Introduction

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> With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines, and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens.
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> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*[1]

Most of the papers in this volume originated at two conferences, one held in 2005 at the University of Toronto and one in 2006 at Cornell University.[2] As organizers we then commissioned another seven papers in order to produce a much more wide-ranging, if still far from comprehensive volume.[3] Philosophical accounts of the tripartite soul in Plato have traditionally focussed on the *Republic*: while that dialogue remains central to many of the papers in this volume, readers will also find discussions of other dialogues featuring soul-partition (including Sheffield on the *Phaedrus*, Lorenz on the *Timaeus*, and Brisson on the *Laws*) and other relevant psychological investigations (Dorion on the *Gorgias*, Vasiliou on the *Phaedo*, Sheffield on the *Symposium*, Moss on the *Philebus*). Also included are three case studies of uses of the tripartite theory within the later Platonic tradition (Opsomer on Plutarch, Schiefsky on Galen, and Emilsson on Plotinus). The reader will thus be able to judge to what extent these various sources present a constant, unitary theory – a unitary and stable Platonic Psychology – underlying the developments and revisions in Plato's thinking, and in the views of his successors.

1 Stevenson (2003, first published 1886) 64.
2 The papers first read at the Toronto conference are those of Dorion, Kamtekar, Whiting, and Woolf; at Cornell, those of Brennan, Lorenz, Moss, and Schiefsky.
3 These are the contributions by Brisson, Brown, Emilsson, Opsomer, Sheffield, Vasiliou, and Wilberding.

As these essays bring out, Plato's tripartite theory, like his 'theory of Forms', is an ever-evolving construction, engineered to serve an impressive range of different purposes. It is introduced in *Republic* IV to account for mental conflict; more generally, it serves there as a tool for the explanation of action and the definition of the virtues, while providing a paradigm for the analysis of just and unjust cities (and of course vice versa). But the theory also provides an account of personality types; explains the workings of non-rational thought and emotional experience (Brennan, Moss); provides the basis for a theory of education (Wilberding); and brings into focus questions about personal immortality and eschatology (Woolf). The impact of tripartition on Platonic theories on topics ranging from politics (Brisson) to animal thought (Lorenz) is a central theme of this volume. To speak of the impact of tripartition is not to assume a 'developmentalist' account, though, or assume that tripartition requires Plato to recant ideas developed earlier, such as Socratic 'intellectualism.' If anything the papers in this volume are broadly unitarian in their findings – perhaps 'continuitarian' would be a better term. For they include arguments that the account of *erôs* in the *Phaedrus* (Sheffield), the passions in the late dialogues (Moss), and even soul-partition itself (Whiting) are natural developments from earlier Platonic ideas; Brisson also argues for the essential continuity of both the psychology and the politics of the *Laws* with the *Republic*.

That each of us is a multiplicity is for Plato both intuitively obvious – How else could 'self-control' be intelligible? How else can we be both attracted and repelled by the very same thing? – and a radical, revisionist insight. The oligarch, with his careful self-preserving rationality, will presumably be shocked to discover that he is in fact a slave to appetite (553c–d). Much of the revisionist force of the theory flows from the rich conception it provides of reason, as a form (*eidos*) of the soul with its own pleasures, desires, and way of life – a powerful alternative to the instrumental conception of reason assumed by Thrasymachus and his modern successors.

Exactly what a part (*meros*) of the soul consists in is an endlessly intriguing question. Scholars have often noted that Plato tends to use *meros* much less often than English translators use 'part,' largely thanks to the nifty ability of Greek to use an adjective with an article as a substantive ('the calculating,' 'the spirited,' etc.). And what Plato means by sometimes calling the parts forms or species (*eidê*), a very loaded term in his metaphysics, is quite unclear (Woolf). Most of the papers here represent what seems to be a growing consensus that these entities (whatever the right

word for them might be) are robustly agent-like individuals: 'a polity of multifarious, incongruous' – albeit interdependent – 'denizens'. For each seems to comprise an integrated system of capacities for cognition, volition, affect, and agency vis-à-vis the other parts. Plato's use of animal imagery in both the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, his depiction of the parts as interacting like individual humans or political groups, and his use of the theory to account for the differentiation of biological kinds in the *Timaeus* – all this evidence suggests that we are to understand the parts as real agents, having something of the completeness and autonomy of different kinds of organism. But both Kamtekar and Whiting present deep (and very different) deflationary challenges to this whole 'realist' line of interpretation. Thanks to the indeterminacies of Plato's terminology, his often analogical mode of presentation, and the multiplicity of purposes we can see the tripartite theory as serving, its scope and import are open to contestation at the most basic level.

Analyses of tripartition also need to account for the sense in which Plato clearly remains committed to the view that the soul is somehow *one*. Some texts, including *Republic* X, suggest that the lower parts of the soul are temporary additions which develop to serve our needs at incarnation and disappear, or are reabsorbed into the rational part, at death – though how to reconcile this with the *Phaedrus* myth, which uses the image of charioteer and horses to depict an immortal tripartition, is a perennial interpretive puzzle (Woolf). And just what is divided and in what way by Plato's arguments for partition in *Republic* IV is not so obvious as it might seem (Brown). In any case, to say that the parts are depicted as agent-like is not yet to say in what spirit the depiction is intended. Perhaps the theory gives an account only of human nature under certain non-ideal conditions, as *Republic* X suggests (Woolf); or of defectively educated, poorly integrated natures in particular (Whiting); or perhaps it is intended heuristically rather than literally, as a therapeutic tool more than a naturalistic scientific analysis (Kamtekar).

Elaborated for so many uses, the tripartite theory appears in a number of different versions in Plato's own work. As the essays by Opsomer, Schiefsky, and Emilsson bring out, it was also creatively extended and redeployed by later Platonists, recombined with later ideas and reconfigured to address new challenges. But many later Platonic concerns also have deep roots in Plato's own text. The relation of my soul to my personal immortality; the interaction of the partitioned soul with the body (and with it the bearing of the theory on topics such as medicine and the theory of perception); the connections between the individual soul and

the world-soul of the *Timaeus*; the problem of how a collection of soul-parts can add up to a free and responsible self – all are problems likely to nag at any reader of Plato's own works, and all are addressed in various ways by later Platonists. In doing so they develop sophisticated readings of the Platonic texts, harmonize them with the insights of other philosophers, defend them against objections, and develop their implications with permanently useful results. Thus Emilsson argues that Plotinus gets something importantly right in his understanding of the relation between Platonic virtue and external action; and Wilberding draws on Proclus to develop his own interpretation of Platonic physical education.

This volume is very far from presenting the full story of the tripartite soul even in antiquity; to trace its direct and indirect influence through different eras would be a massive undertaking. If that influence has today receded, it is all the more striking that analyses of the human self as irreducibly multiple are very much back in fashion. The kinship between Platonic and Freudian tripartite psychology is well-known,[4] but equally striking are the resonances with contemporary neuroscience. On many versions of the latter, our cognition and agency are modular, flowing not from a single command centre but "a coalition or bundle of semi-independent agencies."[5] Daniel Dennett explains his deflationary account of consciousness (a concept which Plato seems to do without altogether, at least until *Philebus* 33c–5d) by claiming:

> There is no single, definitive 'stream of consciousness,' because there is no central Headquarters, no Cartesian Theater where 'it all comes together' for the perusal of a Central Meaner. Instead of such a single stream (however wide), there are multiple channels in which specialist circuits try, in parallel pandemoniums, to do their various things, creating Multiple Drafts as they go . . . The basic specialists are part of our animal heritage . . . They are often opportunistically enlisted in new roles, for which their native talents more or less suit them. The result is not bedlam only because the trends that are imposed on all this activity are themselves the product of design.[6]

That Plato too saw the human self as an awkward coalition of very different animals, with specialized skills but a penchant for usurpation, is perhaps no coincidence. For Plato's commitment to teleological

4 Santas (1988).
5 Dennett (1991) 260, citing the work of neuropsychologist Michael Gazzaniga. A strongly Platonic version is the 'triune brain' theory of neuroscientist Paul MacLean; an accessible exposition of his views is given in Sagan (1977).
6 Dennett (1991) 253–54.

explanation (which *Phaedo* 99 ff. shows long predates the *Timaeus*) implies much the same explanatory framework as evolution provides for the modern naturalistic philosopher of mind. (*How* the complexity of the soul serves teleological purposes is explored in part by Brennan.) We hope that this book will encourage both philosophers and other students of human nature to investigate what Platonic psychology might still have to contribute to our self-understanding.

PART I

Transitions to tripartition

1

From the *Phaedo* to the *Republic*

Plato's tripartite soul and the possibility of non-philosophical virtue

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Both the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* emphasize a great difference between philosophers and non-philosophers in terms of their respective abilities, aims, and ultimate post-mortem fates. Each dialogue also appears to refer to three hierarchically ordered kinds of virtue: (1) slavish virtue (*Phaedo* 68d–69c; *Republic* 430b)[1]; (2) political or civic, habituated virtue (*Phaedo* 82a–b; *Republic* 429c–430c, 522a, 619c); and (3) genuine or philosophical virtue (*passim*). Crudely, the first type of person (or even animal) avoids or pursues an action out of fear of pain or desire for pleasure. The second acts from some sort of habituated state "without knowledge." The third agent acts in a way possible only for those who are truly wise and have knowledge, namely, philosophers. Perhaps the most notorious difference between the *Phaedo* and *Republic* is the detailed presentation of the tripartite soul in the latter in contrast with the one-part psychology of the former. In this chapter, I shall examine what difference this makes for our understanding of the three "types" of virtue.[2] I argue that the positing of a tripartite soul creates the possibility for a much more extensive education and development than the one-part psychology of the *Phaedo*, which results in a more plausible and optimistic picture of a

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1 All references to the *Republic* are to Slings (2003); the line numbers accordingly vary slightly from Burnet's Oxford edition (1900–07).

2 The idea that there are different grades of virtue connected to different cognitive and desiderative states in Plato has clear descendants in the Platonist tradition; see e.g., Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2, Porphyry, *Sententia* 32, and the ancient commentaries on the *Phaedo*. I cannot pursue these connections here, but see e.g., Brittain (2002).

non-philosopher's potential for a type of virtue. At the same time, there are clues in the *Phaedo* that point to the more complex picture presented in the *Republic*.[3]

In examining these questions scholars have paid insufficient attention to who does and who does not count as a philosopher in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. This has led to an unwarranted collapse in the possible types of virtue, into either slavish virtue or genuine, full virtue. In the *Phaedo's* conception of a philosopher, I shall argue that Plato opens up conceptual space for a type of virtue that falls short of genuine, complete virtue, but is nevertheless not slavish. In the *Republic*, the role for such virtue – habituated, political virtue – will be greatly enhanced by the more complex tripartite psychology, which in turn expands the possibilities for the role of education.

I Two conceptions of philosophers

In both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* what most significantly distinguishes philosophers from non-philosophers is their recognition of and concern with Forms. But while the *Phaedo* refers to philosophers in the real world, the philosophers in the *Republic* are "offstage" as it were and will emerge together with the Kallipolis in the role of rulers.[4]

The philosopher in the *Phaedo* (a "Phd-philosopher") is described as someone who loves and seeks wisdom more than anything else, but for whom possession of wisdom awaits death. To be a Phd-philosopher includes having lived one's life trying as far as possible to "separate" the body from the soul by avoiding (or at least being indifferent towards)[5] the body and its needs, including food, drink, clothing, money, and sex (cf. 64c–65a). Philosophy is part of a purification process that rids a person of the ill-effects of his body and, if conducted correctly, releases

3 My thesis fits neatly with the traditional consensus among scholars that the *Phaedo* precedes the *Republic*; it does not, however, require that this be the case.

4 In *Republic* VI, Socrates does discuss what happens to people with the best (i.e., philosophical) natures in the real world, as well as the reputation of people typically referred to as "philosophers." In addition at 496a–e Socrates mentions himself, Theages, and a few others who, in the actual world, "consort worthily with philosophy" (*kat axian homilountôn philosophia(i)*, 496b1). It is striking, however, that in this passage no one (not even Socrates) is ever referred to *as* a "philosopher"; contrast the description of philosopher-kings, who are referred to as "those who are in truth philosophers" (*hoi hôs alêthôs philosophoi*, at e.g., 540d3–4). The *Phaedo* repeatedly refers to those who philosophize "genuinely" or "correctly" or "truly"; see e.g., 66b2, 67b4, d8, e4, 68a7, 80e6, 82c3.

5 See Woolf (2004).