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Simple Souls

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I. The Question of Soul Division in Plato's Development

According to a credible account of Plato's development, *Republic* iv contains an argument intended to overturn an idiosyncratically Socratic thesis concerning the possibility of *akrasia*. Socrates flatly denies that *akrasia* is possible. This he does most directly in the *Protagoras*, where he asserts that "those things which one regards as bad, one neither goes toward nor accepts willingly" (ἃ δὲ ἡγεῖται κακά, οὐδένα οὔτε ἰέναι ἐπὶ ταῦτα οὔτε λαμβάνειν ἑκόντα; 358e). His reasons for advancing this initially counterintuitive claim are varied, but evidently include a narrowly cognitive conception of human motivation coupled with a broadly egoistic form of psychological hedonism. These claims jointly result in the thesis that anytime I choose to do *x* over *y*, when doing *y* offers me greater overall pleasure than doing *x*, I act on the basis of a mistaken calculation. Having recognized doing *x* as possible for me, I misreckon its net pleasure relative to the pleasure to be had by my doing *y*. My choice to do *x* is thus due to a simple cognitive mistake, a mistake in calculation akin to the mistake I make when I judge that the area of a square half the area of square *ABCD* is a square whose legs are half as long as those of *ABCD*. When corrected, I see my mistake and I adjust my attitudes and behavior accordingly.

On this developmental account, key to Plato's rejection of Socrates' point of view is his recognition of a kind of complexity internal to the

soul which Socrates had failed to appreciate, or at any rate had failed to acknowledge.[1] This seems to be the point of the admonition Plato issues just after establishing the first two parts of soul in *Republic* iv:

> Μήτοι τις, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἀσκέπτους ἡμᾶς ὄντας θορπυβήσῃ, ὡς οὐδεὶς ποτοῦ ἐπιθυμεῖ ἀλλὰ χρηστοῦ ποτοῦ, καὶ οὐ σίτου ἀλλὰ χρηστοῦ σίτου. πάντες γὰρ ἄρα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν· εἰ οὖν ἡ δίψα ἐπιθυμία ἐστί, χρηστοῦ ἂν εἴη εἴτε πώματος εἴτε ἄλλου ὅτου ἐστὶν ἐπιθυμία, καὶ αἱ ἄλλαι οὕτω.
>
> Let no-one, I said, unsettle us when we are unwary, by claiming that nobody desires drink, but rather good drink, nor food, but rather good food, on the grounds that after all everyone desires good things. If, then, thirst is a desire, then it would be a desire for good drink or whatever else it is a desire for, and so on for the other desires (*Rep.* 438a).

This sounds, at first pass, like a straightforward repudiation of the Socratic suggestion that all apparent cases of *akrasia* must be resolved to be cases of poor arithmetic. Some of my desires, those which well up in my *epithumêtikon*, are *good-indifferent*. These desires can actually conflict with the deliverances of my rational faculty, my *logistikon*. If I act upon them, and against my best interest, the explanation will not typically be cast in terms of a mere miscalculation. Instead, my reason will have been weak, and will have yielded to a more powerful soul part, my faculty of desire. This, then, affirms the very thesis Socrates sought to reject in the *Protagoras*. There he had sought to deny the view of the many, according to which "though knowledge is often present in a man, it does not rule over him, but rather something else does, sometimes desire, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, other times love, often fear" (ἐνούσης πολλάκις ἀνθρώπῳ ἐπιστήμης οὐ τὴν ἐπιστήμην αὐτοῦ ἄρχειν ἀλλ' ἄλλο τι, τοτὲ μὲν θυμόν, τοτὲ δὲ ἡδονήν, τοτὲ δὲ λύπην, ἐνίοτε δὲ ἔρωτα, πολλάκις δὲ φόβον; 352b-c).

This developmental story has two tiers, one at the level of Plato's moral psychology and the other, deeper, at the level of his metaphysical psychology. The two tiers are related: precisely by recognizing complexity internal to the soul itself, Plato is able to allow for the possibility of *akrasia*. Indeed, the thesis about the soul's nature both makes possible and renders explicable a phenomenon Socrates had sought to deny and explain away. So, the moral psychology and the metaphysical psychology march in step. A simple soul gives way to a complex soul; and a Socratic paradox is dissolved.

This two-tiered account thus embraces three distinct theses, one psychological, one moral-psychological, and one regarding the relation between the first two. The first thesis holds:

> (I) The early Plato, especially the Plato of the *Phaedo*, is like Socrates before him in supposing that the soul is simple; he later abandons this view, most forcefully in *Republic* iv, in favor of the view that the soul is composite.

The second maintains:

> (II) Plato, unlike Socrates, accepts the fact of *akrasia*.

And, finally, the third connects these two claims:

> (III) (I) explains (II). That is, Plato accepts, and indeed *can* only accept, the fact of *akrasia* because he comes to reject the simplicity of the soul in favor of a composite view.

Taken together these three theses constitute what I will call the standard developmental account.

The standard developmental account, I believe, is incorrect. Indeed, it is multiply problematic, because every single one of the theses which constitute it is dubious. To begin, the thought that Plato's introduction of a divided soul underwrites a noteworthy development in his moral psychology strikes me as problematic, both in its own terms and as an account of Plato's development. In the first instance, a divided soul is neither necessary nor sufficient for the possibility of *akrasia*. That is, one could accept a bi- or tripartite psychology without countenancing the possibility of *akrasia*. I might, for example, be a psychological hedonist who holds, as a matter of psychological fact, that everyone always maximizes his or her own perceived pleasure. That I recognize various divisions within the soul would then be neither here nor there with respect to the possibility of *akrasia*. Conversely, I might hold to a simple, unified soul, but nevertheless insist that *akrasia* is fully possible. On this scenario, I would simply maintain that though I judge that, all things considered, *x* is better than *y*, I nevertheless find myself doing *y* because of the allure *y* holds for me. I later upbraid myself in the normal way; but

I never fault one part of myself while promising another to do better next time by letting that other part rule.[2] Given that soul-complexity and *akrasia* can be thus decoupled, we should not move too readily to the conclusion that Plato came to acknowledge the possibility of *akrasia because* he came to recognize complexity in the soul. That is, we should already be skeptical about (III) on purely conceptual grounds.

Moreover, there are nonconceptual reasons for doubting this story as an account of Plato's development in psychology, because there are textual impediments to (II), the thesis that Plato accepts but Socrates rejects the possibility of *akrasia*. First, (II) assumes that the Socrates of the *Protagoras* rejects the possibility of *akrasia* in *propria persona*; second, it presupposes that the Plato of *Republic* iv rejects the Socratic position on *akrasia*. But both of theses can be assailed in various ways. On the *Republic* side, it is noteworthy that not long before offering the analogy of the sun, Plato says, rather blithely:

> ὃ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἱκανῶς τί ποτ' ἐστὶν οὐδὲ πίστει χρήσασθαι μονίμῳ οἵᾳ καὶ περὶ τἆλλα, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ ἀποτυγχάνει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἴ τι ὄφελος ἦν
>
> [The good is] that which every soul pursues and on account of which it does all things. Divining that the good is something, but being perplexed and incapable of grasping sufficiently what it is or of having the steadfast confidence it has concerning other things, it misses the benefit, if there was one, from those other things (505e-506a).

On its surface, this passage seems easily compatible with the rejection of *akrasia* of *Protagoras* 352b-358e, a passage thought to be *the* canonical expression of the Socratic paradox. Indeed, it seems more than compatible: if in fact every soul does everything it does on account of the good, then it seems that it fails to meet its end only because of a cognitive confusion, because it is, as Plato here says, perplexed. So, there is reason to doubt (II), and hence already additional reason to doubt the explanatory hypothesis offered in (III).

The same holds true for (I), a thesis which ascribes to the *Protagoras* a view more readily found in the *Phaedo*. That is, this account assumes that the *psuchê* in the *Protagoras* is simple, a thesis not defended or even articulated in that work. So here too it is worth investigating the evidence for ascribing to Socrates a view according to which the soul is non-

composite; if we find no such evidence, we will have still further reason to doubt (III). For absent (I) and (II), (III) advances an explanation where none is wanted.

However that may be, it may nevertheless seem safe to understand (I) in its own terms, whether or not it is understood as a plank in an otherwise problematic developmental account. For surely Plato accepts a simple soul in the *Phaedo* only to reject any such view, in the strongest possible terms in *Republic* iv. A simple soul is incompatible with the complexity exhibited in the argument of *Republic* iv. Here at any rate, we have a clear change of mind.

I wish to argue that insofar as Plato accepts a simple soul in the *Phaedo*, he continues to do so in the *Republic*. I want to argue more narrowly, that is, that the "soul-division" of *Republic* iv is fully compatible with the soul's simplicity, and that, consequently, (I) is incorrect. If that is so, there is still less reason to posit (III). In fact, Plato's argument for a tripartite psychology at *Republic* iv 436b-441a *does not and could not* generate a soul with essentially distinct parts. Accordingly, his argument for a tripartite psychology in *Republic* iv cannot be understood to advocate a conception of the soul in any way incompatible with his characterizations of the soul as simple given elsewhere in the corpus, most strikingly in the *Phaedo* and in *Republic* x.[3]

II. Psychic Simplicity and Immortality in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* x

In the Affinity Argument of the *Phaedo* (78b-84b), Socrates links indestructibility and incompositeness, especially at 78c1-4 and 80b2. Because the soul is akin to the Forms in being "most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and always similarly disposed with respect to itself" (τῷ μὲν θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχή; 80b1-2), it too must be completely indissoluble, or something close to being so (ψυχῇ δὲ αὖ τὸ παράπαν ἀδιαλύτῳ εἶναι ἢ ἐγγύς τι τούτου; 80b10). The argument, whose modest conclusion befits its analogical terms, relies in part on the thought that only what is incomposite (ἀσύνθετον) by nature escapes the dissolution which infects the visible world (78c1-4). So, Plato argues: (i) the soul is incomposite; (ii) what is incomposite cannot suffer

dissolution; (iii) what cannot suffer dissolution is immortal; (iv) so, the soul is immortal.

Indeed, Plato relies not merely on the thought that only what perishes is composite but that everything composite is liable to dissolution. With the tacit addition of a disputable presupposition that whatever is liable to dissolution *will* at some point be dissolved, Plato is at liberty to conclude that all and only those things which are incomposite are immortal. This biconditional, then, underscores the entire Affinity Argument:

Nec. (*x* is incomposite iff *x* is eternal).[4]

With this biconditional in place it is easy for Plato to bifurcate the visible and the invisible as he does. All those things which are visible are extended in space, and so composite, and so perishable. By contrast, whatever is invisible is abstract, and not arrayed in space, and so incomposite, and so eternal. The soul, it is urged, is akin to the Forms in just this way.

The argument is relatively straightforward, simple, and in some ways attractive, relying as it does on a premise which many others have found tempting, that simplicity precludes destruction, since destruction requires resolution into parts.[5] Simple things being as such partless cannot go out of existence.

However that may be, the argument employs a conception of the soul which has struck many as manifestly incompatible with the conception at work in the *Republic*.[6] The *Phaedo* relies on the simplicity of the soul. *Republic* iv argues at length that the soul has three parts. Nor is this argument incidental. As Plato notes, it is crucial to the entire argument of the *Republic* itself that the soul be shown to have three parts; otherwise it could not be shown to be isomorphic with the state whose justice was introduced precisely to illuminate the nature of justice in the individual (*Rep.* 368d-369a, 434d-435b). So with the acceptance of an isomorphism between soul and state comes a repudiation of the soul's simplicity.

Plato disagrees; indeed, in *Republic* x, using language in many ways reminiscent of the *Phaedo*, he once more comes around to the view that the soul "is akin to what is divine, deathless, and always is" (611e2; συγγενὴς οὖσα τῷ τε θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι). More to the point, he does so precisely by way of correcting what he thinks might be an easy misconception derivable from his discussion of the soul's internal complexity earlier in the *Republic*:

> μήτε γε αὖ τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει τοιοῦτον εἶναι ψυχήν, ὥστε πολλῆς ποικιλίας καὶ ἀνομοιότητός τε καὶ διαφορᾶς γέμειν αὐτὸ πρὸς αὑτό.
> πῶς λέγεις; ἔφη.
> οὐ ῥᾴδιον, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἀίδιον εἶναι σύνθετόν τε ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ μὴ τῇ καλλίστῃ κεχρημένον συνθέσει, ὡς νῦν ἡμῖν ἐφάνη ἡ ψυχή.
>
> "nor <must we think> that the soul, in its truest nature, is this sort of thing, so that it is full of variation and dissimilarity and difference itself in relation to itself."
> "What do you mean?" he said.
> "It is not easy," I said, "for what is composite and from many things and not most finely fitted to be eternal, as the soul appeared to us to be" (611b).

Plato corrects this misconception with a striking comparison of the soul to the barnacle-encrusted sea god Glaucus, whose true nature we can scarcely ascertain, owing to its degradation and defilement by the ravages of the ocean. So the soul has been savaged by the evils attendant upon its incarnation. The account of its parts offered in the *Republic* is now held to be adequate when its embodied state is in view; when stripped of its corporeal accretions, the soul's condition, whether simple or with parts, becomes manifest (611e).

The comparison with Glaucus bespeaks a willingness on Plato's part to acknowledge an incompatibility between two conceptions of the soul, one simple and one complex. Plato does implicitly allow that *if* the soul were in its nature genuinely complex, that if it had genuine parts, it would in fact be corruptible. This, though, only underscores and emphasizes a continuity between the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. For he continues to maintain the same biconditional pairing of eternality and incompositeness that he had relied upon in the *Phaedo*. He feels compelled to defend himself by insisting that the picture of the complex soul deployed throughout *Republic* iv-x is a picture of a soul in its sullied state. And its association with the body is here, as in the *Phaedo*, the culprit.

There is a temptation to think of the comparison to Glaucus as an unhappy expedience, as an attempt to salvage a manifestly lame argument for the soul's immortality whose obvious incongruence with the rest of the *Republic* Plato could not but fail to notice.[7] That is, Plato first advances the so-called Special Vice Argument for the soul's immortality in *Republic* x (608c-611a),[8] an argument which prompts him to wonder

how an immortal entity might yet be composite (611b), and then proceeds to treat the tri-partite psychology of the rest of the *Republic* as if it were somehow illusory, or at least inessential. When washed clean by philosophy, the true soul will be revealed simple and wisdom-loving; it will be, in short, the soul of the *Phaedo*, a soul effectively exhausted by its intellective capacity. So, in a misguided and somewhat desperate attempt to rescue an incurably defective argument, Plato backpedals, treating the entire psychological edifice of the *Republic* as expendable.

This interpretation has one thing right: it treats the simplicity of the soul as incompatible with one form of complexity. Plato evidently himself sees just this problem; this is why he raises the concern. But the attempt simply to set aside Plato's Glaucus-image as unfortunate is unwarranted, obscuring as it does a genuine continuity in Plato's thought. To begin, Plato does not conclude in *Republic* x that the true soul is *in fact* or somehow *demonstrably* simple. Instead, he allows that when freed of its association with the body, the soul would present its true nature, where what that nature might be remains an open question.[9] If the soul were cleansed, he suggests, "then one might see its true nature, whether it is multiform or uniform, and whether it is such and how" (612a; καὶ τότ' ἄν τις ἴδοι αὐτῆς τὴν ἀληθῆ φύσιν, εἴτε πολυειδὴς εἴτε μονοειδής, εἴτε ὅπῃ ἔχει καὶ ὅπως). This echoes the caution of the *Phaedo* almost exactly, since there, even in the Affinity Argument, Plato had not wanted to insist categorically that the soul is indissoluble, since he qualified his conclusion by saying that it must be so *or nearly so* (*Phaedo* 80b10). In both cases, we find not dogmatism from Plato, but a caution which befits the difficulty of the subject. Plato is free to rely on an argument from simplicity, relying on the analytic premises, while remaining cautiously optimistic about whether the soul qualifies by being simple in the requisite sense.

III. The Mereology of Soul Division in *Republic* iv

These forms of continuity may prove unfortunate for Plato. If we grant that both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* x presuppose, with due precautions, that the essential soul is simple, then we find him in an awkward position. Sandwiched between these two chapters we have the bulk of the *Republic*, including most notably *Republic* iv, which contains an argument to show precisely that the soul is complex and not simple.[10] This argument, if sound, seems to require that the soul have parts not merely

in the way that Glaucus has encrustations, that is contingently, but rather essentially. If so, according to this approach, the attempt in *Republic* x to soft-pedal the mereology of *Republic* iv and following will be wholly ineffectual.[11]

I want to argue that nothing in Plato's argument for soul division is incompatible with the picture of the soul offered in *Republic* x.[12] One test of whether I am correct should be, then, whether the soul described in *Republic* iv qualifies as a suitable candidate for an argument from simplicity. I argue that it does. In short, the argument for psychic division does not yield parts of a sort which would be incompatible with either the Affinity Argument of the *Phaedo* or the Special Vice Argument of *Republic* x.

The argument for psychic division in *Republic* iv proceeds as follows:[13]

1. The same thing cannot do or undergo contraries with respect to the same element of itself (436b8). (I will call this *PGP*, or the *part generating principle*.)
2. Acceptance and pursuit are contraries of rejection and avoidance (437b1-5).
3. Instances of acceptance and pursuit are: appetite (hunger or thirst), willing, and wishing (437b7-c7).
4. Instances of rejection and avoidance are: refusal, unwillingness, and lack of appetite (437d8-10).
5. So, if we find an instance of someone both having an appetite for x and refusing x, we will have an instance of someone standing in contraries with respect to x.
6. In fact, our souls sometimes both have an appetite to drink and refuse to drink (439c1-2).[14]
7. So, we have an instance in which our souls undergo contraries with respect to x.
8. Since, by (1), nothing can undergo contraries with respect to the same element of itself, whenever any soul is in the condition described in (6), it must be with respect to different elements in that soul.
9. Hence, our souls have distinct elements.

In describing the conclusion in terms of distinct "elements," I intend to be neutral with respect to various comparatively determinate alternatives. If we think that the argument establishes distinct *proper parts* of the soul,

then we are already in danger of supposing that it establishes a form of complexity incompatible with simplicity. By contrast, if we think immediately that it establishes only distinct *properties*, or *aspects*, or *features*, or *types of psychic phenomena*, then we have already presumed that the argument establishes not proper parts, but only distinct kinds of qualities in the soul. It would, however, be incorrect to make any of these determinations before asking about the kinds of parts or features PGP generates. It is to this question that I now turn.

In the rich literature on the matter of soul-division in *Republic* iv, the vast majority focuses on an important question concerning (1), whether it is intended as a logical or formal principle, perhaps an instance of the principle of noncontradiction, or some kind of synthetic principle whose truth must be independently established.[15] There is surprisingly little which addresses the following simple question, which is for our purposes far more important: what kind of elements or parts does this argument, if sound, establish?[16] A weaker question might also be asked: even if unsound, what sorts of elements or parts might this argument reasonably be understood to be attempting to establish? These are questions about Plato's mereology; and they are precisely the questions we need to answer if we are to ascertain whether the soul here divided is nevertheless simple in the way requisite for an argument from simplicity.

For clarity's sake, let us distinguish the following notions of *part*. This will enable us to formulate our question with increased precision. In these definitions, I take as primitive the notion of being a *portion* of something. This notion can be given a precise definition, but that is not necessary for the present purposes. More important is the stipulation that the notion of a portion is sufficiently broad to encompass a variety of different kinds of parts, including physical components, properties, aspects, and abstract features, including limits and boundaries:

- *Aggregative part*: x is an aggregative part of y iff: (i) x is a portion of y; (ii) x can exist as x after the dissolution of y.
- *Organic part:* x is an organic part of y iff: (i) x is a portion of y; (ii) x is a functionally defined entity; and (iii) x is parasitic on y for its identity conditions.
- *Conceptual part*: x is a conceptual part of y iff: (i) x is a portion of y; (ii) x is not a functionally defined entity; and (iii) x is parasitic on y for its identity conditions.

Some illustrations:

- Aggregative parts: a marble in a pile of marbles; an apple in the set of all apples; a book in Bodleian.
- Organic parts: my heart; a dollar in a monetary system; a carburetor; a door; the president of a university.
- Conceptual parts: The Louvre's top half; the center of Ireland; Trevor's baldness; Petra's degree of sympathy; the terminus of line segment *AB*; Alcibiades' appearance; the perceptions of a Leibnizean monad.

These illustrations are meant to give a some indication of the kinds of parts which might be at play in Plato's argument for soul division.

With this framework in place, I offer two arguments, the first concerning the form of mereology assumed in the argument and the second concerning the question of whether the argument establishes *essential* parts of the soul, however those parts are construed. The first argument is as follows:

1. Plato's argument for soul-division in *Republic* iv establishes at most conceptual parts.
2. If (1), that argument is compatible with the form of simplicity required for the Affinity Argument of the *Phaedo* and the Special Vice Argument of *Republic* x.
3. Hence, Plato's argument for soul-division is compatible with a simple soul.

I will comment on (1) and (2) in turn.

Two points are relevant to our assessment of (1). The first concerns the fact that the first premise of Plato's argument for soul division cannot be restricted to aggregative or organic parts. However it is to be understood, as a formal or a synthetic principle, the first premise (that the same things cannot do or undergo contraries with respect to the same element of itself [436b8]), shows at most that the one entity must at times have distinct conceptual parts. Thus, for example, we might say that point A is the terminus of two lines, one curved and one straight. A itself thus has two elements, being the terminus of a straight line and being the terminus of a curved line. Since no straight line is also curved, these features in A must be distinct. But A has no aggregative or functional parts. In fact, such parts as A has are all conceptual parts. Given that Plato's principle generates just these kinds of parts, it cannot, as such, generate other forms of parts.

The second point about this first premise is that this is a consequence of his principle which Plato himself fully appreciates. When canvassing putative counterexamples to the principle of contraries, Plato considers the case of a spinning top, which might be thought to be both spinning and standing still. His response is to distinguish two elements in tops: "We would say that there is an axis and a circumference in them" (φαῖμεν ἂν ἔχειν αὐτὰ εὐθύ τε καὶ περιφερὲς ἐν αὑτοῖς; 436e1). We would then be at liberty to point out that these are different, so that the spinning tops do not present counterexamples to our principle.

The purport of this example is clear; and it is evidently for just this purport that the example of the top is introduced. The kinds of parts covered by (PGP) extend to abstract parts. Abstract parts, however, are conceptual parts. Hence, Plato designs his governing principle, unaugmented, to generate abstract parts. He therefore also embraces the conclusion that his argument generates conceptual parts. Since conceptual parts are neither organic nor aggregative parts, it also follows that this argument in its present form cannot establish the existence of such parts in the soul.

More to the point, and we now move on to our second premise (that the argument for soul-division is compatible with the form of simplicity required for the Affinity Argument of the *Phaedo* and the Special Vice Argument of *Republic* x), in establishing these forms of parts, Plato does nothing to undercut any argument for simplicity he might be inclined to offer. For the argument from simplicity assumes that necessarily, something is incomposite iff it is eternal. Even Forms, however, the very basis of the analogy in the Affinity Argument, have conceptual parts. For anything with properties has conceptual parts, and Forms have properties. So too with a point: it has conceptual parts, but not the kinds of parts required for dissolution. Such parts would include, e.g., spatial parts, which might be either organic or aggregative. It follows, then, that the sorts of parts generated by Plato's argument for soul division do not impugn any argument from simplicity he might be inclined to offer.[17]

I turn now to the second compatibility argument, one which abstracts slightly from the fine features of Plato's mereology. This argument takes very seriously indeed the image of Glaucus, by taking Plato at his word when he says that the soul in its true nature may not be multiform. More to the point, it establishes that Plato's argument for soul division could not establish anything about the essence of the soul. For it cannot establish anything necessarily true of the soul, and all essential properties are also necessary.

When he says that the soul in its true nature may well be uniform, Plato seems to resist the suggestion that the soul is essentially composite. Some contemporary interpreters have picked up on this, arguing that any understanding of *Republic* iv according to which it establishes an *essentially* composite soul would render it irrevocably incompatible with both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* x.[18] So, the dominant question has become whether the argument establishes essential composition in the soul.

This question is, however, in one way insufficiently fine-grained. For, given the distinctions we have introduced, the question put thus bluntly is at best misleading. As we have seen, an argument from simplicity is compatible with the presence of conceptual parts, although it is not compatible with the existence of aggregative parts. Indeed, the argument from simplicity is compatible with the presence of essential conceptual parts; this is, of course, welcome, since *everything* with an essence has some essential conceptual parts. That being the case, the only pressing question concerns whether the argument for soul division establishes the existence of essential aggregative parts; for these are the sorts of parts into which an entity can resolve when going out of existence. Since (PGP) does not generate aggregative parts at all, it *a fortiori* does not generate essential aggregative parts. Hence, Plato's argument for soul division does not generate essential parts of a sort incompatible with the soul's being simple in the way requisite for the Affinity and Special Vice Arguments.

That acknowledged, it is worth observing something quite important about the argument, a simple point whose neglect has generated significant and long-term misconceptions about the force of the argument and its place in Plato's development. This is that Plato's argument for soul-division *could not* establish essential parts of any kind. The reason is simple. Premise (6) (that in fact our souls sometimes have an appetite to drink yet refuse to drink) is an *a posteriori* premise. It is also contingent. (6) appeals to a naked fact of experience, to the effect that we sometimes experience psychic conflict. The conclusion, then, is that *given that conflict*, it follows that our souls have the features or elements distinguished by the argument. This, though, is a straightforwardly hypothetical necessity. Hence, none of the features established by the argument can be *de re* necessities. Since every essential feature is also a *de re* necessary feature, it follows that the argument for soul division could not establish anything essential about the soul at all. From this it follows trivially that it could not establish that the soul is essentially composite.

This argument can be expanded and strengthened by considering a tempting objection.[19] The point assumes that since it contains an *a posteriori* premise, Plato's argument cannot establish anything necessary about the soul. *A fortiori*, it cannot establish anything essential. That is, the point relies upon a tacit inference to the effect that proposition *p* is necessary only if it is not knowable *a posteriori*. Perhaps Plato may have assumed that such an inference would be stable, or perhaps not; he does not address the issues in just these terms. Still, *we* cannot accept any such assumption, because we know of the existence of *a posteriori* necessities. As Kripke has pointed out,[20] the *a posteriori/a priori* distinction is an epistemological distinction, while the necessary/contingent distinction is metaphysical in character. The distinctions are not the same, and indeed need not be coextensive. In fact, he contends, they are not coextensive: that water = H_2O is necessary but knowable only *a posteriori*. So, and this is the force of the current objection, Plato may well and rightly have relied upon an *a posteriori* premise in an argument which draws a conclusion about the necessary features of the soul. If so, the fact that one premise in the argument is *a posteriori* does nothing to impugn the possibility of its drawing a conclusion concerning the essential features of the soul.

This objection is uncompelling. In the first instance, though widely influential, Kripke's arguments for the existence of *a posteriori* necessities were refuted already in 1983.[21] That said, the relevance of Kripke's arguments to the point at hand is in any case already suspect. Suppose, that is, as many do, that at least one of Kripke's arguments for the existence of the necessary *a posteriori* is sound. Even this concession would do nothing to undermine the observation that Plato's appeal to an *a posteriori* premise is incompatible with his inferring anything *de re* necessary about the soul. For Kripke's dominant arguments pertain not to *de re* necessities, but to *de dicto* necessities, and then only to a highly specific kind, those expressed by identity statements flanked by rigid designators. Plato's appeal to the fact that we indeed at times experience internal psychic conflict is not a claim about identity statements at all, and thus falls outside the scope of Kripke-style arguments for the existence of the necessary *a posteriori*. Moreover, the apparatus of rigid designation is hardly relevant to Plato's claim (6), which, again, holds: In fact, our souls sometimes both have an appetite to drink and refuse to drink (439c1-2). This phenomenological appeal to our psychological lives has nothing whatever to do with highly theoretical and specific claims concerning the behavior of rigid designators, if there are such.[22] Hence, the

putative existence of *a posteriori* necessities of the sort envisaged by Kripke and his followers has no bearing on the question of whether Plato's argument for soul tripartition could eventuate in essential features of the soul.[23]

It is possible, I suppose, that someone might want to rewrite Plato's actual argument in such a way that it would dispense with premise (6), so that the argument makes no *a posteriori* appeal at all. Such an argument might prove interesting; but it would not be Plato's argument. More to the point, it would be odd and tendentious to use any such argument to create a problem for Plato along the lines currently under consideration. To insist that Plato had contradicted himself by promoting the simplicity of the soul in one context while in another advancing an argument which might be rewritten so as to require a commitment to an essentially composite soul would really be to insist only that Plato might have contradicted himself, but did not.

Given the features of Plato's actual argument, it would be a mistake, as Plato says it would be a mistake, to infer that the forms of complexity ascribed to the soul throughout the *Republic* are, in any relevant sense, incompatible with the simple souls he understands to be our true natures.[24] These Platonic souls are simple souls.

IV. Conclusions

Although it would be incorrect to derive any sweeping unitarian conclusions from these investigations, two results remain noteworthy. First, there is no reason to doubt Plato's contention that the argument for soul-division in *Republic* iv is compatible with the conception of unitary souls upon which he relies elsewhere, mostly notably in the *Phaedo* and in *Republic* x. Second, it is incorrect to posit a shift in metaphysical psychology as an explanatory factor in Plato's (alleged) anti-Socratic affirmation of *akrasia*. For there is no reason to suppose that he underwent any such shift.[25]

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Notes

1. Frede offers this sort of judgment in commenting on the moral psychology of the *Protagoras*: "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 Plato, in the *Republic* (iv, 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" (1999, xxx). Irwin, commenting on *Republic* iv, reaches a similar conclusion: "The division of the soul into parts with potentially conflicting desires seems to explain incontinence. The explanation rejects Socrates' dissolution of apparent incontinence into mistaken belief about comparative goods and evils. If we have desires that are not responsive to reasoning about the good, it is not surprising that they sometimes move us to action in conflict with our belief about the good" (1999, 287). Similarly, Miller (1999, 100) 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."

2. This point seems appreciated by Woods (1987), 45 n. 45.

3. In making this claim, I do not maintain that Plato's views about the soul undergo no form of development whatsoever. On the contrary, there seem to me some important differences between the conception of soul in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, centering especially on its corporeal concomitants. I maintain, rather, a metaphysical thesis about Plato's mereology, that the soul is not essentially partite.

4. I do not here distinguish between eternality and sempiternality, as one must in some other contexts in Plato. Here I treat eternity as a generic notion of ceaseless existence.

5. For example, Plotinus, *Enneades* i. 1. 12, Berkeley, *Principles,* 141: "We have shown that the soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended; and it is consequently incorruptible."

6. So, for example, Gallop, commenting on Plato's introduction in the *Phaedo* of an opposition between an exhaustively rational soul and the emotions and desires housed in the body: "This opposition is not between 'reason' and some other 'part' of the soul, but simply between soul and body. No distinction is drawn in the *Phaedo* between 'reason,' 'spirit,' and 'appetite,' which Plato treats elsewhere as separate 'parts' of the soul—see *Republic* 435a-441c and *Phaedrus* 246a-b, 253c-e" (1975, 89).

7. So Annas (1981, 346), commenting on Plato's argument for immortality (608c-611a): "Plato does not see, or is unmoved by, the question-begging nature of this argument. He goes on (611a-612a) to a problem that this argument raises. The soul has throughout the *Republic* been treated as having parts, as being the area of psychological complexity and division. But the soul just proved immor-

tal is *unitary* . . . Plato here betrays a tendency (cf. *Phaedo* 78b-c) to think of destruction as being a breaking-up and dissolution so that anything indestructible must have no parts or internal complexity. However, if the soul has internal complexity, how can it be immortal? Plato's reply here is that the soul's true nature is immortal, and that our notion of it as being composite and liable to internal conflict is not a true view. . . . Why should we think that immortal simplicity is the soul's true nature, rather than its perceived complexity? Fantastic as it seems, Plato is laying more weight on this ridiculous little argument than on the whole of the rest of the *Republic* with its use of the composite soul." Similarly, Guthrie (1975, 555): "This is certainly no improvement on the arguments for immortality in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, and for Plato's sake one would hope that it was not very seriously meant. . . . Unless I have misunderstood it, the illogicality of the argument, apart from its astonishing premises, is patent."

8. The Special Vice Argument holds that *x* can be brought out of existence, if at all, only by the vice peculiar to it (τὸ σύμφυτον κακὸν; 609a8) and nothing else, that injustice is the special vice of the soul, but that injustice is not the sort of vice which can destroy the soul. Plato concludes, then, that "it is clear the soul is something which always exists, but if it always exists, it is immortal;" δῆλον ὅτι ἀνάγκη αὐτὸ ἀεὶ ὂν εἶναι· εἰ δ' ἀεὶ ὄν, ἀθάνατον; 611a1).

9. Cf. *Phaedrus* 246a, and *Tim.* 72d, where Plato is similarly agnostic or at least cautious.

10. This problem was already formulated crisply in Grote (1875, Vol. ii, 159): "In the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, the soul is a tri-partite aggregate, a commu nity of parts, a compound: in the *Phaedon*, Sokrates asserts it to be uncompounded, making this fact a point in his argument."

11. Archer-Hind (1881, 128) formulates the difficulty this way: "We are therefore driven to choose between the following suppositions: (1) Plato has directly contradicted himself on a point of the gravest importance; (2) the term *psuchê* is used by him in different senses; (3) the expression *thnêton eidos psuchês* is to be explained so as to harmonise with Plato's other statements on the subject." He opts for (3), as do I. Our reasons, though compatible, diverge sharply.

12. In this I agree with Guthrie (1975, 478): "when Plato wrote book 10 he had not forgotten what he said in book 4. The one change came after the *Phaedo*, where passion and appetite were attributed to the body, not the embodied soul. Essentially the soul remains what it was there, simple and akin to the divine." I do not, however, accept his reasons for this conclusion. Guthrie relies exclusively on the view of Nettleship (1898, 154). Nettleship does nothing, however, to address the question of Plato's mereology.

13. This formulation of the argument agrees with Irwin (1995, 204).

14. N.b. that it must be our *souls* which Plato tacitly accepts as the subjects of both these attitudes. If it were, e.g., our *selves*, then we would not have even a *prima facie* argument for soul division; one might well hold, e.g., the picture commonly associated with the *Phaedo*, according to which the rational soul is the seat of one form of desire and the body the seat of another.

15. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Miller (1999), 92-95.

16. One noteworthy study which pays attention to the character of Plato's psychic parts is Woods (1987), who is opposed to the tendency of some others, which he locates *inter alia* in Crombie (1962, Vol. i, 356), of treating the parts of the soul as mere psychic phenomena. Woods aims "to show that Plato needs more than a threefold classification of phenomena: he needs to establish distinct *sources* of action" (25). Even Woods does not ask what would be required, in terms of Plato's mereology, to establish distinct sources of action. In one sense, I am inclined to agree with Woods; but in this sense, the three sources will not be proper parts from which a unified soul is fused.

17. In one sense, then, I agree with Archer-Hind (1881, 125), who concludes against Zeller that the three parts of soul are "*verschiedene Thätigkiesformen*," as opposed to "*verschiedene Theile*."

18. Thus, Cross and Woozley (1964, 120) maintain that an essentially tripartite soul would force an "irresolvable contradiction" between *Republic* iv and x. As will be seen in what follows, in one way I agree and in another I disagree. The question turns crucially on the conception of "parts" employed in this judgment.

19. Several people have voiced this objection. Among them, Nicholas White has put it most clearly and forcefully.

20. Kripke (1971), 267-71.

21. By Pavel Tichey (1983), whose arguments I will not reproduce, but which I endorse almost completely.

22. So, although a second form of argument offered by Kripke does pertain to *de re* necessity, including especially facts about origination, these arguments are equally irrelevant to the experiential appeal in Plato's premise (6). For these arguments too rest upon an appeal to the apparatus of rigid designation.

23. That Plato did not himself understand the argument to generate three (and only three) essential features of the soul seems confirmed by his observation toward the end of *Republic* iv that the just person is the one who has harmonized his reason, spirit and appetite, as higher, lower, and intermediate parts, "as well as any others there may be between them" καὶ εἰ ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξὺ τυγχάνει ὄντα; 443d7). It would be perverse and cavalier to allude to other parts of the soul, evidently on par with the three delineated by the arguments of *Republic* iv, if these parts were understood as all essential. This would generate an unacceptable psychic fission. Indeed, it would seem to land Plato in the awkward dilemma clearly articulated by Miller (1999, 100): "Plato's argument for a tripartite soul thus faces a dilemma: depending on how we understand the argument, either it establishes too little (namely, only two parts of the soul) or too much (a part of the soul corresponding to every desire." If, however, the parts in question are conceptual parts, and in any case, not essential to the soul, Plato is at liberty to generate as many parts as he requires for any given eristic

purpose. Again, it is surely noteworthy that in this context he himself finds congenial the existence of other parts. On this point see also Murphy (1951, 29), with whose view I agree.

24. As a modest confirmation of this conclusion, it is worth recalling that Plato shies away from speaking in terms of *parts* (*merê* or *moria*) in *Republic* iv, employing the term *meros* first at 442b11 already near the end of the chapter and well after the dominant argument for soul-division has been delivered. Plato prefers three forms of locutions: (i) the article with a relative clause, (ii) adjectives, and (iii) noun phrases other than part (e.g., *genê* and *eidê*, kinds or types. It is also worth recalling that the dominant interpretation of Plato in antiquity, from Aristotle (*MM* 1182a26) through the Middle Platonists (see, e.g., Arius Didymus 38.14), ascribed only bipartite division to Plato, suggesting either: (i) a willful misunderstanding of Plato's mereology, as Vander Waerdt (1985) would have it, or, as I prefer, (ii) a recognition that the soul division of *Republic* iv does not establish parts incompatible with other axes of division, for example, into the *alogon* and *logon echon*. No violence is done to Plato in this division, since it is compatible with the tripartite division established in *Republic* iv.

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7

The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's *Republic*

Bernard Williams

In making the first construction of the city, there is an assumption that it should be able to tell us something about δικαιοσύνη in the individual: we look to the larger inscription to help us read the smaller one, 368D. But, as Plato indeed implies, the larger inscription will help with the smaller only if they present the same message. What is Plato's reason for expecting the same message? Basically, it is that δίκαιος applies to both cities and men, and that it signifies one characteristic: "So the just man will not differ at all from the just city, so far as the character of justice is concerned, but will be like it" (καὶ δίκαιος ἄρα ἀνὴρ δικαίας πόλεως κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης εἶδος οὐδὲν διοίσει, ἀλλ' ὅμοιος ἔσται, 435B). That there should be some kind of analogy between cities and men in respect of their being δίκαιος would seem to be a presupposition of asking the question "what is δικαιοσύνη?" and expecting one answer to it.

Indeed at 434E Plato says that when we transfer what we have said about the city back to the man, we may find that it does not work out; but the moral will be that we should go back and try again and "perhaps by looking at the two side by side and rubbing them together, we may make justice blaze out, like fire from two sticks." Plato clearly has a fair confidence that this technique will work: his confidence is in what I shall call the *analogy of meaning*.