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Lorenz’s *Plato On The Soul* Summary

**Introduction:** Hendrik Lorenz’s *Plato On The Soul* is a chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato.* This chapter explains how Plato’s idea of the soul evolves and changes over the *Protagoras, Gorgias, Phaedo,* and *The Republic.*

**Protagoras:** Plato’s biggest claim in the *Protagoras* is the idea that Knowledge Reigns Supreme (KRS) (352c4-6). This idea states that if someone has knowledge of good and bad, they wouldn’t be forced to act by anything but their knowledge, and this knowledge is true. The assumptions of KRS are that people are fully in control of their actions, and this knowledge of good and bad gives direction on how to get the best outcome. Socrates is thinking in terms of quantitative values since KRS gives us “peace of mind firmly rooted in the truth” by “measuring” a situation with this perception of good and bad (Lorenz, 356d7-32). This means one could never make a bad decision because they have knowledge and know the value of each option (356d7-e1). It’s further stated that Socrates believes if someone knows what they are doing is worse than something else they could be doing, they are going to change course for the better. An example of KRS is through a doughnut experiment: you have the option of eating an ordinary doughnut now or waiting until tonight to have your favorite dessert. KRS says you will wait to have your favorite dessert tonight since the reward is better. *Akrasia* (having a lapse of judgment due to weakness of the will)is also thrown into the mix*.* This goes against Socrates since he currently believes no one will do anything they believe to be bad because it is not within human nature (358c6-d2). *Socratic intellectualism* (every desire to do something aims at the pursuit of action that a person knows or believes is no worse than any other course of action available) is also introduced here. Lorenz stresses that you can accept KRS without accepting Socratic intellectualism.

**Gorgias:** The Socrates of Gorgias believes that knowing what is *just* and *unjust* is *knowledge* and therefore no one would want to act unjustly because it is worse than acting justly (460c1-3)*.* However, the *Gorgias* leaves room for human desire and an idea of what we “should” be doing as in the tyrant example: “tyrants ‘do just about nothing they want to do’” (466d6-32). Meaning people are going to do what is in their best interest, not their desires. Lorenz then brings up the Principle of Relatives in which A and B are a pair of relatives, and A and B bear the same degree of complexity (Repub. IV AA)*.* An example being thirst and drink being desirable and good because everyone wants good things. However, in the *Gorgias*, some desires don’t aim for the good but for the pleasurable. Therefore, there is a need for self-control (491d10-e1) unlike in the *Protagoras.* Lorenz notes Socratic intellectualism can exist with humans having a lack of self control because even when we do things that aren’t themselves good, it is still in pursuit of the good (468b1-8). This idea, Lorenz states, might be gearing us up for the tri-part soul coming up in the *Republic.*

**Phaedo and The Immortality of The Soul:** This Socrates accepts psychological conflict, but still doesn’t see the soul as a sum of bodily parts: the *harmonia* theory. He believes the soul can oppose the body and its parts (94c9-d6) like Odysseus telling his heart to endure through not revealing himself to his household (94d7-e1). This was his soul conversing with his desires and anger. Lorenz translates Socrate’s argument by saying no arrangement could oppose the parts that compose it (93a8-9, 94c3-7). Desires and emotions reside in the body parts, so the soul could not possibly fight itself; it has to be separate (94b7-c1). However, Socrates still subjects the soul to mental states since it opposes the body. Socrates in the *Phaedo* therefore abandons Socratic intellectualism since there is a conflict of desires and outcomes. All in all, Socrates still confirms his belief in the immortal soul, but it cannot be divided up otherwise it will be destroyed as the body dies (80d5-e1)

**Republic:** Lorenz introduces the Principle of Opposites (PO) (“the same thing cannot do or undergo opposites in the same respect, in relation to the same thing at the same time” (254)). This principle allows for the tripart soul. Socrates takes desire and aversion to be fully opposites (439b3-c8). Lorenz believes his “Why” for this opposition is because desires and aversions move the soul to or away from the object of desire or aversion.

**The existence of the spirit (3rd) part of the soul:** In proving that spiritedness is different from appetite and reason, there is a conflict between wanting to do something and at the same time being opposed to it (again, Odysseus ex.). Therefore, anger (spirit) can fight with appetites within the soul, therefore they are distinct from one another (440a6-7). Everyone must also have a spirit because it’s connected to our self-esteem. We already know appetites are different from reason, so spirit must be the third part of the soul.

**Comments on the argument:** Reason has its own attachments and desires as does appetite. However, appetite and spirit aren’t capable of means-end reasoning, so they don’t have the same cognitive resources as reason which leaves out a possibility of them having aversions and desires by their own reasoning. Their reasoning is pleasure-driven (money ex.), and it’s formed during childhood.

**Desire and the Good:** By the Republic, humans are capable of doing things they think are bad while also believing a better option is available. In book 4, it’s presented that people act a certain way to promote the good, but they can also be persuaded by pleasure to do something detrimental for their own good. The overall message is we are always oriented towards the good, even though our view of the good can be misguided.