

The paper investigates the doctrine of the tripartite soul in *Republic* IV, VIII and IX. The claim is that we should ascribe to Plato a *deliberative* rather than a *causal* model of human moral psychology.

While it is generally taken for granted that there are three parts of the soul (Reason, Spirit, and Appetite), and often also that these three parts are agent-like subjects of psychological predicates, these assumptions will be questioned here. Instead, the claim will be that the ‘parts’ should be taken as separate kinds of motivation or desire, distinguished from each other by their respective principles of value. Thus, appetitive desires go for pleasure, spirited desires for honour or recognition, and Reason’s desires for the good (however exactly that is to be understood). The ‘parts’ do not directly cause the soul (or agent) to act in certain ways, but rather supply the agent with desires or motives that constitute, as it were, *proposals* for how he ought to act. Thus we should not picture the soul as a field of various motivational forces pulling in different directions, such that the person’s action (or decision) is the effect of the strongest of these forces. Rather, the ‘parts’ supply proposals for action such that it is up to the agent himself (e.g. Leontius or the thirsty person) to *decide* which proposals to opt for – which ones should be accepted and which rejected. It is thus the person himself, whose ‘parts’ (i.e. kinds of desire) these are, who is the proper subject of psychological predicates, and hence the author of his actions. And the decision made (and the action performed) is the one the agent judges to be the right, best or most valuable under the circumstances, and hence commits himself to carry out.

This interpretation has some advantages over the alternative. First, it fits better with crucial and often neglected passages in the text, e.g. where the parts are said to drive *the agent* to do so and so (437b–c, 439a–b), or where the agent is said to *let* some part of himself rule in him (443d–e, 553b–d). Secondly, it gives us a picture of human psychology more consistent with the project of the *Republic* as a whole, viz. to advocate the life of justice to people deliberating about how to live (357a–367e). Human psychology is presented from the point of view of, and as addressing, someone deliberating about how to live, not from the point of

view of someone attempting to explain human motivation and action from a detached theoretical position. Thirdly, the present interpretation allows us to see the account of moral decline in VIII and IX as making appeal to an agent's recognition of the possibility of letting certain kinds of desire take over rule in his life. Finally, on this interpretation, the city-soul analogy and the tendency to personify the 'parts' become natural means of presenting the point to the deliberative agent.