de facto*, generate the rational power to attain its good.

It may, however, be objected that my argument violates the principle of opposition outlined in the *Republic*. If the rational good is subjugated by another soul, and if the rational

part is involved in this process, does it not follow that the rational part must be motivationally conflicted in relation to the same thing at the same time? Yet, it is crucial to note that, while the rational part is enslaved, it adopts the good of the rational part as its own, after its goods have been destroyed by the appetitive part. Since the rational part operates in relation to the other soul parts, under the guise of always potentially forgoing its own ends at any time in service of the whole soul (which is its motivational neutrality), it is clear that the principle of opposition would not apply to the rational part in the same way that it applies to the other non-rational soul parts.

In caring for more than itself, the rational part of the soul removes motivation *per se* and, in this way, the principle of opposition could not be violated by this facet of the rational part of the soul since it simply does not apply in this regard. Here, 'destroyed' may simply refer to the enslavement of the rational part of the soul, where its own good has lost the capacity to motivate since it is only ever considered from within the motivational neutrality in which it determines the good of the whole soul. Once the lesser good is already assented to, and the motivational neutrality of reason is already applied, the motivational conflict between the appetitive part and the rational part of the soul re-ensues. As such, the conflict in the soul would continue, and the neutrality of reason, *per se*, should not be thought sufficient to overcome the internal conflict but to engender it at, perhaps, higher levels.

Yet, that stated, it is possible that Plato holds that the enslaved rational part could work in tandem with the appetitive part in achieving any of its ends, regardless of the appetitive part having its own cognitive capacities, as outlined. Therefore, Plato could hold, and be consistent in doing so, that the enslavement of the rational part of the soul means that it makes up any shortcomings that are associated with the appetitive part of the soul, regardless of the fact that the rational part of the soul can still generate the experience of shame. As such, the soul ruled by the appetitive part would not be as limited as the appetitive part *per se* since it is necessarily

the case that the soul of such a person contains a rational part that can be made to serve appetitive ends.

What the *Phaedrus* adds to this is a clear picture of how the rational part of the soul comes to serve the appetitive part, such that its new good is that of power, in the sense that the case of Alcibiades presents. That is, a concept of power, the original grounding of which is supported by the appetitive part itself, as outlined in Chapter Four, and that is clearly focused, with the assistance of the rational part of the soul, on attaining any good/desire that the appetitive part may wish. Yet, as shown, even when the rational part of the soul is enslaved by the appetitive part, the wishes of the appetitive part must be presented to the rational part of the soul in order for them to be assented to. The rational part of the soul retains the capacity to opt in alternative ways, by choosing to take motivation, in precisely this mediated sense, from a qualitatively distinct end.

5.4.1 *The Cause of Akrasia: Two Points of Departure from SV*

Finally, before concluding, it is important to note that from this brief examination of *Phaedrus* 256, coupled with my reading of the case of Alcibiades and my reading of the *Republic*, the following points of major revision between Plato's positions in the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and that of **SV** can be outlined: (1) the problem of a previous knowledge of the good (what I term, the problem of 'self-association'). This point goes straight to the heart of how it is habituation and familiarity with a previous good that can hinder the development of virtue, and that the character formation that emerges in relation to the lesser good can come to be overly valued by the soul. The problem of moral weakness, therefore, no longer has to be thought of as the outcome or consequence of ignorance, since knowledge and reason are the requirements for rejecting the greater good of philosophy and virtue.

This is so as the very experience of attachment to the lesser, signified by the desire to protect the old good, is generated by the presence of a prior knowledge and understanding of

the alternative good of virtue or philosophy. This is precisely the root cause of Alcibiades' *akrasia*, the *akrasia* of those who reject the ascent in the *Republic*, and the cause of the account of the Phaedrean lovers, who act against their better knowledge. As such, the problem of self-association is at odds with **SV**. (2) Because of the problem of self-association, Plato should no longer be thought to hold the dichotomy between reason/knowledge and *akrasia* that is at the very centre of **SV**.

In the last chapter I noted that some of Alcibiades' vices are, for the most part, in-line with the virtues of Athenian society. As stated in Chapter Two, Alcibiades' good is that of power; that is, the power to attain whatever he may happen to desire. It is precisely because a given society may have ill-conceived notions of virtue that the problem of self-association is rendered tenable. Everywhere Alcibiades would turn, so to speak, his ideas of power and his physical beauty, would be reinforced and, as such, would contradict the very truths that Socrates had revealed to him, through philosophical discourse.

Yet, Alcibiades has Socrates in his corner, assisting him and offering to continue to assist him. As Socrates states, "In the future, let's consider things together. We'll always do what seems the best to the two of us" (219b). In this manner, the gadfly's commitment to Alcibiades' betterment seems to betray, at the very least, an awareness of the obstacles that Alcibiades will experience. Moreover, these obstacle must surely be understood as such, by Socrates, as being generated as much by the introduction of a new concept of good. It is only after such is generated that there is any possibility for conflict to ensue. Indeed, on my reading of Plato, such an awareness is the turning point towards the surrendering of the dichotomy between reason/knowledge and *akrasia*, as it is from this tension between conflicting concepts of the good that the motivational neutrality of reason, coupled with the problem of self-association, that the familiar and easily attainable good is pursued. The attainment of the lesser but familiar good, by these lights, must be knowingly opted for, in the full knowledge of this very quality.

5.5 Conclusion

In the *Republic* and *Symposium*, we are provided with a way to understand how reason is at the very least complicit with moral weakness. It is not the case that the force of one type of desire is enough to overpower another type of desire – a desire for pleasure, for example, overpowering a rational desire – and that leads to the pursuit of the lesser good. For an action to be deemed *akratic*, the lesser has to be contradictory to the greater, in a simultaneous way, and the lesser must be pursued. These conditions, as I have shown, are met by Alcibiades' rejection of virtue and philosophy, his known greatest good. As such, his moral weakness is generated out of his own choosing and, without recourse to claims of ignorance, he is culpable for his choices in a direct manner. With such in place it would be difficult indeed to understand how Plato could still be thought to be adhering to **SV** (other than the partial way outlined) in any substantive way.

In the case of the *Phaedrus*, however, Plato demonstrates an active sense in which the rational part of the soul can be considered culpable for moral weakness, in that it is the rational part of the soul that presents the grounds for continued moral weakness. Rather, in presenting the soul with concepts such as entitlement to make it easier to live with being immoral, reason itself is actively involved in setting the groundwork for the future pursuits of what would otherwise be considered, exclusively, to be the goods of the hubristic part of the soul.

The weakness of the Phaedrean lovers, no less than the moral weakness of Alcibiades and those who reject the ascent, is predicated upon their choice to remain at a distance from the good of virtue. This is precisely the 'bad' that Socrates' hubris in the *Protagoras* was blindsided by. It would be extremely misguided, I suggest, to conclude that Plato was not aware of this when writing these works. The pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fit together far too well to conclude that their creator did not intend this to be so. From what occurs in the *Protagoras*, through the *Symposium*, supported by my reading of the *Republic*, and through to the *Phaedrus*, we now find that the 'wayward' lovers can act against their better knowledge and still benefit both in

the here-and-now and in the afterlife.¹⁰¹ As such, *akrasia*, as it is considered in *SV* and in the *Protagoras*, is outlined as something that is not possible due to the level of motivation that is attributed to knowledge of the greater good.

Yet, in Plato's *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, there is, to varying degrees, a complete revision of this view, to the extent that, when writing the *Phaedrus*, there is a very palpable sense that *akrasia* is, in fact, a likely outcome. That Socrates is outlined as acting virtuously in the *Symposium* and, by his own admission, acting shamefully in the *Phaedrus*, is a clear indication that Plato has broken from *SV*. It would seem that, where and when the object of experience is the beautiful, all are subject to the possibility of allowing their rational part to be enslaved by their hubristic part. Such does not have to be read as an indictment of Socrates' character but as a statement of the power of the beautiful to derail virtue, and the virtuous, by the sheer awe that it generates within the soul. Indeed, while Socrates' shame was temporarily ignored by him, he is not akratic in the same sense as Alcibiades or the tyrants who come to regret their entire lives before they are even lived. The latter exist within regret, such that they are committed to the very good that generates regret/shame, whereas Socrates' regret is sufficient to see him changing his actions almost immediately.

¹⁰¹ See 256d-e: "Their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes."

Conclusion

i. The Significant Findings in the Case of Alcibiades

Having shown the case of Alcibiades to demonstrate Plato's awareness of the neutrality of reason, similar to that outlined in the *Republic*, it will be beneficial to reflect on the insights that represent the revision in Plato's thinking. It is crucial to note that while the brunt of the argument that I have formulated is made in relation to the *Republic*, much of what I have outlined would not be apparent if Plato had not situated the akratic experience of Alcibiades alongside of Socrates. We are presented with Alcibiades, someone who, by his own admission, is 'consumed' and wracked by the weakness of his ability to commit to the good of virtue and philosophy, and Socrates, someone whose strength of will is of the highest renown.

This unhappy coupling forces the most pertinent of questions regarding what it is exactly that distinguishes the man, and the question of virtue, with a heightened level of intensity and pertinence. On the one hand, we have, after all, a character whose infamy in the Peloponnesian war is assured in perpetuity and, on the other hand, we have Socrates, someone whose wisdom ought to have reformed Alcibiades. This forces the context of their relationship to pronounce itself to the reader in quite a concrete manner.

For example, the sheer drama that the entrance of the Alcibiades brings to the dialogue, the fact that he delivers a eulogy of Socrates, and the fact that Socrates, for the most part, seems to have failed Alcibiades, elicit a great deal of questions. Chief among them: why did Socrates' knowledge/wisdom not lead to Alcibiades taking up the ascent? Why does knowledge of imprisonment by ignorance lead one to take up the ascent and another to reject it? What does the combination of the possession of this knowledge and the rejection of the ascent signify? All of these questions, in one way or another, are posed by Plato's presentation of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, and the reader is ultimately challenged to understand what differentiates these two men.

As I have argued, it is not the presence or absence of either knowledge or the capacity to reason that differentiates the two. Rather, the most decisive difference between Socrates and Alcibiades is the commitment (or lack thereof) that each can generate within themselves regarding the pursuit of the known greatest good of virtue. Yet, it is the question of what differentiates the two that has led me to search for any possible instance in which Socrates himself acts a way that does not provide the finest example of his virtues. In the first place, this led to my consideration of the ‘Socrates example’ in the *Protagoras*. This example does not qualify as an example of *akrasia*, for the reasons outlined, but it does provide a certain measure by which to detect such in other instances. Additionally, since the presence of knowledge and an application of reason were not sufficient to guarantee virtue, the ‘Socrates example’ revealed the potential weakness for reason/knowledge to qualify as virtue. Indeed, it was with this insight that I began to re-examine the case of Alcibiades with a view to determining how reason could itself be responsible for his *akrasia*.

ii. *From Scepticism to Justified Scepticism*

(1) To best illustrate Plato’s opposition to SV regarding the possibility of *akrasia*, I will contrast Socrates’ problem of self-knowledge in the *Protagoras* (as outlined in Chapter One) with the case of Alcibiades. Yet, before I do so, it is worth noting the following: SI’s claim is that those who know (SA), along with those who do not, must act upon what they take to be their good (SC). SV holds that *if* a person had genuine knowledge, knowledge derived from a proper application of reason, *then* this knowledge would lead to virtuous action (SO). Yet, SO is merely a reformulation of SA and SC, with the terms modified to yield the SC that Socrates is hoping for. Therefore, any example which meets the general parameters of the claim but does not generate the stipulated outcome will be sufficient to reject SV from within its own terms. As I have shown, such examples are to be found in the case of Alcibiades, those who reject the ascent, and Socrates himself in the *Phaedrus*.

With this stated, I will turn to the problem of self-knowledge. As stated, according to **SV**, it is the quality of the knowledge attained that generates the quality of moral success. The point at which an action is lacking in virtue or morality is precisely the moment when knowledge of the greater good is illusory or insufficient. Therefore, moral error is accounted for by the very principle that would guarantee moral attainment. Yet, since knowledge ought to be the source of motivation, it is clear that acting under obscure motivational grounds would seem strange.

In Chapter One, I introduced the ‘Socrates example’ as Plato’s demonstration of his awareness of the problem of **SV**. I noted that this line of thinking stands in the sharpest of contrasts with much of what Socrates had stated in many of the Socratic dialogues. Socrates, in not holding known contradictory preferences simultaneously, does not, himself, violate **SV**. Yet, the weight of the error contained within the point that Socrates develops immediately alerts us to a problem. What is clear is that Socrates does not appear to notice his error, or the quality and source of his motivation. As it were, Socrates applies his considerable powers of rationality to his argument but not to the original cause of him speaking in the first instance. Of course, it does not need to be stated that, in most instances, a person’s motivation for engaging in philosophical discussion would have to lead to fruitless conclusions. Yet, in this case, Plato is clearly drawing the reader’s attention to Socrates’ undiscerned motivation and the peculiar conclusion he arrives at.

The grounds for reading passages in the *Protagoras*, as I do, are to be found within the care and meticulous attention Plato applies to ensure that Socrates makes an error due to undiscerned desires, and, as such, without being an akratic. Socrates’ strength of character is not brought into question; at least not to the extent that he can be thought of as being morally weak. Yet, in the immanence of the experience, Socrates is susceptible to being possessed of desires that are not in keeping with his character. Indeed, we might think that if he had taken

the time to analyse his motivation, then he could still have applied the resolve to reason correctly.

This is precisely the point that I make: philosophical investigation, in certain instances, no less than any other activity, requires a self-examination such that prejudiced conclusions cannot be attained. Therefore, the task of reason can be thought to always, in such instances, have a dual application: to investigate the subject matter while also ensuring that the motivation for investigation cannot run aground due to the content of one's own prejudices. In this instance, Socrates' desire to appear as knowledgeable to his friends. In the absence of this additional application of reason then even Socrates can generate 'corrupted' conclusions, conclusions that are not motivated by a desire to know but merely to appear knowledgeable. This is the very point that I take Plato to be making with the 'Socrates example'. Yet, looking ahead to the *Symposium*, since Socrates' character is alongside that of Alcibiades, the more pertinent question has to be: what would the outcome of applying reason in this way be for a morally weak character?

The outcome of Socrates' unknown source of motivation was one feature of the text that led to my use of the term 'problem of self-knowledge'. The crux of this problem is that, while **SV** does not fit with the idea of taking motivation from motivational sources that are obscure or unknown, it is a strange thing that this is precisely what leads to the 'Socrates example'. It is not possible for knowledge to provide motivation if it is unknown to the agent, surely? Yet, since Socrates manifestly takes motivation from obscure or unknown motivational sources, generating knowledge of the greatest good may not remove every form of motivation. This is particularly so with motivational sources that a person is unaware of; if there are areas of the soul that can be shaded from the light of the knowledge of the good, knowledge *per se* might not be the sufficient cure for this type of ignorance.

Therefore, if knowledge or reason are to have any chance of overcoming such, reason needs to be applied to one's own motivations such that it should engage in a form of self-

surveillance (that is, where every single motivation is examined by the full light of reason). Yet, that Alcibiades does indeed apply reason thus and still comes up short renders the idea that Plato took this application of reason to guarantee virtue somewhat moot. Indeed, as I have shown, the case of Alcibiades would not be overcome or cured by reason or knowledge since his lack is not a purely epistemic problem. Alcibiades knows the greater good, it is just that he will not take motivation from such. This alone situates the motivation for his action outside of his knowledge of the greater good, and is enough to remove the validity of **SO** since it removes that which binds **SA** and **SC**.

What links both the case of Alcibiades and the ‘Socrates example’ is twofold: (i) the very conspicuous absence of Socrates qualifying as an akratic. Indeed, as shown, that Socrates would most likely have acted differently in the situation, had his error been revealed to him, is beside the point. All that is required to reject something as a sufficient condition is to show an example in which this sufficiency is removed. To this end, the case of Alcibiades, and Plato are extremely efficient.

(ii) This is to do with the immediate manner in which Socrates moves seamlessly to his ill-founded conclusion. From within the ‘black’, and “reeling from Protagoras’ oratory and the others’ clamour” (339e), Socrates’ initial reaction was to appear as he had understood himself to be perceived by his companions. Hence, almost in the same breath, Socrates outlines his desire to “buck” this hero. As Socrates has associated himself so strongly with this reputation, he does not perceive it as the grounds upon which he was taking motivation. This is a formulation of the problem of self-association, where a person can unwittingly take motivation, and is not therefore, akratic.

The case of Alcibiades demonstrates that past association with a good can be so alluring that one refuses to be unsettled by knowledge of it as lesser and thus knowingly rejects the greater good. As seen in Chapter Four, this point applies to all who reject the ascent, and is not the ‘privilege’ of Alcibiades. However, allowing the case of Alcibiades to inform a reading of

the *Republic* allowed me to investigate how a person can apply the neutrality of reason to maintain their lesser good, even in the presence of their known greater good. Indeed, in terms of clarity, the *Republic* provided much of the philosophical ‘heavy-lifting’ needed in order to better understand the context that the case of Alcibiades provides for the *Republic*.

Crucially, the problem of self-association that is rooted in **SV** – in the form of the problem of self-knowledge – is not overcome by reason/knowledge or **SV**. As it were, since reason/knowledge – that which Plato and **SV** purported would lead to virtue – come to be viewed as the very things that can generate *akrasia*, **SV**, by its own terms, is ‘unfixable’. For now, the application of reason and the presence of a genuine knowledge of the real good can be forgone for the sake of some ‘good’ that is such with reference to the ease with which it can be attained.

The problem of self-association is outlined in opposition to the problem of self-knowledge. The latter take knowledge to be cure to ignorance and moral shortcoming, whereas the former asserts that neither knowledge nor reason are sufficient to achieve this end. This does not suggest that Plato has surrendered to the problem but rather suggests that he is presenting a deeper understanding of it. Moreover, as stated in Chapter One, Plato may have suspected that the conception of knowledge that **SV** operates under simply spreads itself too widely. As such, on my reading Plato presents the view that knowledge is indeed a condition of action but not the sufficient condition. Knowledge of *a* good can continue to provide the motivation for action but only after it has been freely chosen from within the neutral space that reason affords the soul.

(2) The end of the dichotomy between reason and *akrasia*: in perhaps the boldest and starkest of moves, Plato presents a view that circumvents the dichotomy between reason and *akrasia* that is at the core of **SV**. By holding that reason is a requirement of *akrasia* (in the case of Alcibiades), it is clear that the problem of self-association, coupled with the freedom of

choice that reason's neutrality brings to the soul, provides the grounding to understand the revision with reference to the contrast between the two opposing positions.

It would seem that the very pertinent insight within **SV** – that knowledge could be understood as a determinant – led Plato to the initial view that such could be the sufficient condition for action. Indeed, the very weight of the insight could be what led him to his original and more rigid view, rather than holding the more moderate view that it is but 'a' condition of action. Understanding the problem of self-association, however, shows that Plato comes to reconsider the psychology of **SV**. Knowledge has a deterministic aspect but moral failure does not have to be limited to some kind of ignorance or epistemic failure. Reason is required for the akratic experience, and so, by choosing the knowledge claim under which to act, moral error can be understood as chosen or intentional moral weakness.

However, from a practical perspective, **SV** does not suppose that everyone wants their greatest good; it is simply the case that not all *have* to do so. This is particularly so where the lesser is considered to be the more easily attainable. In such circumstances, reason can be used to select the lesser good at the expense of the greater. Or, put differently, the motivational neutrality of reason facilitates the pursuit of the illusory at the expense of the real. This point is typified in the case of Alcibiades. As such, it is clear that **SV**'s position of holding knowledge as the sufficient condition for action has been abandoned by Plato. Discerning Plato's presenting a position that opposes the problem of self-knowledge, which saw knowledge as the cure for moral error, suggests that a person's moral short-comings – intimated by the problem of self-association – will not necessarily lead to moral development. However, that reason is required to overcome internal conflict, in the negative, points to Plato's rejection of **SV**, since the dichotomy between reason/knowledge and moral weakness is removed.

iii. *Plato's Alternative Viewpoint*

As I have formulated it, Plato's reconsideration of the possibility of *akrasia* does not represent a turnabout regarding the force of desires, or of the appetitive part of the soul's capacity to bypass the rational part of the soul. Additionally, it is not due to the presence of a level of force *per se* that the appetitive part of the soul comes to rule in the soul. On the contrary, it is precisely because of the removal of motivational force that the rational part of the soul allows the appetitive part to rule. Since the rational part of the soul must enter into this state of its own volition, it is apparent that the rational part of the soul is involved in its own enslavement.

There is clearly a coercive element to past experience of goods, particularly where they are of the non-rational variety, yet, this element is not something that is either sufficient to qualify as motivational force or something that is achieved by some act of deception enacted by the appetitive part of the soul. The soul is fundamentally susceptible to opting for certain options regarding goods, but this is itself facilitated by choice and not ignorance. Moreover, in a framework where the only grounds for any option are goods, that one good is of a type that will be more appealing to some, and not to others, surely cannot have stacked the deck. Where this is experienced as such, it is only due to the level of commitment that a person has towards the option of their choosing.

On Plato's new position, it is freedom of choice/preference that is the root cause of the problem of self-association, moral weakness, and *akrasia*. The choice of making the ascent or not is registered at every experience of shame, and is better understood as a choice allowing for the freedom to re-instantiate the commitment to the respective good. As *Symposium* 207e makes clear, to possess any quality requires that it be continually (re)generated. This is outlined as applying to qualities of character, and so a person's character must be continually reproduced if it is to be maintained. This is precisely how commitment to a conception of a good is reproduced on a rolling or continual basis. Where and when action is required to either keep

with, or break from, the ascent, it is commitment to the ascent that is required to, as it were, get a person over the line.

It is commitment to knowledge that leads to progress on the ascent and to the reproduction of virtue. Indeed, there is nothing to suppose that both reason and knowledge are also conditions of virtue. Yet, as I have shown, on Plato's new thinking, in the absence of commitment, both of these will be as impotent to the task of generating virtue as commitment would be in the absence of reason and/or knowledge. Moreover, since Plato has come to reject the dichotomy between reason/knowledge and moral weakness, as I have shown, commitment to knowledge is no longer an internal aspect or constituent feature of knowledge *per se*. My terms of the 'motivational neutrality' of reason and 'mediated motivation' represent my attempt to highlight Plato's efforts to adjust his thinking to overcome what he takes to be the weaknesses of **SV**. As shown, in the case of the former, Plato accounts for the very freedom to select the knowledge of a good under which the soul will act. The latter represents Plato's account of how the soul comes to retake motivation predicated upon the decision that it had the freedom to make, which reveals the necessity of the rational part of the soul, both in assessing goods/desires and in coming to take motivation from them.

The concepts within Plato's work that my use of these terms attempts to display are precisely the areas which are absent from the scholarship on this topic. While it may appear, when initially presented, that the idea that reason is the cause of damage to the soul is a strange conclusion to formulate, the texts themselves bear out these conclusions. It is by the negative application of reason that the soul of the akratic is full of regret and shame. Yet, this thesis has also attempted to show that the phenomenon of shame and regret, regardless of any accompanying feelings of impotence, are full of the potential to achieve the change that they may suggest as being impossible.

Crucially, the position that Plato presents us with in the case of Alcibiades, the *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, is predicated upon an awareness of how experience and the constituent features

and functions of the soul that can see the soul become self-hindering or self-defeating. The soul is so nuanced an entity as to be the source of its own liberation *and* the source of its own imprisonment. For this reason, knowledge *per se* cannot qualify as virtue. In a soul, comprised as it is, virtue is the outcome of possessing knowledge and reason, but being committed to good/virtue beyond knowing. Indeed, the developmental aspect of the ascent confirms that the soul, though engaging in increasingly higher levels of both, must fundamentally come to be dissatisfied by each level of the ascent.¹⁰²

As such, if the good of virtue is to be achieved, then there must be an aspect of this aspiration that requires a commitment to something outside of the would-be philosopher's knowledge *per se*. It seems that both in the attempt to become virtuous and in the maintenance of virtuous character, via reproduction, there is a commitment outside of knowing. Yet, to reach the conclusions of the ascent, in both cases, the commitment to taking motivation from only virtuous goods is something that must be upheld, to the highest degree. It is precisely this that allows me to discern the concepts in the *Republic* and *Symposium* that differentiate Socrates from Alcibiades.

Where **SV** had taken the outcome of knowing the greater good to be axiomatic and binding, Plato holds an alternative view which asserts that *if* the soul and the will make some end an impossibility then this is the outcome of absolutely binding levels of commitment. Here determinism itself, due to the encumbrances of our personal history, and the constitution of the

¹⁰² Commenting on the ascent passage of the *Symposium*, Irwin outlines the following position: "The process is elenctic. At each stage the pupil tests his aspirations against his present objects of admiration, and though he was not previously aware of it, finds the objects inadequate to the aspiration ..." (*Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 170). The problem with this line of thinking, Sheffield argues, is that man only "realizes the inferiority of lesser beautiful objects after he has arrived at a more elevated state of awareness ..." (*Plato's Symposium*, p. 125.) On first reading, this argument seems rather compelling, yet there is, I suggest, an alternative handling of Irwin's thinking that is as compelling. Commenting on Irwin's position, Price argues that: "nothing has been said to indicate that attraction by the new [stage of the ascent] is preceded, and motivated, by dissatisfaction with the old [stage]" (*Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, p. 42). Price then goes on to suggest that, while he welcomes Irwin's suggestion: "Plato may be [simply] supposing that each stage justifies *itself* once the guide has prompted its achievement ..." (*Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 170). Yet, I must add that if the goal of the ascent is to come to the good that the guide 'possesses' and to become virtuous, if no stage prior to the completion of the ascent generates such, it would obviously prove unsatisfactory. I have argued for a similar point in 'Virtue as a Lesser Good?'

soul, is contingent upon the soul's commitment to such. Socrates demonstrated the highest level of commitment to truth in the *Crito*, just as Alcibiades does, albeit in a negative sense, in the *Symposium*. Yet, as I have shown, this commitment must be considered to be extrinsic from knowledge *per se*. As such, both Socrates and Alcibiades, due to the very nature of reason itself, commit themselves to whatever end that they wish to. Indeed, the final comment that I will pass on this topic is that Plato may have seen fit to immortalise the relationship of these would-be opposites because, in their own way, they are as committed to their goods and ends as each other. As contradictory to intuition as it may appear, the superlative example of the akratic and the superlative example of moral character are equivalent in terms of their commitment to their respective ends.

iv. *Areas of Future Research*

While I have found the research and the work of putting this thesis together to be highly rewarding, there are some additional questions that, due to the constraints of this thesis, I have not yet addressed. The most pertinent of these questions, in my view, is the following: if the soul is not ever dragged around by passions *per se*, where does this new position of Plato's stand in relation to the argument of the *Protagoras* and the view of the many?

The first point I wish to make here is that the position that I have formulated does not seek to differentiate **SV** from the *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, based upon a difference between the power of the passions in either position. As such, I am agreeable, in principle, to there being concordance between both the motivational neutrality of reason and mediated motivation, and Plato's view in the *Protagoras*. Plato holds both of these positions and has still changed his view about knowledge of the greater good as the sufficient condition of action. However, what he cannot hold simultaneously, which the 'Socrates example' demonstrates, is both that knowledge of the greater good is the sufficient condition for action and that reason itself provides the grounding by which the passions themselves cannot precipitate action.

In rejecting the conclusion of the many that passions overwhelm, and bypassing reason, Plato opens the door onto the conclusion that the lesser good can provide motivation. Additionally, the care with which the ‘Socrates example’ demonstrates the inherent weakness of reason to qualify as virtue, and avoids casting Socrates as an akratic, demonstrates Plato’s awareness of what it is exactly that he is asserting and what, as a consequence, he is rejecting. Socrates opens the door onto the weakness of reason in an unintentional way, while, with the case of Alcibiades, we see Plato showing how such can be achieved intentionally.

(2) Another, perhaps less obvious, question that my thesis suggests but does not address directly is the following: to what degree is the akratic aware of her/his weakness as the outcome of their own will? I have addressed this question in relation to those who are akratic in a complete sense, Alcibiades and those who reject the ascent *qua* ascent, for example. Yet, what of those who are unintentionally akratic, like the case of Socrates in the ‘Socrates example’? In the latter portion of Chapter Five, to demonstrate the applicability of Plato’s thinking, I suggested that anyone who rejects the good of their respective society would qualify as akratic for this exact reason.

Yet, since the ‘Socrates example’ demonstrates the possibility of acting against one’s better knowledge, does it necessarily have to be the case that such requires a lapse in judgement? The point that I am driving at is that it may, outside the case of Socrates, be an example or exercise of self-deception that allows the akratic to ignore their better judgement and better knowledge. In my research going forward, I will make attempt both to better understand Plato’s thinking on the topic of self-deception and to relate his thinking to current contemporary theories on this topic. More generally, however, it is my hope to bring Plato’s thinking in relation to *akrasia* to the broader philosophical community. Finally, while this thesis has answered some new questions on the topic of *akrasia* in Plato’s work, I do not imagine that what I have outlined will answer as many questions as it will raise.

Works Cited

Primary texts:

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Trans. W. D. Ross in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, Volume II*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 1552-1728.

Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007).

Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la sexualité. Tome II: l'usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). Trans. R. Hurley, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume II The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1987).

Plato. *Apology*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 17-36.

_____. *Gorgias*. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 791-869.

_____. *Laws*. Trans. Trevor J. Saunders in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 1318-1616.

_____. *Meno*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 870-897.

- _____. *Oxford Classical Texts: Platonis Rempublicam*, ed. S. R. Slings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- _____. *Phaedrus*. Trans. C. J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986).
- _____. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 506-556.
- _____. *Phaedo*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 49-100.
- _____. Trans. and ed. Harold North Flower, *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo & Phaedrus* (Cambridge & Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966).
- _____. *Protagoras*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 746-790.
- _____. *Republic*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 971-1223.
- _____. *Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee, *The Republic* (London: Penguin, 1974, second edition).
- _____. *Symposium*. Trans. C. J. Rowe, *Plato's Symposium* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1998).

_____. *Symposium*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 457-505.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'être et le néant* (Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1972). Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Methuen, 1969).

Secondary texts:

Allen, R. E. *The Dialogues of Plato: Volume 2, Symposium* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991).

Anagnostopoulos, Mariana. 'The Divided Soul and the Desire for Good in Plato's Republic' in *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*, ed. Gerasimos Santas (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 166-88.

Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Barney, Rachel. 'Plato on the Desire for the Good' in *Desire Practical Reason and the Good*, ed. Sergio Tenenbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 34-64.

Bobonich, Christopher. *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

Brickhouse, Thomas C. & Smith, Nicholas D. *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

- _____. 'Reply to Rowe', *Journal of Ethics*, vol. 16 no. 3 (Sept., 2012), pp. 325-338.
- Buccioni, Eva M. 'The Psychological Forces in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol.10 no. 3 (Jan. 2002), pp. 331-357.
- Callard, Agnes. 'Everyone Desires the Good: Socrates' Protreptic Theory of Desire', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 70 (June 2017), pp. 617-44.
- _____. 'Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 47 (2014), pp. 31-80.
- Carone, Gabriela Roxana. 'Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change His Mind?', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 20 (2001), pp. 107-148.
- Cartledge, Paul. 'A Patriot for Whom?', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* (October 1987).
- Cobb, William S. *The Symposium and Phaedrus: Plato's Erotic Dialogues (SUNY Series in Greek Philosophy)* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993).
- Cooper, John M. 'Plato's Theory of Human Motivation' in *Plato 2*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 186-206.
- _____. 'Psychology of Justice in Plato' in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*, ed. John M. Cooper (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 138-149.

_____. 'The *Gorgias* and Irwin's Socrates', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 35 (1982), pp. 577–587.

Cornford, F. M. *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

_____. *The Republic of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

Crombie, I. M. *Plato: The Midwife's Apprentice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).

Cross, R. C. & Woosley, A. D. *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1964).

Devereux, Daniel T. 'Socrates' Kantian Conception of Virtue' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 33 no. 3 (July, 1995), pp. 381-408.

Dover, Kenneth. *Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

_____. *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978).

Ferrari, G. R. F. *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Fitzpatrick, William J. 'Moral Responsibility and Normative Ignorance: Answering a New Skeptical Challenge', *Ethics*, vol. 118 no. 4 (2008), pp. 589–613.

Friedländer, P. *Plato, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

_____. *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

Gerson, Lloyd P. 'Plato's Rational Souls', *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 68 no. 1 (Sept., 2014), pp. 37-59.

_____. 'The Myth of Plato's Socratic Period', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 96 no. 4 (2014), pp. 403-30.

Gould, Thomas. *Platonic Love* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

Greenberg, David F. *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Guerrero, Alexander A. 'Don't Know, Don't Kill: Moral Ignorance, Culpability, and Caution', *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 136 no. 1 (2007), pp. 59–97.

Hadot, Pierre. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987, second edition). Trans. Michael Chase, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises*

From Socrates to Foucault (Malden, Oxford, Melbourne & Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

Halperin, David M. 'Why is Diotima a Woman?' in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, ed. David M. Halperin (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 113-151.

Harman, Elizabeth. 'Does Moral Ignorance Exculpate?' *Ratio*, vol. 24 no. 4 (2011), pp. 443–468.

Hawthorne, Susan. 'Diotima Speaks Through the Body', in *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Readings in Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar On (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 83-97.

Irigaray, Luce. '*L'amour sorcier. Lecture de Platon. Le Banquet, "discours de Diotime"*' in *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1984), pp. 27-39. Trans. Eleanor H. Kuykendall, 'Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium, Diotima's Speech' in *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, ed. Nancy Tuana (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 181-195.

Irwin, Terence. *Plato's Ethics* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

_____. *Plato: Gorgias*, translated with notes by Terence Irwin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

_____. *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

Jackson, Henry. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas I', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 10 (1882), pp. 253-98.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas II', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 11 (1882), pp. 287-331.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas III', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 13 no. 1 (1884), pp. 1-40.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas IV', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 13 no. 2 (1885), pp. 242-72.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas V', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 14 (1885), pp. 173-230.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas VI', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 15 (1886), pp. 280-305.

_____. 'Plato's Later Theory of Ideas VII', *Journal of Philology*, vol. 25 (1897), pp. 65-82.

Jaeger, Werner. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, Volume Three, The Conflict of Cultural Ideals in the Age of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944).

Kahn, Charles H. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

_____. 'Plato and Socrates in the Protagoras', *Methexis*, vol. 1 (1988), pp. 33-52.

- _____. 'Plato's Theory of Desire', *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 40 (1987), pp. 77-103.
- Kamtekar, Rachana. 'Plato on the Attribution of Conative Attitudes', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 88 (2006), pp. 127-162.
- Kastely, James L. 'Respecting the Rupture: Not Solving the Problem of Unity in the *Phaedrus*', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 35 no. 2 (July 2002), pp. 138-152.
- Littman, Robert J. 'The Loves of Alcibiades', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 101 no.1 (October, 1987), pp. 263-276.
- Lorenz, Hendrick. *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desires in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- _____. 'Desire and Reason in Plato's Republic', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 27 (2004), pp. 83-115.
- McTighe, Kevin. 'Socrates on Desire for the Good and the Involuntariness of Wrongdoing: *Gorgias* 466a-468e', *Phronesis*, vol. 29 (1984), pp. 193-236
- Moline, Jon. 'Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 60 no. 1 (1978), pp. 1-26.
- Moravcsik, Julius. 'Inner Harmony and the Human Ideal in Republic IV and IX', *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 5 (2001), pp. 39-56.

- Morris, Michael. 'Akrasia in the Protagoras and the *Republic*', *Phronesis*, vol. 51 no. 3 (2006), pp. 195-229.
- Moss, Jessica. 'Appearances and Calculations: Plato's Division Of The Soul', *Oxford Studies In Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 34 (2008), pp. 35-68.
- _____. 'Pleasure and Illusion in Plato', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 72 (2006), pp. 503-35.
- Nails, Debra. *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Springer, 1995).
- Nichols, Mary P. *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis* (Cambridge, et. al.: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Nussbaum, Martha. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- _____. 'The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's *Symposium*' *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 3 no. 2 (1979), pp. 131-172.
- Parry, R. D. 'The Unhappy Tyrant and the Craft of Inner Rule' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 386-414.

Penner, Terry. 'Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351b-357e', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 79 no. 2 (1997), pp. 117-149.

_____. 'Knowledge vs. True Belief in the Socratic Psychology of Action', *Apeiron*, vol. 29 no. 3 (1996), pp. 199-230.

_____. 'Desire and Power in Socrates: The Argument of *Gorgias* 466a-468e that Orators and Tyrants have no Power in the City', *Apeiron*, vol. 24 (1991), pp. 147-202.

_____. 'What Laches and Nicias Miss; and Whether Socrates Thinks Courage is Merely a Part of Virtue', *Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 12 (1992), pp. 1-17.

_____. 'Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 16 (1990), pp. 35-74.

_____. 'Plato and Davidson: Parts of the Soul and Weakness of Will', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 16 (1990), pp. 35-74.

_____. *The Ascent from Nominalism: Some Existence Arguments in Plato's Middle Dialogues* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987).

_____. 'Thought and Desire in Plato' in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays II: Ethics, Politics, and Philosophy of Art and Religion*, ed. G. Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 96-118.

Penner, Terry, and Rowe, Christopher. *Plato's Lysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

_____. 'The Desire for Good: Is the *Meno* Inconsistent with the *Gorgias*?' *Phronesis*, vol. 39 (1994), pp. 1–25.

Politis, Vasilis. 'What do the Arguments in the Protagoras Amount to?' *Phronesis*, vol. 57 no. 3 (2012), pp. 209-239.

Price, A. W. *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Rauhut, Nils. 'How Virtuous Was Socrates?' in *Reason and Analysis in Ancient Greek Philosophy: Essays in Honor of David Keyt*, eds. Georgios Anagnostopoulos and Fred D. Miller, Jr. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), pp. 109-123.

Reeve, C. D. C. *Plato on Love: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades, with Selections from Republic and Laws* (London: Hackett Publishing, 2006).

_____. 'A Study in Violets: Alcibiades in the *Symposium*' in *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, eds. J. H. Lesher, D. Nails and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 124-146.

Rist, John M. *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964).

Rosen, Gideon. 'Skepticism about Moral Responsibility', *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 18 no. 1 (2004), pp. 295–313.

_____. 'Culpability and Ignorance', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 103 no. 1 (2003), pp. 61–84.

Rosen, Stanley. *Plato's Symposium* (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1999).

Rowe, Christopher. *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Santas, Gerasimos X. *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato's Early Dialogues* (London: Blackwell 1979).

_____. 'Plato's Protagoras and Explanations of Weakness', *Philosophical Review*, vol. 75 no. 1 (1966), pp. 3-33.

Shanahan, Colm. 'Plato: The Humanity of Ethics' in *An Ethics off/for the Future?* Ed. Mary Shanahan (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014), pp. 1-16.

_____. 'Virtue as a Lesser Good?', *Philosophia*, vol. 42 (2012), pp. 106-120.

Sheffield, Frisbee C. C. *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Stalley, R. F. 'Persuasion and the Tripartite Soul in Plato's *Republic*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 32 (2007), pp. 63-89.

Stehle, Eva. *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece: Non-dramatic Poetry in its Setting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Taylor, A. E. *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

Taylor, C. C. W. 'The Origins of our Present Paradigms' in *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, eds. Julia Annas and C. J. Rowe (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 73-84.

Voegelin, Eric. *Order and History, Volume II: The World of the Polis* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1964).

Weiss, Roslyn. *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Wilburn, Joshua. 'The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato on Moral Education and The Many', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 49 (2015), pp. 1-36.

Wolfsdorf, David. 'The Ridiculousness of Being Overcome By Pleasure', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 31 (Winter, 2006), pp. 113-136.

_____. 'Desire for the Good in *Meno* 77b2–78b6', *Classical Quarterly*, vol. 56 (2006), pp. 77–92.

Woods, Michael. 'Plato's Division of the Soul', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 73 (1987), pp. 23-47.

Woolf, Raphael. 'Consistency and Akrasia in Plato's Protagoras', *Phronesis*, vol. 47 no. 3 (2002), pp. 224-52.

Vlastos, Gregory. 'The Individual as Object of Love in Plato', in Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, second edition), pp. 3-34.

Zimmerman, Michael J. *Living with Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

_____. 'Moral Responsibility and Ignorance', *Ethics*, vol. 107 no. 3 (1997), pp. 410-426.