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TITLE

Plato's psychology in *Republic* IV and X: how many parts of the soul?

ABSTRACT

Plato's psychology in the *Republic* seems to be affected by an apparent contradiction, which has been pointed out by many scholars (see lastly Ch. Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 140-41, 164-85), to the extent that the conception of the tripartite soul, omnipresent in the central books of the dialogue, seems to be recanted by Socrates, in book X, when he introduces the thesis that the soul is, in and for itself, an immortal, unique and unitary reality, to the wonder of his interlocutor (see for example 608d). Many efforts have been made to dissolve this contradiction, by arguing, for example, that the model of the tripartite soul in book IV is only useful for illustrating the structure of the *Callipolis*, but must in any case give way to a unitary conception, when the soul is considered for what it really is in and for itself; and this would be a good example of Socrates' strategy, which takes various paths, depending on the subject and what is most effective in the specific context of the discussion with his interlocutors. Now, an analysis of the relevant passages of the dialogues (in the *Phaedo*, in the *Republic* itself or in the *Timaeus*; it is more difficult to place the psychology of the *Phaedrus* in this context) shows that it is never really questioned that, for itself, the soul coincides with its rational and immortal part or function, the only one of divine nature and destined to control the body, so that in this sense the soul certainly has the form of a unique, indivisible and simple reality; but the soul, precisely because it is destined to control the body, must at least temporarily reside in the body, and it is this that produces in it, as claimed in *Republic* X 611b-c, that 'mutilation', or that *division*, which depends on the fact that it is joined to the body and subject to its various affects (λελωβημένον αὐτό ... ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας καὶ ἄλλων κακῶν). As it is the case for the sea-god Glaucus, whose pure and simple nature is covered and thickened by the saline encrustations that corrode it and disfigure its contours (X 611d), it is precisely because it has been grafted onto the body that residues extraneous to its simple nature are 'added' to the soul, and these 'added residues' are due to its sojourning in an improper element. In short, it is the very doctrine of the soul that implies both a substantially unitary conception of the soul itself and of its status, and its division when it is in the body; so there are not two doctrines or two conceptions of the soul, nor two competing explanatory models, but only one, as long as one properly understands the 'amphibian' nature of the soul. This interpretation is also related to the description of the psycho-physiological origin and structure of the individual soul in the *Timaeus*.