

THE RATIONAL SOUL AS THE CAUSE OF UNIFICATION IN THE TRIPARTITE SOUL

Sylvia Kocięda

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Approved by:

C.D.C Reeve

Alan Nelson

Mariska Leunissen

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ABSTRACT

Sylvia Kocięda: The Rational Soul As The Cause of Unification In The Tripartite Soul
(Under the direction of C.D.C Reeve)

Discussions regarding unity in the Platonic tripartite soul generally surround the issue of achieving virtue. However, there must exist some type of fundamental, unearned unity between the parts of the soul prior to achieving virtue which affords the agent meaningful interactions between the three soul-parts and the unity of consciousness. In this paper, I argue that the possession of the rational soul warrants unification of the pre-virtuous soul since the function of reason is precisely to be responsible for the organization and intelligibility of parts. In view of this, I suggest that the rational soul itself is the basis for the unearned unity of the soul. My view is developed against the standing view by Eric Brown in which unearned unification is achieved by the causal relationship between the three soul-parts, which makes the soul-parts tend toward agreement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Puzzle of the Unearned Unity of the Soul.....	3
3. The Rational Soul's Role in Unearned Unification.....	9
4. Conclusion.....	35
REFERENCES.....	37

Introduction

Discussions regarding unity in the Platonic tripartite soul generally surround the issue of achieving virtue. According to Plato, becoming a virtuous agent entails organizing the three parts of the soul- reason, spirit, and appetite- such that they coexist in harmony by way of a specific process; namely, the latter two parts of the soul- spirit and appetite- must agree to be ruled by the higher, rational soul. However, as Eric Brown argues in a recent article, there must exist some type of fundamental unity between the parts of the soul prior to achieving virtuous harmony, which affords the agent i) meaningful interactions between the three parts of the soul and ii) unity of consciousness in the first place. In other words, one need not be a virtuous agent to possess one, complex soul (comprised of three parts) whose experiences occur in a single stream of conscious experience.¹ It is not as if the three parts of the soul function independently of one another with the agent experiencing three separate sites of consciousness. Rather, the parts constitute a “whole soul.” Brown refers to this issue as a “puzzle” regarding the “unearned unity of the soul” that arises for Plato, one that has not received sufficient attention in Plato scholarship. According to Brown, this is a significant issue that must be addressed in order to better understand Platonic psychology and, more importantly, why it is that the rational soul seems to bear the responsibility of vicious actions caused by the other two parts of the soul, particularly in the afterlife.

¹ Note that Brown does not supply an answer for how it is that we possess a singular site of consciousness. See Brown (1989). In my paper, I will be collapsing the issues of the unearned unity of the parts and the unification of consciousness into one issue.

In this paper, I question whether the issue of the unearned unity of the soul is, in fact, a puzzle with which Plato must contend, as Brown presumes. I argue that Plato explicitly holds that the possession of the rational soul warrants unification of the pre-virtuous soul since the function of reason is precisely to be responsible for the organization –and intelligibility- of *parts*. In other words, the rational soul operates to bring about order and its mere presence in the human (and animal) soul guarantees meaningful interaction among parts and a singular conscious experience. In fact, theoretically, virtuous harmony could not be achieved if the rational soul failed to possess this capacity. In view of this, I suggest that the rational soul *itself* is the basis for the fundamental unity of the complex soul, even prior to acquiring virtue. While virtue relies on the stability of the right proportion of forces between the soul parts as delegated by reason (or harmony), mere unity itself simply relies on the presence of the rational soul.

To argue for this view, I first cover what Brown perceives to be the puzzle of unearned unity in the soul and its implications for moral responsibility, and I briefly cover his suggestion to dissolve the puzzle. Brown relies on two principles he attributes to Plato, the hydraulic and hegemonic principles, to highlight a *causal* relationship between the three soul parts; he believes the causal relationship, which makes the soul-parts tend toward agreement, accounts for the unity of soul. In the next section, I raise issues with Brown's solution, particularly with his construal of causation in the soul. I show that such a position is problematic given the ontological priority of the rational part in relation to the lower parts of the soul, which undermines its possibility of being affected by the lower parts of the soul. In other words, I argue that, for Plato, the rational soul always qualifies as the primary cause and, as such, we must understand any interactions of the soul parts as effects of rational activity. I make Plato's account of vision a central feature of the section to highlight the role of the rational soul as the primary cause responsible even for

simple sensory experiences (like vision) and I use this example to illustrate the way in which the rational soul makes intelligible that which occurs in the other parts of the soul. According to this interpretation, consciousness is afforded only by the activity of the rational part of the soul. Thus, there is no problem in accounting for the interaction of the soul parts or the “oneness” of the soul since the rational soul is the source of articulation and cognition for these parts and there is no problem in accounting for the unity of consciousness since the parts of the soul are not unified to make for one consciousness- rather, there is only one site of consciousness to begin with. In the end of the section, I follow Brown’s lead by showing how my interpretation bears on the issue of moral responsibility of the rational soul.

Puzzle of the Unearned Unity of the Soul

In “The unity of the soul in Plato’s *Republic*,” Brown seeks to explain how separate sources of psychological activity (the three parts of soul) comprise a single, whole soul prior to acquiring virtue. This question is pressing in two different respects: first, if unification is a feature that is present only in virtuous souls, then Plato “cannot account for the felt unity of consciousness.” Agents who lack virtue would simply possess three disparate souls that fail to interact in any meaningful way, resulting in something like the possession of three independent souls. He notes the many instances in which Socrates refers to both the “plurality and the unity” of the human soul, suggesting that Plato certainly emphasizes the fundamental unity of the soul prior to virtue, though Socrates never offers an explicit account of how both plurality and unity can be the case. But an account is needed to explain what makes “elements into parts of a whole” in order to make sense of the complex soul being *one* soul and to subsequently offer hints as to how a single stream of consciousness is made possible despite the plurality of psychological sources of activity.

Second, the question is pressing because “if Plato cannot explain the unity of the soul, then he cannot treat the whole soul as the locus of moral responsibility” (Brown 54). This is an especially important concern since the rational soul bears the effects of the embodied, complex soul in the afterlife,² which affects the mode of reincarnation in the next life, and many times the actions of the embodied, complex soul are spurred by desires residing in spirit or appetite, not in reason. Brown holds that “holding the rational part responsible for such actions seems to blame an innocent bystander or, worse, a victim. So it is better to infer from Socrates’ manner of speaking that the *whole* soul is responsible. This can accommodate the hypothesis that only the rational part of the soul survives death” (Brown 55). Thus, an account of what makes the parts of soul one complex whole is necessary to understand Plato’s views on moral responsibility.

Brown looks to Plato’s remarks on other complex wholes to generate a fresh approach to unity.³ He appeals to examples that involve ships, speeches and the human body and he does so with an eye on establishing the distinction between perfect unity and the minimum amount of unity necessary for a thing to qualify as a ship (or speech, body, etc.) in order to establish degrees of unification. In looking at these examples, Brown finds that “[something] is made a whole by the special arrangement of its parts” and “[in the *Gorgias*], Socrates maintains that *every* craft, and not just tragedy and oratory, confers special organization on its products. . . and he suggests that the same kind of order or organization is manifest in the natural world” (Brown 66). For instance, take Plato’s example of a ship. A certain sort of organization of parts must take place for something to qualify as a ship; that is, there is some minimum threshold under

² Or, at least this is the traditional view. This is a special concern since the state of the soul in the afterlife determines the next mode of life in reincarnation.

³ Other approaches looked for unity in the embodiment of soul, which Brown rejects since the unity of soul would be based on an *extrinsic* property. See, Brown, 63ff.

which a certain arrangement of parts just simply does not meet the criteria for being a ship. This threshold marks the “suitable” organization of diverse elements “in relation to each other and in relation to the whole that they constitute” (Brown 66).

In addition, the degree of organization and arrangement of the parts track the degree of functionality of the entity. For the ship to qualify as ‘ship’, it must be seaworthy, which entails that there must be a suitable organization of its parts such that it can successfully go out to sea. If the organization and arrangement of its parts are perfect, then the function of the ship will be perfect. On the other hand, if the organization and arrangement of its parts are closer to the lower threshold, then the function of the ship will be less than perfect. If the organization and arrangement of its parts are unsuitable, or does not at least meet the lower threshold, it does not qualify as a ship. Likewise, “Socrates assumes both that there is a correlation between psychological order (that is, justice) and psychological functioning (that is, living) and that each of these features comes in degrees” (Brown 68). That means that if a soul is to perform its function, it requires at least the minimum amount of justice. Brown’s position can be summarized with the following passage:

“The soul’s unity is a function of the order or harmony of its parts. The parts’ causal relations with each other produce this order or harmony: the more the parts do what they are supposed to do, as parts, the more the soul enjoys unity. On this view, Socrates can and does say that the soul’s unity takes the specific form of agreement, since agreement is the harmony or order of minded things. And on this view, the soul can perform vital activities- that is, its function of living- with only minimal agreement and order, since it requires perfect agreement and order only for excellent or virtuous activities. (That is the distinction between unearned and earned unity)” (Brown 67).

I would like to take the time to examine this passage more fully, as it articulates all of the elements of Brown’s view in dissolving the stated puzzle. The features of his view on which I will focus each in turn are i) unification as a function of order or harmony, ii) causal relations

between the parts producing order or harmony, and iii) unification as agreement between minded things.

The first element of Brown's view- unification as a function of order or harmony- specifies the continuum along which increasing degrees of unification indicate "earned" unity, or virtue. That is, at the lower end of the continuum, there exists the minimum amount of order or harmony for the three soul-parts to qualify as one, complex soul of an agent. There has to be at least *some* order, which indicates *some* unity, if the soul is to be a whole. This minimal structure or minimum amount of unity is required simply for living (Brown 70). At the highest end of the continuum, on the other hand, there exists the maximum amount of order or harmony, which is required to not simply live, but to *live well*. This type of unification of soul-parts is "earned" because, unlike the minimal structure of unity that exists *naturally* in living beings in virtue of their merely being alive, the maximum structure of unity is a "perfect fulfillment" of unification- i.e., harmony- brought on by the activity and effort of the agent herself. Thus, for Brown, one way to regard the distinction between unearned and earned unity lies in the degree of order with the lowest degree of order being naturally constituted (to serve as the animating force of life) and increasing degrees of order being arranged by conscious, rational activity.⁴

The second feature of Brown's view attributes to Plato commitments concerning causal relations between the soul-parts. According to Brown, order or harmony present among soul parts to constitute a single, complex whole can be attributed to a particular causal relationship in the interaction between soul parts. On this view, the structural order explored in the prior discussion above of the first feature in Brown's view is produced by causal relations between the soul parts and it is *this* that "makes the three psychological elements parts of a whole" (Brown

⁴ Of course, this type of *complex* soul is to animate *complex* life. Plants are also alive but possess only appetitive souls.

68). Brown spells out two causal principles to make clear these relations (he suggests there are probably others, though they are not relevant to the current puzzle): first is “Plato’s hydraulic principle of psychology” (Brown 68). This principle specifies that in cases where one soul-part grows stronger the others grow weaker. He quotes Socrates to support this principle: “When someone’s desires incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened for others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another channel” (Brown 68). Brown likens this “stream” to something like a single “hydraulic power” that operates within the complex soul; when one part is amplified, the hydraulic power is funneled in the direction of the desires of that part, which causes the other parts to diminish in power. And he emphasizes that this is indicative of *one* complex soul and that it is indeed unified: “this plainly applies to different soul-parts *within the same soul*. If my spirited desires grow stronger, my rational and appetitive ones grow weaker” (Brown 68). So, that the causal relations, which spell out the degree of order or harmony in the soul, occur only between the soul-parts of *this* particular agent implies that those soul-parts are unified.

The second principle is “Plato’s principle of psychological hegemony,” which is closely related to the first principle.⁵ This principle provides an explanation for what it is to be governed by a particular soul-part. As Brown explains it, “to be ruled by a soul-part is to take the ends of that soul-part to be one’s ends generally” and he further clarifies that being ruled by a particular soul-part is just “explaining what it is for the rational part of the soul to be ruled” (Brown 69). Namely, since it is the rational soul-part that measures and calculates, if the appetite rules this soul-part, then reason will calculate in terms of how to attain the goods appetite desires (and

⁵ “The two causal principles are related. For instance, a rational part can come to accept that honor or victory is what is good only if it is too weak to grasp what really is good, but it will be too weak if the spirit has taken much of the soul’s “hydraulic power” away from reason” (Brown 69).

likewise in the case of spirit and the desires spirit wishes to fulfill if spirit rules the rational soul-part). In this way, then, “my soul-parts are parts of one psychological system, one soul. They are parts of one soul because they are parts of an orderly causal structure” (Brown 70).

The final feature of Brown’s position concerns the soul’s unity “tak[ing] the specific form of agreement, since agreement is the harmony or order of minded things.” It is this specific feature that will lend itself most directly to the issue of the whole soul bearing the responsibility of vicious actions incurred during embodiment. The orderly causal structure present in every soul “tends toward agreement,” which, for Brown, is another way to explain how the three soul-parts constitute one soul (Brown 70). In the virtuous soul, this “tendency” is fulfilled perfectly: all of the soul-parts agree to do exactly what it is that they are supposed to do. In the less than virtuous soul and even in corrupt souls, the tendency to agree is present. In what does this “tendency” consist? Brown clarifies when he notes that the soul “tends to organize and unify itself” and that the causal principles discussed above explain how it is that the soul can fulfill this tendency. For instance, there is “a tendency for the rational part to agree with appetite about what is good and a tendency for the spirited part to find some honor in what appetite pursues” (Brown 70). Brown clarifies further when he draws our attention to Socrates’ example of a band of robbers who would be “unable to achieve an unjust purpose if its members were unjust toward one each other” (Brown 68). So, even in the most corrupt soul, there must be some tendency towards agreement between its parts if the agent is to function at all.

Due to this final feature of Brown’s view, Brown holds that the interaction between the soul-parts mirror a typical account of collective agency and that this explains how the whole, complex soul is accountable for actions committed by the agent during embodiment. If the soul-

parts are collectively responsible for embodied actions, then the rational part can fairly bear responsibility for embodied actions when it enters the afterlife:

“When one part of the soul does something, the others are causally implicated in a structure that fosters agreement. At the least, each of the others could have been a more powerful obstacle. So it would not be inappropriate to hold the rational part alone responsible in the afterlife for what the other parts had done during embodied life” (Brown 70).

Brown, then, is able to dissolve the puzzle of the plural but united complex soul and addresses the issue of the moral responsibility of the rational soul using the three features of his view, especially the third. Nevertheless, he admits that he is not able to provide a satisfactory answer for how it is that agents experience a single stream of consciousness given his view.

In the next section, I raise serious issues with Brown’s solution to the puzzle of the unearned unity in the soul. In doing so, I generate a competing account, which undermines Brown’s causal principles. I rely heavily on the *Timaeus* as it is the most explicit text to engage the issue of causation as well as the relationship between the three parts of the soul, though I also back up these claims by referring to other texts. In laying out my competing view, I aim to show why Brown’s answer to the issue of moral responsibility is highly dissatisfying and I go on to offer an answer as to why the rational part is the *only* part of soul morally responsible for the actions of the embodied agent. An additional advantage of my view is that it addresses and explains the issue of unity of consciousness.

The Rational Soul’s Role in Unearned Unification

In this section, I attempt to address the issue of unearned unification of the soul-parts by appealing to the presence of the rational soul alone. Before raising issues with the solution Brown offers, I first wish to construe crucial passages from the *Republic* as evidence that Plato takes the rational soul to be the principle of fundamental unification between the three soul-parts.

I support this construal by briefly illuminating key passages in the *Philebus* and in the *Timaeus*, both of which highlight the rational soul as being a principle of unification not just in the complex, embodied soul, but also between the soul and body.

Consider Plato's multiple suggestions that there is something "natural" and "appropriate" about allowing the rational soul the function of ruling the complex soul. For instance, he asks, "isn't it appropriate for the rational part to rule since it is really wise and *exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul*" (*Republic*, 441e, my emphasis).⁶ Shortly following this query, he states, "we'll call him wise because of that small part of himself that rules in him and makes those declarations and has within it the knowledge of what is advantageous for each part *and for the whole soul*, which is the community of all three parts" (*Rep.* 442c, my emphasis). At 444d, Plato emphasizes, after analogizing the just soul to a healthy body, that producing justice is "to establish the parts of the soul in a *"natural relation of control"* while injustice consists in a relation of ruling and being ruled that is *"contrary to nature."*⁷ And he describes the guardians most fitting to serve as rulers those who have a "conviction" to "pursue what is advantageous to the city" (*Rep.*, 412e).

I believe the best way to interpret such passages given the issue at hand is to ask why it is that the rational part should rule. Perhaps Plato is merely making the point that in the virtuous soul, the rational part just does the job of ruling the whole, complex soul. But I believe Plato is making a larger point in these passages. It seems that he wants to stress that the rational part is the appropriate part of the complex soul to rule precisely because it alone possesses the capacity to consider not only the other parts of the complex soul, but also the soul insofar as it is one

⁶ All references are from Plato's "Republic" in *Plato: Complete Works* (1997) unless otherwise noted. See *Plato: Complete Works*, 971-1223.

⁷ My emphasis.

entity. Plato suggests acquiring knowledge since the rational part has the ability- if properly trained- to determine what is “advantageous” for each part, subsequently determining what is best for the whole soul. Thus, the answer to the question “why is it that Plato proposes the rational soul should rule” is simply that the rational part is naturally oriented to account for its lower parts *as* elements of one, complex entity and as such is the only part of the soul capable of ruling and qualified to properly rule.

The rational soul’s function of unification does not exhaust itself within the soul and its parts but extends to the body and its association with the soul as well. In the *Philebus*, Socrates draws a parallel between the human soul and the cosmic soul by indicating the relationship between the material elements of the human and of the world: “there is something called fire that belongs to us, and then again there is fire in the universe” (*Philebus*, 29b). He explicates the relationship between the element of fire that is in the human, which is “small in amount, feeble, and poor” and that of the universe which is “overwhelming in size and beauty” as one in which the latter sustains the former. He goes on to apply this example to the human soul. The human body is “obviously” equipped with a human soul and it is to the soul that we owe any training to or medicine for the body or order in general. Protarchus, Socrates’ interlocutor, agrees that it would be foolish to assume that the human body possesses a soul that imputes to the human being intelligence while the cosmic body fails to possess an intelligent soul.

Moreover, the cosmic soul, like cosmic fire, is overwhelming in its capacity, beauty and purity compared to the capacity and impurity of the human soul and, again like cosmic fire, the cosmic soul is that from which the human soul is derived and thrives (by reaching virtue). The principle responsible for the integration of the human soul and body, then, is manifested perfectly in the source of the cosmic soul and the cosmic body, which even Protrarchus

acknowledges as residing in the intelligence of the cosmic soul: “the only account that can do justice to the wonderful spectacle presented by the cosmic order of sun, moon, and stars and the revolution of the whole heaven, is that reason arranges it all, and I for my part would never fail in saying or believing it” (*Phil.*, 28e).⁸ The integration or unification of the cosmic soul and body is found in the cosmic soul ruling and arranging the constituents of the cosmic body. That is, the reason for the ordering of elements of the cosmic body is the fundamental principle of unification. If we take Socrates’ parallel introduced earlier seriously, then, the integration or unification of the human soul and the human body must be found in the rational soul ruling the constituents of the human body. Thus, the reason the human body is ordered the way it is owes its arrangement to the rational soul and the rational soul is the principle that supports the unification of the body and the soul.

Plenty of passages from the *Timaeus* support the idea that the rational part affects the arrangement of the human body (including its organs) and the idea that the rational part underlies the unification of the body and the soul. I would like to focus on the latter since that is the present, broader claim being made.⁹ The demiurge, or craftsman responsible for creating the universe in the image of a perfect blueprint, is supremely good and intelligent. The content of the blueprint, being perfect, possesses only goodness, which informs the demiurge’s choice to infuse in the material world a cosmic soul. A world with intelligence is better than a world without intelligence, but intelligence is hosted only through souls, so in giving the material world

⁸ This passage supports the view that only the rational soul can be rightly identified as causing order or arrangement. In the case of the universe, this ordering is carried out perfectly due to the scope and perfection of the cosmic soul. In the case of the human being prior to achieving virtue, the ordering is carried out imperfectly. I will return to this later in the paper.

⁹ For example, see 70d-e in which Timaeus describes the organs (in this case, the heart) joining the lower soul-parts to serve reason and the following account of the configuration of the liver and spleen for the purpose of serving the rational part.

a cosmic soul, the demiurge created a “truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence” (*Timaeus*, 30c). With the introduction of soul and consequently intelligence into the material world, the demiurge conquered the disorder present in material things: “the [demiurge] wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible, and so he took over all that was visible- not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion- and brought it from a state of disorder to one of order, because he believed that order was in every way better than disorder” (*Tim.*, 30a).¹⁰ Undoubtedly, the presence of reason achieves and maintains order in the cosmos. However, what is less clear is how reason is a principle of unification between the cosmic soul and cosmic body. *Timaeus* spells this out a few lines later at 32c:

“It isn’t possible to combine two things well all by themselves without a third; there has to be some bond between the two that unites them. Now the best bond is one that really and truly makes a unity of itself together with the things bonded by it, and this in the nature of things is best accomplished by proportion” (*Tim.*, 32c).

Following this assertion, *Timaeus* goes on to describe the creation of the remaining two elements- earth and water- with which the demiurge creates in order to fashion (along with the other two elements of fire and earth) the world of visible things. Establishing a proportion among any parts is described as “bestowing friendship” or “harmony” between parts and so unification is “best accomplished” by this. The unification of the cosmic soul and the cosmic body is the *act* of cosmic soul keeping itself informed of the material parts whose order it underlies such that each part is kept in proportion to the others. The act of being informed and subsequently using such information to calculate and maintain proportion, then, is an intelligent one and could not be accomplished if the material world were to lack a cosmic soul.

¹⁰ The way I have described the ordering of the material universe reverses the order of the narrative as presented in the “*Timaeus*”. I do this to preserve the fact that the cosmic soul was prior to the creation of the universe: “The [demiurge] gave priority and seniority to the soul, both in its coming to be and in the degree of its excellence, to be the body’s mistress and to rule over it as her subject (34c).”

At this point, it should be obvious that the path my argument will take assumes that unearned unity of soul-parts lies in the rational part's natural proclivity to oversee all other parts, even if its function of overseeing is perpetually confused. That is, the difference between unearned unity and earned unity is that in the latter case, virtue, the rational part oversees or accounts for all parts with knowledge of what is advantageous to each part, thus enabling a successful act of keeping parts in proportion, while in the former case, the rational part lacks this knowledge. Briefly returning to the parallel drawn between cosmic material elements and the cosmic soul with respect to material elements in the human body and the human soul in the *Philebus*, one can see that the act of keeping parts in proportion in the cosmic soul can never be confused due to the overwhelming scope and perfection of the cosmic soul.¹¹ In comparison, the human rational soul is less pure, feeble and lacks perfection. But appealing to the given passages above will not alone make this case and so I will now turn back to Brown's account and what I see to be its problems in order to generate a stronger and more well supported argument for my speculation.

Recall from the prior section the latter two features of Brown's solution to the issue of unearned unity. The second feature dealt with the two causal principles- the hydraulic principle and the hegemonic principle- that produce order or harmony in the soul (feature one) while the third feature read unity itself to be a form of agreement between "minded things." It seems, on the one hand, to construe the "relations" between the soul-parts as equivalent "causal" relations and, on the other hand, to assume that lower soul is "minded" such that Plato is referring to an actual, robust agreement between soul-parts flies in the face of Plato's thoughts expressed in his

¹¹ However, this does not ensure perfect functioning of the universe since necessity operates in the background. I will return to the issue of necessity when it is not driven by intelligence shortly.

theory of causation. In order to cash out Plato's view of causation, I will turn to a very specific example set out in the "Timaeus" that concerns the process by which we come to experience vision.¹²

At 45b, Plato has Timaeus detail the process of vision. Daylight, comprised of one of the four elements (fire), altered to merely provide a gentle light (as opposed to burning), is described as a "body" which comes into being freshly anew each day. From and through the eyes exist a "pure" form of the element of fire, which, being related to the fire from which daylight is formed, becomes "one" with the fire from daylight whenever the stream of pure fire from the eyes hits an external object. He goes on to say,

"And because this body of fire has become uniform throughout and thus uniformly affected, it transmits the motions of whatever it comes in contact with as well as of whatever comes in contact with it, to and through the whole body *until they reach the soul*. This brings about the sensation we call "seeing"" (*Tim.*, 45b).¹³

I want to make the case that by "soul" he is referring to the rational soul. The first indication that this is what he means is that the mortal soul¹⁴ is only mentioned in passing and not even in name; rather Timaeus refers to it as "whatever else remained that the human soul still needed to have" (*Tim.*, 42e), which is fashioned by inferior gods, offspring of the demiurge. At this point of the text, the only way in which "soul" is regarded is by its being referred to as the cosmic or world-soul, the immortal, divine, intelligent soul of the universe instilled by the demiurge. The demiurge passes on the job of creating the human to his offspring after delivering to them inferior quality divine soul. It is important to note that the divine soul of the human is inferior

¹² Going forward, all references are from Plato's "Timaeus" from *Plato: Complete Works* (1997), 1224- 1292, unless otherwise specified.

¹³ My emphasis.

¹⁴ Plato refers to the appetitive and spirited parts of soul as "mortal" or "lower" soul.

even before mortal soul is introduced. The inferiority is due to the demiurge using leftovers of the previous ingredients he had used to fashion the universe. And he considers this a good thing since pure grade divine soul would make the humans too god-like.¹⁵ In fact, there really is no explicit mention of the mortal soul until 70d and Timaeus emphasizes that these are added to the divine, immortal soul because it is “necessary”; namely, the human must be able to eat food, grow, perish, etc.

The second indication that the “soul” to which the vision passage refers is the rational soul is given a few lines above the passage when Timaeus mentions that he is giving his account of vision in service of explaining why the gods fastened the eyes within the head. Earlier, he described the head as the “most divine part of us, and master of all our other parts” (*Tim.*, 44e) and the face as the “soul’s vessel” (*Tim.*, 45a). The head is the most divine part of the human since this is where the “divine orbits” are housed, i.e., the immortal origin of the soul handed to the gods by the demiurge. In the creation of the head, the lesser gods most perfectly imitated the demiurge by “copying the revolving shape of the universe” (*Tim.*, 44e). In addition to this, all of the corporeal elements of the human that aids in acquiring virtue are fixed about the head such as the eyes (which observe the heavens), ears (which observe music and rhythm) and the mouth (which allows for speech).¹⁶

Furthermore, only a few lines after providing the mechanism for vision, Plato has Timaeus draw a distinction between auxiliary causes, which he specifies as the material elements that give rise to vision, and primary causes, which is attributed to “intelligent nature” and are the “actual causes” of phenomena and events. He states,

¹⁵ The demiurge wanted to prevent any possibility of humans rivaling gods.

¹⁶ For an account of seeing colors and hearing sounds, see 67b in “Timaeus”.

“[Auxiliary causes] are totally incapable of possessing any reason or understanding about anything. We must pronounce the soul to be the only thing there is that properly possesses understanding. . . [A]ny one who is a lover of understanding and knowledge must of necessity pursue as primary causes those that belong to intelligent nature, and as secondary all those belonging to things that are moved by others and that set still others in motion by necessity” (*Tim.*, 46d-e).

Clearly, the natural facts about the uniformity of fire between the fine fire of the eyes and the gentle fire in daylight causing motions throughout the body provide us with a secondary cause. But it is only when those motions “reach the soul” that we have discovered the primary cause of vision. A similar case is made for the reason for vision and eyes and what Plato refers to as the “supremely beneficial reason” for vision and eyes. The reason the gods designed eyesight in humans was to conduct light, subsequently providing them the ability to see things. But this is only second to the actual reason for vision: vision is a gift from the gods that makes virtue possible for humans (and theoretically animals) to attain. By observing the uniformity of the cosmos, humans develop the concepts of number and time, which lead humans into even more abstract pursuits, ultimately culminating in philosophy.¹⁷

However, one might object by arguing that the “soul” that appears in the vision passage might be the whole, complex soul and that the soul in its entirety is that which (primarily) causes vision. I do not think this approach can be successful, given the discussion immediately above. First of all, again, there is no mention of the mortal soul at this point of the text. Second, and more to the point, it would be very odd for Plato to hold both that the *entirety* of the soul, is “something that shares [the gods’] name of ‘immortal,’ something described as divine and ruling

¹⁷ The full passage reads: “Let us rather declare that the cause and purpose of this supreme good is this: the god invented sight and gave it to us so that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding. For there is a kinship between them, even though our revolutions are disturbed, whereas the universal orbits are undisturbed. So once we have come to know them and to share in the ability to make correct calculations according to nature, we should stabilize the straying revolutions within ourselves by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god” (*Tim.*, 47b-c).

within those of them who always consent to follow after justice and after [the gods]” (*Tim.*, 41d) given such a description perfectly tracks only descriptions of the rational part everywhere else in the text, including in the *Republic*, and that the mortal soul is marked by “unreasoning sense perception and all-venturing lust” (*Tim.*, 1271).¹⁸ In fact, Timaeus stresses that “we must describe both types of causes [primary and secondary], distinguishing those which possess understanding and thus fashion what is beautiful and good, from those which, when deserted by intelligence, produce only haphazard and disorderly effects every time” (*Tim.*, 46e). As is well known by now, the rational soul is the only part that can “fashion what is beautiful and good” and “possess[es] intelligence” and the mortal soul, when deserted by the rational part, produces disorder. It follows that, the rational part is the actual cause of vision and is the soul to which the vision passage refers.¹⁹

Another serious objection to consider is that starting at 69b, Timaeus very explicitly goes on to describe the most accurate account of the coming to be of the world and its constituents as one in which intelligence and necessity are causally interwoven. Timaeus first begins his account of the generation of the world by appealing only to intelligent cause or Intellect. He then begins again at 47e, acknowledging the existence of another kind of “straying cause,” which he identifies as Necessity. After acknowledging this cause, he recounts the creation of the universe from the perspective of Necessity. At 69b, it seems he begins his account anew with the

¹⁸ I will reintroduce the issue of unreasoning sense perception later in the paper. For present purposes, this passing mention will suffice.

¹⁹ Note that earlier we mentioned the supreme, beneficial cause and reason for vision/ the possession of eyes was the possibility of attaining virtue and that this was made possible by the intelligence of the gods. Given that rational soul is a diluted variant of the intelligence of the gods and is, in itself, the very thing that allows for the attainment of virtue, we could say that we are talking about the same thing.

realization that an account of how things come to be cannot be properly explained by appealing to either only Intelligence or Necessity. He addresses this earlier when he notes:

“[This] ordered world is of mixed birth: it is the offspring of a union of Necessity and Intellect. Intellect prevailed over Necessity by persuading it to direct most of the things that come to be toward what is best, and the result of this subjugation of Necessity to wise persuasion was the initial formation of this universe” (*Tim.*, 48a).

Thus, under this objection, it might be misguided to locate causal agency within only intelligent centers of action or events since Intelligence and Necessity operate together as cooperating causes.

Nonetheless, this objection does not stand since, for Plato, seeking causal accounts is always somehow entrenched in moral cultivation and auxiliary causes always stand in second place to intelligent causes. Searching for the cause of some action or phenomenon is simply the act of searching for the reason for that action or phenomenon and the reason for anything is ultimately rooted in intelligence.²⁰ Intelligence operates with an end; hence, even when confronted with Necessity, Intellect must make use of it or make use of its results towards the end that it sees as best:

“Although [the demiurge] did make use of the relevant auxiliary causes, it was he himself who gave their fair design to all that comes to be. That is why we must distinguish two forms of cause, the divine and the necessary. First, the divine, for which we must search in all things if we are to gain a life of happiness to the extent that our nature allows, and second, to the necessary, for which we must search for the sake of the divine. . . [Without] the necessary, those other objects, about which we are serious, cannot on their own be discerned, and hence cannot be comprehended or partaken of in any other way” (*Tim.*, 69a).

The project of seeking causes, according to this passage, is connected to the project of seeking virtue. It is useful to identify auxiliary causes only insofar as they lead one to identify the

²⁰ This sentiment is repeated in the “Philebus” when Socrates states that “reason belongs to that kind which is the cause of everything” (*Phil.*, 30e). See “Philebus” in *Plato: Complete Works* (1997), 398-456.

underlying primary, intelligent cause. This indicates that intelligent causes are, as Timaeus states in the first account of the generation of the world he provides, always the primary causes for any action or event. Regardless of the effects of Necessity “setting things adrift,” anything endowed with intelligence is, in the first place, responsible for accommodating the conditions, which Necessity brings about. In the sphere of moral actions, this leads to the contradictory result that when it comes to human beings, viciousness, even if it is the consequence of being born with a bad body,²¹ is both unintentional and self-imposed. That is, while necessary or spontaneous factors can be discovered that explain certain actions or events, they fail to register as the “real” explanation if they are not rooted in the ultimate aims of the intelligent subject in question. Similarly, looking to auxiliary causes as explanations for phenomena in the world falls short of the reason why one should be searching for explanations. For instance, one should not study the heavens simply for the sake of formulating mathematical laws. Rather, such formulations should be seen as a step to moving beyond the studies of what is immanent towards something divine and for the sake of perfecting one’s soul.

Socrates also presents this account of real causation versus auxiliary causation in the “Phaedo”. Socrates is interested in questions that are generally put forward in the context of natural science such as: “do we think with our blood, or air, or fire, or none of these and does the brain provide our senses of hearing and sight and smell, from which come memory and opinion, and from memory and opinion which has become stable, comes knowledge” (*Phaedo*, 96b) and “how men grew” (*Phaed.*, 96c)? He is initially attracted to the theory of causation he attributes to Anaxagoras because, according to what he has heard about the theory, “it is the Mind that directs and is the cause of everything” (*Phaed.*, 97c). Much like the account provided in the

²¹ Plato attributes viciousness to a lack in either of body or mind (or both). So, a poor bodily constitution might make a subject predisposed to viciousness.

Timaeus, intelligence is that which directs everything and it does so with the intention of arranging each thing according to what is best. Seeking causes, then, consisted of learning what was the best and the worst way for a thing to be:

“If then one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what was the best way for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act” (*Phaed.*, 97c-d).

And, like in the *Timaeus*, the investigation into only what is best (and worst) is connected to a moral project since once the best is specified for each thing as its cause and the general cause of everything that exists, next in the order of explanation is “the common *good* for all” (*Phaed.*, 98b, my emphasis). Socrates, like Timaeus, also laments the failure of most philosophers to draw a distinction between “real,” intelligent causes and “that which the cause would not be able to act as a cause.”²²

In terms of the contradiction of viciousness or ignorance being both unintentional and self-imposed, a simple example might suffice in expressing Plato’s position. When my cat jumps up on my desk and, in the process, kicks over my coffee mug, leading it to shatter on the floor, I can be seen as both the victim of an unfortunate accident and the person that is responsible for the breaking of the mug. On the one hand, it is because of the cat’s movements and the mug being in a certain position on the desk and the result of porcelain hitting a very hard surface like my floor that the mug is broken. On the other hand, however, it is because of my choosing to place my mug right there on the desk and my neglecting to consider that my cat might jump onto my desk as he does every other day that the mug is broken. It is this latter explanation that, for Plato, gives the best account for why it is that the mug is no longer intact.

²² “If someone said that without bones and sinews and all such things, I should not be able to do what I decided, he would be right, but surely to say that they are the cause of what I do, and not that I have chosen the best course, even though I act with my mind, is to speak very lazily and carelessly” (*Tim.*, 99a-b).

In a similar vein, the rational part is that which ultimately possesses causal power in the embodied, complex soul. Surely one can attribute to the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul certain factors that bring about particular actions in the subject. However, one would be mistaken to assume that this means there is causal agency at play equivalent to the way in which the rational part brings about actions in the subject. Actual causes operate with the best end in sight and the mortal soul has no such teleological propensity. The rational soul is capable of making its aims comply with the good because it is derived from the world-soul. The world-soul is infused with intelligence and as such acts as an intermediary between the realm of Being and that of the sensible world. Having access to the Ideal, world-soul maintains the order of the material universe as perfectly as Necessity allows. The rational soul, sharing in the world-soul's capacity to order and arrange in accordance the good, consistently operates with this aim, though its sight of the end may be confused. Still, the mortal soul is an interesting case given each irrational part does have its own aim, even if it is not intelligent: the spirited part seeks honor and the appetitive part seeks pleasure. Despite this, the mortal soul cannot carry out its aims without the aid of the rational part, as I will argue shortly.

In addition, although the mortal soul qualifies as soul-parts, it occupies a space somewhere in between Necessity and Intellect. Plato does not spend much time discussing the ontological status of the mortal soul so it is unclear where among his classification of Being it stands. Nevertheless, it clearly comes onto the scene only when the human body is introduced and its ontological status must be derivative, even more so than the human rational soul is derivative in comparison to the world-soul given the mortal soul is crafted by the lesser gods. The lesser gods merely imitate the demiurge; imitation, being an inferior practice, results in inferior products. Moreover, the function of the mortal soul is to make the human being as much

like the cosmic body, the perfect material body, as possible. Recall that the world is a “truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence.” However, the world did not require an intermediary, mortal soul since it was not to experience any of the sensations. Sensations are processes by which motions from external objects enter into and are processed by mechanisms internal to the body. But there is nothing external to the world, hence there is no information it must process from without it (*Tim.*, 33a-d). Furthermore, the world does not require limbs since it occupies all space, thus there is no where to which it can move and it does not need to take anything into itself or relieve itself of anything since its waste and food self-contained in an endless loop. As such, the world is perfect since it is “self-sufficient.” The human body, on the other hand, is far from self-sufficient and requires all of the organs of sensations as well as appendages with which it can move about and acquire objects for its sustenance. The mortal soul, then, is fitted to the body to accommodate its vast degree of imperfection and, as a result, initially exists to service the subject insofar as it is a body requiring nutrition to remain alive. In this capacity, as an extension of the body of sorts, the mortal soul functions similarly to auxiliary cause more so than it does to intelligent cause.

In further defense of the position that the movements of the mortal soul function more so as auxiliary rather than intelligent causes is the fact that even if we wished to do away with them, the desires those motions produce always remain. In the *Republic*, Socrates asks, “what are we to suppose that the philosopher thinks of other pleasures compared with that of knowing the truth and being always engaged in the pursuit of it? Won’t he rank them far lower, regarding them as *necessary* in the strict sense, things that he’d do without if they weren’t *unavoidable*?” (*Rep.* IX 581e, my emphasis). Much like the material necessity Intellect is sometimes forced to deal with in its pursuit to order, movements inherent in the mortal soul force the subject to contend with

desires she would many times like to do without. They are present necessarily since the mortal soul operates the way it does for the human being to physically thrive. Thus, it seems best to relegate the mortal soul to the domain (or at least closer to the domain of) material, auxiliary causes.²³

Thus far, I hope to have given sufficient support to convince the reader that only one part of the soul, the rational part, has any claim to actual causal power since it is the only part that is intelligent in nature. This should begin to chip away at Brown's assumption that Plato really meant something robust by agreement consisting in unity of "minded things" when referring to soul-parts.²⁴ If mind implies intelligence, understanding, or the possibility of true action, then clearly we are minded only insofar as we possess rational souls.²⁵ This should also begin to chip away at the two causal principles Brown proposes since his principles presuppose that the lower parts of the soul can affect the rational part as genuine causes. If the rational soul is the only true cause that can be found within the human soul, then only the rational soul can affect other soul-parts, and any decline of power it notices in its own part will be due to its own shortcomings in action.

Turning back to the "Timaeus", we can further support this hunch and problematize Brown's causal principles by investigating how exactly Plato deals with the interaction of soul-

²³ Also see *Republic* VI 493c5-6 in which Socrates calls out the Sophists for not making a distinction between necessary pleasures (for the maintenance of the body) and the true goods (wisdom).

²⁴ However, while this cannot hold (literally) for soul-parts, it does obtain between parts of the city since members of each class are, in fact, minded.

²⁵ This applies to animals as well. According to Plato, animals theoretically possess minds since they contain a rational part to their soul. However, animals fail to make use of their intelligence since they are burdened by not only their bodies, but an inferior quality of reason due to the past, vicious incarnation of their soul.

parts, specifically in the context of amplification or reduction of part-strength. In discussing what it is for a human to lead a rational life, Plato has Timaeus detail (yet again) the three distinct souls that reside within the human, but this time he refers to them with respect to their motive forces. In keeping with the theme of the good, rational life versus the bad, ignorant life, Timaeus asserts,

“Any type [of soul] which is idle and keeps its motions inactive cannot but become very weak, while one that keeps exercising becomes very strong . . . so we must keep watch to make sure that their motions remain *proportionate* to each other” (*Tim.*, 89e-90a, my emphasis).

The present narrative surrounding strong or weak souls is not so much a story about the causal interaction between soul-parts as much as it is about each soul- part remaining strong and, more importantly, each soul-part’s respective motion remaining proportionate to the other motions.

The theme of proportion, which was central to Timaeus’ account concerning unification, returns.

Keeping motions proportionate indicates a measuring act, which, for Plato, is an important task.

Consider the following passage regarding measured agitations: “it will happen that when a man subjects his body to these motions²⁶ when it has been in a state of rest, the body is overcome and brought to ruin” (*Tim.*, 88d). However, if a man continually agitates his body and refuses to let it rest “he will keep in a state of natural equilibrium the internal and external motions.” Then

Timaeus adds “if the agitation is a measured one, he will succeed in bringing order and regularity to those disturbances and those elemental parts that wander all over the body according to their affinities in the way described in the account we gave earlier about the universe” (*Tim.*, 88e).

Remaining at rest makes motions idle while constant agitation makes equilibrium possible. But it is only when the agitation is measured, that order and regularity enter the picture. As the rational

²⁶ Plato refers to the motions in the elements of the body produced by gymnastics or strenuous physical exercise.

soul is that which calculates and measures, it follows that the rational soul is that which will establish the right amount of agitation to promote order.

Furthermore, Plato has Timaeus provide this insight in the context of the “gravest disease of all”, or ignorance. He gives an example of a large body (too much for its soul) joined to a puny, feeble mind. Motions of the stronger part will predominate and amplify their own interest, thus “render[ing] the functions of the soul dull, stupid and forgetful” (*Tim.*, 88b). It seems completely sensible to ask what it means for a part to predominate and amplify its own interest. And it also seems sensible to ask why this amplification would render the function of the soul “dull, stupid and forgetful.” Brown would offer his causal principles to answer these questions. I would like to return to an unlikely place- Plato’s account of vision- in order to make sense of my next move and begin to get my own account of unearned unity in the soul off of the ground.

Recall from the discussion surrounding vision my conclusion that the rational soul was the primary cause for vision. While plenty of natural events take place between the material aspects of the human eye and the body of daylight external to the eye, these merely serve as auxiliary or secondary causes. One way to further interpret this passage in my direction is to suppose that Plato means to say there exists no visual perception if reason is not involved. My assumption is corroborated by another passage in which Plato seems to say that the rational soul is necessary for any sensation *whatsoever*, not just perceptive abilities like vision. At 64b, Timaeus makes the case that,

“With every property, whether perceived or not, let us take up the question of causes of pleasure or pain in the following way, recalling the distinction made in the foregoing between what is easily moved and what is hard to move. This is the way in which we must pursue all that we intend to comprehend. When even a minor disturbance affects that which is easily moved by nature, the disturbance is passed on in a chain reaction with some parts affecting others in the same way as they were affected, until it reaches the center of consciousness and reports the property that produced the reaction” (*Tim.*, 64b).

This passage mirrors that given about vision and recommends an interpretation that holds the rational soul as being that capacity in the human soul which cognizes or makes *intelligible* the motions of the other soul-parts. That is, if a being is to have a mental life, it owes its mentality to the rational soul. Recall from earlier that the mortal soul *was* described as that which is “fused with unreasoning sense perception and all-venturing lust” (*Tim.*, 1271). Such a claim now makes sense with the present interpretation; that is, were the mortal soul to exist without the presence of the rational soul, the agent (if she can be called so) would fail to cognize the motions of the body that affect the motions of the mortal soul. In other words, she would lack sense perception and the ability to experience pleasure and pain. For example, Socrates explains to Protarchus in the *Philebus* that were a subject to completely lack all of the qualities one attributes to the rational soul (reason, memory, intelligence, etc.), and if such a subject were left only with the capacities of what is usually attributed to the sensitive soul, he would lack the capacity to feel pleasure or pain. One would simply be in ignorance about whether or not one were enjoying oneself, memories from one moment to the other would block the subject’s capacity to experience pleasure or pain, and one would not be in a position to calculate how to continue on in the pleasure (or avoid the pain) (*Phil.*, 21b-d). Thus, while the lower soul accommodates the motions that will come in from the body, the higher, rational soul has its motions set off by the soul alone, whether that be the lower soul, fitted to the rational soul by the gods so that humans will eat, grow, perish, etc., or the divine, perfect, immortal soul present in the world-soul, the gods, and the demiurge.

On the face of it, this interpretation might not sit well with the very function of the mortal soul, which is to be the subject of passions and feelings. That is, the mortal soul is the location in which passions and feelings arise and so my interpretation might be placing more weight on

the rational soul than is merited. However, I do not think that I am overstating the causal role of the rational part in the process of sensations. Without doubt, the mortal soul is the seat of all sensitive passions and feelings. The rational soul, considered in itself, aims at attaining knowledge; thus, the objects of desire it seeks are of a wholly different variety than sensitive desires and that which it perceives is of a different variety than what the mortal soul perceives. In a certain sense, the rational soul- if it is to be successfully embodied and thrives as a human being- necessitates the presence of the mortal soul. The human being cannot experience bodily sensations and pleasure or pain without the mortal soul. But sensations, pleasures and pains serve a particular function and without the participation of the rational soul, this function cannot be carried out. These sensations serve the purpose of directing the human being to the maintenance of her existence as an embodied complex; mere brute “unreasoned” sensations cannot successfully fulfill this function.

Moving on, in favor of my reading is the account Plato describes of virtue in which a traumatized embodied, immortal soul regains its original motions. The immortal soul is traumatized when it is fused with the body since the motions of the elements in the body contort the motions inherent in the divine orbits of the soul. Disembodied, immortal souls enjoy synchrony with the divine orbits of the world-soul. Upon embodiment, however, the immortal soul’s orbits lose their alignment with the world-soul due to the violent and overbearing motions of body: “these orbits, now bound within a mighty river, neither mastered that river nor were mastered by it, but tossed it violently and were violently tossed by it” (*Tim.*, 43a-b). In the very next line, he describes the state of the human being fully intact with all of its soul-parts and body: “consequently, the living thing *as a whole* did indeed move, but it would proceed in a disorderly, random and irrational way that involved all six of the motions (my emphasis)” and a

footnote clarifies Timaeus is describing the first movements of a new-born. Notice that it must be the case that the mortal soul has been added to the immortal soul in order to permit the creation of the human being, but Timaeus is only explicitly referring to the effects of embodiment upon the rational soul. It is explicit in that he calls the orbits those that belong to the “immortal soul.” Of interest here, then, is why the soul is not intelligent at birth: “at this stage souls do not have a ruling orbit taking the lead. And so when certain sensations come in from outside and attack them, they sweep the soul’s entire vessel along with them. . . All these disturbances are no doubt the reason why even today and not only at the beginning, whenever a soul is bound within a mortal body, it at first lacks intelligence” (*Tim.*, 44a-b). Compared to all other periods in his lifetime, the human experiences exponential growth and development in his first few years so the “stream that brings growth and nourishment” is at its most turbulent during this time. But as this phase subsides, “the soul’s orbits regain their composure, resume their proper courses, and establish themselves more and more with the passage of time, their revolutions are set straight. . . They then correctly identify what is the same and what is different, and render intelligent the person who possess them” (*Tim.*, 44b-c). But regaining the composure of the orbits requires nourishment.

Timaeus supplies an account of proper nourishment of the soul much later in the text at 90c-d during which he explains how the subject can set the rational soul’s revolutions straight. Proper nourishment is the only way to care for anything, which is just to ensure that its motions are proper to it:

“We should redirect the revolutions in our heads that were thrown off course at our birth, by coming to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe, and so bring into conformity with its objects our faculty of understanding, as it was in its original condition. And when this conformity is complete, we shall have achieved our goal: that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore” (*Tim.*, 90c).

The best way to tend to the soul is to “constantly care for [the] divine part,” which is to devote oneself to the love of learning and true wisdom (*Tim.*, 90b). In learning, we exercise rational part, thereby strengthening it and reestablishing its motions. Drawing attention back to our earlier discussion about the measuring act of ensuring proportionate motions in each part of the soul, if we are to measure accurately and calculate perfectly, we will need a strong rational soul. The most important task an agent can undertake, then, is to secure the proper motions for her rational soul.

At this point, I would like to pull together all of the pieces in this section to show how they cohesively lend to an account of unearned unification. According to my interpretation of Plato’s theory of vision, what makes a subject “minded” is her possession of the rational soul. The rational soul is responsible for the intelligence and agency of a subject as well as the possibility for her experiencing any type of sensation or perception. This suggests that any and all psychological activity presupposes the involvement of the rational soul, which further suggests that the rational soul is always somehow overseeing the activity of the other soul-parts. In this way, the mortal soul is dependent on the immortal soul. For instance, the rational soul might be said to “translate” the activity of the lower soul such that its activity manifests itself as a proper cognition to the subject. At birth, when the rational soul is first embodied, it is so overwhelmed by the nourishment needs of the new body that it is wholly invested in “translating” the motions of the lower soul, which is feeding the soul information from the body and external world. Since the rational soul’s own motions are thrown off course by the violence in embodiment, it can only confusedly oversee the lower soul-parts by simply translating for them, which means the subject will act according to the “dictates” of the lower soul, though really it is acting according to the dictates of a confused, rational soul.

A similar story can be told regarding the ignorant person. Timaeus generally refers to ignorance as a “disease” but he also describes it in a telling passage as the “cultivation of mortality.” A subject cultivates his mortality when he becomes “absorbed in his appetites and ambitions and takes great pains to further them.” Timaeus labels such a person’s thoughts as “mortal.” He then contrasts this case with the subject who loves learning, calling the latter’s thoughts “immortal and divine.” If we cast these claims within Timaeus’s comments on the strength or weakness of the soul-parts, we can say that in the case of the ignorant subject, the thoughts of the subject are “mortal” because the rational soul is overwhelmingly making intelligible the motions of the lower soul (in this case, the appetitive part), which is very similar to the case of the newborn. However, in the case of the newborn, the rational soul’s investment in making intelligible solely the motions of the lower soul is necessitated primarily by the rational soul’s inability to make intelligible that which is *naturally* intelligible (objects of true wisdom) due to its revolutions being forced off course, and secondarily by the urgent need of material resources to facilitate the growth of the human. Notice that in such a state it would be inaccurate to suppose that the strength of the lower soul is causing the weakness of the rational part. Rather, the rational part *begins* its embodied life in a frail state due to the violence of embodiment. Once the forceful phase of nutrition and growth has passed over, however, the rational part can begin to more easily tend to the task of regaining its motions. In fact, even the most uneducated people are still regarded intelligent to some extent given they possess language, can perform simple arithmetic, appreciate rhythm and music, and other such skills that qualify as rational endeavors, or activities to which the rational soul’s motions itself gives rise.

However, such activities do not necessarily rouse the rational soul from its idleness, especially if the subject continues to preoccupy herself with “mortal” concerns. If she never

fully commits herself to the study of the heavens, mathematics, music, and eventually philosophy, then the motions of her rational soul are never restored to their proper state, thereby leaving her rational soul in a weak state. Again, it is not *because* of the lower, mortal soul that the rational soul remains weak; rather, the subject has performed little initiative to exercise the rational soul to make it strong. That is, the rational soul still oversees the lower soul but lacking wisdom, which can only be attained by restoring the motion of its orbits, it oversees the soul without any calibration with which it could then properly calculate or measure. Thus, the rational part is confusedly taking account of the lower soul-parts and, as such, of the whole soul because it lacks the knowledge necessary to direct each part such that the proportion of their motions are what is most advantageous for the subject as a whole. The rational soul's organizing or directing capacity simply lacks calibration, as it is out of sync with its native, rational motions.

Let us look at a case in which virtue is present in the subject to further flesh out this account. In the virtuous subject, the rational part oversees the lower soul-parts but does so knowing which proportion of motions is best to bring about optimal functioning. That is, since she has successfully restored the motion of her orbits in her rational soul, she can accurately measure or calculate what is advantageous for the soul as an entirety. She is, as Timaeus describes it, constantly caring for her divine part and, in doing so, necessarily keeps the motions of the lower soul-parts in proportion. However, by constantly tending to her "divine part," Plato does not mean to suggest that she no longer cares for her body. After all, the perfectly healthy person is proportionate in soul *and* body. The virtuous person cares for her body to the right degree, meaning she rationally beholds the function of her body and rationally assesses the material goods that will benefit her as a corporeal being. Namely, the rational soul autocorrects the motions of the appetitive soul as it makes its motions intelligible. In an ignorant subject, the

rational soul lacks true wisdom and therefore takes the objects translated from the motions of the appetitive soul at face value, thus translating the goods appetite wishes to attain as *truly* good and worth attaining. The rational soul, lacking intelligence, can do no better than this in such situations. However, when the rational soul is operating properly, in sync with the motions of the heavens, it translates the motions of appetite in favor of what is truly good. In a virtuous subject, the rational soul has secured its synchrony with the cosmic motions of the world-soul and all subsequent translations will lie in favor of what reason deems true and good. Therefore, the virtuous subject is stable with regard to keeping the motions of her soul-parts in proportion and, as a result, experiences no struggle in the face of seeming temptation since reason will always translate motions in favor of reason.

With my proposed account, the unearned unity of the soul-parts is not mysterious. All three parts of the soul succeed as one, complex entity in virtue of the presence of the rational soul. The rational soul alone makes possible the psychological aspect of each soul-part since, in overseeing the lower parts, the motions of each soul-part can be transformed into mental events apprehended by the subject. The trajectory of the soul from unearned unity to earned unity, or virtue, tracks confusion to clarity; without knowledge, the rational soul confusedly oversees the lower soul-parts, confused because it knows not what is advantageous for its parts, thus cognizing the motions of each part without reason. With knowledge, however, the rational soul clearly oversees lower soul-parts in that it knows precisely what is best for each part, thereby cognizing each soul-part in accordance with reason.

Under this reading of unearned unification, the unity of consciousness also ceases to be mysterious. Without the aid of the rational soul, the lower soul-parts simply fail to qualify as sources of psychological events. The site of consciousness just *is* the rational soul and it is in the

rational soul's activity of making intelligible the motions of the lower soul-parts that the subject comes to be conscious of his respective activities. Hence, there is no need to seek a principle that unifies multiple sources of psychological events since there is already only one with which the complex soul begins.

My final remaining task in this section is to address the issue of the rational soul's moral responsibility of the complex soul's embodied actions. Recall that Brown's solution to the problem was to assert that the soul-parts constitute something like a collective agency since the orderly causal structure of its parts tends toward agreement. As a result, if one part of the soul brings about a particular action, the others are causally implicated (Brown 70). Thus, even if the rational part is the only part that goes on in the afterlife, it fairly carries the burden of the complex soul's embodied actions because "it could have been a more powerful obstacle."

My account provides a much more satisfying solution to this problem. Recall that the only motions on which subjects have any direct impact are the motions that reside in the rational soul. As humans mature, they can directly strengthen the rational soul by restoring its motions when they perform mathematics, astronomy, play music and ultimately study philosophy. The motions of the lower soul, on the other hand, are only indirectly impacted by the subject's actions. For instance, the appetitive soul becomes amplified only when the subject allows her rational soul to remain weak. If the subject wishes to influence the motions of her lower soul, she can do so only by leaving her rational soul idle or by strengthening her rational soul such that it keeps in balance the motions of the soul-parts through a careful measuring act. Any action of the agent is truly brought about by the rational soul, though that action might be brought about by confusion (when the rational soul is weak and thereby lacks intelligence, or it has not stabilized its measuring act to qualify as virtuous). Any vicious action, then, is attributable only

to the rational soul since it is due to *its* weakness and subsequent confusion that the other parts of the soul have the occasion to “dominate.”

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that Plato understands the rational part to be the part in the embodied, human soul that warrants its fundamental unity prior to achieving virtue. As I read him, Plato holds the cosmological function of reason to be the unification of its related material body and parts of that body by appealing to the Ideal and, in doing so, rendering order and harmony in the arrangement of its associated material body and those bodily parts. Since the cosmos serves as a model for the human being (in the *Timaeus*), the human rational soul similarly functions as a unifier. However, in the case of the human being, since a mortal soul is necessary, the rational soul primarily serves as that which unifies the distinct soul-parts. Thus, the rational soul in the human being imitates the creative ordering act of the demiurge and it is only when the rational soul is successful in bringing the parts to the perfect, proportionate arrangement that it has succeeded in its “craft”- when it has reached a virtuous state.

To generate this view, I argued against the account put forward by Brown in which he purports to show that the unification of the pre-virtuous soul is brought about by a causal structure inherent in the arrangement of the soul-parts. Brown heavily relied on two causal principles, which I attempted to undermine by expounding Plato’s views on causation. According to Plato, true causes are attributed to Intellect. Thus, while unintelligent, necessary forces bring about certain events and phenomena, they are second in the order of explanation to intelligent forces that aim at good ends. Such a position leaves Brown’s principles untenable since the intent of the rational soul and the forces of the lower soul cannot affect each other to the same extent. Therefore, it is questionable as to what sort of “causal structure” is in place

within the complex, embodied soul and to what extent each part is “equally” accountable for actions of the subject.

In addition, my view offers an explanation for the unity of consciousness. Brown is not able to address this issue head on with his view, especially considering his concern that there is no easy way to account for shared content between the soul-parts. My position simply proposes that the rational soul makes possible all cognition, including sensations, and is thereby the only site for consciousness.

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