

# Audience Psychology and Censorship in Plato's *Republic*: The Problem of the Irrational Part

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**ABSTRACT:** In *Republic X* the “problem of the irrational part” is this: Greek tragedy interacts with non-reasoning elements of the soul, affecting audiences in ways that undermine their reasoned views about virtue and value. I suggest that the common construal of Socrates’s critique of Greek tragedy is inadequate, in that it belies key elements of Plato’s audience psychology; specifically, (1) the crucial role of the spirited part and (2) the audience’s cognitive contribution to spectatorship. I argue that Socrates’s emphasis on the audience’s cognitive contribution to spectatorship allows him to anticipate a non-authoritarian solution to the problem of the irrational part.

In Plato’s *Republic* Socrates infamously proposes a censorship program of stunning magnitude and ruthless scope, extending from Greek drama and literature to architecture, pottery, and even children’s games. Socrates bans or severely censors the entire Greek literary canon. Plato’s interest in authoritarian “cultural catharsis” is real and enduring, resurfacing prominently in the *Laws*.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I do not defend censorship. Instead, I point to the problem that ultimately motivates Plato’s censorship program—what I call “the problem of the irrational part.” Put simply, the problem is this: tragedy interacts with non-reasoning elements of the human psyche, affecting audiences in ways that undermine their reasoned views about value and virtue. In what follows, I focus on the neglected final book of the *Republic* (*Republic X*), wherein Socrates recruits his tripartite psychology to remake the case for censorship—in effect banning comedy and tragedy and banishing the “leader of the tragedians,” Homer.

In *Republic X*, Socrates charges tragedy with appealing to the irrational (ἀνόητον, ἀλόγιστον) part of the soul—i.e., spirit (τὸ θυμοειδής) and appetite

(τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) that *oppose* (rather than harmonize with) reason.<sup>2</sup> The rational part (τὸ λογιστικόν) of the soul, which forms beliefs on the basis of reason, generates desires for truth, learning and wisdom (581b6–10). In contrast, appetite and spirit form beliefs on the basis of appearances.<sup>3</sup> Whereas appetite generates desires for bodily satisfaction and money (581a1); spirit generates desires for control, victory and high repute (581a10), becoming angry when these aims are frustrated (606d and 439e).<sup>4</sup> As regards tragedy, the irrational part (comprised of spirit and appetite) “leads us to dwell on our misfortunes and to lamentation” and “can never get enough of these things” (604d6–8). In lamenting for the tragic hero, Greek audience members strengthen their irrational appetite for physically expressing grief (605d, 606a)—an appetite better kept in check, lest the citizenry prize pleasurable histrionics more than practical reason (607a).

However, this common construal of Plato’s critique of tragedy is inadequate. It belies key elements of Plato’s audience psychology; in particular, the focus on the audience’s *cognitive contribution* to spectatorship. In what follows, I sketch how, for Plato, tragedy interacts with Greek theatergoers’ spirited part to produce illusions of virtue and value, which are instrumental in conditioning Greek audiences to adopt false beliefs about virtue and value.<sup>5</sup> I end by suggesting that Socrates’s emphasis on the audience’s contribution to spectatorship allows him to anticipate a non-authoritarian solution to the problem of the irrational part.

## I. AXIOLOGICAL ILLUSION

According to the theory of audience response that Socrates articulates in *Republic X*, tragedy’s “illusory images” (εἶδολα, φαντάσματα, φαινόμενα) trigger the spectator’s appetite for lamentation.<sup>6</sup> Not unlike painters who produce visual illusions with their paintings, Greek tragic and epic poets produce axiological illusions with their poetry—i.e., false appearances of virtue and value. According to Socrates, tragedy’s depictions of heroes lamenting death, dishonor or disenfranchisement produce the appearance that the loss of external goods is terrible (δεινόν) and that lamentation is a “worthy” (ἄξιον) response (387d–e, 388d). In effect, tragedy produces the illusion that a fine man (i.e., the hero) suffers a terrible misfortune. However, according to Socrates, only having a bad soul is truly terrible for a human being. Personal and material attachments are insignificant in comparison to “virtue” or “excellence” (ἀρετή), which Socrates analyzes as soul health. Moreover, a fine and noble individual, recognizing this fact, is not histrionic, irascible and variable (ποικίλος); having the least need of anyone or anything external to himself, he is “most self-sufficient in living well” (387d11), in contrast to the so-called heroes that populate epic and tragic poetry. The loss of external goods does not incite him to imperil his soul health by excessively lamenting. Also, because his desires are in line with reason, his

appetites are few and simple. For this reason, the truly excellent human being is not variable, but “remains pretty well the same” (604e1). Undisturbed by violent appetites or emotions, he employs practical reason in pursuit of a unified vision of what is truly valuable in human life (i.e., soul health).<sup>7</sup> Hence, given this picture of virtue, it is hardly surprising that Socrates censures Achilles's expressions of grief in the *Iliad*. Achilles's excessive, self-indulgent grief handicaps his practical reason and imperils his soul health; he behaves unreasonably and viciously in defiling Hector's corpse. According to Socrates, such depictions produce the axiological illusion that external goods are more valuable than virtue or soul health.

I do not defend Socrates's revaluation of values, which places an unusually high premium on virtue in contrast to external goods. Nor do I wish to put pressure on the (rather odd) idea that embodied existence and friends are “external goods,” on par with material goods and honor. I am more interested in Plato's general model of audience response and the role of irrational part therein. My question is this: how does tragedy interact with and strengthen the irrational part of the soul? So, having canvassed the kind of axiological illusion tragedy purportedly produces, I now turn to discuss the heretofore-unappreciated role of the Greek theatergoer's spirited part in accepting and creating tragedy's axiological appearances.

## II. SPIRIT AND AXIOLOGICAL ILLUSION

In this section I argue that spirit (not appetite) is susceptible to tragedy's illusions of virtue and value. This is because spirit (not appetite) forms appearance-based beliefs about virtue and value. In Socrates's view, the Greek poet, lacking knowledge of “what makes men better,” imitates “images of virtue” (εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς) or whatever appears “fine” (καλόν) to the ignorant majority (599c–d, 600e, 602b). Tellingly, the *spirited* element of the irrational part (not the appetitive element) makes assessments of fineness or nobleness.<sup>8</sup> According to Socrates, when a man believes someone has wronged him, his spirit is angry; battling for “the seemingly just” (τῷ δοκοῦντι δικάϊῳ) and undertaking “noble actions” (τῶν γενναίων), his spirit tolerates hunger and cold until it is victorious or placated (440c–d). In other words, spirit generates moral indignation and corresponding judgments about fineness and shamefulness (440b–e).<sup>9</sup> Importantly, spirit's judgments as regards the fine and the shameful are deficient insofar as they are insensitive to calculations of benefit and detriment. So, citing Odysseus's reasoned resistance of his angry impulse to punish Penelope's maids, Socrates concludes, “For here Homer clearly represents the part that has calculated about better and worse as different from the part [spirit] that is angry without calculation” (441b6–7). Spirit tends to “boil over,” such that reason must calm it and call it to heel like a

shepherd would his dog (440c–d). Unlike reason, spirit’s judgments of fineness and shamefulness arise from whatever appears fine or shameful to it; spirit fights for the “seemingly” (δοκοῦντι) just (440c6).

It should come as no surprise that spirit plays an important role in the audience psychology of *Republic* X. After all, in Books II–III Socrates advocates using music and poetry to soften whatever “spirit” (θυμοειδές) the young guardians possess, tempering it like hot iron and making it useful (411a8–10). Socrates supposes that Homeric poetry has the opposite effect on youths, as evidenced by his sustained critique of Homeric depictions of Achilles.<sup>10</sup> According to Socrates, Homer’s Achilles is irascible, insubordinate, headstrong, arrogant, etc. (389e–390a, 391a–c)—in short, the exemplar of “thumos run amok.”<sup>11</sup> Adolescents must not imitate Achilles or similar characters, lest such imitations “become part of nature and settle into habits of gesture, voice, and thought” (395d1–2). In other words, in providing irascible and savage role models for imitation, popular Greek poetry hardens and animalizes the spirited part of the adolescent soul.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, exposure to likenesses of virtue (in music and poetry) teaches a guardian’s developing spirit to recognize truly “fine things” (καλά) and truly “shameful things” (αἰσχρά) (401e–402a).

What about tragedy’s illusions of terribleness? Does spirit form appearance-based beliefs about terribleness. In answering this question, it is important to note that the theatergoer’s judgment that the tragic hero’s personal misfortune is terrible is a value judgment. According to Socrates, we “follow” the hero to the extent that we lament with the hero and “take his sufferings seriously” (605d2), which undoubtedly requires sharing the hero’s assessment that he “fares badly” (κακῶς πεπραγέναι) with regard to material loss or death—i.e., that he has lost something of presumed worth.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, unlike appetite, spirit is said to be capable valuing. So, even though the oligarchic man is ruled by his appetitive desire for money, his spirit (not his appetite) “values” (τιμᾶν) and “admires” (θαυμάζειν) money, “being ambitious to” (φιλοτιμῆσθαι) acquire money (553c2–d6). Nevertheless, unreasoning spirit’s value judgments are deficient, in that they are not grounded in rational calculations of worth. Rather, spirit’s value judgments arise from whatever appears valuable, admirable or fine. (Consider again undercover Odysseus and the apparent worth of immediately punishing the maids.) Hence, spirit is uniquely susceptible to tragedy’s appearances of terribleness (analyzed as appearances of what is valuable in human life).

Lastly, Socrates’s analysis of courage and cowardice directly implicates spirit as the source of appearance-based judgments of terribleness. According to Socrates, a soul is cowardly if spirit fails to follow reason in making the correct assessments about what is and is not terrible (442b–c)—e.g., if spirit judges (contra reason) that death is terrible. Given that the apparent terribleness of death is one

of tragedy's chief axiological illusions, the spirited element of the irrational part (not the appetitive element) is susceptible to tragedy's illusions of terribleness.<sup>14</sup>

However, the spirited part of Greek theatergoers is not only susceptible to tragedy's axiological illusions; it is also instrumental in *creating* tragedy's axiological illusions. For Plato, the irrational part of the soul does not merely believe tragedy's illusions; it also co-creates tragedy's illusions.<sup>15</sup> Tragedy's axiological illusions are the "joint progeny" of the drama and the viewer's irrational part. Tragedy "has intercourse with" (προσομιλεῖ) the irrational part (603a9–11). Each is a "courtesan" (ἑταίρα) to the other. Tragedy is an inferior thing (φαύλη) which, "having intercourse with" (συγγιγνομένη) with an inferior thing (i.e., the irrational part), "begets" (γεννᾷ) inferior offspring (603b3–4). Moreover, the analogy with shadow painting (σκιαγραφία) supports this point. According to Socrates, the shadow painter appeals to the irrational part of the soul by producing optical illusions. In particular, the shadow painter uses shading and coloring to produce the visual illusion of depth within the field of the painting, thereby creating the illusion that apparently nearby objects are large and apparently faraway objects are small (602c).<sup>16</sup> Importantly, this optical illusion is the joint offspring of the irrational part of the soul and the painting. It is precisely because the perceiver is prone, in virtue of her irrational part, to view certain two-dimensional combinations of shades and colors as three-dimensional and to view seemingly nearby objects as large and seemingly faraway objects as small that shadow painting is able to produce an optical illusion and a corresponding false belief.

Why suppose that spirit is complicit in constructing tragedy's axiological illusions? Answering this question requires examining the character of the spectator's spirited part. According to Socrates, the audience of Greek tragedy consists of the vicious majority and "decent men" (ἐπιεικεῖς) (602a, 605c). The decent man is ethically flawed, in that he undergoes psychic conflict (στάσις). For example, when misfortune befalls the decent man, he experiences an appetitive desire to lament and an opposing (rational) desire to keep quiet (603d–604e). This inner opposition constitutes psychic conflict, as opposed to mere opposition, due to the manner of its resolution. When in the presence of others, the decent man's spirit, fearing shame, "fights" (μάχεται) and overpowers his appetitive desire to lament (603e–604a); and when the man is alone, his appetitive desire to lament overpowers his rational inclination to keep quiet (603e–604a).<sup>17</sup> In contrast, in the harmonious soul of the fully virtuous individual psychic opposition is resolved peacefully; reason "persuades" appetite and/or spirit to "follow" it.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the harmonious soul is less likely to experience psychic opposition to begin with, because its appetitive and spirited parts are trained to harmonize with reason (401e1–402a4). Thus, the decent Greek (whom tragedy appeals to) possesses a propensity to psychic conflict, which is symptomatic of his reason-opposed (RO) appetite and spirit. Being prone to perceive (and believe) that death, dishonor

and disenfranchisement are huge in terribleness, his spirited part judges (contra reason) that the loss of external goods is terrible. (Similarly, the irrational part is prone to perceive (and believe) that nearby objects are huge in size.) By projecting its own assessments of value onto the performance, the spirited part contributes to the construction of tragedy's axiological illusions.

Whereas the irrational part is susceptible to optical illusions in virtue of certain facts about the agent's physiology, the spirited part is susceptible to axiological illusions in virtue of certain facts about the agent's psychology. Specifically, spirit, qua the honor-loving (φιλότιμον) part of the soul, is naturally susceptible to culturally endorsed axiological appearances—conformity to which earns spirit honor.<sup>19</sup> According to Socrates, Greek poets reflect whatever (erroneously) appears fine to the ignorant majority (602a–b). In other words, the heroes of Greek tragedy reflect (and reinforce) cultural ideals, which necessarily appear correct to spirit—shaped as it is by Greek culture. Even the “decent” man's spirited part—having been steeped in Hesiod, Homer and the like—is prone to perceive tragic heroes as “κάλοι.” In this way, the Greek theatergoer's spirited part is actually complicit in constructing tragedy's illusions of virtue.<sup>20</sup>

### III. APPETITE IN PLATO'S AUDIENCE PSYCHOLOGY

The previous discussion might seem to suggest that appetite plays little or no role in Plato's audience psychology. However, RO appetite (i.e., appetite at it occurs in the inharmonious soul) plays a crucial role in Plato's audience psychology. In satisfying RO appetite's hunger to physically express RO spirit's “thumoeidic perspective” on the tragic hero's misfortune, tragedy strengthens the motivational force of the thumoeidic perspective. Moreover, tragedy achieves this effect by enticing theatergoers to relax their reason in pursuit of the pleasure of sympathetically inhabiting the thumoeidic perspective—the repeated enjoyment of which conditions audiences to occupy the thumoeidic perspective in real life, with regard to their own misfortunes.<sup>21</sup> Socrates remarks:

I suppose that few are able to figure out that enjoyment of other people's sufferings is necessarily transferred to our own and that the pitying part, if it is nourished and strengthened on the sufferings of others, won't be easily held in check when we ourselves suffer (606b5–8).

[λογίζεσθαι γὰρ οἶμαι ὀλίγοις τισὶν μέτεστιν ὅτι ἀπολαύειν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα· θρέψαντα γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνοις ἰσχυρὸν τὸ ἐλείνδον οὐ ῥάδιον ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῦ πάθεισι κατέχειν.]

The “pitying part” (τὸ ἐλείνδον) is the irrational part of the soul, which is the source of the decent man's disposition to view his own misfortunes as terrible and to desire to lament in response. Plato's point is that this disposition is both

self and other regarding. So, if it is strengthened with regard to others, then it is strengthened with regard to oneself. This is because weeping for the hero (on behalf of his misfortune) and bewailing one's own misfortune both involve (a) the belief that the loss of external goods is terrible and (b) the satisfaction of the desire to physically express this belief. To succumb to this belief and its concomitant appetitive desire is to strengthen both the belief and the desire, whether applied to another or oneself. In sum, Plato charges Greek tragedy with nurturing the histrionic tendencies of the populace by strengthening the motivational force of the thumoeidic perspective and its concomitant appetite for lamentation.<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This concludes my sketch of the critique of tragedy in *Republic X*. I want to end by suggesting that Socrates anticipate a non-authoritarian solution to the problem of the irrational part. Completing his Book X critique of tragedy, Socrates considers how we, who do not occupy the kallipolis, ought to respond to corruptive poetry:

whenever we listen to it, we'll repeat the argument we have just now put forward like an incantation so as to preserve ourselves from slipping back into that childish passion for poetry which the majority of people have. And we'll go on chanting that such poetry is not to be taken seriously or treated as a serious undertaking with some kind of hold on truth, but that anyone who is anxious about the constitution within him must be careful when he hears it and must continue to believe what we have said about it. (608a1–b1)

In other words, Socrates exhorts us to *not* relax our reason in the theater. It is precisely because Plato's theory of audience response emphasizes the audience's complicity in constructing axiological appearances that it can accommodate the audience's doxastic responsibility. In other words, it is up to us, qua active contributors to media's axiological appearances, to guard our souls against false appearances and beliefs. Doxastic responsibility (of the sort Socrates recommends) requires more than mere rational engagement with the drama; it requires the theatergoer to forgo the pleasure of lamentation so as to retain the rational perspective throughout the drama.<sup>23</sup> Such rational disengagement protects the theatergoer against strengthening his reason-opposed thumoeidic perspective.

Mightn't a similar appeal to doxastic responsibility be made in our own time, with regard to contemporary popular media? Consider Oliver Stone's film *Natural Born Killers*, which has been widely criticized for sensationalizing violence. Stone defends the film, on the grounds that it prompts viewers to reflect that "violence is all around us; it's in nature and it's in every one of us, and we have to acknowledge it and come to grips with it."<sup>24</sup> However, even if we grant Stone this point, the problem of the irrational part remains: *Natural Born Killers* might trigger our reason-opposed violent urges (making us "aware" of them), but at the

expense of empowering them. Plato's criticism of tragedy runs along these same lines: despite whatever moral reflection epic and tragic poetry encourage, Greek theatergoers nevertheless run the risk of strengthening their histrionic tendencies.<sup>25</sup> This realization is the first step toward doxastic responsibility.

## NOTES

1. See especially *Republic* II–III and *Laws* II.
2. Most commentators identify the irrational part with spirit and appetite. See, for example, Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, 406; Moss, *What Is Imitative Poetry and Why Is It Bad?*, 439; and Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle*, 65. This interpretation is supported by the language that Socrates uses in connection with the irrational part. According to Socrates, the irrational part “hungers for the satisfactions of weeping and sufficiently lamenting, being by nature such as to have appetites (ἐπιθυμείν) for these things” (604d5–6, translation in Moss, *What Is Imitative Poetry and Why Is It Bad*, 439). Furthermore, Socrates calls the irrational part “multicolored” (ποικίλον) (605a5)—a term earlier applied to the appetitive part (588c7). The irrational part also possesses qualities associated with the spirited part. For instance, by appealing to the irrational part of the soul, imitative poetry not only “nurtures and waters” appetites, but also anger (θυμός)—the source (or subject) of which is the spirited part (τὸ θυμοειδής) (606d & 439e). That imitative poetry appeals to spirit, in addition to appetite, receives further confirmation at 604e–605a. There, Socrates claims that imitative poets imitate the “irritable” (ἀγανακτητικόν) character and, in so doing, appeal to the “irritable part” (τὸ ἀγανακτητικόν) of the soul. Tellingly, Socrates earlier associates spirit with “irritability” (δυσκολία) (590a8).
3. The resistance to identifying the irrational part with appetite or appetite and spirit is rooted in a particular account of appetite, according to which appetites are blind impulses or “good-independent desires”—i.e., desires that are not constituted by the belief that their object is in some sense good. Murphy puts it succinctly: “τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν is a source of original attractions and repulsions, blind impulses to obtain or avoid” (Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic*, 42). And Irwin calls appetitive desires “good-independent” (Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 208–9). Since, on this construal of appetite, appetites do not involve beliefs, it follows that appetite is necessarily distinct from the irrational, “illusion believing” part of the soul. However, the “blind impulse” view of appetite has been challenged in recent years. Commentators increasingly point out that the *Republic* attributes beliefs, including beliefs about the good, to appetite (571d1, 505d11–e1, 560b7–c3, 554c12–d3). See, for example, Singpurwalla, *Soul Division and Mimesis in Republic X*, 291–3; Carone, *Akrasia in the Republic: Does Plato Change his Mind?*, 107–48; and Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle*, 59–73.
4. Socrates alludes to the possibility of “parts in between” other parts of the soul (443d7), twice remarking that the tripartite theory of the soul is not a precise answer to the question of how many parts the soul contains (435c9–d8, 504b1–c4).



5. Although scholars recognize that spirit plays a role in Plato's audience psychology, this role has not been well articulated. See Singpurwalla, *Soul Division and Mimesis in Republic X*, 297.
6. The terms "εἶδολα," "φαντάσματα," and "φαινόμενα" often denote deceptive or spurious images. See Janaway, *Images of Excellence: Plato's Critique of the Arts*, 110–11; see also Halliwell, *Republic X with Translation and Commentary*, 118–19. Note the complete absence in Book X of the neutral term for "image" (i.e., "εἰκῶν"), employed in the divided line passage (509d–511e).
7. In a certain sense, Socrates's critique of excessive, self-indulgent lamentation is compelling, especially when placed in its historical context. To flourish amid social and political upheaval, war and plague would have required resilience.
8. Citing parallels with the *Protagoras*, Moss argues that tragedy appeals primarily to appetite, which judges goodness and badness by the false standard of pleasure. See Moss, *Pleasure and Illusion in Plato*, 503–35; see also Moss, *What is Imitative Poetry and Why is it Bad?*, 415–44.
9. Spirit never sides with appetite against reason (440b), unless corrupted as a result of bad upbringing (441a). Thumos is much more likely to side with reason against appetite (440e).
10. From 379d to 391e there are sixteen references to Achilles or his speeches, fourteen of which are critical.
11. See Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero*, 199–209. Hobbs emphasizes the similarities between Achilles (as depicted by Socrates) and the timocratic man, in whom spirit has "run amok" (in virtue of not being properly subordinated to reason). To cite just one example, Socrates ascribes materialism to both Achilles and the timocratic man (390e, 391c, 549b).
12. The reason that this is not explicitly stated in the text is that Socrates has not yet distinguished between the three parts of the soul.
13. At 603c Socrates claims that imitative poetry imitates human beings in action, who believe that they fare well or badly in these actions and who experience either pleasure or pain as a result. From this it can be inferred that the tragic hero, whom the imitative poet imitates, believes that he fares badly with regard to his misfortune.
14. To be sure, Socrates acknowledges that tragic heroes lament other things—e.g., the loss of money or prized possessions (387e, 603e). This might seem to suggest that appetite, qua the "money-loving" part of the soul, is susceptible to tragedy's illusion that the loss of money is terrible. However, as we have seen, it is the spirited part of the money-lover's soul that values money.
15. See Harte, *Republic X and the Role of the Audience in Art*, 69–96.
16. Hence, it is because shadow painting exploits a "weakness in our nature"—i.e., our propensity to be deceived by colors and by distances (602c)—that shadow painting has "powers that are little short of magical" (602d), deceiving a part of the soul "which cannot distinguish the large and the small but believes that the same things are large at one time and small at another" (605c1–3).
17. While Socrates does not explicitly say that spirit fights and overpowers the decent man's appetitive desire to lament, this can be inferred. Since spirit, qua the honor-

loving part of the soul, desires honor, it follows social custom (νόμος) in opposing the decent man's appetitive desire to shamefully lament in the presence of his equals. However, when the decent man is alone, spirit does not oppose this appetitive urge to lament, since the man's reputation is no longer at risk. In contrast, reason, if operative, always opposes the decent man's appetitive urge to lament, since the rational disinclination to lament arises not from the desire to conform to social custom, but rather from the calculation that the present event is not all that bad in the grand scheme of things and should be met with practical reason, not lamentation (604b–c). Presumably, when alone the decent man is overcome by his appetitive desire to lament, because reason requires spirit, its watchdog, to overpower the appetitive desire to lament. See 440a–c for the view that spirit, like a loyal dog, naturally allies itself with reason. For a good discussion of the “decent man,” see Ferrari, *The Philosopher's Antidote*, 107–9.

18. In Book IX, Socrates juxtaposes the peaceful rule of reason—in which appetite and spirit “follow knowledge and argument,” having been tamed and cultivated by reason—to the forceful rule of appetite and spirit (586d–587a, 588b–589b). Also, in Book VIII the appetite-ruled oligarch is faulted for resorting to “compulsion and fear” to keep his better appetites in control of his worse ones, instead of “persuading and taming” his appetites with “arguments” (554c–d). The clear implication is that while the appetitive part rules by means of overpowering the other parts, the rational part rules by caring for the community of the parts and by persuading them (via non-rational means) to follow it.
19. See Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero*.
20. It is at this point that the analogy with painting and visual illusions breaks down. Whereas spirit is prone to certain sorts of axiological illusions in virtue of its upbringing, the irrational part is not prone to certain visual illusions in virtue of its upbringing.
21. The evidence we have suggests that Greek audiences did not cultivate ‘aesthetic distance.’ Rather, Greek tragedy was an emotionally charged form of mass entertainment. For a good discussion of this topic, see Nehamas, *Plato and the Mass Media*, 214–34.
22. There is also a worry that tragedy strengthens the *perceptual force* of the thumoeidic perspective—i.e., one's tendency to apply or occupy the thumoeidic perspective. So, according to Socrates, poetry's depictions of heroes lamenting cause young people to “groan and lament at even insignificant misfortunes” (388d7). The worry is that the repeated, *pleasurable* experience of occupying the tragic hero's thumoeidic perspective conditions decent Greek theatergoers to apply the thumoeidic perspective to formerly ambiguous stimuli (e.g., the loss of a half drachma).
23. See Ferrari, *The Philosopher's Antidote*.
24. See Silet (ed.), *Oliver Stone: Interviews*, 156.
25. Smith argues that the *Iliad* is a critique of Achilles's character and Greek notions of virtue more generally (Smith, *Some Thoughts About the Origins of “Greek Ethics,”* 3–20). So, the *Iliad* may be plausibly interpreted as a critique of Achilles's thumoeidic worldview. After all, there is not a happy ending for Achilles, much less the heroes of Greek tragedy, whose ἀμαρτίαι are testaments to their shortcomings.

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