

1 Plato

1. Plato: The Tripartite Structure of the Soul

A. Why Plato Posits Parts of the Soul

Key principle:

The *same thing* cannot simultaneously do or undergo *opposites* in the *same respect* and at the *same time*.

So if one and the same person both wants and refuses the same thing, the soul must have *different parts* in conflict.

1. Rational vs appetitive parts

Example: the thirsty person who refuses to drink.

- As **thirsty**, the person's soul has a simple drive: *drink*.
 - Appetite is always for its object as such (thirst □ drink, hunger □ food), not for “good” or “bad” drink as such.
- Yet sometimes a thirsty person **decides not to drink** (e.g., a doctor who knows the water is poisoned).
- So in one and the same person:
 - **One part** is pulled toward drinking (simple bodily appetite).
 - **Another part** holds back, forbids, and calculates (reason).

Conclusion: there is at least a **rational** part and an **appetitive** part.

2. The spirited part (*thumos*)

Plato argues that **spirit** (anger, indignation, love of honor) is a *third* part, distinct from both reason and appetite.

Key evidence:

- **Leontius story:**
 - He wants to look at corpses (appetite) but is disgusted at this desire and *gets angry with himself*, yelling at his own eyes.
 - His **anger** sides with what he thinks he *ought* to do (not look) against what he *wants* to do (look).
 - So spirit can oppose appetite in line with reason.
- **Self-reproach cases:**

- When appetite pushes us to act against our better judgment, we often *get angry at ourselves*.
- Spirit aligns with **reason** (“Why did I do that?!”) against appetite.
- **Children and animals:**
 - Children and animals show strong **spirit** (anger, pride) before they have full rational understanding.
 - Suggests spirit is *not* the same as reason or appetite.

Conclusion: the soul has **three distinct parts**:

1. **Rational part**
 - Loves: *truth, wisdom, knowledge, what is genuinely good for the whole person.*
 - Function: *thinks, calculates, judges what is best overall.*
 2. **Spirited part (thumos)**
 - Loves: *honor, victory, standing up for what seems just.*
 - Function: *emotional energy, courage, anger; naturally an ally of reason if well-trained.*
 3. **Appetitive part**
 - Loves: *bodily pleasures* (food, drink, sex), comfort, money as a means to those pleasures.
 - Function: *desires, cravings, urges for physical satisfaction and material gain.*
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2. Plato: The Ideal Condition for a Human Being

A. Justice and Harmony in the Soul

Plato uses the just city as an analogy for the just person:

- In the **city**, justice = each class does its own proper job; the wise rulers rule, auxiliaries support, producers obey.
- In the **soul**, justice = each *part* does its own proper job; the **rational** part rules, **spirit** supports, **appetite** obeys.

So, the **ideal (best) condition for a human being** is:

A soul in which **reason rules**, **spirit loyally supports reason**, and **appetite is kept in its proper subordinate role**, producing inner harmony.

B. Roles of the Three Parts in the Ideal Soul

1. **Rational part (ruler)**
 - Has knowledge of what is genuinely good for the whole person.
 - Decides what is to be pursued or avoided.

- Virtue associated: **wisdom**.
- 2. Spirited part (ally of reason)**
 - Enforces reason's decisions; supplies motivation, courage, resilience.
 - Gets angry at injustice, both in oneself and in others.
 - Virtue associated: **courage** (preserving right beliefs about what to fear or not to fear).
 - 3. Appetitive part (ruled)**
 - Largest part; can be dangerous if not controlled.
 - Desires bodily pleasure and wealth.
 - In a just soul, it accepts guidance from reason and does not try to rule.

C. Moral Virtues as Forms of Inner Order

- **Wisdom**: rational part has knowledge of what benefits the whole soul.
- **Courage**: spirited part preserves and executes rational judgments about what is truly dangerous or not.
- **Moderation (temperance)**: agreement between all parts that reason should rule; inner self-control.
- **Justice**:
 - Each part does its own work; no part meddles in the role of another.
 - The person is “one,” not internally at war.

D. Well-Being as “Health of the Soul”

Plato explicitly compares:

- **Virtue** = health, fine condition, and well-being of the soul.
- **Vice** = disease, shameful condition, and weakness of the soul.

On this view, the **best life** is:

- One in which the soul is harmoniously ordered under the rule of reason.
 - This inner condition matters *more* than external goods (wealth, power, reputation).
 - Even if a just person lacks external advantages, their soul is in the best condition, and that is what truly counts as happiness.
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3. Plato: Disharmony Between Parts of the Soul as Ill-Being

A. What Is Disharmony?

Disharmony = **the parts do not do their own jobs**, but instead:

- One part **rebels** and tries to rule when it shouldn't (especially appetite or spirit).
- There is "civil war" in the soul: inner conflict, turmoil, lack of self-control.

This is Plato's account of **injustice in the soul**.

B. Forms of Inner Disorder

1. **Appetite ruling over reason**
 - The person knows better, but bodily desires dominate.
 - Examples:
 - Addictive behavior: rationally recognizes harm, but can't resist.
 - Cheating or stealing for money or pleasure despite believing it wrong.
 - Plato: this is like a **slave** (appetite) trying to rule over the natural ruler (reason).
2. **Spirit ruling without guidance from reason**
 - Person driven by anger, resentment, or love of honor without rational control.
 - Examples:
 - Overreacting in rage and doing things one later regrets.
 - Pursuing honor or revenge at great cost, ignoring what is really good.

In both cases, the soul's **natural hierarchy is reversed**.

C. Why Disharmony = Ill-Being

- Just as disease in the body is **organs not relating properly** (wrong parts ruling or failing), injustice in the soul is **psychic "disease"**:
 - Mixed-up roles of the parts.
 - Persistent conflict, guilt, regret, lack of peace.
- No matter how many external goods you have (wealth, power, pleasure),
 - If your soul is in this disordered state, your life is **not truly good**.
 - You are like someone bodily sick but surrounded by fine food: the condition that *really* matters is bad.

So for Plato:

III-being = a soul in turmoil, where appetite or (unguided) spirit overrules reason, producing vice and misery even if appearances suggest "success."

4. Plato: Two Scenarios to Illustrate True Love of Wisdom

Plato claims the **best person** (and best ruler, the philosopher-king) is one who loves **wisdom and goodness above all else**.

Lectures use **scenarios** to test whether someone *really* values wisdom for its own sake, as Plato's ideal person does.

Scenario 1: Knowledge vs Pleasure

Setup:

You must choose between two lives:

- **Life A (Knowledge with less pleasure):**
 - You understand reality as it truly is; your beliefs are mostly true.
 - You face uncomfortable truths; you may have fewer pleasures.
 - You cannot escape the knowledge even when it is painful.
- **Life B (Pleasure without knowledge):**
 - You live in comforting illusions or false beliefs.
 - You feel happy, but many of your key beliefs about the world and yourself are false.
 - You never discover the truth.

Question:

Which life is *better*?

- Someone who **truly loves wisdom** (in Plato's sense) chooses **Life A**:
 - Values *truth and understanding* more than comfort or pleasant illusions.
 - Thinks a life of deception, however pleasant, is deficient.
- Someone who prioritizes **pleasure** over wisdom would choose **Life B**.

Plato's point:

The genuinely just, rational person:

- Takes **knowledge and truth** to be central to a good life.
- Is willing to sacrifice some pleasure to avoid living in falsehood.

Scenario 2: Knowledge vs External Goods (Power, Honor, Wealth)

Setup:

You are offered:

- **Option 1 (Philosopher's life):**
 - You can pursue wisdom and philosophical understanding freely.
 - You may remain poor, lack status, and be misunderstood or mocked.
 - You will not hold political power or great honor.
- **Option 2 (Non-philosophic success):**
 - You gain great power, wealth, and public admiration.
 - Conditions: you must abandon serious pursuit of wisdom and deep understanding.
 - You surround yourself with flattery and shallow opinions; you avoid unsettling questions.

Question:

Which option is *better*?

- The **true lover of wisdom** chooses **Option 1**:
 - Prefers a life of understanding, even if obscure or materially modest.
 - Refuses to trade away the pursuit of truth for power or fame.
- A person dominated by:
 - **Appetite** will likely choose wealth and comfort.
 - **Spirit** will likely choose honor and status.
 - **Reason** (philosopher-type) chooses the life of inquiry and understanding.

Link to the Three Parts of the Soul & Three Kinds of People

Plato connects the **dominant part** of someone's soul with what they most value:

- **Appetitive-dominated person:** money-lover; chooses pleasures, comfort, wealth.
- **Spirited-dominated person:** honor-lover; chooses status, recognition, victory.
- **Rational-dominated person:** wisdom-lover; chooses knowledge and goodness over pleasure and honor.

These scenarios are designed to:

- Reveal **which part** of the soul is in charge.
 - Show that Plato's **ideal human being** is one for whom:
 - **Reason rules,**
 - **Spirit supports reason,**
 - **Appetite obeys,**
 - and **wisdom and goodness** are valued more than pleasure, money, or status.
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How These Pieces Fit Together for the Exam

- **Tripartite soul:** be able to explain the three parts, their functions, and Plato's arguments for their distinctness (thirst example, Leontius, children/animals).
- **Ideal condition:** understand justice and the virtues as inner harmony under the rule of reason; virtue as health of the soul.
- **Disharmony as ill-being:** explain injustice as internal "civil war," and why this is like disease of the soul.
- **Scenarios & love of wisdom:** be able to:
 - Describe each scenario.
 - Say which choice shows true love of wisdom.
 - Connect the choices to which part of the soul is ruling and to Plato's picture of the happiest, most just person.