

BOOK REVIEW

Plato's Threefold City and Soul. By JOSHUA I. WEINSTEIN. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. viii + 300. Hardback, £ 75.00. ISBN 978-1-107-17016-2.

Provided that *thumos* is conceived in Platonic terms as the psychic part that responds to honor and shame while also being responsible for our warlike traits, to what extent is it really a necessary component of ourselves?

Could a bipartite Humean conception of the soul, consisting of appetite and reason, suffice to account for the full spectrum of human behavior? *Plato's Threefold City and Soul* addresses these issues and proposes that *thumos* is too integral and indispensable for human psychology to be argued away.

In Part I, Weinstein examines the philosophical reasons that lead to tripartition in the *Republic*. In evaluating the argument from opposition of *Republic* 4 as the analytical tool that effectuates tripartition, Weinstein endorses the generally accepted view that it suffers from both rhetorical and logical flaws, most conspicuous among the latter being the factual truth that oppositions eventuate in pairs (37)—the implication being that all this principle could ever accomplish would be bipartition and would thus leave no room for *thumos*. Instead of seeing it as the linchpin of tripartition, Weinstein proposes that the argument be taken in conjunction with what he terms “argument from character,” that is, the *Republic's* classification of human characters into three types of life, namely “the life of acquisition, the life of ambition and the life of curiosity” (10). Relevant to this classification is the *Republic's* association of justice with “doing one’s own”: absence of opposition, Weinstein argues, is not a sufficient condition for justice; even though it is necessary, one still needs to distinguish among three types of characters which stand in conflict to one another both synchronically and, most importantly, diachronically. Weinstein’s suggestion is that, understood this way, the logic of opposition serves the aim of facilitating our understanding of injustice by accentuating the discrepant features inherent in each of the mutually-clashing life-choices (“The argument from opposition is like a knife that can slice the soul into two opposing parts any number of times, and the arguments from character

guides the knife to make exactly the three cuts dividing reason, *thumos* and the appetites from one another” 36).

Part II focuses on the quest for political autarky and the influence it exerts on the human soul. Underlying this part of the study is the assumption that the city is divided in three classes because three distinct functions are needed for human life, namely “sustenance of the body; stability against distractions and threats; and guidance among competing possibilities” (15). Weinstein follows closely the thought experiment of Socrates and company who construct linearly a city from the beginning and locate in it the virtue of justice writ large. The reader is led step by step to the realization that *thumos* does not spring up as a psychic component so as to match the tripartite structure of the ideal city just for the sake of symmetry or to satisfy Glaucon’s thumotic demands (136). Instead, Weinstein argues that tripartition is predicated on the political demand for self-sufficiency: the problems begin as soon as the company expands the primitive city—constructed to satisfy the necessary desires of the body—so as to include other commodities that, in Socrates’ view, render it feverish. Rather than striving to meet the necessary desires of the body, the feverish city values pursuit of luxury and is ultimately led to uncontrolled expansion and war with neighboring cities. The emergence of war calls for the creation of a distinct class—in keeping with the *Republic*’s fondness for specialization—that is responsible for guarding the city. Since the guardians will have to distinguish between friends and enemies, it follows that the preservation of the city is essentially predicated on their training, which consists of the ability to fight and cease fighting, i.e. to discern good (friends) from evil (enemies). As such, the training of the guardians requires as an initial stage the proper attunement of the soul through music and gymnastics and, subsequently, the mediation of reason as a guiding principle that leads to knowledge of the Form of the Good.

In Part III, Weinstein takes up two related issues, namely whether *thumos* is in fact an essential psychological component and how the various aspects of thumotic experience are unified. He argues persuasively that *thumos* is necessary for the preservation of the psychic attitude that prevents indulgence, since without it the soul would be constantly faced with momentary ethical lapses and the concomitant rationalizations. The ability of *thumos* to preserve reason’s injunctions is thus elevated to its hallmark activity: both expressions of thumotic behavior, namely love of victory (*philonikia*) and love of honor (*philotimia*), evidently rely on the ability of *thumos* to persevere and subjugate outcomes to expectations in an everchanging sensible world. In conclusion, Weinstein eventually relates

tripartition of the soul and the city to a threefold division of time into definite, indefinite and infinite: bodily sustenance and appetites are short term, hence temporally delineated; thumotic aspects such as preservation of plans as well as individual and social expectations extend into the open-ended future; rational concerns are inherently reliant on the everlasting changelessness of eternal Being and, as such, are directed to the infinite (271-272).

The style is elegant and demanding, and the book is free from errors. The author is to be commended for his impeccable command of Platonic scholarship as well as his ability to engage his profound philosophical learning without sacrificing the nuances of Plato's political psychology. Even though Weinstein takes his liberties in the interpretations he advances, he remains sensitive to the literary context that underpins the arguments under consideration. In short, *Plato's Threefold City and Soul* presents a coherent attempt to salvage the *Republic* from received interpretations that charge it with a fundamental psychological flaw.

ORESTIS KARATZOGLOU

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, okaratzo@gmail.com