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In Plato's *Republic*, the soul is partitioned into 3 distinct, constitutive parts that each govern with their own aims in mind. Achieving a harmonious balance between the parts is what leads a person towards justice and general moral development, and by analogy, provides the structure for how the ideal city would look like. The role that the tripartite soul has is therefore elemental to the practical endeavors of the *Republic*, namely in it's seeking out what justice is, where it lies, and how an ideal state may be founded with justice as its central tenet. With these important stakes in mind, this paper investigates whether the soul truly is tripartite, and what the potential consequences are if it is not. This is a large question to tackle, so I will limit myself to only unearthing a few inconsistencies in Socrate's introduction of the tripartite soul, to show that it's proof might not conclusively demonstrate a three-part structure. My aim is not to suggest that the soul can't take on this divided arrangement, but that the arguments put forth in the Republic don't do well in explaining why the soul *must* be divided in that particular way.

Part 1: Is the soul truly tripartite?

In addressing whether the soul is truly tripartite, it's best to go over Socrate's argument for it in Book 4. Socrates introduces temperance as a sort of order and mastery over pleasures and appetites (430e5). However, he quickly points out the incoherence of describing temperance as a "self-mastery". The problem arises from the inherent contradiction in suggesting that the same thing can create disorder while also being responsible for ordering. If temperance orders our pleasures, it cannot simultaneously be the site where that desire proliferates as well. Socrates explicitly appeals to the law of non-contradiction in his line of reasoning, by saying that "*the same thing cannot do or undergo opposite things"* (431a-b, 436c). Logically, this is expressed by the proposition $A \neq \sim A$, or: one thing cannot both be itself and its negation. So, he infers that there must be another place within a person's soul that is the cause of disorderly behaviours, appetites, etc., and would thus require something like 'temperance' to master it (431b5).

Socrate's argument for the appetitive part of the soul is roughly, as follows (Reeve, 122-3):
(1) Thirst, or the act of wanting water, is a relational property – it has an object of its desire, which is the thing that the appetite yearns for in that moment (e.g., sex, food, drink, gambling).
(2) The natural object of thirst, for example, is drink. (437de5)
Therefore,
(3) A thirsty individual wants to drink (439a5)
However,
(4) "*Some people are thirsty sometimes, yet unwilling to drink*" (439c)
Therefore,
(5) Some individuals both want to drink and don't want to drink at the same time
But,
(6) Wanting to drink and not wanting to drink are *opposite* wants.
And since the principle of non-opposition says that one thing cannot at the same time be its negation (436c),
(7) These two urges must be located in different parts of the psyche
Therefore,

(10) The part of the psyche which wants to drink is distinct from the part that wants to drink (439d5)

The grand presupposition lies in assuming that premise (5) is a violation of the principle of non-contradiction, or that the principle of non-contradiction applies to psychological relations as it does to physical relations. To demonstrate his claim in premise 5, Socrates asks Glaucon whether it's possible for the same thing, at the same time, and in the same respect, to be standing still and be moving (436c). As well, he asks Glaucon to confirm that the following behaviours are also opposites: wanting to have something yet rejecting it; taking something and pushing it away – the former example belonging to psychological behaviour, while the latter belongs to a physical action. Having opposing actions (e.g., to be still yet moving) occur at the same time is a physical impossibility. By contrast, having opposing thoughts (e.g., wanting something yet rejecting it) does not defy physical or logical laws in the same way. The problem here is in treating psychic relations as ontologically/structurally similar to physical relations and thinking that logical principles can cut at its joints like it does with physical relations (e.g., like space, movement). For the principle of non-contradiction to truly "target" psychological thoughts and their opposites, it would require these two thoughts to be genuinely opposing to one another. But achieving this is no simple matter, as I will explain in the following paragraph. Nevertheless, what Socrates has managed to demonstrate by premise (4) is *not* that an individual can't have both the desire to drink and not drink, but rather that it's impossible to physically satisfy both desires at the same time with the drink in front of them.

Whether desires (let alone thoughts) can have "opposites" isn't clear. It's difficult to discern what a true "opposite" desire is, and how the principle of non-contradiction would work in the psychological context. It's logically true that the thought of wanting water (Ww) could not at the same time be not-wanting water (~Ww), but this does not mean that (Ww), as a thought, is fully expressed by its predicate (w). The water may be a little cloudy looking, as if it were poisoned, which adds the predicate of cloudy (c) to the reasons why we may not want the water (~Wwc). However, the water may look totally appetizing by being perfectly hot (h), which adds to the reasons why we desire the water (Wwh). The earlier thought we had that wanted water (Wwh = wanting water that is hot) is now opposed to our thought of not wanting water (~Wwc = not wanting water that is cloudy), yet these are not in logical oppositions the way that Socrates argues for physical actions. For physical actions, there are real constraints on what can be done at one specific time and place. But extending the law of non-contradiction to the psyche invites a swarm of further contradictions that the principle cannot adequately address by itself. There are many such examples in the psyche where desires such as (Wwh) aren't met with their true opposites, but merely resembling ones (~Wwh). Perfect opposites are seldomly encountered in the realm of psychic thought.

An obvious response to this would be that those additional predicates/marks are rational justifications that someone makes about their appetitive urge, which would end up supporting Socrate's argument for a rational part of the soul. However, while these calculations may very well be rational (e.g., the decision to decline the water on the grounds that it's too cloudy for my liking), this does not prove that it's wholly separate from the appetitive. What I mean is that most desires aren't felt independently of the reasons behind their urges, save for extremely primal, biologically driven urges that might be more blind to their surroundings. Take for example

"thirst", which Socrates says, "*is not for much or little, good or bad… rather, thirst itself is, by nature, just for drink itself*" (439a). This is an extremely primal urge that can, in extreme contexts, work independently of its surroundings. If someone visited Italy in their hottest months, they would be ready to drink water from the public fountains (which the locals really advise against). But if they were at a banquet, they may experience a more complex desire, intertwined with reason, that urges them to drink not water, but wine, and to drink it in excess, so they can obtain some courage to talk to their professor. The former example is very biological, and perhaps a better candidate for the principle of non-contradiction (i.e., if your desire is *only* to drink, this would be expressed by Ww and is relatively easier to find an opposing thought ~Ww). But the later example is riddled with predicates, and much more difficult to oppose. So, the principle of non-contradiction is less efficacious in dealing with complex psychological thoughts because their nature is such that they are deeply intertwined with reason. The principle of noncontradiction does not seem like the right sort of law to explain the divided psyche.

It has not been argued sufficiently whether there are grounds to name the part which does not want to drink as "irrational". It's also presumed that all appetitive drives operate on a process that is totally *devoid* of rationality. From the two examples I discussed earlier, there does seem to be a significant difference between primal appetitive urges (concerned with pure bodily satisfaction) and more complex psychic wants (like voyeurism). To conclude that (7) must be true because we have the capacity to reason with some of our appetites is a bit hasty. And, assuming that there are genuine conflicts between the appetite and reason, this still doesn't conclude that there would only be two parts in the soul. Perhaps the psyche/soul has as many parts as it has desires that can conflict (Reeve, 124). If that is the case, on a logical framework, the psyche could be divided up, infinitely.

Part 2: What are the consequences for the *Republic* if the soul is not tripartite?

Scattered throughout the book are references to each of the parts of the soul via examples and scenarios where someone's soul is not harmonious and thus leads them to act in a certain lawless way. There were several vulgar examples of what behaviour a person might engage in if their appetitive desires took over (e.g., Leontinus being compelled to stare at corpses because it reminded him of his love for boys as pale as corpses). For the *Republic*, a lot hinges on the tripartite soul because adequate control over one's soul will allow them to know justice. Otherwise, we can only imagine that a person who doesn't gave a grasp on the ebb and flows of their personal urges have no place in helping the city be just. I do favour the kind of anecdotal discourse in the *Republic* that appeal to practical judgement by way of story-telling that most people can agree with (i.e., I detest "philosophical armchair" styled reasoning). Where I think the arguments of the *Republic* fall into trouble are when pure logical principles are deployed to demonstrate the structure of a very abstract, psycho-socially complex phenomenon (e.g., the soul, the nature of appetites, reasoning, etc.,).

At the start of Book 9, Socrates tells Adeimantus that he doesn't think that the nature and number of the appetites has been properly investigated, and that if that subject isn't adequately dealt with, their investigation will lack clarity (571b). The investigation Socrates is referencing is, I assume, the main investigation of the *Republic*: what justice is. Therefore, we can infer that the stakes truly are high for the *Republic* if the soul is somehow not governed in the way that they

think it is. Socrates introduces a further distinction within the appetites, which address the earlier problems that I have canvassed in this paper. Within the appetites, there are some that are "*lawless*", and are "*held in check by the laws and by our better appetites allied with reason*" (571c). This is a curious moment in the text, where Socrates describes a further distinction in the appetites: "better" ones that are allied with reason, and ones that are supposedly more "lawless". This corresponds to the earlier distinction I pointed out between primal drives that are blind to environmental surroundings, and ones that are intertwined with reason. I use the language of "intertwined" rather than "allied", because I think that those respective drives are coextensive with the environment, or that they cannot be thought independently of their environment. Having those desires require the cognitive ability to pluck out their objects in space and time and cannot be said to play the primary role in the determining relationship (i.e., they are conditioned by their environment, not the other way around). So, because environment creates the condition for appetites and informs reason, it's hard to conceive of a model where the appetites are somehow blindly led by reason alone. How Socrates puts it makes it seem as though it's just our reason and appetites that create the urges that they do, and nothing more. But in any case, it's a shift in tone that Socrates makes, because earlier in Book 4 he introduces the appetites as being more robustly separate and in opposition to reason. In Book 9 the language softens, and he writes as if they mingle, and are more intimately related than previously thought. In any case, Socrates is telling us that they work together. Unfortunately, the conversation is dropped before it could be further examined…

CITATION LIST

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