

Plato's Theory of Conflict in the Soul.

The main purpose of my contribution is to analyse the philosophical presuppositions of Plato's theory of conflict. First of all I would like to discuss the nature of the principle which leads in book IV (436b) to the distinction of three parts of the soul. Many commentators (Adam, Shorey, Vegetti, etc.) have expressed the opinion that this principle represents "the first formulation of the law of contradiction (PNC)". Nevertheless, I will take sides with other scholars who have observed that it is not concerned with contradictories, but with opposites, and call it a "principle of non opposition" (Robinson, 1971, 39, Irwin, 1977, 327, Annas, 1981, 137, Miller, 1999, 92, etc.). And even more, I will defend that, contrary to Aristotle's formulation (*Metaph.*, IV 3-6), the principle works in Plato not as referred primarily to propositions, to reality or to beliefs, but to the will or to the realm of action that has to do with *poieîn* and *páschein*. This principle cannot be reduced to an instance of the PNC, because it is intended more than as a mere logical, formal or trascendental argument (see Shields, in Wagner, 2001, 13-151). Although the principle can have an apparently formal character, it establishes a synthetic truth that has to do with Plato's concept of the will or, as some scholar has stated it, with Plato's theory of human motivation (Miller, 1992).

In second place, I would like to examine (a) the nature of the parts of the soul that have been distinguished by the application of the principle of non opposition just considered. I will give an explanation of Plato's "mereology" contemplating the parts of the soul as **independent sources of motivation**. This is how I understand Plato's insistence (437c) upon what a scholar has called the principle of a "détermination réciproque des corrélatifs" (Delcominette, 2008). Nevertheless, (b) one of the main points of my contribution is that I do not interpret this principle as a break with Plato's thesis that all desires are desires for the good, as stated in previous dialogues (cfr. Penner, in Vlastos, 1971). There is "an influential line of interpretation" (as Ferrari summarizes it, 2007, 168) that sustains the existence of "a category of irrational desires that are blind to the good". Plato's insistence throughout the work on his accustomed principle that everything is desired under the appearance of the good (cfr. 505d-e; cfr. Price, 1994, 47-8) signifies that all desires, independently of their own source of motivation, have to be provided with cognitive elements (Kahn, 1987, 85-86), which will appear to the will as "images of the good" (cfr. Vallejo, 2007, 331-339, 2009, 113-136). This is confirmed by Plato's analysis of the conflict of desires which we find in the case of the different types of men referred to in Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*.

Finally, I would like to examine also the relation between desires and values, and the ontological reasons of Plato's denial of a conflict of values within each part of the soul and even in the entire soul when we "accept the guidance of the wisdom loving part" (586e). This issue will take me to analyse what I. Berlin has called the Ionian fallacy in relation to values, the unity of "the Platonic ideal" (Berlin, 1998, 5). The Idea of the Good provides an ontological basis for the impossibility of a real conflict between values because all receive their being (509b) and all become useful and beneficial by reference to this form. After all, the principle of non opposition can be applied equally to propositions, reality and beliefs (see 602e-603), on the one hand, and to desires and values, on the other, because Plato does not distinguish adequately the realm of being and the realm of values and in close correspondence with this the theoretical and the practical uses of reason.

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