

The Tyrannical Character, Spirit, and Moral Repair in the  
*Republic*

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**Declaration**

I, India Griffiths, confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## Abstract

In *Republic* books VIII and IX, Socrates describes the moral degeneration of four unjust characters, culminating in the worst character of all, the tyrannical character. This thesis examines the moral degeneration of the tyrannical character. My main claim is that a person develops a tyrannical character progressively over time. In chapter one, I investigate Socrates' account of the degeneration of unjust characters. I argue that a bad upbringing, specifically a lack of rational development and weak interpersonal relations in one's upbringing, enables moral degeneration. Hereafter, I focus exclusively on the tyrannical character, beginning with an examination of three interpretations of the nature of extreme desire, or eros, in the tyrannical soul. I argue that each interpretation is unable to provide a complete picture of the tyrannical character's eros because they fail to consider the entire process of his moral degeneration. Chapter two is split into two parts. First, I argue that the tyrannical character develops progressively over the course of three stages of moral degeneration. In stages one and two the tyrannical character is still developing and therefore has the potential to undergo moral repair. However, by stage three the tyrannical character is fully formed and thus morally incurable. In the second part of chapter two, I investigate evidence for the possibility of moral repair for tyrannical characters in the *Republic*. In chapter three I examine the role of spirit in the tyrannical soul. I argue that spirit's capacity for shame, which can be evoked at the prospect of harming those familiar to us, plays a crucial role in helping the developing tyrannical character to resist his lawless desires. I end with a speculative account of how moral repair can be initiated in the developing tyrannical character through the intervention of a friend and role model.

## **Impact Statement**

This thesis presents a new interpretation of the moral degeneration of Plato's tyrannical character in the *Republic*. Through approaching the tyrannical character's moral degeneration as a progressive process, I suggest we are better able to identify factors in this process that enable one to resist moral degeneration, such as spirit's capacity for shame, and factors that exacerbate degeneration, such as the weakening of our interpersonal relationships. These findings can help us to further understand the moral degeneration of all four unjust characters in books VIII and IX. Furthermore, by identifying how moral degeneration occurs in unjust characters, like the tyrannical character, we gain greater insight on how to cultivate good moral development, for instance, by establishing strong interpersonal relations in upbringing.

This thesis also investigates the largely unexplored possibility that some unjust characters have the potential to undergo moral repair, specifically developing tyrannical characters. If the worst type of unjust character has the potential to undergo moral repair, this then raises the question of whether other types of unjust characters, being less degenerate than the tyrannical character, can also be capable of repair.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Fiona Leigh, for always making the time to offer her guidance, support, and invaluable feedback. I would also like to thank Merrick Anderson for his helpful critical feedback on an earlier draft of this thesis, and Margaret Hampson for taking the time to discuss the tyrannical character with me, which helped me to further clarify my thoughts. Finally, I am immensely grateful for the support of my UCL MPhil cohort.

## Contents

<b>Chapter One: Moral Degeneration of Unjust Characters</b> .....	6
1.1 Introduction .....	6
1.2 Just and unjust characters.....	9
1.3 The Timocrat (548d5-551a9).....	11
1.4 The Oligarch (553a5-555b2).....	12
1.5 The Democrat and necessary and unnecessary pleasures (558c8-562a2).....	13
1.6 The Tyrannical Character and lawless desires (571a1-576b9).....	15
1.7 The nature of eros .....	20
1.7.1 Eros as an intense desire for bodily gratification.....	21
1.7.2 Eros as a sexual kind of desire.....	23
1.7.3 Eros and the eroticization of lawless desires.....	25
<b>Chapter Two: Understanding the Moral Development of Plato’s Tyrannical Character</b> .	30
2.1 Reason and regret in the tyrannical character.....	32
2.2 Stage one (572b9-573c10) .....	37
2.3 Stage two and tyrannical character’s transition into stage three (573c11-575a7).....	38
2.4 Stage Three (575a8-576b9).....	47
2.5 Moral repair .....	52
2.5.1 Intervention.....	53
2.5.2 Myth of Er.....	56
<b>Chapter Three: Psychological Degeneration in the Tyrannical Soul</b> .....	68
3.1 Spirit in the <i>Republic</i> .....	68
3.1.1 The two roles of spirit: interpersonal diplomat and internal police force.....	71
3.1.2 Spirit in the tyrannical soul.....	75
3.2 The Tyrannical son.....	78
3.3 The Betrayal.....	84
3.4 Unleashing lawless desires .....	87
3.5 Friendship and moral repair.....	90
4. Conclusion.....	96
Bibliography.....	98

## Chapter One: Moral Degeneration of Unjust Characters

### 1.1 Introduction

In *Republic* books VIII and IX, Socrates offers an extensive account of the moral degeneration of four unjust characters. The worst of these unjust characters is the tyrannical character. The tyrannical soul is ruled by an extreme desire, or eros, for bodily passions – such as food and drink, and sex - that has been implanted in the individual by the criminals and tyrant-makers of his city (572e3-6).<sup>1</sup> Through the implantation of this extreme desire, the individual's bodily passions are further intensified to become insatiable, and they will overrule the decent beliefs in his soul (573b1-4). Eros will become the leader of the tyrannical character's appetites and enslave his rational and spirited elements to do its bidding. As a result, the tyrannical character will be “drunk, filled with erotic desire, and mad” (573c7-8). It is often a background assumption that at the end of this passage (573c10), the tyrannical character is fully formed and there is little or no hope that his soul could undergo moral repair.<sup>2</sup> This thesis rejects this claim for the reason that the tyrannical character still experiences further moral degeneration in his soul even after his tyrannical constitution is initially established. He is not yet morally incurable.

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<sup>1</sup> Citations of Plato's *Republic* are from Reeve's revision of Grube's *Republic* translation (1992).

<sup>2</sup> Scott (2020) argues that because eros has overruled the tyrannical character's decent beliefs, and the rational element of his soul is underdeveloped from bad upbringing, the tyrannical character will be incapable of listening to moral reason. Hence, his soul cannot be improved (p.109). Johnstone (2011) suggests that, in general, once the individual has established an unjust character it is unlikely that they could undergo reform at this later stage in their life (p.165, fn55). In the tyrannical character's case this would mean that now he has a tyrannical constitution his reform is unlikely.

I will propose a new way of understanding Plato's account of the moral degeneration of a tyrannical character, this is that the moral degeneration of a tyrannical character occurs progressively over time. Specifically, this progressive degeneration occurs over the course of three discernible stages in Socrates' account. Only by the third and final stage of degeneration is the tyrannical character fully formed and therefore morally incurable. An important consequence of this is that in the first two stages, whilst the individual's tyrannical character is developing, he will have the potential to undergo moral repair.

In chapter one, I investigate the causes of moral degeneration in the four unjust characters of books VIII and IX. I identify bad upbringing as the primary cause of moral degeneration in unjust characters. In particular, a lack of rational development and the weakening of interpersonal relations in upbringing are both key factors that enable moral degeneration to take place in the soul. Following this, I move to focus exclusively on the moral degeneration of the would-be tyrannical character through an examination of the nature of his eros. I analyse three interpretations of the tyrannical character's eros. However, I argue that none of these interpretations can provide a complete picture of eros. This is because they fail to account for the entire development of a tyrannical character's soul, which includes eros' development to progressively strengthen its control over the soul.

In chapter two, I present my argument that the tyrannical character develops progressively over time, and that this occurs over three stages of moral degeneration. Socrates divides his argument in book IX into three sections, (1) how the tyrannical character evolves, (2) how he will live, and (3) that unjust characters are miserable and just characters are happy.<sup>3</sup> I argue that within the second section, how he will live, the tyrannical character will undergo two stages of moral degeneration, stage two and stage three. Stages two and three are essential to his moral degeneration because over the course of his progressive transition into the third stage of moral

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<sup>3</sup> Scott (2020) also makes this distinction.

degeneration the tyrannical character will become fully formed and therefore morally incurable. The event that marks his soul as incurable will be the release of lawless desires into his soul from 574d3, but before this point the developing tyrannical character will have the potential to undergo moral repair.

In the second part of chapter two, I focus on the possibility of moral repair for the tyrannical character. I identify a passage in book IX that, I argue, points toward the potential of moral repair for people who commit injustices, provided they are discovered and punished. However, this passage lacks details of how exactly moral repair could be achieved. In response, I appeal to the Myth of Er in *Republic* book X which, I suggest, can offer valuable insights on experiences that can help us to make better decisions. These experiences could be enabled in the developing tyrannical character's life through the intervention of a friend and role model, as I will argue in chapter three.

In chapter three, I focus on the role of the spirited part of the tyrannical soul. Spirit's capacity to evoke shame is the main reason why, on my account, the developing tyrannical character is capable of moral repair. I propose that spirit is responsible for resisting the developing tyrannical characters' lawless desires, through its capacity for shame, before these desires are unleashed in his soul from 574d3. Spirit's affinity towards those people and things that are familiar to it (375b-e), also applies to the tyrannical character and his affections for his parents. These affections, up to a point, are able to evoke shame in the tyrannical character at the possibility of further damaging his relations with his parents. This, I suggest, has a meaningful impact on dissuading him from the most wicked actions. Finally, I end by offering a speculative account of how moral repair could be initiated for the developing tyrannical character through the intervention of a friend and role model.



## 1.2 Just and unjust characters

Who leads the happiest life, the just or unjust man? The unjust man can appear just in society by unfairly securing this reputation through wicked action. However, what matters to the just individual is not appearing to be just, but to truly be just. Even if the just man was unfairly accused of being unjust and forced to suffer all of the tortures that are reserved for unjust men, the truly just man would endure all of this and still remain just. But which life is better? This is the challenge that Glaucon, playing devil's advocate, urges Socrates to answer at the beginning of book II (357a-362a). Socrates is implored to take on the plight of the just man and show that even if the just man were to be deprived of all of the good consequences of being just, it would still be better to lead a just life as opposed to an unjust one.

Undertaking this challenge, Socrates will argue that the satisfaction of monetary desires, bodily passions, and the attainment of political power will not lead to a life of happiness. What ensures a person's happiness is for their soul to be in a state of psychic harmony. This means that all three elements of the soul, reason the wisdom-loving part, spirit the honour-loving part, and appetite the lover of bodily pleasure and money, will work together without opposition. This cohesion is only possible when reason rules over the other two elements, which is how true happiness is achieved. This psychic harmony will belong exclusively to the just man (442c-d).

The ideal psychic constitution of the just man corresponds to the ideal political constitution (435a9-c1), this being the aristocracy in Kallipolis. The three elements of the soul are each represented by three classes of citizens in Kallipolis. Reason is represented by the just guardian rulers, spirit by the auxiliary class, and appetite by the artisan class. In the ideal psychic constitution, the rational element of the soul ensures the cooperation of the spirited and appetitive elements. This is achieved through reasons' ability to rationally discern which spirited and appetitive desires will benefit the soul, reason then guides each psychic element to pursue its own desires in moderation (442c4-7). Likewise, the guardians of the ideal city - as just individuals ruled by reason

- will guide the auxiliary and artisan types, allowing each to play their own natural role in maintaining the proper functioning of the city (441d5) and regulating their actions.

In line with this comparison, Socrates will contrast the just man's ideal soul and the corresponding ideal city with four unjust character-types, each one corresponding to a corrupt political constitution (449a1-6). He will argue that the psychic harmony of the just man's soul secures him happiness by demonstrating that the souls of unjust characters are in psychic disarray, and that this causes each unjust character immense suffering and misery, as Glaucon exclaims:

Even if someone can do what he wishes except what will free him from vice and injustice and make him acquire justice and virtue, how can it be worth living when his soul – the very thing by which he lives - is ruined and in turmoil? (445b1-4).

However, the investigation into the disharmony of unjust souls is side-tracked in book IV in favour of a discussion on communal living in Kallipolis. It is not until book VIII that the discussion of unjust character-types is resumed and reaches its conclusion at the end of book IX.

The four unjust characters that Socrates distinguishes are timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical characters, and each character is increasingly more degenerate than the former. The presence of these unjust characters will shape the very nature of a city and constitution (544d4-e2). Beginning with the fall of aristocracy, Socrates describes the city's decline into a constitutional timocracy, followed by an account of the type of person whose soul corresponds to the values and motivations of this political constitution. He replicates this format for each of the four unjust constitutions and corresponding character-types.

To mark the transition from one unjust character to another Socrates describes the relationship between a father and son. The father will possess the previous narrative's character-type and will try to engender his own moral values in his son. However, the son will be influenced by other household members and the pressure of societal values, hence he will develop a new character-

type in the next stage of moral degeneration. For example, the timocratic father will unintentionally raise an oligarchic son. The presence of this father-son narrative is crucial to show the significance of interpersonal relationships for Plato, as I will later argue. In this thesis I will focus on the degeneration of individual characters as opposed to their corresponding political constitutions, in what follows I present the degeneration of each moral character.

### 1.3 The Timocrat (548d5-551a9)

The timocrat is the first unjust character in Socrates' account and he is characterised by his honour-loving nature. Hunting, warrior training, and going to war are the activities that he values above all else, for when pursued courageously they award a man great honour (549a4-5). He is amicable toward his fellow timocrats but is actively cruel to his slaves (548d4-549a1), which can only be expected in a society that judges its citizens on physical strength and their ability to be victorious over others.

The timocrat is raised by a just father who avoids all political affairs in his society because it is corrupt.<sup>4</sup> In fact, so disciplined is his father that he will allow himself to be put at a disadvantage in his society in order to avoid the affairs of unjust persons in his city (549c4-5). This alludes to the potentially corrupting power of societal influence that will later ensnare the budding, young timocratic son and his future generations. Ruled by his reason, the just father takes care to avoid the unjust activities of other citizens in his city as a precaution against compromising his own integrity.

The son's gradual corruption begins with his mother's harmful influence. She is offended by her lower status in society as a result of her husband refusing to partake in (unjust) politics. Her husband is not motivated by money, nor the types of honours that the city prioritises such as

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<sup>4</sup> This pre-empts the warning Plato will give at the end of book IX that just men cannot be involved in politics in a city that is badly governed (592a1-b1).

retribution against one's enemies, and for this she openly slanders the father in front of her son (549c7-e1). Household servants previously loyal to the patriarch now urge the son to do the manly work that his father is too weak to attempt by punishing the enemies of the household. The son sees this very practice carried out in his city, observing it to be praiseworthy (550a1-2).

However, the father pushes back against these harmful influences by acting as a source of guidance for his son, as Socrates explains, "his father nourishes the rational part of his soul and makes it grow; the others nourish the spirited and appetitive parts" (550b1-3). In response to this struggle between his father's just values and his city's unjust values the son adopts a compromise. The son will not be a bad man, but the harmful influences will mean that his soul will be ruled by spirit, making him a "proud and honour-loving man" (550b6).

#### 1.4 The Oligarch (553a5-555b2)

The second unjust character emerges in the son of the timocratic father, this is the oligarchic character. The emergence of the oligarchic character marks the first time in Socrates' narrative of moral degeneration that the appetitive element will have control over the soul. Before this point the appetitive part of the soul has been kept at bay, first by reason's wisdom and spirit's obedience to reason in the psychic constitution of the just man (442b), and second by spirit's love of honour in the timocrat (550b). However, the oligarch is characterised by an intense desire for money, therefore in his soul we will see appetite take control.

Once again, the father-son narrative is repeated. Initially the son is raised to believe in his father's timocratic values, to be victorious and honour-loving. However, one day the son witnesses his father's fall from grace. The timocratic father is betrayed by false witnesses against him, loses his livelihood, societal status, all his possessions, and is finally executed or forced into exile (553b1-4). Seeing this betrayal, experiencing the loss of his family's fortune and his father, and fearing he too could be next in line, the son now abolishes his love of what is honourable and sets to work

acquiring his fortune. This decision removes spirit as ruler of his soul and replaces it with appetite, hence he now has a new psychic constitution:

He makes the rational and spirited parts sit on the ground beneath appetite, one on either side, reducing them to slaves. He won't allow the first to reason about or examine anything except how a little money can be made into great wealth. And he won't allow the second to value or admire anything but wealth and wealthy people (553c7-d4).

In the oligarchic soul appetite has enslaved reason and spirit. It is important to distinguish that the appetitive desire that the oligarch has is specifically the desire for money. However, in the next two generations of unjust characters, though each will be ruled by appetite their appetitive desires will be directed at different objects.

In spite of his new psychic constitution the oligarch will discipline his behaviour in public. Instead of openly displaying his avaricious nature, such as outright stealing from others, the oligarch will practice caution and carefulness in how he conducts his behaviour in society. This caution is not born from the same sense of honour that motivated the timocrat, nor is it out of respect for the law. In fact, when no one is looking the oligarch will pounce on the opportunity to exploit the vulnerable, like orphans in society (554c5-6). This is because the oligarchs' carefulness in society comes out of fear, perhaps latent since he witnessed his fathers' demise, of losing his possessions should he let down his guard (554d1-3). He does not indulge himself but prefers to watch his money accumulate (554e-555a).

### 1.5 The Democrat and necessary and unnecessary pleasures (558c8-

562a2)

Socrates begins his introduction of the next type of unjust character, the democrat, by distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary pleasures. Necessary pleasures are those natural pleasures which we cannot deny, that also benefit us (559d9-e2), like eating to be healthy.

Unnecessary pleasures are inessential to our existence and bring about no good (559a3-5), for example the desire to indulge in a range of luxury foods. With proper moral education, such as nurturing of the rational element of the soul in upbringing, the desire for these types of pleasures could gradually be eliminated (ibid). However, if left unchecked, unnecessary desires can grow strong and powerful to the extent that they heavily influence our judgements. The oligarchic character's desire to accumulate money meant that rather than indulging his unnecessary pleasures by spending his money, he preferred to watch his fortune accumulate. However, the democratic and the tyrannical characters will not be so lucky.

The democratic son will dispense with his father's tight-fisted economics to embark on a frivolous lifestyle. The son's upbringing by his oligarch father has created the perfect conditions for the son's transition from oligarchy to democracy. As the son of an oligarch, he has endured a stringent upbringing shielded from the taste of unnecessary pleasures, however, when the criminal types in the city show him all sorts of unnecessary pleasures his transition to a democrat begins (559d7-e2). In response to these criminal tempters the son's oligarchic family comes to his aid and chastises him for indulging in unnecessary pleasures. This sparks a civil war in his soul between his traditional oligarchic values and the lure of new pleasures. On some occasions he will conquer and eliminate the appetitive desires that he is aware of but unbeknownst to him, other appetites are developing in his soul at the very same time:

“As desires are expelled, others akin to them are being nurtured unawares, and because of his father's ignorance about how to bring him up, they grow numerous and strong” (560a7-b1).

There has been a failure in the son's upbringing that has allowed appetitive desires for unnecessary pleasures to develop in his soul. The failure this passage is alluding to, I suggest, is that the oligarchic father did not nurture the rational element of his son's soul, hence, the son lacks the rational restraint to resist his appetites. Therefore, the criminals in the city continue successfully to

nurture and grow his appetites. Eventually the power and number of these desires will overcome his oligarchic values for money and thriftiness, dispelling any shame associated with overindulgence. The son will then become a democrat, excluding his family's influence (660c6-9).

To cement his transition the sons' previous values for money, carefulness, and his resistance to unnecessary pleasures will now take on a different meaning in his new democratic life, here "insolence [is] good breeding, anarchy freedom, extravagance magnificence, and shamelessness courage" (560e3-6). The democrat will lead a lifestyle of moderation, fleetingly partaking in all kinds of desires, both necessary and unnecessary, because all are of equal value to him. One day he is captivated by intense physical training, his next day will be leisurely and relaxing, and the day after he might even try his hand at what he believes to be philosophy (561c5-d2).

One question often posed to Socrates' account of the democrat is why his liberal life is considered more degenerate than the money-grabbing oligarch. The answer to this lies in the constitution of the soul. Oligarchic souls and democratic souls are each ruled by appetite. However, the oligarch's soul is enslaved under one overall goal, namely the pursuit of money, and his need to accumulate wealth means that he won't indulge his unnecessary desires. However, the democrats' value for the pursuit of freedom, as shown by his liberal lifestyle, makes his soul far more chaotic and unbalanced than the oligarch's because he cannot decide on just one way to do this (561e2). His affliction is that all desires, both necessary and unnecessary, appear equally enticing to him at one point.

## 1.6 The Tyrannical Character and lawless desires (571a1-576b9)

In his account of the democrat Socrates distinguished between necessary and unnecessary pleasures, now he introduces a further subcategory of unnecessary pleasures, namely lawless desires. Everyone has lawless desires, but they are repressed by the law and rational restraint, and

in the best kinds of people they are abolished completely or at the very least severely weakened (571b5-c1). Lawless desires express themselves in our dreams when our rational part sleeps:

“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. You know that there is nothing it won’t dare 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, whether man, god, or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat” (571c4-d3).

It is the complete awakening of these lawless desires that will mark the full development of a tyrannical character, as I will argue in chapter two. To begin his account of how a person could ever become so degenerate as to pursue lawless desires whilst awake, we see Socrates once again employ a father-son narrative. The democrat now has a son and instils in him a love of freedom. However, this son is tempted by the criminal-types in society who convince the son that the only way to achieve complete freedom is through lawlessness. His entire family attempt to bring the son back to his democratic roots, and they almost succeed. However, sensing their defeat the criminals have one final hand to play, “they contrive to plant in him a powerful erotic love, like a great winged drone, to be the leader of those idle desires that spend whatever is at hand” (572e4-6). This erotic love, or eros, is the beginning of the son’s undoing. I will discuss the nature of eros in the next section, for now I suggest that in the tyrannical character eros is an extreme desire for bodily passions such as food, drink, and sex. The satisfaction of these types of pleasures are the very first things that the son pursues after he develops a tyrannical constitution (574d3-4).

Eros capitalises on the son’s overindulgent lifestyle as a democrat where he pursued unnecessary pleasures. In the son’s soul eros becomes the leader of his many desires (572e5-6), it nurtures them and intensifies their hold over him by making them grow stronger and more powerful than ever before (573a4-7). The intensity of these desires drives the son to a state of madness because he



longs for their satisfaction (573a7-b8), however, this can never be achieved because of their insatiability. As part of solidifying its power over his soul eros will overhaul the democratic beliefs and desires that he previously held dear:

“If it [eros] 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 has purged him of moderation and filled him with imported madness” (573b1-4).

As a result of this process the son now becomes a tyrannical man ruled by eros’ extreme desire for bodily passions, which are so strong that they derange the tyrannical man. Enslaved by eros’ hold over him, he believes that he has the right to fulfil his every desire and that no one, man or god, should stand in his way (573c3-4).

Once he has described how a tyrannical constitution is formed, Socrates then offers a closer inspection of how the tyrannical character lives. The tyrannical man spends his days partaking in feasts, parties, and entertaining many sexual partners (573d2-4). Unfortunately for him this extravagant lifestyle is expensive, and he soon runs out of money. After burrowing money and exhausting any spare capital he has the tyrannical man sets his eyes on his parent’s money. First, he will try and take their money through deceitful means and if this fails he will then result to force (573d-b).

However, he won’t stop here, for in a shocking turn of events he will go so far as to strike his father and sacrifice both of his parents for boyfriends and girlfriends. Just when we thought he could do no worse, the tyrannical man will move his newfound companions into his parents’ household and force his poor parents to act as their slaves (574b8-c3). After this debauchery, and having spent his parent’s money, the tyrannical man will turn to a life of crime, stealing from homes, and plundering temples. The abuse of his parents and his subsequent criminal activity signals a profound development in the tyrannical man’s narrative. He will cast aside the previous values he held from upbringing (574d1-6) and truly embrace his lawless tyrannical nature. Now,

he will pursue his lawless desires when he is awake. This means that there is no heinous act he won't be willing to commit to satisfy his bodily passions (574e6-575a3).

Embracing his lawless desires, he will join with other tyrannically minded individuals to go and fight for a tyrant abroad. If there are no tyrants abroad then he will remain in his own city and engage in criminal acts of increasing wickedness from breaking into houses to selling people into slavery (575b5-7). However, if the political conditions in his city are just right then he will set his sights on obtaining political power to become a tyrant. With the help of the tyrannical mob the tyrant will enslave the citizens of his motherland and take control of the city (575d).

The tyrannical man suffers greatly as a result of his psychic constitution. His prioritization of his bodily passions over all else means that he doesn't have any friends (576a3-5) but only tyrannical accomplices who use him just as he uses them back. We may think that his existence couldn't be any more wretched, however, as Socrates goes on to show in the final section of book IX, the worst existence is the tyrants'.

The tyrant is not only completely alone, friendless in the world, but he is the least free of all the unjust characters. Like the private tyrannical man his insatiable bodily passions are forever hounding him but ruling over others takes its toll. For instance, the tyrannical man's intemperance becomes a greater problem when he forces himself into a position of political power for he now has to fight with others to maintain his power (579c). As a tyrant he will live in constant fear and suspicion, unable to leave his fortress should any number of his enemies be waiting to dispatch with him. The tyrant will want to explore the world like a free person, instead he will be "mostly confined to his own house and envying any other citizen what happens to travel abroad" (579b7-9).

Through his account of unjust characters Socrates shows, most notably through the tyrannical character, that it does not pay to be unjust for the psychic imbalance this causes in a person's soul ultimately makes him miserable. The timocrat's prize for honour causes him to lose sight of justice,

the oligarch is a slave to money, the democrat embarks on a directionless lifestyle in pursuit of freedom, and worst of all, the tyrannical man is driven to the most wicked of actions, none of which will relieve him from the suffering of his bodily passions.

As I have previously noted, the development of each unjust character type begins with a father-son narrative. I suggested that through this narrative Plato emphasises the importance of upbringing in helping to bring about good moral development. I want to draw attention to a specific part of upbringing that I think is shown to be particularly important by the father-son narrative, this is the establishment of strong interpersonal relationships. In each of the four accounts of unjust characters it is only once the son's relationship with his father, and greater household, has been undermined by harmful social influences that the son undergoes moral degeneration.

As Socrates' account of the moral degeneration of unjust characters unfolds we see that each son experiences an increasingly worse upbringing than the former and in each new degeneration the task of nurturing the son's rational element becomes increasingly neglected by his parents. One thing that I think reflects this failure in the son's upbringing is that it becomes easier for each son to be tempted to adopt unjust moral values by harmful social influences. As the narrative progresses the person, or group of people, that are able to influence and tempt the son are members of his society that are increasingly impersonal to him and his household, as he is approached and influenced by increasingly degenerate groups of people.

For example, for the young budding timocrat his temptation to adopt timocratic values comes from within his own household in the form of his mother and household servants. Here the integrity of the son's household is ruptured from within as the mother and servants undermine the father's just influences.

In the young would-be oligarch, the harmful influencers that are able to provoke the son to adopt an oligarchic lifestyle are false witnesses who betray the timocratic father. This, I suggest, shows

the weakening in his upbringing of interpersonal relationships because, unlike the budding timocrat, the would-be oligarch is tempted by harmful influences who come from outside of his household. Worse still are the influencers who corrupt the budding democrat as these are criminal types in society (559d). This shows a further break down in the strength of the son's household and his parent's inability to nurture his rational restraint, for the son is influenced by criminals over the values of his own family, and when his parents do try to come to his aid he shuts them out of his life (560c5-9). Similarly, the budding tyrannical character is corrupted by actual tyrant-makers, whose temptations he succumbs to over his own family's influence (572e).

Throughout Socrates' account of unjust characters, the son's interpersonal relationships with his family are undermined by increasingly degenerate external sources, and it is only once this is achieved that he then experiences the moral degeneration of his character. Therefore, I propose that the father-son narrative shows us that strong interpersonal relationships in upbringing are crucial to ensuring good moral development. Using this insight, I will later argue in chapters two and three that interpersonal relationships can also help to repair degenerate moral characters. From here onwards my investigation into moral degeneration focuses specifically on the tyrannical character, as the worst of all unjust characters. In the next section I examine scholarship on the nature of the tyrannical character's eros.

## 1.7 The nature of eros

Commentary on Socrates' account of the tyrannical character has largely focused on discerning the nature and object of his eros. It is only by understanding the operation of eros in the tyrannical soul, including the object(s) of its desire, and how and when it establishes complete control over the soul, that we can fully comprehend the significance of Plato's argument for the worst type of unjust character, and his overall intentions for books VIII and IX.

In this section I analyse three interpretations of eros. First, the characterisation of eros as an intense desire for bodily gratification (Johnstone, 2015). Second, eros as a sexual kind of desire that should be understood as distinct from the mere appetite for sex (Arruzza, 2018). Finally, eros as an appetitive desire that culminates in the eroticization of law-breaking to demonstrate one's superiority, and is best indulged by obtaining political power as a tyrant (Nielsen, 2019). The focus of my analysis is not only to gain insight into how eros should be characterised, but also to examine the method of analysis through which each interpretation justifies its conclusion.

### 1.7.1 Eros as an intense desire for bodily gratification

Perhaps the most uncontroversial characterisation of eros is Johnstone's reading, namely that eros in the tyrannical soul is "a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure: as much as he can get, and however he can get it" (Johnstone, 2015, p.424). If the tyrant alone rules his city then the soul of the corresponding tyrannical character must also have a single ruler, and this is eros: the object of eros is bodily pleasure. To substantiate his proposal, Johnstone argues that the tyrannical man's hedonistic lifestyle, where he partakes in feasts, parties, revelries, and short-lived girlfriends (*Rep*, 573d3-4), suggests that his primary concern is to indulge in an assortment of bodily pleasures (Johnstone, 2015, p.428).

It is important to distinguish between the bodily pleasures that are directly desired by the tyrannical character's eros and the objects that he desires for the sake of fulfilling his bodily pleasures. For example, the tyrannical man's pursuit of money from 573d9 is only a means to further indulge his bodily pleasures. Money is not an object eros directly seeks, but instead money is something that the tyrannical man recognises that he needs in order to indulge in activities that satisfy his bodily pleasures. We see evidence of this because it is only after the tyrannical man exhausts his finances, which he used to fund his hedonistic lifestyle, that he then pursues money (Johnstone, 2015, p.428).

Further effort should be made to avoid reducing the tyrannical man's desire for bodily pleasures to an appetitive sexual desire (*ibid.*, p.426). Eros cannot only be a sexual desire because the tyrannical man pursues bodily pleasures other than sex, such as food and drink, as can be seen when he attends feasts and parties (*Rep*, 573d3-4). Crucially, in Socrates' account of lawless desires, which are usually only present in our sleep (571c3-4), the types of desires mentioned include both sexual pursuits like having sex with an animal and a God, but also the desires to eat and drink whatever one pleases. Therefore, eros must be understood broadly as an intense desire for bodily pleasure, not merely sex.

There is much to admire in Johnstone's account. First of all, it presents a characterisation of eros that can explain the motivation behind the tyrannical characters' actions throughout his moral development. In other words, we can see how both the developing tyrannical character and the tyrant are both motivated by the pursuit of bodily pleasure. The developing tyrannical character will indulge in feasts, girlfriends, and parties, and the tyrant aspires to political power so that he can pursue his bodily pleasures without restraint.

Johnstone's account also tracks how the tyrannical character's desires become increasingly depraved by pinpointing significant moments in Socrates' narrative that mark the further degeneration of the tyrannical soul. A connection is made between the tyrannical character's actions and the negative affect that they have on his soul, as Johnstone observes that from 574d1 and onwards "the tyrannical man's increasingly shameless criminal behaviour eventually results in the removal of the last vestiges of restraint in his soul" (2015, p.431). As a consequence of this behaviour, lawless desires are unleashed in his soul and motivate his actions when he is awake, and for the first time he is now described as behaving like a tyrant (*Rep*, 575a1-4). Johnstone's description of this process from 574d1-575a4 illustrates how the degeneration of the tyrannical character appears to be a progressive process. This is because, as Johnstone rightly points out, by the end of 575a4 the tyrannical characters' desires include both unnecessary desires *and* lawless

ones (Johnstone, 2015, p.431). Hence, it would appear that even after the implantation of eros into the soul at 573a5-6 the tyrannical soul does still become increasingly more degenerate.

### 1.7.2 Eros as a sexual kind of desire

Cinzia Arruzza (2018) argues that Johnstone's examination of lawless desires within his account of the tyrannical man's appetites is underdeveloped. Specifically, Arruzza questions how lawless desires can also qualify as part of the tyrannical man's pursuit of bodily pleasures. The relationship between the tyrannical man's bodily pleasures and his lawless desires is complex. For instance, Arruzza suggests that when he is a tyrant part of the tyrannical man's satisfaction in pursuing bodily pleasures such as sex, drink, and food is not only to satisfy these pleasures but, significantly, that he is able to satisfy them through lawless action. According to Arruzza the best way to understand the tyrannical character's eros, the leader of his appetites, is as a sexual kind of desire.

At 572d7-573a2, eros becomes the leader of unnecessary appetites in the tyrannical soul. As leader eros exploits and intensifies the soul's appetites, "it multiplies them, making them uncontrolled, increases their intensity and obsessive character, and attaches them to unlawful objects" (Arruzza, 2018, p.175). Although the exact nature and object of eros is not immediately apparent in the text, Arruzza points to an important passage which she suggests offers support for eros as a sexual kind of desire.

Then a man becomes tyrannical in the precise sense of the term when either his nature or his way of life or both of them together make him drunk, filled with erotic (ἔρωτικός), desire, and madness (*Rep*, 573c9).

The term 'ἔρωτικός' is earlier used in Book V to describe men who are driven by a sexual love, specifically the lovers of boys (Arruzza, 2018, p.179). Given that this same term is now used in book IX, Arruzza suggests that this indicates that the tyrannical character's eros, like the eros associated with lovers of boys, is of a sexual kind.

In contention with this proposal is Johnstone's objection against characterising eros as sexual desire. The tyrannical man pursues a range of bodily pleasures that are not of a sexual nature, such as to eat and drink whatever one pleases, which the tyrannical man pursues at feasts and parties (Johnstone, 2015, p.426).

Against this objection, Arruzza attempts to further elaborate how sexual eros goes beyond the boundaries of appetite. There is a distinction between sexual eros and sexual appetite. Building on a point made by Halperin (1985) that sexual eros does not merely aim at bodily gratification (1985, p.170), Arruzza suggests that sexual eros is also "characterized by intensity, exclusivity, and ultimately futility" (Arruzza, 2018, p.180). It is this intensity of sexual eros that drives the tyrannical character to the brink of insanity and makes him crave all kinds of appetitive desires, including lawless objects of desire (ibid.). Whilst I think that Arruzza's distinction between sexual eros and sexual appetite does not entirely fend off Johnstone's objection, as I will argue shortly, I want to first highlight the aspects of her idea of sexual eros that I suggest do capture Plato's depiction of the tyrannical character.

In support of her reading of eros as a sexual kind of desire Arruzza argues that expressing an unrestrained sexual eros was one of the most common presentation of tyrants in ancient Athens. When a tyrannical character is a tyrant he can have sex with anyone he desires and engage in sexual scenarios that violate social convention (Arruzza, 2018, p.44). Also intertwined with unrestrained sexual eros in these depictions are hubristic attitudes and the desire to humiliate and dominate others (ibid., p.181). Arruzza argues that Plato's account of the tyrannical man capitalises on this presentation of tyrants to deliver an account of the tyrannical man that captures "the most extreme embodiment of erotic license" (ibid, p.181).

In defence of Arruzza I think that we do see hubristic attitudes and the desire to humiliate and dominate others in Plato's depiction of the tyrannical character. For instance, after the implantation of eros in his soul the tyrannical man is extremely overconfident, desiring control



over both men and gods (*Rep*, 573c3-4). Later, when lawless desires are freed in his soul, we learn that there is no act that he won't dare attempt to satisfy his lawless desires (574e). Furthermore, throughout his development the tyrannical character attempts to dominate and humiliate others, such as his parents when he takes over their home and forces them to become slaves to his companions (574b8-c3). Similar acts of wickedness, but on a greater scale, are displayed by the tyrant when he enslaves his entire motherland (575d).

According to Arruzza, political power is only a tool wielded by the tyrannical character to serve his sexual eros without restraint, which is ultimately futile (2018, p.183). In line with his interpretation, Arruzza argues that Plato's account of the tyrannical character attempts to oppose a dangerous new ethos that had arisen among the elite in Athens where political power had become regarded as a means to obtain wealth and gratification of one's desires. The tyrant, a man driven by eros who "pushes the principle of rulership to the ruler's advantage to its extreme consequences" (Ibid., p.128), and whose life is characterised by suffering as a result of his enslavement to his bodily passions, is Plato's warning to those who seek to eroticize political power.

### 1.7.3 Eros and the eroticization of lawless desires

In direct contention with this claim is Karen Margrethe Nielsen's account of eros and the tyrannical character's appetites. Plato's tyrant has no restraint over his appetites, but this is not the only factor that makes him so unjust. Additionally, accompanying his extreme appetite, or pleonexia, is the belief that he should have whatever he desires because he deserves it.

In *Republic* book II Glaucon argues that pleonexia is characterised by a "desire to outdo others and get more and more. That's what everyone's nature naturally pursues as the good" (359c). Pleonexia is more than greed, it is to defy fairness and obtain riches at the expense of others, and it expresses itself as a distinct need to be in competition with everyone else (Nielsen, 2019, p.151). Although

Glaucon makes this assertion, Nielsen observes that Plato doesn't have Socrates refute it which, she suggests, indicates that there is good reason to take this assertion seriously; we do appear to have a natural propensity for greed and to be in competition with one another.

As a result of the tyrannical character's lack of rational restraint and insensitivity to shame, Nielsen proposes that, in the tyrannical man, pleonexia adopts a unique manifestation in the form of his eroticization of lawless desires. The tyrannical man will seek out pleasures of increasing intensity, always aspiring to experience new heights of pleasure. He indulges himself and quickly becomes accustomed to one form of pleasure, as a result his eros then demands the satisfaction of new, greater forms of pleasure to replace the old ones (574a). Hence, Nielsen observes that "it's not just individual people who 'outdo' each other, in other words, but also pleasures themselves" (2019, p.153). In the bid to indulge in greater pleasures of increasing intensity the tyrannical character will therefore pursue lawless desires.

The natural goal for any tyrannical character is to achieve political power. As we just saw, Arruzza argues that political power is pursued by the tyrannical man only as a means to indulge in greater lawless desires. However, against Arruzza's reading Nielsen argues that "the tyrant doesn't use political power as a means to the satisfaction of his desires, but rather seeks political power as an expression of his superiority, expressed by an untrampled pursuit of pleasures that are prohibited by the laws that bind others" (ibid., p.159). How else, she claims, are we to explain the content of lawless desires such as to have sex with one's mother, or bestiality (ibid., p.161)? These lawless desires cannot be for his actual sexual gratification, but rather for the enjoyment of breaking the law which the tyrant does with impunity. Through his lawless action the tyrant demonstrates his superiority over others.

I suggest that Arruzza's reading, namely that political power is a means to an end for the tyrant, is more convincing than Nielsen's account at explaining why the tyrannical character has lawless dreams like to have sex with his mother. Instead of eroticizing the act of breaking the law, I suggest

that per Arruzza the lawless dream to have sex with one's mother can be understood as a sexual kind of desire to degrade and humiliate one's mother. This very desire is manifested in the tyrannical man's waking reality when he makes his mother and father the slaves of his companions and takes control of their estate (574b8-c3). Furthermore, although he does not have sex with his mother the tyrannical man is said to 'replace' her with an irrelevant girlfriend (573b7-9), this could be a symbolic gesture of fulfilling the sexual fantasy as part of his lawless dreams.

A limitation for Nielsen's explanation of the tyrant's eroticization of law-breaking is that her claim concerns only the unjust nature of the political tyrant and not the tyrannical man in general. Whilst I agree with Nielsen that the tyrant breaks the law with impunity, since he now has complete power, what we fail to see in this account is the tyrannical man's relationship with the law before he became a tyrant. As I will argue in chapter three, the tyrannical man does not always behave with impunity towards the law. Only after he abuses his parents at 574b-c does he then pursue criminal activity in his city. Before this occurs, he first attempts to steal his parent's money using deceit instead of force. This, I will argue in chapter three, is his attempt to conceal his tyrannical nature from his parents, and the law, as opposed to outright flaunting it by using force.

As a result of these limitations in Nielsen's account, I argue that we are left with two plausible readings of the tyrannical character's eros, these are Johnstone's view that eros is an extreme desire for bodily gratification, and Arruzza's view that eros is a sexual kind of desire. I suggest that both accounts are plausible readings of eros, but each has its own limitations.

For instance, Arruzza's main critique against Johnstone's argument is how the desire for bodily gratification can motivate the tyrannical character to pursue the most wicked kinds of lawless acts (2018, p.180, fn72). Throughout Socrates' narrative the tyrannical character enslaves his parents, steals from temples, acts as a slave trader, and as a tyrant enslaves an entire nation. An important question, therefore, is could a person's pursuit of bodily gratification, though his bodily desires may be extreme, really motivate him to commit such atrocities? I suggest that it could. Eros inflates

a person's desires to their very worst meaning that he can do nothing but focus on their satisfaction if he wants to avoid being driven mad by their demands. Faced with his own insanity or committing the worst actions to satisfy his bodily passions the tyrannical character chooses the latter. In his eyes the continuation of his indulgence is also self-preservation from mental insanity.

However, if we ask this same question again but instead with Arruzza's reading of eros I think it is far easier, and perhaps more convincing, for us to say yes. A person's pursuit of sexual eros, understood as more than mere sexual appetite but also for one to possess hubristic attitudes and a desire to dominate and humiliate others, does appear to be a more plausible motivation for them to pursue the wicked and lawless acts that the tyrannical character commits. As I have previously defended, I believe we see these attitudes, desires and motivations influencing the tyrannical character throughout Plato's depiction of his development.

Yet, I suggest that even after Arruzza makes her distinction between sexual eros and sexual appetite, where sexual eros also includes one's possession of hubristic attitudes and having the desire to dominate and humiliate others, Johnstone could still press his original objection. How does the inclusion of, for instance, hubristic attitudes explain the lawless desire to eat whatever food one pleases (571d2-3)? It is for this reason that I suggest Arruzza's account still requires further elaboration.

To summarise, I have argued that both Johnstone's and Arruzza's accounts present plausible readings of the tyrannical character's eros. I suggest that Arruzza's account of eros as a sexual kind of desire offers a more convincing explanation of how eros can motivate the tyrannical character to pursue lawless action. Yet, even after distinguishing between sexual eros and sexual appetite I suggest Arruzza's account still needs further treatment to convincingly explain how the desires for food and drink can be encompassed under sexual eros.

Despite characterising the defining feature of a tyrannical character that endures as the leader of his soul throughout his moral degeneration, namely his eros, each of these accounts falls short of

providing a complete picture of the tyrannical character, and development of his eros, because they fail to devote sufficient attention to his moral development. As a result, I suggest they fail to notice that eros progressively strengthens its control over the tyrannical soul and the intensification of the individual's bodily passions. The gradual intensification of one's desires means that the tyrannical man will resort to increasingly wicked action to attempt to satisfy them, which worsens the degeneration of his soul. In the next chapter I offer an account of how this progressive degeneration takes place over three stages.

## Chapter Two: Understanding the Moral Development of Plato's Tyrannical Character

At the very beginning of book IX Socrates proposes to split his investigation of the tyrannical character into three sections:

It remains, I said, to consider the tyrannical man himself, how he evolves from a democrat, what he is like when he has come into being, and whether he is wretched or blessedly happy (571a1-2).

The first part of Socrates' investigation will concern the genesis of the tyrannical character, the second part will examine how he acts after he has first come to be, and in the final part Socrates will turn to the question of his happiness. The first section, the genesis of the tyrannical man, corresponds to 572b9-573c10 in the *Republic*.<sup>5</sup> The second section begins at 573c11 with the question "but what way does he live?", and Socrates' answer to this question concludes at 576b9 with his judgement that the longer one remains a tyrant the more wretched he will be. Finally, the third section, where Socrates will analyse whether the tyrannical character is wretched or happy, starts from 576b9 where Glaucon is said to be "taking over the argument". The third section ends at 580a6.<sup>6</sup>

I will argue that within the first two sections that Socrates distinguishes, these being the tyrannical man's evolution and what he is like once he was evolved, there are in fact three stages of moral development that take place in the tyrannical character. The first stage of moral development

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<sup>5</sup> At the end of this first section, at 573c10, Socrates concludes that "this, then, it seems, is how a tyrannical man comes to be."

<sup>6</sup> Scott (2020) also distinguishes these three sections in Socrates' account of the tyrannical character.

corresponds to the genesis of the tyrannical character from 572b9-573c10. However, my primary claim is that there is far more going on in the second section of Socrates' account, 573c11-576b9, than previously thought. I argue that in this section the tyrannical character will undergo a second and a third stage of moral development. From 573c11-576b9 the developing tyrannical character will undergo a complex psychological transition. At the beginning of this transition the tyrannical character will still be psychologically developing, and he will have the potential for moral repair, but by the end of this transition his development will be complete, and he will be morally incurable.

In my account the three stages of moral development of the tyrannical character correspond to the following areas of the text. Stage one of the tyrannical character's moral development is from 572b9-573c10, stage two is from 573c11-575a7, and finally stage three is from 575a8-576b9.

The first stage of moral development corresponds to the first section of Socrates account from 572b9 where Socrates proceeds to tell Adeimantus what happens when a democratic father has a son. Here, Socrates describes the upbringing of the would-be tyrannical character, and how he is tempted away from his democratic values by the tyrant-makers. Stage one ends at 573c10 when Socrates concludes his account of the genesis of a tyrannical character.

Stage two of the tyrannical characters' moral development begins at 573c11 when Socrates goes on to describe how the tyrannical character will live, and it ends at 575a7. The transition from stage two to stage three is something I will explain in detail as it includes the rapid process through which the developing tyrannical character becomes a fully developed, incurable tyrannical character. This transition begins at 574b3 with the tyrannical son's decision to take his parent's money by force, which will quickly escalate, with the tyrannical character ultimately enslaving his parents and turning to crime in the city. These two events will initiate the unleashing of lawless desires in his soul from 574d3. The tyrannical character's transition from stages two to three is complete by 575a7 when, once the tyrannical character has engaged in lawless action, now he will be morally incurable. This means that from 575a8 he will be a fully-fledged tyrannical character.

The third and final stage of the tyrannical character's development is from 575a8-576b9. Despite having formed a fully developed tyrannical character and now being morally incurable, I will argue that even within the third stage of development there are different degrees of wickedness for tyrannical characters. I will distinguish between two types of fully developed tyrannical characters, those tyrannical characters that lead private lives, and tyrannical characters who obtain political power and become actual tyrants. The tyrant is distinguished by Socrates at 575c4 where we are told that, in the right political conditions, the greatest tyrannical character will be elevated to political power by the tyrannical mob in the city. Socrates' account of the moral degeneration of a tyrannical character ends at 576b9.

## 2.1 Reason and regret in the tyrannical character

As we saw in chapter one, a significant cause of the moral degeneration in all four unjust characters in books VIII and IX is the experience of a bad upbringing. Each type of unjust character receives an increasingly worse upbringing from his parents and as a result of this the rational element in the soul of each character type becomes increasingly undernourished. The worst instance of this is the tyrannical character. However, just how much influence reason can have in the decisions of unjust characters, especially in the undernourished tyrannical soul, still presents a difficulty for scholars in understanding Socrates' account of the development of tyrannical characters.

Dominic Scott (2020) examines the role of rationality in the soul of a tyrannical character by addressing what initially appears to be a contradiction in Socrates' account of the tyrannical character's moral development (2020, pp.106-108). At 577d10-e1, in the third section of Socrates' account, the fully developed tyrannical soul is described as "least likely to do what it wants and, forcibly driven by the stings of a dronish gadfly, will be full of disorder and regret". If the tyrannical character is so very wicked, then where does this regret come from? We were led to believe that the tyrannical character eliminated all decent beliefs and desires he held from his democratic upbringing once eros established itself as ruler of his soul in the first section of Socrates' account.



For instance, at 573b1-3 we are told that “if it [eros] finds any beliefs or desires in man that are thought to be good or that still have some shame, it destroys them or throws them out”. If Socrates describes the destruction of all decent beliefs in the tyrannical soul in section one then there can be no place from where feelings of regret for his condition could arise, instead the tyrannical character would be left with only eros’ wicked beliefs and insatiable desires.

Scott raises the stakes of this contradiction and introduces a further conflict in Socrates’ account. Not only is it difficult to explain how a tyrannical character can feel this regret, but it appears equally as challenging to confirm whether the tyrannical character has in fact been purged of all decent beliefs in the first section at 573b1-3. This is because in the second section of his account, after the tyrannical character has stolen from his parents, enslaved them, and engaged in petty crime in the city, Socrates makes the following further claim:

The old traditional opinions that he held from childhood about what is fine and shameful – opinions that are accounted just – are overcome by the opinions, newly released from slavery that are now the bodyguard of erotic love” (574d3-7).

The presence of decent beliefs and desires in the tyrannical soul in the second section of Socrates account raises the question of whether good beliefs and desires have really been eliminated from the tyrannical soul in section one.

The key to overcoming this conflict, Scott argues, can be found in book VIII, where Socrates describes the political constitution of a tyranny (2020, p.108). Socrates argues that the political tyrant will first eliminate the strongest and bravest people in the city who speak out against his reign until he has “purged them from the city” (567b3-c2). This, Scott suggests, corresponds to the tyrannical character’s rigorous elimination of decent beliefs and desires at 573b1-3 in the first section of Socrates’ account. These represent the strongest of the decent beliefs in the tyrannical character’s soul, these are his democratic beliefs which previously resisted the temptations of the tyrant-makers (Scott, 2020, p.109).

Even after eros has eliminated the strong decent beliefs in the tyrannical soul in section one we still find some remnants of democratic values and beliefs in section two, but these are the weakest of his original belief system. Scott suggests that this corresponds to Socrates' account of the tyrannical city where even after the tyrant has purged the best people from the state there still remain some decent people, though they are not as morally noteworthy as the fine citizens originally purged from the city by the tyrant (*Rep*, 568a3-4).

These decent citizens lack the power to overthrow the political tyrant, just as the beliefs at 574d3-7, in the second section of Socrates' account, lack the power to overcome eros in the tyrannical soul (Scott, 2020, p.108). Yet, just as the hatred of the decent people remains an obstacle to the tyrant's ambition for complete domination, so too the weaker beliefs remain a source of conflict in the tyrannical soul. In the third section of his account, when discussing whether the tyrannical character is wretched or happy, Socrates argues that these beliefs are occasionally expressed in the fully developed tyrannical character as feelings of regret (577d11-e1), which partially accounts for the tyrannical man's anguish.

It is because of the weakness of these beliefs against the almighty eros that Scott argues the tyrannical character cannot be receptive to moral reasoning (2020, p.109). The tyrannical character may at certain moments feel some semblance of shame due to the presence of weak democratic values but these feelings, deriving from his enslaved rational and spirited parts, will always be overruled by eros.

Even in these brief moments of regret the tyrannical man still lacks the level of rational development to be able to respond to the moral reasoning of another person. This is not only because his reason is enslaved by eros but also as a result of the lack of moral education in his upbringing. Raised by democratic parents who have failed to nurture the rational element of his soul, it is very unlikely that the tyrannical character could reflect on his situation, and with this

reflection make amends toward reform (Scott, 2020, p.109). If the democrat himself lacks a firm grasp on reason, then there is little hope for his tyrannical son (ibid.).

In order to address the question of whether the tyrannical man could respond to his regret and shame I think we must first determine just how far along in his moral development he is at this point. In other words, does this person possess a fully developed tyrannical character, or are they in the process of forming this character?

As previously noted, Scott distinguishes three sections in Socrates' account of the tyrannical character (2020, pp.105-6). The first section (572b9-573c10), which explains the genesis of the tyrannical character, is where Scott argues we see the strongest democratic decent beliefs and desires being replaced by intense and insatiable bodily passions. In the second section (573c11-576b9), which explains the lifestyle of the tyrannical man after his evolution, Scott points out that the strength of the tyrannical man's eros will cause him to neglect the needs of others and instead focus exclusively on the fulfilment of his own bodily passions. Describing the effect of eros as detailed in his earlier (2007) work, Scott argues that the tyrannical man's eros will express itself in a "peculiar intensity that transforms its subject's attitude to other concerns, in this case blinding him to the importance of social norms and boundaries" (2007, p.140). It is with this mindset that he will be capable of stealing from and striking his parents. Whilst the very thought of these actions would have elicited great shame before section one, now having been purged of his strongest decent beliefs the tyrannical characters' eros will simply overpower any weaker decent beliefs (Scott, 2020, pp.105-6). Finally, in the third section (576b10-580a8), Socrates will end with an explanation of why the tyrant's existence is miserable (ibid., p.106).

On Scott's account the development of a tyrannical character appears to be complete by the end of section one, without any hope for future reform<sup>7</sup>. Scott describes the weaker decent beliefs

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<sup>7</sup> This is with the exception of a further development Scott distinguishes, this is the difference between 'imperfect' tyrannical characters who have not obtained political power, and actual political tyrants (Scott, 2020, p.110).

remaining after the purge in section one as being “*permanently* overruled” (2020, p.109, my emphasis) in the tyrannical character’s soul. The reign of eros over the tyrannical character’s soul, which single-mindedly pursues its own bodily passions, will forsake all other considerations and create in him a “*permanent* blindness to the existence of norms and boundaries” (Scott, 2007, p.151, my emphasis). This means that on Scott’s reading at the end of section one (573c10), now eros is ruler of his soul, the tyrannical character will have fully developed and therefore will be incapable of listening to rational argument.

By distinguishing between stronger and weaker democratic beliefs Scott is able to explain how the tyrannical character can be immune to moral reasoning yet still be capable of feeling regret in the third section of Socrates’ account. However, though it may well be the case that the tyrannical character’s weaker decent beliefs are incapable of overpowering eros in the second section at 574d3-7, this does not entail that the tyrannical character has reached his full development in section one now eros has been implanted in his soul.

I will show that even after the first section of Socrates’ account, the individual does not yet possess a fully developed tyrannical character, instead his moral character will become progressively worse over time. Scott’s account focuses primarily on the implantation of eros in section one, purging the son’s soul of his strongest decent beliefs (573b1-3), and also the overpowering of his weaker beliefs in section two at 574d3-7. However, in doing so it overlooks the very actions that a developing tyrannical character commits which will exacerbate the degeneration of his moral character. Therefore, I argue that in failing to examine the entire psychological development of the tyrannical character, Scott’s account cannot offer a definitive answer on whether the tyrannical character is, at any point in his development, incapable of moral repair.

I want to propose a new way of understanding the tyrannical character, this is that a tyrannical character develops progressively over time, and this progressive moral development should be understood as taking place over three discernible stages. The first stage of moral development

corresponds to the genesis of the tyrannical character from 572b9-573c10. The second stage will begin at 573c11 and the transition from the second to the third stage will commence at 574d3 with his decision to take his parent's money by force, and will be complete at 575a7 once the tyrannical character has engaged in lawless action. From 575a8 the fully developed tyrannical character can still intensify the wretchedness of his condition if he becomes a political tyrant. I suggest that before he engages in lawless action the tyrannical character has the potential to undergo moral repair, through a friend's intervention. Over the course of the next three sections I will present my reading of the moral development of Plato's tyrannical character.

## 2.2 Stage one (572b9-573c10)

Before I explain the first stage of the tyrannical character's moral development, I first want to highlight a significant passage from Socrates' account of the tyrannical character that I suggest supports my reading that the tyrannical character develops progressively over the course of sections one and two in Socrates' account.

Socrates: Let's sum up the worst type of man: his waking life is like the nightmare we described earlier

Adeimantus: That's right.

Socrates: And he evolves from someone by nature most tyrannical who achieves sole rule.

And the longer he remains tyrant, the more like the nightmare he becomes (576b3-8).

Socrates here is summarising the evolution of a tyrannical character, beginning with someone who is by nature susceptible to developing this type of character, due to his democratic upbringing where his parents encouraged moderate engagement in all lawful desires instead of nourishing reason in his soul.

The distinction in this passage is between a fully developed tyrannical character who privately engages in lawless desires and a fully developed tyrannical character who achieves political power to become a tyrant<sup>8</sup>. Significantly, the longer the fully developed tyrannical character lives as a tyrant the more lawless he becomes. Presumably, this is because as a tyrant the tyrannical man has greater opportunity to pursue his lawless desires since he is no longer constrained by the law. However, it is rare for a private tyrannical character to obtain political power to become a tyrant as this requires the right political conditions<sup>9</sup>. I suggest that before a tyrannical character could become a tyrant he must first undergo three stages of moral development to form a fully-fledged tyrannical character.

The first stage of development (572b9-573c10) is complete once, as Scott has argued, eros has established itself as ruler of the soul, instilling a tyrannical character in the individual. In this stage the tyrant-makers will exploit the upbringing of the young democrat and implant in him an extreme desire for bodily passions. I agree with Scott that here eros will eliminate the strongest beliefs from the son's democratic upbringing to replace moderation with the desire for complete indulgence in bodily passions, an ambition that drives the developing tyrannical man mad.

### 2.3 Stage two and the tyrannical character's transition into stage three (573c11-575a7)

In this section I begin by explaining the immediate effect on the developing tyrannical character's life of having a soul ruled by eros. Following this, I examine the beginning of the developing tyrannical character's transition into a fully-fledged tyrannical character. This transition starts with the tyrannical character's decision to take his parents money by force at 574b3-4, after he fails to obtain their money by deceiving them. This transition further escalates when his parents resist his demands, which then provokes the developing tyrannical character to strike and enslave them

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<sup>8</sup> This distinction is also pointed out by Parry (2007), and Scott (2020).

<sup>9</sup> See Scott (2020, pp.109-10) for a discussion on the rarity of tyrants.

(574b5-c4). Following his abusive behaviour toward his parents the developing tyrannical character will reach a further descent in his degeneration for directly after he abuses his parents he will engage in criminal activity in the city (574d1-3). This is the final breaking point for the tyrannical character. I will argue that together his abusive behaviour and criminal actions erode the last remnants of resistance that he had left against the release of his lawless desires, which are subsequently unleashed into his soul at 574d3.

The release of lawless desires in his tyrannical soul is described from 574d3-e6. However, before his transition into a fully developed and incurable tyrannical character can be complete, I suggest that it is not sufficient for the tyrannical character to have unleashed his lawless desires, and have lawless thoughts, he must also be able to act on them. Once the tyrannical character takes action to satisfy his lawless desires then the transition from stage two to stage three is complete and he is truly incurable. I now begin my explanation of this process.

At the end of stage one (573c11), eros has established itself as ruler of the tyrannical soul. Now, at the beginning of stage two, the immediate effect of this establishment is that the developing tyrannical character will attempt to pursue a hedonistic lifestyle. He will indulge in “feasts, revelries, luxuries, girlfriends and all that sort of thing” (573d3-4) with the objective of satisfying eros’ insatiable bodily passions. Through his continued indulgence eros’ bodily passions will grow and require even greater satisfaction (573d6-8).

However, after some time the developing tyrannical character exhausts all his funds in his expensive pursuit of pleasure, and as a result he will take out loans and seize any spare capital he can find (573e1). All the while eros’ bodily passions will demand satisfaction, the longer they go unsatisfied the further their protests will drive him to madness (574e3-6). In a final bid for money the tyrannical character will turn to his parents. At first, the developing tyrannical character will devise a plan to take his parent’s money using deceit (574a11-b1). However, if this fails then he will turn to more drastic methods.

The developing tyrannical character now decides to use force to take his parents' money. This wicked decision marks the beginning of the process of his transition into a fully-fledged tyrannical character. If his parents try to resist their son forcibly taking their money, Socrates argues that the developing tyrannical character will take the following actions:

S: And if the old man and woman put up a fight, would he be careful to refrain from acting like a tyrant?

A: I'm not very optimistic about their fate, if they do.

S: But, good god, Adeimantus, do you think he'd sacrifice his longed-loved and irreplaceable mother for a recently acquired girlfriend whom he can do without? Or that for the sake of a newfound and replaceable boyfriend in the bloom of youth, he'd strike his aged and irreplaceable father, his oldest friend? Or that he'd make his parents the slaves of these others, if he brought them under the same roof?

A: Yes, indeed he would (574b5-c4).

The developing tyrannical character will physically abuse his parents if they try to resist him, and after he has forcibly taken their money he will invite his companions to his parents' estate and make his poor mother and father their slaves. I suggest that the wickedness of these actions marks a significant moment in the moral development of the developing tyrannical character for they signify the beginning of his transition into a fully-fledged tyrannical character.

Once he has exhausted his parents' possessions the developing tyrannical character will immediately resort to criminal action, such as stealing from people's homes and pillaging temples (574d1-3) in order to raise the money to sustain his hedonistic lifestyle. I think it is significant that only after the developing tyrannical character has physically abused and enslaved his parents, effectively ending their relationship, is he then described for the first time by Socrates as engaging in crime in the city.



I propose that the developing tyrannical character only now resorts to crime because previously his relationship with his parents - though weakened by the implantation of eros in his soul at stage one (572e) - held him back from pursuing outright crime in the city. The tyrannical character's parents are democrats meaning that they raised him to value the democratic beliefs and practices that define the city. By abusing his parents, the tyrannical character not only undermines his relationship with them but also everything his parents stood for, and raised him to believe in, which includes democratic values. Hence, his abusive behaviour not only weakens his affections towards his parents but also any affinity he had toward his, already fragile, democratic beliefs. This means that when the tyrannical character next finds himself in a position where he has no more money, he is now willing to engage in crime in the city.

The developing tyrannical character's relationship with his parents was his final connection to his democratic roots, now he has destroyed this he no longer has any lingering affinity toward democracy, hence he is now willing to betray its laws and the citizens who live by them. These events have a profound effect on the developing tyrannical soul, as can be seen in the next passage:

And *in all this* the traditional opinions that he held from childhood about what is fine or shameful - opinions that are accounted just - are overcome by the opinions, newly released from slavery, that are now the bodyguard of erotic love and hold sway along with it (574d3-7, my emphasis).

First to clarify is that the 'newly released' opinions that Socrates mentions in this passage are opinions concerning the tyrannical character's lawless desires. Directly after this passage Socrates refers to these new opinions as those that "used only to be freed in sleep" (574e2-3), which coincides with the description of lawless desires at the start of book IX that only awaken in one's sleep (571c2-3).

I suggest that in this passage when Socrates says 'in all this' he is referring to the events that have happened just previously, these being the developing tyrannical character's abuse of his parents

and subsequent criminal activity. These two events are the final breaking point that lead to the release of the tyrannical character's lawless desires. With the unleashing of his lawless desires from 574d3 the tyrannical character will be on the precipice of completing his transition into stage three of his moral development.

Socrates suggests that everyone likely has lawless desires but that these are restrained by laws and by reason in partnership with our better desires (571b5-6). In a distinct few people lawless desires are either completely abolished, and in others they are far stronger, but for the majority these desires arise only in sleep (571b6-c4). When he was younger the would-be tyrannical character's lawless desires would have only been present in his sleep. Even in stage one of his moral development, Socrates makes no mention of the tyrannical character's lawless desires being a part of his waking life. I suggest this is because the developing tyrannical characters' democratic beliefs, though weakened by the implantation of eros in his soul, were able to hold back his lawless desires through the resistance of shame.<sup>10</sup>

The act of abusing his parents and engaging in criminal activity further weakens any lingering democratic beliefs and desires in the tyrannical character. As such, the developing tyrannical character no longer has the resistance in place to hold back his lawless desires, this means that his lawless desires are now fully released to be a part of his thoughts whilst he is awake. In support of my proposal, I think we see Socrates point to the importance of family and democratic values in upholding resistance against the tyrannical character's lawless desires in the following passage:

When he himself was subject to the laws and his father and had a democratic constitution within him, these opinions used only to be freed in sleep. *Now*, however, under the tyranny of erotic love, he has *permanently* become while awake what he used to become occasionally

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<sup>10</sup> I explore the significance of shame in the developing tyrannical soul in chapter three.

while asleep, and he won't hold back from any terrible murder or from any kind of food or act (574e1-6).

This passage occurs directly after the tyrannical characters' lawless desires are unleashed at 574d3-7 where, I argued, the tyrannical character is on the precipice of completing his transition into stage three of his moral development. There are a few things to note from this passage. First, this passage reconfirms the notion that the tyrannical character's desires have been fully unleashed to be a part of his waking thoughts. There has been a new development in the tyrannical person's moral character which is implied by the language I have emphasised in this passage. For instance, only 'now' will the tyrannical character 'permanently' have lawless thoughts whilst he is awake. The impact of this development, Socrates tells us, is that there is no act which the tyrannical character won't commit, even murder.

The second point to draw from this passage is that Socrates appears to cite three things which were previously responsible for holding back the tyrannical characters lawless desires, (1) having a democratic constitution, (2) being subject to the law, and (3) being subject to one's father. In stage one of his moral development, we saw how (1) was compromised once the tyrant-makers implanted eros in the would-be tyrannical character's soul, which formed his tyrannical constitution.

Both (2) and (3) remained just about intact in stage one. As previously noted, Socrates never described the tyrannical character as engaging in crime until stage two at 574d1-3. At the beginning of stage two the tyrannical character is only described as partying (573d2-4), borrowing money (573e1), and deceiving his parents (574a11-b1). Furthermore, although the developing tyrannical character is no longer strictly subject to his father in stage one, because he favours eros over his democrat parents (572d7-e6), he is yet to completely sever this bond until he abuses his parents in stage two. Only once he engages in criminal activity and betrays his parents, breaking (2) and (3) respectively, are his lawless desires now fully unleashed on Socrates' account and become a

permanent part of his soul from 574d3 onwards. Therefore, I propose that abusing his parents and engaging in crime are the two events that are the breaking point in the tyrannical character's moral development. These events erode the tyrannical character's final resistance against his lawless desires, allowing them to be unleashed in his soul whilst he is permanently awake.

The significance of this passage at 574e1-6 is also observed by Parry (2007). Like Scott (2020), Parry draws attention to the tyrannical character's ability to feel regret, arguing that his regret can be accounted for by reason's role to seek what is good for the soul. Since reason is only enslaved and not eradicated from the soul, this regret is expressed in episodic moments of frustration for his condition and the feeling that his life has turned out badly (Parry, 2007, pp.401-402). Parry notes that this passage signifies "the conscious or waking acceptance, as good and appropriate, of such things as sex with one's mother or with any man, beast, or god" (2007, p.399). This, he argues, shows that the tyrannical man has descended to new depths for he now truly accepts these lawless desires. Consequently, Parry concludes that "there is not much hope of dislodging the obsession" (Ibid., p.400).

Before I proceed to explain the completion of the tyrannical man's transition into a fully-fledged tyrannical character, I want to pause for a moment to consider a possible response to my claim that lawless desires are only unleashed in the tyrannical characters' soul at 574d3. It could be argued that the tyrannical character's lawless desires and thoughts must have been capable of entering his mind whilst he was awake, before 574d3, otherwise how else could he perform such wicked actions as abusing his parents and engaging in criminal activity in the city.

However, if we look at the description of the psychological state of the tyrannical character at the end of stage one he is described as "drunk, filled with erotic desire, and mad" (573c7-8). There is no mention here, nor at any point in stage one, of his lawless desires driving his actions whilst he is awake. What is mentioned here is the tyrannical man's madness, and again at the beginning of stage two it is the stings of eros' bodily passions that drive him frenzied (573e3-574a1) such that

he looks for someone's money to take, either through deceit or by force. Hence, what I want to argue is that madness, caused by the relentless demands of his bodily passions, is primarily responsible for the developing tyrannical character's choice to commit his most wicked acts before 574d3.

However, whether in the clutches of madness some of the developing tyrannical character's lawless desires and thoughts could enter his mind whilst he is awake is a further important question. I suggest that with the initial weakening of his democratic beliefs in stage one by the implantation of eros in his soul, the developing tyrannical character's lawless desires and thoughts could perhaps occasionally enter his mind when awake. The crucial difference between this scenario and the unleashing of his lawless desires from 574d3 is that before this any lawless thoughts will be temporary, unlike the *permanent* presence of these thoughts and desires at 574e1-6. They will be temporary because, as I argue in chapter three, before 574d3 the developing tyrannical character will still be capable of feeling shame that is strong enough to influence his behaviour and resist the complete release of his lawless desires.

At the beginning of stage two the developing tyrannical character still has an affinity toward his weaker democratic beliefs. As long as he has this affinity his (weakened) democratic beliefs will be capable of evoking feelings of shame strong enough to have some influence, especially over his most wicked, lawless thoughts. However, as I explain in chapter three, in extreme cases of madness, such as the starvation of his bodily passions when he has spent his money at 573d, some of his lawless desires could enter his thoughts. In this case spirit's affections for his parents, and associated democratic beliefs, will have to resist his lawless desires. Yet should his affinity for one of these fail then any feelings of shame will no longer be strong enough to hold back his lawless desires. If this happens then more and more lawless thoughts will slip through spirit's dwindling resistance, as we see at 574b-d when he abuses his parents, and at 574d1-2 when he engages in criminal activity, until their complete release at 574d3.

I will now resume my argument to look at the final part of the tyrannical character's transition into a morally incurable, fully-fledged tyrannical character. At this point in my account the tyrannical character is on the precipice of completing his transition into the third stage of his moral development. However, his transition into a fully-fledged, incurable tyrannical character is not complete just yet. I propose that for this process to be complete it is not simply enough for the tyrannical character to have lawless thoughts and desires; he must also be able to act on them.

Directly after Socrates explains that lawless desires have been permanently unleashed in the tyrannical man's soul, Socrates and Adeimantus confirm the tyrannical man to be in the following moral condition:

S: But, rather, erotic love lives like a tyrant within him, in complete anarchy and lawlessness as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the unruly mob around it (some of whose members have come in from outside as a result of his keeping bad company, while others have come from within, freed and let loose by his old habits). Isn't this the life that a tyrannical man leads?

A: It is indeed (574e6-575a7).

This passage describes the state of the tyrannical man's soul now that lawless desires have been fully unleashed. Eros is now completely lawless and motivates the tyrannical man to desire anything that will satisfy eros' bodily passions and newly unleashed lawless desires. However, not only must the tyrannical man dare lawless things, but, as Socrates confirms with Adeimantus at the end of this passage, the tyrannical man must also lead his life this way (575a6). He cannot only desire lawlessness, he must also live and be lawless. This, I suggest, is the final condition of the developing tyrannical character's complete transition to a fully-fledged and incurable tyrannical character, namely he must take action to enact his lawless desires. Once he does this the transition is finally complete at 575a7, and he is now beyond moral repair. In the next section I examine the different types of lives that fully-fledged, incurable tyrannical characters can lead.

## 2.4 Stage Three (575a8-576b9)

In this section I distinguish between two types of fully-fledged tyrannical characters, these are tyrannical characters who lead private lives, and tyrannical characters who acquire political power to become tyrants. I will demonstrate that both private tyrannical characters and tyrants lead lawless lifestyles. However, I argue that there are degrees of wickedness in their lifestyles and moral characters. The tyrant leads the most wicked lifestyle because his political power allows him to commit the greatest unjust actions, as such his soul is the most wretched of all tyrannical characters.

Once his transition into a fully-fledged tyrannical character is complete the type of lifestyle a tyrannical character adopts largely depends on the social opportunities available to him in his city. The first two types of lives that Socrates describes are the lives of tyrannical characters who live as private individuals in the city (575a8-c1), the third is the life led by a tyrant and his immediate followers (575c2-d8).

In the first lifestyle, if the tyrannical character lives in a democracy but there are tyrants living abroad then the tyrannical character will leave his own city to become a bodyguard to an international tyrant, or if there are wars abroad then he will fight in them as a mercenary (575a8-b2)

In the second lifestyle, if there are no international tyrants or wars then the tyrannical character will remain in his democratic city and commit small evils. He will become a thief, temple robber, or even a slave trader (575b6-7). These occupations will earn him the money to continue to fulfil his bodily passions. He might also seek out powerful and influential people in the city whom he will take bribes from to do their bidding (575b7-8).

Finally, in the third type of life, which is heavily dependent on social opportunity, if there happen to be many tyrannical characters in the city and they recognise the potential of their numbers then

they will band together and select the greatest tyrannical character among them (575c4-d1). They will attempt to elevate this person to political power and make him a tyrant.

Private tyrannical characters and tyrants are both morally incurable because, since 574d3, they have permanently had lawless thoughts and desires, and they have since acted on these lawless thoughts and desires. Both the first and second types of lives led by private tyrannical characters enable them to pursue lawless actions. In the first lifestyle the private tyrannical character can reap the rewards of being the flatterer of an international tyrant and through his affiliation with the international tyrant he can share in the tyrant's hedonistic lifestyle. As a mercenary the private tyrannical character can engage in lawless, bloodthirsty action, such as murder<sup>11</sup>, whilst also making money to later satisfy his bodily passions. If victorious on the battlefield then he could gain power and status which he can exploit to prioritise his own appetites. In the second lifestyle as a criminal in his democratic city the private tyrannical character continuously breaks the law for his own hedonistic purposes. Like the bodyguard, he too seeks to be in service of powerful people in his city and to exploit this relationship to get what he wants.

Despite their different social circumstances, private tyrannical characters still aspire toward the same things, such as money and powerful allies who allow them to operate above the law. The pursuit of both of these things is ultimately in service of satisfying their bodily passions, which now include lawless kinds.

However, even within this third stage of moral degeneration there are still degrees of wickedness to be found amongst these fully developed tyrannical characters. The tyrant is the most wicked type of tyrannical character. This is implied by Socrates when he explains that the “extreme of

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<sup>11</sup> Arruzza (2018) argues that spirited desires such as bloodthirstiness also play a part in motivating the actions of tyrannical characters. I present this argument in chapter three.



wretchedness” (578b9) is the “one who is tyrannical but doesn’t live a private life, because some misfortune provides him with the opportunity to become an actual tyrant” (578c1-2)<sup>12</sup>.

The tyrant is the most wicked type of tyrannical character because he has the power to commit the most unjust actions. Previously, in stage two, the maximum show of power that the developing tyrannical character was able to display was his enslavement of his parents. However, as a tyrant with political power the fully-fledged tyrannical character can now enslave an entire nation (575d4-8). Additionally, he is able to exercise his power without restraint as he practices it mercilessly to vanquish his personal enemies and anyone that expresses resistance to his regime (567b3-9). Thus, tyranny provides the tyrannical character with the greatest opportunity to be wicked. Socrates makes this point for he exclaims that “when it comes to producing wickedness and misery in a city, all these evils together don’t, as the saying goes, come within the mile of the rule of a tyrant” (575c2-4). The reason the tyrant is able to outweigh the small evils committed by private tyrannical characters is because with political power he can commit a greater number of evils, each far more atrocious than any private tyrannical character could accomplish. The longer a tyrannical character maintains his position as a tyrant the more wicked and lawless he will become.

Yet, his wickedness doesn’t go unpunished. As a result of enslaving his nation the tyrant is surrounded by many enemies. This means that not only is he friendless, but he also lives in constant fear of mutiny. This fear forces the tyrant to confine himself to his home for protection (579b7-c1), ironically rendering him just as unfree as the citizens that he oppresses, if not more since he cannot even explore his city.

Perhaps the greatest reason for the tyrant’s misery is his intemperance (579c7-d1). As we have seen, the tyrant’s political power appears to exacerbate his intemperance because it provides him with greater opportunity than the private tyrannical man to engage in lawless action. Initially, the

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<sup>12</sup> For further support in the *Republic* that the tyrant is worse off than the private tyrannical man see also, 576b6-8, 576b11-c1, and 578c7-d1.

fully developed tyrannical character might have viewed life as a tyrant as the best way to satisfy his lawless desires, through the unconditional control of others. However, it is with this mindset that Ferrari (2005) argues the tyrant makes a fatal mistake.

When the tyrant forces the city to bend to his will Ferrari argues that he foolishly believes that he is the one in control. Yet, what he fails to understand is that by enslaving others, externalizing his will onto them, he is in fact further entrenching his own psychic enslavement. The more power the tyrant amasses to feed his insatiable desires, the further these desires swell and fatten, making him an even greater slave to them (Ferrari, 2005, pp.98-101). Power is not the solution to his condition but the ultimate downfall of it. Political power reaffirms his lawless desires and further encourages them, which is a realisation that he can only grasp at momentarily in those brief episodes of regret (577d10-e1).

There is a further reason why the tyrant is the most wretched. Although both the private tyrannical character and the tyrant are, strictly speaking, alone in their conquest for bodily passions, since “someone with a tyrannical character lives his whole life without being friends with anyone” (576a3-4), there is a key difference between the two. Socrates argues that the private tyrannical man surrounds himself with flatterers to obey him and applaud his efforts. When he needs something the private tyrannical man will flatter others in return until he has achieved his target, but once he has obtained what he wanted then he will desert the flatterer (575e2-576a2). However, should he want to, the private tyrannical man is free to walk away from these flatterers at any time to either pursue his criminal life alone or with another group of tyrannically-minded individuals.

However, the social circumstances of the tyrant are completely different. Having eliminated all the best people from the city, the tyrant is left with only some decent people who hate him for enslaving them. Worse still, his inner circle consists of fellow unjust and tyrannically-minded individuals like himself who are ready to pounce on his position should he falter for even a moment. Surrounded by danger, even if the tyrant awoke one day wanting to abandon his political

position to instead pursue life as a private citizen it is unlikely that he could ever really walk away. Instead, the tyrant would face execution, eternal imprisonment, or be dispatched with by one of his inner circle. Therefore, whilst both the private tyrannical citizen and the tyrant are prisoners to their eros, the tyrant is also in a far worse position because of the social restraints that come with his political power.

Before I end this section to discuss the possibility of the moral repair of a developing tyrannical character, I want to make one final observation of what, I suggest, is an important factor in serving to further cement one's fully-fledged tyrannical character. This is that in each of the three lifestyles the tyrannical character assimilates himself amongst like-minded tyrannical characters.

Immediately after the release of his lawless desires, spanning from 574d3-574a7, the tyrannical character joins a mob of other tyrannical individuals (575a8). As previously described, he will either leave the city with this mob in service of an internal tyrant, cause small evils in his own city, or in the right political conditions he will assist the mob to elevate the most wicked among them to become a tyrant. Not once does Socrates describe the fully developed tyrannical character as leading his lawless life alone. I suggest that this is because being part of a mob of like-minded individuals helps to further encourage wickedness in the tyrannical character.

Navigating the strength of his lawless desires in reality could, on his own, be overwhelming. The tyrannical character is the person who feels the most regret in his soul which is what makes his existence so wretched, as such we might wonder how he stays on course with his wickedness in spite of his regret. Above all else he has his newly released lawless desires to satisfy, whose demands continually motivate his lawless actions. Yet, I argue that being part of a tyrannical mob is also a crucial device to enabling the tyrannical character's wickedness. Surrounded by people like himself who are also committing unjust actions, this can serve to reaffirm his tyrannical identity. The more he witnesses their wickedness and how this leads to the satisfaction of their bodily passions, the further assured he will be of his own condition and encouraged to pursue his own lawless action.

Given that this mob will not be friends to one another, since tyrannical characters are friendless (576a3-5), but rather resemble convenient associates, being in the mob can breed a sense of competition among tyrannical characters. Tyrants and tyrannical characters who are enticed by the prospects of tyranny feel compelled to compete with others for control (579c6-d1), with the objective of proving themselves to be the most wicked character in their mob who the others will then rally around to make him a tyrant. Hence, being surrounded by like-minded tyrannical characters not only reaffirms one's tyrannical identity but also motivates tyrannical characters to commit wicked actions in the hope of becoming the greatest tyrant of their group. It is for these reasons that I argue that the type of people we associate with impact our moral development, which we also saw from the effects of bad upbringing in chapter one. However, I shall suggest in the next section that when we are exposed to the right type of person this can play a crucial role in initiating good moral development.

## 2.5 Moral repair

The question of whether the developing tyrannical character is capable of moral repair is not a question that Plato asks in books VIII and IX as they focus on the contrast between the just man and the four unjust characters to determine who is happiest. However, I suggest we can shed light on this question by examining two important aspects of Plato's *Republic*.

This section will be split into two parts. First, I will examine a passage at the end of book IX that, I believe, offers hope that unjust characters can undergo moral repair, provided that they are detected and punished for their actions. Second, to gain further insight on important factors that are needed to help us to make better life decisions I will examine two sections from the Myth of Er in book X. I will later use the insights gained from this section to offer a speculative account of how moral repair can be initiated in tyrannical characters in the final section of chapter three.

### 2.5.1 Intervention

I propose we see a significant indication from Socrates that it is possible for unjust characters to undergo moral repair. At the end of book IX Socrates is in the process of concluding his argument that the unjust man leads an unhappy life when he claims that if people who have committed injustices are detected and punished for their actions then their bestial part can be tamed (591a3-b5).

Before I proceed to present and examine this passage I wish to first clarify my reading of the 'bestial part' to be tamed that Socrates mentions at 591a4-b1. The term 'bestial part' is in reference to a previous discussion at 588b9-e2 where Socrates proposes to "fashion an image of the soul in words" (588b9-10). Here, he appears to distinguish his imagining of the soul into three different images. The first is of a "many-headed beast, with a ring of tame and savage animal heads that it can grow and change at will" (588c7-9). The second is a single species of lion, and the third is a single species of human being (588d3-5), with the first bestial part being the largest element and the lion part the second largest.

I will take these three images to line up with the three elements of the tripartite soul, with the bestial part being appetite, the lion species as spirit, and the human species as reason. I acknowledge that there is a controversial debate of whether these three images map onto the three elements of the tripartite soul, however, I will not enter into this debate here. Instead, I point to the following passage in support of the idea that the bestial part can be in line with the appetitive part of the soul. At 580d-e, when describing the three elements of the soul, Socrates speaks of a 'multiform' element that is also the largest element in the soul, this he refers to as the appetitive element. This, I suggest, reflects many of the features Socrates attributes to the bestial part at 588c-d. Fashioned as an image in words, the multiform element at 580d-e becomes a 'many-headed' beast at 588c7, and both passages refer to this element as the biggest part of the element of the three parts.

To resume my argument, below is the passage at 591a3-b5 that I suggest lends support to the idea that tyrannical souls could undergo moral repair if they are detected.

Socrates: How, then, will we maintain or argue, Glaucon, that injustice, licentiousness, and doing shameful things are profitable to anyone, since, even though he may acquire more money or other sort of power from them, they make him more vicious?

Glaucon: There's no way we can.

Socrates: Or that to do injustice without being discovered and having to pay the penalty is profitable? Doesn't the one who remains undiscovered become even more vicious, while the bestial part of the one who is discovered is calmed and tamed and his gentle part freed, so that his entire soul settles into its best nature, acquires moderation, justice, and reason, and attains a more valuable state than that of having a fine strong, healthy body, since the soul itself is more valuable than the body.

Admittedly, in this passage Socrates does not specify that the people who commit injustices here are tyrannical characters. However, I see no reason why it is not a plausible suggestion that these people could include tyrannical characters. If we look at the actions that Socrates refers to when describing the types of things that this person will do they are said to enact unjust, licentious, and shameful actions, which are exactly the types of actions that tyrannical characters commit. Tyrannical characters indulge in their bodily passions with little, if any self-control, and they commit shameful actions such as abusing their parents. Therefore, although we cannot conclusively say that Socrates is referring the tyrannical characters here, I think there is good reason to think that tyrannical characters would be included in this description.

The key claim to highlight in this passage is that a person who commits injustices can be reformed, provided that they are discovered and punished for their unjust actions. If discovered and punished then the bestial part, that is the appetitive part of the soul on my reading, can be 'calmed' and

‘tamed’, allowing his gentler elements to be freed. With this achieved the individual even has the opportunity to become just by acquiring virtues such as ‘moderation’, ‘justice’, and ‘reason’ (591b3-5). In a tyrannical character this would mean that if he were detected and punished for his injustices then eros’ bodily passions that have enslaved his gentle elements, including his spirit and reason, could be brought under control. This could then free spirit and reason from their enslavement to then reform his soul.

However, there is also an alternative scenario in this passage. If a person who commits injustices is not discovered then he becomes ‘even more vicious’ (591a5). The reason for this, I suggest, is that since he is not discovered and punished - which would put an end to his unjust actions - then he will simply continue to commit unjust, licentious, and shameful actions. The longer he operates undetected the more injustices he will commit simply by being able to continue. This aspect of the passage, I argue, echoes what happens to the tyrant the longer he is able to maintain his power, this being that “the longer he remains a tyrant the more like the nightmare he becomes” (576b6-8). I previously argued in this chapter that the reason the tyrant becomes ‘more like the nightmare’ the longer he maintains his power is because he is able to keep on indulging in lawless action without challenge. Similarly, I want to suggest that the same is true of the person who commits injustices but goes undetected at 591a4-b9, this being that he becomes ‘even more vicious’ because he is able to continue committing unjust actions.

Hence, on my reading one implication from this passage is that if a person is discovered in good time and punished, instead of being allowed to continue committing injustices, then he can be reformed to undergo positive moral development. However, if he goes undiscovered and has pursued injustice for a longer period of time then this will make his soul, and character, far worse.

On my account of the moral degeneration of a tyrannical character, once his lawless desires are unleashed at 574d3, and he acts on them, then he will achieve a fully-developed character and be incapable of reform. Yet, in this passage Socrates does not say that there is a point at which the

person who commits injustices is no longer capable of reform, provided he is discovered and punished. However, I suggest that there is good reason to think that, based on my previous argument, the tyrannical character does reach a point in his moral degeneration where even if he were discovered and punished his soul could not be repaired.

In support of my claim, I point to Socrates' description of the tyrannical soul at 574e1-6. Here, the tyrannical character is said to have "permanently become while awake what he used to become occasionally while asleep" with the consequence of this being that "he won't hold back from any terrible murder or from any kind of food or act" (*ibid.*). The use of the description 'permanently' here suggests that the tyrannical characters' state of degeneration is now fixed and final. One reason why Socrates may not mention at 591a4-b9 that some characters reach a point of irreparability is that at this point in book IX, where he is concluding his argument, he is no longer talking about the tyrannical character specifically. Instead, Socrates is now addressing the unhappiness of unjust characters in general<sup>13</sup>. Hence, this could be why Socrates does not enter into the same specific details that we see him do in his actual account of the moral degeneration of the tyrannical character.

I will now turn to the second part of this section. As I previously noted, the intervention passage in book IX does not explain how exactly an unjust character is to achieve moral repair once they are detected, we only know that his bestial part must be tamed for his gentler part to be freed. In the next-subsection I turn to examine two aspects of the Myth of Er that I believe offer important insight on crucial factors needed for moral repair.

### 2.5.2 Myth of Er

In *Republic* book X, Socrates recounts to Glaucon the tale of a soldier called Er who died at war (614b2-621d3). In the tale Er's disembodied soul travels to the afterlife but once there he is told

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<sup>13</sup> I have my supervisor, Fiona Leigh, to thank for this suggestion.



that it will be his job to observe the journey and judgement of souls from one life cycle to the next, and then return to earth to report what he had seen. Through this tale Plato explores immortality, moral responsibility, and reward and punishment.

There are two areas of the myth that I will examine in this sub-section. In the first area (614b8-616b1), Er describes how the disembodied souls are judged and punished in the afterlife. Of great interest for our purposes is Er's description of the judgement and punishment that the souls of disembodied tyrants suffer in the afterlife. I will argue that this description offers further support for my assertion in stage three that even among fully-fledged tyrannical characters there are different degrees of wickedness, with tyrants being the most wicked. In the second area (617d2-620d4), souls are given the opportunity to choose what type of life they will lead in their next life-cycle on earth. There are both just and unjust types of lives on offer to be chosen and several experiences are cited in the myth as helping to influence souls to choose better lives for themselves, such as the experience of suffering. I will suggest that such experiences could provide insight into how moral repair can be initiated for embodied souls, specifically the embodied souls of developing tyrannical characters.

It is important to stress that there are many significant differences between the context of the Myth of Er and Socrates' account of degeneration in moral characters in books VIII and IX. The biggest difference is that the former envisions the judgements, punishments, and redemptions of disembodied souls in the afterlife, whilst the latter focuses on the degeneration of living embodied moral characters. Hence, it is not my intention to apply the contents of the Myth of Er directly to the possibility of moral improvement and intervention for developing tyrannical characters. Even if the former does support the idea of moral improvement for disembodied souls, this alone is by no means evidence that Plato believed moral repair to be possible for unjust characters in a single lifetime. However, I hope to show that important insights can be gained from a study of the two sections I have specified. I now turn to look at the first area of attention in the myth.

After dying on the battlefield, Er's disembodied soul travels with a group of souls to the place of judgement in the afterlife. The group reaches a chamber with a series of chasms; two chasms to the heavens, one to earth, and one to the underworld. In the centre sits a selection of judges who explain the rules of reckoning. Each soul is judged by their deeds on earth, for any injustice a soul has committed he must pay tenfold for it through punishment in the underworld, for just souls reward awaits them in the heavens. Er observes as the soul's travel in and out of the chasms according to the judgements passed upon them (614b8-615b6). One soul recounts to Er the terrible punishments he saw inflicted on the great tyrant Ardiaius, who killed his brother and father (615d4-d1).

When we came near the opening on our way out, after all our sufferings were over, we suddenly saw him [Ardiaius] together with some others, pretty well all of them tyrants (although there were also some private individuals among them who had committed great crimes) (616d4-6).

Here, we are told that the people who are punished alongside Ardiaius mostly include tyrants, but there are also a few private citizens among them, the reason for their inclusion with the tyrants appears to be because of the severity of their unjust actions on earth. Having just received a cycle of punishment in the underworld this group has now entered the chamber of judgement where its members believe that they are ready to go up through another chasm to a better life. However, the chasm fails to allow them entry.

It [the chasm] roared whenever one of these incurably wicked people or anyone else who hadn't paid a sufficient penalty tried to go up. And there were savage men, all fiery to look at, who were standing by, and when they heard the roar, they grabbed some of these criminals and led them away, but they bound the feet, hands, and head of Ardiaius and the others, threw them down, and flayed them. Then they dragged them out of the way,

lacerating them on thorn bushes, and telling every passerby that they were to be thrown in Tartarus, and explaining why they were being treated in this way (615e2-616a4).

There are several significant points to draw from this passage. Most significant is that the disembodied souls of tyrants are described as ‘incurably wicked’. It is the souls of all tyrants, like Ardiaius, who are dragged away and thrown into Tartarus. This fate is said to be the greatest fear of all souls who pass through the chasms (616a4-6). The definitive fate of a tyrant’s disembodied soul in the Myth of Er could suggest further support to my argument that embodied tyrants, as fully-fledged tyrannical characters who have obtained political power, are morally incurable.

The second thing to note is that some criminals are removed from the group before ‘Ardiaius and the others’ are thrown into Tartarus. This means that some of the group are spared the fate of Tartarus. This could possibly be to undergo a further cycle of punishment in the underworld to allow for them to pay for the severity of their crimes, and the pain they have previously caused others on earth. It is only a select number of the ‘criminals’ who are removed from the group, none of which include the disembodied tyrants. But just who are these spared souls?

One possibility is that these souls are private individuals who committed great crimes but never became tyrants, which suggests that, unlike the tyrants, they could possibly be redeemed through further punishment. A consequence of this suggestion is that fully developed tyrannical characters who remain private citizens could still be redeemable. This would contradict my claim that all fully developed tyrannical characters, even those who are private citizens, are morally incurable.

A second possibility is that these individuals are developing tyrannical characters, those that I distinguished in the second stage of moral development who have abused their parents. Striking and enslaving one’s parents is by all accounts a great crime and even more so in ancient Athenian society. A developing tyrannical character in this position could be one of the spared souls that requires a further cycle of punishment in the underworld to make up for the severity of their crimes on earth.

A third possibility is that some private tyrannical individuals were spared the fate of Tartarus whilst other private tyrannical characters, those whose crimes were most heinous, were thrown in Tartarus alongside the tyrants. This third possibility is difficult to navigate because it means not only considering the degeneration of a person's moral character but also the severity of the actions that they have committed. For example, if we recall the three types of lifestyles of fully fledged tyrannical characters that I distinguished in section 2.4 it could be the case that only the private tyrannical characters who commit the worst actions will be morally incurable. For example, committing murder in service of a tyrant is far worse than stealing from homes.

Throughout this chapter I have argued that the moral degeneration of a tyrannical character is progressive, and that only once lawless desires have been unleashed in the tyrannical soul at 573d3, and he has taken action to satisfy them, is he fully developed and beyond moral repair. In response to the third possibility, I suggest that it does not matter what type of lawless desires he has and the actions he will commit to satisfy them. What does matter is that the tyrannical character has taken the initiative to pursue his lawless desires because in doing so this demonstrates that he no longer experiences feelings of shame that are strong enough to resist his lawless desires. Without shame the fully-fledged tyrannical character will take action to fulfil his lawless desires without restraint.

The only thing, I suggest, that separates the private tyrannical man, and the tyrant is political opportunity. Provided with the political opportunity to take power I think the private tyrannical man would engage in the same wicked and ruthless actions as the tyrant, such as enslaving an entire nation (575d). Hence, on my account, both the private tyrannical character and the tyrant are morally incurable as, psychologically speaking, each one has lawless desires unleashed in their soul. Therefore, both the fully-fledged private tyrannical character and the tyrant are willing to pursue lawless action, the tyrant just has greater opportunity to commit greater injustices.

Before I end this discussion on the identity of the spared souls, I want to first point out an important consequence of the passage in question, 615e2-616a4, that still holds regardless of which

of the three possibilities is correct. I suggest the passage offers support for my argument that even among tyrannical characters there are different degrees of wickedness. The fate of the disembodied souls of tyrants like Ardiaius is clear from the very beginning of the judgement process, this being that they are morally incurable and will be thrown into Tartarus. However, the uncertainty of the fate of the private individuals who have committed great crimes (615d5-6) implies that there are different degrees of wickedness in tyrannical characters. Only the disembodied soul of the tyrant is definitively described as morally incurable in the myth (616e2-3).

Finally, to end my examination of this first area in the myth, what I want to be able to say in answer to the question of the identity of the spared souls is that the second possibility is the case. This is that the souls who are spared the fate of Tartarus are, as per my second suggestion, the developing tyrannical characters from stage two of my account. They have committed the great crime of abusing their parents, but they have not committed crimes on the level of fully-fledged tyrannical characters, both in number and in severity, because their lawless desires have not been fully unleashed yet. Hence, their souls can still be capable of redemption through further punishment which is why they are spared the fate of Tartarus. Unfortunately, however, the myth does not specify who the spared souls are, nor who the 'others' are that are condemned to Tartarus alongside the tyrants. Therefore, we cannot know whether the second possibility, or any other option, is what Plato means here or not.

However, what I think we could say is that the unspecified 'others' who are condemned to Tartarus alongside the tyrants will have committed many unjust actions and that these actions would have caused a great amount of pain to others. If we recall Ardiaius' introduction in the myth, of the few things we learn about him is that when he was a tyrant on earth he killed his father and brother and "committed many other impious deeds as well" (615c5-d1). The emphasis here is on the severity of Ardiaius' actions, murdering family members, and the many wicked deeds he has committed.

This information that we learn about of Ardiaius fits with the narrative of what Er has just observed about the judgement and punishment process of disembodied souls. This is that souls are punished based on how many unjust things they do and how many people they have wronged. Each soul must suffer ten times the pain that they have caused each individual on earth (615a5-b5). We could imagine that a tyrant like Ardiaius who had killed his father and brother, enslaved an entire nation to take political power, and committed many other unjust acts would have caused an insurmountable level of pain to countless individuals. As such, the fate of Tartarus is the only possible way in which he can continue to suffer for all the pain he has caused.

Given what we know about the judgement of souls in the afterlife, I suggest we can expect that the unspecified 'others' who are thrown into Tartarus alongside the tyrants must also have caused much pain and committed many unjust actions to be receiving the same type of punishment as tyrants. In books VIII and IX the people who are able to commit the worst crimes, like murder, are tyrannical characters with unleashed lawless desires (574c3-6). The demands of eros' newfound lawless desires will motivate the tyrannical character to commit any act for his own pleasure (574e6-575a3). Hence, the greatest pain caused to others will be by the unjust deeds of tyrannical characters whose lawless desires have been unleashed. As I distinguished in stage three, these are fully-fledged tyrannical characters.

As developing tyrannical characters have not yet unleashed their lawless desires I propose that the suffering they do cause others will not be anywhere near the degree of suffering caused by fully-fledged tyrannical characters. There is a significant difference in the wickedness of the developing tyrannical character who strikes his father and enslaves his parents, and Ardiaius the tyrant who murders his own family members.

It is for these reasons that I suggest the unspecified 'others' who are thrown in Tartarus alongside the tyrants are unlikely to be developing tyrannical characters. Unlike fully-fledged tyrannical characters, the injustices and suffering that developing tyrannical characters bring about are limited

by the restraint of their lawless desires<sup>14</sup>. As such we might think that it is possible that their injustices could be paid for with a further cycle of punishment, as opposed to the moral incurability that is implied by being condemned to Tartarus. To conclude this discussion, it is for these reasons that I suggest the second option presents at least a plausible reading of who could be punished alongside the tyrants in Tartarus, and who is spared this fate. However, as I stressed before, Plato does not specify who these people are that are spared and who are the ‘others’ to be condemned, hence though I have offered this suggestion it remains unclear as to what the answer is.

Moving onto our second area of interest from the myth. After Er observes the judgement and punishment of the souls he then joins another group of souls who have already received their punishment or reward in the afterlife. These souls now have the opportunity to choose the nature of their next life cycle on earth (617d5-618b6). The souls are presented with a selection of lives that they could lead, both human and animal, just and unjust. They are told that it is their responsibility to choose a good life for themselves (617e3-4), but that their choices on earth will also affect the constitution of their soul (618b2-4).

The first soul to choose the nature of their next life cycle selects a tyrant’s life (619b7-c4). Foolish and greedy, he chooses a life that initially appears to satisfy his appetites. However, upon closer inspection he discovers that he is destined to commit and suffer many evils in this life, like eating his own children (619c1). The soul is filled with anger but fails to see that he alone is to blame for his bad choice. Most interesting about this case is that though this soul chooses a tyrannical life he is revealed to have come down from heaven in the afterlife. On earth he lived in a good city and so performed virtuous action out of habit in accordance with his city’s laws, but not from philosophy (619c5-7).

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<sup>14</sup> Using this same reasoning, it would be the fully-fledged private tyrannical characters who are the unspecified ‘others’ that are condemned to Tartarus with the tyrants. This is because they also have lawless desires unleashed in their souls which motivates them to commit greater injustices and cause more suffering.

From this observation, Er notes a pattern arising among the choices of the souls. The souls who have arrived most recently from heaven do, in general, choose life cycles of poorer quality for themselves. One reason given for this choice is that the souls from heaven, having recently experienced great reward, are “untrained in suffering as a result” (619d2). By contrast, the souls who have most recently come from earth, in general, choose better lives for themselves.

The majority of those who had come up from earth, on the other hand, having suffered themselves and seen others suffer, were in no rush to make their choices. Because of this and because of the chance of the lottery, there was an interchange of goods for evils for most of the souls (619d2-6)<sup>15</sup>.

Ultimately, in the afterlife it is the disembodied souls themselves who are responsible for the nature and quality of their next life on earth. They can choose unjust, miserable lives, or by taking care in their selection they have the potential to choose better lives for themselves. A key factor in motivating souls to try and make better choices is the experience of suffering, particularly those souls who have mostly recently suffered or witnessed the suffering of others. I suggest that the implication here is that some souls are able to learn from their previous mistakes on earth. A soul's punishment in the afterlife, paying for his injustices and suffering tenfold the pain he caused on earth, could allow him to gain an understanding of the suffering his actions caused others. He might then feel shame, guilt, and regret for his previous actions. When the opportunity arises for the disembodied soul to choose the nature of his next life on earth he can reflect on his experience of suffering in the afterlife, and proceed cautiously with his choice. This is opposed to immediately choosing the life that appears to satisfy his appetites.

As I stressed at the beginning of this section we must practice caution when comparing the Myth of Er and books VIII and IX. The potential for disembodied souls to learn from their mistakes

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<sup>15</sup> If, however, a person pursues philosophy in their lifetime and by the fate of chance they are not one of the last people to choose their next life cycle, then it is implied that they will be rewarded in the heavens and their journey to and from earth will be far easier (619d7-e4).



and make better choices does not mean that moral improvement can also be achieved by embodied developing tyrannical characters in a single lifetime. However, the intervention passage at 591a3-b5 does provide support for the idea moral repair could be possible.

Mark Johnstone (2011) cautions against the influence of the Myth of Er on the question of moral repair. Johnstone presents a reading of books VIII and IX wherein the moral degeneration of the four unjust characters is a result of a power struggle in the soul. The power struggle view holds that an unjust character-type is formed by a power struggle between the beliefs and desires of the father and corrupting societal influences. The result of this struggle rests on the strength of these competing influences and may also depend on the extent to which the son's rational element has been nurtured in upbringing. A consequence of the power struggle view is that Johnstone attempts to shift our focus away from the idea that these characters are unjust simply because of mistaken life choices. Rather, Johnstone suggests that Plato's main point in books VIII and IX is that corrupt societies greatly impact our moral development, as the type of upbringing one receives in a given society heavily determines his moral character (2011, p.164)<sup>16</sup>.

Given the priority that he accords to societal circumstances over rational choice, Johnstone cautions against the application of the Myth of Er to understanding the moral degeneration of unjust characters in books VIII and IX. There are important differences, he argues, between the choices of the souls in the Myth of Er and the lives of the unjust characters in books VIII and IX. In the Myth of Er the souls are able to make their choices from a detached position, looking in on the type of life they might choose. Yet, the unjust characters of books VIII and IX do not have this luxury because they are caught in the midst of their life cycle.

The disembodied souls are also able to reflect on their choices because they have an assortment of lives available for them to choose from. This advantage means that if they have thoroughly

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<sup>16</sup> Johnstone does stress that rational choice is still important to Plato because Plato wants us to reflect carefully on how we should lead our lives. However, on his reading the importance of social influence in moral degeneration appears to outweigh individual choice (Johnstone, 2011, pp.164-5).

inspected the lives available then they know what each one entails and can use this valuable information to choose a better life, with less suffering. However, Johnstone argues that “there is no evidence in the text that we are to think of the young men described in books 8-9 as stepping back from their lives and reflecting on them in the detached way this implies” (Johnstone, 2011, p.164, fn52).

In the case of the tyrannical character, he is trapped in a power struggle between competing appetitive desires. In which case, how can he ever hope to practice the same detachment of the disembodied souls to make a sound choice on the course of his life? Given these circumstances Johnstone further expresses his doubts over whether one could become a good person after they have established an unjust character (*ibid.*, p.165). Yet, as we have seen, the intervention passage appears to offer this very chance, that even vicious characters have an opportunity for reform so long as they are detected, punished, and their bestial part is tamed and their gentle part freed.

At the beginning of this sub-section, I proposed that the experiences through which some souls in the myth are able to choose better lives could help to inform us on how, if indeed possible through intervention, embodied unjust characters could be encouraged to make better decisions. I will now summarise what these three experiences are.

The first experience involves reflecting on one’s actions. The disembodied souls experience a temporal lapse between the end of one lifecycle and then choosing their next life on earth. In this time disembodied souls are punished or rewarded depending on the nature of their actions on earth. This is an important opportunity for them to reflect on their actions, having now been judged on them. This first experience leads into the second, which is the experience of suffering.

The temporal lapse between one life cycle and choosing one’s next life on earth is, I suggest, particularly important for the souls who are being punished for their unjust actions because the disembodied soul is made to suffer tenfold the suffering he caused others on earth. Through this particular punishment the soul has the opportunity to experience the pain he caused others,

allowing him to gain some understanding of the consequences that his unjust actions had on the people he wronged. This experiencing of suffering lends itself to the third and final experience.

Each disembodied soul is allowed to review the different types of lives they have to choose from before making their choice. This means that if they have thoroughly inspected the lives then they will know what each one entails and can use this valuable information to choose a better life. Helping the disembodied soul to choose wisely is both his experiences of reflection on his previous life, and his experiences of suffering.

I propose that these three conditions, the opportunity for reflection, the experience of suffering, and being able to review potential lives could also help the embodied tyrannical character to undergo moral repair. The first experience of reflection, and the third experience of reviewing better lives for oneself could be enabled in the developing tyrannical character's life through the intervention of a friend and role model. The friend would appeal to the developing tyrannical character, not to his rational element because he is incapable of moral reasoning<sup>17</sup>, but rather to the spirited part of his soul that yearns for recognition and affirmation. In the final section of chapter three I will offer a speculative account of how the friend could undertake this challenge to help initiate reform in the developing tyrannical character. In the next chapter I investigate the role of spirit in the tyrannical soul and the crucial part it plays in restraining the developing tyrannical characters' lawless desires through the feeling of shame.

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<sup>17</sup> As per Scott's (2020) argument.

## Chapter Three:

### Psychological Degeneration in the Tyrannical Soul

In this final chapter I investigate the role of spirit in the developing tyrannical soul. Spirit plays a crucial role in resisting the lawless desires of the developing tyrannical character because it is able to evoke feelings of shame that can hold back his lawless desires. Spirit is capable of evoking shame in the developing tyrannical character because of its affinity toward those people and things that are familiar to it, which in the tyrannical characters' case is his parents. By having the ability to feel shame strong enough to motivate him to resist his lawless desires, I argue that the developing tyrannical character still has the potential to undergo moral repair.

#### 3.1 Spirit in the *Republic*

The nature of spirit and its functions in the soul are discussed by Socrates at three distinct points in the *Republic*. In book II we have our first glimpse of spirit through Socrates' examination of the nature and role of the spirited auxiliaries in the ideal city. In book IV the nature of spirit is further elucidated by Socrates' argument for the division of the soul into three parts. Finally, at the end of book IX, Socrates explains how spirit is able to pursue truly honourable action by listening to reason. To begin this chapter, I offer a traditional explanation of spirit by drawing on the key details presented in each of these three sections in the *Republic*.

In book II, at 374e8-9, Socrates and Glaucon resolve to investigate the nature of the city's auxiliary class. As the class of citizens that correspond to the spirited element of the soul in Socrates' city-soul analogy (440e-441a), this investigation into the auxiliary class offers an insightful first impression of the nature and functions of spirit.

There are a number of qualities that the auxiliary class must possess to defend the city. Socrates begins by appealing to types of animals that are associated with guarding responsibilities, such as dogs. To guard others one must demonstrate courageousness which can only be achieved if they

are spirited. Spirit enables courageousness for it produces fearlessness and feelings of invincibility (375a10-b1). Therefore, to be effective at guarding the city the auxiliaries must possess spirited souls (375b5).

However, if the auxiliaries act with fearlessness, and feel that they are invincible, then what is to stop their charged, spirited nature from motivating them to attack one another or even the citizens they are meant to be defending? The answer lies in Socrates' initial appeal to guard-dogs. Dogs are gentle to their owners and people they are familiar with, but savage towards strangers (375d10-e2). Likewise, the auxiliaries must be gentle to one another and the citizens that they protect, and savage towards enemies of the city (375b10-c3).

In book IV Socrates undertakes a direct examination of spirit to argue that in the soul spirit exists as separate from appetite, as the third part of the soul. Spirit is responsible for motivations, feelings and desires that often go against what the appetitive part of the soul wants. For instance, spirit has the capacity to evoke anger in an individual (439e2-3) and sometimes anger can work against what appetite wants (440a5-6). If reason has rationalised that it would be best for us to do one thing but instead we give into our appetite and do the opposite then, Socrates explains, this person will be angry with himself, specifically his appetitive desires (440a7-b2). Two things are drawn from this discussion. First, if our anger is often in contention with our appetitive desires then spirit, as the source of our anger, must be separate from appetite. Second, if we can be angry at relinquishing control to our appetites instead of listening to reason then, in the soul, spirit must be an ally of reason (ibid).<sup>18</sup> To be an ally of reason, spirit can listen to reason's judgements and obey its instructions, whilst also ensuring that appetite obeys reason. Spirit can do this provided that it has not been corrupted by a bad upbringing.

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<sup>18</sup> The alliance between spirit and reason is also represented by the function of the auxiliary class in the ideal city to obey the instruction passed down from the rulers (440d4-6), and also to ensure the artisan class follows suit.

In book III Socrates cautions that the auxiliary class can become savage and harsh if too great an emphasis is placed on physical training in their upbringing, however, if their education is focused only on music and poetry then they will grow up to be weak and cowardly (ibid.). The spirited element must be nurtured with a mixture of physical training, and music and poetry, and if the rational element is nurtured through learning then spirit can ally itself with reason to help control appetite (441e7-442a).

An integral aspect of spirit is its value for honour.<sup>19</sup> Spirit's honour-loving nature is complemented by its capacity for courageousness and its desire for victory, for courage helps spirit to pursue honourable action and a desire for victory further motivates spirit. However, as Socrates explains in book IX, without reason's guidance spirit's honour-loving nature risks being led astray. Valuing honour can make one envious of others (586c5-d2), and also motivate us to extreme actions in pursuit of recognition and honours. Significantly, spirit's honour-loving nature does not guarantee that the individual pursues truly noble action. This is because what spirit deems as honourable appears to be determined by the values of the society it operates in.<sup>20</sup> For instance, in book VIII when the just father's son transitions into a timocrat a crucial factor in this transition is social influence. His mother and household servants tell him that his father does not defend the family's honour, and the son observes social norms that dictate that his father should be doing this. As a result, his understanding of honourable action shifts to coincide with the current values and practices of his society. Now, he prioritises status and the task of defending and promoting his

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<sup>19</sup> See, *Rep* 582e3-4, and 586c6-d3.

<sup>20</sup> This interpretation is taken by Kamtekar (1998), who argues that "honour-lovers do internalize the norms of their societies, making judgments of worth that presuppose their having made judgments of self-assessment in the normative terms of their societies" (p.332). Similarly, Brennan (2012) also proposes that spirit's conceptualisation of honour is based on society. The fact that there are many appetitive beings but only a limited number of resources means that there arise facts about certain abilities that are identified as best able to help one obtain and preserve their resources, significantly, "it is the spirited souls' sensitivity to these [...] facts that constitutes the landscape of honour" (2012, p.110). Brennan argues that spirit "creates the institutions of reputation, renown, shame, and so on, as a sort of signalling system to encode and transmit these underlying facts" (ibid.). Although this is the dominant view of spirit's constitution of honour, namely that we determine what is honourable based on our societal values, Singpurwalla (2019) has contested this reading.

household (549c-550c). It is by moving away from the rational influence of his father that the son loses sight of what is truly honourable and now wrongly adopts timocratic values.

To summarise, spirit is responsible for capacities such as courageousness, fearlessness, and a desire for victory. If corrupted in upbringing it can become savage, harsh, and encourage violence towards others. It has a propensity to express gentleness to people who it is familiar with, like fellow citizens, and is suspicious and unfriendly towards strangers. Overall, its honour-loving nature can motivate it to undertake good action, under the supervision of reason. However, without reason, spirit will decide what is honourable based upon its social environment. As a result, spirit risks attaching honour to the wrong actions. Uniting this eclectic range of capacities, motivations, and desires, is the common view that spirit's nature is predominantly social.<sup>21</sup> In the next sub-section, I present Tad Brennan's reading of the nature of spirit which, he argues, plays a defining role in our social interactions.

### 3.1.1 The two roles of spirit: interpersonal diplomat and internal police force

If you could design a soul from scratch, why give it a spirited part? The answer, Tad Brennan suggests, is that spirit is the response of the rational part of the soul to help regulate the demands of its appetitive part (2012, p. 103). To have a soul that functions harmoniously appetite must obey reason, however, appetite is immune to rational argument since it is solely devoted to the satisfaction of bodily and monetary desires, and reason is too small and weak to overrule appetite. Spirit was created to resolve this problem by helping to control appetite on the behalf of reason.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wilberding (2009) characterises spirit as “essentially social and other-directed; it is wholly dependent on the views of others” (2009, p.366).

<sup>22</sup> In support of this assertion Brennan appeals to Plato's political allegory between the tripartite soul and the three classes of the city (2012, pp103-4). It is only after unnecessary desires are introduced into the healthy City of Pigs (369-372), transforming it into a fevered city (372e-373a), that the auxiliary class are needed in the city. Once citizens desire goods in excess, the city requires a police force and an army to seize the land of neighbouring cities for growing further crops, they also require protection from these neighbours should they decide to retaliate (373d).

To fulfil this purpose Brennan proposes that spirit undertakes two roles in the soul, first it confronts the appetitive desires of other souls, and second it confronts its own appetite (Brennan, 2012, p.105). In support of these two roles Brennan points to the nature of the auxiliaries, the political representations of the spirited element of the soul, and their role in Kallipolis (2012, pp.106-7). In the ideal city the auxiliaries “will guard against external enemies and internal friends, so that the one will lack the power and the other the desire to harm the city” (414b).<sup>23</sup> This dual function is also reiterated in the *Timaens* where the auxiliary class are said to guard against enemies of the city from outside and from anyone who should do evil inside the city (17d-18a).<sup>24</sup>

The first role of spirit is to cultivate interpersonal diplomacy. A limited number of resources in the world means that souls must compete against one another for a share of them. In response to this situation spirit acts as a negotiator to confront the demands of other souls and to help organise the distribution of resources (Brennan, 2012 p.107). Spirit will balance the claims of other appetites with its own desires, it will decide when to concede its desires and when to resist the demands of others, and also work with others to maximise its own gain.

Spirit’s negotiation of the distribution of resources heavily depends on social convention. For instance, the distribution of goods in society is often based on personal merit which in turn can be equated with those abilities which help a society acquire resources and protect those resources. For example, to have citizens who act with bravery and courageousness to seize and then defend their resources is good for a city (ibid., p.108).

Brennan argues that above all spirit is honour-loving (586c5-d2) and it forms its sense of honour based upon the very traits that help a society amass and sustain its resources. To be brave is honourable, whilst acting with cowardice is shameful as cowardly citizens will hinder a society’s ability to amass resources and protect them. Therefore, through interacting and negotiating with

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<sup>23</sup> See, *Rep*, 415d for further evidence of the auxiliaries’ dual function.

<sup>24</sup> For evidence of the relationship between reason and spirit working together to govern appetite Brennan refers to *Rep*, 442ab, and *Tim*, 70a-b.



other souls for resources, spirit, and in turn society, forms ideas of what is honourable and shameful behaviour which subsequently influences how resources are to be allocated (Brennan, 2012, p.110).

A further factor that influences spirit's negotiation of resources is that which is *oikeion*, those things and people which one finds familiar (*Rep*, 375c), and so shares a sense of solidarity and kinship with (Brennan, 2012, p.109). Spirit holds an affinity toward the values and traditions that are familiar to it from upbringing, and to people who are dear to it.<sup>25</sup>

Spirit's value for what is *oikeion* and for honour ultimately differentiates it from its rational and appetitive counterparts. In the first case, though spirit is honour-loving only reason is good-loving (Brennan, 2012, p.111). Spirit loves that which it is raised to value as honourable, but these social traditions do not have to coincide with the good. Only reason is capable of the moral reasoning needed to identify the good (452d), as Brennan rightly explains "spirit is not only incapable of understanding the good, but is incapable of even having thoughts about goodness that go beyond knee-jerk prejudices about what is familiar" (Brennan, 2012, p.116). Only in Kallipolis can spirit's idea of honour coincide with what is morally good because the just guardian rulers ensure that the behaviour considered praiseworthy and honourable in the city is just.

Honour and what is *oikeion* also differentiate spirit from appetite because spirit values honour beyond its own immediate bodily desire, just as the timocrat values honour over bodily desire.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, spirit's love of the *oikeion* separates it from appetite since it can be willing to sacrifice its own gain for the well-being of loved ones, which gives rise to capacities such as loyalty, kinship,

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<sup>25</sup> Brennan (2012, pp.115-6) notes how spirit's love for the things it was raised with is also shown in the narrative of moral degeneration in *Republic* books VIII and IX where a younger son is torn between the values he was raised with by his father and a new, more degenerate set of values introduced by external social influences (560a1), (560c6), (572e3). However, because spirit only loves what is *oikeion* because it is familiar, spirit struggles to defend these values against strong resistance because its acceptance of them is unreflective. This is why, once the son's affinity toward his original values is undermined by external influences, he turns to a more degenerate lifestyle (Brennan, 2012, p.116).

<sup>26</sup> Honour also identifies spirit with the irrational side of the soul. Anyone who cares too much for honour is on a slippery slope to succumbing to his appetites since the system of honour is that which regulates the distribution of resources in the first place (Brennan, 2012, p.114).

generosity, and self-sacrifice. Thus, spirit's role of creating interpersonal diplomacy in response to the problem of limited resources is essential since it leads to the identification of honourable and shameful behaviour in society, which also decides how these resources are distributed.

The second role Brennan attributes to spirit is to police internal unrest in the soul (2012, p.118). Even if I am completely alone, isolated from all forms of society and honour systems to regulate my behaviour, Brennan argues that my spirit could still attempt to police my own appetite based on my sense of self-esteem:

“Even if my desert island offers me unlimited quantities of choice foods, my spirit ought to act to restrain my appetite from indulgence. Gross indulgence is vicious in a way that goes beyond public propriety and does not depend on the opinions of others. It is beneath me, absolutely, and not merely in relation to others” (ibid., p.119).

Spirit regulates my appetitive desires not through sensitivity to social conventions but rather by utilising my sense of pride and of self-esteem. Reason instructs that it is wrong to overindulge myself, for example this can result in sickness. Spirit listens to reason but translates this worry into its own concern of personal pride, and feelings of shame and physical disgust at making oneself sick, it then uses the power of these feelings to regulate appetite.

As a result of this second function, though spirit has a key social function, this is not all that defines it since it can regulate the soul's appetite without reference to a social system of honour. Fundamental for spirit, Brennan argues, is its ability to be the medium between reason and appetite; a middleman to unite two components that would otherwise be at odds.

This middleman has both a social and a solitary use. The first social role for spirit requires it to possess a range of capacities for navigating the distribution of resources, such as anger. Spirit also has regard for one's reputation and the all-important ability to imagine how others view our status in society. These capacities can then be used in spirit's role as our internal police force. The

regulation of one's own appetite can be achieved by the internal projection of the views of others, such as "it is greedy to eat the whole cake", regardless of if there is no one around (ibid., pp.126-7).

Brennan's account is able to offer a detailed picture of the operations of spirit. It utilises the political analogue between spirit and the auxiliaries in the *Republic* to shed light on the role of spirit in the soul. Brennan accounts both for spirit's social role to communicate effectively with others, and its solitary function to practice self-control. In doing so Brennan attempts to accommodate the vast range of capacities that are associated with spirit in the *Republic*.

However, one concern for this account is just how well it represents the spirited operations of all moral characters in Plato's *Republic*. Cinzia Arruzza (2018) argues that Brennan's model of spirit, consisting of so-called external and internal roles of spirit working together to regulate our appetitive desires, can only reflect a "normatively good working of spirit" (2018, p.221). This model, she objects, cannot account for the operation of spirit in the tyrannical soul. In the tyrannical soul spirit is enslaved by eros and forced to operate in fulfilment of the tyrannical man's bodily passions. This means that spirit's "internal and external roles are completely decoupled, and there is no internal representation of the appetites of others" (ibid.). In the next sub-section, I investigate Arruzza's account of spirit in the tyrannical soul and her reasoning behind this objection.

### 3.1.2 Spirit in the tyrannical soul

In response to Socrates' definition of spirit in book IX as that which is "wholly dedicated to the pursuit of control, victory, and high repute" (581a9-10), Arruzza argues that the desire that best captures each of these spirited pursuits, and from which they can best be achieved is through a need to assert oneself (Arruzza, 2018, pp.191-2). To gain control over others and be victorious, spirit can focus on force and competition to assert oneself. To gain status and reputation, which

is also a source of pleasure for spirit, we can seek recognition from others, either through oppressing others or by pursuing honourable action (2018, p.192) Arruzza's account of spirit in the tyrannical soul aims to explain how self-assertion is achieved by this unjust character.

Through correct upbringing spirit is a natural ally of reason, however, this potential alliance does not extend to appetite (ibid., p.196). Spirit can only ever become the slave of appetite for appetitive desires are often in conflict with spirited desires. The difficulty of addressing the role of spirit in the tyrannical soul is that Plato only explicitly mentions spirit once in his account of the tyrannical character at 572a3-5, when explaining how a healthy and moderate person can avoid lawless dreams in sleep:

He soothes his spirited part in the same way, for example, by not falling asleep with his spirit still aroused after an outburst of anger.

From this passage, Arruzza infers that our lawless dreams do not always have to be appetitive. Spirit can also contribute to our lawless dreams if its anger has not been resolved before going to sleep (Arruzza, 2018, pp.214-15). In support of this idea, Arruzza examines the nature of the lawless desires that the tyrannical character pursues whilst awake. His desires include to commit murder and to have sex with the gods, both of which, she argues, appear to be spirited in nature as opposed to solely appetitive. For instance, murder implies bloodthirstiness, associated with aggression and competition, and having sex with a god is hubristic (ibid., pp.216-17). Hence, in the tyrannical soul spirit operates as the corrupted slave of appetite to also influence our lawless desires when appropriate.

In a normally functioning soul spirit appears to play a role in controlling and even repressing our appetitive desires. For instance, it is only when "released and liberated from shame and reason" (571c6) in his sleep that a person can then dream of lawless desires. Whilst awake the spirited capacity of shame accompanies reason in constraining appetite. However, given that the tyrannical man has lawless desires in his waking reality we may ask at what point in the development of the

tyrannical soul does spirit become completely corrupted, and thus incapable of exerting any control or influence over appetite?

To answer this question, Arruzza draws on two key passages in the tyrannical character's development, which I term P1 and P2. The first passage, P1, corresponds to stage one on my reading of the development of the tyrannical character (see chapter two), which is the genesis of the tyrannical character.

When the other appetites [...] buzz around the drone, making it grow as much as possible and nurturing it, they cause the sting of longing in it. Then this popular leader of the soul takes madness as its bodyguard and is driven into a frenzy. If it detects in the man any beliefs or desires that are thought to be good or that still show a sense of shame, it kills them and banishes them from him until he is purged of moderation and filled with imported madness (*Rep*, 573a4-b4).

This indicates how spirit loses its capacity to evoke shame (Arruzza, 2018, p.219). The would-be tyrannical character's values and beliefs from upbringing help to control his appetite by evoking feelings of shame should he think about breaking these values. However, once these values are destroyed by eros, Arruzza argues that spirit is no longer capable of evoking shame to regulate the tyrannical man's appetite. Now eros' bodily passions have free rein they will fill the tyrannical character with madness. Arruzza suggests that we learn something else about this madness a few lines later at 574d5-e1.

And in all these circumstances, the opinions recently released from slavery – the ones that once when he still had a democratic constitution within himself under the influence of the laws and of his father, were released only in sleep – are now the bodyguard of Eros and with its help overcome the traditional opinions that he had held from childhood about what is fine or shameful, opinions deemed to be just.

This second passage, P2, corresponds to the moment that the tyrannical character first transitions into stage three on my reading, as a result of the release of his lawless desires. In response to P2, Arruzza suggests that “if we combine this passage with the previous one [P1], it appears clear that *μανία* [mania] includes a new set of opinions and desires that the tyrannical man only dared to have when asleep. These new opinions are, so to speak, his reason’s nightmares” (Arruzza, 2018, p.219). Having acquired these new beliefs, the beliefs that he used to have when only asleep, and having lost his ability to feel shame, spirit no longer has any control over appetite (ibid., p.220). Now, under the enslavement of extreme bodily passions, spirit will satisfy its desire for self-assertion by aspiring towards complete domination, as is achieved by the tyrant.

Arruzza concludes that by 574d5-e1 the tyrannical character has lost his capacity for shame and given complete control to his lawless desires. However, she has failed to point to the exact circumstances that have caused this transformation to take place, in-between P1 and P2, which her account overlooks. I believe that the events that transpire between P1 and P2, from 573d1-574d5, are those events that Socrates identifies when he refers to “all these circumstances” (574d5), which directly lead to the release of the lawless desires and overcoming beliefs from upbringing. The most significant event that lies between P1 and P2 is the tyrannical character’s betrayal of his parents. In the next section I will demonstrate that by overlooking this event Arruzza’s account is limited in its understanding of spirit’s gradual corruption in the tyrannical soul, specifically of spirit’s capacity to regulate appetite through shame.

### 3.2 The Tyrannical son

I begin this section by analysing the first part of the developing tyrannical character’s encounter with his parents when he attempts to deceive them to obtain their wealth. To differentiate this significant episode in his life I will henceforth refer to the developing tyrannical character as the tyrannical son. The primary aim of this section is to demonstrate that, despite the enslavement of

his spirit to eros, the tyrannical son is capable of feeling shame and, importantly, that this does influence his actions.

After eros' bodily passions take control over his soul in stage one (572b9-573c10), Socrates describes how the tyrannical son attempts to live an extravagant hedonistic lifestyle in order to satisfy his bodily passions (573d2-4). However, the expense of this lifestyle soon exhausts his finances, so the tyrannical son is forced to borrow money. When this money is spent he soon turns an eye towards his parents' fortune. He will first concoct a scheme to deceive his parents and steal their money (574a10-b1), and should this scheme fail he will then attempt to take their money by force.

The tyrannical son's decision to first use deceit to take his parents money, as opposed to force, is significant. Taking their money would be the quickest way for him to continue funding his hedonistic lifestyle. Trapped in an acute state of suffering as the demands of his bodily passions drive him into maddening fits of frenzy (573c4-574a1), if he could only have his parent's money then his suffering would temporarily cease. He truly believes that he is entitled to their fortune. In his democratic upbringing he was raised to indulge in an assortment of desires, and these have only intensified since eros became the ruler of his soul. From his perspective he deserves to have the means to pursue unconditional pleasure, and his parents should provide these means.

Won't the man himself think that he deserves to outdo his mother and father, even though he is younger than they are - to take and spend his father's wealth when he's spent his own (574a6-8).

If the tyrannical son feels this strongly that he is entitled to his parent's wealth, and he suffers so profoundly in the absence of fulfilling his bodily passions, then why not immediately take his parents money by force? Not only would this hasten his satisfaction, but it would also fuel his spirit's drive for self-assertion by taking control to assert his needs to get what he wants. Why, therefore, bother first with schemes of deceit?

The reason he does this, I suggest, is that the tyrannical son still has affections for his parents and some semblance of bias towards particular social norms in his city, such as to protect one's parents from harm. The very idea of destroying these affections by forcibly taking his parents' money and violating deep seated social norms causes the tyrannical son to feel shame. This feeling of shame prevents him from acting like a full-blown tyrant who would seize anything he desired by force without consideration for others' well-being. However, because his soul is corrupted by eros the tyrannical son cannot leave their fortune to go untouched, and as an imperfect form of compromise he will first use deceit rather than force to try and take it. To understand how spirit can generate feelings of shame that can influence the tyrannical son's actions we now turn to examine this psychic process.

The spirited element of an uncorrupted soul that lives in a society that forbids stealing would feel a sense of shame at the prospect of stealing. Since the laws of the society dictate that stealing is wrong this means that spirit, as the element of the soul that is sensitive to honour, would feel shame at the dishonourable prospect of breaking the law. Though he lives in a democratic society that forbids stealing, the tyrannical son's spirit is partially corrupted by its enslavement to eros so it will not operate in this way.

The mere taboo of stealing is not enough to influence the tyrannical son to stop him from taking his parents money. This is because the strength of his bodily passions overrules spirit's sensitivity to the laws that he was raised to obey. This negatively impacts spirit's ability to perform the two roles identified by Brennan. The power of his bodily passions means spirit will single-mindedly pursue its own satisfaction. The tyrannical son does not care about practising interpersonal diplomacy with other appetites to negotiate the sharing of resources because, as shown at 574a6-8, he believes that his needs come first. Spirit is also unable to regulate his appetite to the same degree as we would see in a normally functioning soul. Any appeals to his self-esteem and self-worth to encourage him to exercise self-control over his appetites will be futile. This is because



alleviating the suffering caused by the unfulfillment of his bodily passions will be the tyrannical son's number one priority. This is demonstrated by the numerous degrading and hedonistic activities that he engages in, such as revelries and seeing a string of lovers (573d3-4).

Although a sense of honour towards the law and social convention cannot influence the tyrannical son's actions, I suggest that his bias towards what is *oikeion* to him can and does alter his behaviour for two reasons. First, the tyrannical sons' affections for what is *oikeion* influences him to conceal his tyrannical state, that is, his enslavement to his bodily passions, from his parents. This is because he fears that if they recognised the true extent of his moral degeneration then they would sever their relationship with him. The tyrannical son still cares about how his parents see him. Closely linked to their opinions of him is his sense of pride, for their disapproval could cause him to feel shame and regret for his condition.<sup>27</sup> It would also mean losing the only good, genuine, and meaningful relationship in his life. This is because the tyrannical character has no true friends (576a3-5) because he always prioritises his needs above others. The tyrant-makers were only ever intent on corrupting him with eros, they were never his friends and never had his best interests at heart, as we would expect his parents to. His parents are the only people in his life who truly care about him.

Second, his affections for his parents could influence the son to take his parent's money using deceit instead of force because forcibly taking his parent's money could result in the tyrannical son physically hurting them. Both his affections for his parents and any existing affinity for social convention will implore the tyrannical son not to harm his family. The idea of going against these conventions or betraying his affections for his parents could elicit feelings of shame in the tyrannical son, even now. I will now explain how, from these two reasons, spirit is able to generate feelings of shame in the soul of the tyrannical son to convince him to first use deceit instead of force to take his parent's money.

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<sup>27</sup> He is capable of regret even as a fully developed tyrannical character at 578a5-6 and 577d10-e1.

Spirit capitalises on the tyrannical son's long held affections for his parents by creating an internal representation of their horror, disgust, and devastation at witnessing their money being forcibly taken by their son. Spirit further exploits his sense of self-worth and self-esteem attached to his parent's opinion of him by internally visualising his parents' disappointment and shame toward the degenerate person their son has become. In doing so, spirit also targets the tyrannical son's own opinion of himself and the shame of carrying out these horrific actions. A sense of shame and fear is generated in the tyrannical son, these feelings can then be used to influence the son's decision process by encouraging him to practice restraint over his appetitive desire to take his parents money.

However, because the son's developing tyrannical soul is partially corrupted by eros the restraint that he will be capable of practicing over his appetite will be limited. In a normally functioning soul, spirit, in its role as interpersonal diplomat, would recognise that it is unfair and shameful to take one's parents' property as this is not a fair distribution of resources. However, the tyrannical son cannot be reasoned with in this way because he believes that his needs are the only priority. The very best restraint that the tyrannical son's partially corrupted spirit can practice over his appetite is to force appetite to yield to the idea of first trying to take the money by using deceit. As a result, the tyrannical son will avoid the shame of having physically abused his parents and could potentially succeed in concealing his tyrannical nature from them.

Therefore, the tyrannical son's spirit is able to perform both the internal and external roles originally proposed by Brennan. However, because spirit has been partially corrupted by eros as ruler of the soul it will be unable to perform these two roles exactly how Brennan envisions a normally functioning soul would. This does not mean, as Arruzza objects, that the tyrannical son has lost his capacity for shame. Rather, instead of being influenced by a sensitivity to what is honourable, based on the laws and conventions of one's city, the tyrannical son will be influenced by his affinity for what is *oikeion*, his parents, and also social conventions that dictate how he should

treat his parents. The prospect of hurting what is *oikeion* will evoke feelings of shame in the tyrannical son which will prevent him from committing the worst action in his situation, namely, to take his parents money by force. Thus, spirit will use shame to restrain lawless thoughts and desires in the tyrannical son and as a compromise he will first use deceit to try to take his parent's money.

Against my proposal, it could be objected that the tyrannical son only chooses to proceed with deceit in order to avoid the legal repercussions of being caught taking his parents money. Unlike the tyrant, the tyrannical son lacks the political power to take whatever he likes by force, hence, if he wants to avoid imprisonment then he must appear to be obeying the law. One way to do this is by concealing his deed through deceit in order to remain undetected. Hence, his choice is not motivated by spirit's bias towards *oikeion* but rather his own self-preservation. Moreover, just because the tyrannical son is sensitive to social convention and the law, demonstrating an awareness of what is considered shameful and honourable behaviour in society, this does not mean that his choice to avoid breaking these rules is motivated by shame. Instead, his choice could be motivated by the fear of being caught and imprisoned.

However, I think we see that the tyrannical son does have strong affections towards his parents before he decides to use force against them. This is implied as Socrates describes the tyrannical son's mother as "long-loved" (574b8) by her son, and his father as being his "oldest friend" (574b12).<sup>28</sup> Clearly the tyrannical son does still have some affection for his parents despite his insatiable bodily passions. If, as Socrates argues, spirit is gentle to one's *oikeion* then given that the tyrannical son has yet to complete his moral degeneration to become a fully developed tyrannical character, these affections will still have some bearing on his actions, albeit limited.

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<sup>28</sup> This point is also made by Hampson (Forthcoming 2024, p.5, fn15).

### 3.3 The Betrayal

I will now examine what happens when the tyrannical son fails to obtain his parent's money through deceit. If his plan to use deceit fails we are told that the tyrannical son will next try to take his parents' money by force, and should they put up a fight (574b5-6), then he will turn to drastic action:

S: Do you think he'd sacrifice his long-loved and irreplaceable mother for a recently acquired girlfriend whom he can do without? Or that for the sake of a newfound and replaceable boyfriend in the bloom of youth, he'd strike his aged and irreplaceable father, his oldest friend? Or that he'd make his parents the slaves of these others, if he brought them under the same roof?

A: Yes, indeed he would (574b8-c4).

In this passage we see the tyrannical son act out against his parents because they resist his efforts to take their money. He will sacrifice his mother for a new girlfriend, strike his father for the sake of a new boyfriend, and even enslave his parent's, effectively ending their relationship. These actions severely exacerbate the moral degeneration of the tyrannical son's soul and also demonstrate the profound psychological affect that his parents' resistance has on him.

The introduction of boyfriends and girlfriends into his parents' household might initially appear solely for the sake of satisfying his sexual desires, however, I think that they also serve a further role. In Socrates' description his irreplaceable parents are implied to have been substituted by the 'replaceable' boyfriends and girlfriends (ibid.). This is a strange way to describe the tyrannical son's introduction of various sexual partners as (inadequate) replacements for his parents. The reason, I suggest, that we have this description is that the boyfriends and girlfriends provide more than sexual fulfilment for the tyrannical son. These companions are also his attempt to cover up the

void of companionship left by his betrayal of his parents and the subsequent severance of their relationship, although it seems likely he would never admit this.

After taking his parent's money the tyrannical son will move his newfound companions into his parents' home and then force his parents to act as their slaves. However, this behaviour defies a trend in the developing tyrannical character's actions. Up until this point in the narrative, the tyrannical character is described as moving from one source of income to the next in quick succession. For instance, once he spends his own money on feasts and revelries he then turns to borrow money, after this option is spent he looks for any spare capital he can seize. Finally, after he exhausts all alternatives he then turns to his parent's fortune. Even after he leaves his parents household he then resumes this same behaviour, moving from stealing one item to swiping another:

What about when the possessions of his mother and father give out? With that great swarm of pleasures inside him, won't he first try to break into someone's house or snatch someone's coat late at night? Then won't he try to loot a temple? (574c7-d2).

Why remain with his newfound companions in his parents' household when he has already acquired their money? I speculate that the primary reason for this is so the tyrannical son can enact what he believes to be retribution against his parents for resisting his efforts to take their money. Not only does their resistance mean a further attempt to deny the satisfaction of his bodily passions, which increases the intensification of his suffering, but it also means that when he retaliates against their resistance his actions sever the only meaningful relationship in his life, leaving him vulnerable.

When his parents try to put up a fight against their son taking their money (574b5-6) I suggest that the tyrannical son feels that his pride and self-esteem have been wounded because his parents refused to put his irrational needs above their own. Hampson notes the importance to his self-esteem of the tyrannical son getting what he wants. She argues that his belief that he deserves more

than his parents (574a8-9) suggests that he has an “inflated sense of his own self-worth” (Hampson, forthcoming 2024, p.4), resulting in his failure to show meaningful consideration to others. For Hampson, this further vindicates her claim that the tyrannical character suffers severe interpersonal failings since his treatment of his parents demonstrates that long term relationships, and a duty of care to one’s parents, bear no significance for him (ibid., pp.4-5). I agree that the tyrannical son is guilty of these interpersonal failings and that the severity of his reaction to his parents’ resistance does signify a blow to his self-esteem, but also I suggest this represents a hurtful personal betrayal for the tyrannical son.

Witnessing their son try to forcibly take their money, his parents have finally seen his tyrannical nature and instead of caving to his demands they put up a fight. I think there is good reason to believe that the tyrannical son’s horrific actions, striking and enslaving his parents, are motivated by the pain of his parent’s resistance, and the fact that his nature has now finally been revealed to them.

From his perspective, the tyrannical son has good reason to find this situation painful. He no longer has any meaningful relationships. The tyrant-makers from stage one were merely manipulators out to exploit his democratic upbringing, his hedonistic lifestyle means he has no real friends as a result of always prioritising his own bodily passions, and his boyfriends and girlfriends are only ever fleeting. His parents, as the people who originally attempted to fight for him against the tyrant-makers (572e1-2), symbolise every value that he once held dear. Now, in the eyes of the tyrannical son, even his parents, the people with whom he has his one meaningful relationship, have failed him. The severity of the tyrannical son’s actions after his parents’ resistance suggests that this is personal for him. When he takes his parents money by force he does not leave but stays to punish them further by making them into slaves.

There is also a further reason for why the tyrannical son stays to punish his parents, namely his desire for recognition. In this situation the tyrannical son gains recognition in two ways. First,

knowing that now his parents have seen through his deceit and are aware of his tyrannical nature, when the tyrannical son uses force against his parents he also makes them recognise his dominance in the situation. His position of power over them can serve to boost his self-esteem that they have wounded through their resistance to him. Second, by inviting his companions to his parents' household and having them witness his parent's enslavement, the tyrannical son also ensures that his companions recognise his ever-growing ruthlessness and power-hungry nature, this reinforces his sense of self-worth. Now, instead of attempting to conceal his tyrannical nature, like he did from his parents, he utilises it as a show of strength, initiating a sense of lawlessness unseen before in his tyrannical character. In the next section, I argue that abusing his parents initiates the tyrannical son's final descent into lawlessness and therefore the incurability of his soul.

### 3.4 Unleashing lawless desires

If we recall from chapter two, the tyrannical characters' lawless desires are unleashed from 574d3, this marks his initial transition into the third stage of his moral degeneration. However, this transition into stage three, to be a fully-fledged tyrannical character, is not complete until he has enacted his lawless desires, which he accomplishes by 575a7. Only then is he a fully-fledged tyrannical character and his transition from the second stage into the third stage of his degeneration is complete. In this section I present the final erosion of shame in the tyrannical soul after this character has abused his parents.

The tyrannical son's abuse of his parents is not the event that marks him as a fully-fledged incurable tyrannical character. This is because, as I have argued, his retaliation against his parents is personal, fuelled by what he views as a betrayal of their affections towards him. However, when a fully-fledged tyrannical character pursues wicked action he is motivated by the objective of fulfilling his bodily passions, for which he is now prepared to commit lawless acts. It is the fact that his bodily passions, accompanied by lawless desires, are now powerful enough to drive him to such heinous acts that makes the tyrannical character so unjust. Hence, the tyrannical son's soul cannot yet be

as degenerate as the fully-fledged tyrannical character since his wicked actions are an expression of his pain which demonstrates that he did care for his parents, albeit in his own very imperfect way.

However, as I also argued in chapter two, the tyrannical son's abuse of his parents is the event that initiates his rapid descent into complete lawlessness and with this the complete degeneration of his soul. The reason for this, I suggest, is that the act of abusing his parents quickly eliminates any lingering sentiment that the tyrannical son had for them and any associated democratic values. For instance, it is only after he abuses his parents that the tyrannical son begins to engage in petty crime in his city (574d1-3). This is significant because it is the first time that Socrates describes the tyrannical character as engaging in criminal activity.

Furthermore, the crimes which the tyrannical son commits share a likeness with the types of crimes that Socrates describes the fully-fledged tyrannical character committing from 575a8. For example, both the tyrannical son and the fully-fledged tyrannical character break into people's homes at 574d1-2 and 575b7 respectively.

The longer the tyrannical son engages in petty crime the more corrupted his spirit will become. This is because the more he steals the more money he will have to indulge his bodily passions, allowing them to grow greater and make it even harder for spirit to resist them. Also, by continually violating the law in his city the tyrannical son will become increasingly desensitized to doing so, eroding his remaining affinity to his previous democratic values. Spirit will become so corrupted, enslaved by eros' increasingly powerful bodily passions, that it will reach a point where it will be unable to mount any meaningful resistance against his lawless desires. Consequently, the final weak foundations of spirit's ability to resist his lawless desires will give way and his lawless desires will be fully unleashed into his soul at 574d3.



Once his lawless desires are unleashed in his soul, spirit will be unable to evoke shame with the power to influence his actions.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the two roles Brennan distinguished for spirit will not apply in the fully fledged tyrannical soul. Spirit will no longer care about maintaining interpersonal diplomacy with other appetites unless it can see an opportunity for collaborating with someone else to maximise its own gain. Spirit will be unable to police appetite through an appeal to his self-esteem. This is because, having severed his relationship with his parents, the tyrannical character will have no one else who he cares enough about to have their judgement matter to him. Hence, an appeal to what others will think of his wicked nature will not succeed in generating enough shame in him to control his appetite.

Now, with the prominence of lawless desires in his life and the need to fulfil them, I suggest that the fully developed tyrannical characters' sense of self-worth will be attached to how best he can pursue his lawless desires to satisfy his bodily passions. The ultimate ambition for the most wicked of tyrannical characters is to become a tyrant who rules over others since, as Socrates argues, "this is surely the end at which such a man's desires are directed" (575d7-8). Any obstacle of resistance to his satisfaction is treated with the same savagery as he treated his parents. In fact, Socrates draws a direct comparison between the tyrant's enslavement of his nation and the tyrannical son's enslavement of his parents. If, when the tyrant attempts to take control over a city the citizens try to resist him, then he takes the following action:

...but if it resists him, then, just as he once chastised his mother and father, he'll now chastise his fatherland, if he can, by bringing in new friends and making his fatherland and his dear old motherland their slaves (575d3-7).

This passage captures how the tyrant, like the tyrannical son, asserts his dominance over others when he faces resistance to his rule. The description of the tyrant as 'chastising' the citizens

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<sup>29</sup> He can still experience the feeling of shame as shown at *Rep* 577d10-e1, but the strength of his bodily passions, increased by his lawless desires, means that any feelings of shame he will have will no longer be able to have any impact on restraining these desires.

indicates that he believes he is administering a form of punishment against the citizens for an offence they have committed, namely resisting him. His motivation here resides in his original belief that he deserves to outdo others (574a6-8). It is the notion that the satisfaction of his desires must take priority that he demands others to recognise, just as we saw when he enslaved his parents.

Unlike the tyrannical son, the tyrant has a further reason for needing to obtain recognition from others. He needs the citizens to recognise his power. The tyrannical mob have selected the tyrant to be their leader, and will help him take control over the city because they believe him to be the “greatest and strongest tyrant of them all” (575d1). The burden is now on him to prove himself to the mob by succeeding in taking over the city. If he is met with resistance then he must treat it severely as only by asserting his wickedness, through enslaving others, can the tyrant demonstrate to his supporters that he is truly the strongest, most unjust tyrant of all. In doing so he secures power and also recognition from his supporters and the citizens he enslaves. In the final section of this chapter, I present a speculative account of how a developing tyrannical character could undergo moral repair.

### 3.5 Friendship and moral repair

If we recall, in the last section of chapter two, I explored the possibility of the developing tyrannical character undergoing moral repair. I argued that in book IX, at 591a3-b5, Socrates appears to allow the possibility of reform for people who have committed injustices, provided that they are discovered and punished for their unjust actions. Through discovery we are told that a person’s beast-like part, corresponding to the appetitive part of the soul on my reading, can be tamed and their gentler part freed. However, as I previously noted, though this claim could provide hope that moral repair is possible for unjust characters, it fails to tell us exactly how this can be achieved.

With this limitation in mind, I examined the Myth of Er where disembodied souls are punished for their unjust actions on earth and later have the opportunity to choose a better life for themselves. I identified three experiences in the afterlife that appear to help some disembodied souls to choose better lives. First is the experience of reflection, disembodied souls have the opportunity to reflect on their past actions whilst in the afterlife. Second is the experience of suffering, since the souls who committed unjust acts on earth are now punished for them. Finally, the disembodied souls have the chance to examine all the potential lives that they could lead in their next lifecycle on earth before they select a new life. I concluded chapter two with the proposal that these experiences, excluding suffering since the tyrannical character already suffers because of his condition, could be brought about, albeit imperfectly, in the life of the developing tyrannical character through the help of a friend and role model. In this final section I offer a speculative account of how this could happen. This is not intended to be an exhaustive, final account of moral repair for the developing tyrannical character. Rather, this final section provides an indication of how key features of friendship can be utilised to help the tyrannical character make the first steps to pursuing a better life.

I begin with the proposal of friendship. How can a friend help initiate moral repair in a developing tyrannical character? To answer this question, we need to remind ourselves of the value of interpersonal relationships for good moral development, as I identified in chapter one. Here, I drew attention to the father-son narrative threading throughout Socrates' account of the four unjust characters. Only once the son's relationship with his father, and household, has been undermined by harmful social influences do we see the son's moral character degenerate in each of the unjust characters. The father is responsible for instilling in the son certain values that are better than the new lifestyle he is being tempted towards. Weakening the son's relationship with his father also weakens his attachment to those values, eventually resulting in the son pursuing a more degenerate lifestyle. Therefore, having strong interpersonal relationships, especially in upbringing, is integral for good moral development.

If we are to develop into just people then we must form relationships with the right people. The upbringing of each son in Socrates' narrative becomes increasingly worse because, in each new generation, the son's parents fail to nurture the rational element of his soul. Thus, it is integral for our moral development that we form strong interpersonal relationships with people who can serve as good role models, to instil in us just values.

From the father-son narrative we gain insight into the important features needed for a good upbringing, namely strong interpersonal relationships and good role models who can nurture the rational element of the son's soul. However, the developing tyrannical character has already experienced a corrupted upbringing and has a tyrannical constitution, therefore, the focus now is how to repair his established unjust character.

Socrates claims that unjust characters need to be discovered. However, at the beginning of chapter two we ruled out the possibility that the tyrannical character could be reformed through moral reasoning due to his unnourished rational element.<sup>30</sup> In this chapter, I have demonstrated the significance of the spirited element of the soul in helping to resist the developing tyrannical character's lawless desires through the feeling of shame. For our purposes, the integral factor that motivates the developing tyrannical character to feel shame is spirit's affinity towards what is *oikeion*, that is, those people and values it is familiar with. For the developing tyrannical character this is his parents. It is the tyrannical son's affections for his parents that maintains his lingering sentiments to his democratic values. These affections are exploited by spirit which evokes shame at the prospect of harming his parents, and undermining the values he associates with them. This shame, I have suggested, is powerful enough to resist his lawless desires and to influence his actions. Therefore, I propose that to have any hope of influencing the developing tyrannical character the role model must first become his friend.

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<sup>30</sup> Scott (2020) makes this point.

As a friend to the tyrannical character, she will be able to capitalise on spirit's gentleness to what is *oikeion* to gradually influence his actions. The more we grow to care about someone the more we value their opinion of us. By getting to know them we catch glimpses of the world from their point of view, and over time some of their values can even become our own.

I suggest that if the tyrannical character had a friend who was also a good person then these very experiences could happen to them too. Just as he cares about his parent's opinion of him, as we see when he tries to conceal his tyrannical nature from them by using deceit instead of force to take their money, he can also, over time, grow to care about the friend's opinion. In doing so he will be motivated to avoid behaviour that will bring disapproval from his friend and cause him to feel shame. The more he is immersed in his friend's presence he can begin to see how she behaves and approaches the world. Using this information, he may start to take part in actions that he thinks will gain her approval. As we have seen, a significant desire for spirit is to gain recognition from others. Hence, the thing that would initially motivate the tyrannical character to pursue better action would not be the reform of his soul, but rather his own spirited affinity for what is *oikeion* and his desire for recognition.

The sceptic might point out the optimistic nature of my suggestion, that a developing tyrannical character could acquire a friend whose presence can help to repair their degenerate soul. Who would want to attempt to be a friend to a tyrannical character? The crucial point of my proposal is that only a just person could undertake this role, and hope for success. Only their virtue could possibly motivate them to undertake this intervention, and enable them to be the role model that the tyrannical character would need.

On the other hand, why would a tyrannical character accept the friendship of a person whose character, and nature of living, is so different from their own? I suggest that there are two reasons for this. First, as I have already mentioned, the spirited element of one's soul desires recognition from others. This is one reason why we see tyrannical characters entertaining the company of

flatterers (575e), not only can the flatterers do and get things for him but in virtue of being flatterers they also serve to elevate his ego. Similarly, I suggest that if the just person were to extend friendship towards him, the developing tyrannical character would entertain this offer, believing that he could ultimately exploit this relationship to get something out of it.

The second reason, and I think perhaps the most important, concerns the developing tyrannical characters' experience of suffering. I previously identified the experience of suffering as an important factor in helping the disembodied souls to choose better lives whilst in the afterlife. Being forced to suffer for the injustices and the pain that they caused others, prompts the disembodied souls to practice caution when choosing their next life (619d). Recall also that Socrates claims at 591a3-b5 that alongside being discovered unjust characters must be punished for their actions.

A defining feature of both developing and fully formed tyrannical characters is that they suffer more than any other unjust character-type because they are enslaved to eros' desire for the satisfaction of its bodily passions. Friendless, dissatisfied, frenzied, unfree, and experiencing sharp moments of regret towards their condition, the tyrannical character is the person who suffers more than anyone, and also causes the most suffering to others.

Due to his acute suffering, I suggest that the embodied developing tyrannical character is already in his own unique perpetual state of punishment. The tyrannical character indulges in his bodily passions because his eros demands satisfaction, and without satisfaction eros will drive him mad. However, through satisfying these passions he only causes them to grow more powerful and insatiable. Hence, the very thing that temporarily alleviates his suffering, namely, to attempt to satisfy his bodily passions, is also the thing that intensifies his suffering. Therefore, the more unjust actions he commits the worse he suffers, and the greater he is punished.

As a result of this suffering the tyrannical character leads a miserable existence, and will always be in a state of discontent. Due to his misery, and the important point that he has not yet developed

a fully-fledged tyrannical character, I suggest that the developing tyrannical character can still act on the small part of him that feels regret over his miserable existence. The friendship of the just person is an opportunity to do this. I will end this section by explaining how the friend can help the tyrannical character to reflect on his life and to envision a better existence for himself.

Unlike disembodied souls in the afterlife, the embodied tyrannical character cannot be extracted from his existence. However, he can be distanced from the harmful environment that both facilitates and cultivates the degeneration of his moral character, this is the presence of other tyrannically-minded individuals. When in the friends' presence the tyrannical character can step away from this environment of injustice and instead be exposed to a person with a just character. Through this exposure he can observe how she behaves, the just manner in which she conducts herself, and how she treats others. At first this will mean very little to him, he may even think her foolish for not indulging her bodily passions. However, the longer he keeps her company and experiences her kindness the greater affinity he will develop towards her, away from other unjust characters.

Gradually he will develop affection for the friend. As I argued at the start of this section the impact of caring about someone else is that he will seek their approval, and start to value some of the things they do, simply because we feel an affinity toward them. Both of these things can begin to influence the judgements and actions of the tyrannical man for the better.

Recall, in the afterlife the disembodied souls get to review and assess the different lives available to them. Alongside reflection and their previous experiences of suffering, this is one extra opportunity that helps the disembodied souls to choose a better life. This option is, of course, not available to the embodied tyrannical character. However, I suggest that as a role model the just friend is able to provide the developing tyrannical character with an example of what his life could look like should he reform his character. One of the important things that she could draw attention to, and which the tyrannical character can observe the longer he spends in her presence, is that

unlike him she leads a happy existence. A factor that motivates the disembodied souls when choosing their next life is avoiding suffering, and I suggest that the embodied tyrannical character will also want this for himself.

Hence, if the tyrannical character is able to comprehend that the friends' life is far happier than his miserable existence, or he can even begin to question the point of satisfying his bodily passions, then he could be motivated, for selfish reasons, to want to pursue a better life for himself. With the friend's guidance and the reflection that he can undergo when he is in her company he can begin to work towards reform.

#### 4. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the moral degeneration of Plato's tyrannical character, to show that his degeneration occurs progressively over time. I began by identifying bad upbringing as the primary cause behind the moral degeneration of unjust characters, including the lack of rational development in upbringing and the weakening of interpersonal relations. Focusing exclusively on the tyrannical character's moral degeneration, I argued that we must understand his entire moral development in order to comprehend the developing nature of his extreme desires. My main claim has been to argue that the tyrannical character degenerates over three stages of moral degeneration. With the release of lawless desires in the tyrannical soul, and his enactment of these desires, the tyrannical individual will have completed his transition into stage three and will have established a fully developed tyrannical character. Even among fully developed tyrannical characters there are degrees of wickedness, with the political tyrant possessing the most wicked, and wretched of all moral characters.

However, I have proposed that in the first two stages of his degeneration the tyrannical character is capable of moral repair. I have presented evidence from book IX of *Republic* that, I have argued, suggests moral repair is possible for developing tyrannical characters who are discovered and



experience punishment for their unjust actions. Finally, I have offered a speculative account of how moral repair could be initiated in the developing tyrannical character by a friend and role model.

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