

THE DIVIDED MIND IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC

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Plato starts from a thesis that we may call the Principle of Non-Contrariety: 'It is evident that the same thing will never do or suffer opposites simultaneously in the same respect and in relation to the same thing' (4.436b8-9). So any appearance of attaching contrary predicates to a single subject is to be dissolved by qualifying either subject or predicate. Thus, if a man is standing still, but moving his hands and head, we should say not that he is simultaneously at rest and in motion, but that some of him is at rest, and some of him in motion (c9-d1). Now we find cases where thirst, i.e. a desire to drink, which drives the soul towards drinking like a beast, is opposed by something that draws the soul back (439a9-b5); when a man is thirsty and yet refuses to drink, there is something in his soul that tells him to drink, and something telling him not to that prevails (c2-7). But we excluded that the same thing 'by the same of itself' should act simultaneously in opposite ways in relation to the same thing (b5-6); so the soul must contain two forms (e2), whereby it desires oppositely.

Plato is not supposing that we need to posit two forms within the soul whenever we meet desires that are contrary in the sense that they cannot both be satisfied. That relation between desires is virtually inevitable once one has a plurality of desires. What interests him is cases where a man is not merely 'similarly affected towards different objects', but 'contrarily affected towards the same' (H.W.B. Joseph). Just as man cannot simultaneously move towards an object, and away from it, with his whole body, so, Plato suggests, he cannot both be drawn towards a thing, and recoil from it, with a soul operating as a whole.

Plato uses this line of thought to distinguish appetite from reason, and then spirit from both. Someone who thirsts for a drink, and yet refuses to drink, displays that his soul is multiple, containing contrasting sources of desire. If we specify that the thirst arises (like hunger) from physical depletion, but the refusal from rational calculation, we shall have here a conflict between his appetite and his reason (4.439c2-e3). Further, we must separate his spirit from both: a man may be angry with his appetites, or his reason may condemn his anger (439e3-441c2). And this may only be a beginning, to be complicated by further investigation (435c9-d8, 443d7, cf. 6.504b1-c4).

While his meaning is debated, Plato had no need to conceive parts of the soul as distinct souls (which he never calls them), or homunculi (little men within each man); and it is at least clear that they share a single consciousness. And yet they are not mere faculties either: rather, they share certain faculties, such as those of believing and desiring. As homes of clusters of beliefs and desires that arise from different sources, and act together or apart on bodily organs, they are agencies, and have some of the freedom that we ordinarily ascribe only to persons. Hence it is natural to talk of them – literally or not – in interpersonal terms, as if they were distinct subjects and agents; and such talk is recurrent in the Republic. When Socrates likens each soul to a trio of animals, a Cerberus, a lion, and a man (9.588c7-e1), he graphically conveys how alien to one another are the repertoires of the different parts. When he

remarks that these can give commands (4.439c6-7) or be obedient (441e6), and raise faction (442d1, 444b1) or be meddlesome (443d2, 444b2), he uses public imagery to capture private reality.

Reason has various operations and concerns, which Aristotle was later to separate out as theoretical or practical. On the one hand, it is both its task to discover the truth (9.580d10, 583a2), and also its passion (4.435e7, 9.580d10, 581b5-10, 586e4); on the other, it governs the entire soul, guarding against both internal and external dangers with knowledge of what is beneficial to each part of the soul and to the community of its parts (4.441e4-442c8).

Plato introduces appetite with physiologically generated desires such as hunger and thirst (437d2-4). Its abstract goal is pleasure: it pursues not just food and drink but 'the pleasures associated with nutrition and generation' (436a11). Its repertory may then extend together with a wider conception of pleasures. Pursuing money first as a means to satisfying appetite, a man may slide into loving money for its own sake; he will then have an appetite for 'the pleasure that comes from money' (9.581d5-6, cf. 580e5-581a1). There can even arise an appetite for philosophy. The democratic man, though a creature of appetite, is 'manifold and full of very many dispositions' (8.561e3-4), alternating unpredictably between wine and water, sloth and exercise, war and business, politics and philosophy (c7-d5). We may suppose that his appetite borrows a love of war from spirit, and of philosophy from reason. It can be eclectic in its objects so long as it inclines a man to pursue them appetitively. A love of philosophy will count as an appetite if it is indulged just for fun, and not (which is harder work) out of a passion for truth.

The unity of spirit has been found elusive. In its primitive form, it is displayed even by newborn children (4.441a7-b1) and animals (b2-3, cf. 2.375a11-12). It shares with appetite an aspect of physiological disturbance: it 'boils' (4.440c7). At its more civilized, it takes on the evaluative activities of admiring, honouring, and taking pride in (8.553d4-6). It thus occupies a midpoint between the other two parts (550b4, 6). Yet there is a connecting thread to be traced. From its physiology spirit takes a native belligerence; as the seat of anger (4.439e3), it is prone to savagery (3.410d6-7). This initially gives it not so much any distinctive conception of the good (like appetite's equation of the good with pleasure) as a type of orientation, aggressive and self-conscious, towards the good. This helps explain why it is by nature reason's auxiliary (4.441a2-3): it is receptive of another's values, translating them into its own terms (cf. 442c1-3). However, its temperament also inclines it towards values of its own: we later, in Books 8 and 9, read repeatedly that it is set on honour (for the pugnacious love honour, 9.583a8); its love of that goes with a love of victory (8.545a2-3, 548c6-7, 550b6-7, 9.581b2-3, 582e4-5, 586c9).

Are appetite and anger liable to subdivide? Possibly (and why not?), but not evidently. Take appetite first. I may suffer simultaneously from hunger and thirst, while recognizing that I cannot afford to satisfy both. Now desiring food, and drink, is so far a case of being similarly drawn to two different things. But might I not desire not to eat in order to be able to drink, and won't I then at once desire to eat and desire not to eat? This may be so, but without both desires falling within - and so subdividing - appetite. Appetite can't motivate unappetizing actions, and not eating is not, in itself, attractive to the appetite of someone who is hungry. (However, more troublesome is the man, conceived by Terence Irwin, who wants food but dislikes cabbage, when cabbage is the only food available.) Next take spirit. Why, for example, should shame (which belongs within spirit, 8.560a6-7) not come apart from one-

upmanship (which is close to love of honour)? A good example is the drama of sexual temptation in the *Phaedrus*. There spirit is represented within the chariot of the soul by a good horse (appetite by a bad horse, reason by a charioteer). The good horse of the *Phaedrus* is 'a lover of honour when joined with restraint and a sense of shame' (253d6); but why should there not be a conflict between the vanity that would boast of a successful seduction (cf. 232a1-6), and the shame that holds any but a Don Juan back? However, we need here to identify the source of the conflict: this appears to be not any inherent division within spirit itself, but rather the danger that, when a rational desire conflicts with an appetite, spirit may side with both of them. Thus, in the instance touched upon in the *Phaedrus*, it may supply both a vanity that seconds sexual appetite, and a sense of shame that seconds rational restraint. Conflict within spirit may always be parasitic upon conflict elsewhere. Despite its liability to come apart within an already divided soul, it can still strictly count as a single part.