

PLATO ON LOVE: RATION, SPIRIT, AND APPETITE

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Abstract: In his later works, *Symposium*, Plato begins his exploration of love and friendship. However, two critical questions remain unaddressed: where does the feeling of love originate in one's soul, and what parts of the soul are prone to receiving, expressing, and partaking in love? This paper seeks to answer these questions by referencing his earlier work, *Timaeus*, which delves more deeply into the nature of the soul. By integrating insights from *Timaeus* with the concept of love as presented in the *Symposium*, the aim is to explain the division of love and its feelings with respect of the tripartite soul model. It concludes that love is distributed across all three parts of the soul: the mind serves as the rational judge of love, the heart embodies the uncontrolled spirit of love, and the body represents the appetitive desires associated with love in its physical manifestations.

Keywords: Love; Tripartite Soul; Senses; Reason; Spirit; Appetite

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plato in *Symposium*

Being a continued work of Plato from *Lysis*, in which Socrates, Lysis, and Menexenus arrive at an indeterminate conclusion stating friendship as due to human needs and wants as well as possessing good in itself for those of higher ideals, all three candidates arrive at a contradiction upon the truth of such relations, setting the stage for Plato to draft his following work: *Symposium*, upholding the underlying claim that love is of the god, and thus divine, we thus become divine through the process and achievements in love. *Symposium* is one of the most profound analyses of love in the history of philosophy [1]. Specifically, the *Symposium* starts by situating Socrates in a party, in which he and other men decide to make speeches in honor of love rather than partying and drinking, Phaedrus comes first, and Socrates namely last; yet they were drunk and asleep on the floor by the end of the day [2].

A brief recall on *Symposium*, Phaedrus speaks the first, and speaks of how love is courageous, citing the example of Alcetis as woman of virtue in dying for her love and man of cowardliness in unfaithful to his wife. Subsequently, Alcetis was sent to meet her lover in the island of the blessed, while Orpheus were punished to never be accompanied with love again. After which, Pausanias takes the tale, he claims a necessary distinguishment between love of heavenly and earthly, each facilitated by their different Aphrodite. The daughter of Uranus, Aphrodite Urania, for the noble, intelligent, and faithful purpose, and the daughter of Zeus and Dione, Aphrodite Pandemos, as a coarser type of love towards the body but not the soul. After which, Aristophanes, suffering a hiccup, is accompanied by his doctor. The doctor speaks of two kinds of love, claiming that the art of medicine shows which is good and which is bad, persuading the body to make good choices, and reconcile conflicting elements and makes them friends. Cured from the hiccup, Aristophanes add that people are of, initially, three genders, men, women, and the union, in which Zeus later split people in halves, going about and looking for one another at the pursuit of reunion and thus love in fate. By which here, the book arrives to its main point, of how true love serves as the lord and minister in which god appoints men to work towards for reunions, and thus the happiness and the blessing. Then, Agathon comes out to reject, that all men in prior of him viewed the advantages of love without consolation to its badness, reconciling Zeus' duality in character and the presence of evil in that mission. Finally, Socrates comes in, stating his words as a mere imitation of his inspirer Diotima, remarking how the good of love lies within each of the character's personal experience of love, and thus concluding that it is the need, wants and desires of man [3]. Socrates explains that Love is neither a god nor a mortal, but rather a spirit born of a coupling between Resource and Poverty [4].

1.2 Key Question Addressed

The conclusion of the needs, wants, and desires of man calls into question if the origin of the feeling, or perception of love, making it a tripartite necessity, can be connected to the three-part model of a man's soul: the reason, the spirit, and the appetite [5]. As such, it is also worthy to discuss, from the aspect of soul and love, whether those three aspects are necessarily prerequisites of love, or merely parts that construct the sense of love, meaning which only physical appetite, or the physical soul, or any other aspect of love, could be the only element present in the proposed type of love in Plato's *Symposium*.

This essay attempts to draw on the separate discussion of Plato's different works, namely souls in *Timaeus* and love in *Symposium*, to propose a relationship of which Plato establishes between the parts of soul and its perception of love. It is important to denote, that while there may be substantial correspondence in literal texts and real-life context that support a relationship between the tripartite model of soul and the requisites of love, it is to be clear that Plato does not claim such logic in his own works, but this proposal is merely speculative and does not fully represent that of any Plato's ideas. In fact, other scholars interpret the division of soul as dual rather than tripartite, citing it reason and appetite as the two parts of soul and hindering spirit, like Siewert proposes [6].

2 THE TRIPARTITE MODEL OF THE SOUL

The divided self, or namely the tripartite model of soul is a memorable feature of dialogues in his *Timaeus* and *The Republic*. In which, Plato argues that the soul of men is divided into three parts:

The first part of a soul is the reason (*Logos*), which comes from the mind. This is rather an inaccessible part of the soul that could be aspired through education intended for philosophers. In using this part of his soul, men think through reasons and logics to perceive the truest image of reality and the world [7]. Also in this aspect, friendship is to be good and mutual between one man and another, and that of heavenly love could be accessed for men are able to partake a greater character of courage and determination [8].

Next comes the spiritual soul (*Thymos*), coming from the heart. This is a common perception of the origin of love, from the heart that draws a couple together without the need of reason and physical desires, rather relying on emotional appeals. In this place of soul, people have their preferences and their appreciation of good things they like, such as music, art, and nature, in which inspired their attraction that is not to be explained using both logic and physical desire [9].

Finally, is the appetite (*Epithymia*), coming from the body as a whole. Contrary to spirit sometimes, many aspirations towards bad and evil can be justified using the aspect of appetite. For example, drudgery comes from the physical desire of drugs and its addiction, as well as laziness results from the body refraining from work and other labor physically without the process of think and feel [10].

To Plato, a soul of men naturally derives based on those parts: the mind, the heart, and the body, with the mind representing the reason, heart representing spirit, and the body representing appetite. In this context, Plato argues that these three aspects of a soul bring the sensual perception to the soul, and in some cases, one may be hindered while other's function, giving a rather incomprehensive sense of being [11]. For example, whilst philosophers use their mind for deriving reasoning and thinking of truth and the world, lending fruitful visions that they use to help educate and enlighten others, people that are rather rural such as soldier warriors are prone to being motivated by appetite, where they fight and battle for physical desires. Thus, Plato presents that the level of education or development in men's character may influence the way of their soul, lending them different visions and perceptions; In this way, this essay first draws that the parts of soul can be inexistent or to be aspired out of the soul, and thus the three components are unnecessarily present together at all times in men. However, while some raises concern upon the seemingly contradiction between spirit or logic with appetite, stating that bad causes due to appetite may be abolished in the presence of either reason or spirit, it is nevertheless evident that the three can coexist simultaneously in most examples such as men trying to give up drugging realizing that it is for his own good, as well as, most importantly, in the case of love where a physical desire must be present in the realm of birth giving while the reason and spirit will be advanced to sustain a healthy and desirable relationship.

3 CONCEPTUALIZING LOVE IN THE SYMPOSIUM

Adding on to the love introduced in the opening, it is to be further developed the categories of love: the heavenly and the earthly. Revisiting the logic of the *Symposium*, the realm of discussion starts by arranging love into the categories of such, with courage, ritual, sacrifice, and dedication presented by prior speaker Phaedrus lying in that of heavenly love [12]. Expanding, in Pausanias' speech, the reason behind the two love is the two Aphrodite the daughter of Uranus, who has no mother and is the elder and wiser goddess, and the daughter of Zeus and Diones, who is popular and common. In this way, Aphrodite Urania is considered a more celestial figure, representing a higher form of love and beauty linked to intellectual and soul, whilst Aphrodite Pandemos is associated with physical attraction and sexual relationships [13]. Furthermore, it is later claimed that medicine and certain ways help men distinguish between the two types of love, and that only the achievement of heavenly love, a love appointed by God, leads to a place in the island of the blessed [14].

4 THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVE AND THE TRIPARTITE SOUL

To begin with, one clear relationship is established by Plato himself, explicitly in *Symposium*. This is regarding the two types of love, the heavenly and the earthly, the former is of noble purpose and delights the intelligent nature of men, while the latter is rather of love of body. The visioned is cleared by linking that, heavenly love requires that of reason and spirit to be present, in which couples fall in love for good and enlightenment, while the earthly love shall only require a bare minimum of appetite in which men gains a desire of a women's body. This shall also be justified as only philosopher

thinkers and well as educated men establishes a spiritual and logical soul, enabling that of heavenly love, while most uneducated peasants are prone to only appetite, seen in how Plato claims that they work hard for earning a mate by the appointment of God, which is a deceit from the nobles, causing them to only aspire for earthly deeds. This soul of appetite or body shares also the commonness of earthly love, as Plato hints its Aphrodite, Pandemos, to be rather common and mediocre.

However, others are to be said upon whether there is a true connection between the parts of soul present and the type of love gained. There is one way of clear comprehension by referring to Socrates' final remark of how love is of the needs, wants, and desires of man [3]. Using this definition of three parts, there appears to be correspondence between each part of the soul and each aspect of love. First is reason and need. Here, the mind serves as a rational judgement towards love, the determination of whether the other is good or the designated innate other part of one's union, as Aristophanes introduces how Zeus split each Union in part looking for each other. In this way, the mind judges upon the capacity of need of a particular love. Additively, the spirit and want, where the heart is namely and conventionally a source of passion that causes a want towards a specific person, or a seeming indication that is without reason, the innate force of attraction between the union of love that creates wants. Finally, the appetite and desire, where from sexual and physical attraction causes a desire of lovemaking without both the prolonged and innate passion from within and the judgement of right-doing from the mind. In this way, each of the elements of love proposed by Socrates can be drawn upon a part of the soul and appears to be independent of each other.

Upon all, whilst all three parts of the soul might not, or rarely coexist in most men as only some are educated thinkers, this phenomenon is also that of love, as heavenly love could only rarely be found while most are only tied to earthly love. And the tripartite of the soul serves each as a power to one element of love. Thus, it is clearly drawn that, need, want, and desire is not a prerequisite of love, but rather the criterion that qualifies heavenly love, requiring all three parts of the soul to be present, in which brings one's soul to the island of the blessed [15].

5 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the perception of love can come from, independently, all three parts of the soul: the mind, the heart, and the body, bringing different aspects of love as a need, a want, and a mere desire. By which, there is an inherent logic between the soul that permits people to sense, and the love that people arrive at. In this way, the comprehensiveness of soul brings the men towards heavenly love and the island of the blessed, underlining the necessity of education and intellect as he proposed in *The Republic* to be the purpose of education and society [16]. Therefore, this essay arrives at the conclusion that the love in the form of need stems from logical judgements of the good and the union from the mind, wants stem from the inherent passion of union before men and women were separated and given birth from the heart, and desire from the coarse need of sexual and physical attraction from the body, with all three aspects being able to exist independently of each other, leading different types of love.

However, it is useful to note that, this paper only examines parts of Plato's work in *The Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Symposium*, and the inherent logic is a result of mere speculation and interpretation. It is therefore suggested that future studies investigate the copious comprehension of Plato's work for more explicit statements in favor of the relationship, that may be able to substantiate and deepen the discussion in this essay.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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