

The Art Education and the Tripartite Soul

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[English Abstract]

‘What, therefore, is the education (*paideia*)?’ at *Republic* 376e, Socrates leads his interlocutors to ponder this question and considers the art education (*mousikē*) to be for the soul. This opens a discussion which is well-known as Plato’s censorship of poetry in *Republic* 2 and 3. Later in the book 4, Plato offers a deeper analysis of the soul which divides the soul into three elements. (436a-441c) In the light of the tripartite doctrine, since the art education aims to educate the soul, which element(s) in the soul does it educate? At 402a, Socrates emphasises that the importance of the art education lies in its powerful effect on the soul before one grows rationality. The claim that young children have not yet rationality occurs again, at 441a, where Plato tries to argue for the distinction between spirit and reason. It seems that the education of the rational element should be at a later stage. Thus it seems that the art education does not educate the rational element, but the non-rational spirit and appetite.

However, the story above is not satisfying. At 411e-2a, when Socrates is finishing his discussions on the art and physical educations, he says that these two expertises are for two elements – the spirited and the philosophical; having introduced the tripartite doctrine, he reminds people this point again, and emphasises that a combination of the art and physical educations makes the spirited and rational elements concordant at 441e-2a. The repeating, on the one hand, shows that Plato’s consideration on education is indeed closely linked with his theory of the tripartite soul, and on the other hand, shows that the art education does effect on the rational element even though it is undertaken before one grows rationality.

This leads us to reflect on the interrelation among the three elements in the soul. If Plato means to assign different educations to different elements respectively, it seems puzzling whether the art education is for the non-rational elements or the rational

element. But the elements in the soul could be more interrelated than usually expected. There could be a more holistic reading: the art education does not educate a certain element or elements exclusively; it is the whole soul which is educated.

The holistic view goes through Plato's thoughts on education. Later in the analogy of the cave, Plato points out that an eye cannot be turned towards the light without turning the whole body. (518c) Conversely, the art education would not turn 'the whole body' without turning 'the eye'. The content of art education, as it can be easily found in the text, may cultivate virtues proper for spirit and appetite, but not wisdom and knowledge which are presumed to be attained by reason. However, the art education remains its impact on the philosophical element in the soul especially if the soul will go on pursuing the genuine philosophy.

[French Abstract]

Qu'est-ce donc que l'éducation(paideia) ? Dans La République 376e, Socrate conduit ses interlocuteurs à méditer sur cette question et considère l'art d'éducation comme pour l'âme. Cela débouche sur une discussion bien reconnue, à savoir la censure de poésie chez Platon dans La République 2 et 3. Plus loin dans le volume 4, Platon donne une analyse plus approfondie de l'âme selon laquelle l'âme est composée de trois éléments. (436a-441c) A la lumière de cette doctrine tripartite, une question se pose naturellement : puisque l'art d'éducation a pour but d'éduquer l'âme, quel(s) élément(s) de l'âme éduque-t-il ? Dans cet article, je ne mets pas en doute cette question avant de montrer qu'elle est trompeuse. J'essaie de présenter une vue holistique de l'âme selon laquelle les éléments sont tellement liés qu'aucun d'entre eux ne peut être éduqué séparément au cours de l'éducation. Ainsi, l'art d'éducation pourrait s'intégrer plus aisément avec la philosophie qui tire l'âme entière vers la lumière.