

## First Paper Topic: The Tripartite Soul

Argument Schema Due: 10:07:03

Paper Due: 10:14:03

Socrates argues that the soul has three parts. In fact, he argues this twice between 435a and 441c of *Republic* Book 4. His first argument (435a – 436a) is rather simple and yet quite problematic. The second (436b – 441c) is much more sophisticated. Your task is to examine and evaluate the second of these two arguments.

### Schema

First you will schematize this second argument. An argument schema, as we have seen, is a representation of an argument in premise-and-conclusion form. Please use my own schema of the first argument (provided as an additional attachment) as a model. In a similar way, distinguish the second argument's premises and conclusions, numbering them, and setting them out so that they accurately represent the argument Plato had Socrates make in his dialogue.

Since you now understand six forms of deductive argument (Weston), and dozens of technical terms of philosophical argumentation (Warburton), please label any instances of these that you notice. You will find that schematizing Socrates' argument will help you understand it better than if you were simply to read it and ponder it as it is. Diagnosing it using the terms and forms from Warburton and Weston, moreover, will help you even further.

For the sake of your schema's simplicity, skip the passage between 437d ("One of these is for food . . .") and 439a (" . . . Absolutely."). Socrates' intent in this difficult passage will not become clear to you until you have grappled with his whole argument. You will likely return to this passage, though, while writing your paper.

### Paper

Secondly, you will write a paper (5-8 pages) using your corrected argument-schema as basis. In this paper you will have three tasks.

- (a) Accurately reproduce, in clear and concise English, Socrates' second argument that the soul is divided into three. Two things will especially help you here: a good argument schema, and chapters 7-9 of Weston (which are invaluable guides to good philosophical writing).
- (b) Present the objections and replies that Socrates himself mentioned for and against it. You may find it easier to present these objections and replies while you are reproducing the argument; or you may find it easier to save them until the end, until you have fully reproduced the argument.
- (c) Discover an objection to it, and do your best to marshal a reply to this additional objection.

Socrates himself recognizes one such objection, although he does not mention it. Instead, assuming it, he seems to be trying to develop a reply in the difficult part of the text I suggested you skip for your schema: i.e., between 437d (“One of these is for food . . .”) and 439a (“ . . . Absolutely.”) You may follow this Socratic objection-and-reply, or you may develop your own line of thought.

### **Tips**

Producing an objection is, in a way, easy – once you have schematized Socrates’ argument. After all, every objection is the same: it must claim that the argument is unsound, and there are only two ways that this can be so: either the argument is invalid or at least one of the premises is false. But there are many ways in which an argument can be invalid, just as there are lots of different reasons why a premise can be false. We have studied many such ways already in this course. The challenge for you, then, is to show either *how* Socrates has reasoned invalidly or *why* (at least) one of his premises is false. This is the hard part, and I enjoin you to begin thinking about it as soon as possible.

The quality of a philosophical discussion is not often marked by a solution to a problem, but instead by a deepened understanding of it. The further you take your discussion with objections and replies – the further you prosecute the dialectic, in other words – the deeper you will understand the problem at hand: in this case, the constitution of the soul.