

THE CONCEPT OF AKRASIA IN ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY:
PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND THE STOICS

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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF *AKRASIA* IN ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY: PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND THE STOICS

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This thesis investigates the concept of *akrasia*, with particular attention given to its sundry interpretations in the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. In this inquiry, I argue that these philosophers agree on the lack of knowledge of the akratic person, while they differentiate from each other as to what this missing knowledge is. Irrespective of their rejection or acknowledgement of *akrasia* due to their conceptions of the soul, I argue that Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics share the common view that the causes of *akrasia* are the wrong evaluation of *phantasia* and insufficient or wrong exercise of reason, which are strengthened by poor education and bad habituation. Hence, in this thesis, I aim at demonstrating that a full account of this concept can be given if both the intellectual reading of the concept of *akrasia* (which reads akratic action as an action caused by ignorance) and the non-intellectual reading of it (according to which akratic action is an outcome of a mismatch between the commands of reason and appetite) are considered together with the essential role education and habituation play in akratic action.

Keywords: Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, *akrasia*, *phantasia*.

ÖZ

ANTİK YUNAN FELSEFESİNDE *AKRASİA* KAVRAMI: PLATON, ARİSTOTELES VE STOACILAR

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Bu tez *akrasia* kavramını, Platon'un, Aristoteles'in ve Stoacıların muhtelif yorumlarına odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bu araştırmada, bu filozofların akratik kişinin bilgisiz olduğu konusunda hemfikir olduklarını, ancak bu eksik olan bilginin ne olduğu konusunda birbirlerinden farklılaştıklarını ileri sürüyorum. Farklı ruh anlayışları sebebiyle *akrasiayı* reddetmelerinden ya da onaylamalarından bağımsız olarak, Platon'un, Aristoteles'in ve Stoacıların *akrasianın* sebebinin zayıf eğitim ve kötü alışkanlıklar ile tahkim edilmiş *phantasianın* yanlış değerlendirmesi ve aklın yetersiz ve hatalı kullanımı olduğu fikrini paylaştıklarını tartışıyorum. Böylelikle, bu çalışmada, *akrasianın* tam bir açıklamasının ancak bu kavramın (*akrasiayı* bilgisizlikten kaynaklanan bir eylem olarak yorumlayan) anlıksal okuması ile (*akrasiayı* akıl ile iştah ya da şehvet arasındaki uyumsuzluk olarak ele alan) anlıksal olmayan okumasına eğitimin ve alışkanlıkların oynadığı temel rolün de eklenmesiyle mümkün olabileceğini göstermeye çalışıyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Platon, Aristoteles, Stoacılar, *akrasia*, *phantasia*.

To My Lifelong Friend and Beloved Husband Emre



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ.....	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. AKRASIA IN PLATO: A PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE AND <i>PHSYKHE</i>	10
2.1 <i>Akrasia</i> Between Hedonism and Knowledge.....	10
2.1.1 A General Outline of the <i>Protagoras</i> in the Context of the Concept of <i>Akrasia</i>	10
2.1.2 The ‘Ridiculous Argument’: ‘Being Overcome by Pleasure’ and Hedonism	12
2.1.3 <i>Akrasia</i> and the “Art of Measurement”	20
2.1.4 Socrates’ Own Solution to the Problem of Misunderstanding the Case of <i>Akrasia</i>	24
2.2 Plato: Akritic <i>Psyche</i>	29
2.2.1 The Simple Soul in the <i>Phaedo</i>	30
2.2.1.1 Illusion-Bound Pleasure	31
2.2.2 The Composite Model of the Soul	34
2.2.2.1 <i>Homunculi</i>	41
2.2.3 The Composite Soul Making <i>Akrasia</i> Possible.....	44
2.2.3.1 Which Part of the Soul Should Rule?.....	45
2.2.3.2 <i>Akrasia</i> Justified.....	47
2.2.4 Denouement	49
3. AKRASIA IN ARISTOTLE: A CONTINUATION OR A BREACH	51
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 <i>Akrasia</i> in the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> : An Outline	52
3.3 Method and <i>Φαινόμενα</i>	54
3.4 Other Character States and <i>Akrasia</i>	56

3.5 Desire and Action.....	64
3.6 The Conflict between Rational and Non-Rational Desires	67
3.7 <i>Phantasia</i>	70
3.7.1. Habituation and Education.....	73
3.8 Voluntary and Involuntary Action	77
3.9 Practical Syllogism	80
3.9.1 Three Senses of Having and Not Having Knowledge	83
3.9.2 The Third Sense of Knowledge and Practical Syllogism.....	86
3.9.2.1 Particular and Universal Knowledge, or the Minor and the Major Premises of the Practical Syllogism: A problem of Linkage and Disregard for the Future and <i>Eudaimonia</i>	90
3.9.2.2 Two Syllogisms.....	91
4. THE STOICS: A RETURN TO SOCRATIC CONCEPTION OF AKRASIA? ...	102
4.1 Introduction.....	102
4.2 The Stoic Conception of the Human Soul.....	103
4.3 The Stoic Theory of Action: <i>φαντασία</i> , <i>συγκατάθεσις</i> , <i>ὁρμή</i> , and <i>πάθος</i>	108
4.4 <i>Akrasia</i> on View.....	125
5. CONCLUSION	135
REFERENCES.....	140
APPENDICES	
A. CURRICULUM VITAE	149
B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	151
C. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU.....	168

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *akrasia* (ἀκρασία, ἀκράτεια) has been one of the most studied topics in ancient Greek ethics. Its standing at the intersection of many other discussions, such as the study of virtues, the theory of action and choice (προαίρεσις), moral psychology, and epistemology, might have been the main reason for its recurring examination. Despite the plenteous study of this notion, it continues to be an intriguing topic, and hence still allows miscellaneous interpretations.

The translation of this Greek term has become an object of debate. Among possible translations are ‘incontinence,’ ‘lack of control,’ ‘lack of self-control,’ ‘weakness,’ ‘weakness of will,’ ‘moral weakness,’ ‘psychological weakness,’ and ‘powerlessness’. However, in my thesis, I will leave the term untranslated in order not to distort its nuances. Being a composite word that derived from the ancient Greek *α-* and *κράτος*, *akrasia* literally means not having strength or might, or being without command over oneself or a thing. Understood as ‘lacking strength’, *akrasia* is commonly considered to be denoting a human experience whose characteristic feature is not to act in accordance with what one takes to be the best course of action, or to lack the determination to stick by one’s own idea of what one should do. In this thesis, I will mostly use *akrasia* in this sense.

In my thesis, I will be tracing the varying conceptions, the possible causes, and the development of the concept of *akrasia* in ancient Greek philosophy. Also, I will be inquiring into to what extent and in what manner the explanations put forward as regards this concept rule out or support each other. The main focus of my thesis will be on figuring out what kind of knowledge is present or missing in the akratic person and investigating what gives strength and debilitates this knowledge. For this purpose, as to the sources, I will confine my scope of investigation to Plato’s *Protagoras*,

Phaedo, and *Republic*,¹ Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,² and for the Stoic understanding of it, I will consult Long and Sedley's collection of reports on the Hellenistic philosophers.³ By examining the extant fragments and interpretations found in the works of later writers, such as Plutarch, Galen, Diogenes Laërtius, and Stobaeus, I will investigate both the views of the early Stoics, such as Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, and the views of their critics on the concept of *akrasia*.

The discussion of *akrasia* appears in the history of Western philosophy firstly in Plato's *Protagoras*. However, he does not treat this subject as detailed and explicit as Aristotle does. In point of fact, the concept of *akrasia* has become the focus of attention after Aristotle's explicit discussion of it in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Hence, in order to trace the various interpretations of this concept, I will take Plato's understanding of this concept as my starting point, and try to elucidate the points on which Aristotle builds his own discussion of it. After investigating Aristotle's thorough discussion of this notion, and delving into his analysis of the occurrence of this type of action, I will investigate the Stoic interpretation and conception of it by dint of focusing on the similarities and dissimilarities between the Stoic reading of this concept on the one hand, and Plato and Aristotle on the other.

In Chapter 2.1, I discuss the concept of *akrasia* within the framework of Plato's *Protagoras* (352b-358d5). I firstly lay out the general outline of this work and afterwards the context in which *akrasia* is discussed. Socrates'⁴ discussion in the *Protagoras* begins by questioning the claim of the many (*οἱ πολλοί*), according to which knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) is not always powerful and can succumb to the enticement or power of pleasure, anger, fear, love, etc. This claim of the many runs

¹ For the translations of the works of Plato, I used *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) and *Plato, Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

² For the works of Aristotle, I consult Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³ A. A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

⁴ There is still an ongoing debate as to whether Plato in his early dialogues asserts his own views or his works serve as channels through which the historical Socrates speaks. However, for the brevity's sake, in the following, I will use 'Socrates' when giving references to the remarks made in the early dialogues, and 'Plato' for the later, instead of saying 'Plato's Socrates in the *Protagoras*' or 'Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*'.

counter to the Socratic understanding of knowledge altogether. According to him, knowledge of what is good and bad is regarded as the most powerful force. If a person has this knowledge, it is impossible to carry out an action conflicting with it. Socrates expounds the view that knowledge is forceful and commanding, whereas passions, pleasures, pains, etc. are weak and incapable of overcoming the former if knowledge is in effect present. Afterwards, I try to elucidate how Socrates challenges the claim of the many by reducing their claim to ridiculousness (The Ridiculous Argument), rather than vindicating his own claim that knowledge is invincible. As Socrates indicates, this ridiculousness stems from their maintaining hedonism and the above-stated claim ('knowledge can be overcome by pleasure') at the same time. In order to flesh out this absurdity, Socrates makes reference to pleasure and its relation to the good, likewise pain and its link to the bad. Their relations are argued within the framework of long-term pleasures and pains, on the one hand, and immediate and impulsive pleasures and pains, on the other.

Nevertheless, refuting the claim of the many by means of pointing out the ridiculousness of their argument does not suffice to reject *akrasia*. This rejection can be accomplished by investigating whether knowledge itself has the supposed power. For this purpose, first of all what it is meant by knowledge should be ascertained. As Socrates clarifies, what is at issue in the case of akratic action is not belief, but knowledge. Underlying this claim is the view that one may act against one's own belief, but not against one's own knowledge. This reading enables Socrates to deprive the many of the truth of their claim. According to him, when their hedonism (more pleasure is more desirable than less pleasure, or, satisfaction taken from immediate pleasure is more preferable than the satisfaction acquired only after a long time) and the analogy of distance are considered together, the so-called *akrasia* can only be due to a misrepresentation or misunderstanding on the part of the *akratēs* (the akratic person). In his elucidation of the concept of *akrasia*, Socrates lays out that this misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the phenomenon is caused by 'the power of appearances,' which may induce one to consider pleasures as more intense and powerful than they really are. Socrates suggests the 'art of measurement' (an art serving to assess what is good and bad, or what is more pleasurable or less painful for oneself in the long run) as the antidote to the power of appearances. Hence, according to Socrates, if one has this kind of art, one cannot be akratic. Put differently, one can

only act as the way the many claim if this person does not have the proper knowledge formed as a result of the use of the art of measurement. All in all, for Socrates, the possible causes of the said *akrasia* are ignorance, wrong belief, miscalculation, misunderstanding, lack of knowledge (the art of measurement), rather than the power of pleasures, pains, or emotions over against the command of reason or knowledge.

In Chapter 2.2, I investigate Plato's conception of the human soul (*ψυχή*) with a view to demonstrate which conception of the soul enables the akratic action. In this chapter, it is pointed out that the *Pheado* supports the view articulated in the *Protagoras* regarding *akrasia*. That is to say, the non-composite, partless conception of the soul of the *Phaedo* provides a basis for the akratic action. In the *Pheado*, where the immortality of the soul is investigated by comparing that which is non-composite (the soul) and that which is composite (the body), the pleasures and pains as the causes of impurity are linked to the body. According to this account, their illusory and deceptive power operates in the body, not in the soul. The soul's being exempt from the physical and appetitive pleasures also comply with the requirements needed for the soul to be immortal, namely divine, uniform, and indissoluble. In the non-composite, monistic soul, pleasures of the body are subject to the dictates of the soul or reason. In such a monistic conception of the soul, if one were to act contrary to the commands of reason (soul), then it can only be due to ignorance, since appetitive or physical pleasures can only exert influence on the body. In this conception, *akrasia*, if it is defined in terms of the effect the appetitive pleasures have over one's reason, hence soul, must be rejected. On the other hand, the composite (bipartite or tripartite) model of the soul enables akratic action. As laid out in the *Republic IV*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*, in the composite model of the soul, the existence of the non-rational motivations, which resist the demands of the reason, are recognised. That is to say, in this model of the soul, reason, rational deliberation, or knowledge in particular, are no longer the only hegemonic power. Conflicting desires, pertaining different parts of the soul, are acknowledged in this soul. In the case of the *Republic*, for instance, these desires originate from one of three parts of the soul: the *θυμοειδές* (the spirited part), the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* (the appetitive part), and the *λογιστικόν* (the reasoning part). In such a composite model of the soul, where each part has the required power to overcome the demands or desires of the other parts, it is not predetermined which part will accomplish to rule the whole soul. Each part, from their point of view, claims to be

best fit for ruling the soul. So as to determine which part is the most eligible in ruling the soul, their relation to the overall good, the truly good, or the Form of the Good, should be investigated. While the non-rational parts are only interested in satisfying their own particular pleasures and desires (their particular ‘goods’), and while they are liable to confuse the apparent good with the actual good, the rational part of the soul has the knowledge of what is beneficial for each part of the soul and for the whole soul. This part commands or advises by keeping in mind the actual good. The soul where the rational part is in command, for this reason, can be called a harmonious soul. Here the harmony indicates the subordination of the non-rational parts to the rational part, rather than the cooperative working of the parts. Bearing in mind these features of the composite soul, it can be claimed that the composite model of the soul enables the akratic action.

After investigating how the existence of akratic action is denied in the *Protagoras*, whose claim is borne out by the monistic model of the soul in the *Phaedo*, and is acknowledged in the *Republic* by dint of the composite conception of the soul, in Chapter 3 of this thesis, I analyse Aristotle’s interpretation of this action. In Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for the first time, a character state which is closer to vice than virtue, namely *akrasia*, finds a lengthy discussion. This might strike the reader as unexpected, since in the other books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, vices (or character states other than virtues) are only examined with a view to comprehend virtues, hence have only subsidiary roles in the discussion. *Akrasia* refers not to a mean, hence it is not a virtue, but at the same time it is not a vice. Aristotle carries out his inquiry into *akrasia* (a character trait in his reading) by emphasising its difference from other character states. For instance, he examines *ἀκολασία* (self-indulgence) with the aim of pointing out its difference from *akrasia*. Likewise, the similarities and dissimilarities between the *akratēs* and *enkratēs* (ἐγκρατής – the continent person) are investigated so as to better understand *akrasia*. In this investigation, the most delicate point is the relations of these character traits to pleasure, since both the *akratēs* and the *enkratēs* are subject to the same pleasures, yet one succumbs to them while the other overcomes them. Accordingly, so as to comprehend their difference, first the pleasures which they are both responsive to are analysed, and afterwards, their reception and reaction to these pleasures are examined. At this point of the discussion, we reach the conclusion that the reason why the *enkratēs* triumphs over her appetites lies in her

strong will and determination to listen to the commands of reason. Whereas the *akratēs* gives in to the commands of her appetitive desires.

Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia* provides one with varying topics of discussion. One of these topics is desire, which Aristotle classifies as rational and non-rational. In this classification, *boulēsis* (βούλησις – wishing or reasoning) is thought under the rational desires; *thumos* (θυμός – anger) and *epithumia* (ἐπιθυμία – appetite), on the other hand, are recognized as types of the non-rational desires. The significant point for Aristotle is that these three types of desire constitute three distinct motivations for action. Accordingly, if these motivations do not work harmoniously, and enter into conflict, then akratic action may ensue. Desire draws its power in leading one to action from seeing something as good. Put differently, the underlying motor of desiring something and acting stems from considering something as good for oneself. (As we see in Chapters 2, this view bears resemblance to the Platonic claim.) The good in question can be either an apparent or a real good; yet what is essential in desiring and acting is not its being apparent or real good, rather is being 'represented' as good.

The faculty of *phantasia* (φαντασία – representation), if performs properly, determines what is the apparent and what is the real good; for this reason, its role is of utmost importance in the analysis of akratic action. In view of this fact, Chapter 3 is occupied with an examination of the role of *phantasia* in such akratic actions. Such an examination requires us to make reference to the *φαντασία αἰσθητική* (perceptual representation), in which appetite is active and the *φαντασία λογιστική* (rational representation), in which *boulēsis* is active. Claiming that, in the *akratēs*, the latter is blocked by the former may be regarded as a possible cause of akratic action. However, even though the role *phantasia* plays in an akratic action is vital, the role of habituation and education, which helps one generate the proper *phantasiai* can be regarded as more fundamental. Habituation and education enable one to strengthen the *phantasia* once formed. If the habituation and education are correct, one gradually moulds a proper, virtuous character and does not succumb to the desires of the non-rational pleasures and consequently fall into *akrasia*.

Suggesting bad habituation and poor, or wrong, education as the ultimate cause of akratic action should not lead us interpret such an action as involuntary. On the contrary, this should encourage one to claim that a person is in every step of her upbringing is aware of her actions, and thus is held responsible. In this context, the

inquiry into voluntary and involuntary action is a novelty on the part of Aristotle. This inquiry is particularly significant when we consider it in contrast to Plato's own discussion, according to which the *akratēs*' action cannot be voluntary, since "anyone who does anything wrong or bad does so involuntarily,"⁵ or 'no one errs knowingly.'⁶ On the other hand, despite acknowledging the ignorance of the *akratēs*, Aristotle at the same time claims that the *akratēs*' action is done voluntarily.

Apart from the non-intellectualist reading of *akrasia*, which focuses on the conflict of rational and appetitive desires, there is also an intellectualist reading of it, which interprets *akrasia* as caused by a lack of knowledge and which centres around the application of the practical reasoning to the akratic action, that is, the practical syllogism. This can be considered as the invaluable contribution of Aristotle to the discussion of *akrasia*. Within the framework of the practical syllogism, the ignorance, which is attributed to the so-called *akratēs* by the Socrates of the *Protagoras*, is investigated thoroughly by Aristotle. In the following, I examine what this syllogism adds to our knowledge of the akratic action.

The reading I intend to demonstrate in this chapter focuses on the knowledge or lack of knowledge of the akratic person. This approach is more of a refinement of both the claim of the many (*οἱ πολλοί*) and that of Socrates of the *Protagoras*. In this regard, by questioning the knowledge or ignorance of the *akratēs*, we find a middle ground between these two *prima facie* incompatible claims. With the examination of the differences between knowledge and opinion (or belief), also between the knowledge in potentiality and in actuality, and lastly between the particular and the general/universal knowledge, Aristotle lays bare what the said knowledge of the *akratēs* is and is not. In this context, the premises of the practical syllogism, namely the minor and major premises (corresponding to the particular and universal knowledge, respectively) and the conclusion of this syllogism function as the key to comprehend the said knowledge of the *akratēs*. Whether the *akratēs*' failure in following the right action is a failure in her knowledge of the minor premise/particular knowledge, a failure in linking the minor premise to the major, or a mishap in conceiving the conclusion of the syllogism is to be answered at this point. If we

⁵ Plato, *Prot.* 345e4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 352c2-7; 358b6-c1.

consider these points together with the Socratic reading of *akrasia*, this scrutiny leads us to claim that the genuine, universal knowledge (*epistēmē*), which Socrates claims not to be ‘dragged around,’ remains intact and all powerful. Consequently, what we reach at the end of the intellectual reading of the concept of *akrasia* saves both the Socratic claim and popular claim of the many.

The Stoic conception of *akrasia* has considerable similarities with the Socratic reading of it. As I discuss in Chapter 4, their investigation centres around the human soul. Their model of the soul, just like that of the Plato of the *Phaedo*, is monistic or partless. As we examined in Chapter 3, this conception of the soul reinforces the denial of *akrasia*. The acknowledgement of the monistic model of the soul requires that the soul be fully rational. That is to say, it does not have any non-rational ‘part’ which is capable of overpowering reason. So as to comprehend the Stoic approach to the akratic action, we need to analyse the Stoic theory of action, that is, the mechanism of action formation in this model of the soul. For this purpose, how the rationality is maintained in the face of *hormē* (*ὁρμή* – desire) and passion should be investigated. This process starts with *phantasia*, is followed by assent, then impulse, and comes to its conclusion with action. In this discussion, what is striking at first glance is the role of passions. While in later Plato and in Aristotle, they are considered to be linked to the non-rational parts of the soul, the Stoics regard them as the mistaken ‘judgments’ of the rational, partless soul. In this soul-model, passions, which are generally deemed to be the cause of one’s acting akratically, originate from not listening to the Right Reason, namely the reason when perfected. In other words, here, the imperfect reason turns against the perfect reason (of the wise or the sage). Hence, in the Stoics, passions do not stem from a non-rational part of the soul; rather it is just an aberration on the part of the reason. Also the problem of what triggers passions in one’s soul in the first place is solved by means of an external force: the representations (*phantasiai*). In line with the monistic model of the soul, the introduction of an external force rather than an internal conflict as the cause of passions and thus of akratic action, supports the Stoic reading of *akrasia*. With this claim, Stoics converge on the Socratic reading of *akrasia*, in which the power of presentation/appearance plays a vital role. This illusory power leads one to make mistaken interpretations of one’s presentations, which in the end concludes with a mistaken assent and a wrong action.

The Stoics maintain that *akrasia* can only occur as a result of conflict between two judgments of reason, rather than between reason and appetite. An assent given to wrong kind of judgment gives rise to passion, which leads to a wrong action (in this case *akrasia*). In such a case, one's judgments or opinions change so swiftly that, one may think that there is a conflict between reason and desire, when this is, in fact, only a conflict between successive opinions.

Furthermore, we can consider the impetuous or precipitant *akrasia*, which is suggested by Aristotle, as a type of *akrasia* which might be acknowledged by the Stoics. Aristotle considers this type of *akrasia* as occurring due to absence of reasoning, and it can be recognised that the Stoics further this consideration and suggest education of the reason as an antidote to precipitant *akrasia*. This suggestion is in line with the Aristotelian reading. By means of the education of reason, even the precipitant agent gradually changes her behaviour and hence disposition, and reaches the level of the virtuous people (the sage), who has no conflicting opinions or judgments, and has a harmonious soul. If we remind ourselves of the fact that, for the Stoics, knowledge (*epistēmē*), which is formed and acquired by continuous practice of reasoning, is required for becoming virtuous, then we can claim that non-virtuous actions must be formed and performed due to ignorance, or due to not acquiring the required knowledge. With this point, we come full circle to what we have examined as the Socratic explanation of the cause of *akrasia*, according to whom the cause of *akrasia* is nothing but ignorance or lack of knowledge (of, the Stoics would say, the Right Reason). The Stoic contribution to this explanation is about pinpointing and elaborating what the knowledge the *akratēs* lacks consists of. In point of fact, this elaboration bears close similarities with the conclusion Aristotle reaches through the discussion of practical syllogism even though the Stoics reject *akrasia* and Aristotle acknowledges it.

CHAPTER 2

AKRASIA IN PLATO: A PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE AND *PHSYKHE*

2.1 *Akrasia* Between Hedonism and Knowledge

2.1.1 A General Outline of the *Protagoras* in the Context of the Concept of *Akrasia*

Almost all ancient and modern discussions on *akrasia* either briefly comment on or analyse in detail the account given in Plato's *Protagoras* (352b-358d5), since it is for the first time here that this concept is worked out in a detailed manner. For this reason, in this chapter, we will start our discussion by laying out how *akrasia* is discussed in this work. Before delving into the issue, it should be kept firmly in mind that even though *akrasia* has become a subject of discussion in the *Protagoras*, this concept does not play a central role in this work. Rather, it is examined with a view to demonstrating the power of knowledge, whose details will be given below. The interlocutor of the *Protagoras*, which constitutes one of the early dialogues of Plato, is Socrates. Here Socrates maintains – even though at the outset he asserts the opposite – that virtue can be taught since it is knowledge. The knowledge in question is not any type of knowledge, but a certain type of it, which enables one to discern what is good and what is bad. To this, however, Protagoras objects by claiming that one of the cardinal virtues, namely courage, differs from the rest.⁷ The dispute between Socrates and Protagoras henceforth centres around whether or not courage is knowledge like the other virtues.⁸ The discussion of the relation between the good and pleasure – that is, whether or not things are good to extent that they are pleasant, or whether the pleasant

⁷ Plato, *Prot.* 349d.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 349d- 351a.

and the good are the same – enters into the picture at this point in the dialogue. This investigation will be carried out under the title “2.1.2 The ‘Ridiculous Argument’: ‘Being overcome by Pleasure’ and Hedonism” below, which plays a key role in understanding Socrates’ views on *akrasia*.

In the discussion between 352b-358d2, Socrates, together with Protagoras, raises a hypothetical discussion as to *akrasia*, through which the power of knowledge is examined and questioned. This discussion between 352b-358d2 can be divided into four parts. In the first part (352b-353d), the many’s (*οἱ πολλοί*, the imaginary interlocutor with whom Socrates engages in the dialogue) view on *akrasia* is generally described, and the possible reasons as to its occurrence are given. In the next part (353d-355a), the hedonistic hypothesis of the many, on which Socrates’ argumentation concerning *akrasia* depends, is laid out. In the third part (355a-356c), the claim of the many is considered together with their hedonism, and the absurdity or ridiculousness of their claim is demonstrated. Lastly, in the fourth part (356c-358d2), Socrates sets out to give his explanation of the akratic action.

The discussion takes its beginning with Socrates’ question to Protagoras. He asks Protagoras whether he agrees with the many who opine that knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) is not always powerful and does not always rule, which, in turn, attests to the weakness of knowledge. As Socrates asserts, the many claim that even though knowledge is present in one, that knowledge can be “dragged around” sometimes by “anger [*θυμός*], sometimes pleasure [*ἡδονή*], sometimes pain [*λύπη*], at other times love [*ἔρως*], often fear [*φόβος*] [...] as if it were a slave.”⁹ In point of fact, this claim of the many provides us with the prevalently accepted definition of the *akratēs* (i.e. the one who behaves akratically). According to this definition, the *akratēs* is the one who acts contrary to her own knowledge and is generally deemed to be acting in this way because she is overcome by pleasure, appetite, fear, etc. What is conspicuous here is the close relation between knowledge and action, or the role of knowledge in one’s action.

Given this claim of the many, Socrates furthers his questioning with an alternative one, which bears resemblance, or comes close, to Socrates’ own approach to the issue. This lays emphasis on the ascendancy of knowledge, of knowing “what

Ibid., 352b5-c2.

is good and bad.”¹⁰ According to the alternative approach, if one were to have this knowledge, then, claims Socrates, acting contrary to this knowledge would be impossible. They could not be dragged around by any of the said factors. Knowing what is good and bad is said to be the most powerful force, and is deemed to have the complete control over a person.¹¹ That is to say, pursuing what is good and refraining from what is bad, if the occasion and opportunity are apt, is what the knowledge dictates and what the agent does. Therefore, the possibility of acting contrary to one’s knowledge, which is the claim of the many, should be eliminated in order to save the power of knowledge in one’s actions. To this end, either the power of knowledge should be established or the feebleness of passions or appetites by comparison to the power of knowledge should be proven. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates takes the former path by resorting to a specific type of knowledge one is to have in order not to be akratic, while he touches the latter path only briefly. Also, he presents the ridiculousness of the claim of the many which casts a doubt on their credibility.

In fact, this reasoning constitutes the kernel of Socrates’ view on this issue, that is, passion, appetite, pleasure, or pain, do not have the required power to make a person act contrary to their knowledge if knowledge is present in them. According to this understanding, the power of knowledge, drawing its strength from discerning what is good and bad (or what is pleasurable and painful), or from knowing what is the best action or thing to do, suffices one not to be drawn into the sway of those passions, appetites, or feelings. As this remark makes clear, for Socrates, knowledge plays the leading role in one’s conduct. The whole discussion centres on the idea that knowledge does not permit one to be led astray. It is this emphasis on knowledge that prevents him from giving in to the views of the many.

2.1.2 The ‘Ridiculous Argument’: ‘Being Overcome by Pleasure’ and Hedonism

Socrates, in his discussion of the power of knowledge and the rejection of *akrasia* (due to the reasons that will be discussed below), pursues a longer path. Rather than examining and demonstrating the power of knowledge beforehand, he sets out to

¹⁰ Ibid., 352c5.

¹¹ Ibid., 352d1-2.

cancel out the claim of the many by showing that their claim itself leads to absurdity when considered together with one of their deeply rooted thoughts. He presumes that if he immediately gave his own view about the issue, the many would not be convinced, and hence would dismiss his solution.¹² For this reason, he firstly calls into question the claim of the many, leaving his alternative hypothesis (which claims that if one were to know what is good and bad, one cannot act akratically) untouched for the nonce. He delves into questioning what ‘being overcome by pleasure’ is, so as to understand what makes people act akratically.¹³ What should be taken note of is that here Socrates singles out pleasure, and does not consider the other four accounts given as the explanation for one’s acting akratically, i.e. *akrasia* due to anger, pain, love, or fear.¹⁴ The discussion of ‘being overcome by pleasure’ is definitely necessary for understanding the claim of the many and for Socrates’ rejection of it. However, as Gerasimos Santas points out, discussing only the pleasure may not provide us with the overall explanation as to why it should also be applied to the other four accounts given as the reasons of akratic actions.¹⁵

Leaving aside the problem of oversimplification which focuses only on ‘being overcome by pleasure,’ Socrates continues his examination by linking the discussion of ‘being overcome by pleasure’ with the hedonistic account of *akrasia*, to which, he holds, the many are committed. In this, he aims at exposing that hedonism and the many’s claim cannot be held at the same time, since this would lead to absurdity. Accordingly, in Socrates’ discussion, hedonism, which can simply be defined as holding pain to be bad and pleasure to be good¹⁶ or identifying the good with pleasure and the bad with pain, will play a pivotal role in refuting the claim of the many as to *akrasia*.

Defined in this way, we should first of all investigate whether or not the many hold hedonism to be true, so as to proceed with Socrates’ analysis of the case. Whether

¹² Ibid., 357d.

¹³ Ibid., 353a2.

¹⁴ Gerasimos Santas, “Plato’s *Protagoras* and Explanations of Weakness,” *The Philosophical Review* 75, no. 1 (1966): 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶ Plato, *Prot.* 354c.

the many are really hedonists is subject to many debates.¹⁷ If we take into account the questions Socrates asks and the answers he presumes that the many would provide, we can assert that the many hold hedonism. But, it should be borne in mind that this is not an answer given by actual interlocutors present during the conversation, but by the ‘imaginary’ many. This point exposes a serious limitation concerning the tenability of Socrates’ attribution of hedonism to the many. But, it is clear that Socrates bases his argument on this assumption, and works it up on this line.

At the outset of the discussion, Protagoras demurs to acknowledge hedonism, and rather than hedonism according to which pleasure is identified with the good and pain with the bad, he adopts a non-hedonistic stance. He claims that only praiseworthy pleasures are good, and asserts that some pleasant things are bad, and some painful things are good.¹⁸ Socrates asserts that this is also what the many maintain. However, in the course of his analysis, Socrates (rhetorically) asks the imaginary many and Protagoras whether they would like to acknowledge another standard for goodness aside from pleasure, and badness aside from pain. Yet the only answer he presumes to be taking from them is that they would not.¹⁹ For instance, Socrates asks whether the many “pursue pleasure as good and avoid pain as bad”²⁰ (psychological hedonism), or whether “the good is anything other than pleasure or that the bad is anything other than pain.”²¹ The many’s inability to “explain their first intuition that some pleasant things are bad and some painful things good by appealing to any other aim or end (*telos*,

¹⁷ For further debates on whether the many are hedonists, see Gregory Vlastos, “Socrates on Acrasia,” *Phoenix*, 23, no. 1 (1969): 71-88; Donald J. Zeyl, “Socrates and Hedonism: *Protagoras* 351b-358d,” *Phronesis* 25, no. 3 (1980): 250-269; Charles H. Kahn, “Socrates and Hedonism,” in *Remembering Socrates: Philosophical Essays*, (eds.) Lindsay Judson, Vassilis Karasmanis (New York: Oxford UP, 2006), 50-7. There are also those who question whether Socrates/Plato accepts hedonism, see J. Gosling and C. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982): 45-68, 51; T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 82-92; D. J. Zeyl, “Socrates and Hedonism,” *Phronesis* 25 (1980): 250-69; George Klosko, “Towards a Consistent Interpretation of the *Protagoras*,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 61, no. 2 (1979): 125-42; Gregory Vlastos, “Socrates on Acrasia,” *Phoenix* 23, no. 1 (1969): 71-88.

¹⁸ Plato, *Prot.* 351d4-5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 354b6-8, 354d1-4, 354e2-4. There are some, however, who do not think that the many hold hedonism. For this view, see G. R. F. Ferrari, “Akrasia as Neurosis in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* IV 6, no. 1 (1990): 132ff.

²⁰ Plato, *Prot.* 351c1, 354c3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 355a2-4.

354c1) than more pleasure and less pain,”²² in their reply, lead Socrates to the conclusion that they in fact hold hedonism, at least in his exposition. What that means is that the many cannot offer any other standard for goodness and badness apart from pleasure and pain. “The pleasant things the many assumed to be bad are so because they cause more pain overall whereas the painful things they assumed to be good are so because they lead to more pleasure in the long run.”²³ Hence, their initial non-hedonistic stance turns out to be something in which the good and the bad are determined and explained according to the pleasures and pains it provides. Moreover, Socrates’ repeated demand for their assent (that they acknowledge hedonism) can be seen as a need to prevent any possible breach within his analysis.

Having pointed out this limitation of Socrates’ analysis of hedonism, we can now proceed to the link between ‘being overcome by pleasure’ and hedonism. Socrates firstly elaborates on the meaning of ‘being overcome by pleasure’ by consulting to ordinary and elementary examples of pleasure, such as the pleasure taken from “food or drink or sex.”²⁴ Then, he asks whether or not people indulge in satisfying these pleasures even though they are cognizant of the fact that they are (or might be) harmful (*πονηρά*).²⁵ After surmising that the many would answer positively, Socrates brings his questioning to where he has been aiming at: questioning whether the pleasures themselves or what they cause later on are harmful or wicked.²⁶ This investigation will also be helpful to determine whether the many consider good or bad things in terms of anything other than pleasures and pains.

The harmful effects that may ensue after a pleasant but excessive ingestion of food or lavish expenditure of one’s riches, for instance, would be “diseases and poverty.”²⁷ Socrates attains the approval of the many through Protagoras, who

²² Vivil Valvik Haraldsen, “Is Pleasure Any Good? Weakness of Will and the Art of Measurement in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” in *Plato’s Protagoras: Essays on the Confrontation of Philosophy and Sophistry*, (eds.) Olof Petterson, Vigdis Songe-Møller (Cham: Springer, 2017), 99-121, 108.

²³ Ibid., 108.

²⁴ Plato, *Prot.* 353c5-6.

²⁵ Ibid., 353c6.

²⁶ Ibid., 353d1-5.

²⁷ Ibid., 353d1-3.

occasionally speaks in the name of the many. Accordingly, some pleasant things are bad, harmful, or wicked, not because of themselves, but because what they cause afterwards, be it a ruinous outcome or enjoying less of prospective greater pleasures. They are deemed wicked, since they cause us feel pain and “deprive us of other pleasures.”²⁸ In this exposition, pleasures themselves, or, to be more specific, the immediate pleasures, without any unwanted concomitants, are not deemed harmful or ruinous considered in the context of hedonism (which Socrates makes use of in his argument).

From this point onwards, Socrates continues to refine his argument by stating that even though some pleasant things are considered bad due to the future pain they might cause, not everything that gives rise to pain is bad, i.e. military training, treatments by doctors, etc.²⁹ Hence, as can be seen, feeling pain is not the only criterion for the classification of bad. The future or remote pains or pleasures that an action might cause are also included in determining something as bad or good, respectively.

Given this consideration as to what counts as good or bad with a resort to pleasure and pain, Socrates states the hedonistic claim that the bad is what gives rise to pain (which causes sooner or later bad things or deprives us of greater pleasures) and the good is what brings about pleasure. Here, the pleasure in question is the long-term pleasure which can be equated with the overall good. The pleasure which the many claim to be prevailing is, on the other hand, the pleasure taken from the satisfaction of an immediate gratification.³⁰ In the hedonism of the many, in other words, a “haphazard and impulsive”³¹ gratification is at work, rather than a pleasure directed towards a long-term and overall good. The hedonism which Socrates might be advocating, on the other hand, could be a hedonism which identifies goodness with the greatest pleasure. This greatest pleasure is that which exceeds the pain in the final analysis, and is conducive to one’s happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*).³² As this discrepancy

²⁸ Ibid., 354a2.

²⁹ Ibid., 354a6.

³⁰ Jessica Moss, “Hedonism and the Divided Soul in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 96, no. 3 (2014): 312.

³¹ Ibid., 312.

³² Ibid., 312.

between the hedonism attributed to the many and the Socratic hedonism³³ shows, the former is limited in comparison to the latter by being momentary, random, and only bodily.

Socrates bases his prominent ‘ridiculous argument’ on this ground. In this ‘ridiculous argument’, the substitution of good for pleasure and bad for pain (the limited hedonism of the many) unfolds, the link between this equation and ‘being overcome by pleasure’ is established, and lastly, the ridiculousness or the absurdity of the claim of the many is betrayed. If we remind ourselves of the claim of the many, according to which one acts akratically due to being overruled by pleasure,³⁴ and the identification of pleasure with good, and pain with bad, the claim turns out to be as follows: “Someone does what is bad, knowing that it is bad, when it is not necessary to do it, having been overcome by the *good*.”³⁵

This statement of Socrates captures the gist of his thought. Firstly, “knowing that it is bad” indicates that one is well aware of the situation one is in, one *knows* what one should do and should not do, and thus it is not an involuntary act. Secondly, by saying “when it is not necessary to do it”, it is stressed that one is not forced to act contrary to one’s knowledge, that is, one is not compelled to do what is bad, thus one is free. Lastly, in this statement we might see that Socrates substitutes pleasure with good, and the claim, after Socrates’ modification, turns out to be that ‘one does what is *bad* due to the fact that one is overcome by the *good*.’ With this formulation, the claim of the many as to akratic action is reduced to absurdity.

What is seen in this discussion is that Socrates does not question the said knowledge of the *akratēs*, but only that their claim is absurd or ridiculous if hedonism of the many is acknowledged. Ridiculousness is the translation of the ancient Greek word *γελοῖον*. This word does not refer to self-contradiction, but describes something

³³ Jessica Moss uses the phrase “popular Hedonism” to describe the hedonism of the many, and “Socratic Hedonism” to describe that of Socrates. See Moss, “Hedonism and the Divided Soul in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” 317.

³⁴ Since Socrates bases his argument only on ‘being overcome by pleasure’, we will also consider only pleasure, leaving other explanations of *akrasia* undiscussed.

³⁵ Plato, *Prot.* 355d2-4, emphasis added.

“ridiculous, absurd, or something deserving laughter.”³⁶ And by pointing out the absurdity of their claim, Socrates refutes it. A problem arising in this refutation of *akrasia* is that this refutation is founded only on ‘being overcome by pleasure.’ The substitution of good for pleasure enables one to demonstrate the absurdity only to an extent, since the claim of the many does not only include being overcome by pleasure but also being overcome by fear, love, anger, etc. If we take into account these other reasons given as explanations of the akratic action, hedonistic hypothesis will not be applicable and the claim of the many will not be refuted. The second difficulty is that this refutation is applicable only if the many adopt hedonism;³⁷ if not, then the refutation of the claim of the many and the denial of the akratic action cannot be held true. However, as shown above, the many acknowledge the identification of the good with pleasure. By showing the absurdity of the explanation of *akrasia* given by the many, Socrates does not prove that *akrasia* does not occur; but only that the many’s explanation of it results in absurdity. Hence, he makes us doubt the truth of the claim of the many even though he does not prove that it does not happen at all.

The next point to be emphasized, as the above quotation indicates, is that in his discussion of the claim of the many, Socrates formulates this claim by focusing on the ‘knowledge’ (*ἐπιστήμη*), not the belief one may hold. He repeatedly states this throughout his analysis.³⁸ As these repetitions evince, Socrates focuses on the knowledge, and questions its power. He is not interested in beliefs or opinions which might make tenable the claim of the many. That is to say, if we take what the many claim as acting against one’s *belief* as to what is best, then we turn out to be dealing with a weak type of ‘knowledge,’ not the strong knowledge, which Socrates claims to be lacking in the case of *akrasia*. In this scenario, if one does what is bad, *believing* it to be bad, yet lacks the actual knowledge as to what is good and bad, knowledge which Socrates strongly defends remains untouched. Taking belief rather than knowledge as

³⁶ Josh Wilburn, “Akrasia and the Rule of Appetite in Plato’s *Protagoras* and *Republic*,” *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2014): 77, note 32.

³⁷ Gerasimos Santas, “Plato on Pleasure as Human Good,” in *A Companion to Plato*, ed. Hugh H. Benson (Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 7-8.

³⁸ Plato, *Prot.* 355b3-4, 355c2-3, 355d2-4.

being present in one who acts akratically, in point of fact, would save both the claim of the many and that of Socrates.

It saves the claim of the many, since one's beliefs with respect to what is good and bad might be wrong. In other words, beliefs do not necessarily correspond to the facts or the truth, and thus, one may (wrongly) *believe* that what she is doing is good while the opposite is the case. In such a case, one may be overcome by pleasure, pain, fear, etc., since the actual/strong knowledge is not present in her, but only belief. Considering the issue in this way also vindicates Socrates, because the (altered) claim of the many ('one does something which is bad, *believing* it to be bad') does not threaten what Socrates has been trying to defend, namely knowledge. In this interpretation, Socrates would not embark on refuting their claim. Also, the substitution of belief for knowledge would strengthen Socrates' argument, according to which knowledge is the ruling power, and if it is present in one, one cannot act contrary to it,³⁹ but can act contrary to one's belief.⁴⁰

Even though this way of reading Socrates may sound tenable, there are also passages where Socrates explicitly denies not just action against knowledge, but also against belief. There, belief is not thought to be presenting an alternative which justifies Socrates' argument as to *akrasia*. Instead, belief is taken to be as strong as, or not different from, the knowledge in motivating one for acting accordingly, that is, acting in line with what one sees as the best. As Agnes Gellen Callard draws attention,⁴¹ Socrates makes this point clear as follows:

[N]o one who knows or believes [οὐδεὶς οὔτε εἰδὼς οὔτε οἰόμενος]
there is something else better than what he is doing, something
possible, will go on doing what he had been doing when he could
be doing what is better.⁴²

Now, no one goes willingly toward the bad or what he believes to
be bad [ἐπὶ γε τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἐκὼν ἔρχεται οὐδὲ ἐπὶ ᾧ οἶεται κακὰ

³⁹ Ibid., 352c3-7.

⁴⁰ Agnes Gellen Callard, "Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the *Protagoras*," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XLVII, ed. Brad Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31-2.

⁴¹ Ibid., 32-3.

⁴² Plato, *Prot.* 358b7-c3.

εἶναι]; neither is it in human nature, so it seems, to want to go toward what one believes to be bad instead of to the good.⁴³

As these passages state, no one acts against one's own knowledge as well as one's belief; yet, one can act in line with one's 'representation' (*φάντασμα*),⁴⁴ which may be contrary to one's knowledge and belief.

2.1.3 *Akrasia* and the "Art of Measurement"

After laying out the 'ridiculousness' of the claim of the many on the basis of being overcome by pleasure with the help of their hedonism, and examining Socrates' emphasis on knowledge (not the belief) in his argumentation, Socrates investigates the significance of the first half of the phrase "*being overcome* by pleasure/good." He interprets being 'overcome' as being 'outweighed.' (There is another interpretation of being 'overcome,' which points out the strength or the power of desires or passions, yet this is not what Socrates lays stress on. The discussion of this interpretation can be found below.). 'The good outweighing the bad' or 'the bad outweighing the good' is what is foregrounded in the explanation of the possible causes of akratic action. The only answer that is given to the question what is the cause of the good's being outweighed by the bad, or vice versa, is that "one is greater and one is smaller, or more and less."⁴⁵ In the case of being outweighed by the bad, then, the good is regarded as smaller or less effective than the bad. If, following the hedonistic principle, pleasure and pain are inserted in this exposition, the argument may be more understandable. Borrowing the reformulated claim of the many, i.e. 'one acts akratically because within oneself pleasure outweighs the pain,' the issue at stake turns out to be a discussion of immediate pleasures and pains, and that of pleasures or pains at a later time, or the near and remote pleasures or pains.⁴⁶ In the case of the *akratēs*, pleasure near in time

⁴³ Ibid., 358d1-3.

⁴⁴ *φάντασμα* can be translated as appearance or simulacrum. The power of *φάντασμα* in determining one's actions will be discussed in detail below (2.4). For now, suffice it to say that in Socrates' understanding, *akrasia* is not defined by acting contrary to one's knowledge or belief, but against one's another kind of mental state which is related to producing *φάντασμα*.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 355e1-2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 356a6-7.

outweighs pain at a later time. That is to say, in the case of the *akratēs*, she considers the action resulting in an immediate pleasure as more preferable, and ignores its future harm.

What is evaluated here is the “*estimated or believed* (by the agent) quantities⁴⁷ of pleasure and pain,”⁴⁸ not the *actual* quantities of them.⁴⁹ One estimates that this pleasant thing is pleasant because it provides immediate pleasure or more pleasure than the alternatives. As to the more pleasures we can say that since ‘maximizing pleasures and avoiding pains,’ or ‘pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain,’⁵⁰ is what the many hold as their principle, what brings (more) pleasure is to be chosen. With this principle in mind, we can understand the preference of more pleasure over less pleasure. Nevertheless, we have not yet reached a position to determine how one thing (pleasant or painful) can be seen less or more, or smaller or bigger. By means of an analogy of distance, Socrates explains that the same thing may appear larger “when seen near at hand and smaller when seen from a distance.”⁵¹ Hence, the designations of ‘small/smaller’ or ‘large/larger’ turn out to be belonging not to the thing itself; but they are designations assigned by the persons themselves, who can misrepresent things. Therefore, their calculation, according to Socrates, cannot be taken as being based on knowledge, rather on estimation, which might be wrong. That being the case, one’s estimation might as well be a misestimation. This conclusion is what Socrates has been after, namely that in the claim of the many, not knowledge but misestimation, or miscalculation, is in operation.

Our discussion so far has centred around analysing the phrase ‘being overcome by pleasure.’ For this purpose, we firstly focused on the latter part of this phrase, namely pleasure, within the context of hedonism which is attributed to and acknowledged by the many. The substitution of pleasure with the good, and likewise, pain with the bad, is applied to the formulation of the claim of the imaginary many.

⁴⁷ The discussion about quantities in the case of pleasures and pains, and their application to the good and bad will be discussed in the next section (2.4).

⁴⁸ Santas, “Plato’s *Protagoras* and Explanations of Weakness,” 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 23, emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Plato, *Prot.* 354c3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 356c5-7.

Secondly, the first half of the phrase, namely ‘being overcome’ is called into question, and Socrates’ own treatment of the issue, which interprets ‘being overcome by the good’ as ‘the good’s outweighing the bad’ is discussed. In order to unravel the meaning of ‘outweighing,’ as we have seen, Socrates makes use of an analogy of size and distance. What has been determined as the cause of one’s action, as the way described by the many, is in effect is a misestimation on the part of a person. At this point, before discussing ‘the tool of knowledge’ (art of measurement), which prevents one acting contrary to knowledge, and the possible causes of one’s misestimation, we should examine an alternative reading of the phrase, ‘being overcome by...,’ which Socrates does not discuss in his argumentation. This is the discussion of ‘the strength or power of desires.’⁵²

According to this reading, in the case of *akrasia*, one has conflicting desires: one for pursuing a pleasure, and other for avoiding the pain in a given situation. The suppositions in this reading are that one of these two desires is to be stronger or weaker than the other, and the subject is to act or behave in conformity with the stronger desire. With these suppositions in mind, in the normal course of actions, why one follows the stronger desire, and what makes a desire stronger should be answered. This is a slippery ground, since what is the cause and what is the effect should be heeded. An answer to the first question would be that one follows the stronger desire, because this desire is congruous with one’s evaluation, ranking, or belief.⁵³ One’s ranking, in other words, correlates with the strength of desires. Here, the strength of desires is already determined: one is stronger and the other is weaker. Hence, it can be speculated that since one has both the stronger desire and the respective conforming belief or evaluation, then one possibly would act in accordance with them.

However, here, what determines the strength of desire is not questioned, instead it is taken for granted. At this point, if we acknowledge the correlation between one’s evaluation or belief and the strength of desires, and regard the strength of desire as the outcome of one’s evaluations of beliefs, we may explain whence the strength of desire comes. On this reading, one’s belief (in getting more pleasure in doing an action, for instance) strengthens the respective desire. In other words, one chooses among the

⁵² Santas, “Plato’s *Protagoras* and Explanations of Weakness,” 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

conflicting desires the one which corresponds to one's belief, and makes it stronger. Hence, what is expressed so far is the conformity of one's evaluation or belief with the desire strengthened by this evaluation. Thus far, why one follows the stronger desire, and what makes a desire stronger are tried to be answered. We should now link this reading with the case of *akrasia*.

One regards as good what corresponds to one's belief and evaluations. In other words, a person regards her own belief as knowledge. Applied to *akrasia*, this reading turns out to be as follows. The *akratēs* is defined as the one who acts contrary to one's own knowledge, which is, in this reading, one's own ranking or belief as to what is good. This ranking or belief, in turn, determines the stronger desire. Since in the case of *akrasia* one acts against what one's own knowledge (here, belief) dictates, the *akratēs* follows not the stronger desire which correlates with one's knowledge/belief, but the weaker desire. However, this state of affair contradicts with the supposition pointed out above, according to which one acts in accordance with the stronger desire. The strength of the desire, then, does not necessarily suffice to determine one's actions. If "being overcome by..." in the definition of *akrasia* is to be understood as succumbing to the strength of desire, then in the case of *akrasia*, this reading becomes untenable. The reason for this is that the *akratēs* follows the weaker desire, whose weakness ensues from not corresponding to one's own belief or ranking.

Another problem would be that if knowledge and belief are used interchangeably, as is the case in this reading, then the akratic action becomes far from being explicable. The reason for this is that the only plausible explanation of *akrasia* has been so far the misestimation or the (wrong) belief of the *akratēs*. If *akratēs* is to be taken as acting contrary to its own knowledge, and its knowledge is, in this reading, its belief, then the *akratēs* turns out to be the one who acts contrary to one's own belief (knowledge), and yet acts in accordance with one's own belief, evaluation, or ranking.⁵⁴

The phrase "being overcome by..." in terms of the strength of conflicting desires has so far been read as suggesting a correlation between one's acting in conformity with one's own stronger desire and one's own ranking or belief. Even

⁵⁴ A discussion of what have been pointed out in this paragraph can be found in Gerasimos Santas, "Plato's *Protagoras* and Explanations of Weakness," 26-7.

though taking both one's evaluation/belief and pursuing the stronger desire makes us conceive the case more comprehensible, it is possible also to pursue the stronger desire and to be overcome by it without including in the discussion one's estimation, evaluation, or ranking. Hedonism can be taken as a sufficient condition for them. Following the stronger desire is in line with the hedonism attributed to the many; because, as Socrates emphasizes, hedonism seeks more or greater pleasure, or a desire for attaining such a pleasure. In that vein, acting in accordance with the stronger desire would not need a correlation with one's own belief or ranking.

2.1.4 Socrates' Own Solution to the Problem of Misunderstanding the Case of *Akrasia*

After refusing the claim of the many by disclosing the ridiculousness of their argument, Socrates now lays out his own explanation of *akrasia*. As discussed above, Socrates makes use of the analogy of distance and size in explaining how one can misevaluate a phenomenon. This misevaluation enables Socrates to incorporate in his discussion the “power of appearance” (*ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις*).⁵⁵ Socrates contrasts this power with “the art of measurement” (*ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη*),⁵⁶ and describes their respective roles as follows:

While the power of appearance often makes us wander all over the place in confusion, often changing our minds about the same things and regretting our actions and choices with respect to things large and small, the art of measurement in contrast, would make the appearances [*τοῦτο τὸ φάντασμα*] lose their power by showing us the truth, would give us peace of mind firmly rooted in the truth and would save our life.⁵⁷

While “[u]nder the influence of our appetites and the Power of Appearances [...] immediate pleasures *appear* bigger and more intense than long-term ones, and that appearance causes us to make mistaken judgments about the value of those competing

⁵⁵ Plato, *Prot.* 356d4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 356d4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 356d4-e3.

pleasures,”⁵⁸ the art of measurement saves us from succumbing to it.⁵⁹ The art of measurement⁶⁰ can be defined as “the art of the greater and the lesser,”⁶¹ which is included in knowledge in general. It is this knowledge that enables us to discern what is greater or less, and that prevents us from misestimating the strength of the related pleasures or pains by just looking at their nearness and remoteness.

In this type of knowledge, pleasures against pleasures, pains against pains, and also pleasures against pains are put on a scale. When the spatial and temporal proximity is ignored for the sake of assessing what is to be pursued and what is to be avoided, a clear idea of what is more pleasurable and less painful, or vice versa, can be attained. This, in turn, prompts one to act accordingly. This is the service the art of measurement provides. If knowledge – the art of measurement – enables us not to mistake the bad for the good, or pain for pleasure, and if this knowledge is present in one (as the many claim, it is), then one’s acting in the way the many claim is only possible in the case of an absence of knowledge. This knowledge, as Socrates reiterates, is not knowledge in general, but the knowledge of measurement.⁶² This constitutes Socrates’ answer to the claim of the many. People, according to him, act ‘akratically’ due to ignorance, not due to being overcome by pleasure or by anything enumerated in the claim of the many.

As stated above, on the hedonistic lines, pleasure is good and people seek to maximise the pleasure they take if there is an opportunity. Thus, if one is cognizant of the fact that “there is something better than what [one] is doing”, one’s acting contrary

⁵⁸ Wilburn, “Akasia and the Rule of Appetite in Plato’s *Protagoras* and *Republic*,” 85.

⁵⁹ Plato points out the importance of, and our need for, the ability to measure things so as to avoid being fooled by the illusions of appearances in his various dialogues, such as *Rep.* 7.522c, *Pol.* 285a, and *Phil.* 55d-e.

⁶⁰ As a side note, we should point out that what we encounter in the *Protagoras*, that is, deploying the art of measurement in assessing the power of pleasures and pains, and hence determining the good and the bad, differs diametrically from the *Euthyphro*. In the latter (7b8-d11), Plato’s Socrates advocates that the sciences of number, measurement, and weight (arithmetic, geometry, and weighing, respectively), have no use in determining the good/bad, the beautiful/ugly, and the just/unjust. In the *Protagoras*, however, we can see a change of mind in Socrates. According to this understanding, the art of measurement can be applied to the good/bad, the beautiful/ugly, and the just/unjust, with the result that an agreement can be established in compliance with the assessment.

⁶¹ Plato, *Prot.* 357a3-4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 357d6-e1.

to the hedonistic principle, that is, not pursuing pleasure or following a lesser pleasure/good, can only be possible due to ignorance or a “false belief.”⁶³ The misestimation or the belief that was attributed to the one acting akratically falls into place when Socrates substitutes it with ignorance. In point of fact, this constitutes Socrates’ goal, for which he uses his method of *elenchus*. Accordingly, it is ignorance, not knowledge, which is the cause of one’s acting akratically. With this conclusion, knowledge is exonerated from the impotency implied by the many. The claim of the many, thus, brings to light the power of knowledge, without which one may act akratically.

At this point, it should also be heeded that here knowledge is the knowledge of how to measure pleasure and pain correctly. Even though Socrates and Protagoras acknowledge that knowledge is strong and is “capable of ruling a person,”⁶⁴ in his analysis Socrates does not make use of it. In his discussion of hedonism of the many and his denial of *akrasia*, knowledge turns out to be “ruler of nothing.”⁶⁵ It “does not rule over or outdo pleasure, but rather functions as its servant; it works to maximize pleasure through art of measurement.”⁶⁶ That is to say, knowledge, by means of measuring pleasures and pains correctly, helps to make pleasures one can get as large and great as possible. In this sense knowledge (art of measurement) and pleasure can be considered as working together, whereas ignorance works contrary to pleasure, and causes one to gain less pleasure or experience more pain (in the long run).

Despite its significant role in the argument, the nature of the art of measurement is left indeterminate.⁶⁷ That is to say, how to measure or compare pleasures and pains, be it large or small, or near or distant, is not elucidated. How can one quantitatively or qualitatively measure pleasures and pains? What are the criteria by which we can determine which pleasures and pains should be promoted or avoided? Furthermore, how can we claim an art (*tekhnē*) of something purely subjective such as

⁶³ Ibid., 358c1-4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 352c4.

⁶⁵ Haraldsen, “Is Pleasure Any Good? Weakness of Will and the Art of Measurement in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” 110.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁷ Plato, *Prot.* 357b5.

pleasures and pains?⁶⁸ Also, as Francisco Gonzales points out, the art of measurement “require[s] precise knowledge of all of an action’s long-term consequences. We would need, in short, a divine omniscience. A second and related point is that the science of measurement would require immortality or, at least, a guaranteed lifespan, since a premature and unexpected death would undermine all of its calculations.”⁶⁹ Considering all these, we can conclude that even though Socrates provides knowledge, which is acquired through the art of measurement, as what ‘saves’ our life and what “make[s] the appearances to lose their power by showing us the truth,”⁷⁰ and even though he assigns such a vital meaning and role to this knowledge, he leaves it vague, undetermined, and thus abstract.

Before concluding, one more point needs to be elucidated which may help us to consider *akrasia* from a different angle. This point may also provide us with a perspective through which the power of knowledge is both examined and substantiated. In the *Protagoras* (345d-e, 358d1-3), the *Gorgias* (509e5-6), the *Meno* (78a), and the *Timaeus* (86d5-e3), Socrates explicitly claims that no one does what is evil ‘voluntarily’ (*ἐκὼν*). In effect, it is not due to the fact that one who has knowledge *exerts* oneself not to succumb to its own feelings or passions. But rather, it is due the fact that a person who has knowledge does not ‘naturally’ choose what is evil, base, or less good, while being ‘conscious’ that it is bad. Socrates asserts that human beings by nature do not choose what appears them to be the worse,⁷¹ and that everyone desires what is good.⁷² If one chooses a bad, or a less favourable, less pleasurable alternative, rather than the better or the best one at the exact moment of action, such a situation would be considered to be due to the wrong belief, misconception, misjudgement or miscalculation one has. That is to say, such a person must have misjudged what is best

⁶⁸ For further information, see Francisco Gonzalez, “The Virtue of Dialogue as Virtue in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” *Philosophical Papers* 43, no. 1 (2014): 57. Cynthia Freeland, “The Science of Measuring Pleasure and Pain,” in *Plato’s Protagoras: Essays on the Confrontation of Philosophy and Sophistry*, (eds.) Olof Pettersson, Vigdis Songe-Møller (Cham: Springer, 2017), 129.

⁶⁹ Gonzalez, “The Virtue of Dialogue as Virtue in Plato’s *Protagoras*,” 56.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Prot.* 356d.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 358d2-3.

⁷² Plato, *Grg.* 468b; *Meno* 77e-78b; *Rep.*, 438a4.

for oneself. Still, in such a case, it is evident that Socrates does not assert that one acts contrary to her own reason or knowledge, or one succumbs to the temptation of one's own appetites or feelings (or any of those listed in the claim of the many: pleasure, pain, fear, love, etc.). Rather, what he claims is that even though one 'seems' to be acting contrary to its knowledge, at the moment of action that person is actually in line with it. The only difference is that at that moment what one takes to be the best course of action has changed.

In this respect, the akratic action in the *Protagoras* can also be read as a change of mind, rather than an example of the overcoming of knowledge by pleasures, feelings, or passions. Giving such a priority to knowledge and excluding even the possibility that one's feeling or appetite might have the power to overcome one's knowledge or deliberation, is usually summed up as 'Socrates' intellectualism.'⁷³ In view of this intellectualism, Socrates in the *Protagoras* rejects *akrasia* as defined by the many altogether. For him, the akratic action is not possible and, speaking as if there were such an action, is owing to a misjudgement, or, as discussed above, due to ignorance, which is alternatively defined as not having or using a specific type of knowledge: the art of measurement.

However, in this reading, the reason Socrates suggests as his rejection of *akrasia* does not explain why such a change of mind occurs in the first place, or why one has erroneously regarded what is in fact worse as better or as the course of action which is to be followed. Could it be owing to strength of pleasures or feelings? Could the temporal and/or the spatial proximity of pleasures and pains affect one's deliberation, and thus one's choice and action? One's erroneous belief or estimation concerning what is good and bad (or what is pleasurable and painful) might be formed through the proximity or remoteness of those pleasurable or painful things. Hence, one's belief could be held responsible for one's pursuing a painful or less pleasurable course of action. However, what Socrates objects to is not belief or misestimation one might hold, but the sort of knowledge which is claimed to be present yet ineffective, or impotent.

⁷³ Roslyn Weiss, "Thirst as Desire for Good," in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Brill, 2007), 87. This moral intellectualism can also be found in the dialogues such as the *Laches*, the *Charmides*, and the *Meno*.

A change of mind could occur on account of the strength of pleasures or due to the proximity of them. Yet, even this could explain only the fact that this change of mind is a type of wrong belief or misestimation. One could change one's mind as to what is good and bad in the exact moment of action, which, however, shows only one's mistake as to the state of affairs, not the powerlessness of knowledge. This view of Socrates can be traced from his conception of human being. He seems to be presupposing "a form of agency akin to the highly unified agency,"⁷⁴ in which reason or knowledge is the only ruling power. In such a conception of agency, appetite, passion, or feeling, cannot have the required power to overcome the dictates of reason if reason is active and knowledge is present in one.

Summa summarum, in the *Protagoras* (352b-358d5), Socrates examines whether *akrasia* can be possible. His refusal of *akrasia* takes its beginning from another view of the many – hedonism –, and, reduces their claim to be about only pleasures and pains. In his discussion of it, he shows the absurdity or ridiculousness of their claim, and proves the validity of his refutation. According to him, 'akratic' actions are the result of ignorance, or are due to epistemic failures on the part of the subject. The suggested readings such as 'change of mind' or 'being overcome by pleasure, pains, etc.' do not find a direct support from the text, yet are useful in understanding Socrates' argument in this text. Whether pleasures, pains, appetites, and so forth, have such a power to overrule one's knowledge or the dictates of reason, which is not discussed in the *Protagoras*, will be examined in the next chapter by having recourse to Plato's conception of the human soul.

2.2 Plato: Akratic Psykhe

In the previous chapter, we have investigated the concept of *akrasia* in terms of 'lack of knowledge' or, as it is commonly referred to, a 'cognitive failure.' This explanation of *akrasia* is best exemplified, as we saw in the previous chapter, in Plato's *Protagoras*. However, regarding this failure as the only explanation of akratic action

⁷⁴ Christopher Shields, "Unified Agency and *Akrasia* in Plato's *Republic*," in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 66, 68.

would narrow down our investigation. A more comprehensive investigation should also focus on understanding the formation of akratic action.

The role of (appetitive) pleasure, pain, appetite, or emotion, in one's actions, for instance, is disregarded as an explanation of akratic action in the *Protagoras*. It can even be claimed that in this work their taking the upper hand in one's actions, or their power in overruling the commands of reason, is seen to be an impossibility. As will be seen below, I hold the view that the reason why this is seen as such is rooted in Plato's understanding of the human soul ($\psi\bar{o}\chi\eta$). In order to unravel Plato's conception of the human soul, in this chapter, I will be focusing on the other dialogues of Plato, namely the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, and partly, the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*.

In his dialogues, Plato offers us various conceptions of the human soul. These conceptions range from the partless/simple soul to the composite/bipartite or tripartite soul. Each conception of the soul plays a pivotal role either in rejecting or accepting the akratic action, as we will see below.

The conception of the simple soul is considered to be supporting Socrates' position in the *Protagoras* concerning *akrasia*. This is principally conceptualised in the *Phaedo*, an early dialogue of Plato. Since this dialogue provides us with a direct link to what we have discussed in the previous chapter by forming a firm basis for the rejection of the akratic action seen in the *Protagoras*, I shall take the *Phaedo* as my starting point.

2.2.1 The Simple Soul in the *Phaedo*

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates investigates the afterlife of the soul: whether it is possible for the soul to survive after death, whether it is immortal, and if it is, then how it is possible. In his discussion of the soul, Socrates compares that which is non-composite with that which is composite.⁷⁵ He likens the former to “the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself.”⁷⁶ The latter, on the other hand, resembles what is “human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never

⁷⁵ Plato, *Phd.*, 78c1-3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 80b1-2.

consistently the same.”⁷⁷ The latter with these characterizations is said to be the body, whereas the former is the soul. Since the soul is conceived as being akin to the divine, it is unfathomable for it to be compounded of parts: it must be partless and simple in order for it to have this affinity. The body, on the other hand, is a site where decaying, splitting up, and changing occurs. To it, pleasures and pains, which are thought to be the causes of the body’s impurity, are linked. As Socrates says, “every pleasure and pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and to weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal.”⁷⁸ In order for soul to be immortal, it must be pure, devoid of physical, violent pleasures and pains, which are connected to the decaying, composite body.

The conception of the soul seen in the *Phaedo*, therefore, does not accept the soul to have those features which cause the body to perish. Since the soul is uncompounded, and in it there is nothing such as (physical, appetitive) pleasures, pains, or emotions, to divert it from its own affairs, it cannot perform akratic actions. At this point, why the simple, partless model of the soul is considered to be preferable to the composite one can be understood better if we turn our attention to Plato’s conception of pleasure.

2.2.1.1 Illusion-Bound Pleasure

Regarding pleasure, especially the appetitive pleasure, as that which smudges the soul or which is inimical to one’s overall goodness, can be encountered in many dialogues of Plato. The reason why such a view on pleasure is taken in his dialogues can be due to its illusory power to deceive us: it can inveigle you into believing that something is good while it is in fact only an apparent good. In order to see that this view of pleasure is a frequent theme in Plato, we should examine his other dialogues.

Apart from the *Phaedo* (81b3) where the soul is said to be made impure through contact with the body and its pleasures, there are also references⁷⁹ in the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 80b3-4.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 83d2-4.

⁷⁹ For further references, see Jessica Moss, “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXXII, no. 3 (May 2006): 504, note 3.

Republic where pleasure is seen as a deceiver, which beguiles one by casting a spell on one like a magic.⁸⁰ The relation of pleasure to deceiving is also evident in the *Laws*, where pleasure's power in cajoling one into doing whatever it desires is indicated.⁸¹ Also, while contrasting pleasure with reason, in the *Philebus*, pleasure is described as being "the greatest impostor."⁸² Lastly, in the *Timaeus* it is seen as "evil's most powerful lure."⁸³

The direct link between pleasure⁸⁴ and illusion is also evident in the *Gorgias*.⁸⁵ Here, it is claimed that whenever we do something, we do it by thinking that it is good.⁸⁶ And since "what is pleasant appears to be good,"⁸⁷ we go after pleasure thinking that it is in fact the good. Pleasure does this through creating an illusion, through which appearance and reality cannot be clearly distinguished.⁸⁸ In other words, what we pursue creates a pleasing appearance in us.

As can be seen from these various references, seeing pleasure as illusory, deceptive, and hence destructive, is a key theme in Plato's thought. As an answer to the question whence it takes this power, we can refer back to the discussion of "the power of appearance," which is discussed in the previous chapter. As noted earlier, this power can be rendered ineffective through "the art of measurement,"⁸⁹ in which reason, together with knowledge, is actively used. Since "measuring, counting, and

⁸⁰ Plato, *Rep.* 413c1-3, 584a8.

⁸¹ Plato, *Laws*, 863b8-10.

⁸² Plato, *Philebus*, 65c4.

⁸³ Plato, *Tim.* 691-2.

⁸⁴ It should be emphasized that not the pleasure in general but a special type of it, namely physical or appetitive pleasure, is taken to be deceptive, and illusion-bound.

⁸⁵ Plato, *Grg.* 468b.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 468b2-4.

⁸⁷ Moss, "Pleasure and Illusion in Plato," 512.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 512.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of both the power of appearance and "the art of measurement," see Chapter 2.1.3.

weighing are the work”⁹⁰ of the reason, only reason can calculate what is the overall best for one. This art makes the most substantial contribution to one’s actions; yet, it can be used after one is deceived by the appearance or illusion, that is, *post factum*, or it may be used simultaneously. In the latter case one is not fooled by the power of the appearance. Even though the latter case is rationally the more desirable alternative in order not to succumb to the pleasure’s and appearance’s temptation, what happens mostly is the former. That is to say, at the moment of action, one generally does not think that what is before her may not be the actual good. Rather, one takes it for granted that what appears to be good is to be *the* good. Neither reasoning nor calculation intervenes at the moment of action. For this reason, even though the art of measurement is thought to be a sufficient solution as a means for eliminating the power of appearance, its *post factum* use might render it inefficacious.

Up until now, we have seen the reason why Plato considers pleasure as undesirable and mistrustful. With this in mind, it might be more straightforward to understand his efforts in getting rid of pleasure, which is linked with appetite, in his conception of the simple soul in the *Phaedo*. Pleasures with its illusory and deceptive power are, therefore, considered to belong not to the soul but to the body in the *Phaedo*. The soul must be exempt from appetitive pleasures in order for it to be akin to the characteristics discussed above: divine, immortal, and indissoluble (therefore non-composite). On this conception of the soul, pleasures pertaining to the body are thought to be submissive to the dictates of the soul, in which reason plays the pivotal role.⁹¹ If one acts contrary to what one’s reason dictates, then in this model of the soul, it can only be due to ignorance, to which reading we find support in the *Protagoras*.

Although (physical or appetitive) pleasures are condemned as the cause of wicked enchantment, desire itself is not dismissed in Plato. The fact that the desire for (physical or appetitive) pleasure is not the only type of desire, undergirds this point. In one, besides the desires for appetitive pleasure, there are also desires for honour and for truth. While the desires for appetitive pleasure and for honour are thought to be

⁹⁰ Plato, *Rep.* 602d.

⁹¹ For a discussion about why the soul/reason is thought to be taking the upper hand in one’s conduct, see Section “3.3.1 Which Part of the Soul Should Rule?” below.

non-rational, the desire for truth can only be classified as rational.⁹² As Jessica Moss indicates, in the early dialogues, including the *Protagoras*, *all* desires are thought to be “rational desires for the good.”⁹³ Desire for appetitive pleasure is also included in these rational desires. Once one acquires the knowledge of what is good and bad, one immediately desires ‘the good’ option and takes a step on the way to be virtuous. In other words, if ignorance about good and bad is ruled out, even one’s desires for appetitive pleasure accords with the good. This view of desire, together with the power of knowledge, is also supported by the simple model of the soul. For, in this model, even though one has conflicting desires, these desires eventually abide by what reason commands, leaving the soul not disturbed. Secondly, since the desires opposing the reason belong to the body rather than the soul, the soul will not be muddled and, for this reason, its actions cannot be called akratic.

2.2.2 The Composite Model of the Soul

Plato’s later dialogues present a markedly different conception of the soul. Unlike the conception of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Plato conceptualises a composite model of the soul in the *Republic* (Book IV), the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*. So as to comprehend this model of the soul, in this section I will be focusing on what these dialogues offer in this context.

The significance of discussing the composite soul, or the tripartite/bipartite psychology, lies in its opening up the possibility of accepting the existence of *akrasia*. Unlike the Socrates of the *Protagoras*, Plato here “recognizes the existence of non-rational motivations that do not aim at what is best for the whole person overall [...] and can persist even in the face of a judgment that another course of action is overall better.”⁹⁴ Rather than the model of the human soul in which reason/knowledge or the rational deliberation has the sole hegemonic power,⁹⁵ in this model, human soul is

⁹² Moss, “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato,” 517.

⁹³ Ibid., 504. Italics added.

⁹⁴ Chris Bobonich, “Plato on *Akrasia* and Knowing Your Own Mind,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Brill, 2007), 41.

⁹⁵ In the *Prot.* 352d1-2, Plato states that knowledge and wisdom are “the most powerful forces in human activity.” Even though he does not extend his discussion here to the human soul, I do not think it would

understood as that which is capable of having conflicting desires. While in the *Phaedo* the opposition is between the soul and the body, or what pertains to it, in the *Republic* it is within the soul itself.⁹⁶

By showing how Plato's conception of the tripartite or bipartite soul unfolds, we take our point of departure from the *Republic*. This conception of the soul, as stated above, is different from that which we see in the *Phaedo*. In the latter, it is asserted that anything composite eventually resolves into its parts, or goes out of existence.⁹⁷ If the soul is composite, then it is at least liable to split up into its parts. Nevertheless, Plato regards the soul as being akin to what is immortal, that which never ceases to exist and is dissoluble. A support for this view can also be found in the *Republic*: In the *Republic* X, Plato indicates that the soul "is akin to the divine and immortal and what always is."⁹⁸ If we consider these two views (on the one hand the *Republic* IV and on the other the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* X) together, we can see that a problem arises:

if composite, the soul is not immortal; but if incomposite, the soul is not isomorphic with Kallipolis, with the result that there is no reason to suppose that one account of justice applies to both.⁹⁹

This point poses a difficulty for us in achieving a consistency in Plato's conception of the soul: Is it composite or partless, mortal or immortal, does it have the same structure as the *polis* or not? All these questions are not easy to be answered, yet require an examination of the texts which do not in fact offer a clear-cut solution. So as to better understand Plato's conception of the soul, then, it would be better if we turn our attention to the question why the tripartite soul is introduced in the *Republic*.

contradict his thoughts if I incorporate this view of him into the simple model of the soul, and regard reason and rational deliberation as having the complete control over a person.

⁹⁶ Fred D. Miller, Jr., "The Platonic Soul," in *A Companion to Plato*, ed. Hugh H. Benson (Blackwell, 2006), 286.

⁹⁷ Plato, *Phd.* 78c.

⁹⁸ Plato, *Rep.* 611e1-2.

⁹⁹ Christopher Shields, "Plato's Divided Soul," in *Plato's Republic: A Critical Guide*, ed. Mark L. McPherran (Cambridge, 2010), 148.

In the *Republic*, Plato's concern is to determine whether justice is univocal. To this end, he draws an analogy between the state/*polis* and the soul.¹⁰⁰ According to this analogy, both the state and the soul have similar structures. They only differ with respect to the fact that the former is bigger and the latter is smaller.¹⁰¹ Hence, when justice in the state is explained by means of its parts or divisions, it is expected that justice in the soul, as well, is to be explained through its parts.¹⁰² This, accordingly, requires an understanding of the soul as having parts¹⁰³ or divisions, if the parallelism is to be properly maintained. Considered from this point of view, it can be stated that, in the *Republic*, the examination of the nature of the soul appears only as a side issue in bringing to light the analogy of the state and the soul. With this insight, we can now discern Plato's motivation in introducing the tripartite soul in the *Republic*.

In the *Republic* (Books II-IV) Plato states that the human soul is composed of a non-rational part as well as a rational part.¹⁰⁴ The *θυμοειδές* (the spirited part) and the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* (the appetitive part) constitute the non-rational part of the soul, while the *λογιστικόν* (the reasoning part) constitutes the rational one. The *θυμοειδές* is related to the emotions, whilst *ἐπιθυμητικόν* is interested in immediate sensual pleasures and pains. The *λογιστικόν*, on the other hand, is the seat of knowledge and wisdom, and is thought that it should govern the whole soul.

The appetitive part consists of appetites for food, drink, sexual intercourse, and money.¹⁰⁵ Its desires are bodily desires which drive one into their immediate satisfaction. The other non-rational part, i.e. the spirited part of the soul, is concerned with the "pursuit of control, victory, and high repute."¹⁰⁶ It is the seat of the desires

¹⁰⁰ Plato, *Rep.* 368c ff., 577c.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 368c-a3, 434d6-8.

¹⁰² Ibid., 580d.

¹⁰³ For what I here say as 'parts', in the *Republic*, Plato variously uses *γένη* (441c), *εἶδη* (435c, 580d), *μέρη* (442b,c, 439bcd), which are commonly translated as element/class, form, and portion, respectively.

¹⁰⁴ The designation 'non-rational' should not be understood to mean that it is exempt from rational and intellectual activities.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Rep.* 580e1-4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 581a7-8.

dedicated to honour and dominance, and the related emotions. The reasoning part, on the other hand, is the part which is dedicated to calculation (*λογίζεται*).¹⁰⁷ These parts with their respective functions and characteristics constitute the core of Plato's conception of the soul in the *Republic*.

Let us lay out now how, in Plato's description, the appetitive part comes to be distinguished from the reasoning part. He distinguishes the appetitive part from the reasoning one by citing an example of a thirsty person.¹⁰⁸ If one is thirsty, this means that in them there is a desire for drinking, and this desire compels them to drink. But, it is also possible for a thirsty person not to drink if their reason dictates not to, forbidding them in some way or other and overpowering the desire for drink, even though this desire still exists and is still active. Hence, Plato reasons, in the soul there must be separate parts, which operate in opposition, one part is bidding and the other forbidding, because

[i]t is obvious that the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we'll know that we aren't dealing with one thing but many.¹⁰⁹

With this in mind, Plato recognizes that in the soul there are at least two parts, desiring and performing in the opposite directions.

Hence it isn't unreasonable for us to claim that they are two, and different from one another. We'll call the part of the soul with which it calculates the rational part and the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites the irrational appetitive part, companion of certain indulgences and pleasures.¹¹⁰

Recognizing that in the soul there are two separate parts (the reasoning part and the appetitive part), now the question as to whether the soul consist of only these two parts arises. Plato proceeds by means of the examples of Leontius and Odysseus.¹¹¹ In these examples, the third, the spirited part of the soul as different from the other two

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 439d5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 439b-d.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 436b3-7.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 439d.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 439e-440a, 441b2-c2.

parts is to be distinguished. The former maintains that the spirited part is different from the appetitive part. The latter, on the other hand, demonstrates that it is distinguished from the reasoning part. Leontius, filled with a rather warped desire for gazing at the corpses, cannot help but look at them, his desire overrules his feeling of shame. This incident is in close association with the feeling of anger, which is evident in his exclamation: “Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!”¹¹² Here, the conflict is not between the spirited part and the reasoning part. Leontius is not acting against his own reasoning or calculation as to not looking at the corpses. Rather, he is struggling now with his feeling of shame and the ensuing anger. This shows us that there is in the soul another part which cannot be reduced to the appetitive part. Can this ‘new’ part, which is to be called the spirited part, then, be reducible to the reasoning part? This question might be answered by considering the case of Odysseus. It is a very brief explanation, but it suffices for Plato’s argumentation. Referring to Homer’s *Odyssey*,¹¹³ where Odysseus, angry to his servants due to their being disloyal to him, feels the desire to kill them, but after some calculation he reasons that such an act would be nothing but self-destructing. By means of this incidence, Plato accomplishes to distinguish the reasoning part of the soul from this ‘novel’ part, which cannot be reducible to the appetitive part. Plato names this part the spirited part of the soul.

The spirited part, also, is not entirely remote from the reasoning part, as it is thought to be the case with the appetitive part. There is, in other words, a connection between these two parts. In the case of a sudden and blood-curdling event, for instance, the thought of imminent danger and of what would happen to oneself comes into view. In either case, we could say that an intellectual activity is in view in the functioning of the spirited part of the soul. Bearing this affinity with the reasoning part of the soul in mind, it can also be said that the spirited part of the soul can be the supporter of the reasoning part, if it “has not been corrupted by bad upbringing.”¹¹⁴

Furthermore, contrary to what has generally been considered, the appetitive part is connected to some intellectual activities. “[I]t is capable of evaluating things on the

¹¹² Ibid., 440a1-2.

¹¹³ Homer, *Odyssey* XX.17-18.

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Rep.* 441a.

basis of anticipated pleasures and pains.”¹¹⁵ Its desire for money, for example, depends on an evaluation.¹¹⁶ Plato describes this claim by means of an example of a thrifty worker, who loves and desires money above all else. “[B]y being a thrifty worker, who satisfies only his necessary appetites, [he] makes no other expenditures, and enslaves his other desires as vain.”¹¹⁷ This person makes evaluations in order to achieve his dominant desire, namely accumulating money. The use of cognition, therefore, can be said to be in operation also in the appetitive part of the soul.

Their share in cognition or intellectual activity¹¹⁸ is also in agreement with the analogy Plato draws in the *Republic*. There, Plato indicates that the structures of the state and the soul are thought to be parallel. Thus, since the state is composed of the ruling, the warrior and the merchant classes, which consist of thinking individuals who entertain opinions in some way or other, then, likewise, the parts of the soul should to some extent have a share in cognition or forming opinions as well.¹¹⁹ Apart from this feature, which all these parts share to some extent, they also have in common another element, namely desiring.

But before discussing desires and the related concept of *akrasia*, let us briefly have a look at Plato’s other dialogues, where the composite model of the soul is examined. In the *Timaeus*, Plato distinguishes the immortal origin of the soul, which he claims to be located in the “round mortal body [i.e. the head],” from the mortal soul located in the body below the head.¹²⁰ Accordingly, while one part of the soul, namely

¹¹⁵ Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8; Plato, *Rep.* 442a, 583e–584c.

¹¹⁶ W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2002), 38-9.

¹¹⁷ Plato, *Rep.* 554a.

¹¹⁸ Following W. W. Fortenbaugh (*Aristotle on Emotion* (London: Gerald Duckworth 2002)), I too think that cognition, or intellectual activity, is what is common to all parts of the soul. Contrary views can be found in N. Murphy (*The Interpretation of Plato’s Republic* (Oxford 1951)), and M. O’Brien (*The Socratic Paradoxes and The Greek Mind* (Chapel Hill 1967)). The latter links the functions of the spirited and the appetitive parts with mere ‘automatic action’ and ‘blind tendencies’, respectively.

¹¹⁹ Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 39.

¹²⁰ Plato, *Tim.* 69c5-8. What is enounced here is generally referred to as “biological psychology.”

reason, enjoys immortality, the other parts, namely the spirit and appetite, can only be mortal.¹²¹ The latter are subject to

those dreadful but necessary disturbances: pleasure, first of all, evil's most powerful lure; then pains, that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counsellors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray. These they fused with unreasoning sense perception and all-venturing lust, and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul.¹²²

In either case, be it mortal or immortal, the soul is thought to be composite, that is, consisting of rational, spirited and appetitive parts. These are not considered to be the features of the body. The body enters into the discussion only as the location of respective parts of the soul. Furthermore, unlike the *Republic*, in the *Timaeus* it is held that the appetitive part of the soul “is totally devoid of opinion, reasoning or understanding, though it does share in sensation, pleasant and painful, and desires.”¹²³

Also, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato suggests a tripartite/composite understanding of the soul. In its famous simile, the soul is likened to the composite nature (*συμφύτῳ δυνάμει*) of two-winged horses and their charioteer.¹²⁴ One of these horses is a well-behaved, tractable horse which does not exhibit any bad behaviour. The other, on the other hand, is recalcitrant and more inclined to behave as it wishes. In this simile, the two horses represent the spirited and the appetitive parts of the soul, respectively. The charioteer, on the other hand, represents the rational part of the soul, since she has control over these horses. As it is evident, the opposite natures of these two horses render the task of the charioteer more challenging. Hence, in controlling the desires of the disobedient, appetitive part of the soul, an alliance between the rational part and the spirited part of the soul could prove to be helpful.

In the *Laws*, the conception of the soul as composed of parts continues to be held. Unlike the tripartite conception of the soul in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, here Plato is inclined towards a bipartite psychology, even though this reading is not

¹²¹ Ibid., 69a-70b.

¹²² Ibid., 69d.

¹²³ Ibid., 77b5-6.

¹²⁴ Plato, *Phdrs.* 246a-256e.

accepted by some scholars.¹²⁵ In the *Laws*, the soul is thought to be consisting of logical and alogical parts. To the latter emotions are thought to be belonging.

All these similar conceptions of the soul regard the soul as being composed of ‘parts.’ This model of the soul, however, gives rise to some problems. For instance, how these different parts inhabit the same soul at the same time remains to be examined. I should now like to discuss briefly what this model of the soul might amount to.

2.2.2.1 *Homunculi*

The tripartite model of the soul in the *Republic*, with its emphasis on the power of its parts in impelling one to act, has been read as if we are dealing with a version of *homuncularism*¹²⁶ in the *Republic*. In this interpretation, the λογιστικόν, the θυμοειδές, and the ἐπιθυμητικόν are personified as little humans, each of whom strives for gaining the control in order to realise their respective interests.¹²⁷ The person whose appetites are authoritative is a crude, beast-like being; the spirited person is dominated by his emotions such as being proud, courageous, etc., and is more apt to listen to the reason’s commands than the previous one, even though her obedience proves to be an insufficient one. The rational person, on the other hand, is moderate, and looks out for the best.

We might interpret what Plato states in the *Republic* as supporting the homuncular theory. In that case, each *homunculus* turns out to have respective pleasure and desires.¹²⁸ Each of the *homunculi* is seen to be capable of coaxing the other parts

¹²⁵ For the bipartition of the soul in the *Laws*, see F. M. Cornford, “Psychology and Social Structure in the *Republic* of Plato,” *Classical Quarterly* 6 (1912): 246–65; F. M. Cornford, “The Division of the Soul,” *Hibbert Journal* 28 (1929): 206–19; T. Penner, “Thought and Desire in Plato,” in *Plato, Vol. II*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1971), 96–118. For the tripartition of the soul in the *Laws*, see J. M. Cooper, “Plato’s Theory of Human Motivation,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1, no.1 (1984): 3–21; T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995).

¹²⁶ The Latin word *homunculus* literally means “little person,” and denotes a fully formed person in small scales.

¹²⁷ Christopher Shields, “Unified Agency and Akrasia in Plato’s *Republic*,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 62.

¹²⁸ For ‘each part of the soul has pleasures and desires’, see Plato, *Rep.* 580d.

into submitting its authority,¹²⁹ and to have some cognitive activity (even though it is very basic, such as means-end reasoning).¹³⁰ Viewed from this perspective, we might claim that what Plato states in the *Republic* can be easily applied to the *homunculus* reading, and the *homunculus* reading does not contradict the core idea of the tripartite soul.

Given this textual evidence, considering the soul as being composed of *homunculi* (little persons), each capable of prompting action, seems to be a cogent way to pursue in explaining the akratic action. However, despite this textual support, the homuncular theory generates a problem, namely that we cannot not find in the *Republic* any support to regard each of these *homunculi* as having their own souls. Since they are described as being (little) persons, who are capable of performing intentional actions, it might well be supposed that they have souls. Yet, ascribing souls to them posits a major difficulty: a soul, which consists of three souls, each of which involves three souls, *ad infinitum*. Hence, regarding these ‘parts’ as distinct individuals, who are autonomous and bestowed with soul, does not alleviate the problem posed by the composite model of the soul, which is nothing but offering a suitable ground for akratic actions.

That being the case, another question arises: Is the tripartite soul a disharmonious soul whose parts are in constant struggle for power and turn the soul into a battle ground? Or is it a harmonious soul despite the immanent conflicting desires? If it is the latter, in the presence of conflicting desires of *homunculi*, how can such a conception of the soul be transformed into a harmonious whole? Therefore, it seems that the soul as inhabiting *homunculi* allows the akratic action; however, it is not exempt from oversimplifying the issue in question.

What the *Republic* in Books IV and X lays bare when the division of the soul is discussed, as Christopher Shields notes, does not suggest that these ‘parts’ are “essentially distinct parts.” Rather, this conception of the soul “allows for the existence

¹²⁹ For ‘each part of the soul is capable of persuading other parts’, see *ibid.*, 442b-d, 554c-e, 589a-b.

¹³⁰ For ‘each part has some cognitive activity’, see *ibid.*, 442b-d.

of distinct and differently focused sources of motivations.”¹³¹ From this we can understand that the parts of the soul are not discrete parts that allow for a *homunculi* interpretation. They just constitute different types of motivations and desires, which are to be ‘joined in unity’¹³² by the just person.

Kenneth Dorter too draws our attention to this point, namely that even though appetite, emotion, and the reason may aim at conflicting desires, this does not immediately lead us to reckon these as “discrete parts within us.”¹³³ He explains this claim by stating that rationality is almost always experienced together with some emotion. He formulates Socrates’ view in the *Republic* 436a as follows: “it may be [...] that our soul acts as a unity when it learns, gets angry, and desires, rather than doing each of these with a different part of itself.”¹³⁴ Socrates acknowledges the difficulty in determining whether they constitute discrete parts or not. But, to my mind, it would be more feasible if we regard, together with C. Shields, these parts as different types of motivations, from which the just person manages to form a unity.

The desires of each part are joined and bound in such a way that none of them is allowed to interfere with the work of the other. The just person acts in such a way that

he regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale—high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious.¹³⁵

The just person has a harmonious soul. In other words, in such a person the desires of the spirited and the appetitive part are subordinated to the commands of the rational part. But, as a matter of fact, instead of the just person who has a harmonious soul, we most of the time encounter those who do not have an integrated and harmonised

¹³¹ Shields, “Unified Agency and *Akrasia* in Plato’s *Republic*,” 72.

¹³² The verbs used in this context are *συναμύζω* (to fit together) and *συνδέω* (to bind) in the *Republic* 443d5 and 443e2, respectively.

¹³³ Kenneth Dorter, “Weakness and Will in Plato’s *Republic*,” in *Weakness of Will from Plato to the Present*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁵ Plato, *Rep.* 443d.

soul.¹³⁶ Such an explanation of the soul of the just person, and how its parts obey the dictates of reason, however, do not elucidate the soul of the *unjust* persons, who are in majority in the daily life. Ascribing the harmonious, conflict-free soul to the just person, then, renders only the akratic action possible.

Apart from the discussion of *homuncularism*, there is also a further point to be paid attention to. This is about whether in soul there are just three parts. If we turn our attention to the later parts of the *Republic*, we may realize that the soul can be considered to have more than three parts. The analogy between the soul and the *polis* requires the soul to have three ‘primary’ parts. Nevertheless, within them there are various subdivisions. In the Book VI, for instance, rationality is subdivided into 4 parts.¹³⁷ The spiritedness is subdivided into the love of honour, victory, or anger. As for the third part of the soul, in Book IX Plato points out that “we had no one special name for it, since it’s multiform, so we named it after the biggest and strongest thing in it. Hence we called it the appetitive part, because of the intensity of its appetites for food, drink, sex, and all the things associated with them, but we also called it the money-loving part, because such appetites are most easily satisfied by means of money appetite is conceived as containing multiple forms.”¹³⁸ So, despite the textual evidence supporting the tripartite model of the soul, in the course of the dialogue, we can see that the soul is more like a continuum, at one pole standing the most savage appetites and at the opposite pole, rationality.¹³⁹

2.2.3 The Composite Soul Making *Akasia* Possible

While the conception of the soul in the *Phaedo* does not allow (and provide an explanation for) any akratic action, with the composite model of the soul in the *Republic*, we can now claim that *akrasia* is both possible and accountable. In the conception of the soul of the *Republic*, each of the three parts of the soul has their

¹³⁶ Whether the person with a fully integrated soul is akin to Aristotle’s *phronimos* will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹³⁷ Plato, *Rep.* 509d-513e. Dorter, “Weakness and Will in Plato’s *Republic*,” 11.

¹³⁸ Plato, *Rep.* 580d-e.

¹³⁹ Dorter, “Weakness and Will in Plato’s *Republic*,” 11.

respective desires, and each of them is capable of putting one into action. Which part of the soul would overpower the others is not predetermined. It can be said that, if the reasoning part does not take control, that is, if one of the non-rational parts wins out the reasoning part, that person is liable to act akratically. Plato suggests such a model for the soul, since, in the *Republic*, he acknowledges concurrent and opposing desires: one urging one to pursue and the other impelling one to avoid the same thing.¹⁴⁰ The soul must have parts responsible for each type of desire, since, according to Plato, “the same one thing [in this case, the soul] cannot simultaneously either act or be acted on in opposite ways in the same respect and in the same context.”¹⁴¹

2.2.3.1 Which Part of the Soul Should Rule?

The problem of which part of the soul will overpower the other parts and drive one to action hangs in the air. It becomes all the more challenging to determine which part should rule, since each part has a right to claim to be the dominant one in the soul. For the people in whom reason dominates, rationality appears to be the best in the soul. Likewise, for the people in whom appetite overpowers, appetite seems to be the best, and rationality is considered only as a means to satisfy the desires of the appetites. This pattern also fits in with the spirited people, for whom emotions are the best and thus rationality is good insofar as it leads one to acquire honour, success, or fame.¹⁴² Considering that each of these parts claims to be the best candidate for ruling the soul, we need to cast a quick look at each of them so as to determine which of them is more capable of bringing true and long-lasting happiness.

If in the ‘ideal’ state of human being reason is in power, this problem might be resolved with ease. In this ‘ideal state, the reasoning part of the soul is seen as the guarantor of the harmony of the soul and of one’s being just. The reason for this is pointed out by Plato in this way: “[I]sn’t it appropriate for the rational part to rule,

¹⁴⁰ Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 5.

¹⁴¹ Plato, *Rep.* 436b-c.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 581c-d.

since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul.”¹⁴³ On this conception, the reasoning part of the soul advises, commands, and desires the (actual) good. The designation of ‘actual’ here is significant, since in the early dialogues Plato holds that other desires such as the appetitive desires for pleasure can be pursued by thinking or believing that they are good.¹⁴⁴ In the *Republic*, this view is discarded and replaced by the thought that other desires, namely the desires of the non-rational parts of the soul, are not interested in the good.¹⁴⁵

To my mind, however, it would be more appropriate to say that the non-rational parts of the soul are not so much concerned with the good, or that their scope of goodness is limited compared to the conception of the good by the reasoning part. They are interested in their own, particular pleasures and desires, whereas the reasoning part “has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul.”¹⁴⁶ The problem with especially the appetitive part of the soul is that it is liable to confuse the apparent good with the actual good.¹⁴⁷ This should not be considered as a deficiency on the part of the appetitive part of the soul. Rather, in Plato’s conception of the soul, the nature of the appetitive part entails such a misconception, and, by nature, it is not probable for it to see clearly what is in fact good and what is not. Properly distinguishing between what is apparent and actual good would, for this reason, be unlooked for in the case of the appetitive part. Plato’s mistrust of the appetitive part and his giving priority and dominance to the reasoning part of the soul springs from this view of him.

The inability of appetites to recognize the difference between appearance and reality makes impossible the attainment of truth by the soul. Appetite is seen as that which is limited to the world of appearances, while reason seeks to attain the Form of the Good, which alone provides the knowledge of the truly good. In order to attain this

¹⁴³ Plato, *Rep.* 441e3-4.

¹⁴⁴ Plato, *Symp.* 205e; *Prot.* 354c; *Grg.* 468b-c, *Meno*, 77c-78.

¹⁴⁵ Moss, “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato,” 524-5.

¹⁴⁶ Plato, *Rep.* 442c5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Moss, “Pleasure and Illusion in Plato,” 527. G. R. Carone, “Akrasia in the *Republic*: Does Plato Change His Mind?” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XX (2001): 120; G. Lesses, “Weakness, Reason, and the Divided Soul in Plato’s *Republic*,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (1987): 151.

knowledge, one needs to make use of one's rational capacities, which appetite lacks. The role of appetite and reason in holding us in the world of appearances and going beyond them, respectively, can also be found in the allegory of the cave in the *Republic* VII. Here, appetitive pleasures bind us to the appearances, the illusions, or the shadows; whereas, philosophy, as the rational activity, takes us beyond this world to the world of the Forms, where truth and good reside.

Owing to this characteristic of reason, it can be put forward that the desired state of human being is the state in which reason is not the slave, but the master of its own appetitive pleasures. The insatiable nature of appetites, which leads one to unhappiness, is a clear indication that, besides its mostly faulty discrimination between the illusions and the truth, appetite is not apt for ruling the soul. It might even be claimed that passions or appetites, are generally, but not always, more apt to desire what is contrary to what reason commands. Even though this does not necessarily mean that all the appetites contradict reason, it might still be asserted that appetites 'in general' mar one's 'ideal' state, and due to this feature, it would be more appropriate for reason to be the only hegemonic power in the soul.

Also, reason has another advantage to the other candidates for ruling the soul. This is the power of experience it has. While reason can partake in appetitive pleasures and passions (even though this might be a very basic one), the latter can never enjoy the intellectual pleasure arising from contemplating reality.¹⁴⁸ Hence, this feature of reason too makes it more suitable to rule the soul than the other two candidates.

2.2.3.2 *Akasia* Justified

Up until now, we have examined the reason why reason or the reasoning part *should* rule the other parts in one's soul. Yet, what we encounter in our daily life is the contrary. As discussed above, each part of the soul has its respective desires, and each of them is able to get the upper hand over other parts, with the result that if appetite or passion overrules reason, harmony in the soul dissolves and discordance reigns in the soul.

¹⁴⁸ Plato, *Rep.* 582a-d.

In the *Republic* IV, Plato acknowledges that the soul “does not automatically form a harmonious whole.”¹⁴⁹ From this we can infer that reason is not always in power. Moreover, the harmony should not be understood as resulting from the cooperative working of the parts of the soul, rather from the outcome of the subordination of the non-rational parts of the soul to the reasoning part.¹⁵⁰ This is in line with Plato’s description of justice, according to which each part of the soul/*polis* fulfils its respective function, yet does not encroach on others’ domain. The exception is only given to the reasoning part, which overrules the other parts owing to its ability to see the overall good for the soul.¹⁵¹ Despite the significance and superiority of reason in one’s soul, it is not the case that it *always* overpowers the other parts. Instead, they are often in conflict with each other, trying to take over the rule. If the non-rational parts of the soul overpower the reasoning part, that is, if one acts for the benefit of one’s appetites or emotions and, hence, contrary to what one’s reason dictates or advises, then it can be asserted that that person acts akratically. The tripartite soul of the *Republic* IV, or in general, the partition of the soul, then, opens up the possibility of akratic action,¹⁵² in contrast to the simple soul seen in the *Phaedo*.

The tripartite model of the soul, therefore, justifies the existence of akratic action, but with one provision. Conceptualising the soul as divided or containing ‘distinct’ parts, reduces the soul to a visible object since divisibility is regarded as a feature of the visible realm. If we consider the analogy of the Divided Line, discussed in the *Republic* VI 509d-511e, we can see that opinion is thought to be related to the visible realm of becoming, while knowledge is regarded as being about the intelligible realm of being (the Forms). Regarding the soul as divided, therefore, brings the soul to the visible realm of becoming, and hence to the realm of opinion. In this context, the tripartite model of the soul with its divisibility pertains to the visible realm. What is worthy of notice here is the point that we are now in the realm of opinion, not

¹⁴⁹ Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 7.

¹⁵⁰ Shields, “Plato’s Divided Soul,” 151.

¹⁵¹ Plato, *Rep.* 441a-442.

¹⁵² Chris Bobonich, “Plato on *Akrasia* and Knowing Your Own Mind,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 42.

knowledge, which the *akrates* is said to possess. In other words, the tripartite model of the soul allows for the akratic action, if what is pronounced in its definition as knowledge is understood as just an opinion, or at least, not a ‘full’ knowledge.¹⁵³

2.2.4 Denouement

By and large, what we have encounter in the *Protagoras* is that *akrasia* is denied by Socrates, because what appears to *οἱ πολλοί* as a case of *akrasia* is nothing but a cognitive mistake on the part of the person herself. The conception of the soul as simple in which the only hegemonic power is reason bears this denial out, and thus makes the case of *akrasia* only an ‘apparent’ *akrasia*. It is regarded as a cognitive mistake in the sense that the subject makes a mistaken judgment as to what is the overall best.

What is seen in the *Republic* IV, on the other hand, is not a denial, but an acceptance of the akratic action. On this view, it is possible for one to have knowledge about what is the best and to act contrary to her knowledge, since reason or knowledge may not have the sufficient power to silence the forceful demands of the other parts of the soul. On this view, there are other parts of the soul which can be so powerful that they can gain the upper hand and impel one to satisfy their desires.

In the *Protagoras*, an epistemological reading of *akrasia* centring on knowledge and the power of reason is worked out, which is reinforced by the conception of the simple, uncompounded soul, while in the *Republic* IV a psychological (relating not just to emotions, but to the *ψυχή* in general) reading of it suggested for an explanation of akratic action. However, we should also pay heed to the later parts of the *Republic*, in which this tripartite model of the soul is criticised and superseded. The tripartite model of the soul accords with the visible realm of becoming and opinion, while knowledge in the fullest sense of the word, which Socrates spares no effort to endorse, does not pertain to this realm and does not allow akratic action. Aristotle takes up the issue where these two readings of Plato leave us. Taking the notions of opinion and full knowledge as his main problem, he investigates

¹⁵³ Dorter, “Weakness and Will in Plato’s *Republic*,” 15-6.

what knowledge means. In the next chapter, we will discuss his examination of knowledge and his analysis of *akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.



CHAPTER 3

AKRASIA IN ARISTOTLE: A CONTINUATION OR A BREACH

3.1 Introduction

At the commencement of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle maintains that “[e]very art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at *some* good; and for this reason *the* good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”¹⁵⁴ At first glance, one can discern that here Aristotle is already laying out a hierarchy within the kind of good things, *the* good being the ultimate end, the goal of life at which everything else (e.g. health, wealth, honour, etc.) aims. For a human being, this ultimate end turns out to be *eudaimonia*, that is, living well (εὖ ζῆν), which entails, as its main and defining component, being a good and virtuous person. What being a good person means and how to achieve this end is investigated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This ethics in this sense is not comprised of any list of obligations, rules, principles, or any type of oughts and ought nots. Rather, it is concerned with finding out how to live well, and hence to be happy (*eudaimon*) by becoming a good and virtuous person.

Becoming good (the goal of moral philosophy) comprises not only behaving in a certain way, but also behaving in that way as a result of having a certain character. It is “not simply how I am to conduct myself in my life, but how I am to become the kind of person readily disposed so to conduct myself, the kind of person for whom proper conduct emanates characteristically from a fixed disposition.”¹⁵⁵ The disposition in question is not something that we possess naturally, but it is something

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle, *EN*, 1094a1-3, italics added.

¹⁵⁵ L. A. Kosman, “Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle’s Ethics,” in *Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Nancy Sherman (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 261.

we acquire. Aristotle defines the human good as an activity in accordance with virtue.¹⁵⁶ This means that in order to become good and thus have a good life, having virtues is not considered enough, rather they need to be exercised or actualized in actions or emotions.¹⁵⁷ In Books II-V and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle examines the character-related virtues and thinking-related virtues, respectively. The former, i.e. virtues of character, are considered as potentialities, which are actualized in virtuous acts and/or emotions.

Aristotle conceptualises virtue, be it a character-related or a thinking-related virtue, as a mean between two vices: an excess and a deficiency.¹⁵⁸ Up until the Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle examines the two vices as a means to understand virtues, the intermediate states. That is to say, they are taken into account only with a view to grasping what virtue (intellectual or character-related) in question is. In this sense, they occupy a secondary position in the discussion. They are discussed as deviations from the good or virtuous states. Since virtues of any kind are considered as *sine qua non* for achieving the ultimate goal of human life, i.e. *eudaimonia*, it is understandable that virtues constitute the bulk of the discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, in Book VII, this focus on the virtues has remarkably changed with the discussion of *akrasia*, which is neither a virtue nor a good.

3.2 *Akrasia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: An Outline

Even though some brief remarks have been previously made in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,¹⁵⁹ the full-fledged discussion of the concept of *akrasia* is made in Book VII. The ten out of fourteen chapters of Book VII are dedicated to the analysis of *akrasia*. It is in this respect that Book VII, 1-10 in a sense stands out from the rest of the work.

¹⁵⁶ Aristotle, *EN* 1098a15.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Heinaman, "Voluntary, Involuntary, and Choice," in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnosopoulos (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 483; Kosman, "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's *Ethics*," 261.

¹⁵⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1106b36-1107a1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1095a9, 1102b14-7, 1111b12-3.

In these chapters, Aristotle regards *akrasia* as a character trait which is ranked among excesses rather than intermediate states (virtues).

Right at the beginning of Book VII, Aristotle introduces three conditions of character (*τὰ ἥθη*) to be avoided: vice, *akrasia*, and beastliness.¹⁶⁰ *Akrasia* and its opposite¹⁶¹ *enkrateia* (*ἐγκράτεια*) are not listed among those states which are vicious and virtuous, respectively. These are moral¹⁶² states which cannot be reduced to either of them. If we think character/moral states as a continuum from the worst to the best, at one end we find beastliness, vice or self-indulgence (*ἀκολασία*), and *akrasia* (aligned from the worst to the bad). At the other end of continuum, from the good to the best, we find *enkrateia*, virtue, and heroic or superhuman virtue.¹⁶³ As is evident now, in the character-states continuum *akrasia* stands in the least bad, and *enkrateia* stands in the least good. Why *akrasia* and *enkrateia* are not considered as a vice and a virtue, respectively, will be discussed below. But, for now, we can say that this is concerned with having conflicting pleasures and appetites on the one hand, and having a completely wrong idea about what is good, on the other. As an indication of the former, *akrasia* signifies an unsettled state of character,¹⁶⁴ while virtue and vice indicate a fully formed, settled character.¹⁶⁵

At the beginning of Book VII, Aristotle considers *akrasia* as a condition of character, or a character trait (*τὸ ἥθος*), rather than (or more than) an attribute of individual action.¹⁶⁶ An akratic person receives this denomination not because they have acted akratically once or twice, rather because they have shown to be more

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 1145a14-5. By writing “beastliness,” I follow John M. Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII: 1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” in *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Book VII: Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Carlo Natali (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 16-7.

¹⁶¹ *Akrasia* is generally considered as a character state which is opposite to *enkrateia* even though its relation to the latter is more intricate. This point will be explicated in the following pages.

¹⁶² Here “moral” should be understood as pertaining to the *mōrēs*, characters.

¹⁶³ Aristotle, *EN* 1145a14-18; Daniel P. Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 32.

¹⁶⁴ Details of this point will be given below.

¹⁶⁵ Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” 14.

¹⁶⁶ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 34.

inclined than other persons to act akratically. In fact, by describing it as a character trait rather than a one-time incidence, Aristotle undertakes an uphill task. Unravelling its nature and causes is as essential as understanding virtues, since it serves as an indicator of one's character, whose possible progress is of great significance for achieving or failing to achieve the ultimate goal of human life, i.e. *eudaimonia*.

3.3 Method and *Φαινόμενα*

In his analysis of *akrasia*, Aristotle declares that he would pursue a method:

We must, as in all other cases, [1] set the phenomena [*τὰ φαινόμενα*] before us and, [2] after first discussing the difficulties, [3] go on to prove if possible the truth of all reputable opinions [*τὰ ἔνδοξα*] about these affections or, failing this, of the great number and most authoritative; for if we both resolve the difficulties and leave the reputable opinions undisturbed, we shall have proved the case sufficiently.¹⁶⁷

In this passage, the phrase “as in all other cases” provoked disputes among scholars. Some regard it as applying to *any* philosophical investigation. That is to say, according to this reading, this (dialectical) method is to be used not just in ethics, but also in other fields of philosophy, e.g. metaphysics, physics, etc.¹⁶⁸ This unrestricted reading of this phrase, however, is not tenable, since Aristotle himself does not make use of this method even in the other books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, let alone other areas of philosophy.¹⁶⁹

Aristotle's enquiry comprises [1] taking into account the accepted opinions (*φαινόμενα*) or “the things said” (*τὰ λεγόμενα*) (1145b8-b21); [2] delving into sundry difficulties or puzzles (*ἀπορίαι*), which the *φαινόμενα* bring about and which are firmly embedded in the latter, and [3] getting rid of them if possible (1145b22-1146b; Chapter 2 in general). In Chapter 3, although not stated among the *φαινόμενα*, Aristotle tackles with the Socratic paradox; and in Chapter 10, he returns to his examination of the

¹⁶⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1145b3-7. Numbers are added for the ease of reference.

¹⁶⁸ For further discussion, see G. E. L. Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic: Collected Papers in Greek Philosophy*, ed. Martha Nussbaum (Ithaca and NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), Ch.13.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 236. For further consideration, see R. Smith, “Dialectic and Method in Aristotle,” in *From Puzzles to Principles?: Essays on Aristotle's Dialectic*, ed. M. Sim (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999), 39-55.

difficulties, considers the nature of *akrasia*, investigates it in its relations to other character traits, and then endorses what is left standing of the reputable opinions (*ἔνδοξα*) after these examinations. Furthermore, in these chapters, he works through other issues arisen in discussing these various difficulties which are not stated at the beginning. All in all, Aristotle carries out his investigation in Book VII in accordance with the said method, similar to a puzzle solving, encompassing the clarification and maintenance of the sound *ἔνδοξα*.¹⁷⁰

Immediately after this declared method, Aristotle lists the commonly held views and some empirical facts on the subject of *akrasia* and other character traits related to or confused with it (1145b8-b21). These views (*φαινόμενα*) do not comprise all of the aspects of *akrasia* with which Aristotle deals in Book VII. (The discussion against Socratic interpretation, for instance, is not listed among the *φαινόμενα*, yet finds a lengthy discussion in the following chapter.) The *φαινόμενα* Aristotle investigates in Book VII read as follows:¹⁷¹

- [1] [B]oth continence [*ἐγκράτεια*] and endurance [*καρτερία*] are thought to be included among things good and praiseworthy, and both incontinence [*ἀκρασία*] and softness [*μαλακία*] among things bad and blameworthy;
- [2] and the same man is thought to be continent and ready to abide by the result of his calculations, or the incontinent ready to abandon them.
- [3] And the incontinent man, knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion [*διὰ πάθος*], while the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad, does not follow them because of his reason [*διὰ τὸν λόγον*].
- [4] The temperate man [*τὸν σώφρονα*] all men call continent and disposed to endurance, while the continent man some maintain to be always temperate but other do not;
- [5] and some call the self-indulgent man [*τὸν ἀκόλαστον*] incontinent and the incontinent man self-indulgent indiscriminately, while others distinguish them.
- [6] The man of practical wisdom [*τὸν φρόνιμον*], they sometimes say, cannot be incontinent, while sometimes they say that some who are practically wise and clever are incontinent.
- [7] Again men are said to be incontinent with respect to anger, honour, and gain.—These, then, are the things that are said.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” 20.

¹⁷¹ The original text does not have the interposed numbers. We have added them for ease of reference.

¹⁷² The translation is taken from *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. The idiosyncratic use of masculine pronouns belongs to this translation. There are various scholars who numerate this passage differently. Among them are John M. Cooper whose list encompasses six enumerations (Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” 21) and Michael Pakaluk who itemizes eight *φαινόμενα* (Pakaluk, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction*, 235-6).

All these *φαινόμενα* are discussed directly or indirectly throughout Book VII 1-10. Four (*φαινόμενα* 1, 4, 5, and 6) out of these seven *φαινόμενα* are about the relations *akrasia* has or is considered to have to other character states: *ἀκολασία* (self-indulgence), *μαλακία* (softness), *καρτερία* (endurance, resistance), *ἐγκράτεια* (continence, self control), *σωφροσύνη* (temperance), and *φρόνησις* (practical wisdom, prudence). To these character states will be added later on the relation of the *akratēs* with the virtuous and the vicious person. The remaining three (2, 3, and 7) are mainly about *akrasia* itself. Except maybe the third *φαινόμενον*, which hints at a possible cause of akratic action, none of the said *φαινόμενα* consider what happens to *ἀκρατής* during the akratic action. But before delving into the difficulties encircling the concept of *akrasia*, we should first of all focus on *akrasia* in its relations to these other types of character traits so as to distinguish it from the latter.

3.4 Other Character States and *Akrasia*

As hinted at the list of the *φαινόμενα*, some character states are confused with the other states (*akratēs* with the *akolastos*, or the *karterikos* with the *enkratēs*, for instance). The main reason for this confusion is that these character states are concerned with similar types of pleasures or pains. The types of pleasures the *akratēs* and the *akolastos* are attracted to, for instance, are the same. At this point, Aristotle provides us with a fruitful discussion of pleasures, which will help us to distinguish the difference between two types of *akrasia*.

From 1147b20 onwards, Aristotle discerns and discusses the difference between types of pleasure¹⁷³ with a view to differentiating unqualified *akrasia* from the qualified *akrasia*. According to this exposition, some pleasures are classified as necessary, whereas others are considered as choiceworthy. The latter are not deemed necessary on the grounds that they are not “physical species-sustaining activities”, but

¹⁷³ In the *EN*, apart from 1147b20ff, Aristotle presents two separate discussions of pleasure. First one appears in Book VII.11-14, and the second one in Book X. There are numerous discussions about whether or not these two accounts of pleasure can be taken as compatible. For further discussion, see G. E. L. Owen, “Aristotelian Pleasures,” in *Articles on Aristotle. Vol. 2, Ethics and Politics*, ed. J. Barnes, M. Schofield, and R. Sorabji (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978). Also, for the discussion of pleasure as something good, see Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 64-72.

they are desirable in themselves.¹⁷⁴ Among the former, Aristotle lists the pleasures of the body, such as pleasures taken from food, drink, and sexual intercourse.¹⁷⁵ These are the pleasures of taste and touch. The choiceworthy pleasures, on the other hand, encompass [1] pleasures that are intrinsically desirable, such as pleasures taken from virtuous activity or contemplation; [2] pleasures that are desirable by accident or perversion (e.g., the pleasures taken from recuperation, cannibalism, etc.); [3] intermediate pleasures which can be classified under neither intrinsically good nor bad, such as the assurance of material goods, wealth, victory, honour, gain, and anger.¹⁷⁶

The necessary pleasures of the body and the intermediate pleasures (type [3] of the choiceworthy pleasures) are what *akrasia* in general is attracted to. Aristotle thinks that those who go to excess with reference to the necessary bodily pleasures should be deemed *akrateis* proper, or they are subject to unqualified *akrasia*. Those who indulge in intermediate pleasures, on the other hand, are examples of *akrasia* with qualification. Put differently, they are akratic in respect of gain, money, anger, etc.; they are akratic only by resemblance.¹⁷⁷ Desiring or being affected by wealth, honour, or victory is not intrinsically bad; on the contrary, when they are followed moderately, they are worthy of choice. What makes them bad or blameworthy is to carry them to excess.¹⁷⁸ Understood in this way, both the pleasures of the body and the other pleasures listed above are not bad in themselves (except for the pleasures desired due to perversion). Despite the frequent base charges with which the pleasures of the body, which mostly awaken intense appetites or feelings in a person, face, even this type of pleasure can be deemed good if its associated activity is good.¹⁷⁹ The main reason why

¹⁷⁴ Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics*, 58.

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1147b26-7.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1147b24-9, 1148a22-7. Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics*, 58.

¹⁷⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1147b30-4.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1148a23-b14.

¹⁷⁹ D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (New York: Cambridge, 1999), 211-2.

pleasures in general are regarded as wicked is that they make most of the things appear as “a good when it is not.”¹⁸⁰

Bearing in mind these different types of pleasures, we can now turn our attention to the above-mentioned character traits in their relation to pleasures. The first character trait we will zero in on is *enkrateia* (ἐγκράτεια – continence, self-control). If we see Aristotle’s discussion of *akrasia* as a discussion of the (lack of) management of bodily pleasures, we might better apprehend his examination of *enkrateia*. *Enkrateia* is generally defined as being master over those pleasures to which the *akratēs* surrenders.¹⁸¹ Even though it is generally considered as the opposite state of *akrasia*, it actually occupies an intermediate place between an excess and a deficiency, similar to the case of virtues. The excess of this right mean (*enkrateia*) is *akrasia* in which one fails to listen to reason because one takes too much pleasure or delight, while the deficiency is a state in which one fails to obey reason owing to the fact that one takes less pleasure than one is supposed to take.¹⁸² Since this latter type of character trait is very rare in human life, it is for the most part forgotten, causing *enkrateia* and *akrasia* to be regarded as opposites.¹⁸³

Describing *enkrateia* in terms of pleasures or delights should not be overlooked, since this is what distinguishes it from a virtue. Like the *akratēs*, also the *enkratēs* (ἐγκρατής) is concerned primarily with bodily pleasures and appetites.¹⁸⁴ In point of fact, excessive enthusiasm for the pleasures of bodily enjoyments, such as food, drink, and sex, are in force in the *enkratēs* as well as in the *akratēs*. What differentiates them, for this reason, is not that one has desires and the other has not, or one has strong(er) desires, while the other has weak(er) ones. Furthermore, it is not

¹⁸⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1113b2.

¹⁸¹ What this implies will be explicated shortly.

¹⁸² Aristotle, *EN*, 1151b23-32; Teun Tieleman, “Nicomachean Ethics VII. 9 (1151^b23) – 10: (In)Continence in Context,” in *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, Book VII*, ed. Carlo Natali (New York: Oxford UP, 2009,) 174. Concerning this point, we should also pay attention to what Sarah Broadie takes notice of. Broadie points out that postulating ἐγκράτεια as having “excessive appetite for pleasure” necessitates an additional fourth state to the triad of moral states which Aristotle makes use of. In this fourth state, “reason prevails against excessive aversion from pleasure” (Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), 307, note 3).

¹⁸³ Aristotle, *EN* 1151b29-30.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1147b22-3, 1149b25-6.

that the *enkratēs* has other kinds of desires – desires for intellectual pleasures, for instance – rather than desires for bodily pleasures, with which the *akratēs* is afflicted. In fact, both of them are distressed with strong, excessive bodily delights, which command the opposite of what the reason dictates. Defining *enkrateia* in this way, that is, as having conflicting and excessive desires for bodily pleasures, is what makes it a lesser good in comparison to virtue. For this reason, as stated in the introduction, *enkrateia* is not a virtue. The latter denotes a harmonious state of character. This means that a virtuous person is the one in whom reason and appetites (bodily pleasures) do not pit against each other. There is no conflict between her reason, emotions, and pleasures, and there are no opposing impulses which require her to be strong-willed.¹⁸⁵ Stating that *enkrateia* is not a virtue,¹⁸⁶ on the other hand, should not lead us to consider it as a vice. It does not denote a bad character state; it is just a lesser good in comparison to a virtue, and characterizes a right mean between two bad states.

While having strong desires for bodily pleasures is the common feature of *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, what differentiates them and what makes the *enkratēs* what she is, is its being able to withstand in the face of strong bodily desires or pleasures. Despite having these pleasures, the *enkratēs* can manage to stand firm against them with the help of good reason she has. *Enkrateia* is, in other words, a mixture, a blend¹⁸⁷ of right reason, which encourages a person to act in the best way, and the irrational part, which urges the person to satisfy the appetitive desires that run counter to what the right reason commands.¹⁸⁸ It is described as “a semi-virtue typical of someone progressing toward virtue but still lacking a perfect mind in which appetite operates in harmony with reason.”¹⁸⁹ The *enkrateis* know that they have strong bodily appetites, yet their rational principle prevents them from fulfilling those appetites.¹⁹⁰ It is not so much a resistance in the face of those appetites as conquering, as Aristotle makes it

¹⁸⁵ Hutchinson, “Ethics,” 215.

¹⁸⁶ Aristotle, *EN* 1128b33-5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1128b33-5.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1102b14-7.

¹⁸⁹ Tieleman, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 9 (1151^b23) – 10: (In)Continence in Context,” 175.

¹⁹⁰ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 33

clear.¹⁹¹ That is to say, it is not a state in which one resists with difficulty to the lures of appetite; rather the *enkratēs* triumphs over them, listens to the reason and positively responds to the latter's commands. Despite having emotions and appetitive desires, the *enkratēs*' desiring element (*ὀρεκτικόν*), unlike that of the *akratēs*, obeys what her reason commands.¹⁹² In other words, *enkratēs* is obedient to her cognitive understanding of what is the best thing to do, rather than to the enticements of bodily pleasures. Also, the *enkratēs* is not conceived as the one "whose 'good' desires typically outweigh her 'bad' desires, but rather as the one whose desiring element (*orektikon*) is obedient to her 'rational principle'."¹⁹³

The *enkratēs*' obedience to reason implies a strong will, a self-control, while the *akratēs*' failure to stick by her own rational principle is indicative of a weak character.¹⁹⁴ In contrast to the *akratēs* who is more inclined "to be defeated even by those [pleasures] which most people master", the *enkratēs* can be regarded as the one who "master even those by which most people are defeated."¹⁹⁵

The *akratēs*' relations with the *phronimos* (*φρόνιμος* – the practically wise, prudent person) and the *sōphrōn* (*σώφρων* – the temperate person) indicate a similar point. *Phronimos* is the one who knows the ultimate correct end for herself, and deliberates well over how to achieve this end. Her deliberation is practical rather than theoretical. The *phronimoi* "are the people who know how to deliberate well about the things that are good for themselves, not (just) in some restricted context, such as matters of health, but with regard to life as a whole – *pros to eu zen holos*."¹⁹⁶ The *phronimos* does not have to make use of her knowledge so as to conquer the temptations of pleasures.¹⁹⁷ The reason for this is that the *phronimos* does not regard

¹⁹¹ Aristotle, *EN* 1150a34-b1.

¹⁹² Alfred R. Mele, "Aristotle on *Akrasia*, *Eudaimonia*, and the Psychology of Action," in *Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Nancy Sherman (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 190-1.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 190

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1150a11-3.

¹⁹⁶ John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 111.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1146b13-14.

what is contrary to her rightful ends as something pleasurable. What is pleasurable for the *phronimos* is in line with what her rational principle or knowledge commands. Understood in this way, the virtuous person, the *phronimos* for instance, is not devoid of pleasures and desires. Rather, she has her own pleasures and passions in the right mean.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, the *sōphrones* are defined as those who “are so constituted as to take no pleasure in anything contrary to *orthos logos* [right reason], whereas continent persons [*enkrateis*] are pulled by base desires [*φάυλας ἐπιθυμίας*], and so feel the tug of those pleasures they successfully resist.”¹⁹⁹ In the *sōphrōn*, the appetitive element of the soul should agree with reason, for the *sōphrōn* “craves for the things he ought, as he ought, and when he ought; and this is what reason directs.”²⁰⁰

Despite this difference between *sōphrosunē* (σωφροσύνη) and *enkrateia*, we can discern a structural similarity between them. In terms of Aristotle’s triad of moral qualities, which is comprised of a deficiency, a mean, and an excess, *sōphrosunē* constitutes the right mean. Its excess is described as *akolasia* (ἀκολασία – intemperance, self-indulgence, profligacy), and deficiency as *anaisthēsia* (ἀναισθησία – insensitivity, insensibility).²⁰¹ Structurally speaking, we can recognise that it is parallel to the triad in which *enkrateia* is the mean. This is the triad of the unnamed state in which one takes delight less than it should (the deficiency) – *enkrateia* (the mean) – *akrasia* (the excess). This structural similarity between them sometimes causes confusion between *enkrateia* and *sōphrosunē*.

The fourth *φαινόμενον*²⁰² expresses the idea that some regard *sōphrōn* and the *enkratēs* as the same. Put differently, the one who is *enkratēs* is at the same time a *sōphrōn*, and vice versa. Even though they both constitute midpoints between an excess and a deficiency, they are not the same. As indicated above, the virtue, *sōphrosunē*, requires that one finds no pleasure whatsoever in anything which is contrary to the right principle. Reaching such a point, where a person not only resists

¹⁹⁸ Amelie O. Rorty, “*Akrasia* and Pleasure: *NE* Book 7,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, LA, California: University of California Press, 1980), 274.

¹⁹⁹ Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle’s Ethics*, 59.

²⁰⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1119b14-7.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1119a5-6.

²⁰² For the enumerated *φαινόμενα*, see p. 57.

or conquers the temptation of the physical enjoyments, but also does not find such desires pleasurable, is an exacting process. Taken in this way, the difficulty of becoming *sōphrōn* in the full sense of the word necessitates a process full of challenging attempts. In developing this virtue, it is natural that one occasionally fluctuates between acting enkratically and akratically. That is to say, until a point where one turns herself to a person in whom there is no battle between her pleasures and right reason, one sometimes succumbs to the temptations of appetites, and sometimes overpowers them. These are the conditions in which most people dwell.²⁰³

In the fifth *φαινόμενον*, the confusion between *akolasia* (self-indulgence)²⁰⁴ and *akrasia* is pointed out. As Aristotle describes, the *akolastos* (ἀκόλαστος – the self-indulgent person) “craves for all pleasant things and those that are most pleasant, and is led by his appetite to choose these at the cost of everything else; hence he is pained both when he fails to get them and when he is craving for them (for appetite involves pain).”²⁰⁵

As is the case with *sōphrosunē* and *enkrateia*, *akolasia* and *akrasia* seem almost the same. Outwardly, in both *akolasia* and *akrasia*, what we notice is that someone is giving in to the temptations of appetite. However, what differentiates one from another is whether or not there is an inner struggle between reason and appetite (*ἐπιθυμία*) or emotion (*πάθος*).²⁰⁶ In the case of the *akratēs*, while acting contrary to reason, she is not completely convinced that what she is doing is the right action, whereas the *akolastos* is persuaded that what she is doing is the right one. This means that for the *akolastos*, pursuing bodily pleasures, even though they contradict the dictates of reason, is correct.²⁰⁷ It is due to this aspect of *akolasia* that it is considered

²⁰³ Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy*, 59.

²⁰⁴ The word ἀκολασία comes from the verb *κολάζειν* which means ‘to restrain, to chasten, and to keep something in check’. ἀκολασία, then, points out an unbridled state with respect to pleasures. Alluding to its etymology, early in the *EN*, Aristotle states that ἀκολασία should “be kept in a chastened condition,” since in such a state of character one “desires what is base” and it tends to develop quickly (1119b4ff).

²⁰⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1119a1-4.

²⁰⁶ Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics*, 58.

²⁰⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1151a11-4.

as a type of *kakia* (vice) rather than a weakness.²⁰⁸ Actually, its badness arises from its being mistaken about what is good.

The *akratēs*, on the other hand, is knowledgeable of the right path to be pursued even though her *πάθος* intervenes and causes her to act akratically.²⁰⁹ Since the *akratēs* has the knowledge of what the right action is, we cannot call her bad or vicious. But we cannot consider her as good either; because, she gives authority to her bodily pleasures which are to silence her reason. This stark difference between these two character-states is propounded by Aristotle as follows: the *akratēs* “is like a city which passes all the right decrees and has good laws, but makes no use of them,” while the *akolastos* “is like a city that uses its laws, but has wicked laws to use.”²¹⁰

Another dissimilarity between the *akolastos* and the *akratēs* is about the feeling of remorse. While the latter regrets what she has done, there is no question of it in the former. The reason for this is that the *akolastos* acts from choice and conviction.²¹¹ The *akolastos* has the wrong idea of what is good, hence she does not even realise the wrong action she has done. Furthermore, the *akolastos* is incurable, “since a man without regrets cannot be cured.”²¹² It is a permanent state of character, “like a disease such as dropsy or consumption,” as Aristotle calls it.²¹³ On the other hand, *akrasia* is “an intermittent badness,” “like epilepsy.”²¹⁴

As an explanation of *akolastos*’ not feeling any regret about her action, we have just stated that she acts out of choice (*προαίρεσις*). The *akratēs*, on the other hand, does not act “by choice, but contrary to his choice and judgment.”²¹⁵ So as to understand what this statement means, we should now go a little astray in our current discussion and lay out some other concepts, such as desire and (voluntary and

²⁰⁸ Rorty, “*Akrasia* and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 272.

²⁰⁹ Aristotle, *EN* 1145b12.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1152a19-24.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1150b29-30. Hutchinson, “*Ethics*,” 215.

²¹² Aristotle, *EN* 1150a22.

²¹³ Aristotle, *EN* 1150b32-3.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1150b33-4.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1148a9.

involuntary) action. As we shall see, these will turn out to be essentially related to *akrasia*.

3.5 Desire and Action

Even though in the *Nicomachean Ethics* we find Aristotle touching on the topic of action on several occasions, an elaborate and explicit account of it can be found in the *Rhetoric*. There, Aristotle describes types of action as follows:

Now every action of every person either is or is not due to that person himself. Of those not due to himself some are due to chance, the others to necessity; of these latter, again, some are due to compulsion, the others to nature. Consequently all actions that are not due to a man himself are due either to chance or to nature or to compulsion. All actions that *are* due to a man himself and caused by himself are due either to habit or to desire; and of the latter, some are due to rational desire, the others to irrational. Rational desire is wishing, and wishing is a desire for good—nobody wishes for anything unless he thinks it good. Irrational desire is twofold, viz. anger and appetite. Thus every action must be due to one or other of seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite.²¹⁶

Rational desire (i.e. *βούλησις*) and non-rational desires (i.e. *θυμός* and *ἐπιθυμία*) constitute the central point in understanding human motivations of action; hence we need to clarify what these desires mean. *Boulēsis* (rational wish) is formed as a result of deliberation or calculation, and aims at the good. *Epithumia*, frequently translated as lust or craving, is a sensual appetite. It is concerned with, and strives to attain, bodily pleasures such as those arising from food, drink, and sex. *Epithumia* also aims at avoiding physical pain. It “always settle[s] on what appears to be most pleasurable or least painful.”²¹⁷ *Thumos* (anger/moral passion), on the other hand, falls somewhere between *boulēsis* and *epithumia*. It can be variously translated as passion or emotion, and includes love, hate, anger, fear, pity, envy, and shame. It is responsive to both sensual, appetitive and rational desires.

These three types of desires/motivations (*boulēsis*, *thumos*, and *epithumia*) act independently; but this should not be taken to mean that they cannot work together. They can sometimes be competitors to each other (in which case akratic action

²¹⁶ Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1368b33-1369a6.

²¹⁷ Deborah Karen Ward Modrak, “Sensation and Desire,” in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 319.

becomes possible) or complement each other. For instance, in the case of an insult hurled at someone you care, you feel anger (a *thumos*/emotion). You may ‘think’ that the requital for the insult is due and even pleasurable, and consequently desire and act on this thought. In this case, reason is complementary to the feeling of anger. However, this may not always be the case: you may not act on what your reason commands, and thus you may act akratically.²¹⁸

These desires are discussed in the framework of action. That is to say, they are regarded as those which motivate one to act or prevent one from acting. Desire is in itself a psychic activity, yet is capable of causing changes in one’s physiology, and thus action. Each of the three desires is capable of motivating one for action and moving relevant bodily parts.²¹⁹ Since all these three types or sources of desire can move one, the occurrence of clashes between these desires can be anticipated.

Until now we have said that desire causes action; yet how this comes about needs some clarification. Desire itself is “a moved mover and its object, the thing desired, is the unmoved mover of desire.”²²⁰ For an action to take place, both of these components must be there. Being an unmoved mover is more fundamental than being a moved mover in Aristotle thinking. He explicates this through pointing out that “since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality.”²²¹ What this indicates is that “it is the object of [desire]²²² which is essential in originating movement, this object may be either the real or the apparent good.”²²³ The good in general functions as the final cause of desire. The good is an end serving as the prime mover of all animal

²¹⁸ Norman O. Dahl, “Aristotle on Action, Practical Reason, and Weakness of the Will,” in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnosopoulos (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 499.

²¹⁹ Modrak, “Sensation and Desire,” 318. For sensual desire’s (*epithumia*) power of causing action, see *EN* 1147a35. For Aristotle’s theory of movement of living beings (human movement in particular), see *De Motu Animalium* 6-8 and *De Anima* III, 7-11.

²²⁰ Modrak, “Sensation and Desire,” 318

²²¹ Aristotle, *Met.*, XII.7 1072a24-6.

²²² In the text it says appetite instead of desire; but in order to point out that the cause of movement does not have to be only appetite but also other kinds of desires, I generalize the cause of movement to desire as well.

²²³ Aristotle, *DA*, 433a29-30.

action despite its being immobile.²²⁴ In order for something to stimulate one to act, that thing is to be seen as some good. Regardless of its being real or apparent, this thing arouses a desire (appetite, for instance) which may result in acting.

The relation between seeing something as good and action can be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As quoted in the beginning of this chapter, in the opening sentence of this work, Aristotle states that every action, as well as every inquiry, art, etc., aims at some good.²²⁵ In the *Metaphysics*, the good is described as something sought after. There, in the case of the object of appetite (*ἐπιθυμητόν*) this good is said to be the apparent good; while in the case of the object of wish (*βουλητόν*) it is the real good.²²⁶ This point should not be taken as meaning that appetite cannot take as its object something which is really good. A good example for this is the *sōphrōn* (the temperate person). The *sōphrōn* might have appetite for bodily pleasant things which are ranked among appetitive pleasures, yet these, in the *sōphrōn*, serve health or good condition.²²⁷ That is to say, the things the *sōphrōn* pursues are not the apparent but the really good things. Despite the *sōphrōn*'s relation to appetite, and the latter's being an appetite of the real good rather than the apparent in the case of the *sōphrōn*, appetite in general is considered to be more concerned with the apparent good. The primary reason for this is that, in the case of people who are not virtuous or on the way to be virtuous (that is, the majority of people), appetite ordinarily incites one to mistake what is really good.²²⁸

The link between the apparent good and pleasure is hinted at in *De Motu Animalium* 700b29 and *Eudemian Ethics* 1235b25-9. Basically, what appears good to a person actually indicates what this person enjoys doing and what she desires to do. This does not have to be in line with what is overall good for this person. It is in the case of the virtuous person that what this person enjoys corresponds to what is really

²²⁴ Pierre Destree, "Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*," in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, ed. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 149.

²²⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1094a1-2.

²²⁶ Aristotle, *Met.*, XII.7 1072a28-9.

²²⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1119a15-8.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1104b9-10, 21-2, 1113a33-5. I take "pleasure" in these references to mean bodily pleasures and consequently appetites.

good, that is good for her and good without qualification. While the compatibility of (bodily) pleasure with the real good is cogent in the case of the virtuous person, it is not always the case. For instance, with respect to the *akratēs* – who dramatically differs from the virtuous person—, the power of pleasure makes her regard bodily pleasures as good while these do not correspond to the real goods. That is to say, even though the *akratēs* is well aware of the fact that the satisfaction of these pleasures disagrees with the dictates of reason, and hence carrying out this action is wrong, she still considers them as good. They still appear her to be good, because she still desires them.²²⁹

Considering something as good, or representing something to oneself as good, therefore, is essential in desiring and acting. That which is desired does not have to be the real good; it can also be the apparent good. The crucial point here is that something is to be “represented” as good. In this sense, representation (*φαντασία*) serves as the cause of desire²³⁰ and consequently of action. “In order for the desirable object to become a real object of desire for an agent, that agent must represent it to himself as being a good; and when he does represent it to himself as good, he desires it at the same time.”²³¹ As we will see below, the role *φαντασία* plays in comprehending the case of *akrasia* will be of utmost importance, yet for this account we first need to complete our discussion on desire and action.

3.6 The Conflict between Rational and Non-Rational Desires

As stated above, each part of the soul by means of their corresponding desires is able to move the body. Desires, in other words, have the power to move the body and cause action. Desires, as we discussed above, can work together and complement each other to attain the object of desire, or be at variance with each other and cause one to waver between two conflicting desires. Among the conflicts of desires what is often encountered is the conflict between sensual desire (*epithumia*) and reason (or what the

²²⁹ Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, 128.

²³⁰ Aristotle, *MA*, 702a17-9.

²³¹ Destree, “Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*,” 150.

rational desire (*boulēsis*) wishes).²³² Apart from its frequent occurrence, the main reason for our focusing especially on the conflict between *boulēsis* and *epithumia* rather than the conflict between *boulēsis* and *thumos* here is that the latter conflict relates to the phenomenon of *akrasia* only by resemblance (*καθ' ὁμοιότητα*) while the former type of conflict is what describes the *akrasia* proper.²³³ Since an investigation into the relation between *boulēsis* and *epithumia* would help us to apprehend *akrasia* proper, in the following we will zero in on this relation or conflict.

The conflict between rational desire and appetitive desire is iterated throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*: In 1102b17, for instance, Aristotle discusses that sensual desire “fights against and resists reason” (*μάχεται καὶ ἀντιτείνει τῷ λόγῳ*). Similarly, in 1102b22, Aristotle speaks of appetitive or desiring element of the soul as something resisting and opposing reason (*ἐναντιούμενον τούτῳ καὶ ἀντιβαῖνον*). Moreover, in 1147a34, Aristotle indicates the conflict between them by stating that reason (*to logistikon*) “bids us avoid the object, but appetite lead us toward it.”²³⁴ This is actually where *akrasia* enters into the discussion.

Furthermore, similar remarks concerning desires with the emphasis that this conflict leads one to act akratically can be found in the *De Anima*: “Sometimes it overpowers wish [rational desire] and sets it in movement; at times wish acts thus upon appetite, like a ball, appetite overcoming appetite, i.e. in the condition of moral weakness (though by nature the higher faculty is always more authoritative and gives rise to movement).”²³⁵ Likewise in 433a1-3, “even when [practical not speculative] thought does command and bids us pursue or avoid something, sometimes no movement is produced; we act in accordance with [sensual] desire, as in the case of

²³² The conflict between reason and appetite, or rational desire and non-rational desire, is stated in various works of Aristotle. For further references see *DA* 433a1-3, 433b6-7, 434a12-3, *EE*, 1223a37-8, 1241 a19-20, *EN*, 1102b14-18, 1102b21, 1111b13-4, 1151a20-4.

²³³ The types of *akrasia* and what counts as *akrasia* proper or *akrasia* by resemblance shall be discussed in detail below. For now, I just would like to point out that *akrasia* with respect to *thumos*, honour and gain is first put forward among the *phainomena* in 1145b8-21. This *phainomenon* is solved later on (in 1147b30ff, 1148b11-4, 1149a3-4, 1149a21-3) by stating that this type of *akrasia* can only be *akrasia* by analogy or with qualification, and not *akrasia* proper or without qualification.

²³⁴ Chapter 3 of the Book VII of the *EN* will be discussed below when practical syllogism is put under scrutiny. For this reason, here I content myself with this cursory account and leave the extensive discussion of this passage later in this thesis.

²³⁵ Aristotle, *DA*, 434a12-5.

moral weakness.” As these quotations manifest, similar accounts can easily be found in Aristotle’s different works. And in all of them we can realise that the struggle between the rational and non-rational desires is presented as the cause of akratic action.

Akrasia, therefore, can be taken as an outcome of a mismatch between the commands of reason and appetite. The reason in question here is not the theoretical reason, but the practical, which is concerned with what one ought to do and not ought to do in a specific situation. Not unexpectedly, reason and appetite do not have to act in opposition to each other. In this sense, their conflict does not present a case of inevitability or of necessity, but that of a possibility.²³⁶ It is possible that reason and appetite can be in conflict, and furthermore, it is possible that this conflict end with the victory of the latter, hence results in an akratic action.

A crucial point, which should be laid stress on before furthering on our discussion, is that, as the above quotation shows, *akrasia* is regarded as a phenomenon which is contrary to the nature even though it is more common to encounter with it in daily life. Its frequent encounter in daily life of human beings does not render it natural in other words. As Aristotle states in the *De Anima* 434a13-4, that which is higher in the hierarchy should be authoritative and rule the lower parts in that hierarchy. That is to say, reason, (practical or speculative) thought, or the rational desires driving from the power of reason should be by nature authoritative in one and cause one to act accordingly. In Aristotle’s words, “the appetitive element should live according to reason.”²³⁷ This is what is expected from a ‘normal’ human being even when in them non-rational desires do have a say. Agent’s not pursuing reason or what reason dictates is hence seen as an anomaly if we take Aristotle’s own treatment of the subject.²³⁸ The question arises from these is that while the *enkratēs*, like the virtuous person, follows her own reason and act accordingly, how and why it is that the *akratēs* fails in this endeavour.

So far we have investigated that in the *akratēs*’ rational and non-rational desires fight against each other and the latter gain the upper hand; but we have not yet

²³⁶ Marco Zingano, “*Akrasia* and the Method of Ethics,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, ed. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 168.

²³⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1119b14.

²³⁸ Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 1-2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” 15.

investigated what gives the non-rational desires the power they have in the *akratēs*. What causes one to listen to one's appetites and emotions instead of one's reason's commands? This question in effect constitutes the core of our treatment of *akrasia*, and we have already hinted at it above: it is the role *phantasia* plays in determining one's actions.

3.7 *Phantasia*

Thus far we have not adequately taken into account the role of desire in the process of action. So as to initiate the process leading to action, the parts of the soul need rational (*βούλησις*) or non-rational desires (*θυμός* and *ἐπιθυμία*). In investigating akratic action, in which non-rational desires take the upper hand and urge one to act accordingly,²³⁹ then, we should be heedful of these desires, and elucidate why and how the non-rational desires overpower the rational desires. This examination can be carried out more efficiently if we inquire into what strengthens these desires.

As previously indicated, Aristotle explicates this point with the aid of an explanation regarding the movement of living beings. There he develops the idea that in order for something to set a living being in motion, it must be *represented* as something good. This view can also be applied to desires in general, and we can state that “[w]e desire a thing because it seems good to us.”²⁴⁰ As noted previously, this good can be a real or apparent good; and what determines whether the good is to be classified as real or apparent good lies in its representation (*φαντασία*). Since desiring something requires something to be seen as some good –real or apparent–, having a clear conception of *phantasia* is of utmost importance. In the following, I will be examining how *phantasia* as the cause of non-rational desire in the akratic action functions; but before furthering on, some explanations regarding how Aristotle treats this notion should be made.

Derived from *φαίνεσθαι* (to come to light, to appear), *phantasia* designates a capacity by means of which things appear to us in a certain way. It should not be translated as “imagination,” as it is sometimes rendered. Even though it is related in

²³⁹ Pierre Destrée, “Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, ed. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 148.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 150. Aristotle, *Met.* XII.7. 1072a29.

some sense to mental imagery, it does not refer to a capacity for creativity or invention of imaginary, hallucinatory scenes.²⁴¹

In Aristotle, *phantasia* constitutes a midway between perception and thought,²⁴² both of which provide information about the world to our cognition. Perception is thought to be concerned with individual, external, and perceptible objects; it is either triggered by them or is about them. Thought, on the other hand, is stimulated by something within; it is about universals.²⁴³ *Phantasia* serves as a bridge to these two mental states. Being closely related to perception and hence bodily activities, *phantasia* “provides the material on which our understanding works to produce concepts.”²⁴⁴ In its close relation to perception, *phantasia* derives its content from perception, and is able to retain this content even after the perception in question comes to an end. It is this continued process *phantasia* prolongs that false representation of something in the world can take place.²⁴⁵

After these preliminary remarks, we can now scrutinise *phantasia*’s role in akratic action. Positing the overpowering of the non-rational desires as the ultimate cause of akratic action only serves as pigeonholing the problem rather than solving it. *Phantasia*, on the other hand, can be seen as something which strengthens the power of passion and appetite (non-rational desires), and therefore can be regarded as the cause of akratic action.

In the *akratēs*, the pursued good is the apparent good. Borrowing terms from the *De Anima* 434a5, we can claim that the apparent good is formed through *φαντασία αἰσθητική* (perceptual representation), rather than *φαντασία λογιστική* (rational representation). While the former indicates a representation where appetite is active, the latter refers to the one where *boulēsis* is in force. *Phantasia logistikē* seems to be silenced in the *akratēs*. In other words, the act one should not be doing is not presented to the one as a non-good; this would be the function of the *phantasia logistikē*. Instead,

²⁴¹ Victor Caston, “Phantasia and Thought,” in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 323.

²⁴² Aristotle, *DA*, III.3.

²⁴³ Caston, “Phantasia and Thought,” 322.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

this act is presented as an apparent good thanks to the workings of the *phantasia aisthētikē*.²⁴⁶

At this point, it should be emphasized that such a reading of the role of *phantasia aisthētikē* can be considered as a continuation of Socrates' reading of *akrasia*. As discussed earlier, Socrates regards *akrasia* as a misjudgement, and thus emphasises that one makes a mistake about what is best for one, and acts, as 'the many' call it, akratically. Likewise, here in Aristotle's reading, we can notice that due to its *phantasia aisthētikē* the *akratēs* misrepresents the good. Accordingly, we can claim that Aristotle furthers the discussion initiated by Socrates, and explains how one can misrepresent or misjudge what is overall good. However, this alone does not explain how or why one's *phantasia aisthētikē* gains an edge over the *φαντασία λογιστική*; for this, we should ask further questions.

Phantasia aisthētikē alone does not emerge *per saltum* and gain power over *phantasia logistikē* instantaneously. In order for *phantasia aisthētikē* to gain the upper hand, there should be a desire prior to this kind of *phantasia* so as to prompt it and cause it to prevail over the other kind of *phantasia*. Following Aristotle's example, in the case of someone who is overwhelmed by the desire of eating the cake in front of her, an appetite "happens to be" there in the agent.²⁴⁷ Here Aristotle's wording is crucial: "τύχη δ' ἐπιθυμία ἐνοῦσα."²⁴⁸ An appetite (to eat) is there by chance (τύχη). It is not that the agent, say, first sees the cake and then a desire to eat it arises. Rather the agent is in such a condition that she wants to eat something sweet (general desire), and the cake's presence only serves to trigger the process of actualisation of this desire. Having the desire and an object of desire (the cake) at hand, the *phantasia aisthētikē* is stimulated and it represents the "apparent good", i.e. the pleasant.²⁴⁹

At this point, it should not be taken that whenever an appetite-arousing object is present, one's *phantasia logistikē* is blocked and that only *phantasia aisthētikē*

²⁴⁶ Destrée, "Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*," 151.

²⁴⁷ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a31-35. Aristotle's treatment of this subject will be the topic of section 9.2.2, yet since the explanation of *phantasia* requires its handling here, I will briefly touch on this topic here as well.

²⁴⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a31-35.

²⁴⁹ Destrée, "Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*," 152.

exercises. It is more of the co-existence of various elements that make the agent use *phantasia aisthētikē* instead of, or more than, *phantasia logistikē* and act akratically. Or at least we can surmise that these elements help the agent favour one type of *phantasia* over the other. These are first of all the presence of a prior desire and an encounter of an object being able to satisfy this desire. However, this does not suffice to be the ultimate reason why the agent listens to her non-rational desires, whose satisfaction appears her to be a good due to the working of *phantasia aisthētikē*. There must be some other factors rather than an existing desire that favour the result of *phantasia aisthētikē* and hinder the working of *phantasia logistikē*. *Epithumia* (appetitive desire) alone, in other words, cannot suffice to block one's *phantasia logistikē*. The obvious evidence for this is that not just the *akratēs* but also the *enkratēs* entertains the same appetitive desire towards the pleasurable object. If both of them have the same impulse to satisfy this desire, have the same general intellectual background, and the one succeeds and the other fails in resisting it, we must look for an explanation for it. Why does the *akratēs* fail to triumph over her appetitive desires? What makes the *akratēs* more inclined to ignore reason's (*phantasia logistikē*) exhortations?

Their difference does not rest upon *epithumia*'s strength in each of them. Even though Aristotle speaks of quickness and strength or violence of desires as leading the *akratēs* astray in differentiating the types of *akrasia* (weak and impetuous *akrasia*),²⁵⁰ the strength of desire cannot be taken as the cause of the difference between the *akratēs* and the *enkratēs*. The main reason for this is that the *enkratēs*, just like the *akratēs*, is susceptible to the same surge of appetitive desire. If the strength of desire is not responsible for the use of *phantasia aisthētikē* rather than the *phantasia logistikē*, then how could *phantasia logistikē* be silenced?

3.7.1 Habituation and Education

What prevents one from using one's own *phantasia logistikē* has been thought to be bad habits. In other words, it is "the pleasure taken in a habitual way in one's appetites

²⁵⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1150b19-28, 1151a11-2.

and in their objects” that one fails to make enough use of its *phantasia logistikē* and as a result acts akratically.²⁵¹

The *akratēs* can then be defined as someone who is “more in the *habit* of enjoying bodily pleasures,”²⁵² which are engendered by appetites or passions and thus are triggered by the working and overpowering of the *phantasia aisthētikē*.²⁵³ Hence one’s habitual enjoyment of pleasure can form such a character that she may lose her determination to resist the lures of the pleasures and become susceptible to act akratically.²⁵⁴ Put differently, the *akratēs* “has habits that give his pathē undue dominance in the determination of his actions.”²⁵⁵

Representing something as a real or apparent good by means of the workings of either *phantasia aisthētikē* or *phantasia logistikē* respectively, and pursuing either of these goods can therefore be regarded as the result of one’s habits and character moulded through them. If one has formed (abominable or agreeable) habits, it is almost inevitable for her to act contrary to these habits. She will act according to what she deems good (what appears her to be good). If she turns out to act akratically, it is due to her *phantasia aisthētikē* which presents her the apparent good rather than the real good which *phantasia logistikē* points out. Furthermore, she will be blameworthy for mistaking the apparent good for the real.

Now someone may say that all men aim at the apparent good, but have no control over how things appear to him; but the end appears to each man in a form answering to his character. We reply that if each man is somehow responsible for the state he is in, he will also be himself somehow responsible for how things appear.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Destrée, “Aristotle on the Causes of Akrasia,” 155-7.

²⁵² Ibid., 160, emphasis added.

²⁵³ Ibid., 160.

²⁵⁴ Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle’s Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 59.

²⁵⁵ Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, LA, California: University of California Press, 1980), 279.

²⁵⁶ Aristotle, *EN* 1114a32-6.

In forming habits education has an essential role. Education is the process of learning to get pleasure from what is good and to feel pain from doing what is bad;²⁵⁷ and, through repetition, one becomes accustomed to feeling in the right way without the need for consulting one's *phantasia logistikē*. Getting pleasure from the right sort of things and thus not succumbing to acting akratically are thus presented as the result of good education and habituation which render getting pleasure from the right sort of things one's second nature.

On account of its poor education, the *akratēs* builds an unstable character which fails to desire right pleasures, feel the right emotions, and perform the right actions. This insufficient and faulty education prevents this person from resisting the temptations of appetitive pleasures. An attention to the words which Aristotle uses in 1150b23-4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* can be informative. In this passage –“ἐνιοι [...] οὕτω καὶ προαισθόμενοι καὶ προιδόντες καὶ προεγείραντες ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν οὐχ ἡττῶνται ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους”²⁵⁸–, Aristotle deploys the words starting with the prefix *προ-* (meaning before or beforehand). As these words indicate, preparing oneself before the actual unsettling or enticing experiences take place, is helpful in resisting the temptations of passions which the *akratēs* fails to resist. This preparation and deliberation beforehand, in turn, is something which education provides. If one prepares herself before the actual encounter of such occurrences, fortifies herself beforehand in other words, she would not succumb to her own passions.²⁵⁹

Moreover, as Aristotle points out, not all types of *akrasia* are open to moral guidance equally. This is most evident in his distinction between the weak and the impetuous *akratēs*.²⁶⁰ *Akrasia* due to weakness (*ἀσθένεια*) characterises those who,

²⁵⁷ The role education plays in shaping young people's character is also evident in Plato's *Laws*. Learning to love and hate correctly is sine qua non for developing the ability to reason. This education, as in Aristotle is realized through an “inculcation of appropriate habits”. This in turn is essential in discarding possible conflicts between non-rational inclinations and the suggestions of reason. Plato, *Laws*, 653b-c.

²⁵⁸ “[S]ome men, [...] if they have first perceived and seen what is coming and first have aroused themselves and their calculative faculty, are not defeated by their passion.” Aristotle, *EN* 1150b22-4.

²⁵⁹ Aristotle, *MM* 1203a30-1203b11.

²⁶⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1151b19-28.

despite deliberation,²⁶¹ do not stick to their deliberation due to passion (*pathos*); while the *akrasia* due to impetuosity (*προπέτεια*) describe those who fail to deliberate owing to their rashness. Aristotle considers the impetuous *akratēs* to be easier to cure than the weak *akratēs*.²⁶² He asserts that if the impetuous *akratēs* took her time and deliberated instead of acting impulsively, she would not be acting akratically.²⁶³ From this point of view, the topic of curability runs parallel to the topic of education, i.e. learning to get pleasure in the good, avoid the bad ones, and act in the right way.

Also, as briefly stated above, it should be emphasized that claiming poor education and bad habits as the ultimate causes of akratic action should not be understood as pretexts. That is to say, the *akratēs* bears the responsibility of her actions. In this respect, the *akratēs* should not be thought as passive, who has no power to change the course of events. Rather, she is accountable for who she is. That is why Aristotle holds the *akratēs* responsible and blameworthy; yet at the same time he opens a possibility for the *akratēs* that she can change herself and act as she ought to.²⁶⁴ As we discussed earlier, the *akratēs* is considered to be not completely but only half wicked.²⁶⁵ Just like the *enkratēs* who is not yet virtuous, but is on her way to become virtuous, the *akratēs* with the right education and properly formed habits can cut loose from her half-wicked state and be enkratic and even maybe virtuous.

If the path for recovery is open to the *akratēs*, then we cannot hold the *akratēs* irresponsible for her actions, since “it is in our power to be virtuous or vicious.”²⁶⁶ “Even when they act from habit, they do not act from compulsion.”²⁶⁷ Having all the

²⁶¹ Propounding the idea that the weak *akratēs* is the one who ‘deliberates’ but fails to abide by the conclusions of her deliberations, suggests the view that the *akratēs*, as an outcome of her deliberation, recognizes how she ought to act. In other words, she draws the right conclusions. This point will be vital in our discussion of practical syllogism below.

²⁶² Ibid., 1150b19-1151a28.

²⁶³ Teun Tieleman, “NE VIII.9 (1151b23)-10: (In)Continence in Context,” in *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Book VII: Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Carlo Natali (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 180.

²⁶⁴ Aristotle, *EN VII*, 1152a27-31.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 1152a18-9.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 1113b14.

²⁶⁷ Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 280.

capacities and qualities for performing the right action, the *akratēs* acts *voluntarily*. What acting voluntarily adds to our understanding of *akrasia* should now be investigated for a clearer understanding of the concept of *akrasia*.

3.8 Voluntary and Involuntary Action

Aristotle defines happiness (*eudaimonia*) as an activity, an exercise of both intellectual and character-related virtues.²⁶⁸ Exercise or practice is so central in Aristotelian ethics that he repeatedly articulates its role in forming virtues. “[I]t is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.”²⁶⁹ However, so as to denominate an action virtuous exercise, repetition, and habit are not sufficient. The other requirement for calling it virtuous is that it is to be done voluntarily.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1, Aristotle describes voluntariness in terms of involuntariness. He regards actions performed under compulsion and actions done because of ignorance as involuntary actions.²⁷⁰ Voluntary actions, in turn, are defined as those whose “moving principle is in the agent” herself and those which are done by someone who is “aware of the particular circumstances of the action.”²⁷¹

When we listed the possible causes of action and wrongdoing in the “3.5 Desire and Action” section above, we noted down that actions which are due to the agent are caused either by habit or desire. Moreover, there we reached the conclusion that the agent is responsible not only for what type of desire one gives power to, but also for the habits one develops. In this connection, voluntariness brings along the notion of responsibility and blameworthiness with it.

Considered in this way, an action can be wrong, yet be done voluntarily. What this statement points out is the essential difference in Aristotle’s and Socrates’ understanding of wrongdoing and, consequently, *akrasia*. According to Socrates, no

²⁶⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1102a5-6.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1105b9-12.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1111a22-3.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1111a23-4.

one does voluntarily what she considers to be bad.²⁷² Hence, in Socrates, wrongdoing is done involuntarily and in ignorance; since if one knows or is aware of what she is about to do is bad, one abstains from doing it. In his understanding, we can group together right action-knowledge-voluntariness on the one hand, and, on the other, wrongdoing-ignorance-involuntariness. As ranked among wrongdoings, *akrasia*, in Socrates, is understood as a form of involuntary ignorance.²⁷³

In contrast, Aristotle considers that ignorance can be voluntary.²⁷⁴ In the case of the *akratēs*, her ignorance is voluntary, in the sense that she is accountable for getting herself into a position in which she does not discern the real good and get pleasure from the right things.²⁷⁵ In speaking of ignorance, it can also be the case that the *akratēs* has *some* knowledge about the particular circumstances of her actions.

[N]or yet is the [*akratēs*] like the man who knows and is contemplating the truth, but like the man who is asleep or drunk. And he acts voluntarily (for he acts *in a sense* with knowledge both of what he does and of that for the sake of which he does it), but is not wicked since his choice is good.²⁷⁶

Having knowledge “in a sense” is the key point in our discussion of *akrasia*. As can be remembered, at the very beginning of our examination of Aristotle’s understanding of *akrasia*, we have stated that Aristotle approaches this topic by first questioning the commonly accepted definition of this concept: that is, the *akratēs* is the one who acts against her knowledge owing to her passions, pleasures, emotions, etc. The said knowledge of the *akratēs* is not the knowledge of *phronimos*, whose knowledge and action are congruent with each other. That is to say, in the *akratēs* there is a gap between what she *knows* and does. In questioning the knowledge of the *akratēs*, we should also point out that, while the said knowledge of the *akratēs* is not the knowledge

²⁷² Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 267.

²⁷³ Plato, *Prot.* 352a-358d.

²⁷⁴ Aristotle, *EN* 1110b17-1111b3.

²⁷⁵ Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 275; Aristotle, *EN* 1114a24ff.

²⁷⁶ Aristotle, *EN* 1152a15-18. Italics added.

of the *phronimos*, it is not a complete ignorance either. It may be a false belief or a vague opinion.²⁷⁷

What is also crucial in *akratēs*' voluntary action is that it is at the same time contrary to her choice.²⁷⁸ What is said in the end of the above quotation, namely "his choice is good," should not confuse us since there this word is used to make a sharp contrast between the *akratēs* and the wicked, who has the wrong idea about what is good or bad. Although the ἀκόλαστος and the *akratēs* "are capable of voluntary and even deliberate action,"²⁷⁹ this does not indicate that an action is done with choice. As Aristotle states patently, the *akratēs* does not act "by choice, but contrary to his choice and judgment."²⁸⁰ If acting voluntarily is not the same as acting with choice, what does choice mean?

Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines choice in terms of desire: it is a "deliberate desire."²⁸¹ If we remind ourselves the centrality of desiring the right things or taking pleasure in the right objects in becoming virtuous,²⁸² we may get a glimpse of what choice is. In this line of thinking, our desires should be in accordance with our reason or rational principle so as to become virtuous. Desiring the right objects and being in line with the right moral judgments necessitate deliberation. Hence, firstly we deliberate, then decide what to do (to pursue or avoid the outcome of our deliberation) as a result of our deliberation, and finally desire accordingly.²⁸³ Desiring something, therefore, requires a process of deliberation. By considering desire in this way, we may realize that it is not a mere coincidence that choice is defined as a 'deliberate desire.' Deliberation in choice should be understood as rational deliberation in which rational desire/will (*boulēsis*) is active. The emphasis made on

²⁷⁷ The relation between *akrasia* and knowledge will be discussed in detail below.

²⁷⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1148a8-9.

²⁷⁹ Oksenberg Rorty, "Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7," 271.

²⁸⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1148a9.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1113a11, 1139a22-3.

²⁸² Deborah Karen Ward Modrak, "Sensation and Desire," in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnostopoulos (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 319-320.

²⁸³ Aristotle, *EN* 1113a11-2.

boulēsis in deliberation or calculation is significant since it is also possible to deliberate on and strive to satisfy one's epithumetic desires, and use this deliberation for improper ends. Thus, choice requires being directed to some end, and the end must be the result of rational deliberation.²⁸⁴ Lacking such a deliberation directed towards the object of rational desire, the *akratēs*, who acts with appetite, acts contrary to choice.²⁸⁵

3.9 Practical Syllogism

Akrasia is generally taken into consideration in one of these respects: It is interpreted either as the weakness or lack of knowledge (the intellectual reading of *akrasia*), or as the weakness or lack of self-control²⁸⁶ caused by passion, appetite, or feeling (the non-intellectual reading). So far, we have pursued the non-intellectual reading of the concept of *akrasia* from the points of pleasure, desire, and choice, which are strengthened by habituation and education. Together with Aristotle, we have regarded it as a character trait and as a conflict between *boulēsis* and *epithumia*,²⁸⁷ and so far neglected its association with knowledge and ignorance. Even though the discussion of *phantasia* draws near to our new way of approaching the concept of *akrasia* by shedding some light on the cognitive aspect of the akratic action, it still needs further attendance as to its relation to knowledge and ignorance (the intellectual reading of *akrasia*) in order to understand Aristotle's significant contribution to the discussion of this concept. His contribution is the application of practical reasoning to the akratic action, known as the practical syllogism. By analysing the *akratēs*' reasoning step by step, he completes his explanation of akratic action.

²⁸⁴ Daniel P. Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), p. 36. Modrak, "Sensation and Desire," 320.

²⁸⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1111b12.

²⁸⁶ Destrée, "Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*," 139.

²⁸⁷ Aristotle discusses *akrasia* as a conflict between two desires not just in the *EN*, but also or more in the *DA* III. 11-4.

After examining various opinions (*δόξαι*) about *akrasia* and the *akratēs*,²⁸⁸ Aristotle furthers his discussion by focusing on Socrates’²⁸⁹ denial of akratic action, as discussed in the *Protagoras*.²⁹⁰ If we remind ourselves of what we have discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, we can notice that in the *Protagoras*, Socrates denies *akrasia*’s possibility on the grounds that no one knowingly does wrong action. Hence, for him, the alleged *akrasia* stems from misinterpreting a case as a mismatch between reason and passion or appetite, and this seeming *akrasia* is in point of fact nothing but a result of one’s ignorance. But, for Aristotle, explaining *akrasia* as caused by ignorance (*dia agnoian*) makes akratic action involuntary, whereas for him, the akratic action is done voluntarily, as discussed above. Equipped with this difference and by taking its start from the Socrates of the *Protagoras*, Aristotle brings the intellectual reading of *akrasia* up for discussion by questioning what the ignorance in question and accordingly knowledge refer to.²⁹¹ Is it the lack of particular knowledge or the lack of all knowledge (general ignorance), in which one does not even know the general or the universal? Aristotle confronts the Socratic explanation of *akrasia* not by the total denial of ignorance-based *akrasia*, but by refining it.

Both the non-intellectualist and the intellectualist reading of *akrasia* have their own advantages in explaining this concept. However, I am more on the side of incorporating both of these explanations by elaborating them, and I suggest that what underlie these readings are in fact the same. That is to say, what I claim is that explaining *akrasia* or akratic action only by means of its said knowledge or ignorance would not be sufficient to elucidate the process leading to akratic action. Rather, in

²⁸⁸ Aristotle, *EN* VII, 1145b8-21.

²⁸⁹ It is difficult to determine whether in his dialogues Aristotle refers to the historical Socrates or to the character in Plato’s dialogues. Some readers suggest a grammatical solution to this problem, namely that when Aristotle refers to the historical Socrates, he writes this name without the definite article. When he uses the definite article in front of the name Socrates, he most probably points out the character of the dialogue. Another evidence they put forward is that when he refers to the historical Socrates’ views, he uses the imperfect/past tense rather than present tense. For more information about this, see W. Fitzgerald, *Selections from the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1853). Even though it is a matter of dispute which one of these views which Aristotle attributes to Socrates, is his own, for the ease of reference, I will be assuming that the views articulated in Aristotle’s work belongs to the Socrates’ himself, and use Socrates rather than Plato in the following.

²⁹⁰ Aristotle, *EN* VII, 1145b23-28.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 1146b9-10.

illuminating this kind of action, taking into consideration the role of *epithumia*, *phantasia aisthētikē*, habituation, and education is also essential. I also claim that in both the intellectualist and non-intellectualist readings of *akrasia*, Aristotle's use of practical syllogism functions as the key element.

By the aid of this syllogism, we will be able to differentiate between different types of knowledge. If we regard the knowledge which Socrates states to be lacking in the akratic action as the particular knowledge only, the definition of the *akratēs* as the one who has no knowledge, or the one who is entirely ignorant of what she is about to do falls apart. In this light, it is possible to define the *akratēs* as the one who does not have the particular knowledge rather than the general or universal knowledge. Furthermore, this reading helps to save the *hoi polloi*'s claim according to which the *akratēs* 'knows' something. But, claiming that the knowledge the *akratēs* lacks is the particular knowledge gives rise to inconsistencies in the discussion of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which we will scrutinise in detail below. For now, let us proceed our discussion as if the knowledge of the *akratēs* lacks was the particular knowledge and see whether this is tenable or not.

This preliminary account of the intellectualist reading of *akrasia* needs further examination, for which we should first investigate what the knowledge in question is, what kind of knowledge the *akratēs* possesses, or in what sense the *akratēs* knows. To this aim, we should inquire into what Aristotle lays out. The Greek of 1145b22-3 reads: “πῶς ὑπολαμβάνων ὀρθῶς ἀκρατεύεται τις.”²⁹² Literally, this quote asks what sort of correct grasp/right belief (*ὑπολαμβάνων ὀρθῶς*) someone who acts akratically has. Here it is not questioned whether (some sort of) knowledge is present or not. By taking for granted ‘some knowledge’ in the case of *akrasia*, he scrutinizes its sort. The existence or non-existence of knowledge is not the issue.²⁹³ It is evident that this said correct grasp cannot be practical knowledge (*phronēsis*) for the plain reason that having this sort of knowledge necessitates (by definition) to act on that knowledge.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Ibid., 1145b22-3.

²⁹³ For the various translations of this sentence, and its possible meanings see Marco Zingano, “*Akrasia and the Method of Ethics*,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, ed. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 174-5.

²⁹⁴ Aristotle, *EN* 11467-9.

Then, we should first of all inquire into what exactly this said knowledge of the *akratēs* refers to if she acts knowingly.²⁹⁵ According to Aristotle, there exist different senses of knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*).²⁹⁶ If we can determine these different senses, then we can assert that acting against one sense of knowledge would be absurd, while acting against knowledge in another sense would not be so.²⁹⁷ In VII.3 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between three senses of having and not having knowledge. The first sense draws a distinction between potential and actual knowledge. The second sense makes use of the knowledge of drunk, mad, or asleep persons, and has its source in *epithumia*.²⁹⁸ Finally, the third differentiates the knowledge of a universal truth or rule from that of particulars.

3.9.1 Three Senses of Having and Not Having Knowledge

The first distinction made between potential knowledge and actual knowledge, in effect, echoes Socrates' own distinction between the innate knowledge the Good/Forms and the actualisation of such knowledge.²⁹⁹ In this sense, Aristotle's distinction between knowledge in potentiality and knowledge in actuality can be seen as a "refinement of Socratic distinction."³⁰⁰ Aristotle subdivides this distinction and adds details to it. We can grasp this distinction by referring to another work of Aristotle, namely the *De Generatione Animalium*. In this work, 735a9-11, Aristotle distinguishes three levels of knowledge: First, there is actively used knowledge ("having it in act"). Against this kind of knowledge, the second and the third sorts of it stand. In the second sort, the knowledge is possessed *in potentia* and can be put into use "only in the conditional sense (one could use it if one were not prevented from so

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 1146b9-10.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 1146b31.

²⁹⁷ Ronald Dmitri Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weakness of Will*, (Walter de Gruyter: 1966), 81-2.

²⁹⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1146b31-1147a17.

²⁹⁹ Oksenberg Rorty, "Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7," 269.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 270.

doing).”³⁰¹ Thirdly, there is the knowledge which is not being used, and due to one’s condition, cannot be put into use, either.³⁰²

Even though Aristotle likens the condition of the *akratēs* to that of drunk, mad, or asleep persons³⁰³ (the second sense of having and not having knowledge stated above) and explains it through the knowledge overcome by *epithumia*, to my mind, we can also elucidate her condition with the help of potential and actual knowledge. We can surmise that in the case of *akrasia*, knowledge could be present, but this knowledge may remain as a mere potentiality, and not be put into effect. The *akratēs*, in other words, is unable to bring this knowledge into actuality. As Aristotle points out, “it will make a difference whether, when a man does what he should not, he has the knowledge but is not exercising it, or is exercising it; for the latter seems strange, but not the former.”³⁰⁴ Even though we may recognize that the *akratēs* belongs to the group who has knowledge *in potentia*, we have not yet determined whether she is similar to the one who is prevented from actualising her potential knowledge, or the one who is able to realise this knowledge if the conditions are apt. According to Aristotle’s depiction of the issue, we can conjecture that she is akin to the former type, since at the time of the action, the *akratēs* does not make use of her knowledge, and her condition does prevent her from acting as she should owing to *epithumia*. At the time of the action, a simple reminder that she should not do what she is about to do would not be sufficient for the *akratēs* to act otherwise.

The *akratēs* knows perfectly well or is terribly conscious that what she is about to do is wrong (even though, at the time of action, this knowledge seems to be suppressed or deactivated). That is why the *akratēs* feels regret immediately after she does the akratic action. However, she feels the vehement force of passion and appetite which catches hold of her, fettering her, hindering her potential knowledge from being actualised. Like the drunkard who is intoxicated by the high consumption of alcohol, the *akratēs* is entranced by *epithumia*. It is due to these ardent feelings of appetite and

³⁰¹ Destrée, “Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*,” 147.

³⁰² Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, 735a9-11.

³⁰³ Aristotle, *EN* 11467a17-8.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1146b33-5.

passion from which the *akratēs* could not extricate herself that she is thought to possess a potential knowledge which cannot be actualised. Considering *akrasia* as a state or condition (ἔστις) can help us to understand this phenomenon. By being a state, the *akratēs* cannot easily awaken herself from her situation and pull herself together.

This reading regarding the knowledge of the *akratēs* bears marked similarities to the second sense of knowledge (the knowledge of the drunk, the mad, and the asleep) stated above. That is to say, the condition of the drunk, the mad, or the asleep (likewise the condition of the *akratēs*) can be explained by means of both potential and actual knowledge and by *epithumia*, which causes and worsens this condition. For instance, the drunkard,³⁰⁵ who, say, has some specific knowledge about her own profession, may be unable to exercise her knowledge in an inebriated condition (e.g. a drunk mathematician). Here, her *epithumia* prevents her from putting her knowledge in practice. Likewise, the asleep, who is given as an example of the bearer of the second sense of knowledge also in the *Magna Moralia*³⁰⁶ together with the *akratēs*, appears as an example of having (ἔχειν) knowledge and not actualising (ἐνεργεῖν) it.

He then who possesses the knowledge of right, but does not operate with it, is incontinent. When, then, he does not operate with this knowledge, it is nothing surprising that he should do what is bad, though he possesses the knowledge. For the case is the same as that of sleepers. For they, though they possess the knowledge, nevertheless in their sleep both do and suffer many disgusting things. For the knowledge is not operative in them. So it is in the case of the incontinent. For he seems like one asleep and does not operate with his knowledge.³⁰⁷

As can be seen from this passage, in the *Magna Moralia*, the case of the drunk, asleep, mad, and *akratēs* is discussed through potential and actual knowledge; while in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, their case is explained by means of their *epithumia*. To my mind, these two ways of discussing and clarifying their states should be combined, since the latter (*epithumia*) serves as the cause of the former's (i.e. potential knowledge) inactivity. Hence, the first and the second sense of having and not having knowledge

³⁰⁵ The condition of the *akratēs* is likened to the drunkard also in the *Magna Moralia* (2.6. 1201a2-1202a7).

³⁰⁶ The authenticity of the *Magna Moralia* is under dispute. But, in the following I will assume its authenticity.

³⁰⁷ Aristotle, *MM* 2.6. 1201b13-9.

at the same time, articulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, can be brought together and be regarded as merely one sense of knowledge.

3.9.2 The Third Sense of Knowledge and Practical Syllogism

The third distinction made around the universal and particular knowledge brings us to the heart of our investigation: the practical syllogism. Up to now, we have hinted that the knowledge the *akratēs* is said to have needs refining. To this end, we have followed Aristotle, and tried to ascertain what this knowledge is. We can now inquire into whether the knowledge the *akratēs* lacks (or has) is a particular or a universal knowledge. A quick answer to this point (as discussed in the first half of this chapter above) can be given by paying attention to the difference between the vicious person and the *akratēs*. As we saw before, the vicious person either does not know the universal or makes profound mistakes in her judgment as to what is good or best; while the *akratēs* is the one who ‘knows,’ or, at least, recognizes what the best action is even though she fails to practice it.³⁰⁸ Due to this difference, the lack of knowledge on the part of the *akratēs* is thought to be that of the particular knowledge, not of the general or universal knowledge. Claiming that one does not recognise the particular or is ignorant about it, however, leaves much more problems to be solved. For instance, in such a situation, questions such as how one cannot link the particular to the general or the universal, and how it is possible to act contrary to one’s general or universal idea should be answered. There is also another possibility which will be addressed below. This is about ‘not having’ the knowledge articulated in the conclusion of the practical syllogism, which will become clearer in the following pages.

Aristotle furthers his investigation in this context, and, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII. 3, gives an example of the practical syllogism³⁰⁹ the *akratēs* makes.³¹⁰ This discussion of the practical syllogism will enable us to get to know the cognitive mechanism that is running in the *akratēs*. Syllogisms consist of two or more

³⁰⁸ Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 271.

³⁰⁹ Aristotle discusses practical syllogism vaguely in VI.11.1143a35-b5, VI.9.1142b22-4, and distinctively in VII.3 of the *EN*. Also, the *DA* III.11.434a16-20 and the *MA* 7.701a6ff address to it.

³¹⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a29-b3.

premises (universal and particular premises) and a conclusion.³¹¹ In a theoretical syllogism, which the scientific or deductive reasoning makes use of, nothing other than the affirmation or denial of the reached conclusion (the proposition) is asked. In a practical syllogism, on the other hand, action is the focal point. In other words, practical syllogism provides us with the means to determine what course of action one is to take. Rather than affirmation or denial, in the practical syllogism, then, the reached conclusion necessitates action,³¹² or the conclusion will ensue in the form of an action. A straightforward example of practical syllogism takes such a form:

Sweet foods are bad for me to consume. (Universal/major premise)
 This food is a sweet food. (Particular/minor premise)
 This food is bad for me to consume. (Hence, I am not to eat this food.
 (Conclusion/action)³¹³

As is obvious here, in practical syllogisms such as this, the conclusion requires one to take an action. In this sense, the mere statement of “this food is bad for me to consume,” is not enough for a practical syllogism to be complete. This kind of syllogism, as said above, provides a means to act and is not a mere articulation of a statement; and the conclusion of the practical syllogism is an implicit imperative. If action is fundamental for a practical syllogism to work properly, we need to answer what happens to the *akratēs* who is implementing the practical syllogism.

The apparent rift between the *akratēs*’ conclusion and its action should be briefly discussed. How is it possible that one accepts the premises, works them together, reaches a conclusion, but acts contrary to one’s own deliberation? In the case of practical syllogism, this seems incomprehensible, since in this kind of syllogism, if one knows both the universal and the particular premises, this person reaches the conclusion, and acts accordingly; because the conclusion of the practical syllogism is

³¹¹ Marco Zingano claims that when Aristotle speaks of two sorts of ‘premises’ (*δύο τρόποι τῶν προτάσεων*) in 1147a1, he must be taking it as two pieces of a syllogism: the universal comprising the major and minor premises on the one hand, and the conclusion on the other. This reading enables him to regard *akrasia* as a state in which the conclusion of the syllogism is not recognized, rather than a state in which the major or minor premises are overlooked. He substantiates his claim by taking into consideration what Aristotle says in 1147a33, namely that “now this is active” (*αὐτὴ δὲ ἐνεργεῖ*), reading *αὐτὴ* as the major and minor premises together. Marco Zingano, “*Akrasia and the Method of Ethics*,” 187, note 25.

³¹² Aristotle, *EN* 1147a26-9.

³¹³ What is taken for granted in this example is that one does not follow what is bad for them, or one pursues what is good for them.

action, it is identical to action. This point is actually supported by Aristotle himself in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In 1147a28-9, Aristotle asserts that in the practical sphere conclusion must be immediately converted to action.³¹⁴ In Aristotle's words, "when a single opinion results from the two" premises, the one "who can act and is not restrained must at the same time actually act accordingly" (*ἀνάγκη τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ μὴ κωλύμενον ἅμα τοῦτο καὶ πράττειν*).³¹⁵

If the conclusion of the practical syllogism is action,³¹⁶ and in *akrasia* the conclusion is not followed by (the right) action even though one is not prevented from acting,³¹⁷ then we might assert that the problem lying in the practical syllogism of the *akratēs* might be because the *akratēs* has not in effect reached the (right) conclusion in her practical syllogism.³¹⁸ Even though the *akratēs* commits a wrongful act, she is not a vicious person, as we have discussed above. This means that unlike the vicious

³¹⁴ Cooper explicates this point with the help of *De Motu Animalium* 701a25-701b1 as follows: If the minor premise indicates a perceptual thing, then there is no need for the mind to linger over this premise, since being a perception it is obvious. In other words, if the minor premise is obvious, no one takes one's time on investigating whether what she perceives matches the major premise. Instead what happens is this: One has a desire (*orexis*) to have a drink [a major premise- "a particular decision made under given circumstances", it can articulate a desire/appetite, etc.]. One perceives a drink, or one's imagination or thought says that this is a drink [a minor premise – based on perception]. As a result, one immediately drinks [Conclusion as action]. This action is produced if the desire coincides with the perception. In such an example, no inquiry or thinking is required. The person acts immediately without any calculation taking place. (John M. Cooper, *Reason, and Human Good in Aristotle*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986, 53-4)

³¹⁵ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a30-1. Prevention in question could be legal or external restrictions (*Met.* 1048a16, *DA* 417a28), as well as internal restrictions, such as passions.

³¹⁶ For whether the conclusion of the practical syllogism is action see Alfred R. Mele, *Irrationality: An Essay on 'Akrasia', Self-Deception, and Self-Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 9; Anthony Kenny, "The Practical Syllogism and Incontinence," *Phronesis*, 11 (1966), 182; David Wiggins, "Weakness of Will, Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 251; Gerasimos Santas, "Aristotle on Practical Inference, the Explanation of Action, and 'Akrasia'," *Phronesis* 14 (1969), 177; Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, "Thought and Action in Aristotle," 154. Ronald Dmitri Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weakness of Will* (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1966), 47; Norman O. Dahl, "Aristotle on Action, Practical Reason, and Weakness of the Will, in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Georgios Anagnosopoulos (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 506, 508.

³¹⁷ At this point, I treat the prevention in question as the external prevention only rather than internal. The latter type of prevention will be dealt with later in this chapter.

³¹⁸ An alternative to this reading would maintain the view that a person does not turn her conclusion into action because she is prevented by, say, *epithumia*. A support for this reading is present in the *EN* 1147a34. But for the sake of approaching this phenomenon in a different angle, I will leave this reading aside for now, and proceed to explore other options.

person who has completely wrong opinion/knowledge about what one should and should not do, and hence does not have the universal knowledge or has the wrong universal premise, the *akratēs* has the (right) universal knowledge. She grasps the universal premise, recognises what one should do; but she either does not have or cannot make use of the particular premise effectively. To say that the *akratēs* does not have the particular premise should not be understood as not having this proposition at all. Rather this means that she has not yet seen the particular in its connection to the universal premise.³¹⁹

This not linking it to the universal should not hinder the *akratēs* from uttering the conclusion. Actually, as Aristotle makes clear, the drunk and the mad can utter the verses/arguments of Empedocles, speak of the scientific proofs, yet, like the beginners of science or like the actors, they can utter these without making them part of themselves.³²⁰ The *akratēs*, in this sense, is thought to be in a similar condition to these people.³²¹ A mere verbalisation of the conclusion by the *akratēs* does not guarantee its full grasp, nor is it indicative of the full apprehension of the minor and major premises.

The failure of the *akratēs*, then, can be approached in two ways. Her failure is either “a failure in [her] knowledge of the minor premise” or a failure in drawing a connection between major and minor premise which is necessary to achieve the proper conclusion.³²² As we have pointed out above, here the first suggestion (i.e., a failure in her knowledge of the minor premise) should not be understood as a total ignorance of the particular knowledge articulated in the minor premise. What we have not sufficiently discussed thus far is the second suggestion. Apart from being an indicator of a failure of character, this failure in linking together the particular and the universal also points to dismissiveness in regard to future, as well as inattentiveness in recognising the end/*telos* and one’s *eudaimonia*.

³¹⁹ More on this point will be said below.

³²⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a17-23.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 1147a17-18.

³²² Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 273.

3.9.2.1 Particular and Universal Knowledge, or the Minor and the Major Premises of the Practical Syllogism: A problem of Linkage and Disregard for the Future and *Eudaimonia*

If we remind ourselves of various intellectual virtues Aristotle unfolds in the Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, such as *sophia*, *nous*, *phronēsis*, *epistēmē*, and *tekhnē*, we can realize that on a scale they constitute varying degrees of competency in terms of attaining knowledge proper. Some of them grasp the general/first principles better than the others; likewise, some are better than the others at comprehending the particular. Hence it can be thought that it is possible for one to “be ignorant of the general principles while being knowledgeable about particulars, and vice versa.”³²³ This being possible, the case of akratic action can be interpreted as the outcome of not fully grasping (the practical import of) the particular. Alternatively, having both the universal/general principle or premise and the particular premise at hand, but failing to draw the relevant conclusion can also be seen as an example of not thinking them together.³²⁴ Coalescing them into producing a conclusion which is to be transferred into action, or knitting them together, so to speak, is what seems to be lacking in the *akratēs*.³²⁵ In order to fully apprehend the particular or minor premise, it is first of all required to connect it to major/universal principles. One should like to see how this particular is related to the universal so as to make sense of the whole picture. However, even this connection may not always be sufficient to prevent one from acting akratically. In order to “appreciate its practical import,”³²⁶ it is also required to link the particular to higher ends (‘higher’ in the sense of being something which even the major/universal premise complies). This higher end can be articulated as one’s overall moral character or, in brief, one’s *eudaimonia*.³²⁷ A similar point is made in *De Anima* 433b8-10, in which a lack of regard for the future is asserted as the cause of diverting

³²³ Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7,” 271.

³²⁴ David Charles, “Aristotle’s Weak *Akratēs*: What Does her Ignorance Consist in?” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, ed. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 195.

³²⁵ Whether or not the *akratēs* reaches the conclusion will be addressed below.

³²⁶ Alfred R. Mele, “Aristotle on Akrasia, Eudaimonia, and the Psychology of Action,” in *Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Nancy Sherman (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 193.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

one from her right decision to act as one should. Even though this passage is about the appetitive pleasures providing momentary satisfaction rather than long-term satisfaction which serves one's overall *eudaimonia*, this disregard for the future, in the sense of not taking into account one's ultimate *telos*, namely happiness, is common to both texts. Practical thought which connects the particular to one's higher ends is lacking, or blocked, in the *akratēs*.

Previously in the chapter we have compared the *phronimos* (the one who has practical wisdom – *phronēsis*) with the *enkratēs* and the *akratēs*. As we discussed above, being *phronimos* means having the right desires as well as the knowledge of general principles alongside that of particulars. Moreover, the *phronimos* knows what to do as well as how to do it. The *phronimos* apprehends “what is good for themselves,”³²⁸ and what leads one to one's *eudaimonia*. The *akratēs* as it is conspicuous now lacks this insight. The one who has practical reason, but not practical wisdom, also shares a common ground with the *phronimos* in this description to a certain extent. But while the one who has practical reason has the ability to reason in order to move from means to ends, this person can also use it to reach corrupt ends. In the *phronimos*, on the other hand, this option is not present. A sole regard for the future is not the only criterion for distinguishing the akratic action from other types of actions. This regard for the future which the *akratēs* ignores should be for one's higher ends, for one's overall moral goodness, or *eudaimonia*, in short. After this discussion of disregard for one's future, *telos* and *eudaimonia*, we should proceed in our discussion of practical syllogism a little more, and turn our eyes to the mechanism of the *akratēs*' awry practical syllogism.

3.9.2.2 Two Syllogisms

Up until now, we have discussed that the *akratēs* has not carried out what is articulated in the conclusion of the right practical syllogism, and thus does not act accordingly. But she acts in another way, namely akratically. If the *akratēs* acts, then some sort of practical syllogism must be in place. Acknowledging that the *akratēs* acts according

³²⁸ Aristotle, *EN* 1140b9-10.

to a syllogism, some commentators investigate what kind of a syllogism this is and what its mechanism is.³²⁹

One reading of this practical syllogism argues that in an akratic action there are two major premises (the universal) and one minor premise (the particular). One of the major premises instructs one to avoid doing some sort of action. Following Aristotle's own example, this premise, say, prevents one from tasting sweet things (due to its detrimental effects upon one's health, for instance), while the other major premise voices another general opinion, like "everything sweet is pleasant" and hence to be tasted.³³⁰ In such a situation, there would patently be a conflict, and in the presence of a sweet thing (the particular), it is not certain under which major premise the particular is subsumed and what conclusion is to be drawn. In the case of the *akratēs*, the second major premise is used or happens to be used, and this person eats the sweet thing. The first major premise or the general knowledge it advises is thus bypassed. If the first major premise is defined as the ethically good practical knowledge, and the second major premise only as the general knowledge, the problem we are facing becomes more intricate;³³¹ since in this case an account of the agent's reason for subsuming the particular under the second (the general knowledge) rather than the first major premise (the ethically good practical knowledge) should be given; however the text does not provide us a clear answer at this point.

According to the traditional intellectualist interpretation, the akratic has committed a fault of subsumption (as Aquinas said): rather than subsuming the minor under the major premise which was the prescription of practical reason, he subsumes it under another major premise, 'everything sweet is pleasant', and then draws the conclusion, which is to eat the cake. The akratic doesn't arrive at the right conclusion, which is the action of refraining from eating the cake; because of his *epithumia*, he doesn't use his first major premise. [...] the main formula in this description lies in the three little words, 'this is active', taking the referent of 'this' as the second major premise, which is thus in act, while the first major premise is *in potentia*.³³²

³²⁹ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 42.

³³⁰ Aristotle, *EN* 1147a32-3.

³³¹ Destrée, "Aristotle on the Causes of *Akrasia*," 143.

³³² *Ibid.*, 143-4.

A minor alteration in words in this reading of the akratic action could help us hit the mark more conspicuously. This two-major-and-one-minor-premise-syllogism can make us confused about the mechanism in operation in the *akratēs*. But if we realise that, instead of a single syllogism, two syllogisms are at work here, we can understand the issue more easily. The first syllogism (the “correct syllogism”) gives voice to *boulēsis*, namely the reason-led pleasure or motivation. The major premise of this syllogism articulates a universal knowledge which is in line with reason’s command forbidding one to act akratically. The reason why this “correct syllogism” is not put into practice can be explained through the intervention of *epithumia*.³³³ Because of *epithumia*, the universal knowledge articulated in the major premise cannot put into use the particular knowledge expressed in the minor premise, and this first, “correct” syllogism becomes inconclusive. In the second syllogism, which the *akratēs* makes use of, on the other hand, the interaction between the major and the minor premises is accomplished, and hence this syllogism reaches its conclusion, and the appropriate action ensues.

In such a reading, we can notice that in both of these syllogisms the minor premise’s interaction with the major premise is the determining factor. If it is affected and blocked by *epithumia*, then the major/universal premise of the first syllogism involving the universal, genuine knowledge is rendered ineffective, and the right conclusion is not reached. If the mechanism of the syllogism of the akratic action is this, then in this interpretation the Socratic thesis is preserved. The Socratic thesis, as we have discussed in detail above, advocates the view that “genuine” knowledge (*epistēmē*) – neither belief nor doxa – is not (and cannot be) dragged about by *epithumia*. Hence, if *epithumia* negatively affects the process in which the particular is subsumed under the universal knowledge, with the result that the latter is not activated and actualised, then *epistēmē* (articulated in the universal/major premise) remains powerful enough not to be overcome by pleasures or passions.³³⁴ With this conclusion, Aristotle both saves the Socratic claim by rendering *epistēmē* intact and opens up a possibility of akratic action. In his account of the practical syllogism, Aristotle asserts that

³³³ Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, 42.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

[w]hen, then, the universal opinion is present in us restraining us from tasting, and there is also the opinion that everything sweet is pleasant, and that this is sweet (*now this is the opinion that is active*), and when appetite happens to be present in us, the one opinion bids us avoid the object, but appetite leads us towards it (for it can move each of our body parts); so that it turns out that a man behaves incontinently under the influence (in a sense) of reason and opinion.³³⁵

In this passage, I would like now to zero in on the sentence “now this is the opinion that is active (*αὖτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ*),” or literally “this is active.”³³⁶ It is a matter of conflict what Aristotle refers to by *αὖτη*. In P. Destree’s reading, this *αὖτη* denotes the second major premise together with the minor premise.³³⁷ It points out not only the particular premise articulating the fact that that thing standing in front of me is one of those sweet things, but also its link to the universal premise denoting whatever is sweet is to be tasted. If this is borne in mind, it becomes apparent that the first major premise – the ethically good knowledge – is *in potentia*. While the second syllogism, the akratic syllogism in other words, is in actuality. In this sense, this statement of Aristotle also in line with his previous differentiation made between knowledge *in potentia* and knowledge *in actu*.³³⁸

Consequently, the same question appears again: what causes the ethically good practical knowledge to remain *in potentia*, what inhibits it from being exercised? Another question would be that if the agent acts according to this explanation, in which there are two major and one minor premises, then could we justifiably name the agent akratic? If we define the *akratēs* as the one who acts contrary to her knowledge, would it not be an oxymoron to call this agent *akratēs*, since what she does in this example is just to act according to her general ‘knowledge’ or major premise (even though it is one of the two major premises) as to what is good? That is to say, she acts in line with her (general) knowledge, not contrary to it. To these two questions, the same answer can be given. Within the context of Aristotle’s account given in 1147a24-b5, it is *epithumia* that inhibits the working of major premise and consequently breaks the

³³⁵ Aristotle, *EN* VII 1147a31-7. Italics added.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, VII 1147a33-4.

³³⁷ Destree, “Aristotle on the Cases of *Akrasia*,” 158.

³³⁸ Charles, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII. 3: Varieties of *akrasia*,” 58.

connection between the particular and universal premises with the result that universal knowledge expressed in the major premise remains *in potentia*. At the same time, it is due the workings of *epithumia* that the *akratēs* follows the (wrong) practical syllogism. The *akratēs* deserves her name, because there was in front of her another (i.e. right) syllogism and she could have acted correctly by following it. Thus, reaching the conclusion of any practical syllogism is not enough for one to be called non-akratic; rather reaching the conclusion of the right practical syllogism is also required.

At this point, what inhibits the *akratēs* from drawing the conclusion of the right syllogism and following it, and also what lies behind her acting according to the wrong practical syllogism should be provided. The answer to this question could be found in the following lines of the same passage. While investigating into what sort of knowledge the *akratēs* has, one of the thorniest problems with which many scholars of Aristotle have been confronted is about how to understand the phrase Aristotle uses when concluding his remarks on the said knowledge of the *akratēs* in 1147b9, namely “*ἡ τελευταία πρότασις*.” This phrase is variously translated as ‘the last premise’ or ‘the last proposition.’ In the following, we will lay out where each translation of the phrase “*ἡ τελευταία πρότασις*” leads us to and try to determine whether these different translations make any substantial difference in our understanding of the concept of *akrasia*. On this line, our focus will be on ascertaining whether the *akratēs* does not have “*ἡ τελευταία πρότασις*” or has it as the drunkard has it. In Aristotle’s words the passage reads as follows:

Now, *the last proposition* [*ἡ τελευταία πρότασις*] both being an opinion about a perceptible object, and being what determines our actions, this a man either has not when he is in the state of passion, or has it in the sense in which having knowledge did not mean knowing but only talking, as a drunken man may utter the verses of Empedocles.³³⁹

If we take Aristotle’s description of *ἡ τελευταία πρότασις* as our support – that it is about something perceptible and it shapes our actions – and translate this phrase as “the last premise,” then it turns out to be the minor premise of the practical syllogism.³⁴⁰ This minor premise may express, for instance, “this is sweet.” With this

³³⁹ Aristotle, *EN* 1147b9-12. Italics added.

³⁴⁰ Norman O. Dahl, for instance, reads *ἡ τελευταία πρότασις* as the minor premise, see Dahl, “Action, Reason, and Weakness of the Will”, 507.

rendering, according to this passage, the *akratēs* acts akratically because she either does not have (recognise) the minor premise in the state of passion, or has this knowledge articulated in the minor premise in the manner of a drunkard “utter[ing] the verses of Empedocles.”³⁴¹ The case in which the *akratēs* does not have the minor premise should not be understood as the total absence of the minor premise. That is to say, the *akratēs* perceives the particular articulated in the minor premise, yet is unable to link it in its connection to the major premise. Classifying the minor premise as an example of the present major premise is thus interrupted in this case. Hence, the subsumption of the minor under the major premise, or the link between the two premises, which will eventually produce the conclusion of the syllogism, is missed out in the *akratēs*. This results in the fact that the first, ethically good practical syllogism discussed above is bypassed.

The possible reasons of the *akratēs*’ not drawing the conclusion of the right syllogism can be found in her use of *phantasia aisthētikē* instead of *phantasia logistikē* at the moment of action.³⁴² These types of *phantasiai*, as discussed above, are responsible for what the agent sees as pleasurable and consequently good. Since in the *akratēs* the *phantasia logistikē* is not working (properly), the link between the minor premise and the correct major premise is not built and developed. This brings about the outcome that the conclusion of the right/first syllogism is not reached.

In such a situation, there is nothing to prevent one from eventually giving way to the second syllogism, which either draws further strength from the inconclusiveness of the first syllogism, or is already powerful due to the cooperation of *epithumia* and *phantasia aisthētikē*. Yet, if we interpret the case of *akrasia* in this way, we might end in deadlock. If a person does not reach the conclusion of the first (right) syllogism, but that of the second, and if, consequently, there are no simultaneous, conflicting conclusions at the time of the action, then there cannot be any *akrasia*.³⁴³ Since the conclusion of the right practical syllogism requires one to subsume the minor under

³⁴¹ Aristotle, *EN* 1147b12.

³⁴² Destrée, “Aristotle on the Causes of Akrasia”, 156.

³⁴³ David Wiggins, “Weakness of Will, Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 249.

the major premise ('I should not eat this cake, because it is a kind of cake that is unhealthy for me'), and since it includes the right practical knowledge as a result of this subsumption ('Doing such an action is detrimental for me, so I should not do it'), acting akratically could only be possible if this subsumption is completed and this knowledge is drawn from the syllogism successfully.

Above we have stated the exercise of *epithumia*, which blocks the interaction of the major premise with the minor premise, as the cause of not reaching the conclusion of the right syllogism. Furthermore, we have examined this description of the issue as what enables us to maintain the Socratic claim regarding *akrasia* by rendering the *epistēmē* (articulated in the major premise) intact despite its being in potentiality. As can be noticed, here the discussion revolves around drawing a distinction between different senses of knowledge: the knowledge expressed in the major premise, which is universal knowledge, and that of articulated in the minor premise, which is particular knowledge. This distinction enables us to speak about having and not having knowledge at the same time in the *akratēs*. However, here in the previous paragraph, we have discussed the case of *akrasia* in terms of conclusions and what is articulated in them. In this context, reaching the conclusion on the one hand (in the second syllogism) and not reaching it on the other hand (in the first syllogism) threaten the existence of *akrasia*. The reason for this is that this time it is defined not in terms of knowledge of the universal and the particular articulated in the major and minor premises respectively, but in terms of knowledge expressed in the conclusions of the first and the second syllogisms.

As a result, we can conclude that if translating *ἡ τελευταία πρότασις* as the minor premise, and stating that the *akratēs* does not have it (interpreted as the way explained above) lead us into claiming that the conclusion of the right practical syllogism is not reached at all, then we cannot claim there is such a case as *akrasia* in the first place. The reason for this is that the conclusion of the second syllogism finds no other conclusion which is incompatible with it. However, if *akrasia* is defined not by means of the conflicting conclusions but by conflicting major premises or incompatible universal and general knowledge, then we can save *akrasia*.

Stating that the *akratēs* does not reach the conclusion of the first syllogism, however, does not agree with what is expressed in 1147a35, "*ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο*" (the one opinion bids us avoid the object). In this sentence, Aristotle makes it

clear that the *akratēs* reaches the first syllogism. The “τοῦτο” (literally ‘this’) in this sentence points out the particular expressed in the minor premise. This indicated that the major premise of the *akratēs* is applied to the minor premise, or the minor premise is subsumed under the major premise, and the conclusion commanded not to eat the cake is reached. For this reason, in the rendering of “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις” as minor premise, the option of ‘not having the minor premise’ which results in not reaching the right conclusion should be dismissed at least so as to save the consistency in the text, and to be able to conceive what *akrasia* really is.

If we acknowledge that the *akratēs* in fact reaches the conclusion of the first syllogism, then our first interpretation of “αὕτη” in the sentence “αὕτη δὲ ἐνεργεῖ” in 1147a33 as denoting the second major and minor premises together, which results in reaching the conclusion of the second practical syllogism rather than the first should be dismissed as well. The reason for this is that rendering αὕτη as the second major and minor premises together instead of minor premise only runs counter to what Aristotle states in 1147a35, namely “ἡ μὲν οὖν λέγει φεύγειν τοῦτο” (the one opinion bids us avoid the object). Here, as we have indicated just above, Aristotle expresses that the *akratēs* in fact reaches the conclusion of the first syllogism.³⁴⁴

The other option articulated in above quoted passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is having “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις” like a drunkard. In this case, the *akratēs* vaguely possesses the minor premise, but this possession suffices to reach the conclusion of the right syllogism even though this does not necessitate acting according to this conclusion. As we have discussed before, even though the conclusion of a practical syllogism is an implicit imperative, the absence of the relevant desire may prevent one from turning what is articulated in the conclusion into action. In the case of the *akratēs*, not her rational desire, namely *boulēsis*, but her non-rational desire, i.e. *epithumia*, is active. This results in pursuing the second syllogism (eating the cake), rather than the first (avoiding eating the cake). Like a drunkard who says that she should not drink this glass of wine while taking a sip of her wine, the *akratēs* utters the conclusion of her first syllogism, however, this utterance does not have any effect on her. This reading of the phrase “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις” agrees with what is expressed

³⁴⁴ The same point will be again made use of below while discussing “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις.”

in 1147a35 and acknowledges the existence of *akrasia* when it is defined in terms of conflicting conclusions.

The second rendering of the phrase “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις” as ‘conclusion’ in fact leads us to a similar point. As the passage reads, the *akratēs* either does not have it, or has it in the manner of a drunkard. We have already discussed the case in which the *akratēs* does not reach the conclusion of the right practical syllogism, and concluded that this disconfirms the existence of *akrasia*. However, if we follow the view that the *akratēs* has it like a drunkard, then we can notice that this does not violate the existence of *akrasia*. Here the *akratēs* draws the conclusion of the right practical syllogism, but she does it vaguely. Her *epithumia*, together with her *phantasia aisthētikē*, prevents her from following the right practical syllogism and actualising its right conclusion. The cooperation of *epithumia* and *phantasia aisthētikē* both inhibits the conclusion of the right practical syllogism to be transformed into action, and prompts one to comply with the dictates of the second practical syllogism and actualise its conclusion. What happens in the case of *akrasia* is, then, the overcoming of the conclusion of the second syllogism the vaguely drawn, indistinct conclusion of the first syllogism. This can lead us into claiming that the conclusion of the latter is only grasped in an indefinite or unclear manner by the *akratēs*. Thus, irrespective of how “ἡ τελευταία πρότασις” is translated, we can conclude that the akratic action can be warranted and the text in Book VII.3 becomes consistent if the *akratēs* reaches the conclusion of the first (i.e. right) syllogism even though she has it in the way a drunkard has it.

To recap, up until now the type of knowledge the *akratēs* has is tried to be elucidated firstly with the help of potential, not exercised knowledge, or the lack of sufficient interaction between particular knowledge/minor premise and universal knowledge/major premise. The *akratēs* understood in one of these senses does not reach the conclusion of the “correct syllogism” even though they utilise some knowledge about the universal knowledge or premise. The knowledge possessed by the drunkards, mad persons, beginners of science, or, as David Charles puts it, children, on the other hand, arrive at the conclusion, however they do not succeed acting on it. They merely grasp (*eidenai*) some specific knowledge without thinking it part of a relevant body of knowledge.

Merely grasping some specific truth (*eidenai*) is not sufficient for having knowledge (*epistēmē*) of it. One will not be aware of it in the right way for

knowledge if one does not contemplate it as part of a relevant body of knowledge [...] Thus, for example, a child may grasp (*eidenai*) some specific truth (e.g. this is a cake) and act voluntarily on it without having any knowledge at all (*epistēmē*) of the relevant area. More specifically, he or she may lack knowledge of the medical or dietary pros and cons of eating a cake. This point is crucial in what follows: it allows for the possibility that an *akratēs* who, like a child, lacks dietary knowledge (*epistēmē*) may still grasp (*eidenai*) that this is a sweet while voluntarily eating it.³⁴⁵

The difference between *eidenai* and *epistēmē* can be elucidated better if we approach it from the aspect which we have earlier discussed.³⁴⁶ This is (dis)regard for the higher ends, future, *eudaimonia*, or one's overall moral character. Actually, this is about considering what is (fully or defectively) recognised in the syllogism as part of one's character. In all the possible candidates for the reasons of the akratic action (not reaching the conclusion, not recognising the minor/particular premise, not linking it to the major premise or higher ends, being diverted because of *epithumia*, etc.), what we notice is, in fact, a failure of character, failing to realize and acknowledge what sort of human being one is. This non-recognition brings her to forget what is good for a person.³⁴⁷

In conclusion, what we have seen in this chapter is that there are different ways of dealing with the said knowledge of the *akratēs*. Interpreting it as the potential or actual knowledge, likening it to the knowledge possessed by the drunkards, or discussing it in terms of practical syllogism help us identify the knowledge which the *akratēs* has and does not have. Such a reading can also save the Socratic explanation of *akrasia* who states that it is caused by ignorance or misrepresentation of the real good. To my mind, if we take into account *epithumia*, *phantasia aisthētikē*, one's disregard for the future and *eudaimonia*, education, habituation, or better, repeated exercise which moulds one character, as extra accounts underlying this lack of knowledge of the *akratēs*, we could both save the Socratic interpretation of *akrasia* and strengthen it. These can help us to get to the bottom of the practical syllogism of the *akratēs* articulated by Aristotle, and aid us to reconcile the intellectual and non-intellectual readings of *akrasia* by pointing out what they share in common. Through

³⁴⁵ Charles, "Nicomachean Ethics VII. 3: Varieties of *akrasia*," 46

³⁴⁶ See, p. 94.

³⁴⁷ Oksenberg Rorty, "Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7," 273.

incorporating all these factors into our understanding of the akratic action, we can realize that these two readings are complementary to each other.

Despite this reconciliation between Socrates and Aristotle, a difference still stands out. While both recognize the role of education and habituation in shaping one's character, Aristotle recognizes that the *akratēs*' wrongdoing is voluntary, since one can be held responsible for her habituation or continuous exercise of one's uncontrolled pleasures. On the other hand, Socrates considers wrongdoing as involuntary and explains it as the outcome of one's ignorance. But what lie behind this said ignorance are these listed factors which shapes one's character and makes her wrongdoings voluntary instead of involuntary. Hence, a complete account of *akrasia* should include both the intellectual explanations (i.e. ignorance, a problem of linkage between the universal and particular knowledge) as well as what lie behind this explanation, namely the exercise of *epithumia* and *phantasia aisthētikē*, one's disregard for the future and *eudaimonia*, as well as education, and habituation.

CHAPTER 4

THE STOICS: A RETURN TO SOCRATIC CONCEPTION OF AKRASIA?

4.1 Introduction

In the investigation of the concept of *akrasia*, Stoics' explanation of akratic action establishes the missing link between Plato and Aristotle. With the help of their theory of action and their conception of the soul, we will discern how they reconcile the early Platonic conception of the soul with a reasonable explanation of akratic action. But before delving into the details of these discussions, a brief introduction to the Stoics could prove useful.

Stoicism is generally divided into three periods: early, middle, and late or Roman Stoicism. The early Stoicism ranges from the foundation of the school by Zeno of Citium around 300 BCE to the late second century BCE, which includes Cleanthes of Assos and Chrysippus of Soli as the pre-eminent figures. The middle Stoicism is the period of Panaetius (c. 185 – c. 110/109 BCE) and Posidonius (c. 135 BCE – c. 51 BCE). Lastly, the Roman Stoicism corresponds to the Roman Imperial times, in which Seneca (c. 4 BCE – 65 BC), Epictetus (c. 55 – 135), and Marcus Aurelius (121 – 180) live.³⁴⁸ Despite the continuity of the Stoic thought throughout these periods in general, this division helps us to mark the various changes the Stoic thought undergoes throughout these periods. Zeno's disciples and successors throughout the following almost 500 years were called Stoics. This word comes from the ancient Greek word

³⁴⁸ David Sedley, "The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 7.

‘στοά’ meaning portico, and marks the place where Zeno has taught his disciples. But before this designation, his followers were simply called Zenonians.³⁴⁹

Concerning the original texts of the Stoic School, from the first three centuries of the school, only fragments survive.³⁵⁰ These fragments are either direct quotations or interpretations found in the works of later doxographers or authors such as Cicero, Plutarch, Galen, Diogenes Laërtius, and Stobaeus. Among these authors, Plutarch and Galen, who provide direct quotations from Chrysippus and Cleanthes, as we will see below, especially stand out as the eminent critics of the Stoic thought. However, from the texts of Stobaeus and Diogenes Laërtius, we learn the standard Stoic doctrine in general. Hence, regarding the early Stoic phase, we should hold in mind that what we have today are in fact the texts filtered through the minds of these authors. Furthermore, it is the general tendency of the later accounts to disregard the differences between Zeno and his successors, which in turn results in overlooking what each figure brings forward individually. On the other hand, concerning the middle and the Roman period, the works of the thinkers themselves survive to this day, and this enables us to evaluate their views more unambivalently.

As we learn from these sources, Stoicism is mostly influenced by Cynics, Socrates and Socratic doctrines, and, in the middle Stoicism especially, Aristotle. By taking into account the last two influences, in this chapter I will be investigating the Stoic treatment of psychology and ethics with special attention to the concept of *akrasia*. This investigation will comprise the discussions of the Stoic conception of the soul and the Stoic theory of action, which includes the discussions of representation (*φαντασία*), assent (*συγκατάθεσις*), impulse (*ὁρμή*), and passion (*πάθος*).

4.2 The Stoic Conception of the Human Soul

As we have seen in the previous chapters, action in general and *akrasia* in particular have close links with Plato’s and Aristotle’s conception of the soul. This pattern continues to be in force also in the Stoics. Due to this close link, any accurate

³⁴⁹ Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 209.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

understanding of action requires an analysis of the structure of the soul which is the cause of action. What the soul consists of, what its structure is, and especially what it is not will constitute the first discussion of this chapter.

The early Stoics in general and Chrysippus in particular borrow their understanding of the soul and the interpretation of *akrasia* from the early Plato. The Stoics, in a sense, continue the Socratic/early Platonic tradition. In their conception of the soul, the soul is unified and partless. Unlike the model of the soul we have seen in Aristotle or in the later Plato, this unified soul of the Stoic doctrine is not divided into ‘parts’. It is a partless soul which is composed wholly of the rational element.³⁵¹ The idea that there is a part in the soul which can assert itself against reason and is able to act independently from the rational element is entirely erroneous according to the Stoic understanding of the soul.³⁵² By making the rational element the commanding faculty of the soul, the Stoics leave no room for irrationality in the soul. According to the Stoics, the soul can only be said to be irrational if by this phrase an aberrant or abnormal state of the unitary reason is alluded to.³⁵³ But if by irrationality a state which is the consequence of an activity of the (irrational) ‘part’ of the soul in the Platonic or Aristotelian sense is understood, the Stoics would definitely not hold this designation for the soul. The Stoic understanding of the soul, in this sense, is a monistic soul which has no additional power apart from the rational element. In this conception of the soul, there is nothing to oppose the commands or decisions of the reason, and nothing to prevent it from actualising its demands into action. Feeling as if one is “torn in two”³⁵⁴ does not immediately follow that the soul is in fact divided. The solution the Stoics put forward, as Plutarch conveys, will be *the* Stoic answer to the question of *akrasia*, as we will see below.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Richard Joyce, “Early Stoicism and Akrasia,” *Phronesis*, 40, no. 3 (1995): 317.

³⁵² Robin Weiss, *The Stoics and the Practical: A Roman Reply to Aristotle*, PhD diss., (DePaul University, 2013), 40.

³⁵³ A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 383.

³⁵⁴ Weiss, *The Stoics and the Practical*, 41.

³⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.* 446F-447A (*SVF* 3.459, part) (65G); parenthetical citations like 65G refer to A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), where (65) indicates chapter and (G) the order in it.

So as to better comprehend what the said rationality of the soul is, we need to investigate its structure. Going back to Zeno, the soul is considered to be consisting of eight faculties³⁵⁶: the five senses, the reproductive capacity, utterance, and the ruling element/the mind (*hegemonikon*).³⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, even though they are expressed separately, the first seven faculties are considered to be the functions of the *hegemonikon*,³⁵⁸ or, as Brad Inwood states, the *hegemonikon* controls and regulates them.³⁵⁹ It is due to this function of the *hegemonikon* that we are not speaking of the ‘parts’ of the soul, but faculties or functions of it. Apart from these eight faculties, the soul also has several powers. The mind or the *hegemonikon*, for instance, has four powers: representation, assent, impulse, and reason.³⁶⁰ Each sense organ, by contrast, only has one power.³⁶¹ Eyes can only see, nose can only smell, etc. These powers can be understood as that which each faculty can accomplish within their range of expertise.

What is unique to the Stoic understanding of the soul is that the soul is regarded as material. This materiality of the soul requires that each faculty and the power of the soul have a place in the body. By describing the faculties of the soul as the “*spatially* distinct bits of *pneuma*” and locating the *pneumata* of the *hegemonikon* of the soul and its powers around the heart,³⁶² the Stoics distinguish themselves from the tradition, and make it hard for us not to regard the faculties and the powers of the soul as distinct ‘parts’.

³⁵⁶ In his book, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, following the common translations, Brad Inwood translates *μέρη* as parts (Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999)). However, in this context, taking into account the Stoic insistence that the soul has no ‘parts’, I consider this usage as misleading. The ancient Greek word here should be understood as faculties not as parts in the Platonic or Aristotelian sense.

³⁵⁷ Joyce, “Early Stoicism and Akrasia,” 317.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 317.

³⁵⁹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 29.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 30. Justin Gosling, “The Stoics and *ἀκρασία*,” *Apeiron* 20, no. 2 (1987): 187.

³⁶¹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 30.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 30, 38. The first emphasis is added, the second is in the original.

Considering the soul as having eight ‘parts’/faculties and powers, on the one hand, and being monistic, on the other, seems to pose a problem. To say that the soul is monistic implies that the parts/faculties and the powers of the soul work harmoniously, without any internal conflict. The Stoics overcome this hardship by positing the mind or the *hegemonikon* as the sole ruler of the soul. It is considered to be in control of all the powers and faculties of the soul. There is nothing in this monistic soul to oppose reason, and to prevent it from actualising its function.³⁶³ Taken in this way, the Stoic conception of the soul bears a striking similarity to the early Platonic understanding of it. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Plato of the *Protagoras* holds that the soul is rational and partless, and these features pave the way for it to be in harmony with itself, and hence to be unified. In other words, reason’s being the sole ruling element in the soul ensures the unity of the soul.³⁶⁴ In order for the soul to have an internal conflict, it needs to have ‘parts’, capable of opposing the rational element or the *hegemonikon*. Since, for the Stoics, the soul is entirely composed of the rational element, it is impossible to oppose itself: “a rational soul qua rational cannot come into conflict with itself.”³⁶⁵

The difference between the Stoic and the Aristotelian understanding of the soul is that for the Stoics reason and desire do not constitute two different parts. They aver that the natural unity of the soul is under the control of the *hegemonikon*, namely the reason. For Aristotle, on the other hand, reason and desire, or the rational and the irrational parts of the soul are one and same only in ‘ideal’ circumstances. According to the Stoics, this is not an ideal state, rather a reality.³⁶⁶

As Galen cites, Chrysippus, an early Stoic philosopher, explicitly denies this late Platonic or Aristotelian tripartite soul. In his conception, the soul is not composed of three distinct parts: that of *logistikón*, the *thumoeides* and the *epithumetikon*. For him, propounding that human being is rational indicates that, in all one’s activities (not

³⁶³ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 33.

³⁶⁴ John F. Finamore, “The Platonic Tripartite Soul and the Platonism of Galen’s *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*,” eds. John F. Finamore, R. M. Berchman (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2007), 15.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁶⁶ Weiss, *The Stoics and the Practical*, 38.

just in those related to reason, but also in those related to the feelings of anger and desire), this person is rational.³⁶⁷

Galen, who is one of the fierce critics of the Stoic monistic soul, on the other hand, holds the tripartite model of the soul, and supports his view by taking into account the physical construction of the human being. His claim is that the governing power of the soul, which conducts motion and perception first of all, is located not in the heart but in the brain.³⁶⁸ Galen reinforces his claim through incorporating in his discussion the nerves. “Where the beginning of the nerves is, there is the governing part. The beginning of the nerves is in the brain. Therefore, the governing part is here.”³⁶⁹ His claim is contrary to what the Stoics assert, according to whom the controlling power of the soul is located in the heart.³⁷⁰ His difference from the Stoics lies not just in the location of the ruling power of the soul. He also claims that the spirited part of the soul lies in the heart, and the desiderative part is located in the liver.³⁷¹ By being the source of veins and nutritive power, liver deserves to assume this function, Galen opines.³⁷² What is evident from Galen’s understanding of the soul is that by being a physical structure, the body provides the soul the required working area. According to this conception, the nerves originating from the brain reach out every single part of the body, and “provide the corporeal conduit for the rational psychic activity, the arteries for the spirited activity, and veins for the desiderative activity (in its wide sense which includes nutrition and growth).”³⁷³ Taken in this way, Galen’s tripartite soul model is physical and it is reminiscent of what is articulated in the *Timaeus*, where Plato links each part of the soul with a part of the body. The materiality of the Stoic soul, on the other hand, is exempt from this partition.

³⁶⁷ Christopher Gill, “Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?” *Phronesis* 28, no.2 (1983): 138.

³⁶⁸ Galen *PHP*, 484-.35-486.2; Finamore, “The Platonic Tripartite Soul and the Platonism of Galen’s *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*,” 2-4.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 484-.35-486.2.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. I. 25.

³⁷¹ Finamore, “The Platonic Tripartite Soul and the Platonism of Galen’s *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*,” 4-5.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 14.

According to them, heart is the source and centre of the rational soul from which every other faculty or power branch out.

Up until now, we have examined that The Stoic conception of the soul is monistic and partless, that is to say, it does not have any irrational parts. But in order to understand the Stoic theory of action, we need to link this conception of the soul with what happens in the soul in the process of action. How the soul retains its rationality in the face of *ὁρμή*, passions, and desires, and also how the rational function of assent is given to them in the process of action are to be investigated. For this purpose, it would be useful to firstly turn to the mechanism lying behind this process or formation of action.

As Plutarch points out, for all the Stoics starting with Zeno, the process of action begins with representation (*φαντασία*). It is followed by assent (*συγκατάθεσις*) and impulse (*ὁρμή*), and lastly action ensues.³⁷⁴ That is to say, first a sense-impression is produced, which then develops into an image or a *phantasia*. To this *phantasia*, then, an assent is given, or withheld, according to the judgment of the reason. And in accordance with the result of the assent, an impulse is formed, which finally leads to an action.³⁷⁵ These steps in the formation of action are most noticeable in Chrysippus.³⁷⁶ Above, we have pointed out that *phantasia*, assent, and impulse are named as the powers of the ruling faculty of the soul. An investigation into the formation of action through these steps, therefore, will be related to our examination of how the rational soul functions.

4.3 The Stoic Theory of Action: *φαντασία*, *συγκατάθεσις*, *ὁρμή*, and *πάθος*

In the Stoic epistemology, the doctrine of *phantasia* (*φαντασία*), which can alternatively be translated as impression, perception, appearing, or representation, plays a vital role. Zeno, Cleanthes, and Diogenes Laërtius define *phantasia* as mental

³⁷⁴ Plutarch, *Adv. Col.*, 1122A-F (69A); Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 32.

³⁷⁵ Joyce, “Early Stoicism and Akrasia,” 317.

³⁷⁶ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 50.

‘imprint’ on the soul,³⁷⁷ borrowing the depiction of the mind as a wax tablet from Plato’s *Theaetetus*.³⁷⁸ It is, in general, “a conceptual construct within the mind, of a physical object external to the mind. Thus, it is like a mental image or perceived appearance.”³⁷⁹ Chrysippus, on the other hand, regards it as alteration/modification (ἐτεροίωσις) of the soul.³⁸⁰ That is to say, in the soul *phantasia* produces a change. Despite the difference in their definition of *phantasia*, the Stoics share the idea that all knowledge takes its start from *phantasia*.³⁸¹

Phantasia arises either from perception (perceptual *phantasia*) or from thought (deliberative or calculative *phantasia*).³⁸² It appears to us in four ways. Epictetus enumerates them as follows: 1. Things are and appear to be 2. Things are not and do not appear to be 3. Things are but do not appear to be 4. Things are not but appear to be.³⁸³ As he points out, the false use of impressions or *phantasia* can cause great tragedies,³⁸⁴ hence determining how something is in reality and how it appears to a person is crucial. The main reason lying behind its significance is that after the production of *phantasia*, an assent will be given to this, and an action will ensue in the end. *Phantasia* accomplishes this task by first providing images and then presenting them to the judgment of the person. In view of these four ways in which *phantasia* can appear to us, we can further group *phantasia* as follows.

³⁷⁷ D.L. 7.49-51 (SVF 2.52, 55, 61) (39A); Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1084F-1085A (SVF 2.847, part) (39F).

³⁷⁸ Sedley, “The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus,” 16; R.J. Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 62.

³⁷⁹ William O. Stephens, *Stoic Ethics: Epictetus and Happiness as Freedom* (London: Continuum, 2007), 41, note 4. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 56: *Phantasia* is “a representational image in the mind”.³⁷⁹

³⁸⁰ Sedley, “The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus,” 15.

³⁸¹ Tad Brennan, “Stoic Moral Psychology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 260, note 8.

³⁸² Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 11.

³⁸³ Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. Robert Dobbin (London: Penguin Books, 2008), I. 27.1

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I. 28.11

There are two types of *phantasia*: cognitive *phantasia* and incognitive *phantasia*, or as commonly referred to, cataleptic *phantasia* (*φαντασία καταληπτική*)³⁸⁵ and non-cataleptic *phantasia*, respectively. As Diogenes Laërtius expounds, the cognitive *phantasia* serves as the criterion of truth, it “arises from what is, and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is.”³⁸⁶ It is, in other words, the *phantasia* of an existent object, and represents this object as it is. The incognitive *phantasia*, on the other hand, differs from the cognitive *phantasia* in two different ways: the incognitive *phantasia* can be i) that which does not derive from what is (i.e. it can arise from a non-existent object), or ii) that which does “arise from that which is but not exactly in accordance with what is: one which is not clear or distinct”³⁸⁷ (i.e. it can derive from “an existent object which is not in accordance with the existent object”³⁸⁸). Cognitive *phantasiai* are deemed to be incapable of deceiving one,³⁸⁹ whereas *phantasiai* arising “from what is but not exactly in accordance with what is,”³⁹⁰ if assented, lead to an erroneous or false belief, resulting in a wrong action or wrong apprehension. Moreover, if an assent is given to the cataleptic impressions, which are thought to be giving us reality, and whose veracity cannot be doubted due to their being clear and accurate, then one can form a true belief about the reality, and act in accordance with nature. *Phantasiai* “are entertained by the mind like competent or incompetent messengers and the faculty of assent has the function of judging the value of their reports.”³⁹¹

According to the Stoic theory of action, by presenting something as appropriate, good, and relevant, *phantasia* – regardless of being cognitive or

³⁸⁵ From *καταλαμβάνω* meaning to seize with the mind, comprehend. This designates “an impression capable of grasping (its object).” A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 250.

³⁸⁶ D.L. 7. 46 (SVF 2.53) (40C).

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 7. 46 (SVF 2.53) (40C).

³⁸⁸ Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology,” 60.

³⁸⁹ D.L. 7.177 (SVF 1.625) and Athenaeus 354E (SVF 1.624, part) (40F).

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 7. 46 (SVF 2.53) (40C).

³⁹¹ A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 250. As we will examine below, giving assent to the non-cataleptic impressions, and hence following the false depiction of what is in reality, are closely linked to the akratic action.

incognitive – brings about a motivation in a person to act on this *phantasia*. This sort of *phantasia* is called hormetic *phantasia* (*phantasia hormetike*).³⁹² For an animal, rational or non-rational, in order for an action to ensue, first a desire should be activated. That is to say, something must be presented to the animal as something healthy, contributory to its well-being, pleasurable, or as suitable for realizing its nature.³⁹³ The word the Stoics use in order to describe this phenomenon is *kathekon* (the convenient). Viewed from this aspect, we can notice that the Stoics appropriate the Aristotelian or Platonic legacy: ‘all action aims at some good’. Deciding whether this good is apparent or real is not the task of *phantasia* itself, yet it helps the agent to interpret the representations, images.³⁹⁴ Hormetic *phantasia* stimulates action by activating the desiderative state. It is in this sense an initiator of action, but it is not a sufficient condition for an action to ensue. This is valid for the rational animals, yet not for the non-rational animals, for whom hormetic, representational *phantasia* and what it activates (namely desire) is sufficient for them to act. In animals and children, their *phantasiai* directly lead them to a relevant action. However, as we will see shortly, for the adult human beings, assent also plays a vital role in the process of the formation of action. It is thought that after forming the *phantasiai*, they either give their assent (*συγκατάθεσις*) and perform the action required by the content of the impression, or suspend their assent and no action is carried out.³⁹⁵ Hence, as can be seen, between *phantasia* and action, there is an intermediate phase in the adult human being: assent (or suspension), which constitutes the kernel of Stoic analysis of action by pointing out agent’s responsibility.³⁹⁶

Assent is a crucial step towards the action, but in Stoic theory of action assent is not directly given to *phantasiai*, rather to the propositions (*axiomata*).³⁹⁷ In other

³⁹² Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 56; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2. 86. 17-8 (SVF 3.169) (53Q).

³⁹³ Ibid., 56.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 12.

³⁹⁵ Brennan, “Stoic Moral Psychology,” 262.

³⁹⁶ Stephens, *Stoic Ethics: Epictetus and Happiness as Freedom*, 16-7.

³⁹⁷ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 56.

words, the adult human being gives her assent to *phantasiai* by means of forming *lekta* (propositions or sayables).

They [the Stoics] say that the “expression” [λεκτόν] is “that which subsists [to *huphistamenon*] in conformity with a rational presentation [λογικὴν φαντασίαν],” and a rational presentation is one in which it is possible to establish by reason the presented object.³⁹⁸

The formation of propositions is an explicit indication of the presence of the power of reason. This is actually thought to constitute the main difference between a non-rational animal and an adult human being, since it is thanks to the *lekta* that *phantasiai* are put into linguistic forms and are articulated clearly. *Lekta* elucidate the content of representational images (*phantasia*).³⁹⁹ On the other hand, despite being receptive to *phantasia*, children are unable to articulate them as the adults do. Yet, since they have the potential for reason, they still have a kind of assent, which can be called weak assent.⁴⁰⁰ Their *phantasiai* remain ambiguous and vague. They have non-rational *phantasiai*, but, only with the acquisition of language, these non-rational *phantasiai* turn into rational ones.⁴⁰¹ As a result, assent given to the *lekta* functions as barriers which prevent non-rational *phantasiai* from directly actualizing themselves.⁴⁰² The articulation and hence the assent help one to review one’s impulses and get rid of irrational and hormetic desires. Despite the role of *lekta* in assent, there is also a reading of assent that interprets the process of assent as not involving deliberation. Here, we can regard deliberation as the process of forming *lekta*. According to this reading, “[w]hether one will initially suspend or assent straightaway is a matter completely antecedent to and thus immune from such conscious or deliberate methods, [...] it is also a fact fully determined by the nature of the impression and the state of

³⁹⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 8.70 (33C); D.L. 7.63 (33F). An alternative translation reads as follows: “a rational impression is one in which the content of the impression (to *phantasthen*) is expressible (*esti parastēsai*) in language (*logo(i)*), see Venessa de Harven, “Rational Impressions and the Stoic Philosophy of Mind,” in *Philosophy of Mind in Antiquity*, ed. John E. Sisko (vol. 1 of *The History of the Philosophy of Mind*) (New York: Routledge, 2019), 224.

³⁹⁹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 58

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 73, 279 note 159.

⁴⁰¹ Gosling, “The Stoics and *ἀκρασία*,” 184.

⁴⁰² Stephens, *Stoic Ethics: Epictetus and Happiness as Freedom*, 17.

the agent's soul at the time of receiving it."⁴⁰³ In my opinion, this reading overemphasizes the moment's power and overlooks what is thought to be distinctive to adult human beings, that is, using their rational power in and before the action, which is foregrounded in the Stoic analysis of action.

In brief, despite having the power of *phantasia* and the power of quest for the desired thing, non-rational animals and children cannot assent.⁴⁰⁴ This is the direct result of lacking the power of reason and being incapable of forming *lekta* (in the case of non-rational animals especially). *Lekta* in this context should be considered as those which express the importance and meaning of the *phantasia* in the form of propositions, or simply in any linguistic forms.

Giving assent to a proposition means finding its content (that is, the impression it articulates) as suitable for pursuit and accordingly acting on it. The pursuit in question is not the immediate pursuit of an animal or a child, who does not give or withhold assent before acting. Rather, it is a rational pursuit, an assented pursuit.⁴⁰⁵ It is this element of rationality in one's assent and action that is attractive to Stoic understanding of action; because this rationality brings with it consciousness, and thus responsibility. The Stoics give emphasis to responsibility, since for them it constitutes the starting point of ethical discussions. In order to hold someone responsible for what she has done, she must, before all, be conscious of what she is doing, or at least must recognize what she is doing.

After exploring to what an assent is given and its role in holding one responsible for her actions, we should also pay attention to its relation to truth. This examination will help us to apprehend more what happens when assent is given to a proposition formed according to an incognitive impression, and recognise more its significance in holding one accountable. The soul gives its assent to truth or what appears to be the truth, rejects or dissents that which it thinks not to be true, and

⁴⁰³ Brennan, "Stoic Moral Psychology, 262.

⁴⁰⁴ Galen *PHP* V.7.19.340; Gosling, "The Stoics and ἀκρασία," 181.

⁴⁰⁵ Gosling, "The Stoics and ἀκρασία," 182.

suspends its judgment in doubtful or unclear cases.⁴⁰⁶ As Epictetus states, “nature designed the mind” in this way.⁴⁰⁷

It is its nature to be moved appetitively towards the good, with aversion towards the bad, and in neither of these ways towards what is neither good nor bad. [...] Once the good appears it immediately moves the soul towards itself, while the bad repels the soul from itself. [...] This is the source of every movement both of men and of god.⁴⁰⁸

We can analyse the phrase ‘the soul moves towards what is good or what appears to be good, and moves away from what is or seems to be bad’, by investigating into the powers of the soul and their role in the process of action formation. The soul’s movement towards or its aversion to something is connected to whether an assent is given to or withdrawn from a proposition, which expresses the content of the cognitive or incognitive *phantasia*. As discussed above, assent, when given to a proposition or *lekton*, gives us reality, the truth. However, in the case of the soul moving towards what is in fact not good but appears to be good, we can here claim that assent does not always give us reality.

Since, as the above quotation indicates, it is by nature that the soul moves towards the good and moves away from what is bad, the soul’s following what is in reality not good yet seems to be so can only be unintentional. This aspect of the soul is in accordance with the Platonic and Aristotelian depiction of it: “Every soul is deprived of the truth against its will.”⁴⁰⁹ The soul confuses something false with something true.⁴¹⁰ If we consider this in terms of assent, we can state that it is by nature that assent is given to a proposition conveying the content of cognitive *phantasia*. Assent given to a proposition, verbalising the content of the cognitive *phantasia*, provides one with truth, a certain and clear grasp of the matter, meaning that that which is pronounced in the proposition is really the case. But this does not hinder the fact that assent can also be given to a proposition expressing the content of incognitive *phantasia*. By giving assent to such a proposition, one assents to something which is

⁴⁰⁶ Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*, I. 18.1-2, I.28.1-2.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., III.3.1-4.

⁴⁰⁸ Epictetus, *Diss.*, 3.3.2-4. (60F)

⁴⁰⁹ Plato, *Sophist*, 228c.

⁴¹⁰ Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*, I.28.4-5.

non-existent, which does not appear to be as it really is, or whose truth is not clearly recognized.⁴¹¹ A hasty assent (*προπέτεια* - *propeteia*) can be given as an example of this type of assent. This kind of assent is thought to be common in non-sage human beings in general, and it leads one to intellectual errors, which in the end result in the wrong action.

Should a person who has assented to such a proposition, then, be held responsible? Is an assent one of those things which are in our power (*ta eph'hemin*)? As Epictetus states in his *Discourses*, “the act of assent which endorses these impressions is voluntary and a function of the human will.”⁴¹² Whereas impressions (*phantasiai*), which function as the involuntary prompter of assent, “striking a person’s mind as soon as he perceives something within the range of his senses, are not voluntary or subject to his will, they impose themselves on people’s attentions almost with a will of their own.”⁴¹³ The difference between the Aristotelian and the Stoic views on holding a person responsible for her actions lies especially in the point that while Aristotle recognises voluntary and involuntary actions, the Stoics acknowledges only the voluntary actions. Their reason for this is that they view every action as the outcome of one’s assent. Assents’ being implicit or unconscious does not alter this point. The fact that assent is given suffices a person to be held accountable. The ability to assent is regarded as an indicator of the rationality of the human soul. That means that even though one assents to non-cataleptic impressions, or assents to impressions that do not correspond to what they are in reality, this (mis)application of assent does not eradicate the fact that one is still rational and that one has given her assent rationally and consciously.⁴¹⁴

This point can be better understood if the close association assent has with the ability to process the impressions is looked into. The ability to elucidate one’s impressions, to evaluate them, and also to determine what forces are in effect in one’s

⁴¹¹ A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 258.

⁴¹² Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*, fr. 9.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, fr. 9.

⁴¹⁴ Joyce, “Early Stoicism and Akrasia,” 324.

actions is the function the reason should carry out in an adult, rational human being.⁴¹⁵ An assent is given by a person only after this function of reason is fulfilled. One can be held responsible for her action due to this activity of reason, which enables one to assent or dissent.

In the process of action formation, after *phantasia* is formed and assent is given, the next step is impulse (*óρμή*). According to the common Stoic definition of impulse, it is a change or motion (*kinesis*) in the soul (movement of the soul) towards something.⁴¹⁶ This movement is prompted by the hormetic representation (*phantasia*) of what appears to be, or is, appropriate (*kathekon*). This movement of the soul is determined by disposition (*hexis*) according to the Stoics.

As a *kinesis*, a movement in the soul, it is stimulated by a presentation of something appropriate to the agent (*phantasia tou kathekontos autothen*). But not every animal finds the same things appropriate to itself, and the reason for this is to be found in the basic constitution or make-up of the animal. This natural aptness to find some things appropriate and so stimulative of impulse is rooted in a disposition, a *hexis*.⁴¹⁷

We learn from Arius Didymus, whose discussions are partly preserved by Stobaeus, that the early Stoics classify impulses as rational and non-rational impulses.⁴¹⁸ While the impulses, which adult human beings have, are rational, the impulses non-rational animals have are non-rational. That is to say, non-rational impulses cannot be attributed to and be applied by rational animals (i.e. adult human beings).⁴¹⁹ The reason for this is that, “[o]nly rational impulses are the result of assent, strictly speaking, and more importantly, only rational impulses are subject to moral evaluation.”⁴²⁰ Denying the existence of non-rational impulses in adult human beings

⁴¹⁵ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 83-4.

⁴¹⁶ Arius Didymus, *ESE* 9; Inwood, 128, 47.

⁴¹⁷ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 189-190.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-3.

⁴¹⁹ Hans Svebakken, *Philo of Alexandria's Exposition of the Tenth Commandment* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 45, note: 46.

⁴²⁰ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 129.

is due to the fact that the impulse they have “*always* involves rational assent (συγκατάθεσις) and thus *always* denotes an activity of the mind (ἡγεμονικόν).⁴²¹

What the Stoics emphasise by claiming that the impulses of adult human beings are rational is the limiting function of reason. That is to say, reason conditions impulses, measures and limits them, such that “they never lead us to perform acts in excess of what reason has given assent to.”⁴²² Hence the rational impulses are “intrinsically measured and limited.”⁴²³

At this point, passion (πάθος), a type of impulse, can be put forward as a topic having the potential to refute the Stoic interpretation of impulse. However, The Stoic understanding of passion cancels out this attempt of refutation. Unlike its common conception, the Stoics do not consider it as a type of non-rational impulse, or a phenomenon located in and produced by the non-rational ‘part’ of the soul. Rather, despite being a morally wrong sort of impulse, they classify it as rational.⁴²⁴ It is not that passions are set against reason, struggling and combating against it, as if they were non-rational forces in the soul. Rather, what is perhaps at issue here is that the mind “extended too far and contracted too much, almost as though it were this alone that made its inherent rationality turn irrational.”⁴²⁵

Impulse is the last step before action. It determines the action an agent performs.⁴²⁶ In this sense, it can be seen as the efficient cause of action. It converts the judgments of reason produced by the process of giving assent to bodily activities. All along we have discussed impulse as occurring after assent. However, there also exist

⁴²¹ Svebakken, *Philo of Alexandria's Exposition of the Tenth Commandment*, 45-6.

⁴²² Weiss, *The Stoics and the Practical*, 44.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴²⁴ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 129. According to Posidonius, while Cleanthes holds reason and passion as two different kinds of things, Chrysippus does not regard them as different (Galen, *PHP* 5.6.34-7 (Posidonius fr.33, 166, part) (65I).

⁴²⁵ Weiss, *The Stoics and the Practical*, 42. Cicero, *TD*, III, ix (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14988/14988-h/14988-h.htm>. Even though we state here that passions do not act against reason, below we will read Chrysippus asserting that people often act in ‘disobedience to reason’. The meaning of this assertion will be given below. But for now, it should be emphasised that acting against reason does not suggest the presence of conflicting forces in the soul, or the existence of non-rational part(s) in the soul.

⁴²⁶ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 47.

texts of Cicero and Seneca which suggest that impulse can also occur before assent.⁴²⁷ This impulse, occurring before assent is given or formed, is the preliminary impulse. This kind of impulse is best seen in sudden and frightening events. In the case of a sudden, loud, or shocking sound, for instance, an involuntary response, such as turning pale or a rapid shriek, may be given. These responses are interpreted as indicators of fear. Fear together with desire, pain and pleasure is a type of passion.⁴²⁸ This leaves us the conclusion that before an assent is given, a kind of impulse may take place. Such a response can also be found in the sage or the wise.⁴²⁹ They stand in stark contrast to the ordinary people (or the fool, as they named them), and the Stoics discuss them so as to make explicit what the latter lack in ethical matters. But the orthodox Stoics would deny acknowledging that this sudden response is fear, or a full-fledged impulse, which takes place only after an assent is given. Impulse occurring before the assent, in their depiction, can only be preliminary impulse or an automatic response, to which the sage refuses to give her assent, while the fool gives. What this leaves us with is the central role assent plays in Stoic theory of action. This must be what Seneca meant when stating that proper “impulse never exists without the mind’s assent.”⁴³⁰

The mere assent to a hormetic proposition does not automatically generate an action in the Stoic depiction of the formation of action. Assenting to a proposition can be conceived as knowing what to do. However, this knowing does not guarantee that an appropriate action would ensue. The Stoics’ contribution here is significant. According to them, impulse bridges this gap between assent and action.⁴³¹ Furthermore, as stated above, impulse is the last step before an action; but in their understanding, there is no gap between an impulse and action. This is actually the direct result of their conception of the monistic soul. Because, if we claim that there are some impulses in the soul which do not result in action, then we have either to

⁴²⁷ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters on Ethics*, trans. Margaret Graver and A. A. Long (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), Letter 113.18.

⁴²⁸ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 144-5; Stobaeus 2.88.8-90.6

⁴²⁹ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *On Anger*, in *Anger, Mercy, Revenge*, trans. Robert A. Kaster and Martha C. Nussbaum (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1.16.7.

⁴³⁰ Seneca, *De Ira*, 2.3.1-2.4 (65X).

⁴³¹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 62.

renounce the idea that the Stoic exposition of the process of action formation is satisfactory, or to accept an additional power, part, or an element in the soul which prevents the impulse – generated after the assent to an hormetic proposition – from resulting in action.⁴³² Both their monistic conception of the soul and the process of action formation confirm that there is not any power other than reason in the soul, capable of resisting, or hindering, the workings of reason. The commands or decisions of reason, in this account, are not resisted by any other part or power of the soul, and the corresponding action, with the help of impulse, follows immediately.

By occurring after the assent, impulses are in direct accordance with assent, the reason's command. Impulse in this sense follows the imperative, which the assented (hormetic) proposition involves.⁴³³ Considered in this way, as opposed to the common understanding, impulses are not directed at objects,⁴³⁴ rather at predicates (*κατηγορήματα*) which are “contained in the propositions assented to.”⁴³⁵ For instance, in an occasion where one utters, or thinks, “It suits me to eat this cake standing in front of me,” the predicate to which the impulse is directed is the second half of it, namely: “eat this cake . . .” However, although there is no gap between an impulse and action, and although impulse corresponds to an imperative, impulse's presence cannot guarantee the physical accomplishment of bodily movements. Impulse is necessary and sufficient condition for action, and it can be taken “a little more than ‘intention’, ‘act of will’, ‘decision’, or *Entschluss* because of its role as the cause of action,” yet external obstacles may hinder the action from being actualised.⁴³⁶ However, this is outside of the process of action formation, which takes place not outside but within (the soul/mind of) the agent.

Up until now, we have step by step followed the Stoic understanding of the action formation process, but we have not yet linked this process to *akrasia* in particular. This link starts to become apparent with a consideration of a type of

⁴³² Ibid., 63.

⁴³³ Ibid., 64.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 56, 325 note: 53.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 53.

impulse, namely passion (*pathos*). Pleasure, pain, fear, and appetite, to which akratic actions are closely related, are kinds of passion; and passions, as we expressed above, are regarded as the outcome of errors in thinking.⁴³⁷ This error stems from considering what is less good or apparent good to be the best or the right. Regarding passions as errors in thinking, in fact, has its origin in Zeno's conception of them. As we learn from Posidonius, Zeno describes them as "irrational contractions, swellings, and so on *resulting* from judgment."⁴³⁸ Chrysippus, on the other hand, furthers this description by claiming that they *are* judgments,⁴³⁹ as in the example: "the love of money is taking money to be a good thing."⁴⁴⁰ We can add to these descriptions that for them passions are not 'any' type of judgments, but 'erroneous' judgments. This way of considering passions is in fact akin to Socrates' interpretation of *akrasia*. To him, what the many call *akrasia* is nothing but a misconception or a misrepresentation. Considered from this point of view, we can claim that what the early Stoics maintain is a continuation of the Socratic reading of *akrasia* as presented in Plato's *Protagoras*.

If we recall what we stated above, that is, the Stoics regard passions as rational, and that, in Chrysippus, they are considered as judgments, we may now be surprised to see Chrysippus' other definition of passion. He defines passion (*πάθος*) also as "irrational and unnatural movement of the psyche and an excessive [*ὀρμὴ*]."⁴⁴¹ At this point, the question how passion can both be rational and irrational arises. This difficulty can be removed if a passage of Chrysippus (quoted by Galen) is taken into consideration.⁴⁴²

(1) First of all we should bear in mind that a rational animal follows reason naturally, and acts in accordance with reason as if that were its

⁴³⁷ Christopher Gill, "The School in the Roman Imperial Period," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 41.

⁴³⁸ Malcolm Schofield, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 249.

⁴³⁹ Schofield, "Stoic Ethics," 249.

⁴⁴⁰ Gosling, "The Stoics and *ἀκρασία*," 192.

⁴⁴¹ Gill, "Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?" 139.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 139.

guide. (2) Often, however, it moves towards and away from certain things in a different way, pushed to excess in disobedience to reason.⁴⁴³

What this passage emphasizes is that every human being (the perfect/wise one or the imperfect/ordinary one) is essentially capable of acting in accordance with reason. It is in fact its nature. All human beings and also their *όρμαι* or passions are rational, since firstly they have this capacity and secondly their *όρμαι* involve judgments as regards the object of their desires or impulses. The judgment in question might be in the form of ‘eating this cake is desirable’. The content of the judgment is irrelevant at this point, since being able to form and reach a judgment is sufficient for any *όρμη* or passion to be called rational. However, in practice, as in many cases, the imperfect/ordinary person might deviate from what her reason dictates. She may act in disobedience to reason, and hence act irrationally. The *όρμαι* or passions of them, therefore, can be called both rational, since they include judgments, and irrational, because they can – that is, not necessarily – lead one to act contrary to reason.⁴⁴⁴ *Πάθος* or (excessive) impulse (*pleonazousa horme*) is thus described as “irrational rationality.”⁴⁴⁵

How the *πάθος* functions and how it can act “against” reason in a monistic and partless soul needs to be broached at this point. If we take into account Chrysippus’ use of the metaphor of the runner, we can comprehend how *πάθος* functions in leading one away from the reasonable. Galen presents Chrysippus’ views by stating that the latter likens *πάθος* to a runner’s legs. The runner begins running consciously and voluntarily; yet after some time, the runner reaches such a speed that, even though she wanted to stop or change the speed, her legs do not listen to her. Chrysippus’ example thus illustrates that *πάθος* is rational, yet, like the runner’s legs, can act irrationally, that is, disobedient to reason.⁴⁴⁶ Chrysippus understands this disobedience to reason as a result of *πάθος*’ excessiveness, as in the speed of a runner’s legs. Exceeding the natural limits of reason is what makes an impulse excessive.

⁴⁴³ Galen, *PHP*, 4.2.10-18 (SVF, 3.462, part) (65J).

⁴⁴⁴ Gill, “Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?” 139.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 140-1. The explanation of how this view of Chrysippus fits in his conception of the soul will be given below.

Posidonius examines this last point by questioning the cause of excessive impulses. Since, he reckons, “reason could not exceed its own occupations and limits [...] some other irrational faculty [must] cause impulse to exceed the limits of reason.”⁴⁴⁷ This interpretation should not be conceived as unexpected for a person who regards passions as “effects of competitive and appetitive faculty,”⁴⁴⁸ which is completely different from the Stoic understanding of passions. This reading of Posidonius not only rejects the Stoic interpretation of passion, but also the Stoic model of the partless soul. Being disobedient to reason while being wholly controlled by it, or exceeding the limits of reason while having no other parts in the soul permitted to carry out this role is what is challenging in comprehending the Chrysippian definition of excessive impulse or passion. In Chrysippus’ conception, passion turns out to be pointing out a realm beyond the control of reason. Could it be the doing of another part of the soul, which the Stoics did not accept, i.e. the passionate part? As Galen reports from Posidonius, “impulse is sometimes generated as a result of the judgment of the rational part, but often as a result of the movement of the passionate part.”⁴⁴⁹

How then should the Chrysippian conception of passion as disobedient to reason, or as something exceeding the limits of reason be comprehended if we are to endorse the monistic soul of the Stoicism and reject the Posidonian dualistic soul model? In the dualistic psychology of the latter this disobedience is interpreted as the “disobedience of the impulse to one’s own reason.”⁴⁵⁰ But within the framework of the Chrysippian monistic soul, such disobedience cannot take place. For one thing, in the monistic soul reason and impulse do not constitute two different ‘parts’. “The unified mind of an agent is both reason and impulse. That is, it contains these two powers and they always work together. “Thus the disobedience can only be to the divine reason of Zeus” or the Right Reason, that is “the normative standard of all proper conduct.”⁴⁵¹ This right Reason is in fact the human reason when perfected.

⁴⁴⁷ Galen, *PHP* 4.3.2-5 (Posidonius fr. 34, part) (65K).

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.3.2-5 (Posidonius fr. 34, part) (65K).

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.5.8-26 (Posidonius fr. 169, part) (65M).

⁴⁵⁰ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 156.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

Thus, passion or excessive impulse's being disobedient to reason is not in need of a distinct part of a soul different from reason, nor it suggests an impossible task of exceeding reason while being dominated by reason. It only indicates that a person in a passionate state disobeys the "normatively ideal and perfectly natural reason" of that person.⁴⁵² By being disobedient to reason, one is in fact "turning his back on the best that he himself can be and should be."⁴⁵³

Obedying the instructions or demands of the Right Reason, or the reason of the person when it is perfected, is then nothing but "obeying one's own reason in its natural and proper condition."⁴⁵⁴ A person who does not obey the orders of the Right Reason, then, acts against her best, true self.⁴⁵⁵ In this way, this person becomes "less than his true self."⁴⁵⁶ This person reminds us of the subject matter of this thesis, namely the akratic. In this reading, the akratic turns out to be the one who becomes the "diminished" or downgraded version of one's normal self."⁴⁵⁷ A person in a passionate state, or an akratic, then, acts not in compliance with herself. Rather it could be said for this person that she is

‘moving in conformity with some force external to themselves.’ Here again he [Chrysippus] grants that there is some force that arouses conations in all the affections, and his understanding is correct, except that he said the force was external [*ἐξωθεν*] to them, when he should have said that it is not external but in the men. It is not because the force that compels their conations to conform to their affections is external, that we say that they ‘have got outside themselves’ and are not ‘in themselves’ but because they are in an unnatural state, since the rational part of the soul, which by nature had the government and rule of the rest, does not govern but is governed and ruled by the soul's irrational powers.⁴⁵⁸

In this passage Galen criticises Chrysippus by claiming that what the latter asserts as being outside the passionate/akratic person is in fact within that person. Thus, Galen

⁴⁵² Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 157.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 302, note 146.

⁴⁵⁸ Galen, *PHP* 4.6.35.

conceives the akratic's or passionate person's not acting in conformity with one's own true reason (the Right Reason) as an outcome of the power of impulse (the irrational part of the soul) over reason.

So as to disprove Galen and maintain Chrysippus' claim that the cause of one's acting against (the Right) reason or one's being a 'diminished version of oneself' is external, we need to elucidate what this external force is. Inwood suggests the power of representation as this external force.

The presentations we receive from environment and which we cannot control have within them a certain persuasive force. They tend to lead us on to assent to them, and it is the job of the rational agent to examine them carefully and only to give assent to the ones which accord with the principles of Right Reason. But they do exert their influence over us, and indeed this very 'persuasiveness of things' is one [of] the two causes of the corruption of rational animals who start out in life with uncorrupted inclinations. If we give in to these stimuli without examining them (assenting implicitly) or give them conscious but erroneous assent, then we will be swept away by them and we will be allowing ourselves to be pushed too far.⁴⁵⁹

What is stated here brings to mind what we have previously discussed in Chapter 2. There, we have investigated the Socratic explanation of *akrasia*, and, as part of this explanation, we have examined 'the power of appearances.' The persuasive power of representation, or of *phantasia*, can be conceived in this framework. From this perspective, we can assert that the Stoic explanation of the action of the passionate or akratic person follows the Socratic or Platonic tradition. The persuasive power of *phantasia* over us, as the passage puts forward, leads us to assent to them. Even though in the passage we are said to be 'swept away by them' and 'pushed too far', this should not be taken as suggesting passivity on the part of the agent. Things, with their persuasive powers, are capable of leading us to make mistaken interpretations of our representations. Giving assent to these interpretations is a clear indication that we are not passive, and accordingly can be held responsible for our actions. Also, by being a kind of impulse, passion too is directed at a predicate contained in the assented proposition, hence it is a product of an assent; and, as Chrysippus claims, it is a judgment. This suffices to hold one responsible for her passions. Being swept away or being pushed by the power of representations, for this reason, cannot be a pretext for being exempted from responsibility.

⁴⁵⁹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 161.

The final step of our investigation is action. In the early Stoicism, a distinction is made among actions. According to this distinction, there are, on the one hand, perfectly right actions (*κατόρθωμα*), which can simply be called virtuous actions, and are performed generally but not exclusively by the perfectly wise person or simply the Stoic sage. On the other hand, there are the ‘appropriate’ actions (*καθήκοντα*), which are preferable and are carried out by the imperfect, ordinary people.⁴⁶⁰ Using this terminology, we can say that passions are the result of treating what is in fact appropriate as if it were the perfectly right action of the wise. It is this error that creates passions in one.⁴⁶¹ Since passions are seen as products of error, much ink has spilled on investigating how this error can be removed. Seneca and Epictetus, for instance, discuss this point by suggesting an ethical guide for those who ‘suffer from’ passions or who have inconsistencies between their impulses/passions and reason.

In brief, if we take into account these steps leading to action, one can immediately discern that action is determined firstly by the assent given to the hormetic proposition of a rational *phantasia*. It is a gradual process gaining its power of truth in every step. The point of assent in this picture is the point of examination of the content of the impressions (*phantasia*). At this stage, one determines whether the content provided by the *phantasia* is appropriate to us, good for us, etc. It also examines whether this content is the right interpretation of the phenomena which is supplied by the *phantasia*. Accordingly, the role of assent in reaching the right decision as to what course of action is to be followed is significant.

4.4 Akrasia on View

This central role of assent and its judgmental feature in forming the right action foregrounds an important difference between the Stoics on the one hand, and Plato of the *Republic*, Aristotle, Plutarch, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Galen on the other hand. The latter, as discussed above, view *akrasia* as a conflict between different parts of the soul. The former, on the other hand, reject this view and hold that “a rapid shift

⁴⁶⁰ Gill, “The School in the Roman Imperial Period,” 40-41.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 41.

between opinions”⁴⁶² takes place in the mind of the akratic. This means that the person is not exposed to an internal conflict between a rational and an irrational part of her soul. Rather, she either changes her mind (an erroneous proposition is assented instead of a proposition provided by the Right Reason or the one’s true reason) or her assent is given in a rush, hence insincere or cursory. Plutarch, actually an ardent critic of the Stoics, summarizes the claim of the Stoics as follows:

(1) Some people [meaning the Stoics] say that passion is no different from reason, and that there is no dissension and conflict between the two, but a turning of the single reason in both directions, which we do not notice owing to the sharpness and speed of the change. (2) We do not perceive that the natural instrument of appetite and regret, or anger and fear, is the same part of the soul, which is moved by pleasure towards wrong, and while moving recovers itself again. (3) For appetite and anger and fear and all such things are corrupt opinions and judgements, which do not arise about just one part of the soul but are the whole commanding faculty’s inclinations, yieldings, assents and impulses, and quite generally, activities which change rapidly, just like children’s fights, whose fury and intensity are volatile and transient owing to their weakness.⁴⁶³

From this perspective, according to the Stoics, *akrasia* is not a conflict between reason and passion; instead it is a result of a conflict between two judgments of reason. Giving assent to wrong kind of judgment or proposition gives rise to passion, which is a wrong or excessive kind of impulse. And, as a result, a wrong action ensues. From this reasoning, we can draw the inference that, for the Stoics, there is no akratic action if it is defined as a conflict between two parts of the soul; it only exists if by it we refer to a fallacious assent given to a proposition formed according to the incognitive *phantasia*. The reason why a conflict between reason and passion appears to be occurring is claimed to be due to “the sharpness and speed of the change”⁴⁶⁴ of opinions. In other words, this swiftness of the oscillation of the unitary commanding-faculty (the *hegemonikon*) between two conflicting views or propositions gives a false impression of an internal, emotional conflict in the soul. The presence of an internal conflict is an explicit sign of there being a divided soul. Stoics’ rejection of the concept

⁴⁶² Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 138.

⁴⁶³ Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.*, 446F-447A (SVF 3.459, part) (65G).

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 446F-447A (SVF 3.459, part) (65G).

of *akrasia* is owing to the fact that in their monistic conception of the soul there is not an emotional or passionate part distinct from reason.

At this point, we can either claim that for the Stoics there is no such phenomenon as *akrasia*, as we have just stated, or we can make a further distinction between types of *akrasia*. By means of this distinction, we can claim that the Stoics may in fact acknowledge ‘a kind of’ *akrasia*. If by *akrasia* we understand an action in which a person “knowingly acts contrary to a self-directed imperative”⁴⁶⁵ (strict *akrasia*) and claim that this is the only kind of *akrasia* there exists, then we can definitely claim that for the Stoics there is no such thing as *akrasia*. In this conception of *akrasia*, the person is aware of the best judgment (and knows the corresponding action) and at the same time acts against it. But if we identify a further type of *akrasia* (broad *akrasia*), according to which a person acts contrary to her best judgment, but does not simultaneously acknowledge this judgment at the moment of action,⁴⁶⁶ then we can claim that the Stoics would not deny the existence of such an akratic action. In both cases a person “fails to stand by a previous decision about what he will do or by some general plan or programme of action.”⁴⁶⁷ Yet the difference lies in knowingly doing a bad action (in the case of the former), and not thinking the corresponding right judgment during the performance of action (in the case of the latter). As discussed earlier, the Stoic rejection of the (strict) *akrasia* is due to its enabling one to hold the view that there are in the soul different forces capable of overpowering the practical reason. This may result in a wedge between practical decision (reached by giving or withdrawing the assent) and action. However, in the unitary or monistic conception of the Stoic soul, in which the *hegemonikon* is the only ruler, and in which assent, together with impulse, serves as a “self-directed imperative [which] must be obeyed,”⁴⁶⁸ this is not possible. However, the second type of *akrasia* (broad *akrasia*) would allow the Stoics to recognize the existence of (broad) *akrasia* and the monistic, or partless, conception of the soul at the same time.

⁴⁶⁵ Michael Tremblay, “Akrasia in Epictetus: A Comparison with Aristotle,” *Aperion* 53, no. 4 (2020): 398.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 398.

Nevertheless, it can be asserted that the concept of broad *akrasia*, whose determining feature is ‘not consciously thinking the best course of action during the performance of action’, is in fact misleading, since it does not fulfil the definition of *akrasia*. In the broad *akrasia*, one gives her assent to a proposition (such as, ‘this type of action befits me’) even though this proposition may not be suggesting the morally right one. At the moment of assent and the ensuing action, this person is of the view that her own action is right even though it is in fact erroneous. In such a case, we do not have before us an akratic action, but only a wrong action. In order for an action to be called akratic, one needs to reckon it as erroneous in the exact moment of action. For this reason, the suggestion that the Stoics may accept not the strict but the broad *akrasia* does not fulfil the requirements for the concept of *akrasia*. As to the internal conflict, the most which can be found in the Stoics is the assent given impetuously or an erroneous assent given to the erroneous proposition. As a result of this, one falls victim to her passions (which is nothing but a product of fallacious judgment or assent), and acts contrary to her rational judgment.⁴⁶⁹

Impetuosity or precipitancy (*προπέτεια*) finds its comprehensive discussion in the Roman Stoicism. Although also Aristotle regards the precipitant *akrasia* as a kind of *akrasia*, his discussion centres around strict *akrasia*, the type of *akrasia*, in which deliberation is in place. Strict *akrasia*, however, is rejected by the Stoics from the beginning, while the former is permitted (at least in Epictetus) as a type of *akrasia*. The reason why Epictetus discusses precipitant action or *akrasia* might be due to the fact that this type of *akrasia* or action poses a difficulty for holding one responsible for an action, which needs to be addressed and solved. According to Aristotle, the precipitant agent by no means contemplates at the time of the action; and this is the reason why this person is led by her desires for pleasure. Despite the absence of deliberation in this agent, Aristotle still considers this action as a type of *akrasia* owing to “the lack of restraint that is manifest in the agent’s following whatever appears to him to be pleasant.”⁴⁷⁰ The absence of reasoning, in brief, characterises the precipitant agent. However, this feature should not lead one to consider the precipitant agent as

⁴⁶⁹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 139.

⁴⁷⁰ Ricardo Salles, “Epictetus on Moral Responsibility for Precipitate Action,” in *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus*, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 249.

being exempt from responsibility. According to Epictetus, even in the absence of deliberation, one is to be held responsible for her actions, owing to the fact that one can, and ought to, avoid precipitancy (*προπέτεια*).⁴⁷¹ Behaving precipitantly is the outcome of “repeated failure to examine critically first impressions before reacting to them.”⁴⁷² Consequently, the role of exercise (*γυμνάζεσθαι*) in deterring one from acting precipitantly, by means of prompting one to examine carefully what the impressions present to the reason is significant. Critically assessing the first impressions (*phantasiai*), or the data provided to the agent through *phantasia*, in effect corresponds to the role assent plays. Examining whether an impression i) is appropriate and is as it appears, ii) is inappropriate and is as it appears, or iii) is either appropriate or inappropriate and is not what appears to be (a misleading proposition based on the impression) is the role of the assent.⁴⁷³ In analysing the first impressions, assent may produce an impulse towards or away from an action (aversion or avoidance), or assent is not given at all, hence no impulse ensues.

The fully rational agent, or, as is usually named, the Stoic sage is defined as the one who internalised this examination. This person forms cataleptic impressions (those corresponding to the options i and ii above), and straightaway assents to them. Such a person does not need to carry out a critical examination owing to the fact that she has already assimilated this process in her soul. On the other hand, people who do not fully make use of their reason, that is, the majority of people, are to determine firstly whether an impression they are confronting is cataleptic or not; since unlike an impression of the sage, the impression of the former may seem to be cataleptic while it is not. Due to this difference between the sage and the ordinary human being, the latter needs to examine each time her own impressions and gives or withholds her assent accordingly. In order to give assent and perform a right action, Epictetus, like Aristotle, emphasises the role of exercise and educating the reason, which in turn serves to strengthen one’s disposition (*ἔξις*). Every disposition is feeble at the outset, and by dint of repeated exercise, it is either intensified (*ἐπιτείνεσθαι*) or slackened (*ἀνίεσθαι*). By not using reason efficiently or using it not so as to build a strong-willed

⁴⁷¹ Salles, “Epictetus on Moral Responsibility for Precipitate Action,” 250.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 251.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 251.

character, the precipitant agent falls into *akrasia*, and is responsible for not building the right character. Despite not being directly about the precipitant *akrasia*, Galen states Chrysippus' position as regards *akrasia* in general, or how a person can turn away from her rational decision, as follows: "A man's reason is not yet in perfect condition, and this means that the *hexis* or disposition of his mind is not yet completely in accord with nature."⁴⁷⁴ Hence, building a disposition which is in accordance with nature is required for a person not to become akratic.

To weaken the already strengthened disposition is a challenging process. A possible solution to this difficulty could be to perform the action opposite to the one which a person has been carrying out. By means of this opposite action, the earlier disposition loses its force in urging one to follow the inappropriate action. This process occurs as follows:

Firstly, one has to produce by the use of reason the impression that the action of ϕ -ing is bad (*kakon*) and, second, one has to assent to that impression and, thus, persuade oneself that one is aiming at something bad. This act of assent will generate an impulse for not ϕ -ing that will replace the appetite for ϕ -ing.⁴⁷⁵

By means of this process, the disposition which makes the agent precipitant peters out.⁴⁷⁶ Only after the agent alters this disposition that she becomes virtuous. The feebleness of one's disposition gives rise to disharmony in one's soul. This disharmony is partly generated by the awakened passions which are unstable in themselves, unlike the impulses. When incorrect opinions or propositions are assented, the command ensuing from this assent and the action at the end become inevitable. On the other hand, in the soul of the virtuous, fully rational person, there are only harmonious and consistent judgments, which are nothing but the judgments of the Right Reason.

Describing virtue as an immediate outcome of a consistent character⁴⁷⁷ causes to regard any state other than virtuous as a product of inconsistent character. At this point, it would be useful if we remind ourselves that the Stoic intellectualist tradition

⁴⁷⁴ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 163.

⁴⁷⁵ Salles, "Epictetus on Moral Responsibility for Precipitate Action," 261.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 261-2.

⁴⁷⁷ D.L., 7.89.

regards virtue as science (knowledge) and vice as ignorance.⁴⁷⁸ Consequently, according to this intellectualist approach, the cause of *akrasia* is nothing but a type of ignorance. Moreover, the knowledge the virtuous possesses is not inborn. As can be readily recognized, this view is in line with that of Aristotle, who asserts that “none of the moral excellences arise in us by nature.”⁴⁷⁹ So as to get rid of ignorance one is afflicted with, and attain virtue, one needs to build a consistent character. The Stoics consider correct habituation as the *sine qua non* of achieving this objective. Nonetheless, this should not lead us to consider that virtue is achieved immediately after one begins practicing. For the Stoics, virtue does not admit of degrees.⁴⁸⁰ Up until one renders her exercise her character, in other words, until one builds a firm habit of the correct sort of conduct, and one fully attains virtue, one is considered vicious.

Learning to act in line with the principles of Right Reason, acquiring its knowledge by repeated exercise is, therefore, essential for one to become virtuous, and at the same time fundamental in not sliding into the akratic state. Being able to act in accordance with the Right Reason is an indication that one has the moral principles. These principles are present in a person potentially. In order to convert this potentiality into actuality, a person needs to exercise this potentiality. At this point, we can put forward that the Stoics reach a similar conclusion with Aristotle regarding the causes of akratic action: Akratic action is caused by not fully understanding what these moral principles are in the first place, or not accepting them as guides for one’s way of behaviour.⁴⁸¹

Name it ‘the Law of Nature’, ‘the Common Law’, ‘the Will of Zeus’, ‘the Right Reason’, or the virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) which is formed in a person through following the former, these varying appellations of the same provides the set of principles, according to which a person should guide her life. These moral principles

⁴⁷⁸ Jean-Baptiste Gourinat, “*Akrasia* and *Enkrateia* in Ancient Stoicism: Minor Vice and Minor Virtue?” in *Akrasia* in Greek Philosophy: From Socrates to Plotinus, eds. Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destree (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 231.

⁴⁷⁹ Aristotle, *NE*, 1103a19.

⁴⁸⁰ Cicero, *On Ends*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 5.83.

⁴⁸¹ Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 162.

present themselves as imperatives, which come into view in the human scale in the form of impulses.

We have seen that exercise and habituation are fundamental in enhancing and perfecting one's disposition, and are decisive in preventing one from acting akratically. But, up until now we have not questioned what the scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) of virtue and ignorance of *akrasia* consist of. The profound difference between virtue and *akrasia* is that the latter clings to the opinions (*doxai*) which are less reliable than cognition (*katalepsis*) and scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*). We can consider *epistēmē* and opinion as occupying the opposite poles of a scale showing the degrees of knowing, and cognition standing in the middle.⁴⁸² Cognition can be defined as a “cognitive state that results from assent to a cognitive impression.”⁴⁸³ Cognitive impressions, “by being assented to, give someone the certainty that he perceives some truth(s), and this cognition takes on the necessary reliability and critical power of the cognitive impression itself.”⁴⁸⁴ As for *epistēmē*, it is “cognition which is secure and firm and unchangeable by reason.”⁴⁸⁵ In other words, in order for cognition to be *epistēmē*, it needs to be so steadfast that wavering and wobbling cannot take place. *Epistēmē* pertains to the wise person, opinion is found in the inferior person (as Sextus Empiricus calls them), and cognition is common to both.⁴⁸⁶ The inferior person's understanding of truth is regarded as so insecure and changeable that her cognition does not eradicate her ignorance. On the other hand, the *epistēmē* of the wise person represents the secure and firm grasp of truth. Above, we have defined cognition as a state deriving from an assented cognitive impression. In a similar vein, the opinion pertaining to the inferior person can be defined as a state which may result from assenting to the incognitive or erroneous impression.

With these in mind, we can claim that for the Stoics, the wise person, the sage, or the fully rational person, does not give her assent to anything incognitive (she is not

⁴⁸² Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, 7.151-7 (41C).

⁴⁸³ A.A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 256.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁸⁵ Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, 7.151-7 (41C).

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.151-7 (41C).

precipitant), and does not suppose anything, “for supposal is an incognitive opinion.”⁴⁸⁷ The inferior person (we should place the *akratic* in this class), on the other hand, is subject to weak supposition, and frequently assents to the incognitive.⁴⁸⁸

This exposition of the knowledge of the wise or ignorance of the *akratic* is the point where the Stoics verge on the early Platonic reading of *akrasia*. In the *Protagoras*, Plato concludes his explanation of the cause of the so-called *akrasia* by stating that it is the result of ignorance. Furthermore, as we have discussed in Chapter 2, the monistic, partless model of the soul supports this reading. By emphasising the ignorance of the inferior person, which is caused by (false) assent to incognitive impressions, the Stoics end up claiming a similar point to the early Plato as regards the cause of *akrasia*. In the Stoics, the said ignorance can be apprehended in the framework of not knowing or not putting into practice the moral principles, which the Right Reason, or the reason when perfected, establishes.

The difference between Aristotle and the Stoics is more recognizable in their conception of human soul. The tripartite model of the soul of the former and the monistic soul-model of the latter constitutes this difference. Aristotle interprets *akrasia* as the conflict between reason and desire, or rational and irrational parts of the soul. On the other hand, the Stoics regard discordant judgments in the rational soul as the cause of this conflict. According to this understanding, the person which is called *akratic* is nothing but the one who is oscillating between two competing views. By means of this conception, they render their claim harmonious with their monistic understanding of the soul.

The Stoic conception of passion within the context of *akrasia* marks their difference from both Plato and Aristotle. The Stoics consider passions as caused by wrong judgments or assents. By dint of this consideration, the most valuable trump card which could be used to refute the Stoic monistic model of the soul is lost. The reason for this is that, passions conceived as judgments do not require a non-rational part in the soul to set themselves against reason. By being judgments, they are already rational, and hence do not constitute a force against reason or reason’s commands.

⁴⁸⁷ Anonymous Stoic Treatise (Herculaneum papyrus 1020), col.4, col.1. (SVF 2,131, part) (41D).

⁴⁸⁸ Stobaeus, 2.111, 18-112.8 (SVF 3.548) (41G)

A significant Stoic contribution to the discussion of *akrasia* can be found in the role they have given to the (cognitive and incognitive) *phantasia* (impressions). However, as we have examined both in Plato and Aristotle, the power of the *phantasia* is already in view. The introduction of assent to the discussion of *akrasia*, on the other hand, is unique to the Stoics. By means of this, the responsibility of the *akratic* agent is attested and the relation of *akrasia* to judgments and knowledge is confirmed.

All in all, after examining the Stoic theory of action and their conception of the soul, we can recognise that the Stoic reading of the concept of *akrasia* shares common views with both Plato and Aristotle. They are in line with the early Plato that by being partless the soul does not allow for the akratic action if it refers to the existence of a non-rational part in the soul. Furthermore, claiming a conflict between two judgments – one presenting the view of the inferior person's reason, and the other presenting the reason when perfected – rather than a conflict between passion and reason makes their reading of *akrasia* similar to the early Plato. In this sense, we can assert that they deny *akrasia*, and yet they suggest an explanation for their denial, which in point of fact draws their reading closer to Aristotle's. This is being ignorant or not knowing sufficiently the moral principle (or, in Aristotle, not recognising the practical import of this principle). As a way out from this ignorance, the suggestion of educating the reason through practice is central both in Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and the Stoics on the other.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have investigated the concept of *akrasia* with particular attention to its development and its miscellaneous interpretations in ancient Greek philosophy. In this inquiry, I traced the steps of Plato, Aristotle, and lastly the Stoics. The focus of my attention in this thesis has been on pinpointing the essential and characteristic elements in their understanding of this concept, as well as the similarities and dissimilarities between them. Furthermore, I have examined the context of their discussion and questioned their possible reasons for rejecting or accepting this concept. Even though they seem to be starting their investigation by distancing themselves from their antecedents, in point of fact, they try to clarify what the latter mean by this concept, and incorporate the interpretations of their antecedents into their own reading of the notion. To my mind, the whole discussion which these various philosophers provided centres around one idea: knowledge.

That it is the lack of knowledge of the *akratēs* is agreed on by the philosophers we have investigated in this thesis, yet they differentiate from each other as to its meaning and content. For instance, in the *Protagoras*, Plato suggests the art of measurement as the knowledge which the *akratēs* lacks. This art helps to evaluate pleasures and pains, to differentiate the real good from the apparent, and also to break the illusion caused by the power of appearances. The said knowledge of the *akratēs* is also dealt with in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in the framework of practical syllogism. Here, Aristotle investigates what should be understood by the 'knowledge' of the *akratēs*. His discussion of practical syllogism, through which the reasoning process of the *akratēs* is tried to be understood, elucidates what the particular knowledge expressed in the minor premise of the syllogism and the universal knowledge (of the moral principles) stated in the major premise are. Considered in the context of *akrasia*, I have examined that in *akratēs*' practical syllogism, even though

the right conclusion is reached, this conclusion is not put into use, and the knowledge articulated in the conclusion is not followed. As has been noted, this point can be better apprehended if the drunkard and the novice to whom Aristotle likens the *akratēs* are taken into account. In the case of the drunkard, the potential knowledge cannot be actualised, and the novice is not fully aware of the meaning or significance of her utterance. From this perspective, the knowledge attributed to the *akratēs* (in its popular definition articulated in the claim of the many for example) can be taken to be neither the full-fledged knowledge (the knowledge acquired as a result of the deployment of the art of measurement) of the Socrates of the *Protagoras* nor the actual or developed knowledge of the virtuous person of the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In point of fact, the only knowledge which the *akratēs* can have seems to be the knowledge which is neither actualised nor used in her final action. It is, in other words, an ineffective knowledge.

The judgment produced as the outcome of the practical syllogism of Aristotle and the ensuing action can be likened to the process of action formation in the Stoics. The process starting with *phantasia*, followed by assent and then impulse and action, like the Aristotelian practical syllogism, focuses on propositions and judgments reached as a result of the workings of the rational faculty. The overpowering of the non-rational factors within the soul (in the case of Aristotle's account), or pursuing the mistaken interpretations of the *phantasia* (in the case of the Stoics) can be seen as the outcome of one's strengthening the wrong kind of power in the human soul or reason through exercise.

Educating reason by habitual activities, hence, is vital in preventing one to act akratically. Teaching the reason to evaluate the pleasures and pains correctly, to feel pleasure and happiness in the face of something good and right, to feel pain when confronted with something bad, learning to consider first and foremost the real good, which helps one to flourish and reach the perfect reason (that of the Stoic sage or the Platonic virtuous person), as good, leading one to attain and use the knowledge of the universal, moral principles, rather than only the particular knowledge focussing mostly on the satisfaction of the temporary appetitive pleasures, are what this education consists of. These are the only means to obviate akratic action. At the same time, the lack of this education is the reason why one falls into acting akratically.

Considered together, ruling the soul in accordance with the appetitive pleasures (against reason), allowing *phantasia aisthētikē*, which makes these pleasures more forceful, to gain strength, poor education, and bad habituation can be considered as the reasons why the minor premise of the practical syllogism of the *akratēs* cannot be linked to the major premise, or the reasons why potential knowledge cannot be actualised. When the role of good education and habituation in silencing the demands of the appetitive pleasures and in holding *phantasia aisthētikē* within the limits of *phantasia logistikē* is taken into account, it can be seen that taking only practical syllogism and the intellectual reading which focuses on the reasoning process and knowledge inhibits a full comprehension of the akratic action. Intellectual reading centring around whether or not the *akratēs* has knowledge misses out the circularity embedded in akratic action. That is to say, all the factors set forth above (i.e. education, *phantasia*, etc.) are the causes of the lack of knowledge of the *akrates*, yet at the same time, the lack of knowledge is the one that strengthens these factors and helps them to overpower the dictates of reason. Therefore, considering only the lack of knowledge or ignorance as the ultimate cause of *akrasia*, as can be found in the *Protagoras*, which is in line with the intellectual reading of *akrasia*, is insufficient in explaining akratic action. A full explanation of it should also make allowances for the role of education, habituation, character building, and *phantasia*.

The characteristic discussions of the human soul, that is, its being monistic/partless (seen in Plato's *Phaedo* and the Stoics in general) or bipartite/tripartite (found in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle), help the philosophers we have examined to reject or acknowledge *akrasia*. Rejecting *akrasia* owing to the fact that the fully rational model of the soul does not allow such an action, or accepting it because non-rational parts of the soul enable such an action can only answer the question as to the existence or non-existence of such an action. However, they do not provide us the ultimate cause of what is called akratic action. Laying out the nature or structure of the human soul, suggesting the activities of the non-rational parts of the soul (acting in accordance with the demands of the appetitive or emotional desires rather than the rational desires, for instance) as the only element leading one to act akratically is nothing but to postpone the burning questions regarding *akrasia*: What causes the akratic action? What is lacking in the *akratēs*?

Accusing passions, feelings, etc. themselves as the cause of *akrasia*, and trying to eliminate them entirely only help to paralyze the human soul and annihilate the possible harmony of it. Rather, trying to curb them, confining them in certain limits with the help of reason help one inhibit the occurrence of such actions. In this context, the illusory power of appearances (Plato), *phantasia aisthētikē* (Aristotle) or cataleptic/incognitive *phantasia* (the Stoics) can be seen as middle causes which is strengthened through continuous inactivity or wrong activity of the practical reason. Hence, what we have encountered in Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics as the culprit, that is *phantasia*, is in fact the result of this (in)activity.

At this point it should be pointed out that although the Stoics are in line with the Plato of the *Phaedo* in the context of their monistic understanding of the soul, and with the Plato of the *Protagoras* in their rejection of *akrasia*, they are also in line with Aristotle in their conception of *phantasia*. By considering passions not as desires produced by a non-rational part of the soul, but as wrong judgments, the Stoics read the so-called *akrasia* as nothing but an action caused by (wrong) assent given to the propositions conveying the content of non-cataleptic/incognitive *phantasia*. This assent, in fact, suggests an inadequate evaluation or wrong judgment, which is in accordance with the intellectual reading of both Aristotle and Plato. As an antidote to this wrong evaluation or assent, the Stoics suggest the education of the reason. The Stoics, then, who reject *akrasia* due to their monistic model of the soul, provide us an explanation (i.e., lack of education of the reason as the cause of *akrasia*) and a solution to what is called *akrasia*. In point of fact, this is another point of agreement between the Stoics and Aristotle, despite the fact that the former reject such an action, and the latter acknowledges it.

Therefore, I conclude that despite their varying, and seemingly discrepant, consequences ensued from their own discussions, irrespective of their rejecting or acknowledging *akrasia*, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics share the common view that the causes of seeming or real *akrasia* are the wrong evaluation of *phantasia* (which leads to an erroneous idea of the particular situation) and insufficient or wrong exercise of reason, that is, poor education and bad habits. Hence, I come to the conclusion that a full account of this concept can be provided if both the intellectual and the non-intellectual reading of this concept are considered together with the essential roles of

education and habituation, whose practice helps one form the corresponding character as well as *phantasia* and determines the actions of a person to a greater extent.



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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Surname, Name: Akkökler Karatekeli, Büşra

Nationality: Turkish (TC)

Date and Place of Birth: [REDACTED]

Marital Status: Married

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Education

MA	[2012-2016] Philosophy , Middle East Technical University The Title of the Thesis: <i>The Concept of Disinterestedness in Modern Philosophy of Art: Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger</i>
BA	[2015-2021] Ancient Greek Language and Literature , Ankara University
BSc	[2007-2012] Physics Engineering , Istanbul Technical University

Work Experience

2019 – present	Middle East Technical University, Department of Philosophy, Research Assistant
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Scholarship

2014 – 2015	TÜBİTAK 2210/B National MA Scholarship Program for Social Sciences and Humanities
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Publications

A. Articles

- 2017 “Modern Felsefede Estetik Çıkarsızlık Kavramının Gelişimi,” *FLSF (Journal of Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 24 (2017 Güz): 19-35.
- 2018 “The Public Use of Reason in Kant and Its Necessity for (the) Enlightenment,” *FLSF (Journal of Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 26 (2018 Güz): 135-147.
- 2018 “Demeter Kültü ve Eleusis Mysteriası,” *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi* 21, sayı: 84 (2018): 245-253.

B. Translations

- 2020 [from German] Immanuel Kant, “İnsan Sevgisi Sebebiyle Yalan Söylemenin Sözde Hakkı Üzerine,” *Pasajlar Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6 (September 2020), 283-7.
- 2022 [from Ancient Greek] Aristoteles, “Erdemler ve Kötülükler Üzerine,” *Felsefelogos* 77 (2022), 155-9.
- 2022 [from Ancient Greek] Ksenophon, *Şölen*, (Doğu Batı Yayınları)

Languages

English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Ancient Greek, Latin

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Eski Yunanca metinlerde *akrateia* () olarak da grebileceğimiz *akrasia* () kavramı, eski Yunan felsefesi erevesinde gerekleřtirilen etik alıřmalarında karřımıza ıkmaktadır. Akratik eylemi aıklamaya olan bu ilginin ana sebebi olarak, *akrasia* kavramının insan doęasında erdemi ve ktlę arařtıran alıřmaların, eylem kuramının, ahlak psikolojisinin ve epistemolojinin kesiřim noktasını oluřturması ne srlebilir. *Akrasia* kavramı, zellikle eylem ile bilgi(sizlik) arasındaki, karakter ile alışkanlık ve eęitim arasındaki iliřkiyi anlamlandırabilmek aısından, zerine yapılan pek ok alıřmaya raęmen, hl ilgi ekmeye ve yeni yorumların doęmasına elveriřli bir konu olmaya devam etmektedir.

Eski Yunanca olan *akrasia* kelimesi literatrde eřitli řekillerde karřımıza ıkmaktadır. Bunların bařlıcaları ‘kendine hakim olamama’, ‘z-denetim eksiklięi’, ‘(ahlaki) zayıflık’, ‘iradesizlik’, ‘gszlk’ olarak sıralanabilir. Ancak, kelimenin eski Yunancada tařıdıęı nansları kaybetmemek adına, bu tezde, *akrasia* kelimesi orijinal haliyle kullanılacaktır. Birleřik bir kelime olan *akrasia*, olumsuzluk anlamı veren *α-* n eki ile ‘g’, ‘kudret’, ‘kuvvet’ anlamlarına gelen ** kelimesinin birleřiminden oluřmuřtur ve ‘gc/kudreti olmama’ ya da ‘(kendine) hkmedememe’, ‘egemen olamama’ anlamına gelmektedir. Bu manalarıyla birlikte dřnldęnde *akrasia* kavramı, felsefi tartıřmalarda genel olarak, kiřinin iyi ya da en iyi olarak dřndę eylemin aksini yapması, ne yapması gerektięi ile ilgili dřncesine sadık kalmaması olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Bu alıřmada, *akrasia* kavramının eski Yunan felsefesinde nasıl ele alındıęı ve akratik eylemin nasıl oluřtuęuna dair ileri srlen aıklamaların birbirlerini ne lde bertaraf ettikleri veya destekledikleri incelenecektir. Tezin odak noktasını, *akrasianın* kabul grlen tanımındaki bilgiye akratik kiřinin ne lde sahip olduęu, bu bilginin ne tr bir bilgi olduęu ve bu bilgiyi glendiren ya da zayıflatan etmenlerin neler olduęu oluřturmaktadır. Bu amala, ilk olarak Platon (*Protagoras*, *Phaidn* ve *Devlet*), ardından Aristoteles (*Nikomakhos’s Etik*) ve son olarak Stoacı filozoflar ele alınacaktır. Stoa dřncesinde *akrasia* kavramının ne olduęunu arařtırırken, bařlıca

kaynak olarak Long ve Sedley'in Hellenistik filozofların eserlerinden ve fragmanlarından oluşan derleme eseri kullanılacaktır. Böylece, hem erken Stoa düşüncesini temsil eden Zeno, Kleanthes ve Khrysippos'un günümüze kalan fragmanlarını veya onların sözlerini aktaranların süzgecinden geçtiği haliyle bu filozofların görüşlerini hem de Stoa düşüncesini eleştiren düşünürlerin (Galen ve Plutarkhos gibi) görüş ve izahlarını incelemiş olacağız.

Akrasia'nın kelime olarak Platon'da yalnızca iki kere kullanıldığını görmekteyiz. Bunların ikisi de ona atfedilen *Tanımlar* (*Ὅροι-Horoi*) adlı eserinde bulunur: 416a1 ve 416a3. Burada *akrasia* 'kendine hakim olamama' anlamıyla kullanılmıştır. Platon'un külliyatında *akrasia* kelimesiyle bu kadar az karşılaşılmasına rağmen, aynı anlamı taşıyan ve kelimenin daha eski bir formu olan *akrateia* (*ἀκράτεια*) sözcüğü çok daha fazla görünmektedir. İlk olarak Platon'un *Protagoras*'ında adı geçen bu kavram, daha çok Aristoteles'in *Nikomakhos'a Etik* adlı eserinde yürütmüş olduğu ayrıntılı tartışma ile dikkat çekecek bir öneme sahip olabilmektedir. Bu sebeple, Platon'un kendi eserlerinde kullanmış olduğu *akrateia* kelimesi yerine, antik ve modern literatürde, Aristoteles'in kendi yapıtında kullanmış olduğu *akrasia* kelimesinin kullanımı yaygınlaşmıştır.

Aristoteles'in üzerine tartışmasını inşa ettiği ve popülerleştirdiği bu kavramın eski Yunan felsefesinde ilk olarak nasıl ele alındığını saptayabilmek için, bu tezde ilk olarak Platon ile başlanılacak olup, ardından Aristoteles'in bu kavram çerçevesinde Platon'un açıklamalarını nasıl ele aldığı tartışılacaktır. Son olarak, Platon'a bir geri dönüş olarak ele alınabilecek Stoa düşüncesindeki *akrasia* okuması irdelenecek ve hangi noktalarda Platon ve Aristoteles ile uyuştukları ve ayrıştıkları incelenecektir.

2. Bölüm Platon'un *akrasia* yorumuna odaklanmaktadır. 2.1'de Platon'un görüşleri *Protagoras* adlı eseri çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır. Eserin özellikle 352b ile 358d5 arası *akrasia* kavramı ile ilişkili olan bölümü içerdiği için tartışmamızın merkezini oluşturmaktadır. Kendisinden sonra gelen filozofların eserlerinde karşımıza çıkan *akrasia* tanımının ilk olarak burada bütünlüklü bir şekilde formüle edildiğini görmekteyiz. *Akrasia* üzerine yapılan daha sonraki tüm tartışmalar bu tanıma referans göstererek, ya bunu reddeden ya da kabul eden izahlarda ve incelemelerde bulunmuşlardır. Bu sebeple, Sokrates'in *Protagoras*'ta ortaya koyduğu bu tanıma anlamak oldukça önemlidir.

Sokrates'in anlatımıyla, çoğunluk, (*οἱ πολλοί*) bilginin (*ἐπιστήμη*) her zaman güçlü ve erk sahibi olmadığını ve de hazzın, aşkın, öfkenin ve korkunun cazibesine kapılıp onlara karşı koyamayabileceğini ileri sürer.⁴⁸⁹ Bilgiye atfedilen bu güçsüzlük ve yetersizlik, Sokrates'in bilgi anlayışıyla tümüyle ters düşmektedir. İyinin ve kötünün bilgisinin en güçlü nüfuza sahip olduğunu düşünen Sokrates, bu bilgiye sahip olması durumunda, kişinin bu bilgiye ters düşecek herhangi bir eylemde bulunmasının imkansız olduğunu ifade eder. Diğer bir deyişle, kişinin iyinin peşinden gitmesi ve kötü olandan kaçınması, iyi ve kötü bilgisinin gerektirdiği, kaçınılmaz bir eylemdir. Bilgi ile eylem arasındaki bu dolaysız ilişki, Sokrates'e göre, kişinin bu bilgiye zıt bir şekilde hareket etme olanağını ortadan kaldırır. Kişi eğer bu bilgiye sahipse, hazzın, tutkunun ve acının bilginin karşısında zayıf ve etkisiz olması kaçınılmazdır, çünkü bilgi her zaman etkin ve hükmeden konumundadır. Bilgiye atfedilen bu gücün ne olduğunu açığa çıkarma tartışması, Aristoteles'te bilgiden ne anlamamız gerektiği tartışmasına evrilmiştir. *Akratēs*in (akratik kişi) sahip olduğunun söylendiği bu bilginin ne olduğu konusu daha sonraki tartışmaların odak noktasını oluşturmaktadır.

İlk bakışta, çoğunluğun iddiasını çürütebilmek adına, Sokrates'in onların ileri sürdüğünün aksine bilginin duygulara ve hazlara yenik düşemeyeceği 'gerçeğini' kanıtlaması beklenebilir. Ancak Sokrates, çoğunluğun iddiasını, eğer kişide mevcutsa bilginin asla yenilmez olduğunu tartışıp çürütmekten ziyade, bu iddianın baştan 'gülünç' veya 'absürd' (*γελοῖον*) olduğunu göstererek çürütme yolunu seçer. İngilizce "the Ridiculous Argument" başlığı altında işlenen bu tartışma, çoğunluğun bu iddiasının savundukları hedonizm görüşleri ile birlikte ele alındığında absürditeden başka bir sonuca varamayacağını ileri sürmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, bu argüman, eğer çoğunluk hem hedonizmi savunuyor hem de *akrasiya*ya dair bu yargıyı öne sürüyorsa, Sokrates'in onların bu iddiasını çürütmeye gerek kalmayacağını, aksine bu iddialarının aslında savunulamayacak kadar gülünç olduğunu ifade etmektedir.

Bu 'gülünç' argüman şu şekilde dile getirilebilir: Sokrates'in ifade ettiği üzere, çoğunluk bir yandan bilgi onda mevcut olmasına rağmen (diğer bir deyişle, neyi yapmanın iyi ve neyi yapmanın kötü olduğunu bilmesine rağmen) kişinin, haz, acı, korku vb. duygular karşısında yenik düşerek bu bilgisinin aksine hareket ettiğini öne sürer. Öte yandan ise, aynı zamanda, hedonizmi savunarak iyiyi haz verici olanla,

⁴⁸⁹ Plato, *Prot.* 352b5-c2.

kötüyü ise acı verici olanla eşitler. Ancak, *akratēs*in durumunu anlatan bu yargıdaki haz ve acı kelimeleri yerine, (savundukları hedonizmleri dikkate alınarak) sırasıyla iyi ve kötü kelimeleri yerleştirildiğinde, karşımıza, Sokrates'in de dile getirdiği gibi 'gülünç' ya da 'absürd' bir iddia çıkar: Kişi, bunu yapmaya mecbur edilmediği halde, gerçekleştireceği eylemin kötü olduğunu bilmesine rağmen, bu kötü eylemi iyi olan tarafından baştan çıkarılarak (ya da iyilik yüzünden) yapar.⁴⁹⁰

Bu cümle, bize akratik eylemin olamayacağını değil, ancak çoğunluğun akratik eylemi açıklayan bu iddiasının absürd olması ya da Sokrates'in ifade ettiği şekliyle 'gülmeyi hak eden' (*γελοῖον*) bir iddia olması sebebiyle savunulamayacağını ortaya koyar. Burada dikkat edilmesi gereken bir nokta ise, çoğunluğun iddiasında bilgiye (*epistēmē*) yapılan vurgudur. Kişinin neyin iyi neyin kötü olduğunu 'bilip' bunun aksine davranması ile kişinin buna 'inanması' ve aksine davranması arasındaki fark, aslında hem çoğunluğun iddiasını hem de Sokrates'in bilginin yenilmez olması düşüncesini aynı anda savunulabilir kılabilir. Diğer bir deyişle, eğer çoğunluğun kişide mevcut olduğunu söylediği bilgi Sokrates'in anladığı, 'gerçek,' en yetkin bilgi değil de, daha müphem bir bilgi, inanç veyahut kanâat ise, Sokrates çoğunluğun iddiasını kendi düşüncesini desteklemek için kullanabilir: Kişi yapacak olduğu kötü eylemi bu eylemin iyi olduğuna inanarak ya da düşünerek gerçekleştirebilir. Ancak bu 'gerçek' bilgi değildir. Nitekim, eğer kişi gerçekten bilgiye sahip olsaydı, bu kötü eylemi gerçekleştirmezdi. Böylece, bilgi ile kanâat arasında yapılabilecek bu ayrım, her iki görüşü de kabul edilebilir kılacaktır. Fakat, Sokrates bu yolu izlemez. Ona göre, kişi bilgisine ya da kanâatine göre değil, ancak yanlış hesabının ya da yanlış değerlendirmesinin sonucu olarak kötü eylemi gerçekleştirmektedir.

Burada sözü edilen yanlış hesaplama, ya da yanlış değerlendirme kişinin hazzı ve acıyı (ya da hedonizmin sunduğu eşitliği kullanacak olursak, iyiyi ve kötüyü) yanlış değerlendirmesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. (Zamansal ya da uzamsal) yakınlık ve uzaklık (ve onlarla bağlantılı olarak büyüklük ve küçüklük) bu değerlendirmede başat rolü oynamaktadır. Hemen duyulacak haz ile hemen maruz kalınacak acı, ya da gelecekte duyulacak haz ile gelecekte yaşanacak acı karşılaştırıldığında, kişinin doğru eylemi seçmesi daha kolay gözükmektedir. Ancak karşılaştırma ve değerlendirme hemen duyulacak haz ile gelecekteki bir acı arasında yapıldığında, kişinin yanlış bir

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 355d2-4.

değerlendirmede bulunarak yakın hazzı, gelecekte karşılaşılabilecek acıya tercih etmesi daha olasıdır. Diğer yandan, yakın hazzın daha yoğun (büyük) hissedilebileceği, uzak acının ise daha hafif (küçük) hissedilebileceği de göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Buradaki haz yani 'iyi' ile ve acı yani 'kötü' ile neyin kastedildiğini anlamak, yakın ve uzak, büyük ve küçük hazların ya da acıların değerlendirmesini doğru yapmak kişinin akratik eylemde bulunmaması için önem arz etmektedir. Burada gerekli olan bilgi, 'ölçüm/değerlendirme sanatı'nı özümseyerek bu sanatın doğru bir şekilde iş görmesi sonucu ulaşılabilecek bilgiyi kastetmektedir. Bu sanat, hazzın ya da acının (veyahut iyinin ya da kötünün) nesnesinin iyi değerlendirilmesini ifade etmektedir. Nesnenin kişide uyandırdığı elde etme arzusunun hazzın yakın olması sebebiyle yoğun ya da ondan kaçınma hissinin acının uzak olması sebebiyle hafif olabileceğini hesaba katması, kişiye bu sanatı doğru kullandığını ve bu sanatı kullanması sonucunda elde ettiği bilginin onu akratik eylemden koruyacağını işaret etmektedir. Sokrates'in kişi bilgiye sahipken aksine hareket edemeyeceğini söylediği durumda, söz konusu bilgi, bu sebeple, müphem, zayıf bir bilgi ya da kanâat değil, hazzın ve acının ya da iyinin ve kötünün ölçme sanatı ile değerlendirilmesiyle ulaşılabilecek bilgi olmalıdır.

Bu bilgiler ışığında, Sokrates'in akratik durumu çoğunluğun iddiasında ifade edildiği haliyle reddederken, bu durumun ortaya çıkmasının sebebi ve açıklaması olarak bilgisizliği ileri sürmesi daha iyi anlaşılabilir. Neyin uzun vadede ve geniş planda daha iyi ve daha haz verici olacağını bilmeme ya da bunları yanlış değerlendirme olarak tanımlanabilecek bilgisizlik ya da cehalet, Sokrates'e göre, *akrasianın* sebebidir. Hazzın, acının, korku ya da aşkın, bilgiyi etkisiz hale getirebilecek bir etkinliğe sahip olamayacağına düşünen Sokrates için, akratik durum, eğer böyle bir durum varsa, ancak bilginin yokluğunun bir kanıtı olabilir.

Bilginin gücünün ya da hazzın, acının, korkunun, vb. duyguların karşısındaki güçsüzlüğünün tartışılmadığı *Protagoras*'ta, akratik eylemin reddi, gerçekten bu tip bir eylemin varlığı ya da yokluğu ile ilgili olmayıp, bu eylemin çoğunluk tarafından nasıl tanımlandığı üzerine odaklanmıştır. Bilginin olmayışını *akrasianın* ana sebebi olarak ileri süren Sokrates, hazzın ve acının bilgiyi yenebilecek bir gücünün olup olmadığını tartışmamıştır. Bu tartışma, bu tezin 2. Bölüm'ünün ikinci yarısında insan ruhu incelenirken ele alınacaktır.

2.2, Platon'un *akrasia* okumasını insan ruhu çerçevesinde incelemektedir. İnsan ruhunu ele almak, ne tip ruh anlayışının akratik eyleme izin verdiğini ya da bu

eylemi reddettiğini anlamlandırmada bize yol gösterici olacaktır. Platon'da birbiri ile karşıtlık gösteren iki ruh anlayışından bahsedebiliriz. Bunlardan ilki *Phaidōn* diyalogunda karşımıza çıkarken, diğeri *Devlet*, *Phaidros*, *Timaios* ve *Yasalar* diyaloglarında karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Ruhun ölümsüz olup olmadığının tartışıldığı *Phaidōn* diyalogunda Platon, çürümenin, bozulmanın, bozunmanın ve değişimin gerçekleştiği yer olarak bedeni işaret eder ve onu parçalı, birleşik bir yapı olarak ele alır. Tanrısal ve ölümsüz olana, kendisiyle hep aynı olan yani değişmeye benzerliği nedeniyle ruh, çürümeye ve bozunmaya mahal veren parçalı, birleşik bir yapıda olamaz. Her türlü duygu ve iştah (yemeğe, içmeye ve cinsel zevklere dair olan itkisel hazlar), bu ruh anlayışında ruha değil bedene ait olarak düşünülmektedir. Bunların bedene ait olarak görülmesinin ardında, duygu ve hazların saflığı bozan etmenler olarak düşünülmesi yatmaktadır. Ruhun ölümsüz ve tanrısal olana olan benzerliği verili olarak alınmıştır ve ruhun bu benzerliği sağlayabilmesi için onun saflığını bozabilecek duygu ve hazların onda bulunmaması gerekmektedir. Platon'un *Phaidon* diyalogunda ortaya koyduğu ruh anlayışı, bu sebeple monistiktir (yani parçalı ya da birleşik değildir).

Bu anlayışa göre, ruh, içinde akıl dışında, duyguları ve hazları da içeren başka bir bölümün olduğu bir töz olmayıp, sadece aklın etkin olduğu bir tözdür. Kişiyi, (aklının sunduğu) bilgisinin aksine hareket etmeye yönelten duyguların ve fiziksel hazların bedene ait olduğunu ifade ederek, Platon bedeni haretekete geçiren olarak ruhu bu dürtüsel ve itkisel etkilerden uzak tutmuş olur. Buradan yola çıkarak, *Phaidōn*'da ortaya konan ruhun bu monistik yorumunun akmatik eyleme izin vermediği ileri sürülebilir. Elbette *akrasianın* bu şekilde reddedilmesi, bedenın ruh üzerinde söz sahibi olabileceği ve kişiyi yanlış eyleme sürükleyebilceği ihtimalini dışlamaz. *Phaidōn*'da ele alınan monistik ruh anlayışı, *Protagoras*'ta ortaya konan çoğunluğun betimlediği *akrasianın* reddedilmesini desteklemektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, duyguların ve hazların, bilgi mevcutken (aklın buyurduğu) bu bilginin aksine olacak şekilde kişiyi akmatik eyleme sürüklemesi iddiası, monistik ruh anlayışı ile uyumlu değildir. Bunun ana sebebi, bu ruh anlayışında, ruhun (parçalı olmaması sebebiyle) sadece akıl ve onun sağladığı bilgi doğrultusunda hareket edeceği ve aksi bir eylemin ruhun böyle bir bilgiyi üretmemesi ya da barındırmaması durumunda bedene ait olan duygu ve hazların üstünlük kazanması ile gerçekleşeceğidir. Burada, bir önceki bölümde incelediğimiz gibi, bilginin duygu ve hazların karşısında yenik düşmesi değil,

bilgisizlik durumunda kişinin duygu ve hazların arzuları doğrultusunda hareket etmesi söz konusudur. Bu açıdan ele alındığında, monistik ruh anlayışının *Protagoras*'ta ifade edilen çoğunluğun *akrasia* yorumuna karşı, Sokrates'in görüşünü desteklediği görülebilir.

Phaidōn'daki monistik ruh anlayışının aksine, Platon *Devlet* (4. Kitap), *Phaidros*, *Timaeos* ve *Yasalar*'da iki ya da üç kısımdan oluşan bir ruh anlayışını ortaya koymuştur. Bu tip birden fazla kısımdan oluşan ruh anlayışının bizim için önemi, bu ruh modelinin akratik eyleme izin vermesinde yatmaktadır. *Phaidron*'da duygular ve hazlar bedene ait olarak düşünülürken ve bunlar ile akıl arasındaki anlaşmazlık beden ile ruh arasındaki bir çatışma olarak ele alınırken, yukarıda sayılan diyaloglarda ifade edilen ruh anlayışlarında anlaşmazlık ruhun içinde gerçekleşmektedir.

Ruhun monistik olmadığı, aksine (iki ya da üç) kısımdan oluştuğu düşüncesinin ardında Platon'un şu akıl yürütme yatmaktadır. Platon, bir şeyin aynı anda, aynı hususta ve aynı bağlamda karşıt yönde hareket edemeyeceğini ifade eder. Eğer ruh, aynı anda aynı şeye karşı, hem bir çekim hem de bir kaçınma arzusu hissediyorsa, bu durumda ruh her bir arzuya (çekim ve kaçınma) karşılık gelen bir kısma sahip olmalıdır.

Örneğin, *Devlet* diyalogunda tartışılan ruh anlayışına göre ruh üç kısımdan oluşmaktadır: *θυμοειδής* (tutkunun ya da duygunun baskın olduğu bölüm), *ἐπιθυμητικόν* (iştahın ya da fiziksel, itkisel hazların baskın olduğu bölüm) ve *λογιστικόν* (aklın baskın olduğu bölüm). Rasyonel olmayan güdüler olarak düşünülebilecek hazlar ve duygular, bu ruh modelinde, aklın karşısına onu alt edebilme gücüne sahip birer erk olarak çıkar. Başka bir ifade ile, artık ruh, içinde sadece aklın ve rasyonel düşüncenin hakim olduğu, kişiyi doğru eyleme yöneltme yetkisine koşulsuz olarak sahip bir yapı olarak ele alınmaz. Bunun yerine, aklın emirleriyle çelişecek arzuları uyandırmaya gücü yeten ve kişiyi bu arzuların tatmini yönünde hareket ettirebilecek rasyonel olmayan motivasyonları da barındıran bir ruh anlayışı söz konusudur.

Ruhta bulunan her bir kısım kişiyi hareket ettirmede aynı güce sahip olduğundan, hangi kısmın arzusunun ruhta baskın olacağı baştan belli değildir. Ancak, ruhta hangi kısım baskın olmalı sorusunun cevabı Platon'a göre bellidir. Sadece anlık, tekil arzularının tatmini ile ilgili olan, ruhun, bedenin ya da tamamıyla ele alındığında bir kişinin mutluluğu, iyiliği (yani onun için neyin en iyi olduğu, onun refahı, sağlığı,

vb.) ile ilgilenmeyen ruhun rasyonel olmayan iki kısmı, kişinin eylemlerini belirleyen motivasyonlar olarak kişi için zararlı olabilir. Ruh, bedeni ve kişiyi bütün olarak ele alan, onun mutluluğu, iyiliği ve refahını kısa değil uzun erimli olarak düşünen akıl ise kişiyi asıl harekete geçiren motivasyon olmalıdır. Her bir kısmın kendi arzu nesnesini en iyi olarak gördüğünü hesaba katacak olursak, aslında aklın ruhu yönetmeye en iyi aday olduğu daha iyi anlaşılabilir. Diğer iki kısmın, görünürdeki iyi olanı gerçekten iyi olan olarak yorumlama ihtimali de ruhun bu iki rasyonel olmayan kısmının ruhta baskın olan motivasyon olmaması gerektiği düşüncesini desteklediği ileri sürülebilir. Aklın ya da ruhtaki rasyonel motivasyonun hem kendi arzusunu hem de tüm ruh için iyi olanı hesaba katması onun ruhu yönetmesi gerektiğini de göstermektedir.

Aklın ruhta baskın motivasyon olması her ne kadar arzu edilse de, bu bir ideal durumu betimlemektedir. Kişinin ruhundaki dengenin ya da uyumun sağlanması çoğunlukla kendiliğinden gerçekleşmemektedir. Bu uyum, ruhun rasyonel olmayan kısımlarını rasyonel olan kısma tabi kılma olarak değil, fakat hem rasyonel hem de rasyonel olmayan kısımların birlikte çalışması olarak ele alınabilir. Ancak, bu uyumu yakalayamayan ve karşıt arzuları olan bir ruh kaçınılmaz bir şekilde ruhun kısımları içinde bir mücadeleyi getirir. Bu açıdan ele alındığında, bu ruh anlayışı, açık bir şekilde, *Protagoras*'taki çoğunluğun iddiasında betimlenen akmatik eylemi mümkün kılabilir, ya da en azından, böyle bir eylemin açıklamasını oluşturabilecek bir niteliktedir.

3. Bölüm, Platon'un tartışmaya açtığı akmatik eylemi çok daha detaylı bir şekilde ele alan Aristoteles'in *akrasia* okumasını incelemektedir. Bu amaçla, *akrasianın* başlı başına tartışma konusu yapıldığı Aristoteles'in *Nikomakhos'a Etik* adlı eserinin VII. Kitabı araştırmamızın merkezini oluşturmaktadır. Burada, *akrasia* tek seferlik yanlış bir eylemde bulunma durumundan öte, bir karakter özelliği (*τὸ ἥθος*) olarak ele alınır. *Akrasia*, ne kötü bir davranış ne de erdemli bir davranış işaret eder. Aristoteles, akmatik eylemi incelerken, ilk olarak, bu eyleme dair genel kanıları (*ἔνδοξα*) ortaya koymaktadır. Bunların arasından *akrasia* için doğru ve yanlış olanları ayırıştırıp, bu kavrama açıklık getirmeye çalışır. Bu doğrultuda, öncelikle bu karakter özelliğinin diğer karakter özelliklerinden farkını ve benzerliklerini inceler. Bu sayede, *akrasianın* ne olduğu ve ne olmadığı, diğer karakter özellikleri ile karşılaştırma yapılarak anlaşılma çalışılır.

Örneğin, erdem ve kötülüklerin gösterildiği bir skala üstünde, kendine kötülüğe yakın bir yerde yer bulan *akrasia* ile kendisiyle sıkça karıştırılan *ἀκολασία* (isteklerine hiçbir türlü ket vurmama) arasındaki farklılıkları ve bu karışıklığın sebebini ortaya koyar. Hem *akrasia* hem de *ἀκολασία* benzer hazlara ilgi duyarlar. Yeme, içme ve cinsel hazların her iki karakter özelliğın de yöneldiğı hazlar olması ve bu hazları tatmin etme yönünde hareket etmeleri, aralarındaki farkın gözden kaçmasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu karakter özelliklerini birbirlerinden ayıran en önemli nokta, eylemin yapılma anında ve de sonrasında, *akratēs*ın ya da *ἀκόλαστος*ün (akolastik eylemde bulunan kişi) herhangi bir iç çatışma yaşayıp yaşamamasıdır.

Neyin doğru olduğı veya neyin yapılmasının kişi için en iyi olduğı bilgisine sahip olmayan ya da bu konuda bütünüyle yanlış bir fikre sahip olan *ἀκόλαστος*, fiziksel hazlarını tatmin etme dürtüsüne herhangi bir şekilde ket vurmaz. Bunun ana sebebi ise, bu hazların tatminin doğru bir şey olduğına olan inancıdır. *Akratēs* ise, yanlış, yani akratik, bir eylemde bulunurken, yapmakta olduğı ya da yapacak olduğı eylemin doğru olmadığının bilincindedir.

Akrasianın birlikte ele alındığı bir diğer karakter özelliğı ise *enkrateia*dır (kendine hakim olma). Bu iki karakter özelliğı sıklıkla karşıt özellikler olarak ele alınır. Ancak *enkrateia* – kendisi bir erdem olmamasına karşın, erdeme yakın, iyi bir karakter özelliğı olarak – bir aşırılık ile bir yetersizliğin ortası olarak tanımlanır. Bu orta yolun aşırılığı, bir şeyden alması gerekenden (çok daha) fazla zevk aldığı için aklın emirlerine karşı çıkan *akrasia* olurken, yetersizliğı, alması gerekenden çok daha az zevk alan bir karakter özelliğidir. Bu yetersizlik durumu çok az karşılaşıldığı için, sıklıkla gözden kaçır ve *akrasia* ile *enkrateia* zıt özellikler olarak görülür. *Akolastosta* olduğı gibi, *enkrateia* da *akrasia* ile ortak hazlara sahiptir. Ancak, bu ikisini birbirinden ayıran özellik, *akratēs*ın bu hazlara karşı yenik düştüğü yerde, *enkratēs*ın (enkratik kişi) bu hazlara karşı koyabilmesidir. *Enkratēs*ın bu karşı koymayı nasıl başardığı, *akratēste* neyin eksik ya da yanlış olduğunu anlamada bize ışık tutmaktadır.

Enkrateianın bir erdem olarak ele alınmamasının sebebi, bir tip karakter özelliğine sahip kişide bir iç çatışmanın olmasıdır. Erdemli kişinin aksine, *enkratēste*, *akratēs* ile paylaştığı hazlar onda bu hazları tatmin etmek için bir istek uyandırır ve bu istek doğrultusunda eylemde bulunup bulunmama konusunda bir iç muhakemeye girer. Aklı ile iştahı ya da duyguları arasında olan bu iç çatışmadan, her ne kadar aklın gösterdiği doğrultuda hareket ederek çıkmayı başarsa da, *enkratēs*, içinde bir

çatışma yaşaması sebebiyle, ruhunda böyle bir çatışmanın yaşanmasının mümkün olmadığı, ruhu bir uyum ve ahenk içinde olan erdemli kişiden ayrılır. *Akratēs* ise, böyle bir iç çatışmanın yaşanmasına ek olarak, hazlarına yenik düşüp, aklının ona sunduğu yolu izlemeyerek erdemden çok daha fazla uzakta yer alır. *Enkratēs*in aklın emirlerine boyun eğmesi ve aynı zamanda fiziksel arzularına karşı direnmesi, güçlü bir karakterin göstergesidir. Bu arzulara yenik düşen *akratēs* ise, güçsüz ya da iradesiz bir karakteri işaret etmektedir.

*Akratēs*in iştaha dayalı ya da bedeni hazları tatmin etme arzusu ve rasyonel arzulardan ziyade bu tip arzunun peşinden gitmesi, arzuları genel olarak incelemeyi gerekli kılmaktadır. Genel olarak, rasyonel ve rasyonel olmayan olarak iki ana başlık altında ele alınan arzu, eylemin motivasyonu olma işlevini yerine getirmektedirler. Akratik eylemin meydana gelmesinde, rasyonel arzu *boulēsis* (βούλησις) ile rasyonel olmayan arzuların, yani *thumosun* (θυμός – tutku ya da öfke, korku, vb. duyguların uyandırdığı arzu) ve *epithumianın* (ἐπιθυμία – iştah veya şehvet) birbirleri ile çatışması ve ikinci grubun aklın emrine ya da tavsiyesine karşı çıkma pahasına, kişinin zararına kontrolü ele alması söz konusudur. Bu arzular, akratik eylemde olduğu gibi birbirleriyle çatışma içinde olabilecekleri gibi, birlikte, diğer bir ifade ile, birbirlerini güçlendiren şekilde de çalışabilirler. Akratik eylemde görülen, rasyonel ve rasyonel olmayan arzular arasındaki çatışmada, *boulēsis* ve *epithumia* arasındaki çatışma asıl (koşulsuz) *akrasiayı*, *boulēsis* ve *thumos* arasındaki ise *akrasiaya* benzeyeni (koşullu *akrasia*) ifade etmektedir.

Arzu her ne kadar gerçekleştirilecek eylemi motive eden faktör olarak iş görse de, Aristoteles'e göre arzu kendisi de hareket ettirilmiş olan hareket ettiricidir. Buna karşın, arzunun nesnesi, hareket etmeyen hareket ettirici olarak, diğer bir deyişle, hareketin asıl hareket ettiricisi olarak anlaşılır. Arzuyu uyandıran, eylemi yaratan olarak arzunun nesnesi gerçek ya da görünürde iyi olabilir. Bir şeyin, gerçekte öyle olup olmamasına bakılmaksızın, iyi olarak görülmesi, arzunun oluşması ve kişiyi harekete geçirmesi için yeterlidir. Kişiye iyi olarak görülenin gerçekten iyi olan ile örtüşmesi zorunlu değildir. Erdemli insan için bu örtüşmenin her zaman gerçekleşmesine rağmen, erdemli olmayan, enkratik kişi için bazen, akratik kişi için ise çoğunlukla bu örtüşmenin gerçekleşmediği söylenebilir. Genel olarak eylemde, bu araştırma çerçevesinde de özellikle akratik eylemde, belirleyici bir etkiye sahip olan neyin iyi 'göründüğü' konusu bu eylemi anlamlandırmada önem arz etmektedir.

Anlıksal tartışmanın başlangıcı olan ve 3. Bölümün 7. kısmında ele alınan bu konu, ‘imgelem’, ‘tasarım’ ya da ‘tezahür’ olarak çevrilebilen *phantasiayı* (*φαντασία*) incelemeyi gerekli kılmaktadır. Hangi eylem doğrultusunda hareket edileceği konusunda etkin olan rasyonel ya da rasyonel olmayan arzular, aslında, bir şeyin iyi ya da kötü olarak görülmesini sağlayan *phantasia* ile güçlenmektedir. Bir diğer ifade ile, bir şey iyi olarak sınıflandırıldığında, bu, kişide bu iyi olan şeyi elde etme, bu şeye sahip olma arzusu uyandırarak onu bu arzuyu tatmin etme yolunda harekete geçirir. Benzer bir şekilde, bir şeyin kötü olarak görülmesi, kişide bu şeyden uzaklaşma arzusuna ve nihayetinde kaçınmaya sebep olur. *Phantasianın* rasyonel olmayan arzulara (*thumos* ve *epithumia*) güç kazandırarak, kişi için iyi olmayan bir şeyi iyi olarak göstermesiyle akmatik eylem gerçekleşebilir. Bu noktada, Aristoteles’in *De Anima*’da tartıştığı *φαντασία αἰσθητική* ile *φαντασία λογιστική* kavramlarına başvurmak akmatik eylemi ortaya çıkaran faktörleri anlamada öne çıkmaktadır. Burada, *φαντασία αἰσθητική*, iştahın ya da şehvetin etkin olduğu algısal imgelemken, *φαντασία λογιστική*, rasyonel arzunun etkin olduğu bir imgelemdir. *Akrasiayı* *φαντασία λογιστική*nin *φαντασία αἰσθητική* tarafından önünün kesilmesi olarak okuyabiliriz. Böyle bir durumda, *φαντασία αἰσθητική* yapılmaması gereken bir eylemi ‘iyi olmayan’ olarak gösterecek yerde, (bu her ne kadar ‘görünürde iyi’ olsa da) ‘iyi’ olarak göstermiş olmalıdır. Böyle bir okuma, *akrasianın* Sokratik okuması ile paralellik göstermektedir. 2. Bölüm’de, Sokrates’in *akrasiayı* yanlış değerlendirme olarak tartıştığını ve bu yanlış değerlendirme sonucu, hazlar ve acılar arasında doğru bir değerlendirme yapılamamasının sonucu olarak, iyi ile kötünün ayırt edilemediğini ve kişinin akmatik eylemi gerçekleştirdiğini ifade etmiştik. Aristoteles’te *phantasia* başlığı altında ele aldığımız konu da benzer bir noktaya işaret etmektedir. Her iki filozof da, farklı terimler kullansalar da, akmatik eylemin sebebi olarak kişi için gerçekten iyi olanın kötü, kötü olanın da iyi olarak değerlendirilmesini görmektedirler.

Ancak bu açıklama akmatik eylemin açıklamasını sonlandırmaktan ziyade, ötelemektedir. Çünkü, kötünün niçin iyi olarak görüldüğünün, iştah ya da şehvetin (fiziksel hazların), bu hazlarla ilgili arzuların, ya da bu arzulara bu gücü verenin, Aristoteles’in ifadesi ile *φαντασία αἰσθητική*nin, kontrolü nasıl ele geçirdiğinin açıklaması yapılmamıştır. Bu noktada, alışkanlık, eğitim ve bunların sonucunda oluşan karakter, akmatik eylemin oluşmasında başat etken olarak düşünülebilir. *φαντασία αἰσθητική*yi güçlendiren, bu tip *phantasianın* ilgili olduğu arzuları ve hazları baskın

hale geitren eylemleri yapmayı alışkanlık hale getirmek, bu tip arzulara karşı koymamayı olağanlaştıran bir karakterin oluşmasına sebep olacaktır. Benzer şekilde, *φαντασία λογιστική*nin kullanımını güçlendiren, rasyonel arzuları ya da aklın emirleriyle çatışmayacak rasyonel olmayan arzuları izlemeye ve onları tatmin etmeyi alışkanlık haline getirmek, bu tip arzuları gerçekleştirecek bir karakterin oluşmasına vesile olmaktadır. Kişi hangi karakteri geliştirirse, bu karaktere uygun olarak erdemli ya da akratik eylemde bulunması o kadar doğal olacaktır. İyi bir şeyden haz alınmasının, kötü bir şey karşısında ise acı duyulmasının (rahatsız olunmasının) öğretilmesi süreci olarak eğitimin de, akratik eylemi engelleyeceği gibi, bu eğitimin alınmaması durumunda akratik eyleme sebep olacağı görülebilir.

Kötü alışkanlık, yetersiz ya da yanlış bir eğitimi akratik eylemin sebepleri olarak sunmak, bizi akratik eylemin istemeyerek yapılan bir eylem olarak yorumlamaya götürmemelidir. Çünkü kişi, bu alışkanlıkları ve dolayısıyla sahip olduğu karakteri geliştirirken yaptığı hareketlerin bilincindedir. Aynı şekilde, zayıf bir eğitim yüzünden akratik eylemde bulunan kişi de, aldığı eğitimi uygulamaya koyarken tamamıyla bilinçsiz ve pasif değildir. Aristoteles'in isteyerek ve istemeyerek yapılan eylemler ayrımında, akratik eylem bu sebeple isteyerek yapılan eylemler kategorisine dahil olmaktadır. Ayrıca, Aristoteles, alışkanlık ile yapılmış da olsa, akratik eylemin herhangi bir zorlama altında yapılmadığından isteyerek yapılmış bir eylem olduğunu ifade eder. Öte yandan, Platon akratik eylemi istemeyerek yapılan eylemler olarak tanımlar. Çünkü, ona göre, yanlış ya da kötü bir eylemde bulunmuş olan kişi bunu ancak istemeyerek gerçekleştirebilir; kimse isteyerek ve bilerek yanlış bir eylemde bulunmaz.

Şu ana kadar incelememizde, *akrasianın* bedensel arzular, fiziki hazlar ile rasyonel arzuların çatışmasına dayanan anlıksal olmayan bir okuması sunulmuştur. Ancak, bu okumanın dışında bir de *akrasianın* anlıksal bir okuması mevcuttur. 3. Bölümün 9. kısmını ana konusunu oluşturan bu okuma, pratik tasımı (*practical syllogism*) merkeze almaktadır. Bu tasım, Sokrates'in *Protagoras*'ta *akrasia* için ileri sürdüğü bilgisizlikten ne anlaşılması gerektiğini incelemektedir. Bu pratik tasım, Aristoteles'in *akrasia* tartışmasına getirdiği en önemli katkı olarak görülmektedir.

Pratik tasımın *Protagoras*'ta dile getirilen Sokrates ile çoğunluğun iddiaları arasında bir uzlaşma sağladığını iddia edebiliriz. *Akrasianın* bilginin olduğu durumda değil, aksine bilginin olmadığı durumda ortaya çıktığını ileri süren Sokrates ile

akrasiada bilginin mevcut olduğunu iddia eden çoğunluk arasındaki bu anlaşmazlık, ancak bilgiden ne anlaşılması gerektiği ortaya konursa çözülebilecektir. Bilgi ile kanâat, gizil (potensiyel) bilgi ile edimsel (aktüel) bilgi, ve son olarak tikel ile evrensel bilgi arasındaki farkların incelenmesiyle, *akrasiada* söz konusu olan bilginin neliği ortaya çıkartılmaya çalışılmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, pratik tasımın öncüllerini, yani tikel bilgiye karşılık gelen küçük önermeyi ve evrensel ya da genel bilgiye karşılık gelen büyük önermeyi, incelemek, *akratēs*in sahip olduğu bilgiyi ya da bilgisizliği anlamada bize yardımcı olacaktır. *Akolastosun* aksine *akratēs*in doğru büyük önermeye sahip olduğu hesaba katılırsa (ki bu, *akratēs*i *akolastostan* ayıran özelliktir), *akratēs*in doğru eylemi izlememesinin ardında yatan sebebin, tikel bilgiyi ifade eden küçük önermeye sahip olmaması mı, yoksa küçük önermeyi büyük ile ilişkilendirememesi mi olduğu açığa kavuşturulmalıdır. *Akratēste* söz konusu olan bilgisizliğin küçük önermede dile getirilen tikel bilgi ile alakalı olmasının Sokrates’in tezini desteklediği görülmektedir. Eğer bu nokta Sokrates’in *akrasia* okuması ile bağlantılı olacak şekilde ele alınırsa, Sokrates’in *Protagoras*’ta yenilemez ya da ‘sürüklenemez’ olarak dile getirdiği (burada büyük önermede ifade edilen) evrensel bilginin (*epistēmē*) hala güçlü ve etkin olduğunu ve de fiziksel hazlara yenik düşmediğini görebiliriz. *Protagoras*’ta, çoğunluğun iddiasında söz edilen bilginin tikel bilgi (küçük öncül), Sokrates’in bu tanıma karşı çıkarak ‘yenilmez’ dediği bilginin ise genel, evrensel bilgi (büyük öncül) olduğu düşünülürse, pratik tasımın yardımı ile hem genel kanâati yansıtan çoğunluğun *akrasia* anlayışı hem de Sokrates’in okuması birlikte savunulabilir hale gelecektir.

Tikel bilgi ile evrensel bilgi arasındaki ilişkinin kurulamaması, ya da tikel bilginin aktüelize edilememesi, ancak bir önceki bölümde ele alınan görüngülerin (kötüyü iyi gösterme) gücü, *phantasia aisthētikē*, kişinin uzun erimli mutluluğu ve refahını düşünmemesi, karakterini oluşturacak olan eğitim ve alışkanlıklar ile anlamlandırılabilir. Diğer bir ifade ile, ancak *akrasianın* anlıksal ve anlıksal olmayan okumalarının bu etkenlerle desteklenmesi ile *akrasianın* bütünlüklü bir açıklaması yapılabilir.

4. Bölüm, *akrasia* kavramının Stoa düşüncesinde nasıl ele alındığını ve Sokrates ve Aristoteles ile hangi noktalarda benzerlik ve farklılıkları olduğunu araştırmaktadır. *Akrasianın* Stoa yorumu, kavramın Sokratik okuması ile dikkate değer benzerlikler barındırmaktadır. Stoacılar ilk olarak insan ruhu üzerine

odaklanırlar. Platon'un *Phaidōn* diyalogunda tartıştığı gibi ruhu monistik olarak ele alırlar. Bu tezin 2. Bölümü'nde incelediğimiz gibi, bu ruh anlayışı, akla boyun eğdirebilecek herhangi bir rasyonel olmayan kısım, güç ya da motivasyon içermediğinden, tümüyle rasyoneldir ve bu sebeple akratik eylemin reddedilmesini desteklemektedir. Stoacıların akratik eyleme olan yaklaşımlarını anlayabilmek için, monistik ruh anlayışlarının ve monistik ruhta rasyonelliği sağlayan meleke (yeti) olarak (literal olarak, yöneten, baskın olan anlamına gelen) *hegemonikon*un tutkular ve arzular karşısında nasıl hareket edeceğinin incelenmesi gerekmektedir. Bu amaçla, bu ruh modelinde eylemin ortaya çıkış sürecini araştırmak önem arz etmektedir.

Phantasia ile başlayan bu süreci, ilk olarak onay (*συγκατάθεσις*), ardından itki/dürtü (*ὁρμή*) izler ve süreç eylemin oluşması ile son bulur. Bu süreçte ve genel olarak monistik ruh modelinde Stoacıların tutkuları nasıl yorumladığı oldukça dikkat çekicidir. Geç Platon ve Aristoteles'te ruhun rasyonel olmayan kısımları ile ilişkilendirilen tutkular, Stoa düşüncesinde *hegemonikon*un yönettiği monistik ruh modelinin yanlış 'yargıları, kararları' olarak düşünülmektedir. Genel olarak, akratik eyleme yol açan faktörlerden biri olarak kabul edilen tutkular, Stoa düşüncesinde mükelleşmiş olan aklın (bilgenin aklı) ya da 'Doğru Aklın' değil, mükemmelliğe ulaşmamış, yanlış yargıda bulunabilecek aklın izlenmesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Khrysippos, tutkuların oluşmasının ve Doğru Akla karşı gelmesinin ana sebebi olarak, Aristoteles ve geç Platon'dakinin aksine, bir 'dış' kuvvete işaret eder: *phantasia*. *Phantasia*nın ya da görünümünün ikna gücü, kişinin görünümüleri yanlış değerlendirmesine yol açıp akratik eylemde bulunmasına sebep olmaktadır. Tutkuların yönelttiği yönde, mükemmel akla karşı gelme sonucu ortaya çıkan akratik eylemin, ruhta gerçekleşen iç çatışmadan ziyade, dış bir kuvvet sebebiyle gerçekleşmesi Stoacı ve erken Platoncu ruh anlayışı ile de örtüşmektedir.

Stoacılar göre, *akrasianın* akıl ile haz arasındaki iç çatışmadan kaynaklanır gibi gözükmesinin ardında, aklın birbiriyle çelişen iki yargısı arasında hızlı bir geçişin, ani bir gelgitin yaşanması yatmaktadır. Anlık olarak gerçekleşen bu gelgitler, kişinin aynı anda iki karşıt görüşü ifade ediyor gibi gözükmesine neden olmakta ve 2. Bölüm'de incelediğimiz üzere, Platon'un dile getirdiği gibi, iki ya da daha çok ruh bölümünün varlığına işaret ediyor gibi gözükmesine sebep olmaktadır.

Stoacıların ifadesiyle bilgenin ya da erdemli insanın böyle bir gelgiti yaşamamasına karşın, bilge ya da erdemli olmayan kişinin bunu yaşamayı, ikinci

gruptaki kişilerin *phantasialarına* onay vermeden önce bunları incelemeleri, değerlendirmeleri ve ona göre yargılarını oluşturup eyleme geçmeleri gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bu inceleme ve değerlendirme aklın eğitimi olarak adlandırılabilir. Bu eğitim yoluyla, kişi yanlış alışkanlıklarını değiştirebilir, görüngüleri gerçekte oldukları gibi algılamayı öğrenebilir ve çelişkili hiçbir düşünceye ve yargıya sahip olmayan, ahenkli bir ruhu olan Stoacı bilgeye ya da erdemli insan olmaya doğru kendini geliştirebilir. Akratik eylemin sebebi ve bundan kurtulmanın yolu olarak sunulan eğitim, hatırlanacağı gibi, Aristoteles'te de karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Stoacılar ile Aristoteles arasındaki bu benzerlik, Stoacılarla Sokrates arasındaki bir benzerliğe de işaret etmektedir. Eğitim ile doğru bilgiye ve erdeme ulaşılabiliriyorsa, o halde, *akrasia* gibi kötü bir eylem ancak aklın eğitilmemesi, Doğru Aklın sunduğu bilgiye ulaşamaması ve dolayısıyla bilgisizlik sebebi ile olur.

Bu tezde ilk olarak ortaya konmaya çalışılan nokta, hem *akrasia*yı reddeden erken Platon ve Stoacılar da hem de *akrasia*yı kabul eden geç Platon ve Aristoteles'te bilgisizliğin ya da eksik bilginin akratik eylemin açıklanmasında oynadığı merkezi roldür. Bu tezde incelediğimiz tüm filozoflar, *akratēs*in bilgisindeki eksiklik konusunda birleşirken, söz konusu bilginin neliği konusunda birbirlerinden farklılaşmaktadırlar. Akratik kişinin sahip olmadığı bilgi, Platon'da ölçüm ya da değerlendirme sanatı (*art of measurement*) ile elde edilen bilgi olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır ve haz ile acıyı doğru değerlendirme ya da görünen iyi ile gerçek iyiyi ayırt edebilme işlevini yerine getirmektedir. *Akratēs*in sahip olmadığının söylendiği bilgi, Aristoteles'te pratik tasım çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır. Bu tasım *akrasia* özelinde ele alınırsa, tikel bilgiyi ifade eden küçük öncülün genel ya da evrensel bilgiyi dile getiren büyük öncül ile bağdaştırılamamasının ya da tasımın sonucunun aktüelize edilememesinin söz konusu olduğu görülmektedir. Bu durum, Aristoteles'in *akratēs* ile benzerlik gösterdiğini ifade ettiği, gizil (potensiyel) bilgisini edimsel (aktüel) hale getiremeyen sarhoş ya da dile getirdiği ifadenin anlamını henüz idrak etmemiş olan öğrenci örneklerinde daha iyi anlaşılmaktadır.

Aristoteles'te bir karakter özelliği olarak ele alınan *akrasia*nın açıklanmasında, kişinin karakterini oluşturan alışkanlıkların ve eğitimin rolü öne çıkmaktadır. İyiyi ve doğruyu yapmaktan zevk almayı, kötülükten ve kötü eylemden ise acı duymayı ve bunlardan kendiğiliğinden kaçınmayı öğrenmek olarak anlaşılan eğitim, kişinin hazları ve acıları karşısında doğru karar vermesini, doğru bilgiyi ve yargıyı üretip, bu

yargı doğrultusunda hareket etmesini içermektedir. Bu noktada, Aristoteles'te şehvet ve iştah olarak çevirerek ele aldığımız fiziki hazlar, bu hazları güçlendiren *phantasia aisthētikē*, eğitim ve alışkanlıklar, pratik tasımda küçük öncülün doğru büyük öncül ile birleştirilememesinin, gizil bilginin edimsel bilgiye dönüşmemesinin sebebi olarak ele alınmalıdır. Pratik tasımı ve rasyonel akıl yürütmeyi merkeze alan anlıksal okumayı *akrasianın* tek ve yeterli açıklaması olarak ele almak ve hazları, *phantasia aisthētikēyi*, geleceği ve mutluluğu (*eudaimonia*) dikkate almayı, eğitimi ve alışkanlıkları tartışma dışında bırakmak akaratik eylemin bütünlüklü bir şekilde açıklanmasını engellemektedir. Bilgi eksikliğini, bilgisizliği, yanlış değerlendirmeyi merkeze alan anlıksal okuma, akaratik eylemde söz konusu olan döngüsellığı göz ardı etmek anlamına gelmektedir. Bu döngüsellik, bilgisizlik ile yukarıda sıralanan tüm etmenler arasında döngüsel bir nedensellik olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, hazların ve *phantasia aisthētikēnin* gücü, geleceği düşünmeme, mutluluğu önemseme, zayıf bir eğitim ve kötü alışkanlıklar bilgisizliği yaratan faktörler olabileceği gibi, bilgisizlik de bu etmenlerin gücünü artırıp onları daha da etkin hale getirebilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, sadece bilgi eksikliğini, pratik tasımı *akrasianın* açıklaması olarak ele almak, *akrasianın* açıklamasında büyük bir boşluk yaratmaktadır. *Protagoras*'ta ifade edildiği gibi, *akrasianun* doğru değerlendirme yapmamak ve dolayısıyla eksik ya da yanlış bilgi ile hareket etmek sonucu meydana geldiğini ileri sürmek, bu değerlendirmenin nasıl yapılabildiğini açıklamaya yetmemektedir. Bu açıdan ele alındığında, *akrasianın* *Protagoras*'taki okuması ve Aristoteles'in anlıksal ve anlıksal olmayan okuması, ancak yukarıda sayılan etmenler ile birlikte ele alındığında bize bütünlüklü bir açıklama sunmaktadır.

Stoacılar *akrasia* tartışmasına erken dönem Platon'a daha yakın olacak bir açıdan yaklaşmaktadır. Ruh anlayışları açısından, Platon'un *Phaidōn* diyalogunda dile getirdiği monistik ruh modeli ile benzer bir görüşü savunan Stoacılar, rasyonel olmayan haz ve duyguların ruhta var olamayacağını ileri sürerler. Bu sebeple, eğer *akrasia* haz ve duyguların akla karşıt hareket etmesi olarak tanımlanıyorsa, böyle bir kavramı reddederler. Stoacıların ruhun tümüyle rasyonel olan *hegemonikon* tarafından yönetildiğini savunmaları bu görüşlerini desteklemektedir. Stoacıların *akrasia* tartışmasına katkıları, akla karşıt hareket ederek akaratik eyleme sebep oldukları söylenen tutkuların aslında yanlış yargılar olduğunu tartışmalarıdır. İki ya da üç bölümlü ruh anlayışında tutkuların veya kontrolü ele geçirme olanağı olan hazların

yerine, monistik ruh modelinde yanlış yargıları ve yanlış tasarım ya da imgelemi koyan Stoacılar, akratik olduğu iddia edilen eylemin aslında, eylem oluşma sürecinde, acelecilik sebebiyle, yanlış *phantasiaya* onay verilmesi neticesinde ya da yanlış ve doğru iki düşünce arasındaki hızlı gelgitin sonucu olarak ortaya çıktığını savunmaktadırlar. *Akrasiayı* reddedip, akratik olduğu iddia edilen eyleme getirdiği bu açıklama, hem Platon'un *Protagoras*'ında hem de Aristoteles'te gördüğümüz anlaksal okuma ile benzerlik göstermektedir. Ancak, yanlış *phantasiaya* onay verilmesi, onları bunun çözümü olarak aklın eğitilmesi gerekliliğine götürmüştür. Eğitilmiş ve *hegemonikonun* söz sahibi olduğu bir ruhta, yanlış *phantasiaya* onay verilmesinin mümkün olmayacağını savunmaları, Aristoteles'in eğitim ve alışkanlıklara verdiği önem ile benzerlik göstermektedir. Buradan ulaşılan sonuç, Stoacıların monistik ruh anlayışları sebebiyle *akrasiayı* reddetmelerine rağmen, bu tip bir eylemi meydana getiren durumun yanlış eğitim olduğuna işaret etmeleri sebebiyle, aslında Aristoteles ile yakın bir açıklama yaptıklarıdır.

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