

Dividing the Mind

Instructor: Rory Hanlon

E-mail: rhanlon11@uchicago.edu

Course Description

In ordinary contexts, we often readily accept the thought that a person (or their mind or soul) can be divided or is made up of parts (“a part of me wants that doughnut, even though I know it’s unhealthy”). Versions of this idea have been embraced throughout the history of philosophy, psychology, and biology. It attempts to capture how a single human can be or do many things simultaneously, especially in ethical or epistemological contexts. The positing of different parts of my mind or soul promises to explain how I could, for example, have conflicting desires (e.g., to eat the doughnut and to avoid it) or beliefs (e.g., cognitive dissonance). Yet other thinkers have argued that such talk is at best metaphorical, and at worst plainly false—that the mind or the soul is just not the sort of thing that can be divided into parts, or that all its acts arise from a single ultimate principle.

In this course, we will examine the history of this idea—that a soul, mind, or person is or could be comprised of parts. In the course of tracing parts of this history, we will come to see how differently, and in such different contexts, the idea of a divided mind or soul has been employed. In the first half of the course, we will examine the origin of the notion as it emerged in Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, especially in the works of Plato and Aristotle. In the second half, we will observe how these themes were recycled for new problems, or how they were rejected as views of the mind and nature changed, up until contemporary philosophy of mind, moral psychology, and cognitive science. In doing so, we will not only explore the particular theme of ‘dividing the mind’, but get exposure to many major thinkers in the history of philosophy and psychology.

Course Objectives

1. To acquire a comprehensive understanding of history of the idea of the divided mind.
2. To get a broad and partial survey of the history of philosophy of mind and moral psychology, seen through the lens of the particular theme.
3. To practice both close reading of primary texts from the history of philosophy, and the ability to recognize connections and continuities between different eras of the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to show up to class having done all of the required reading of the primary text. In addition, during some weeks I will recommend one or two pieces of secondary literature. Reading the secondary literature not required, but strongly encouraged, especially if you want to dig deeper into a particular thinker or topic, or plan to write a paper on a relevant related topic.

The central assignments for the course will be three papers:

- (1) A midterm paper (6-8 pages), in response to the prompts about the various ancient conceptions of soul-division.
- (2) A final paper (10-15 pages), in response to the prompts about a modern author’s approach to the divided self or mind, and its connection to ancient conceptions of the divided soul.

- (3) Biweekly reading responses, in which you pose a one question one observation (e.g., an objection, an implication) you have about the reading for that class. These are meant to be low-stakes and are not graded (beyond them being submitted).

Assessment

Participation (Reading Responses, Attendance, Discussion): 20%

Midterm Paper: 30%

Final Paper: 50%

Midterm Course Evaluations

During midterm week, I will ask you to complete an evaluation about the course thus far. Please take a few minutes that week to think honestly about the course thus far—what you have found to be valuable and helpful, as well deficient and unhelpful. The opportunity to get your feedback at this point is invaluable (you also should feel welcome throughout the quarter to let me know any concerns or problems you are having in the course during my office hours).

Schedule

	Topic	Required Reading	Optional Reading
1	General Introduction, Discussion of Class Structure	"Introduction" from <i>Partitioning the Soul</i> , Corcilius and Perler	
2	Does Socrates deny that the soul is divided? How is this related to Socrates's 'intellectualism'?	<i>Protagoras</i> , Plato	"Ignorance and Akrasia-Denial in the Protagoras", Callard
3	Why does Plato think there are three parts of the soul? What sort of entities are these parts and what are there relations? Is the same theory present in both the <i>Republic</i> and the <i>Timaeus</i> ?	<i>Republic</i> IV (433b-445b); <i>Republic</i> X (595a-603d; 611a-612a); <i>Timaeus</i> (69c-72e)	"Plato's Divided Soul", Shields; 'Are Plato's Soul-Parts Subjects?', Price
4	How does Aristotle divide the soul? How does this relate to his contention that the soul is a 'form' and an 'actuality'? How are these parts united?	<i>De Anima</i> I.1; I.5 (411a24-411b31); II.1-3	"Parts in Aristotle's Definition of Soul", Johansen; "Two Conceptions of Soul in Aristotle", Frey
5	What are Aristotle's criticisms of and arguments for bipartition? How is Aristotle's scientific psychology related to his moral psychology?	<i>De Anima</i> III.9-10; <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.13; VI.1-2	"Aristotle's Criticism of Soul-Division", Vander Waerdt
6	What does Aristotle think is the source of 'akrasia'? Does he think (like Plato) that <i>akrasia</i> requires a divided soul?	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Bk VII; <i>De Anima</i> II.10	"Incontinence and Practical Wisdom in Aristotle", McDowell
7	Do the Stoics deny that the soul has parts (in the Platonic sense)? How does this relate to their theory that emotions or passions are the product of rational judgements?	<i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , "Stoicism, Soul"; "Stoicism, Passions", Long and Sedley	"Walking and Talking: Reflections on Divisions of the Soul in Stoicism", Inwood
8	What is the distinction between <i>Anima</i> (soul) and <i>Animus</i> (mind)? How does Epicurean materialist psychology relate to this distinction?	<i>De Rerum Natura</i> , III, Lucretius	"Epicurean Psychology", Asmis

9	What is the relation between the cosmic World Soul and individual human souls? How does this affect their divisibility?	<i>Enneads</i> , IV.3-5, Plotinus	"Parts of the Soul in Plotinus", Karfik
10	Why does Descartes think the mind lacks parts? How does relate to his distinction between mind and body?	<i>Meditations</i> , III VII, Descartes	"The Faces of Simplicity in Descartes's Soul", Rozemond
11	Why does Spinoza deny a division between desire and mind? How does this relate to Socratic and Stoic intellectualism?	<i>Ethics</i> Bk II (p.48-49); Bk III, Spinoza	"Spinoza on the Unity of Will and Intellect", Schmid
12	How does Kantian sensibility or intuition relate to reason and intellect? Are they distinct faculties (as in Aristotle), or different aspects of a single thing (as in Spinoza)?	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , Immanuel Kant (Selections from the "Transcendental Aesthetic" and "Transcendental Analytic")	"Faculties in Kant and German Idealism" (§1-3), Haag
13	How does Hegel think consciousness is split? Why does he think of this splitting and the changing relationships between the parts of consciousness as a <i>process</i> ?	<i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> , ("Self-Consciousness"; "Lordship and Bondage"; "The Unhappy Consciousness")	"Faculties in Kant and German Idealism" (§4-5), Haag
14	What does Du Bois mean by 'Double Consciousness'? How does this division of the mind reflect social conditions?	<i>The Souls of Black Folks</i> ("Of our Spiritual Strivings", "Of the Faith of the Fathers"), Du Bois	"W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness", Bruce Jr.
15	What is the relationship between the conscious and unconscious activity of the mind? How does this picture (and the picture of psychic health) relate to ancient, especially Platonic, conceptions of the soul?	"The Ego and the Id", Freud	"Freud and the Transformations of Psychology and Philosophy of Mind", Wakfield
16	How does Fodor revive faculty psychology? How does this relate to historical faculty psychology, especially that of Aristotle?	<i>Modularity of the Mind</i> , ("Four Accounts of Mental Structure"), Fodor	"Modularity of Mind", <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> , Robbins
17	What is the distinction between 'massive modularity' and 'Fodorian modularity'? What advantages does massive modularity have?	<i>The Architecture of the Mind</i> ("The Case for Massively Modular Models of Mind"), Carruthers	"Massive Modularity", Samuels
18	What are the central arguments against massive modularity, and modularity as such? Do these arguments apply to previous historical attempts to divide the mind?	"Is the mind really modular?", Prinz	"Faculties and Modularity", Hufendiek and Wild
19	What is the distinction between an additive and a transformative theory of mind? What reasons do we have to be skeptical of an additive theory?	"Additive Theories of Rationality: a Critique", Boyle	<i>Mind and World</i> , McDowell
20	What is Davidson's theory of <i>akrasia</i> and irrationality? How does this relate to Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic conceptions of <i>akrasia</i> ? Does Davidson think <i>akrasia</i> requires a divided mind?	"Paradoxes of Irrationality", Davidson	"Plato, Hare and Davidson on <i>Akrasia</i> ", Taylor