Isn't there something ridiculous about the expression ‘master of oneself’ (κρείττω hautou)? For surely the master would also be the slave and the slave the master; and the same thing will be designated in every case. (Republic 430e11–431a1)\

Perhaps a simple soul of the sort Plato postulates first in the Phaedo and then again in Republic X cannot engage in akratic conduct (Phaedo 80b10; cf. 78c1–4, 80b1–2). A simple soul might be thought somehow insufficiently complex in its psychic make-up to exhibit weakness of will: it assesses, values, prefers, and executes, all in a single seamless and steadfast progression. By contrast, a multi-parted soul, of the sort Plato introduces in Republic IV, may seem easily liable to akratic action. With every opportunity for internal discord and strife, for halting and hesitation, and for indecision about its all-things-considered best course of action, a complex soul is a committee unto itself, and may first determine what is best and then, at the moment of implementation, fall under the sway of some diverting impulse, its judgment perhaps occluded by one of its short-sighted parts, which care about local gratification and not at all about the long-term good of the whole. Still less do such inferior parts know or care about the Good, attention to which might direct the more elevated faculties to turn the attention of the whole not only to its own corporate well-being but to the effects of its action upon other souls as well.

Armed with this easy thought, it has proven irresistible to many to understand Republic IV as a rebuke to Socrates, who had denied the possibility of akrasia in the Protagoras. It has also at the same time seemed a repudiation of the psychology underlying Socrates’ rejection of akrasia.2

* I thank Rachel Singpurwalla for her incisive comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1 Οὐκόν τὸ μὲν κρείττω αὐτοῦ γελοῖον; ὁ γὰρ ἐαυτῷ κρείττων καὶ ἥττων δήπου ἄν αὐτοῦ εἴη καὶ ὁ ἥττων κρείττων· ὁ αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐν ἄπασιν τούτοις προσαχορεύεται.

2 So Frede (1992), xxx: ‘If we find this highly intellectualist account of the passions as judgments of some kind implausible, we should keep in mind that it is only
In its most extreme formulation, the picture of complexity of *Republic IV* has been thought a version of homuncularism, such that the three parts of the soul delineated there—the *logistikon*, the *epithumétikon*, and the *thumoeides*—are virtual little men, tiny agents who squabble for control of the soul’s directionality. The one who dominates sets the character of the whole; and when no one of them dominates, there ensues the instability and waffling characteristic of the akratic.

I have elsewhere argued that the metaphysical psychology presupposed by this account is misguided, since we are constrained, contrary to initial appearances, to regard the soul of *Republic IV* as metaphysically simple. Now I shall want to reject developmentalism for the moral

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Plato, in the *Republic* (437b ff.), who, precisely to explain how one can act against the judgment of one’s reason, for the first time introduces different parts of the soul, each with its own desires, allowing us to understand how irrational desire may overcome the dictates of desire and reason. Here in the *Protagoras*, Socrates seems to argue as if the soul just were reason, and the passions were reasoned beliefs or judgments of some kind, and as if, therefore, we were entirely guided or motivated by beliefs of one kind or another. On this picture of the soul, it is easy to see why Socrates thinks that nobody acts against his knowledge or even his beliefs: nothing apart from beliefs could motivate such an action.’ Irwin (1999), 287, reaches a similar conclusion, as does Miller (1999), 100, who concludes: ‘Plato’s early theory of the soul was substantially revised in order to explain conflicting motivations. Central to this revision were the conceptions of the soul as a self-moving principle and of desires as motions of the soul. The *Phaedo*’s doctrine of the simplicity of the soul on both counts had to yield to the tripartite psychology.’ Also typical is Cooper (1984/2001), 91, who captures the common understanding well: ‘That Plato in the *Republic* is self-consciously rejecting this Socratic theory is by now well accepted; and most philosophical readers no doubt agree that the *Republic*’s theory is a distinct improvement.’

3 Annas (1981) made a strong case for homuncularism, to widespread agreement and approval. Similar observations are found in Burnyeat (1976) and Moline (1981, 1988). Bobonich (2001), 204–6, is slightly more circumspect: ‘For better or worse, Plato’s moral psychology in the *Republic* is committed to the idea that every person is a compound of agentlike parts.’ In speaking of agentlike parts, Bobonich implicitly, and rightly, highlights a cause for concern relating to literal-minded versions of homuncularism. Irwin (1995), 219–22, relying especially on 588c7–d5, also accepts a muted version of homuncularism while calling attention to some inadequacies of any overly emphatic version of this view. Price (1995), 56–7 raises a series of intelligent worries about homuncularism, which he thinks Plato may be constrained to accept as a result of one application of his Principle of Non-Contrariety, the part-generating principle upon which Plato relies to effect psychic division. (See n. 17 below on Price’s versions of his Principle of Non-Contrariety.)

4 In Shields (2001), I argued that the supposed shift in Plato’s metaphysical psychology from a simple to a complex or tri-partite soul is, despite the evidence of *Republic IV*, hard to credit. Already in *Republic X* (611b, 611e2) Plato reverts to a version of the soul directly akin to the position of the *Phaedo*, according to which the soul is essentially, and so necessarily, simple. In that connection, I argued that in fact the argument for a tri-partite of *Republic IV* cannot establish the existence of essentially distinct psychic parts, because it cannot establish that the soul’s being divisible is *de re* necessary. I also