

Francesco Fronterotta (Rom): Psychophysiology in the *Timaeus*

Abstract

The problem of the status of the individual soul and of its relationship with the mortal body – i.e. the *anthropological* problem, since that relationship concerns first and foremost human beings – has arguably attracted in recent Plato scholarship much less attention than other issues and topics in the *Timaeus* or other dialogues. According to the standard interpretation, the human soul derives from the union of an immortal principle, akin to the world soul and produced by the demiurge (41c-d), and a mortal principle, species (eidos) or kind (genos), whose origin and nature are much more obscure. On this reading, the mortal principle is produced by the demiurge's helpers (41a-c), who “engendered” and “formed” it in the body, and comprises an irascible or spirited and a appetitive or desiring part.

My main claim here is that the mortal species of the soul are the psycho-physiological reactions arising spontaneously in the body and then affecting the immortal soul when it descends or is implanted in the body. Therefore, I deny that there is a *partition* of the individual soul in the *Timaeus*, since two of the three alleged parts of the soul, i.e. the inferior and mortal ones, the spirited and the desiring, are not “produced” or “engendered” as such, and therefore lack any substantial autonomy. Rather, they are to be identified with the influxes which arise in the body when the immortal soul enters it and which “are added” to the soul, characterizing it in the manifold functions it has to fulfill while in the body.