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ARTICLE

TYRANNIZED SOULS: PLATO'S DEPICTION OF THE 'TYRANNICAL MAN'¹

Mark A. Johnstone

In book 9 of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates describes the nature and origins of the 'tyrannical man', whose soul is said to be 'like' a tyrannical city. In this paper, I examine the nature of the 'government' that exists within the tyrannical man's soul. I begin by demonstrating the inadequacy of three potentially attractive views sometimes found in the literature on Plato: the view that the tyrannical man's soul is ruled by his 'lawless' unnecessary appetites, the view that it is ruled by sexual desire, and the view that it is ruled by a lust for power. I then present my own account. On the view I defend, the tyrannical man's soul is to be understood as ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure: as much as he can get, and however he can get it. Finally, I show how understanding the tyrannical man's soul in the way I recommend helps resolve some commonly expressed concerns about this part of the *Republic*. I suggest, on this basis, that Plato's procedure in constructing his catalogue of corrupt cities and souls in *Republic* 8 and 9 was more carefully thought out and systematic than has sometimes been supposed.

KEYWORDS: Plato; *Republic*; soul; tyranny; tyrannical; tyrant

In book 9 of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates describes the nature and origins of the 'tyrannical man' (*ho turannikos anêr*, 571a1), whose soul is said to be 'like' a tyrannical city.² In this paper, I examine the nature of the

¹An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Lexington Workshop in Ancient Philosophy, Lexington KY, 21–22 March 2014. I am grateful to the participants at this session, especially Jonathan Nelson, David Kaufman, Whitney Schwab, Stephen White, and Gabriel Richardson Lear, for their helpful comments and advice. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers for this journal for their input and suggestions.

²For example, at 576c5–7, 577d1. To be clear, the person Socrates describes as a 'tyrannical man' is one whose soul corresponds structurally to a tyrannical city: his soul is *tyrannized* by its ruler, much as a tyranny is a society tyrannized by a tyrant. A person can be called 'tyrannical' in the relevant sense even if he or she does not become an actual tyrant. In fact, as

‘government’ that exists within the tyrannical man’s soul. I begin (Section I) by demonstrating the inadequacy of three potentially attractive views sometimes found in the literature on Plato: the view that the tyrannical man’s soul is ruled by his ‘lawless’ unnecessary appetites, the view that it is ruled by sexual desire, and the view that it is ruled by a lust for power. I then (Section II) present my own account. On the view I defend, the tyrannical man’s soul is to be understood as ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure: as much as he can get, and however he can get it. Finally (Section III), I show how understanding the tyrannical man’s soul in the way I recommend helps resolve some commonly expressed concerns about this part of the *Republic*. I suggest, on this basis, that Plato’s procedure in constructing his catalogue of corrupt cities and souls in *Republic* 8 and 9 was more carefully thought out and systematic than has sometimes been supposed.

I

At the beginning of *Republic* 9, immediately before commencing his description of the tyrannical man, Socrates draws a new distinction within the class of appetitive desires. Previously, he had divided appetitive desires into two kinds: ‘necessary’ desires, which we cannot eliminate or whose satisfaction benefits us, and ‘unnecessary’ desires, which we *can* eliminate, at least if we work at it from childhood, and whose satisfaction does us no good or harms us.³ Now, at 571b2 and following, Socrates subdivides the class of ‘unnecessary’ appetitive desires by introducing, in addition to those that are ‘merely’ unnecessary, a new class of desires that are actively ‘lawless’ (*paranomoi*, 571b4). These latter desires, he maintains, are ‘probably present in everyone, but ... are held in check by the laws and by the better desires together with reason’ (571b4–6). When Adeimantus asks him what desires he means, Socrates explains what he has in mind:

Socrates makes clear, most ‘tyrannical men’ become nothing more than petty criminals (575b7–c8); only a rare few suffer the further misfortune (578b9–c3) of becoming tyrants.

Here and throughout I read Slings’ 2003 OCT text of the *Republic*, unless otherwise noted. All line references are to this edition of the text. Translations follow Grube, rev. Reeve, in Cooper (ed.) 1997, although these are sometimes slightly modified.

³Socrates draws this distinction in book 8, 558d8–559c11. As examples of ‘necessary’ (*anankaios*) desires, he cites desires to eat to the point of health and well-being (559a11–b1), while as examples of ‘unnecessary’ (*mê anankaios*) desires, he cites a desire that ‘goes beyond these and seeks other sorts of food’, that ‘most people can get rid of if it’s restrained and educated while they’re young’, and that ‘is harmful both to the body and to the reason and moderation of the soul’ (559b8–c1), together with the desire for sex and other such desires (559c6). In developing this distinction, Plato may well have been assuming, for reasons rooted in his teleology, that no truly ineliminable desire could be harmful to us.

[T]hose that are awakened in sleep, when the rest of the soul – the rational, gentle, and ruling⁴ 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. You know that there is nothing it won't dare to do at such a time, free of all control by shame or reason. It doesn't shrink from trying to have sex with a mother, as it supposes, or with anyone else at all, with a man, god, or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat. In a word, it omits no act of folly or shamelessness.

(571c3–d5)

Our dreams make it clear, Socrates concludes, that there can be found in pretty much everyone this 'dangerous, wild, and lawless form of desire' (572b3–4).⁵

The timing of Socrates's introduction of 'lawless' appetitive desires might lead us to expect that the tyrannical man's soul will turn out to be ruled by them.⁶ However, this expectation is not borne out by the text. Rather, Socrates describes the tyrannical man's soul as ruled by a *single* ruler, which he characterizes as a 'lust' (*erôs*). I will consider the precise nature of this *erôs* shortly. For the moment, I wish only to insist that the tyrannical man's soul should be understood as ruled by a single desire – the *erôs* Socrates refers to – rather than by a whole class of his desires. Not only is this implied by Socrates's use of the singular term 'erôs' to denote the soul's ruler; it is also required by the city–soul analogy – which Plato clearly strove to adhere to as closely as possible throughout this part of the *Republic* – since a tyrannical city has (by definition) only a single ruler. Indeed, in several places (e.g. at 573d4, 575c6–8, 577d1–5) Socrates explicitly compares the *erôs* that rules in the tyrannical man's soul to the tyrant that rules in a tyrannical city, characterizing it as a kind of 'tyrant within'. In accordance with this analogy between city and soul, the tyrannical man's soul must be understood to have a single ruler, and hence cannot be ruled by multiple different desires.

What, then, is the nature of this *erôs*, this 'lust', that rules in the tyrannical man's soul? Socrates's description of the emergence and nature of the tyrannical man does not support two common answers to this question. First, it does not support the view that the tyrannical man's soul is ruled by a

⁴I take it that reason is referred to here as 'the ruling part' (*archon*) because it is the proper or characteristic ruler in the soul, not because every soul under consideration is in fact ruled by its rational part.

⁵Socrates claims earlier in the same discussion that 'in a few people, they [sc. lawless desires] have probably been eliminated entirely, or only a few weak ones remain' (571b6–7). This suggests that lawless desires are not *strictly* ineliminable, although eliminating them will take considerable work and effort and is something only very few people will ever manage to achieve.

⁶So, for example, Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*: 'The tyrannical person ... is ruled by lawless unnecessary appetites' (47; cf. 157, 257).

desire for sex, as is sometimes supposed.⁷ This view is primarily motivated by the connotations of the Greek word ‘erôs’, which, as is well known, often denoted sexual desire. However, the word ‘erôs’ did not *mean* sexual desire; it could also be used (and often was used, including in Plato) to denote any powerful, consuming passion.⁸ To determine whether the tyrannical man’s *erôs* should be understood as a specifically sexual desire, we must therefore look to the details of the text. When we do, we find no support for the view that the tyrannical man’s *erôs* is specifically sexual in nature, and good reasons to doubt that it should be understood in this way. For example, Socrates describes the young tyrannical man, in whose soul an *erôs* already ‘directs everything’, as going in for feasts (*heortai*), revelries (*kôrmoi*) and luxuries (*thaleiai*), as well as for girlfriends (*hetairai*) (573d2–5). In so doing, Socrates provides no indication that this man’s partying, feasting, and drinking is all somehow fundamentally motivated by a desire for sex. Moreover, Socrates claims (576b3–4) that the tyrannical man’s waking life is like the nightmare he had earlier described; but this description (quoted above) included references to food, drink, murder, and ‘folly and shamelessness’ in general, not only to specifically sexual misdeeds.⁹ In general, while the tyrannical man is often presented as strongly

⁷For example, White (*Companion to Plato’s Republic*, 194): ‘Plato tends strongly towards the view that the most salient case of imbalance among human motivations occurs when sexual desire is excessive in both strength and scope. When this happens, motivations associated with sex determine too much of what a person does, and leave insufficient scope for the manifestation of other desires’ (he cites Plato’s portrait of the tyrannical man in support of his claim); ‘the sexual desire that characterizes the tyrannical personality ... dominates in such a way as to provide for its own satisfaction at the expense of the satisfactions of all other parts of the soul’ (201). Similarly Barney (*Eros and Necessity*, 369): ‘What this internal tyranny [sc. the rule of *erôs*] seems to amount to is that the tyrannical man’s sexual desires become insatiable, and drive him to obtain wealth from everywhere’, Ludwig (‘Eros in the *Republic*’), who speaks of the tyrannical man’s ‘sexual eros’ (224, 225), Parry (‘Unhappy Tyrant and the Craft of Inner Rule’): ‘the *erôs* in question seems to be sexual’ (395–6), and Pappas (*Plato and the Republic*), who speaks of tyrannical cities as pursuing ‘sexual pleasure’ (166), of the tyrannical soul as dominated by ‘transgressive lewdness’ (167), and of tyrannical men who become petty criminals as ‘sex-crazed burglars’ (169).

⁸For example, earlier in the *Republic*, at 403a7, Socrates uses the term ‘erôs’ to denote a love of order and beauty that had been moderated by a good education. In book 9, at 586c2, he appears to use the word (in the plural) to denote powerful bodily desires of all kinds (the immediate context emphasizes desires for food). In book 6, Socrates refers to an *erôs* for knowledge and truth (490b1–2) – despite the sexual language he employs in this context, I take it that this desire is to be understood as passionate and consuming in the same way as sexual desire, not as literally a desire for sex. As is well known, the idea that one can have an *erôs* (a ‘lust’ or ‘consuming passion’) for philosophy and for truth features prominently in other Platonic dialogues, especially in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. For more on the *erôs* in Plato (and elsewhere) to denote consuming passions other than the desire for sex, see, for example, Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 156f.; Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, 15; and Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, 302, with notes 8–10.

⁹Socrates makes this same claim – that the tyrannical man comes to act while awake as most do only while asleep – at 575e2–4. There, he mentions ‘murders, terrible foods and other acts’.

motivated by desires for bodily pleasure, his desires are never represented as aiming exclusively at sex; in fact, the desire for sex is never singled out or given any kind of special priority over his other unnecessary appetites.

The tyrannical man's 'lust' is also clearly not a desire for power, as is sometimes claimed.¹⁰ To begin with, on Socrates's account, the tyrannical man's *erôs* leads him to pursue not only political power, but also money. In fact, it seems that most 'tyrannical men' never embark on the pursuit of political power; rather, most become nothing more than petty criminals (575b1–10). Indeed, the tyrannical man's desires seem at first to run, not towards money *or* power, but rather towards a range of bodily pleasures; hence his initial choice of a life of hedonistic partying. Furthermore, Socrates makes it clear that the tyrannical man pursues neither money nor political power in their own right, but rather only in so far as they allow him to satisfy his clamouring appetites. Thus, the young tyrannical man first begins to desire money only when his own resources have been exhausted; and even then, unlike the oligarchic man, he has no hesitation whatsoever in spending whatever he obtains. Similarly, I suggest, if and when a tyrannical man *does* develop a desire for political power, this desire is purely instrumental: power is neither the original nor the ultimate goal of his striving. Rather, political power is something he pursues, when he does so, only because he believes it will allow him to satisfy his other, pre-existing desires.

II

To this point, my conclusions have been entirely negative. I have argued against three commonly held views about the 'government' of the tyrannical man's soul: that his soul is ruled by the whole class of his 'lawless'

Again, there is no focus on specifically sexual misdeeds, nor is the desire for sex singled out in any way as the dominant motive.

¹⁰For example, Blössner, 'City-Soul Analogy': 'with the three subtypes of the appetitive [are to be linked] a striving for money, freedom and power, respectively' (352); 'each corresponding city-soul pair is marked by an equivalent drive or desire ... in the tyrannical city and soul, [this is] the desire for unlimited power' (361);

the fundamental distinction between the five types of individual in the *Republic* rests on their connection to distinct goals in life: the philosophic type aspires to knowledge, the timocratic type to pre-eminence (including honour), the oligarchic to wealth, the democratic to freedom, and the tyrannical to power.

(364)

Kraut ('Defense of Justice in Plato's *Republic*') appears to view the tyrannical man as driven by desires *both* for sex *and* for power: thus on his view, the tyrannical man 'is allowed to live out fantasies of power and eroticism without restraint' and aims at 'great power and intense sexual pleasure' (325). Kraut does not make it clear whether he thinks one of these two kinds of motivation (the desire for sex, the desire for power) has primacy over the other.

unnecessary appetitive desires, that it is ruled by a specifically sexual desire, and that it is ruled by a desire for power. How then *should* we understand the nature of the ‘lust’ that rules in the tyrannical man’s soul? I propose, as an alternative to these views, that the tyrannical man’s soul is best understood as ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure: as much as he can get, and however he can get it. To be clear, my claim is not that the tyrannical man’s soul is ruled by its appetitive part – however the three ‘parts’ of the soul in the *Republic* are to be understood – but rather that it is ruled by a single, persistent, appetitive desire.¹¹

The first consideration in favour of this interpretation is that it makes good sense of the tyrannical man’s initial choice of lifestyle, and of his subsequent turn to a life of crime. As noted, as Socrates describes things, once the *erôs* has first taken control in his soul the young tyrannical man initially adopts a hedonistic life dominated by feasting and partying. This supports the present interpretation, on which he is driven above all by a constant desire for bodily pleasure. Shortly thereafter, the tyrannical man develops a desire for money and begins to commit crimes to acquire it, stealing first by deceit and then by force, first from his own parents then from strangers and others’ houses and places such as temples (574a3–d5). However, this new focus on money arises only once his hedonistic lifestyle has led to the exhaustion of his financial resources. Furthermore, unlike his oligarchic predecessor, the tyrannical man is no hoarder of money, but rather spends it as soon as he gets it. This suggests, as previously noted, that for him the desire for money is purely instrumental: he pursues money purely as a means for satisfying his other, pre-existing desires. This behaviour is what we should expect, on the present interpretation: for on this view, the tyrannical man steals money purely because it enables him to satisfy his craving for bodily pleasure.¹²

¹¹It is worth noting in this context that Socrates has already clearly presented a soul that is ruled by individual desires – rather than by one of its three parts – in the form of the democratic man. For my purposes, nothing important hangs on the much-debated question of whether the parts of the soul are in various ways ‘agent-like’, or on my choice of the language of soul ‘parts’. I do, however, reject the view, flirted with by some interpreters, that the three parts of the soul distinguished by Socrates in the *Republic* (and in the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*) are nothing but ‘families’ of individual desires. A reductionist view of this kind is at least suggested by Price, *Mental Conflict* (e.g. at 53–4). However, I take it to be clear that the ‘parts’ or ‘elements’ of the soul, however, they are understood, are at the very least distinct *sources* of different kinds of motivation, and so cannot be identified with the individual desires to which they give rise. On a related note, some interpreters claim that in subdividing appetitive desires, Plato was also subdividing the appetitive part of the soul (e.g. Blössner, ‘City-Soul Analogy’, 352). However, I see no good reason to think Plato wished to subdivide the appetitive part of the soul, rather than simply distinguishing between three different kinds of desire to which it gives rise.

¹²In this respect, Plato’s tyrannical man as I understand him behaves much like a drug addict with an unmanaged addiction. Much as an addict’s addictive desire for some drug can lead to desperation, and ultimately to a life of crimes committed with the aim of obtaining the drug or the money to buy it, so too, I suggest, the tyrannical man’s desire for bodily pleasure leads him

Second, the present interpretation provides an attractive way of understanding the motivations of those tyrannical men who wish to become actual tyrants by taking over a city. The tyrannical person, as I argue he should be understood, is fundamentally a pleasure-seeker; he ends up pursuing political power, when he does, only because he regards it as a means for satisfying his appetites for pleasure. This interpretation has the advantage of dovetailing nicely with Socrates's treatment of the aspiration to become a tyrant in the *Gorgias*. In particular, both dialogues attack a common target: the idea – which Plato apparently took to have widespread appeal – that becoming a tyrant frees one from all restraints and enables one to satisfy any and all of one's desires. In the *Republic*, Socrates seeks to undermine the appeal of this idea by claiming one is not in fact free (despite outward appearances) if one is a slave to one's own basest desires, as a tyrannical person is (577d2–e3). He then adds that being a tyrant actually *restricts* one's freedom by depriving one of friends and leaving one fearful and confined to one's house (578d4–580a8).¹³ In the *Gorgias*, Socrates seeks to undermine the same idea by arguing that tyrants, like orators, do not in fact get what they want if what they get is not in fact good for them (466b9 and following), then by directly attacking the hedonism he clearly takes to lie at the root of the aspiration to be a tyrant, a view for which the character Callicles serves as representative (491e5 and following). In both dialogues, the critique of unrestrained hedonism has a common strand: the claim that such hedonism is self-defeating, since desires for bodily pleasures are *insatiable* (they quickly return or even multiply and grow stronger when satisfied) and since having numerous unsatisfied desires produces great pain.¹⁴ In this way, my proposed interpretation, on which the tyrannical man's aspiration to become a tyrant is rooted in his desire to be able to satisfy his many clamouring desires for bodily pleasure, connects *Republic* 9 both to Plato's critique of the aspiration of become a tyrant and his critique of unrestrained hedonism in other works.

to turn to a life of crime with the aim of securing the money he needs to obtain the pleasure he desperately and constantly craves.

¹³I take it that while *all* 'tyrannical' people will be unscrupulous, selfish, and untrustworthy, and hence will lack true friends (think again of the drug-addict comparison), those few who become actual tyrants will be even worse off because their enemies are more numerous and the threats to their lives are more severe. It is because of their fear of these ever-present enemies and dangers, Socrates claims, that they become unable even to leave their houses, and in this respect are restricted to their homes 'like women' (579b7–c1). Hence Socrates claims that the only thing worse than being a 'tyrannical' person is being such a person who suffers the additional misfortune of becoming an actual tyrant (578b9–c3).

¹⁴These ideas about the insatiability of appetites feature prominently both in the *Gorgias* (e.g. in the famous image of the leaky jars, 492d1 and following) and in *Republic* 9 (in the depiction of the tyrannical man as tormented and exhausted by his ever-growing horde of desires, and also, arguably, in the subsequent image of the appetitive part of the soul as a hydra-like beast with many heads, which needs to be 'domesticated' and 'tamed' rather than indulged (588b6–589b6)).

Third, the present interpretation reflects and captures Socrates's way of characterizing the tyrannical man's *erôs* and its relationship to his other desires. To begin, Socrates characterizes the tyrannical man's *erôs* as a kind of 'great winged drone' (*hupopteron kai megan kêphêna*, 573a1). In describing it as a 'drone' (*kêphên*), he utilizes a term (and associated imagery) that he employs throughout books 8 and 9 to characterize both people and desires. In Socrates's political narrative, the 'drones' are the useless people in the city: the ones who hold no jobs and make no contribution to the city's good (e.g. 552b8–c5, 555d3–e3, 564b4–565c5). Socrates subdivides these 'drones' into the merely useless (beggars) and the actively dangerous (criminals) – the latter but not the former are said to have 'stings' (552c6–d3) – and assigns them an important role in corrupting the young by introducing them to assorted pleasures (559d5–e3). In the parallel psychological narrative, the drones are the unnecessary appetitive desires (e.g. 554b7–c3), presumably because these desires, like the 'drones' in the city, are at best useless and at worst harmful (thus the unnecessary appetites too are divided into the 'beggarly' and the 'evil' at 554b8–c1). In characterizing the tyrannical man's *erôs* as a drone, Socrates is therefore implying that it is a kind of unnecessary appetitive desire.¹⁵ If unnecessary appetitive desires in Plato aim at bodily pleasure, this implies that the tyrannical man's *erôs* is also some kind of desire for bodily pleasure.¹⁶

This way of understanding the tyrannical man's *erôs* also makes explicable Socrates's claims about its relationship to his other unnecessary appetites. I begin with those that are unnecessary but not lawless. In Socrates's narrative, the 'great winged drone' is set up as the 'leader' of the many 'idle' and 'spendthrift' desires already existing in the tyrannical man's soul (572e5–573a1). These desires, which I take to be unnecessary appetites,¹⁷ 'buzz around' the *erôs*, 'nurturing' it and making it grow (573a6–8). Once the *erôs* has been established as ruler, it then leads and organizes the desires that helped bring it to power. In this way, the unnecessary appetites set up their champion as leader, then benefit from its rule. On the present

¹⁵Note in this connection that in the parallel political passage the tyrant emerges from among the class of drones in the formerly democratic city (564c10–565d3).

¹⁶I take the claim that for Plato unnecessary appetitive desires (and indeed all appetitive desires) aim at bodily pleasure to be both highly plausible and widely accepted. It is certainly well supported by a variety of textual evidence (see note 21 below). My argument here is that *if* this claim is accepted, then, given Socrates's use of the drone imagery, it becomes difficult to resist the conclusion that the tyrannical man's *erôs* is itself some kind of desire for bodily pleasure.

¹⁷Scott ('Eros, Philosophy and Tyranny', 140–1) claims that the desires that 'nourish' the tyrannical man's *erôs* after it is installed in power are themselves 'lawless' desires. However, as Socrates describes things it is clear that the nightmarish 'lawless' appetitive desires – the kind described at the beginning of book 9 – are 'unleashed' in the tyrannical man's soul only at a later stage in his development, at the point when the last remaining vestiges of restraint in his soul are swept away (574d5 and following), by which point the *erôs* has already been in charge for some time.

interpretation, it is possible to make good sense of this imagery. First, a constant craving for bodily pleasure arises from a young man's numerous particular appetitive desires, which have themselves been nurtured by corrupting influences in the city (this explains why the *erôs* can be said to be 'planted' (*empoîêsai*) in him by other people (572e3–573c1)). This persistent, general desire for bodily pleasure then organizes and focuses his previously haphazard pursuit of the satisfaction of his assortment of particular appetitive desires.¹⁸

This interpretation also makes good sense of the relationship between the tyrannical man's *erôs* and his 'lawless' appetitive desires. As Socrates describes things, the tyrannical man's increasingly shameless criminal behaviour eventually results in the removal of the last vestiges of restraint in his soul (574d1 and following). Lawless desires now begin to emerge even during his waking hours, and to forcefully demand satisfaction. These desires, which aim at bodily gratification through depraved acts, quickly assume prominent roles in his motivational make-up, presumably on account of their strength and vivacity. As a result, he begins to seek his pleasures even in these deeply depraved pursuits, indulging desires that even his vicious predecessors, right up to and including the 'democratic man', experienced only in their dreams. The tyrannical man's *erôs* is now said to behave 'like a tyrant' within him: it drives him to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the 'unruly mob' (*thorubos*) that surrounds it (575a1–4).¹⁹ This mob comprises countless unnecessary appetitive desires, now prominently including lawless ones, all constantly clamouring for satisfaction. The tyrannical man's *erôs* works frantically at satisfying these desires; for satisfying them brings bodily pleasure and – perhaps more to the point – failing to do so brings him pain. Since the tyrannical man's *erôs* works constantly to satisfy his other appetites, it is both ruler within him but also, in a way, a slave to his other desires.²⁰

¹⁸In the text, this marks the crucial point of divergence between the tyrannical man and the democratic man. As Socrates emphasizes (572d6–e3), the young future democratic and tyrannical men initially follow similar paths: each young man experiences an inner conflict between better desires instilled in him by his father and worse desires nourished in him by useless 'drone-like' elements in the city in which he lives. However, the path of the young future tyrannical man diverges from that of his democratic predecessor when the 'clever enchanters and tyrant makers' (*hoi deinoi magoi te kai turannopoiōi*) plant the *erôs* in his soul (572e3–573c1). I return below to discuss the kind of single-minded focus this brings to the life of the tyrannical man and to explain why this new focus does *not* make him better off than his fickle, mercurial democratic predecessor.

¹⁹Socrates remarks that some of these desires have come from outside, having been fostered in him (we may assume) by the drone-like 'enchanters' he has encountered in the city, while others have arisen from within him but have now been freed from all restraint by his bad habits (575a4–6).

²⁰Much as a tyrant – the ruler of a city – is really a slave, both to his own basest desires (577d2–e3) and to the many other people he must curry favour with to help him maintain his grip on power (579d10–e6).

Finally, the present interpretation makes it easy to explain why the tyrannical man's soul counts as being ruled, in its own way, by an *appetite*, as we should surely expect for the lowest and worst kind of person Socrates describes. I have argued that the tyrannical man's soul is ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure. In the *Republic*, as in other Platonic dialogues, the appetitive part of the soul is consistently associated with desires for the pleasures of the body.²¹ If the tyrannical man's *erôs* were, say, a desire for political power, it would be unclear why his soul should be thought of as ruled by an appetite, rather than by some other kind of desire. On the present interpretation, by contrast, there is no such difficulty; like any other appetite, the tyrannical man's *erôs* aims specifically at bodily pleasure.

III

Before concluding, I want to briefly address two concerns sometimes raised about Plato's depiction of the tyrannical man. The first is that Socrates fails to create a psychologically realistic portrait of any actual or possible tyrant. The concern here is not (or not simply) that Plato fails to provide a plausible portrait of any tyrant known to him.²² Rather, it is that he needed his portrait of the tyrannical man to be sufficiently realistic to strike a chord with his readership by reflecting character traits thought at least typical of actual tyrants. However, it can now be pressed, the 'tyrannical man' Socrates describes is *mad*, and mad in a way that would prevent him, *or anyone remotely like him*, from ever gaining and maintaining control over a city. As Julia Annas has memorably put the point, 'Plato's tyrant would not last a week' (Annas, *Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 304). If this is right, Plato provides a poor representation of the psychology of a character type typical of actual tyrants, who are often highly adept at remaining in power.

²¹In the *Republic*, see, for example, 389e1–2 (where Socrates clearly already has appetitive desires in mind), 436a10–b2, 439d1–8, 442a7–8, 485d12, all of the choices of examples used to distinguish 'necessary', 'unnecessary' and 'lawless' appetites in books 8 and 9, 580e2–5, 584c3–5, 585a8–b1, and the depiction of ordinary people as gluttonous at 586a1–b4 (this list of examples is by no means comprehensive). The same close connections between appetitive desires and bodily pleasures and needs can also be observed in other, related Platonic dialogues: for example, in the *Phaedrus* the unruly black horse is overwhelmingly associated with sexual desire, while in the *Timaeus* appetite is explicitly characterized as the element of the soul that desires 'food, drink, and whatever else it has a need for due to the nature of the body' (70d7–8).

²²I agree with Frede ('Die ungerechten Verfassungen und die ihnen entsprechenden Menschen'), who argues that Plato aimed in *Republic* 8 and 9 to depict idealized types of city and soul, and hence that it is no good objection to him to claim that not every actual person or political regime can be identified with one of the main types of city or soul Socrates distinguishes.

Now, there can be no doubt that Plato intended the tyrannical man to exhibit a kind of madness. However, there is excellent reason to think a person of the kind Socrates describes *could* take (and keep) control of a city, at least when he is understood in the way I have urged. I have argued that the soul of the tyrannical man is ruled by an *erôs*, understood as a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure. My suggestion now is that the presence of this desire imposes a kind of direction on the tyrannical man's life: he aims above all else at acquiring bodily pleasure and becomes utterly ruthless, single-minded and relentless in pursuit of this goal, and of the money and power that will allow him to achieve it.²³ In other words, once the young man's unnecessary appetites have established an *erôs* as their leader, his pursuit of bodily pleasure becomes more focused: no longer feckless and haphazard, but rather purposeful and single-minded.²⁴ This ruthlessness and single-minded focus in life are exactly the character traits that allow at least *some* tyrannical men to become actual tyrants by taking and keeping control of a city, despite being (by any reasonable standard) mad.²⁵

This brings me to a second concern sometimes expressed about this part of the *Republic*: that the tyrannical man sits awkwardly within Socrates's catalogue of corrupt souls. It is sometimes thought that the chief governing and organizing principle behind Socrates's whole catalogue of corrupt cities and souls in *Republic* 8–9 is a decline in psychic unity.²⁶ On this

²³Contra, for example, Hitz, 'Degenerate Regimes in Plato's *Republic*': 'The tyrant has no "dominant end"' (14). As many commentators have observed, having one's soul as a whole 'ruled' by one of its parts is correlated in the *Republic* with having a set of overall goals or values, goals or values that are associated with the characteristic desires of the soul's ruling element or part. For this idea, see, for example, Kraut, 'Reason and Justice in Plato's *Republic*' and Klosko, "'Rule" of Reason in Plato's *Psychology*', both of whom label the salient kind of rule (the sense in which the philosopher's soul is ruled by reason, the timocratic man's by spirit and the oligarchic man's by appetite) 'normative rule'. This same basic idea – that the ruling part of one's soul determines one's overall life goals – is also endorsed, for example, by Blössner, *Dialogform und Argument* and Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*, 46 and Lorenz, *Brute Within*, 33. Irwin appears to accept it in outline (see e.g. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 285), while Ferrari, 'Three-Part Soul' speaks of the desires of a ruling soul part 'shaping' one's entire life (195). The democratic man lives a directionless life, without an overall guiding goal, because (as I have argued elsewhere) his soul lacks an enduring ruler (Johnstone, 'Anarchic Souls'). My interpretation here has the advantage of making Plato's depiction of the tyrannical man fit neatly within this more general account of his views on the nature of psychic rule.

²⁴In this respect, he is unlike the young democratic man, whose youth is dedicated to useless partying (560d9–561b6) but who apparently never descends to anything darker.

²⁵To be clear, I by no means wish to deny that the tyrannical man's *soul* is chaotic; indeed, it is clearly in constant turmoil, due to the clamouring horde of crazed and unruly desires it contains. However, I maintain, living a purposeful and focused *life* is consistent with having a chaotic *soul*. Compare, again, the life of a drug addict, who focuses single-mindedly on securing some drug while clearly lacking the inner harmony of the Platonically just soul. For more on this point, see below.

²⁶For example, Annas, *Introduction to Plato's Republic* and Pappas, *Plato and the Republic*. For criticism of the view that Socrates's rank ordering of corrupt souls is organized *solely*

view, Socrates aims in books 8 and 9 of the *Republic* to show that the four main kinds of degenerate cities and souls exhibit a declining degree of inner unity: the timocratic person's soul exhibits a lesser degree of unity than the just soul, followed by that of the oligarchic person, and then that of the democratic person. However, it is argued, the democratic person described by Socrates represents the natural terminus of this decline, since his soul is already completely lacking in unity. The tyrannical man therefore represents (to again borrow a memorable turn of phrase from Annas) a 'logical excrescence' to the main line of argument developed in the *Republic*.²⁷ On this view, Plato allowed himself to be led astray by his city-soul analogy: for while tyranny is clearly an important kind of political regime to discuss, the 'tyrannical man' has no rightful place in Socrates's narrative of corrupt souls.²⁸

However, I argue, the tyrannical man actually represents a natural and fitting culmination to the psychological narrative of *Republic* 8–9. To see this, we should first recall Socrates's accounts of the natures of justice and injustice in the soul in *Republic* 4. There, Socrates describes justice as a condition of the soul in which its parts stand in 'natural' (*kata phusin*, 444d8) relations of control and of being controlled, while injustice is a condition in which the soul's parts stand in relations of ruling and being ruled that are 'contrary to nature' (*para phusin*, 444d9). What is 'natural' and 'proper' for the soul, Socrates maintains, is for reason to rule, with spirit as its ally, while appetite refrains from trying to rise above its appropriate station; what is 'unnatural' is for these relations of ruling and being ruled to be inverted and overturned (444d3–11). Socrates then proceeds to present, in order from best to worst: (i) the philosopher, whose soul is ruled by reason; (ii) the timocratic man, whose soul is ruled by spirit; (iii) the oligarchic man, whose soul is ruled by appetite, but in whom unnecessary

around relative degrees of inner unity, see Gavrielides, 'What Is Wrong with Degenerate Souls in the *Republic*?'.
²⁷Annas, *Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 303:

Plato spends much time and imaginative effort on his pictures of the tyrannical state and man, and reasonably so, since they are crucial to the main argument. But logically they are excrescences on a line of thought already complete with the democratic man.

²⁸For example, Pappas, *Plato and the Republic*:

Unfortunately, the portrait of a depraved soul [sc. that of the tyrannical man], despite its realism, strains Plato's psychological theory. He needs to claim that someone compelled by one desire nevertheless experiences less unity than the person whose soul follows the promptings of many desires. Both the structure of the soul, and its disunity when unjust, have become confused by Plato's efforts to make every soul fit his theory. In reality, the political and psychological transitions from democracy to tyranny are not obviously symptoms of growing chaos. If anything, they show that chaos engenders a new order.

desires are held in check ‘by force’ (558d4); (iv) the democratic man, in whom necessary and unnecessary appetites are treated as equals and as equally deserving of satisfaction (561a6–c4), and finally (v) the tyrannical man, in whose soul all remaining good beliefs and desires have been actively destroyed,²⁹ and in whom even the utterly depraved ‘lawless’ appetites, experienced only during sleep even by the worst of his predecessors, have been unleashed. In sum, the tyrannical man represents the elimination of all restraint over the lowest and basest of all forms of human desire, their subsequent ascendancy, and hence the perfect inversion of the power relations that are ‘natural’ and ‘proper’ in a soul.³⁰

One advantage of viewing things in this way, rather than focusing exclusively on degrees of inner unity, is that this enables the rank ordering of character types in the *Republic* to be understood as principled and deliberate on Plato’s part. In particular, the ranking of the final three kinds of corrupt soul Socrates describes now follows a clear pattern: in the oligarchic soul, the better kinds of appetitive desire dominate the worse;³¹ in the democratic soul, all kinds of appetitive desire are treated as equal; while in the tyrannical soul, the worse kinds of appetitive desire – including the very worst kind of all, the ‘lawless’ desires – dominate the better. This is not to deny that the soul of the tyrannical man is chaotic. In fact, Socrates makes it perfectly clear that, regardless of their outward appearance, tyrannical men are in a state of inner turmoil. A case could even be made that the turmoil in the tyrannical soul is greater than that in the democratic soul: for while the democratic man’s *life* may lack order (*taxis*, 561d6), his *soul* is at least relatively calm.³² However, Socrates does not focus on making this case: he never directly argues that the tyrannical man’s soul is less unified than that of the democratic man – a strange omission, if showing the tyrannical soul to be less unified than the democratic were Plato’s main goal in writing these passages. By contrast, Socrates *does* focus on showing that the soul of the tyrannical man deviates further from the ‘proper’ and ‘natural’ order of

²⁹The tyrannical man’s *erôs* literally ‘kills’ them (*apokteinei*, 573b3). Similarly, the tyrant is said to purge all of the best people from the city (567c5–7).

³⁰On this interpretation, the rank ordering of the final three kinds of character type Socrates describes in the *Republic* can be understood as principled and deliberate on Plato’s part: in the oligarchic soul, the better kinds of appetitive desire dominate the worse; in the democratic soul, all kinds of appetitive desire are treated as equals; while in the tyrannical soul, the worse kinds of appetitive desire – including the very worst kind of all, the ‘lawless’ desires – dominate the better.

³¹On the restraint of unnecessary appetites in the oligarchic soul, see especially 554b7–c2 and 559c8–11.

³²It is important to note that Socrates clearly distinguishes between two distinct stages in the life of the ‘democratic man’: in the first is spent in a hedonistic ‘frenzy’ (*ekbakcheuthê(i)*, 561b1), while the second begins only as he grows older and only ‘if he’s lucky’ (*ean eutuchês ê(i)*, 561a8), that is, only if the great ‘tumult’ (*thorubos*, 561b2) in his soul subsides. This comparatively calm ‘mature’ democratic man is the person whose soul is likened to a democratic city.

elements found within the just soul. Indeed, he dedicates considerable time to documenting the ascendancy in the tyrannical soul of the lowest and basest of all kinds of human desire. In this way, the concern about Plato's procedure in including the tyrannical man can be easily met, once we focus on degrees of divergence from 'proper' power relations within the soul.

To conclude, I have argued that the soul of the tyrannical man is ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure: as much as he can get, and however he can get it. This man is constantly driven to acquire more bodily pleasure and becomes completely ruthless in his pursuit of whatever will help him to achieve this goal: primarily money, but also, in some cases, political power. The rule of a single 'lust' in the tyrannical man's soul does impose a kind of single-mindedness and focus on his life – but it does not for all that make him better off than his fickle democratic predecessor. Rather, the presence of this 'lust' results in the complete destruction in his soul of everything remotely good, and of the last vestiges of restraint over the lowest and basest forms of human desire, prominently including utterly depraved 'lawless' desires. As a result, the tyrannical man represents not only inner chaos, but also the complete inversion of the relations of ruling and being ruled that are proper to a soul. He therefore marks the natural terminus of Socrates's narrative of psychic decline.

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