

## THE CRAFTING OF MORTAL SOUL IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

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This paper focuses on the crafting of the mortal type of the human soul in the *Timaeus*. The demiurge entrusts to his divine assistants the forging of this mortal type – consisting of two “parts”: the irascible-aggressive (*thumós*) and the desiderative-appetitive (*epithumía*) – in order to enable the connection of the immortal soul, coming from the first mixture, with the mortal body. The immortal, i.e. divine soul, was sowed and produced by the demiurge himself to animate the world as a whole, and so were the stars. Additionally, auxiliary demiurges make the plants, which also possess a soul (the type which is present in living beings); they serve as food for men, without transgressing the process of transmigration of souls established by the gods.

**Keywords:** Plato – *Timaeus* – Demiurge – Psychology – Cosmology – Anthropology

In the *Timaeus* the human soul emerges from the blend which enabled the constitution of the world soul and, at the same time, consists of a double mortal “part”: the irascible-aggressive (*thumós*) and the desiderative-appetitive (*epithumía*). What precisely provides the character of the soul itself in all its types is its auto-motricity (Brisson 1998, 416),<sup>1</sup> and what differentiates the immortal from the mortal is that the former is generated by the demiurge (41c6-d1), while the latter is generated from the interweaving of the mortal and the immortal (*thanátoi thnetòn prosuphainontes*) (41d1-2) by the auxiliary gods, imitating the action of the demiurge (42e7-43b6).

Plato's psychology, therefore, includes a non-rational domain encompassing a wide variety of impulses, faculties and affections, including some which seem necessary – such as the search for food – or other valuable forms – such as sensation, or experiencing love or affection. This article offers an approach to the composition of the non-rational or mortal soul, from the viewpoint of how it is crafted by those who assist the demiurge.

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the following system of transliteration: eta = *e*; omega = *o*; zeta = *z*; theta = *th*; xi = *x*; phi = *ph*; khi = *kh*; psi = *ps*. Iota subscript is written after the letter (for instance *ei*, but if it is an alpha – which in this case only is a long vowel – with a subscript iota = *ai*), rough breathings are written as *h*, and smooth breathings are not noted. All accents are noted. All translations of Plato's dialogues come from (Cooper, Hutchinson (eds.) 1997).

**1. The soul of the human being.** The human being, just like other living beings, is made from the same model as the universe. We could call him a microcosm, a universe in miniature: he has a soul, whose rational part presents the same two circles as the world soul, and follows the same mathematical propositions; he also has a body, crafted solely from the four elements which form the world body (Karfik 2012, 168-172). However, the human being (microcosm) differs from the world (macrocosm) in two of its properties: (1) the human body is corruptible, i.e. doomed to destruction, in contrast to the world body which is incorruptible; and (2) the human soul passes through different bodies, depending on how far contemplation of the intelligible has been achieved in its previous life, both when it is separate from the body and when it dwells in it (90b-92c). Thus, in general terms, the human being can be considered a compound provisionally linking a human soul and a human body, of male or female gender.

In fact, for Plato a living being is one with a soul, which he defines as the driving force of all spontaneous movement, both physical and psychical. All souls, being immortal, are substitutes for the world soul, and Plato describes how it is constituted in the *Timaeus* 35a-b.<sup>2</sup> However, the beings which have a soul are arranged hierarchically. The gods and demons are at the highest level, and below them are the human beings, both men and women, and then the animals which inhabit the air, dry land and water, and below all these are the plants. Thus, human beings and animals are set apart, differentiated both from the plants, which only have a desiderative-appetitive soul and from the gods, including the earth, the heavenly bodies and the demons, whose body is incorruptible. The human soul thus presents the same structure as that of the gods and the demon, animating the body of man and woman and that of all the animals found in the air, on dry land and in water.

**1. 1. The crafting: the demiurge and his assistants.** The demiurge is the intermediary between the world of intelligible forms and the world of sensible things. As both craftsman and magistrate it is the link between the sensible and the intelligible and its function consists precisely of producing and organizing the sensible, contemplating for this the intelligible models with the Good at the apex. The demiurge is good and as it is without any meanness, it desires that all may become as like to itself as possible. With this aim, it brings all that moves in a chaotic way out of disorder into order, and considers that the latter is better than the former in every way (29d-30a).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The soul is the driving force of motion (35a-b; see also *Phdr.* 245c-d), both orderly physical movements and psychical movements, including all types of knowledge. See, for example, (Grube 1932); see also (Sonderegger 1997).

<sup>3</sup> “The function of the Demiurge is to contribute an element of order to Becoming, because an ordered world will be more ‘like himself’, that is to say, better, than a disorderly one” (Cornford 1937, 37).

The existence of a good demiurge<sup>4</sup> enables an explanation of how the image-model relationship is established between sensible things and intelligible forms, ensuring this good, harmonious relationship. When producing the visible world, the demiurge takes the “perfect living being” (*pantelès zōon*) as its “model” (*parádeigma*) (30c-31b). However, all three – the perfect living being, the demiurge and the model – are one and the same thing. In fact, the demiurge corresponds to the productive-organizational aspect of the perfect living being, just as the model corresponds to the paradigmatic aspect (Baltes 1996, 82, 88-91). The perfect living being comprehends the Ideas of all the living beings in the visible cosmos as visible living beings (39e-40a); but, at the same time, also understands eternity as the model of time (37d) and the intelligible forms of the elements (51b-52a).<sup>5</sup>

The discourse itself which forms the narrative of the *Timaeus* is in fact presented in the form of a living being which depends for its existence on a father, as well as in the form of a product crafted by the demiurge (Brisson 1987, 123). But the demiurge, the craftsman who causes a universal order to emerge from the cosmic disorder (53b1; 75d7), may be omniscient, but not omnipotent, as both the intelligible and the material-spatial (*khóra*) forms exist independently of it. It must face up to necessity (*anágke*), which always resists its attempts. Therefore, the good demiurge is not omnipotent, but is instead reorganizes the elements already present in the whole. The task of the demiurge is to bring order into a previously given material-spatial environment, that of necessity, which in itself tends to disorder and the irregular.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the platonic demiurge is a special type of divinity: after crafting the universe, it abandons its production and retires (42e). No god remains present in the cosmos. Man is left alone in a world in which divine intervention is only manifested in mathematical order.

**1. 2. The assistants of the demiurge.** The demiurge generates the universe following an intelligible model (*parádeigma*), constructing its “form and character (*idéan<sup>7</sup> kai dúnamin<sup>8</sup>*)” (28a8). Nevertheless, the demiurge sees the need to designate its assistants,

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<sup>4</sup> The demiurge is a god and, according to *Republic* (II, 379b), god must be good. Therefore, he cannot be envious (*Phdr.* 247a). On this feeling, see (Brisson 1996).

<sup>5</sup> The visible cosmos, just as all its parts, are copies (*eikónes, mimémata, aphomoiómatta*), 48e, 50c, 51a-b, 92c.

<sup>6</sup> As Fronterotta (2003, 64) points out, the demiurge does not “produce” the intelligible forms, but instead “reproduces” them in the sensible, and in this consists the essence of its activity and function. In fact, we cannot really call him “creator” or “producer”, because we cannot really say that he “creates” or “produces” the sensible things, unless we understand “production” or “creation” in the sense of “giving form to” or “modelling”, following the patterns of the ideal paradigm, a spatial pre-existence material. Its productive activity corresponds more closely to “reproduction”.

<sup>7</sup> It seems that *idéa* has to be understood here in a widest sense, as “that in which is manifested the nature of something”. See (Brisson, in Zamora Calvo 2010, 384, n. 99).

<sup>8</sup> For Plato the *dúnamis* of a thing reveals its nature (*phúsis*), its being (*ousía*). However, this “power” is manifested in two ways. It is an activity (*érgon*), the origin of action or motion, which is discovered by determining what the thing in question acts on (*poieîn, drân*). But it is also a state

the lesser gods, to craft the missing parts, including man, to complete the whole universe (41b-c). Here, even though the generation of man is an intelligible cause, it is on a different ontological level from the cause of the universe as a whole: it is presented as auxiliary (*sunaitía*) (46c-e) to the intelligible principle represented by the demiurge.

“[...] This will assure their mortality, and this whole universe will really be a completed whole. Imitate the power I used in causing you to be. And to the extent that it is fitting for them to possess something that shares our name of ‘immortal’, something described as divine and ruling within those of them who always consent to follow after justice and after you,<sup>9</sup> I shall begin by sowing that seed,<sup>10</sup> and then hand it over to you. [41d] The rest of the task is yours. Weave what is mortal to what is immortal, fashion and beget living things. Give them food, cause them to grow, and when they perish, receive them back again” (41c-41d; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1245).

The assistants carry out their work imitating the action of the demiurge, and generate the human being, a whole unity comprising a soul and a body. In contrast to the world soul, the existence of this body is temporal. In effect, what is generated by the assistant gods is not exempt from aging, unlike the universe (41d-e), whose parts are indissolubly linked (37a). The generation of the human being supposes the existence of time, so that it is understood to exist circumscribed by time. In addition, its parts may dissolve (43a), so that its existence has an end. In this sense, although the higher part of the soul is immortal, as it is formed from that same blend from which the world soul is made (41d), the whole of man is mortal.

Precisely to prevent the distortion of the functions of man’s immortal soul, the assistants of the demiurge construct a mortal soul, enabling continuity between the movements of the body and those of the immortal soul, so that the former do not interfere with the latter. “These they fused with unreasoning sense perception and all-venturing lust,<sup>11</sup> and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul (*anagkaíōs*<sup>12</sup> *tò thnetòn génos sunéthesan*)” (69d4-6; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1271). Nevertheless, on account of the impure blend of man’s immortal soul, it lacks the capacity for order of the world soul, and at best, its intelligence can only become like that of the universe. For this reason, even though the work of the assistants achieves their aim of implanting the immortal soul in the

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(*páthos*), the origin of passivity or resistance (*páskhein*), which is determined by asking how or by what the thing may be affected. See (Brisson, in Zamora Calvo 2010, 384, n. 100).

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps a reminiscence of the pivotal myth of *Phaedrus* (248a1-4). All this speech announces the end of *Timaeus*.

<sup>10</sup> See Plato, *Tim.* 41d-e.

<sup>11</sup> On desire, see Plato, *Phdr.* 237d-e.

<sup>12</sup> Here, *anagkaíōs* refers to the *anagkaía pathémata*, in *Tim.* 69c8-d1. The term agrees with the references to necessity found in the parallel passage of 42a-b. So that the human being can appear and remain in the universe, a mortal type of human soul must be added to the immortal type, enabling the body to defend itself, subsist and reproduce.

body through the generation of a mortal soul, man's soul in its entirety must be educated to be able to (1) restore the motion of the incarnated mortal soul, and (2) strengthen the properties of the *noûs*, to bridge the gap which separates the intelligence of man from the perfection of the world soul.

The world soul is completely rational. In the human soul, in contrast, *noûs* is different from *logistikón*, since "it is impossible for anything to come to possess intelligence apart from soul" (30b3; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1236). The *noûs* is a faculty, not a part of the soul; or more exactly, it is the "actualization" of the faculty of knowledge, as *noûs* cannot be possessed, but only acquired. What is possessed is the *logistikón*, but the *noûs* is "born" or "generated" (*Rep.* VI, 490b5), when the rational part (*logistikón*) of the soul enters into contact with the true objects of knowledge which can only be captured by it.

The three "parts" (*mére*) of the soul are, at one and the same time, three "types" (*eíde*) of soul, which Plato calls respectively: *tò logistikón*, *tò thumoeidés* and *tò epithumetikón*.<sup>13</sup> But intelligence is not identified with the rational part of the soul. In fact, intelligence may emerge from its desire for truth and being, but is not identified with it. Thus, the soul does not possess intelligence all at once, but acquires it. According to Delcomminette (2014, 55-63), the *noûs* in Plato is not innate, but is generated by the soul with education. In contrast to the traditional interpretation, intelligence cannot be confused with a part of the soul, nor with a faculty, but instead is identified with the activity of knowledge as a faculty of thought, so that it is only present when it is known, i.e. when it is exercised or used.<sup>14</sup>

**2. The non-rational soul: the mortal type.** In the *Timaeus*, *thumós* and *epithumetikón* together compose what is called the "mortal" part of the soul, which seems to perish at the same time as the body. However, in the *Phaedrus* (245c5-246a4) the soul, although discarnate, appears as an immortal compound, since the three functions of the soul together form the winged chariot in the second discourse of Socrates.

The irascible-aggressive part (*thumós*) together with the desiderative-appetitive part (*epithumía*), form the "mortal" (*thnetós*) type of soul.<sup>15</sup> The assistant gods craft the mortal types of the soul to be able to connect the immortal soul, resulting from the first blend, with the mortal body. This "mortal" part is thus a kind of appendage of the immortal soul resulting from the first blend. Thus, although the human soul is composed of mortal and

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<sup>13</sup> As expressed in the definitions in the *Phaedrus* 246c4 and in *Laws* X, 895d4, the three parts of the soul are types of automotive movements differentiated by how they function and by the natural object of their desire. By the standards of this object they evaluate all the other movements (*Leg.* X, 896a1-2, b3-14; X, 897a1-4; *Phdr.* 245c9, d7). As the soul itself is a movement, it is the origin of all other movements (Delcomminette 2008, 2-3).

<sup>14</sup> The relationship we establish between the education programme found in the *Republic* and the capacities of the immortal soul is based on the analysis of the cognitive skills developed by mathematical sciences. For this analysis, see (Miller 1999).

<sup>15</sup> See Plato, *Tim.* 41d1, 61c7-8, 65a5, 69c8, 69d5, 69e1, 69e4, 72d4, 73b4, 73d3.

immortal parts, within a cosmological and anthropological context as described in the *Timaeus*, its structure continues to be tripartite (Renaut 2014, 235).

The mortal soul is made to move the body of mortal living beings, but “logically” it post-dates the construction of the body (Pradeau 2008, 51-66), although in the narrative of the *Timaeus* it is mentioned before the crafting of the mortal body by the gods. In fact, the mortal soul is made as an “addendum” to the immortal soul, an addition needed for incarnation in a mortal body. However, the soul of the mortal living being is the product of a series of adjustments which aim to connect as strongly as possible the immortal soul to its body subjected to transformation.

For J. V. Robinson (1990, 108-110), the tripartite soul of the *Timaeus* shares a derived immortality, but not essentially: i.e. the “mortal” parts – *thumós* and *epithumetikón* – do not perish when death occurs, understood as the separation of the soul from the body. If they were to perish, these two “mortal parts” of the soul would in fact be “physical places”, and so linked to the body, and would be fused with it. The soul is always incarnate or, at least, is always defined from this perspective, since it does not escape the cycle of reincarnation (41b-d).

Nevertheless, the soul does not conserve the memory of the body it formerly dwelt in. Therefore, the “mortal” parts are so called not on account of themselves, but because they are inactive (Brisson 2011, 63-67). The assistant gods do not make an individual mortal soul in each reincarnation. The soul conserves the structure and quality it has acquired during its previous life (91e-92a).

**2. 1. The parts or types of the soul.** The human soul comes from the fusion which enabled the making of the world soul and, at the same time, is formed by a double mortal “part”: the irascible-aggressive (*thumós*) and the desiderative-appetitive (*epithumía*). The primacy of the soul over the body is logical and ontological. The demiurge trusts the mortal type of human soul to his divine assistants (41c). Previously, the demiurge had sown and crafted the immortal portion, i.e. the divine soul which allowed him to breathe life into the world as a whole (34a-40d), and also into the stars (41d). The gods later make use of this immortal material, proceeding from an altered blend, when they place the “tripartite” soul in the human body (69d-72e).

The soul has a twofold nature, and is at the same time mortal and immortal (42a), allowing man access through the soul to the sensible and the intelligible, ingredients of the fusion which forms psychic nature. But man’s immortal soul is a blend of the “remains” (*hupóloipa*) (41d5-6) of the world soul. However, in contrast to the world soul (34c), the soul of man does not predate the body at birth (69d-72e).

The differentiation of the three types of soul in the *Timaeus* corresponds to the psychology put forward in the *Republic* (IV, 439e-444d). Timaeus distinguishes between the three types of soul when talking about the composition of the body and the incarnation of the human soul. In both dialogues, the three types are arranged in a fairly similar way: the rational part governs the other two irrational parts and in particular uses the irascible-aggressive part (*thumós*), situated in the heart, to dominate the desiderative-appetitive part

(*epithumia*), located in the belly. But in the *Timaeus* the soul is not described in exactly the same way as in the *Republic*: in the *Timaeus* the three parts do not have the same nature, so that they are not three parts of the same soul, as is the case in the *Republic*, where the desiderative, the irascible and the rational elements all belong to the same human soul.

Therefore, in the *Timaeus*, the human soul is not divided or partitioned. Man consists of various types of the same soul, as a mortal type is added to the immortal (89e). By using the distinction between different types of soul, Plato assigns the motor and cognitive function exclusively to the immortal type. The two mortal types, auxiliaries of the immortal, do not direct themselves or move of their own accord, but only under the direction and hegemony of the pedagogical, rational part (34c, 41c, 89d). This is in parallel to the crafting activities carried out by the assistants of the demiurge, who “imitate” the work of their father and predecessor, following the instructions transmitted to them (Brisson 1997, 314; 1999, 147-176).

The *thumós* is the non-rational part of the soul which acts as an intermediary between the incarnate and the rational part, so that reason subjects the body to its orders. In the human being the rational part of the soul serves as the beginning or end of all the processes where sensation intervenes (Brisson 1997, 314; 1999, 147-176). Thus, the irascible-aggressive part acts as an intermediary between the soul, insofar as it is in a body, whose functions achieve an aim which is necessarily good; and the body, insofar as it is animated by a soul which must produce good movements.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the desiderative-appetitive part (*epithumetikón*), the *thumós* may place the body at the disposal of the rational soul, i.e. it can transmit “quasi-corporal energy” to an exclusively “rational movement” (Renaut 2014, 240-241). This means that it can be considered as an “interface” between the discarnate and the incarnate soul, enabling the soul to order its own movements in accordance with reason.

**2. 2. Tripartite anatomy.** The human soul is described as tripartite, in a clear reference to the same political analogy in the *Republic*. The three parts of the soul are found in the head, in the breast and in the belly, respectively. However, there are some relevant differences between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*: reason is the only part of the soul which survives and is immortal; and the composition of this part of the soul, whether referring to the reason which constitutes the whole world soul, or to the rational part of the human soul, is described as being to some extent *material*. Therefore, in terms of the physical dialogue there is a certain shift in viewpoint compared with earlier writings: the immortal life of the rational soul is not considered so much as an eternal immaterial existence which occurs in the intelligible forms, but rather as a material existence with the continuous animation of the stars and the planets in space and time.

Thus, in the *Timaeus* Plato makes a connection between two different concepts of the soul, both equally plausible – one material and the other immaterial – presented for the first time in the *Phaedo*. The demiurge crafts the soul intentionally, so that it has: (1) a

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<sup>16</sup> See Plato, *Leg.* X, 896d5-897d2; see (Carone 2005, 172-188); see also (Renaut 2014, 221).

type of “intermediate” reality between the absolute reality of the transcendent intelligible forms and the semi-reality of the sensible things located in space and time; and (2) “intermediate” configurations of the characteristics of the Same and of the Other which allow us to formulate epistemological judgements. The status of the rational soul is therefore “amphibious”, since it is akin to Plato’s two spheres of the intelligible and the sensible, while at the same time it is able to comprehend both: in the case of the world of intelligible forms, this comprehension is shown in the level of knowledge (*epistḗmē*), and in the case of the sensible, spatial-temporal world, in the level of true opinion (*dóxa alēthés*).

In the beginning, the demiurge crafts all the souls in the same way (41e). However, the demiurge also establishes the difference between man and woman from the start (90e-91a; 41e-42a). The first generation of men, produced by the demiurge and his divine assistants, was exclusively masculine. As these men died and were reincarnated, those who had lived unrighteously were reincarnated as women, and those who lived in greater or lesser degrees of ignorance were reincarnated in different species of birds or animals.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato states that women are physically not as strong as men, “since humans have a twofold nature, the superior kind (*kreítton*)<sup>17</sup> should be such as would from then on be called ‘man’ (*anér*)” (42a; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1245).<sup>18</sup> The souls of women tend towards an unrighteous, specifically cowardly, life.

“According to our likely account, all male-born humans (*tôn genoménōn andrôn*)<sup>19</sup> who lived lives of cowardice or injustice were reborn in the second generation as women (*gunaíkes*). And this explains why at that time the gods fashioned the desire for sexual union, by constructing one ensouled living thing in us as well as another one in women” (90e-91a; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1289).<sup>20</sup>

In this physical dialogue there is therefore a “natural” difference between the human souls of men and women, in proportion to the characteristic difference in their physical strength and this implies the natural moral superiority of men. Plato considers women as the creatures of moral degradation, disposed to serve as imprisonment for those men who deserve to be punished for their cowardice (*Leg.* VI, 780e-781d; XII, 944d-e). Thus, the appropriate punishment for the soul of a man who has shown himself morally blameworthy

<sup>17</sup> The comparative *kreítton* may also refer to a greater moral goodness in men.

<sup>18</sup> Plato’s idea that “women are physically not as strong as men” (*Tim.* 42a) was also expressed in *Republic* (V, 455d9-e2): “Women share by nature in every way of life just as men do, but in all of them women are weaker (*asthénésteron*) than men.” (Trans. Grube 1997, 1083). According to Annas’ commentary to this passage (1981, 183), “even under ideal conditions women are not as good as men.” However, *asthénéia* does not mean an inferiority with reference to their competences – women would always be inferior because of their nature and men better all over –, but just a physiological weakness, in the sense that they get tired first.

<sup>19</sup> Although the first human beings do not present sexual differences, in this passage of the *Timaeus* Plato clearly alludes to “men”.

<sup>20</sup> See Plato, *Tim.* 42b.



thy is to suffer an even greater moral degradation: reincarnation in the body of a woman, i.e. a creature of an intrinsically lower moral value than his own (Robinson 1999, 85-86).

**3. Plants and their soul.** To contribute to their survival, the gods made the plants, a new type of living being, with a body and soul. The nature of their soul is related to the world soul (35a-b), to the souls of human beings and animals (41d). However this is not the work of the demiurge, but of his assistants, so that the soul they make is mortal, since as we have already seen, the task of these assistants is to deal with what is mortal (69c-d).

“So all the parts, all the limbs of the mortal living thing came to constitute a natural whole. [77a] Of necessity, however, it came about that he lived his life surrounded by fire and air, which caused him to waste away and be depleted, and so to perish. The gods, therefore, devised something to protect him. They made another mixture and caused another nature to grow, one congenial to our human nature<sup>21</sup> though endowed with other features and other sensations, so as to be a different living thing. [...] [77b]. And in fact, what we are talking about now partakes of the third type of soul, the type that our account has situated between the midriff and the navel. This type is totally devoid of opinion, reasoning or understanding, though it does share in sensation, pleasant and painful, and desires<sup>22</sup>” (76e-77b; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1277).

After mentioning the five species of living beings which dwell in the universe, the gods related to fire, human beings – men or women –, birds of the air, animals which walk or crawl on the earth and animals which live in the waters, Plato alludes to the origin of plants which he links to the third type of soul, the desiderative-appetitive soul. However, there is inversion between human beings and plants: the former have a divine root, the latter have an earthly one (90a5-7). As Skemp (1947, 55) points out, the animals have not yet been created, so that plants and animals cannot be compared (77a4-5).

Plants have some type of sensation (77a4-5), which may be what all bodies have, just because they are bodies (64a2-3): the same sensation, centred on pain and pleasure which corresponds to the third type of soul (77b5-6: *hoi dóxes mèn logismoû te kai nou métēstin tò medén, aisthéseos dè hedeias kai algeinês metà epithumiôn*). To avoid any contradiction with this passage, where it is said that the *epithumetikón* cannot have *dóxa*, and Book X of *Republic* (602c7-603a8),<sup>23</sup> where Plato clearly attributes *dóxa* to all the parts of the

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<sup>21</sup> Thus plants are related to human beings, because their body is made of the four elements and because their soul corresponds to the lowest part of the human soul: on the meaning of *suggenê*, see *apò suggenôn* (80d) and *tò suggenés* (81a, b).

<sup>22</sup> What is quite normal, insofar as this passage seems to point out that the soul of plants is a substitute of the third part of the human soul.

<sup>23</sup> “[...] Now, the part that puts its trust in measurement and calculation is the best part of the soul. / Of course. / Therefore, the part that opposes it is one of the inferior parts in us. / Necessarily. / This, then, is what I wanted to get agreement about when I said that painting and imitation as a whole produce work that is far from the truth, namely, that imitation really consorts with a part of us that is far from

soul, including the *epithumetikón*, Delcomminette (2014, 57, n. 2) points out that there is nothing to prevent us from relating *logismós* with *dóxa*, interpreting that the desiderative-appetitive type does not participate in the *dóxa* of “reasoning”, i.e. the *dóxa* typical of *logistikón*. However, if we observe the phytological context of this passage of the *Timaeus*, the *epithumetikón* of the plants cannot have *dóxa*, which is not necessarily the case for human beings. As they have neither *noûs*, nor *dóxa*, nor *logismós*, the plants do not themselves have motion and are rooted in one place, in contrast to human beings (77c3-5).

The living being which results from implanting a mortal type soul in a body must serve as man’s nourishment. But the soul of plants must have an affinity (*suggenê*) with that of human beings as only like can act upon or be understood by like. Thus, plants are a new type of living being at the service of man. Whether wild, or specially cultivated, plants can be used as human food without men transgressing the transmigration process of souls established by the gods.

In the *Timaeus* Plato justifies the existence of plants by the human body’s need to feed itself to maintain its existence, by consuming beings with a soul similar to its own, but lacking any intelligence. Carpenter (2010, 283-286, 300) asks whether plants with a soul which can perceive and desire are also endowed in the *Timaeus* with *noûs*. The reply shows that the perception and desires of plants are not administered by their own intelligence, but by the intellect which guarantees the world order, to control and order need (Skemp 1947, 54). However, the cosmic intelligence directs all that is found in the world: animals, plants, humans and stones. On the other hand, sensation consists of the mechanical transmission of movements from the object to the body of the subject who perceives it (Brisson 1999, 147-170). Nevertheless, there is no real sensation until the information is communicated to the highest, rational part of the soul, enabling a true understanding what may be the object of discourse.

Plants experience pleasure and pain, and therefore must have desires. But these desires only refer to food and growth, and since the plants cannot themselves move to satisfy these desires, this occurs at a very primitive level. A plant is a living being, in so far as it is endowed with non-obligatory motion, originating in a soul. However, this movement presents two primordial differences compared with the motion of animals: (1) Sensation and desire do not mean the same in an animal as in a plant. The soul here lacks any sort of intelligence or opinion. It only experiences a sensation of pleasure or pain linked to appetite, which connects it to the third part (*epithumetikón*) of the human soul. But in a plant, sensation is reduced to a mechanical transmission of movements which do not reach the higher part of the soul, the intelligence (*noûs*). Similarly, plants cannot satisfy their own appetites, as they cannot move. (2) The soul lacks all local movement. Therefore, the living being which is a plant is at one and the same time akin to, and different from, man and animal.

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reason, and the result of their being friends and companions is neither sound nor true.” (Trans. Grube 1997, 1207).

Thus, the only way man can ensure his survival, without committing an automatic act of cannibalism every time he ingests food, is to feed on a type of living being which has no intelligence, i.e. plants. Man would be guilty of cannibalism if he fed on a living being endowed with intelligence, even if this living being did not make use of this higher faculty. However, this does not happen in the case of plants, which have souls, but no intelligence. The decomposition of plants in the interior of the human body enables the formation of the blood,<sup>24</sup> which feeds the rest of the tissues. The plants therefore allow the human body to reconstitute itself without having to consume living beings endowed with intelligence. In fact, in contrast to the world body, the human body can be destroyed by external aggression, deriving from fire and air. As a result, Plato considers that man must be vegetarian.<sup>25</sup>

**Conclusions.** In the *Timaeus* we find respect and admiration for the animal kingdom where even the humblest representatives display intellect, perhaps imperceptibly. Plants form part of the third type of soul found in living beings. But in man this third, non-rational species of soul cannot be separated, in contrast to the plants, where it is found completely dissociated from the irascible-aggressive part (*thumós*) and especially from the rational part (*noûs*) and where sensation is reduced to touch.

Plato justifies the existence of plants because the human body needs to reconstitute itself to continue to subsist. Consuming beings endowed with a soul, such as plants, but completely lacking in intelligence, guarantees this subsistence. Precisely since the plants have a soul without intelligence, humanity can thus avoid cannibalism, by not eating beings endowed with intelligence, even though they do not use this superior faculty. Vegetarianism resolves the problem of how human beings can feed themselves without resorting to cannibalism (Dombrowski 1984).

The assistant demiurges make the plants to be able to preserve the place of man in the hierarchy of living beings, between the gods and the animals. In the image developed in the *Timaeus*, man is considered as a plant, with the head, as the seat of intelligence linking him to the divinity, seen as the root. In this way, man is a heavenly plant (90a) and by likening himself to the object of his intellection in accordance with the original nature, reaches the “goal: that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore” (90d; trans. Zeyl 1997, 1289). Happiness is within man’s reach, as long as he knows how to harmonize the movements of his body and soul, imitating the form of the universe (88c; 47c), caring for the divine part and keeping in good order the demon which lives in him (90c), by striving for the love of knowledge and true thoughts (90b).

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<sup>24</sup> The blood is the agent that transmits food through the body – the nutritive function – and is also responsible for transferring sensible information to the soul – the transmitting function – (42e-43c). Its red colour comes from fire, which decomposes the foods, both liquid and solid, extracted exclusively from plants.

<sup>25</sup> On this point, see (Brisson 2004, 313-319). In the scheme explained by Plato in the *Timaeus*, this use of plants can be interpreted as an ethical imperative (Johansen 2004, 17), since the world is ordered *prós tò béliston* (29e-30a).

But in the case of man, divine perfection is manifested in a way which is neither necessary nor obligatory. Man is responsible for his choices and can only achieve happiness if he manages to throw off the bonds which link him to the *khóra*, where evil and the amorphous are found. Therefore, the assimilation of man to the divine is only partial and virtual; to achieve it he must voluntarily liken himself to the intelligible. The assistant demiurges imitate what was made by the first god, but only a part of earth dwellers may, as far as possible (*katà tò dúnaton*), imitate the cosmic being. To do this, a possible part of the divine harmony must be implanted in the mortal part of the human soul. Thus, the *télos* of human life arranged according to philosophy is identified with the assimilation to the divine (*homoiósis theoi*) of the *Theaetetus* (176a7-b2). But this is not just configuring life from an epistemological exercise with the divine (28a2), but instead continuing to take care of what is divine in man, which implies imitation of what is divine in the world:<sup>26</sup> this care, therefore, concerns both the mortal and the immortal parts of the soul, and there must be harmony between them (88b-c).

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<sup>26</sup> The physiology explained in the *Timaeus* is a naturalist starting point for Platonic psychology to reach the same ethical aim (Taylor 1928, 496). For Sedley (1997, 327-329), Aristotle, in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, maintains the same ethical requirement as in the *Timaeus*; see also his later contribution on the same topic, (Sedley 1999, 309-310), and (Cano 2012, 39-40).

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