

## Book Review

Joshua I. Weinstein: *Plato's Threefold City and Soul*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. vii, 292.)

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Joshua Weinstein's new book makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the *Republic* by paying close attention to early stages of the argument for the city-soul analogy in books II–IV. Weinstein argues persuasively that these books are fundamentally political (correcting the tendency see the real political theory of the *Republic* as starting in book V), and that the elements of tripartite psychology are systematically developed from the founding of the city (rather than depending solely on arguments in book IV). His reconstruction of the argument is judicious and careful, and focuses on the text of the *Republic*.

The work is fittingly divided into three parts. Weinstein's strategy is to identify and motivate the arguments for the tripartite division of soul and city, thus illuminating the nature of justice and its inner workings (7). He details three arguments that establish Plato's position: an argument from a diversity of characters and lives, an argument from an opposition of motivations, and an argument from the sufficiency of function of each of the soul parts (7). Part 1 argues that Plato relies on a "recognized sociology" (11) or "observational anthropology" (43), establishing three basic kinds of character: wisdom loving, victory loving, and profit loving. While there are different manifestations or orderings of these drives to curiosity, ambition, and acquisition in different people, ultimately there are only three basic drives or motivations (59). Thus, there are three (and only three) soul parts because there are three distinctive drives and lives, even though there are multifarious psychological effects from their interactions.

Part 2 moves to the development of the just city. Weinstein's methodology is to explain the function of the parts by considering self-sufficiency: "if the lack of a certain part precludes the self-sufficiency of the political whole, then that part can be said to have a function in the whole, and it can thus be said to 'do its own' (or not) as it contributes justly to the good life of the whole" (106). Using the city analogy advances Plato's argument because the functions required for a self-sufficient city are easier to identify, yet they also correspond directly to the functions of the soul. Weinstein then departs from scholarly

46 orthodoxy in explaining the “one person one job” principle not by reference to  
47 the pragmatic efficiency of division of labor (which he insightfully critiques)  
48 but by reference to the analytical argument from function: the jobs of the city  
49 need to be clearly identifiable in the formal structure of the city for us to  
50 understand each function (118).

51 Weinstein then explains the development of the city: first, basic bodily  
52 needs must be accounted for, but the need to trade, sell, and distribute  
53 goods leads the city to include merchants and move “from socialism to cap-  
54 italism” (124). Though it satisfies basic needs, the early city has no awareness  
55 that this is its purpose and thus no internal limit on what it produces (132).  
56 In order to appease the senses and generate pleasure, the city begins to  
57 produce luxuries, but the unrestrained pursuit of luxuries leads to war  
58 (147): increasing demand for luxuries increases population growth and puts  
59 pressure on limited land, but without a correlate increase of food supplies  
60 the city eventually begins to starve (152–57). The solution is to invade neigh-  
61 boring territories for farmland—and this requires an army. The argument  
62 from function then requires a class of specialist soldiers. But without guidance  
63 of whom to fight and when to fight, the soldiers cannot perform their function  
64 well. Thus the need for the soldiers to be *led* prompts the inclusion of philos-  
65 ophers (161). In each case, the higher classes of the city correct the deficiencies  
66 of the lower and collectively form a self-sufficient whole.

67 Part 3 returns to concerns about the function of the spirited part of the soul  
68 and about its necessity. Weinstein’s key claim is that “no amount of reason is  
69 sufficient, on its own, to make up for the failings of the appetites” (204).  
70 Because the appetites’ drive to luxury and excess cannot be “argued away”  
71 and the appetites are prone to usurp reason through rationalization, there  
72 must be a soul part whose job it is to use force to hold oneself to one’s rea-  
73 soned commitments. Weinstein thus argues that spirit’s love of victory is man-  
74 ifest in a desire to *succeed* in achieving one’s ends (242). While some  
75 commentators understand the spirited part of the soul as seeking positional  
76 or social goods, Weinstein focuses on the description of spirit as the *preserver*.  
77 Because the success of our projects involves overcoming pleasure or pain,  
78 spirit has a necessary function to play in successful agency by preserving  
79 our goals and plans. This framework allows Weinstein to segue into a discus-  
80 sion of the time valence of spirit, which focuses on mid-term goals in the face  
81 of short-term temptations. The account of characteristic temporalities of each  
82 soul part is the most speculative part of the book, but the view deserves  
83 careful reflection and its mechanics become clearer as the book progresses  
84 (esp. 261).

85 On the whole, Weinstein’s arguments are compelling and rely on reason-  
86 able interpretations of the text. There are, however, moments where the  
87 framing of particular issues is puzzling. Readers may be surprised when  
88 Weinstein attributes different characters and ways of life to soul *parts* (92).  
89 Commentators normally understand character as what emerges from one’s  
90 soul taken *as a whole*, even though one’s particular beliefs, desires, and

91 impulses might conflict. Weinstein thus departs from a common view about  
92 each soul part having characteristic powers and desires, and those desires  
93 shaping one's life if they dominate in the soul. Rather, he claims that "Plato  
94 sees every individual as living, at certain times and under some circum-  
95 stances, each of the three lives" (55). Weinstein attempts to clarify this  
96 paradox by describing character as a "fractal in time" (56)—but layered met-  
97 aphors become murky here, and one might worry that Weinstein has used the  
98 *explanandum* (different characters) to motivate the proposed *explanans* (differ-  
99 ent soul parts).

100 More constructively, Weinstein might profitably develop his views by  
101 engaging with the literature on imperfect or nonphilosophical virtue to  
102 explore ways in which appetitive and thumotic forces can be controlled  
103 without the perfection of one's own reason. Though the "highest expression"  
104 of reason is found in one's own knowledge of the Forms (198), Weinstein's  
105 account leaves open the possibility that other kinds of guidance from  
106 reason might result in political good functioning (for example, through law  
107 or the direction of wise rulers). While Weinstein has shown how appetite  
108 and spirit cannot be left to their own devices without nefarious consequences,  
109 Plato suggests that there are a number of ways in which to create order in the  
110 city and the soul without everybody becoming a philosopher.

111 In sum, Weinstein's book is primarily about the moral psychology of the  
112 *Republic*—and it is an excellent and insightful book for scholars interested  
113 in this aspect of Plato's thought. Moreover, it is essential reading for scholars  
114 working on any aspect of *Republic* II–IV. Some readers of this journal may find  
115 the long discussions of psychology slow going for the political upshots  
116 garnered, but for Weinstein's more general audience in ancient philosophy  
117 and for those whose teaching and research focuses closely on the city-soul  
118 analogy in the *Republic*, this book will surely be rewarding.

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