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A Soul without Akrasia: Plato's Tripartite Soul and Its Education in the Arts

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Abstract

Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul is commonly supposed to accommodate akrasia. However, surprisingly, akrasia does not matter much in Plato as one may expect. I propose one reason for this: if akrasia means that one *knows* what is best but fails to do it (cf. *Protagoras* 358c-d and *Meno* 77b-e), knowledge in Plato's *Republic* will prevent it perfectly.

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But the Platonic knowledge must be attained via a long process of education which aims to accomplish the unity of the soul. This is not to ignore the partition of the soul in the *Republic*, but try to submit a more comprehensive interpretation which coherences Plato's partition of the soul with his efforts on unifying it. The paper will read Plato's education in the arts within the context of his doctrine of the tripartite soul. Some scholars suggest that the education in the arts in books 2 and 3 is for the non-rational elements in the soul. I will challenge this view and provide a more holistic reading, along with Plato's main argument for the tripartition in book 4. In my interpretation, the education in the arts plays a crucial role in integrating the soul in Plato's whole educational scheme. This also explains why Plato criticizes poetry for its corrupting effects on the soul in book 10. A soul equipped with Plato's knowledge will be free of akrasia. But, before the soul attains knowledge, the role of the arts in education is always Plato's serious concern, for their power of unifying or partitioning the soul.

Keywords: Plato, *Republic*, the Tripartite Soul, Education in the Arts (μουσική), Akrasia (ἀκρασία)

A Soul without Akrasia: Plato's Tripartite Soul and Its Education in the Arts^{*}

“Akrasia” (ἀκρασία) is a common experience which each of us experiences very often. Roughly speaking, it is the phenomenon when one knows that x is good, while desires to do y and eventually does y. This y can be anything other than x, including not-doing-x. Both the knowledge and the desires in question become the motivations of our actions. They constitute an inner conflict.¹ It is sometimes translated as

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¹ This is obviously over-simplified. Take an example: Taylor has cited Davidson's formulation of akrasia: P1. If an agent wants to do x more than he wants to do y and he believes himself free to do either x or y, then he will intentionally do x if he does either x or y intentionally; P2. If an agent judges that it would be better to do x than to do y, then he wants to do x more than he wants to do y; P3. There are incontinent actions. Taylor believes that Plato accepts a version of P2. (Taylor 1980: 499 and 505, 512) The relations among belief, desire, intention, judgement, and whatever may be involved in akrasia may go complex. Here I touch only the relation between desire and knowledge in Plato. This is based on the textual evidences that Plato uses the noun “knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη) around *Protagoras* 358c-d and the verb “know” (γινώσκω) around *Meno* 77b-e when he talks about the phenomenon which we usually label as akrasia. So does Aristotle when he develops his discussion on Socrates' denial of akrasia in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, chapters 2 and 3. (1145b21-1147b19)

“weakness of will.”² But in the context of ancient Greek philosophy, it is not so clear what we called the strength or weakness of will is. The Greek word “ἀκρασία” is compounded of ἀ- privative and -κρασία. The -κρασία derives from the verb κρατέω, “to master, rule over, conquer or control.” It means mastery, rule, control or a type of governing constitution as it means in “ἀριστοκρασία” –the term by which Plato refers to the best form of constitution in his *Republic*. Akrasia means that the agent is not well-governed inside, namely, lack of self-control.³ It is concerning desires. Desires emerge and rouse the inner conflicts of motivations as we are making our choices of actions. When the desires drive one out of control, it is akrasia.

In the *Republic*, Plato develops the doctrine of the tripartite soul and divides the soul into three elements—the reasoning, the spirited and the appetitive⁴—which can be regarded as different resources of motivation for the agent. This seems to accommodate akrasia. A typical claim based

² For examples: Charlton’s discussion on weakness of will is traced back to akrasia in ancient time. (Charlton 1988: 14) The entry “weakness of will” is redirected to the entry “akrasia.” (Honderich 1995: 19-20 and 907) But as Mele denotes, “weakness of will” and “akrasia” are not the same. (Mele 2012: 13-14)

³ Cf. Liddell & Scott 1995: 29, 448 and 117. There are several translations adopted by scholars. Both “incontinence” (Ross 1980) and “lack of self-control” (Broadie & Rowe 2002) reflect the meaning of ἀκρασία well. In this paper, I will keep its Latinized form “akrasia.”

⁴ τὸ λογιστικόν, τὸ θυμοειδές, and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν. In the original text where Plato introduces the tripartition (436a-441c), there is no fixed terminology for the elements. Mostly he uses a neutral article plus an adjective, and thus my translations imitate his wording. But both τὸ θυμοειδές (the spirited) and ὁ θυμός (the spirit) occur at 411b-c. The spirited is also understood as the emotional. τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν is literally the desiring. In order not to confuse it with the desire in general (see section I), I translate it as the appetitive.

on this line of thinking is made by Bobonich, “explaining the possibility of akrasia was one of the central goals of the *Republic*'s theory.” (Bobonich 2002: 259)

However, surprisingly, akrasia holds only a marginal place in Plato. I shall explain this in the first section. This does not mean that Plato ignores the phenomena of inner conflict we experience. On the contrary, the inner conflict continues to be a concern throughout Plato's writings. The crucial point is that if akrasia means that one *knows* what is best but fails to do what she should do, strictly speaking, “knowledge” in Plato's sense will make a soul without akrasia. For the “knowledge” in Plato's sense can be only attained via a long process of education which presumes the unity of the soul.

A problem arises here. Within the theoretical context of the tripartite soul, one cannot simply take the unity of the soul for granted. How does the process of education presume the unity of the soul? In the rest sections in this paper, I will tackle the education in the arts (μουσική)⁵—which is usually supposed to educate the non-rational elements in the soul—to reveal Plato's view on the partition and unity of the soul underlying his educational scheme. The education in the arts plays a significant role in reinforcing the unity of the soul. As a result, the whole process of education will equip the soul with knowledge which is known by the whole soul rather than by sheer rationality. “Knowledge” in this sense

⁵ μουσική contains several kinds of art. According to Plato's discussion on μουσική in *Republic* 2 and 3, it refers to poetry, music and related performances. For example, the various performances in tragedies and comedies are included. (*Republic* 3.394b-c, 395a)

will prevent *akrasia*. That is, one will never *know* what is best *with one part of the soul* but *oppose it with another part*. Plato never ignores the non-rational motivations in our choices of actions. However, the issue is not to bridge the gap between knowledge and actions. With the assistance of the education in the arts, once the soul attains the Platonic knowledge, it will become a soul without *akrasia*, if the knowledge is actually attained.⁶ The discussion on the education of the soul becomes weightier than that on the so-called *akrasia*, when Plato is facing the phenomena of our inner conflicts.

I. The denial of *akrasia*

The doctrine of the tripartite soul is commonly supposed to accommodate *akrasia*. The need for an explanation for *akrasia* is highlighted in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VII. Aristotle criticises Socrates' denial of *akrasia*. According to him, Socrates claims that there is no *akrasia*; when one knows what is best but fails to do what one should do, it is because of ignorance. (1145b23-7) There is no room for *akrasia*. The underlying thought is one of the Socratic paradoxes⁷

⁶ It is a question whether the embodied soul can actually attain the Platonic knowledge in the strict sense or not. I have argued in another place that, although we may be approaching the knowledge, it is unattainable as far as the soul is embodied. (何晝魂, 2016 : 43-44) However, it makes a serious difference between the soul led in a wrong direction and the soul led in the right direction. The discussion on the education of the soul is meaningful in establishing the ideal scheme which leads the soul to approach the knowledge in the right direction.

⁷ The most well-known Socratic paradoxes are "virtue is knowledge," "all virtues are one," "no one errs willingly." There are five cardinal virtues in the ancient Greek society. Remarkably in the *Protagoras*, Socrates argues that all the five virtues—piety, courage,

explicitly stated in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Meno*,⁸ that is, "no one errs willingly." At *Meno* 77b-c, Plato submits that "all people desire the good" which braces the denial of akrasia. Provided that all people desire the good, if one really knows what is best for her, she will never err on this thing but do what she knows to be the best, since all her desires will motivate her to do so.

Things seem different in the *Republic*.⁹ The claim that "all people desire the good" occurs again at 438a, but presents a false proposition made by an imagined objector. Socrates in the dialogue insists that thirst is simply a desire for drink, without any qualification. When someone who is thirsty wants a drink in so far as that is good, there emerge different motivations in the soul: one is telling the person to drink, another is asking for a "good" drink, a qualified object. (438a-439d) This

self-control, justice and wisdom—can be unified by knowledge. (328d-334c, 349a-360e) The claim "no one errs willingly" is brought into discussion when Socrates argues that the virtue of courage is knowledge. (352a-360e) He argues that people mistake because they lack knowledge to help them in making correct choices. Given the knowledge, no one errs willingly. Then, Socrates concludes that virtue is knowledge and teachable. (360e-362a) Knowledge becomes decisive in all virtues, moral or intellectual. These claims are paradoxes in the sense that they seem contradictory with what people commonly think and what people usually experience. For a further discussion, see Weiss 2006.

⁸ The Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Meno* (conventionally counted as early dialogues) may present some views of the historical Socrates. At the same time, Plato who writes the dialogues may share the historical Socrates' views. "We need not decide here whether they present the mature views of the historical Socrates or the early views of Plato himself; they may, of course, do both." (Price 1995: 8) In the discussion on akrasia, though Socrates in Plato's early dialogues is not completely identical to the historical Socrates, we have reasons to call the Socrates in *Protagoras* "Socrates" and the Socrates in *Republic* "Plato." (Cf. Shields 2007: 67 n.11) Besides, Socrates' words in *Protagoras* and *Meno* match Aristotle's ascription to the historical Socrates cited here.

⁹ For a brief introduction to the dispute whether Plato changes his mind on this point, see Weiss 2006: 168-70 and 2007: 87-8.

shows that there are at least two elements in the soul: the appetitive which desires for drink simply, and the reasoning which aims at “good” things. This also implies that the appetitive element is “good-indifferent,” and thus it may, though not necessarily, go against the reasoning. Then there comes the inner conflict. The context here is the argument for the tripartition of the soul in book 4. In Plato’s argument, the tripartition of the soul is inferred from the psychological phenomena of our inner conflicts. (436a-441c)

“Desire” is heavily implicated in the phenomenon of *akrasia*. Note the subtle difference between “desire” in a broader sense (*ἐπιθυμία*) and the desiring element in the soul (*τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*). Later in book 9, Plato declares the divergence of desire:

Since there are three elements, there are also, it appears to me,
three kinds of pleasure, each element has one particular kind;
and three kinds of desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) in the same way and
also three kinds of rule. (580d)¹⁰

In the passage in book 9, “desire” is not an independent faculty as the appetitive element in the argument for the tripartition of the soul in book 4. Now, Plato admits of different kinds of desire, corresponding to different elements of the tripartite soul.¹¹ Associate this with the passage

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, translations of Greek texts are mine, based on the text of *Republic* in Slings 2003.

¹¹ This sounds like Annas’ model of homoculi. (Annas 1981: 150-151) However, Plato never admits of different kinds of reason inside different elements of the soul, and thus the model of homoculi does not fit. Also see notes 23, 26 and my discussion in section III.

of the thirsty person in book 4. One may easily infer that not all elements in the soul desire the good. These different kinds of desire form different motivations. This may explain for the possibility of akrasia. Along with this line of thinking, it is not unreasonable to associate Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul to the issue of akrasia. As cited in the introductory section, Bobonich considers "explaining for the possibility of akrasia" as one central goal in the *Republic*. (2002: 259) This is apparently one of Price's main concerns in his book in 2011, too. He makes a more cautious comment. "If it is true that Plato's primary concern is not with the possibility of akrasia but with the nature of mental conflict and our need for the virtues, and yet also that his analysis of the soul accommodates akrasia." (Price 2011: 273) The conclusive evaluation says, in a very balanced manner, "akrasia in conflict with better judgement is both accommodated and marginalized" in Plato. (Price 2011: 280)

Does Plato's tripartite soul accommodate or marginalize akrasia? To clarify this, we may investigate into the cases of akrasia in the *Republic*. See the two candidates for the akratic person.¹² One is Leontius in book 4. He desires to look at the pale corpses when he is passing by the public execution. Yet he feels disgusted at the same time. Finally he runs to see the dead bodies but blame himself with anger. (439e-40a) Another is the tyrannical person in book 9. He tries to control others but cannot control himself (ἀκράτωρ, akratic person, 579c8).¹³ Price labels Leontius as

¹² There may be more than two. For example, Bobonich considers all inner conflicts described in *Republic* 4 as the cases of akrasia. (2002: 235-42)

¹³ The word ἀκράτωρ means a person "uncontrolled" or "without a ruler." It may denote ἀκρατής by earlier writers like Sophocles and Plato, but it is not the technical term for the person in akrasia (ἀκρατής) in Aristotle. (Cf. Liddell & Scott 1995: 30)

“[t]he most celebrated akratic character in the history of Western philosophy” (Price 2011: 273) and counts him as a case of “hard akrasia.” (Price 1995: 97-98) The distinction between “hard akrasia” and “soft akrasia” is, briefly speaking, that the former is a conscious failure, while the latter is not.¹⁴ Leontius who blames himself appears to be a case of the former. The tyrannical person in book 9 is probably a case of the latter.

However, in the case of Leontius, “[t]he story is told simply to show that we can be angry with our desires.” (Stalley 2007: 80) Anger does not come from the reasoning element, but the spirited. The conflict is not between the rational and non-rational, but between two non-rationals, the spirited and the appetitive. Therefore, it is incorrect to take Leontius as a case of “hard akrasia” as the lack of control by the reasoning element in the soul.¹⁵ An alternative reading is to read “akrasia” in Plato in a broader sense, to include the conflicts in which the rational element is not involved. But the final stage of education described in *Republic 7* requires the participation of the rational. The rational is necessary for attaining Plato’s knowledge, though probably it is not sufficient. For my concern is Plato’s knowledge, I call the akrasia in the broader sense “inner conflict” in this paper. Among inner conflicts, I tag the cases involved with knowledge “akrasia.” The cognitive state of Leontius is not knowledge in the strict sense. Therefore, I hesitate to call Leontius a case of akrasia,

¹⁴ See Price 1995: 95; Bobonich has a similar distinction between the hard/strong and the weak akrasia. (Bobonich 2002: 266) But the distinction seems not important in Price 2011.

¹⁵ Also see the analysis on Leontius’ case in Ho 2015: 273-274.

given that the person in akrasia means someone who does not act in accordance to her "knowledge." But the cognitive state in this case is worthy of the second thought. It is not confined to the rational cognition. If Plato's educational scheme aims to solve the problem, not only the rational but also the non-rationals should participate in a way when the soul is going to learn the knowledge in Plato's sense.

As for the tyrannical person in book 9, Plato applies the relevant noun ἀκράτωρ (acratia person, 579c8) to him. In the next clause, Plato compares him to be an ill person whose body is "acratia" over itself (ἀκράτορι, 579d1). These are two of the only three occurrences of this word in Plato. It seems a verbal dispute to argue that it is not a case of akrasia because the person (or the ill body) does not have knowledge. But it is a fact that "akrasia" (or "acratia") is not Plato's terminology. Besides, there seems no difference from the case of self-indulging (τὸ ἀκολασταίνειν) that one enslaves her reasoning element and cannot control the "creatures" inside the soul. (589d-90c) A self-indulgent person is drawn by the appetitive desires without knowing what she should do. The tyrannical person is both acratia and self-indulgent. Actually, both Leontius and the tyrannical person can be counted as the cases of self-indulgence (ἀκολασία) as well. There is no suggestion that either of them has "knowledge" in Plato's sense, given the sharp distinction between knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and belief (δόξα) drawn in *Republic* 5. Leontius presumably believes in some way that what he does is wrong. The same might perhaps be said of the tyrannical man. But they do not really *know* what they should do. Plato's wording shows that the problem for the tyrannical person is not that he desires to do what contradicts with his knowledge, but he loses the self-mastery over himself and thus cannot do what he really wants to do. (577e) If Plato likes to deal with the

problem by knowledge, the knowledge needs to entail the ability of self-mastery.

“Akrasia” is not a Platonic term. Plato rarely uses it. We learn it from Aristotle. Our concept of akrasia can be traced back to his discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII. From the same book, we learn the distinction between akrasia and self-indulgence: a person in akrasia regrets that she cannot practically do what she knows to be the good; a person in self-indulgence does not regret, because she simply thinks those things to be the good. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1146b19-24; 1150a10 ff.) In Aristotle, “appetite puts people of un-self-controlled (acritic) disposition into the predicament of both knowing and not knowing” according to his distinctions related to “having knowledge” and “using knowledge.”¹⁶ In Plato, however, it is not both knowing and not knowing. For the acritic person, the same as the self-indulgent person, they simply *do not know*.

What erases the distinction between akrasia and self-indulgence is a characteristic feature of Plato’s knowledge involved here. It is the knowledge which guarantees its practice “always and everywhere” as said in book 10. (*Republic* 618c) The knowledge cannot be grasped by a definition. In the *Theaetetus* which is usually dated around the same period of the *Republic*, Plato shows how aporetic it will be if one attempts to define “knowledge.” However, we may enhance our understanding of it by seeing into the education which is contrived to lead the soul toward

¹⁶ Following Broadie’s comment on *Nicomachean Ethics* 1146b8-1147b19. (Broadie & Rowe 2002: 388-9)

knowledge. As mentioned previously, the knowledge needs to entail the ability of self-mastery. This relies on the harmonious inner state. The “knowledge” is not easily attained. The *Republic* elaborates a long process of education to indicate the direction. The education in the arts plays a crucial role in the process, particularly in promoting the harmony in the soul.

II. The agent to be educated in the arts

“What, therefore, is the education (παιδεία)?” At *Republic* 376e, Socrates leads his interlocutors to ponder this question and considers the education in the arts for the soul (ἐπὶ ψυχῆ). This opens a discussion, running through *Republic* books 2 and 3, which is well-known for Plato's censorship of poetry and his adoption of poetry in the education.

Plato's educational scheme is designed according to a proper understanding of the soul. The line of thinking is shown by Plato's arrangement of literary structure both in the *Republic* where he designs his Callipolis, and in the *Laws* where he offers a later version of his designed polis. In the *Republic*, the discussion on the education for children (*Republic* 376d-403c for the education in the arts; 376d-412b for the entire stage of early education) is followed by a passage on justice in book 4 (412b-434d) which introduces the doctrine of the tripartite soul into the text (434d ff.). In the *Laws*, the discussion on the role of the arts in education (*Laws* 653c-673d) is closely attached to the passage on the forces working in the soul (643a-653c) which accounts for the nature and purpose of education from a psychological perspective. This is perfectly consistent with Plato's assertion in the *Phaedrus* that good oratory relies

on a good understanding of the soul, when one considers that the genuine oratory in Plato does not merely persuade but also educate people. (*Phaedrus* 271c-d)¹⁷

Return to the education in the *Republic*. As for a proper understanding of the soul in the *Republic*, it is unavoidable to think of the doctrine of the tripartite soul. As stated in my introductory section, I am tackling the education in the arts to reveal Plato's view on the partition and unity of the soul underlying his educational scheme. There will be a glimpse of the harmonizing effect on the soul in the arts in section IV. But I will not go deeper to analyses which educational effects impact on which elements, say, how art makes the spirited and the appetitive tamer, makes them more concordant with the rational, and thus the soul will love truly beautiful things. My main concern is the presumption of the unity of the soul. The discussion here starts with the question "which element(s) of the soul does the education in the arts educate?". If we assume that there are three elements in the soul according to Plato's own analysis in *Republic* 4, and ask this question, we will be puzzled by features of the *Republic* which hint at two different, if not really contrary, interpretations.

The first set of features suggests that the education in the arts educates the non-rational elements. At 402a, Socrates emphasizes that the importance of the artistic education lies in its powerful effect on the soul before one develops rationality. The claim that young children do not yet have rationality occurs at 441a again, when Plato is arguing that the

¹⁷ This is not to say that the psychology keeps entirely the same in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Laws*, but to point out that the education in Plato is highly connected to his thoughts concerning the soul.

spirited is not rationality. This implies that the education in the arts does not educate the rational element since there is no such an element in children's souls when they receive the early education. The education in the arts seems to be directed at the non-rational elements like the spirited or the appetitive. Gill further suggests that it is directed at, and only at, the spirited element.¹⁸

The second set of features hints at the possibility that the education in the arts educates the rational element. One point here is that the story based on the first set of features cannot be satisfactory because it goes contrary to Plato's own account of the aim of the education in the arts. At 411e-412a, when Socrates is closing up their discussion on the education in the arts and that in physical training, he says that these two forms of education are for two elements—the spirited and the philosophical. This might be the passage in Nettleship's mind when he infers that "music" educates "specifically the 'philosophic' part of the soul." (Nettleship 1935: 30)¹⁹ Plato reminds us of this point again when he is finishing the argument for the tripartite soul at 441e-442a, where he emphasizes that a combination of the education in the arts and that in physical training makes the spirited and rational elements concordant. Though there seems

¹⁸ "[T]he first stage of Plato's educational scheme is directed at the θυμοειδές element in the ψυχή." And "it is essentially only one element that has so far been trained, the θυμοειδές, not the ἐπιθυμητικόν or λογιστικόν." (Gill 1985: 8 and 12)

¹⁹ I try to realise Nettleship's idea but do not endorse it. I will develop a different interpretation below. The "music" here refers to μουσική, the education in the arts. Also see Schofield 2010: 233, but the "music" in Schofield literally refers to music, say, melody, meter and rhythm. Schofield highlights the power of music because it may prompt "perception of audible structure, and such perception is a cognitive response to beauty, prefiguring the response of reason once that develops." (2010: 242) I agree with this only partially. See note 29 below.

some flexibility when we comprehend the term “the philosophical” at 411e6, Plato replaces it with “the rational” when he restates the same idea here.²⁰ This repetition shows, on the one hand, that Plato’s consideration of education is indeed closely linked with his theory of the tripartite soul, and on the other hand, that the education in the arts does educate the rational element in some way, even though it is undertaken before one develops rationality.

How do we understand the inconsistency between these two sets of hints? If the education in the arts educates the non-rational, how does it educate “the philosophical” which may refer to the rational element? If it educates the rational, how does it educate the rational element before one develops rationality? Both the questions require an account for the education of the rational element in the early stage of education. For the difficulty, Gill draws a difference between two roles of “the philosophical element.” He considers the element “a ‘passive’ rational capacity” in 410-412, but an “active” capacity in 441-444 in the *Republic*, because the doctrine of the tripartite soul introduces the reasoning element as “an active, independent power.” (Gill 1985: 13) If one identifies the reasoning element as the philosophical, the first introduction of the philosophical element is not in the passage arguing for the doctrine of the tripartite soul, but at 411e.²¹ Then, there will be no obvious difference of the “passive” and “active” rationality before and after the introduction of the

²⁰ Trace the αὐτὰ at 441e8 back to τῷ λογιστικῷ at 441e3 and τῷ θυμοειδεῖ at 441e4-5.

²¹ “μουσικὴν τε καὶ γυμναστικὴν ἐπὶ τὸ θυμοειδὲς καὶ τὸ φιλόσοφον (education in the arts and physical training on the spirited element and *the philosophical element*)...” at 411e5-6. Italics mine.

philosophical element in Plato's text. That is, Gill's suggestion implies that the philosophical element at 411e plays the role of the passive rational capacity which will grow active and become the reasoning in the later stage. This explains how the education in the arts educates the rational element before one develops rationality. But is it not too rationality-centred? Does the education in the arts merely pave the way for a more successful education of the reasoning? This looks inconsistent with Gill's own position that the education in the arts is directed only at the spirited element.

One supposition lies beneath Gill's and Nettleship's suggestions: They suppose a one-to-one correspondence between different forms of education and different elements in the soul. Take the passage at 411e-412a. Both Gill and Nettleship suppose the education in the arts and that in physical training educate the philosophical and the spirited elements respectively, even though they assign them in different ways. Then the dilemma becomes unavoidable. The suggestion that the education in the arts educates the rational element, either active or passive, is disjointed with Plato's emphasis on the effect of the arts upon the non-rational elements in the first set of hints above. It is equally problematic to suppose that the physical training is directed at the philosophical element. For the physical education is usually supposed to train the body, and it is far from clear how the philosophical element can be more involved with the body than the other elements.

The dilemma strongly suggests that the supposition of the one-to-one correspondence is wrong. Consider 441e-442a. It does not merely repeat what is said at 411e-412a, but also points out that the educational effect is produced by a combination of the education in the arts and that in

physical training. Besides, the aim of education here, the concord in the soul, cannot come from any single element but concerning the soul as a whole. It is misleading to suppose a one-to-one correspondence between the forms of education and the elements in the soul. The question “which element(s) does the education in the arts educate?” is misleading.

The scheme of education in the *Republic* has a touch of educational developmentalism like Piaget’s theory. There are different stages of education applied to different stages of children’s development. In Plato’s scheme, there are two main stages of education. The first and earlier stage contains two parts: the education in the arts and the physical training. The physical training is practiced later than the arts. Children in this stage have not developed rationality. Studies which require a greater degree of rationality, including dialectics, are assigned to the second stage. The text at 441e-442a, as argued above, shows that the two parts in the first main stage of education do not hold a one-to-one correspondence with the elements. Thus it is not unreasonable to apply the same argument to the two main stages. That is, one should not restrict the education of the philosophical element to the second stage, or assign the education in the arts exclusively to any single element.

In a more recent paper, Gill regards the early education “the pre-intellectual shaping of character in the psyche as a whole (490c-496d)” by rounding his claim that the education in this stage “seems to be directed at the other two elements in the psyche as much as, or more than, the rational.” (Gill 2013: 165) It seems that he does not insist the education in the arts to be particularly for the spirited element or the two non-rational elements at the cost of the unity of the soul. But I would like to go further. I propose that each part or stage of education

works on the interrelations among the elements in the soul, instead of educating any one or two elements respectively. Even though it is possible that the education in the arts works on the non-rational elements, this is only its side effect. At 410-412, Plato reverses the common view about the main effects of different forms of education and their side effects. The education in the arts and that in physical training are “only incidentally” concerned respectively with soul and body; they are, rather, concerned to harmonize the philosophical and spirited elements of the soul. (411e6-7) Based on this, we should establish a more holistic reading. The education in the arts does not educate one or two elements exclusively. It is the whole soul which is educated.²²

III. Unifying the partitioned soul

Gill is right when he declares that Plato's concept of education is to produce the harmony or unity of the soul. (Gill 1985: 1-2) But Gill thinks each part or stage of education is directed at its corresponding element in the soul. My argument is this: Only when the education leads the soul toward the knowledge which is known by the whole soul rather than sheer

²² How does the education in the arts harmonize the elements in the soul? How practically does it educate the whole soul? The present piece only gives a slight touch on these significant questions at the beginning of section IV. A further investigation requires a certain length of discussion on the effects of artistic activities on the soul (for example, the psychological effects of mimetic performance and that of visual art, the relation between the perception of these arts and the harmonization of the inner elements, and so on). They are left to other papers to deal with. The present piece can merely coherence Plato's holistic view of education with his psychology.

rationality,²³ there will be no akrasia in the case when one attains the knowledge in Plato's sense. Therefore, it must be the soul as a whole which receives education. Therefore, in each stage of education, the interrelations among the three elements in the soul, rather than any single element, is Plato's concern, in order not to rouse motivations which come from psychic elements separately and cause the inner conflicts. Therefore, Plato's educational scheme presumes the unity of the soul if it aims at the harmonious and unified soul.

It sounds circular that the education which presumes the unity of the soul aims to accomplish the unity of the soul. However, consider this example. If a group of students are bullying others in a class, it will not work if the teacher always focuses on the students in question without considering the class as a whole. The interrelations among the students in the class cannot be improved by instructing certain students alone. For the interrelations among the different elements are elusive. The harmony and unity cannot be achieved by any single element. To presume the unity helps in accomplishing a more harmonized and unified whole.

²³ To say knowledge to be "known by the whole soul" does not assume that each of all the elements in the soul possess the same knowledge. In pursuing the knowledge, the agent is the whole soul, not the elements in the soul. This is what I mean by the holistic view. The interrelations among elements in the holistic unity are significant. This makes the inner state dynamic. Such a unity cannot be reduced to the sum of the elements. Nor can we attribute the agency of the whole soul to the elements in it, either to one, or two, or all the three of them. This explains why Plato says the education in the arts and that in physical training are for the spirited and the philosophical elements at 411e-412a, though the soul has not yet grown rationality. As for a study on the cognitive resources available to the non-rational elements, see Lorenz 2006b: 59-73. But as pointed out in note 11 above, Plato never admits of different kinds of reason inside different elements of the soul. The non-rational elements do not have "enough cognitive capacity" as in Annas' anthropomorphic model, if by the phrase she means that "desire can carry out enough reasoning to attain its goals." (Annas 1981: 131)

The presumption of the unity of the soul is essential for Plato's entire educational scheme in the *Republic*. At the end of the analogy of the Cave, Plato points out that an eye cannot be turned towards the light without turning the whole body. (518c) The eye metaphorically refers to the reasoning element, while the whole body to the unity of the soul. If the whole soul has not been turned into the right direction from childhood, it may apply its sharp eyesight in looking into the wrong direction, then the sharper its eyesight is, the more evil it will do. (519a-b) The possible danger may be read as a case of akrasia. But for Plato, as shown above, the problem is caused by ignoring the unity of soul in the education. "The eyes" would not be turned towards the light without turning "the whole body." Conversely, the education in the arts would not turn "the whole body" without turning "the eyes." Although the content of education in the arts does not directly refer to the knowledge which seems to be attained by rationality, it definitely retains its impact on the interrelations among the rational element and non-rational elements, if the soul goes on pursuing the genuine philosophy.

As said in the introductory section, given the context of the tripartite soul, one cannot simply take the unity of the soul for granted. In the following passages, I will explain why Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul does not offend the unity of the soul. In the argument at 436a-441c in book 4, Plato divides the soul by the principle of opposites.²⁴ I will focus on Plato's explanatory examples for the principle to show that the

²⁴ I follow Plato's wording "τάναντία (the opposites, 436b9)" to name the principle. Later when it is applied to the soul, Plato does not mean the elements of the soul are opposite, but what motivated by them may form the opposites.

division is not concrete. In other words, it is a matter of theory, unless the inner conflict of the opposite forces in the soul becomes so drastic that the soul splits psycho- pathologically.

The principle of opposites goes in this way. Nothing can do or be done in two opposite states in the same aspect of itself,²⁵ at the same time, in relation to the same thing. (436b-c) If one thing is found to be in two opposite states at the same time in relation to the same thing, it can be divided into two.

In the text, Plato gives us three examples to clarify what he means by the opposites. The first is a playful man standing still but moving his hands and head. (436c) The second is a top which is spinning though its axis is stationary. (436d-e) After some applications of the principle to divide the soul, he supplies another example, that of an archer who is pushing and pulling the bow by different hands. (439b)

The example of the spinning top gives a better account for Plato's addition of the phrase "the same aspect" to the principle, as Stalley and Lorenz notices. (Stalley 1975: 115-116; Lorenz 2006a: 150 and 2006b: 23-24) This is because of a particular feature of the spinning top: it cannot be substantially divided into two parts. "The stationary part" and "the moving part" are relative terms which are opposite only in their relation to each other. None of them can exist independently. What is the genuine

²⁵ κατὰ ταῦτόν, 436b9. It is speaking of the same part or aspect of the same thing in question. For a further and elaborate discussion on this phrase, see Stalley 1975: 112-118. Stalley prefers the translation "in the same respect." According to his analysis, if κατὰ ταῦτόν means "in the same part," the example of the spinning top will become a counter-example to the principle of opposites, and makes the principle dubious. Thus he interprets the phrase as "in the same respect" to avoid of weakening Plato's argument.

axis? Although it is not difficult to understand the distinction between the stationary axis and the moving circumference, we cannot pull out the genuine axis in practice. It is a straight line (τὸ εὐθὺν, 436e1) in theory. It has no spatial extension. As Stalley observes, "It is simply not true that there are distinct parts in the top one of which moves while the other remains stationary. The whole top revolves while staying in one spot. Any part of it, however small its extension, must therefore be moving." (Stalley 1975: 112) If one says the central stick is the stationary part, one may pull out the stick and make the stick spin. Then, "the stationary part" and "the moving part" come into being again.

Subdivision is another problem. When one pulls out the central stick and make it spin, the original stationary part can be divided into "the stationary part" and "the moving part" again. Apply this to the soul. Does this lead to an infinite regress of subdivision?²⁶ For Plato's doctrine of the tripartite soul, the infinite regress of subdivision would be a vice. "Justice" is defined as "to do one's own job and not to do multiple jobs." (*Republic* 433a8-9) The justice in the soul requires each element to do its own job. (435b-c, 441d-e, 443c-d, etc.) If the subdivision is infinite, the justice in a bigger entity will call for an account of the justice of its constituent entities which again will call for an account of their constituent entities and leads to an endless regress. This will make the

²⁶ A typical challenge is made by Bernard Williams. He considers the infinite regress of subdivision of the soul as caused by Plato's city-soul analogy in which the soul-element relation is compared to the city-citizen relation. Therefore, there would be extra little elements in each of the elements in the soul of each individual citizen. (Williams 1973) One conspicuous version of the subdivision of the soul is to regard each of the elements as agent-like. (Cf. Annas 1981: 144; Bobonich 2002: ch.3; for the view against it, see Stalley 2007, Shields 2007 and Ho 2015 among others.)

definition of justice become vain.

Two things prevent the infinite regress. First, the division is not spatial and thus not a matter of physical fact. It is a matter of theory. The genuine stationary part of the spinning top is a straight line which has no spatial extension. It is impossible to pull out the stationary part and subdivide it. There is not a substantial part to be the subject of subdivision. Second, there is an asymmetry. The quasi-subdivision described above does not happen to “the moving part.” One may pull out the central stick and make it spin. But one cannot do the same thing in the same way with the circumference of the top. Even if it is possible to divide “the stationary part” in another pair of the stationary and moving parts, there is no such kind of subdivision for “the moving part.” Note the asymmetry between the rational element and the non-rational. Plato admits of the desire of the rational element (*Republic* 580d), but never of the rational of the appetitive element.

The distinction between the axis of the top and its circumference is drawn by our relative concepts of the moving and stationary parts. It is extremely difficult to have any spinning thing holding its axis actually stationary. Plato mentions this: the straight line may incline to right or left, or forward, or back. (436e) Then the whole top is moving, while no part of it is absolutely stationary. In these cases, it still makes sense when we try to draw some distinction between the stationary part and the moving part. For the purpose of the division is not to divide the top in practice. It works as a conceptual distinction which enables us to do a further analysis of what happens inside a unity.

Two other examples adopted by Plato are of human body. When the playful man makes his hands and head move but keeps his trunk and legs

still, his body is divided into two parts or more. When the archer makes his one hand pushing and another hand pulling, his body is divided into two parts or more.²⁷ In both the examples, Plato uses the image of an organic body which is certainly a unity, even though one may "divide" it in her mind.

One more point. In Plato's examples for the principle of opposites, the divisions are not made by the principle. It is obvious that Socrates and his interlocutors already know the concept of "axis" and already know that the hands and legs are different parts of the body, and so on. What the principle does is to help us to see the conceptual distinctions in the cases where we find opposite states in a unity. The principle enhances our comprehension concerning some different motivations inside, instead of making a practical partition. By the help of the principle, the soul can in theory be divided into as many elements as the opposite states within it, to serve as a theoretical analysis of the inner state within one unity.

IV. The effects on the soul by the arts

How actually does the education in the arts effect on the unity of the soul?

The discussion on the education in the arts in books 2 and 3 is also known as Plato's censorship of poetry. He firstly censors the stories about

²⁷ I add "or more" to leave some possibilities to the rest parts of the body. In theory, the principle of opposites allows us to divide any unity into infinitely many parts if there emerge infinitely many pairs of opposites.

gods with the criterion whether they represent the value of the good and the unchanging truth. (377b-383c) At the beginning, he articulates that we must supervise the story-tellers in order not to let children “grasp in their souls those beliefs that are mostly opposite.” (377b6) Compare this to the principle of opposites applied in the partition of the soul in book 4. Whether there are opposite states inside or not is decisive for one thing to be partitioned. Not to expose the young souls in opposite beliefs is a way to avoid them creating the opposite states inside.²⁸ It helps in retaining the unity of the soul. This is not merely involved with the linguistic content delivered by the speech in poetry. Music is powerful, too, in terms of the educational effects on harmonizing and unifying the soul.²⁹ Plato emphasizes the educational effects of graceful rhythm and harmony. (400a-e)³⁰ The graceful rhythm can be represented in painting and other arts as well. Ideally, children are surrounded by the beautiful objects of

²⁸ In *Republic* 2 and 3, the idea is to lead these children to delight in harmony instead of taking pleasure in conflicts. It seems that Plato does not consider about the ability to face and deal with conflicts. The minds of children educated by the harmonized arts might be fragile when they are confronted with actual conflicts. Such a reflection can be found in Plato's *Laws*. (Yet the relation between the *Republic* and *Laws* is too complex to discuss in this paper.) The citizens will be unable to deal with pleasures if they simply avoid of experiencing pleasures. (635c-d) Therefore, Athenian, the leading character of the *Laws*, suggests to use wine as a useful educational device, before the soul confronting with larger dangers. (649d-650a) This is the preface to the discussion on the education in the arts in the *Laws*.

²⁹ For a full argument for the central role of music in Plato's conception of education, see Schofield 2010. But the power of language in poetry is not dismissible: Plato suggests that rhythm and melody should conform to speech, not speech conform to rhythm and melody. (*Republic* 400a) Besides, when we take into consideration the association of poetry with sophistry and oratory in Plato's *Protagoras*, *Gorgias* and *Sophist*, Plato is very cautious of the power of language.

³⁰ “Harmony” (ἁρμονία) here is in musical sense in Greek, referring to the sounds or voices in concord.

the arts. It is likened to exposing children's eyes and ears to the healthy "breeze." (401a-d) Socrates in the dialogue says, "the education in the arts is the most powerful," because "the rhythm and harmony go down into the inside of the soul most deeply" and "bring the gracefulness." If the soul is educated correctly, the person will be best able to "perceive" (αἰσθάνοιτο) which things are made beautifully and which are not. And then, the soul will delight in the beautiful things, and hate the ugly things. (401d-402a) As for an example of educating the soul incorrectly, when the ears are full of sweet, soft, lamenting music, the soul will be softened as the iron melted into liquid in heat. (411a-b) The example is soon followed by the passage on the harmonizing effect of the combination of the education in the arts and that in physical training. (411e-412a, discussed in section II) A person educated in this way will be the most "well-harmonized" (εὐαρμυστότατον), much more than the person who attunes the strings. (412a6-7) The harmony in music thus improves the harmony in the soul which is the real aim of the musical education.

Plato's censorship of poetry in books 2 and 3 does not only show the significance of the positive educational effects of art, but also the possibility of its negative effects. Learning in the arts is not always producing the harmony and unity of the soul. Since the education in the arts is to unify the partitioned soul in Plato's educational scheme, it will be critical if the practice in the arts may, on the contrary, destroy the harmony and unity of the soul.

This is the double edge of art. Due to its negative aspect, the powerful effect on the non-rational element(s) in the soul is targeted later in book 10. (603a-606d) Many readers of the *Republic* feel sort of discontinuity when they are brought back to the issue of art in book 10.

Even if one focuses on art, the treatment in book 10 seems different from that in books 2 and 3. On the one hand, Plato adopts poetry among the arts as a useful medium of education for the soul in books 2 and 3; but on the other hand, he accuses poetry for its corrupting psychological influence in book 10. But in my interpretation, Plato's criticism of the corruptive effects of poetry in book 10 is not disjointed from the rest of the dialogue at all. Instead, it furnishes the discussion on the education in the arts in books 2 and 3 which needs to be read within the context of his doctrine of the tripartite soul developed in book 4.

One might suspect whether book 10 holds a different psychology from book 4. Though Plato insists to identify the third psychic element in book 4, he brings only two elements, the rational and the non-rational, into his discussion in book 10. However, Plato's bipartition of the soul, especially at 603a, d and 604b in book 10, is inferred by the same principle of opposites which serves the argument for the tripartite soul.³¹

³¹ Therefore, the number of elements in the soul is not fixed. (Cf. Ferrari 2007: 189-190; Ho 2015: 267-268) This is consistent with my claim that the partition of the soul does not offend its unity in section III above, either it is tripartition or bipartition. One might worry that this would spoil the account of justice in the *Republic*, if the number of elements in the soul is not fixed. The tripartition may make sense in the tripartite frame of animal, social animal, and rational animal. (Cf. Burnyeat 2006) However, we need to think about the possibility that "the heart of the analogy is not to be found in the comparison of the Kallipolis and its three parts to the soul conceived as tripartite." (Smith 1999: 33) Plato's principle of doing one's own job for justice does not say that the "one" in issue must be someone among three members of a unity. In the introductory words of the tripartition of the soul in book 4, Socrates urges people to "rub" city and soul side by side, "just as we make a spark from fire sticks," and then justice may become visible. (435a1-4) The two "fire sticks," city and soul, are not justice itself, nor the spark whose light helps us to see justice. Even if we make the spark, we can merely see justice in the dim light of the spark. That is, the application of the tripartite structure of city to the soul may help us to find justice by the "spark," but it does not articulate the exact truth of justice. The analogy of city and soul is an *analogy* which leaves some room for interpretation. The insistence on the tripartite structure of the soul is not necessary, as it seems to me.

Besides, there is a strong connection between the discussion on the inner conflicts in book 4 and that on the decent people's emotional responses in book 10.³² Plato's consideration on the psychological danger caused by the opposite states inside goes along the same line of argument developed in the doctrine of the tripartite soul in book 4.

On the different treatments of art shown in the *Republic*, Halliwell proposes that "book 10 approaches poetry as a subject of directly personal concern for lovers of poetry," "whereas books 2-3 were orientated much more towards the role that poetry should play in the education and formation of young souls in the ideal city." He believes that books 2 and 3 are within the context of Plato's educational scheme. "By contrast, *Republic* 10 makes no reference whatever to the educational system or the socio-political structure of Callipolis." (Halliwell 2012: 187-188)

I hold a different interpretation. To interpret Plato in a more comprehensive way, I presume the coherence between Plato's view on poetry in books 2-3 and that in book 10. I propose that the coherence between these two aspects of Plato's aesthetic thoughts should be established by reading Plato's criticisms of poetry—either in books 2 and 3, or in book 10—within the context of his educational scheme which aims at harmonizing and unifying the soul.

The education in the arts is the education for the soul, as Plato expresses in book 2. (376e) It is the first stage of education for the

³² Also see Ferrari 2007: 179. In Ferrari, the principle is labelled "the principle of conflict." In his analysis, he also makes a comparison of the Freud's tripartite division (Ego, Id and Superego) with Plato's. (176-180)

guardians-coming-to-be. The guardians in the strict sense will rule in Plato's best polity (ἀριστοκρασία). To become reliable rulers, they are required of the Platonic knowledge which is certain, infallible, and lightened by the Good. If possible, they may attain the knowledge through both the early education expounded in books 2 to 3, and the higher education expounded in books 5 to 7. Although there is no apparent reference to the educational system of the ideal political constitution in book 10, the context of education is woven with the continuous concern for knowledge throughout the entire *Republic*. In the final pages of the dialogue, Plato particularly points out the special value of "knowledge." It is the knowledge which enables its possessors "to distinguish the beneficial life from the worthless, to choose the better out of all possible choices, always and everywhere." (618c) Socrates in the dialogue emphasizes that it is what one should learn above all other studies. A soul equipped with the knowledge in this sense will be free from akrasia. In other words, it helps to establish the best constitution (ἀριστο-κρασία) inside the soul, contrary to the constitution which is not well-governed (ἀ-κρασία, akrasia).

It will become clearer when we turn to Plato's fiercest criticism against poetry in book 10. In his criticism, the worst effect of poetry lies in its ability "to corrupt the decent people" (τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς ... λωβᾶσθαι, 605c6). The corruptive effect results from the bad constitution (κακὴν πολιτείαν) that the mimetic poet³³ creates inside us by gratifying the

³³ In original, τὸν μιμητικὸν ποιητὴν. "Mimetic" is the adjective of μίμησις, mimesis, imitation or representation, which causes many aesthetic controversies. The "mimetic poet" does not mean that the poet is without talent or creativity. The creative aspect of mimesis is a central point argued in Halliwell 2002. Plato regards all poetry as mimesis,

unthoughtful element in the soul (605c). The corruptive ability of poetry refers to its psychological influence that the soul receives opposite appearances which form opposite beliefs and rouse conflicts in us, without a competent rational element to rule the inner constitution. (Cf. 602d-603a) This corresponds to the ending words of the discussion on the early education in book 3, where Socrates warns his interlocutors that the poets are “playing magic (γοητεύειν),” changing our beliefs and leading us go astray. (413b-d) The magic (γοητείας, 602d3), now the Socrates in book 10 continues to say, causes the opposite beliefs in us. (602c-e) This is what we usually called “akrasia,” or the akrasia in a broader sense as discussed in section I. But it is not the conflict between knowledge and desire. The soul in this case does not really *know* in Plato's sense. It is the inner conflict resulted from the bad constitution in our soul. One would not need to worry about the case, on the condition that the soul has perfectly established a good constitution inside, by being educated correctly.

Reading Plato's educational scheme within the context of the doctrine of the tripartite soul, the crucial role of the education in the arts becomes conspicuous. The psychological influence of art is powerful. On the bright side, the education in the arts may play a significant role to establish the good constitution inside. Whether we can actually attain the knowledge or not, Plato tries to indicate the direction. If the soul is

including works by Homer, “the poet who educated Greece” (606e2-3). In the context, he is analysing its effects on the audience that we may experience in theatre.

educated in the correct way, as Plato conceives, given the psychological harmony and unity of the soul, the soul is approaching the Platonic knowledge. This knowledge is known by the whole soul and will not fall into *akrasia*. The education in the arts helps in integrating the soul. Therefore, as the ideal goal of his educational scheme, when if once the soul attains knowledge, not only the intellectual cognition is involved, but the desires of all elements altogether. Then the soul is harmonized and unified as one unity, though in some occasions we call it the tripartite soul. However, on the dark side, arts can corrupt even the more decent people among us, as Plato criticizes in book 10. Arts have the power to unify or to partition the soul. A soul equipped with Plato's knowledge will be free of *akrasia*. But, before the soul attains the knowledge, the influential power of the arts on the soul is always Plato's serious concern.

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免於「缺乏自制」的心靈： 柏拉圖的「靈魂三分說」 與文藝教育

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摘要

「缺乏自制」在柏拉圖哲學中，出乎意外地不大具有份量。這並不吻合大多數人在道德實踐上遇到的困難。本文對此提出的理由是：如果「缺乏自制」意指一個人「明知道怎樣最好，卻沒這麼做」，那麼，柏拉圖《理想國》裡的「知識」可以完全避免這情形。但這嚴格意義的「知識」，必須透過漫長的教育，使心靈完全和諧一體。這裡試圖對柏拉圖既區分靈魂、又致力於心靈和諧一體的說法進行理解，將《理想國》第二、三卷的文藝教育整合在對心靈整體的教育藍圖中。以第四卷發展出來的靈魂三分說為理論背景，柏拉圖的文藝教育預設並促進心靈的合一，第十卷則反映出對心靈內在分歧的擔憂。文藝對於心靈合一與分歧的影響，正是心靈能否免於「缺乏自制」的關鍵。

關鍵詞：柏拉圖、《理想國》、靈魂三分、文藝教育 (μουσική)、
缺乏自制 (ἀκρασία)

