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## The Role of Sexual Difference in Plato's Timaeus

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Mary Cunningham, Student

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Dr. Tim Sundell, Director of Graduate Studies

THE ROLE OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Mary Claire Cunningham  
Lexington, Kentucky  
Director: Dr. Eric Sanday, Professor of Philosophy  
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2022

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### THE ROLE OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

My dissertation is a reading of Plato's *Timaeus* that centers sexual difference and in particular femininity. I analyze the role of sexual difference in the framing of the dialogue as well as its accounts of body in the first and second discourse and its account of health in the third discourse. I argue that sexual difference, and, in particular, sexual reproduction, serves as a guiding paradigm of Timaeus' entire project. I argue in each part of my dissertation that various aspects of the *Timaeus* depend on a certain notion of sexual difference—even aspects which are seemingly causally prior to the issue of sexual difference (e.g., the nature of cause itself, structure). The dissertation consists of three parts. In the first part of my dissertation, I give a new reading of the myth of the origin of women at the end of the *Timaeus* and bring it into conversation with the dialogue's opening in order to give an interpretation of the dialogue's framing. I analyze the concept of sexual difference presented in this myth and argue that its philosophical richness has been overlooked, with many considering it to be either a joke or a sexist account. Focusing on Timaeus's account of the woman's relationship with her womb, I argue that womanhood in this myth is constituted by features that are elsewhere characterized as essentially philosophical (e.g., collaboration, making room, recognizing the complex structure of things, and nurture). In the second part of my dissertation, I introduce the two paradigms for the origin and composition of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*: the first discourse's craft paradigm that construes the cosmos as a crafted artifact, and the second discourse's genetic paradigm that construes the cosmos as a birthed organism. I am especially concerned with each discourse's account of body. Here, I argue that the second discourse's genetic paradigm is a significant revision of the first discourse's craft paradigm. While some scholars have found that Timaeus's insights in the second discourse are a further development of the groundwork he lays in the first discourse, I argue that the genetic paradigm's focus on femininity and the mutual collaboration of masculine and feminine capacities is incompatible with the craft paradigm's androcentrism. Finally, in the third part of my dissertation, I analyze the way that the *Timaeus* centers women's bodies in its account of health in body and soul. Here, I argue that the *Timaeus* characterizes health by drawing on ideas about women's bodies that are framed as symptoms of feminine disease

in the Hippocratic texts (e.g., disequilibrium, flux, and porosity). Taken together, the three articles of my dissertation constitute a reading of the role of sexual difference in each part of the *Timaeus*.

KEYWORDS: Plato, Timaeus, Ancient Greek Philosophy, Ancient Greek Medicine, Hippocrates, Sexual Difference

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THE ROLE OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

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DEDICATION

To Andrew, Drew, and Zach

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Finally, I would like to thank those who know me best for their unwavering love, without which not much would be possible, least of all this dissertation. Bucky Stanton

has been a constant resource of knowledge and friendship as I have undertaken this project. Little means more to me than the friendship and brilliant creativity of Zach Anderson, Andrew Mankin, and Drew Swisher, to whom I dedicate this dissertation. It is impossible to overstate the degree and variety of, support, care, and love I have received from my family—Bill, Cydney, Ellie, William, Cami, and Patch. My philosophical journey undoubtedly began in imitation of the love and wisdom of my parents, my original and most frequent philosophical interlocutors.

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## CHAPTER 1. SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE BEGINNING AND END OF PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

### 1.1 Timaeus' Karmic Myth: Comedy, Sexism, or Serious?

From the outset, Timaeus warns us that his speech will have a unique standard of evidence and not always agree with itself. In fact, as he is describing the peculiarity of his method, he tells Socrates to expect a certain degree of disunity and disagreement within the speech:

So then, Socrates, if, in saying many things on many topics concerning gods and the birth of the all, we prove to be incapable of rendering speeches that are always and in all respects in agreement with themselves and drawn with precision, don't be surprised.<sup>1</sup>

Timaeus goes to great lengths to assist the reader in this respect. He reminds us on multiple occasions to consider and appreciate the strangeness of his way of explaining things.<sup>2</sup> The strangeness of his speech takes place as a struggle or an ambition rather than a sure thing; Timaeus says that it is difficult to make things clear and often opens topics by proclaiming that he must try to make them clear. At various points throughout the speech, he describes his method as *ἄτοπος* (out of place) and *ἀήθης* (unusual).<sup>3</sup> Throughout the speech, he gives us every reason to expect strangeness in his explanations.

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<sup>1</sup> *Timaeus* 29c translated by Peter Kalkavage.

<sup>2</sup> C.f., 48c2-e1, "...it's difficult to make plain what seems to be the case according to our present mode of exposition. So, for your part, don't suppose that I must speak of it ... But by safeguarding what we declared at the beginning—the power of likely accounts—I'll attempt to give an account not less likely but more so," 53c1-3, "So now I must try to make plain to you, by means of an unusual account..." and 72d4-8 "Only if god gave his consent, only then, could we insist that the truth has been spoken; but we must utterly risk the claim that what we've said is at the very least likely, both now and even more so as we continue to investigate further."

<sup>3</sup> *Timaeus*, 48d, 53c. Timaeus characterization of the strangeness of his speech seems to be limited to a certain aspect. He does not describe his as strange in the sense that it is novel (e.g., *καίνοσ* or *νέοσ*), foreign (e.g., *ἀλλότριοσ*, *ἀλλόφυλοσ*, *ὀθνεῖοσ*), or astonishing (e.g., *δεινόσ*, *θαυμαστόσ*). It is strange in the sense that it is *odd*; the speech is contrary to that to which we are accustomed (i.e., *ἀήθης*, *ἄτοποσ*).

As strange as the dialogue is, the ending of the *Timaeus* is perplexing even according to the *Timaeus*' exceptional standard of perplexity. Timaeus ends his final speech with a karmic myth explaining how sexual difference and non-human animals came to be. The beginning of the myth (90e-91d) deals with sexual difference, giving special attention to "the origin of women and the entire female sex" (91d). According to this myth, women are the reincarnations of cowardly and unjust men.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to know what to make of this account of the origin of women, especially given the way that the beginning of the dialogue foregrounds the elevated status of women in the ideal city.<sup>5</sup> This seems to be a significant inconsistency of the *Timaeus*. Many choose to dismiss the seriousness of the karmic myth, thinking of it as a comedy or a farce.<sup>6</sup> More charitable interpreters see the myth as a test for the reader, while those less charitable read it as expressly misogynistic thinking. In particular, the account of the wandering womb (91c) is frequently cited as a *locus classicus* of misogyny and notions of the hysterical woman.<sup>7</sup>

Must we understand the dialogue's closing myth as misogynistic or absurd to the degree that it is no longer philosophical? My project here is to read this myth with a straight face. I see my analysis of the karmic myth as a reading that adheres to Timaeus' instructions

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<sup>4</sup> See 90e-91a. As Timaeus notes, he is taking this cue from something he mentioned in the first discourse at 42b: "he who had failed to live well would, in his second birth, take on woman's nature."

<sup>5</sup> The equal civic status of women and making childrearing a task of the city rather than a task for women is the main topic of Socrates' political preface to the dialogue at 17a-19b.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor says, "we can be sure that Plato is not in earnest with [the origin of sex]," (p. 635). Miller (2003) says: "there is a provocative humor in Timaeus' karmic myth, all the more so because it is double edged. ... Can we help but smile at the vivid image of the phallus as an 'unruly animal with a mind of its own' that 'tries to overpower all else with its frantic desires'? But does this image not give the lie to the story it is part of, the story of how the gods fashioned the female form? As the reincarnation befitting men unable to master their passions?" (p. 50).

<sup>7</sup> See Bianchi's "The Errant Feminine in Plato's *Timaeus*: "This is this same errancy, straying, or wandering, (*planomenon*) that Plato attributes to the womb at the very end of the dialogue, in a passage that (alongside Hippocrates) is a *locus classicus* for the malady of hysteria," (p. 89).

for engaging with his speech. Namely, I take the myth seriously in its strangeness and investigate the philosophical insights that such strangeness provides an occasion for.

In my analysis, I will make three arguments. First, I argue that, taken seriously, the karmic myth presents a sophisticated account of sexual difference. This account is more complicated than—and in fact, totally rejects—the seeming notion that men are good and establish a norm while women are bad and stray from that norm. Here, I observe the ways that Timaeus complicates the issue of sexual difference by avoiding locating sexual difference in either the body or soul. The karmic myth instead characterizes sexual difference in terms of each sex's relationship to its respective set of reproductive equipment.<sup>8</sup> On this model, men are characterized by their effort to master their autocratic genitals, while women are physiologically compelled to cooperate with the desires of their wombs.

Second, after establishing the account of sexual difference in the karmic myth, I argue that womanhood on this model is characterized by features that are elsewhere characterized as essentially philosophical (e.g., collaboration, making room, recognizing the complex structure of things, nurture, etc.). I make my argument by analyzing the woman's relationship with her womb, reproductive partner, and offspring in the karmic myth. Again, to establish the familiarity of this kind of an account of womanhood in Plato's writing, I consider instances in which Plato uses feminine capacities such as pregnancy and midwifery to characterize crucially philosophical projects elsewhere in his writing, especially his *Symposium* and *Theaetetus*.

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<sup>8</sup> I.e., humans' god-given ζῷα that Timaeus introduces at 91a.

Finally, I address the seeming inconsistency between the karmic myth's assessment of women and the dialogue's opening suggestion that women should share equal status with men in the city. I argue that my reading of the karmic myth resolves any perceived tension between the dialogue's beginning (i.e., Socrates' preface) and end. I analyze the way that Socrates' preface, which foregrounds issues of sexual difference and childbearing, presents a scheme in which men and women share equality by making childbearing a matter of the city rather than the family. Politically, men in the ideal city enjoy the same obligation to childbearing that women possess biologically, and, in turn, women's physiological dependencies find new expression as civic duty.

## 1.2 Sexual Difference in the Karmic Myth (90e-91d)

The *Timaeus* ends with an account of how different kinds of humans (i.e., sexed humans) and the rest of the animals are born, told as a karmic myth.<sup>9</sup> My purpose in this section is to analyze the account of sexual difference at the heart of the final myth in *Timaeus*. Once I have developed the myth's notion of sexual difference and of womanhood, I will compare the myth's commitments with the political ideas about sexual difference from the beginning of the dialogue.

Once Timaeus finishes his account of human health and disease in the third discourse, he turns to the assignment Critias gave him for his speech<sup>10</sup>:

Now, at this point, what we were commanded to do at the beginning, to go through an account of the all down to human birth, seems to have nearly reached its end. For

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, he also presents the origin of non-human animals (91d-92c), but that's beyond the scope of what we're looking at in this paper.

<sup>10</sup> "It seemed good to us that since Timaeus here is the most astronomical of us and has made it his special task to know about the nature of the all, he should speak first, beginning from the birth of the cosmos and ending in the nature of humans," 27a.



how the rest of the animals were born must be recalled only briefly: there's no necessity to speak of this at length. In this way, we would seem to preserve more of a measure with ourselves in our accounts of these things. So let what we say be as follows.<sup>11</sup>

Timaeus introduces the following myth by suggesting that he will be giving a zoogony. However, his account down to human birth is nearly (σχεδόν) finished, but not entirely. That account reaches its end with the following anthropogony at 90e-91d, which precedes the story of the origin of animals and sets down the origin of sexual difference in humans and other animals.<sup>12</sup>

The first page of Timaeus' karmic myth is an anthropogony in multiple senses. On the one hand, it is an account of how male and female humans came to be as sexually distinct beings. On the other hand, it is an account of human birth itself and the role reproduction plays in the lives of men and women. Sexual difference is a crucial concept in each case. However, as integral as sexual difference may be to Timaeus' final task, it is a surprisingly difficult notion to pin down in the myth. Although the myth is ostensibly accounting for the difference between men and women and how they came to be, Timaeus does not clearly locate the site of sexual difference in the soul or body. Timaeus gestures toward the soul and the body in the myth but ultimately denies both as explanations of sexual difference. I will argue that, instead, he explains sexual difference as a matter of each sex's relationship to the god-given ensouled ζῷα with whom they share a body—their reproductive equipment.

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<sup>11</sup> *Timaeus* 90e.

<sup>12</sup> "That's how women and the entire female sex were born," 91d.

### 1.2.1 Soul

In the beginning of the karmic myth, it appears as if Timaeus will account for sexual difference as in terms of moral psychology. He introduces the issue of sexual difference with a karmic framework:

Among those who were born men (ἀνδρῶν), all that were cowardly and lived an unjust life were, according to the likely account (κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα),<sup>13</sup> transplanted in their second birth as women.<sup>14</sup>

This initial characterization seems to make sexual difference a matter of moral psychology: men are formerly virtuous people and women are formerly vicious people. The conditions of the woman's embodiment are caused by the fact that, in her past life she strayed from the moral norm by living in a way that was cowardly and unjust. The moral quality of her past life determines her status as woman, and in this way moral psychology is deeply connected to the matter of her womanhood.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Timaeus begins his karmic myth with an appeal to a claim about gender and moral psychology from much earlier in his speech. Here, he appears to be referencing his claim at 42b-c: "but he who had failed to live well would, in his second birth, take on a woman's nature."

<sup>14</sup> 90e-91a. While Timaeus tells us about the kinds of lives women lived in their previous life—namely, lives that were male, cowardly, and unjust—he does not reveal the kind of life that human men lived in their previous lives. Perhaps Timaeus is positing human men as the primary forms of mortal living beings. On the contrary, Strauss takes it that the karmic myth suggests sexual difference arrives on the scene simultaneously, making the original humans sexless, or "sexless males" (*The City and the Man*, p. 111, note 42). If this is the case, the quality of a human male's previous life remains a mystery.

<sup>15</sup> This has some interesting implications for the nature of the relationship between spheres that seem categorically distinct, especially the relationship between metaphysical and ethical categories. The conditions of a woman's embodiment—the way her body is structured and arranged *as* a female body, as opposed to a male body—blurs metaphysical and ethical lines. Is womanhood a category of a kind of being metaphysically or ethically? If woman really is a different kind of being than man structurally or categorically, then womanhood seems to be a metaphysical category. Her body, a massively constraining feature of her being, the thing that makes moving around and engaging and acting in the world possible, is determined by the unrestrained moral conduct of another, to whom her connection is meaningful only really in name; the identity of the soul may be the same, but none of its experience seems to be. However, as we have seen, Timaeus presents sexual difference as a distinction with ethical causes and effects. Womanhood is caused by a kind of ethical straying—the poor moral conduct of the past life of the woman—and her womanhood has an ethical fallout. As a woman, a person's social entanglements are, by necessity, more complicated and deeply committed than a man's in that her health and well-being is at stake in her social commitments to her

Although there is an undeniable connection between moral psychology and sexual difference, further analysis reveals that sexual difference is not defined by moral psychology. Deviant moral conduct establishes the origin of sexual difference but does not account for any difference between actual men and women. Sex is determined by one's past life, a life which is not one's own. That a woman is a woman is determined by her past moral conduct, but this, so far, says nothing about the woman's life *as* a woman or what it means to be a woman. Women can be just and men can be unjust on this scheme. While moral psychology can be called the cause of sexual difference on the myth's account, it does not account for the differences between individual men and women. The introduction of sexual categories hints at the soul as the defining feature of sexual difference, but instead makes moral psychology distinct from sexual difference.

Timaeus gives us other reasons not to think of the soul as being inherently sexed, and, therefore, not to think of sexual difference as being a matter of the soul. There is a relationship between one's soul and her sex insofar as her sex is determined by past moral conduct, but Timaeus does not say anything to suggest that men and women could be distinguished by anything about their souls. Over the course of various lives, the souls of mortal beings (at least the immortal soul that survives the death of the body) are "transplanted" (μετεφύοντο, 90e8) between different kinds of bodies, from sexually distinct bodies to bodies of different animal species. As the karmic myth goes on to explain, the soul of a human man or woman may at some point in the future occupy the body of a bird, a beast of the land, or a fish.<sup>16</sup> The soul in itself is not limited to a certain sex category

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reproductive partner and offspring. The woman's offspring and sexual partner are not subject to the same high stakes toward the woman as wife or mother.

<sup>16</sup> See 91d, 91e, and 92a, respectively.

on this scheme any more than it is limited to a certain species category. Further, Timaeus gives no indication that his earlier description of immortal human soul applies to only one sex, or that there would be a separate account for female souls.

### 1.2.2 Body

The next part of the myth gestures to the body as the possible site of sexual difference. As Timaeus continues, he distinguishes the sexes based on a person's reproductive equipment, which he sets apart from the human as an ensouled animal in its own right:

And it was at that very time and at that reason that gods built (ἔτεκτῆναντο) the love of sexual intercourse by constructing one sort of ensouled animal (ζῷον...ἐμψυχον) in us and other sort in women, in either case having some manner as this.<sup>17</sup>

This elaboration gets us closer the heart of the myth's concept of sexual difference, but Timaeus' language still leaves ambiguity. The different types of ensouled animals correspond with sexual difference, but, as distinct entities, they do not constitute a precise bodily difference between men and women. Although a person's reproductive equipment is incorporated into her body, it is not a part of her in the same way the other parts of her body belong to her. The animals that the gods place in human bodies have their own souls, bodies, and desires that are distinct from—and often come into conflict with—those of the men and women they inhabit. While a woman's liver or the heart undoubtedly make up and belong to the woman's body, the womb is more of a roommate with the woman.

Timaeus gives us other reasons not to see sexual difference as a properly somatic distinction. Based on this passage, one's reproductive role is a consequence of one's sex rather than the defining feature of it. Timaeus has one's reproductive role correspond with

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<sup>17</sup> *Timaeus* 91a.

one's sex, but precisely speaking, he presents male and female as categories that precede sexual reproduction. Timaeus says that the gods built the ensouled animals *according* to the categories of sexual difference—one in men and another in women (ἐν ταῖς γυναιξίν). We are also encouraged not to see sexual difference as a somatic issue when we consider that Timaeus' anatomical and physiological account, like his psychological account, applies to both sexes.<sup>18</sup> This is a marked departure from, for instance, some of the Hippocratic texts, which represent a contemporaneous framework for understanding sexual difference. The Hippocratics describe “male” and “female” as broad-reaching categories. They explain female bodies as entirely physiologically distinct from men's bodies (e.g., in terms of humors, composition, and standards of health). In other words, in the medical tradition, male and female are not distinguished purely according to reproductive roles; their entire physical composition is supposed to be different—the flesh in women's bodies is porous, imbalanced, and full of winding passageways, while men's bodies are compact and balanced.<sup>19</sup> No such anatomical disparities are represented in any part of the *Timaeus*. Instead, Timaeus seems to reject that bodily account of sexual difference by giving a basic account of human anatomy and physiology that is common to both sexes.

Timaeus takes careful steps to avoid characterizing sexual difference as a matter of the soul or the body. In fact, it's difficult to describe any ways that men and women differ

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<sup>18</sup> Cornford says: “In the machinery of the myth, the creation of the sexual parts and of the desire for intercourse is postponed until the whole account of the human body is complete and the moment comes for the less satisfactory men to be reincarnated as women (91e). ... We are left to conjecture the reasons for this curious plan. It is not enough to say that differences of sex are postponed because the whole account of the human soul and body applies equally to men and women, though this may be true” (291-2).

<sup>19</sup> C.f. *Diseases of Women* I 1.12-14: “A woman is more porous and softer than a man; this being so, a woman draws what is being exhaled from her cavity more quickly and in a greater amount than does a man's,” and, “a woman has hotter blood, and for this reason she herself is hotter than a man ... A man, having solidier flesh than a woman, will never overfill with so much blood that ... he feels pain” (translated by Potter).

in soul or body in what we have looked at so far. The psychological differences between men and women do not strictly speaking belong to them *as* men or women, they belong instead to their past lives which were not necessarily embodied according to the same gender or even the same species. We find the same difficulty with somatic differences. Differences in the bodies of men and women do not strictly speaking belong to them *as* men and women, they belong to other “animals” with whom they coinhabit a body. Further, these animals appear to be a consequence of sexual difference rather than the explanation of it.

### 1.2.3 “Ensouled Animals”

The remainder of Timaeus’ comments on human birth deal with men’s and women’s ensouled animals, the animals’ desires, and how those desires guide—or, in the woman’s case, force—humans to behave in certain ways. Timaeus goes to great lengths to distance a person from her womb. However, while distinct from men and women, the ensouled animals are the key players in Timaeus’s account of sexual difference. This is not to say that sexual difference amounts only to the difference between male and female reproductive equipment, though; it would be a mistake to reduce a man to his genitals or a woman to her womb. In fact, men and women are, as Timaeus shows us with this myth, often in conflict with their animals. For instance, as I will explore further below, Timaeus says that the womb desires childbearing, and that if a woman does not become pregnant in the appropriate season of life,<sup>20</sup> the womb suffocates the woman until she conceives a child. These conflicts are at the heart of sexual difference in the karmic myth. Men and women cannot be distinguished by psychological or somatic differences alone. The difference

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<sup>20</sup> Reading ὄραν χρόνον at 91c.

between men and women depends on the way that each sex copes with the desires of their reproductive equipment. Sexual difference in the karmic myth is, I find, a matter of constraints for one's ability to navigate conflicts and allegiances.

Men's and women's experiences with reproduction in the myth differ in the degree to which they are forced to confront their ensouled animal. Men are able to get in control of their sexual desire with the right education and practice. They need not be controlled by that desire, and Timaeus—as well as custom—treats it as both a moral vice and a physical disease when men are controlled by their sexual desire.<sup>21</sup> Men as beings who are male are characterized and evaluated by their ability to cope with this desire, with the healthiest, most virtuous, and most nearly immortal man being the one who is fully in control of his desire.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, women have no hope of controlling the will of their ensouled animal through any degree of education, practice, or physical exercise. The womb is simply too powerful for a woman to master because of its ability to wander through her body and, consequently, hold her life hostage. Due to the womb's power in getting its way, women's virtue is not a matter of overcoming her womb's desire for childbearing. A woman's goal *cannot* be to dominate or control the desires of her womb. Instead, she must find a way of working together with it. Here precisely lies the nature of sexual difference in the karmic myth: men relate to their ensouled animal in a struggle for dominance, while women relate

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<sup>21</sup> C.f. 86c-e: “When the seed from a man's marrow-area grows copious and free-flowing beyond measure, he brings on himself again and again many intense pains and many pleasures amid his desires and their offspring; and he comes to be raving mad for the greater part of his life through those greatest pleasures and pains; and although he has a soul that's diseased and thoughtless under the influence of the body, people hold the opinion that he's willingly bad. But the truth is that sexual incontinence has come about as a disease of the soul.”

<sup>22</sup> C.f. 90b: “So when someone has fallen in with desires or contentions and labors away at them intensely, all his decrees grow utterly mortal...but when someone devotes himself to the love of learning and to true prudence, and has exercised himself in these things above all others, then there's every necessity, I suppose, that ... he doesn't fall short of [immortality].”

to theirs through necessary mutual collaboration. Even within the context of the myth, Timaeus shows us that the feminine need for negotiation extends beyond its manifestation in sexual reproduction. Women are forced to confront their vulnerability and obligations to not only their wombs, but also to a male sexual partner, their offspring, and a past life of which they have no experience.

The woman's various reproductive obligations provide occasions to explore the notion of womanhood as a state of being forced to negotiate conflict rather than dominate it. In the next section, I will unpack these commitments and, consequently, the properties and behaviors that the *Timaeus* frames as being inherently feminine. Specifically, I am going to examine three ways in which women are compelled to negotiate conflict in the karmic myth. First, I will look further at the way a woman is beholden to the desires of her womb, and how she deals with the threat of suffocation when the womb's desires are not satisfied by conceiving a child. Next, as an extension of the woman's relationship to her womb, I will consider her reliance on a male sexual partner to conceive a child and satisfy her womb's desires.<sup>23</sup> Finally, I will examine the woman's physiological commitment to her offspring in pregnancy. I will argue that Timaeus' explanation of womanhood through these relationships represents an essentially philosophical way of being according to the values expressed in the *Timaeus* and Plato's other dialogues.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> According to familial custom, this would be the woman's husband. However, as I will explore further below, Timaeus curiously avoids any familial language in the karmic myth—there is no mention of husbands, marriage, or even children. A woman's offspring is characterized as a ζῷον that grows inside her, and her sexual partner in reproduction is not given any title or description. Of the man, Timaeus says only that “the desire of the one and the love of the other bring the sexes together; and, as if plucking fruit from trees, they sow in the womb...” (91d).

<sup>24</sup> In fact, according to much of what Plato has to say about philosophical virtue, the way the woman is beholden to others in negotiating conflict is more philosophically virtuous than the characteristically masculine pursuit of domination in conflict.



### 1.3 The Philosophical Virtue of Femininity

As I unpack Timaeus' characterization of sexual difference and womanhood in particular in the karmic myth, I will be arguing that the traits that constitute femininity (e.g. the capacity to nurture, make room for others, and collaborate rather than dominate) are familiar to us as traits that exemplify philosophical virtue in Plato's other dialogues. Before I continue my analysis of the karmic myth, I will explain what I mean when I call something a "philosophical virtue." I do not intend to discuss a system of ethics in a rigorous sense. Rather, when I refer to philosophical virtue, I mean to designate behaviors, habits, techniques, or dispositions that are essentially philosophical. I consider philosophical virtues to be behaviors that are virtuous insofar as someone is a philosopher, or, in other words, the behaviors that constitute philosophical conduct. These behaviors distinguish the aspiring philosopher from the non-philosopher.

In the dialogues, Plato's characters often discuss proper and improper ways of doing philosophy. They show us that philosophical method is something that can be both used and abused. In the *Republic*, for instance, Socrates warns of the dangers of introducing people to argumentation when they are too young. He says that "when young people get their first taste of arguments, they misuse it by treating it as a kind of game of contradiction."<sup>25</sup> However, it is not only the young who use argumentation unphilosophically. Plato often uses characters in his dialogue to demonstrate philosophical and unphilosophical conduct. Characters like Meno, Thrasymachus, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus and, to a lesser extent, Euthyphro and Theodorus serve as examples of

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<sup>25</sup> 539b, trans. Grube and Reeve.

people who use discourse and inquiry in an unphilosophical way.<sup>26</sup> These characters and their misuse of argumentation can be distinguished by the ends and means of their discourse. Generally speaking, eristic argumentation appears similar to philosophy but is set apart by its goal (i.e., winning the argument rather than getting at the truth) and the way it goes about achieving that goal (i.e., the use of rhetoric to support the speaker's hypothesis rather than test it).

This unphilosophical misuse of discourse stands in contrast with the philosophical project. While eristic discourse seeks to win arguments by means of rhetoric and persuasion, philosophy aims to test the truth of ideas. This is the way Socrates describes his project in the *Theaetetus*, comparing his philosophical art to midwifery:

The most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.<sup>27</sup>

Prioritizing the truth over one's own hypothesis is characteristic of philosophy. Rather than an attachment to any one hypothesis or claim, a philosophical attitude entails an openness to resistance. Consider, for instance, Timaeus' exhortation in the second discourse as he explores which triangle is the most beautiful and makes up bodies:

If, then, someone could tell of one that's more beautiful than he's selected for the construction of these bodies, then he wins the mastery not as enemy but as friend.<sup>28</sup>

Philosophy seeks to recognize what is true rather than dominate an opponent through persuasion and rhetoric. In recognizing what is true, the philosopher makes room for dissent and decenters herself in the discourse. In some dialogues, this aim is carried out in

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<sup>26</sup> And, to a lesser extent, Euthyphro and Theodorus. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

<sup>27</sup> *Theaetetus*. 150c. It is noteworthy that Socrates compares the philosophical project of testing the truth of ideas with the midwife's art assisting in childbirth. I will return to this analogy later in my project.

<sup>28</sup> *Timaeus* 54a.

dialectic—a method of division that seeks to identify what is and separate like from like. Discourse with these aims is philosophically virtuous.

I find that Timaeus' characterization of womanhood is informed by these same ideals. I will argue that this is demonstrated in the myth's account of the woman's obligations to her womb, sexual partner, and offspring.

### 1.3.1 The Womb and Sexual Intercourse

In the karmic myth, the most evident way that women are constrained in their ability to navigate conflict has to do with the womb. The woman is physically compelled to answer to the desire of her womb:

Whenever [the womb] comes to be fruitless long beyond its due season, it grows difficult and irritable; and wandering everywhere throughout the body it blocks up the breathing passages, and by not allowing breathing throws one into the most extreme frustrations (*ἀπορίας τὰς ἐσχάτας*) and brings on all sorts of other diseases, until the desire of the one and the love of the other bring the sexes together.<sup>29</sup>

In this myth, a woman's health and relationship to childbearing consists of two distinct physical dependencies. These dependencies compel the woman to accommodate the desires of her womb and collaborate with a male sexual partner. First, because the woman's life can be jeopardized by the womb blocking her breathing passages, her health depends on the position and behavior of her womb. By not allowing breathing, the womb throws a woman into the most extreme bodily *aporia*. While this description is unpleasant, the woman's vulnerability to intensely painful *aporia* is not a weakness. In addition to her dependency on her womb, the woman depends on a male sexual partner in order to conceive a child and satisfy her womb's desires.

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<sup>29</sup> *Timaeus* 91c-d.

### 1.3.1.1 Dependency and Collaboration

To understand the woman's dependency on her womb, we should first return to the man's relationship with his ensouled animal. Timaeus' myth begins with a description of the male genitals:

From the passageway by which drink goes out, where it receives the liquid that comes through the lungs down into the kidneys and on into the bladder and ejects it with marrow that extends from the head down along the neck and through the spine; and since this marrow was ensouled and had found a vent, it instilled in that very part where it found a vent a lively desire through emission and thus produced a love of begetting. This is why the nature of the genitals is autocratic, like an animal that won't listen to reason, and attempts to master all things through its stinging desires.<sup>30</sup>

After outlining the ensouled animal in men, Timaeus introduces the womb:

Again, for the same reason,<sup>31</sup> there's the matrix or so-called womb in women, which is an indwelling animal desirous of childbearing.<sup>32</sup>

The ensouled animal in women differs from the one in men in the content of its desire and the way it goes about achieving that desire. The man's ensouled animal desires emission; the marrow simply wants out.<sup>33</sup> This desire is constant, unrelenting, and insensitive to circumstance. Timaeus says that the ensouled animal in the man "always attempts to master all things." The womb's desire—childbearing—is more complex. Unlike the unrelenting desire of the male animal, the womb is sensitive to circumstance. While the male animal is always trying to control the man, the womb takes action to control the woman and achieve

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<sup>30</sup> *Timaeus* 91a-b.

<sup>31</sup> The "same reason" seems to be the coming-to-be of the two sexes, referring back to 90e-91a. I.e., "Among those who were born men, all that were cowardly and unjust were, according to the likely account, transplanted in their second birth as women; and it was at that very time and *for that reason* that the gods built the love of sexual intercourse by constructing one sort of ensouled animal in us and another sort in women," (90e-91a).

<sup>32</sup> *Timaeus* 91b.

<sup>33</sup> The animal's desire in turn produces a love of begetting. It is ambiguous whether the man or the genitals possess this love, I am inclined to think that the man possesses the love of begetting while the animal possesses the desire to emit. These do not seem like animals complex enough to have both desire and love. I think 91d1 reinforces this interpretation.

its desires only when the season of childbearing is unfulfilled. Further, the womb is not only sensitive to circumstance, it has some care for measure. The womb does not simply try to master the woman for the sake of mastery. Rather, Timaeus says that it becomes unruly only when it is fruitless long beyond its due season.<sup>34</sup>

The woman's reliance on her womb is mirrored by her reliance on her sexual partner. The woman depends on her sexual partner because he provides something that she could not in any circumstances procure for herself; a woman requires a man to conceive a child. This alone does not make her dependent on him, though. A crucial aspect of her dependency is that her health and well-being depends on what she can receive only from a male sexual partner. On the model of the karmic myth, foregoing childbearing and leaving the female body to its own devices results in blocked breathing passages and, consequently, "all manner of diseases" (νόσους πανταδαπάς, 91c). The woman needs sexual intercourse not only to propitiate her womb, but to be healthy in general. The *Timaeus* tells a relatively happy ending to the woman's troubles with her womb (the woman's diseases last only until they are relieved sexually) but gives no indication of how long the woman can endure these pains, or what would happen if she refused to find a sexual partner.<sup>35</sup> The woman depends on her sexual partner to live a tolerable life—without bearing children, she is vulnerable to attack from within her own body.

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<sup>34</sup> ὅταν ἄκαρπον παρὰ τὴν ὥραν χρόνον πολὺν γίγνηται, 91c.

<sup>35</sup> Other ancient sources—to whatever degree they describe a similar phenomenon, which it seems that they do—demonstrate the life-or-death stakes of this disease for the woman. The Hippocratic tradition describes a virgin's disease in which the womb terrorizes a girl in a similar way if she does not start having sex with men at the time of menarche. For more on the virgin's disease, see *On Girls*, and *Diseases of Women* I 2.14-17, *Generation* 4, and *Nature of Women* 3.316.

Women categorically rely on men for their lives and well-being on this account. In addition to being secondary to men in the logic of the anthropogony (i.e., some men take their second birth as women), women's lives depend on sexual reproduction with men. However, I do not find that women's dependency on men is an inherently misogynistic characterization. As various interlocutors from other dialogues show us, dominance and independence are not necessarily philosophically virtuous qualities. Philosophical discourse puts us in a position of depending on a certain kind of engagement with others, and women in this account are disposed to this way of being even in their physiology. The woman, acting as womankind, does justice to men, her womb, and her body by conceiving a child. Men do not on this account have the same universal relationship to reproduction. The man does not do justice to anyone—least of all himself—by simply “emitting.” Rather, virtue for the man involves overpowering the desire of his ensouled animal.

This difference in men's and women's relationships with their reproductive equipment reflects a difference between eristic and philosophy. Timaeus characterizes the male genitals in a way that reflects dishonest and willful people with whom Socrates speaks in other dialogues (e.g., Euthyphro, Meno, Thrasymachus, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus). This similarity lies in both the desire and the means of achieving that desire. The male desire for emission does not require the presence or the consent of the woman. Like male desire, these speakers' desire to be correct does not have any need for an interlocutor or partner in their correctness. Not only does dominance in discourse not require cooperation from a conversational partner, but it also does not have the capacity for such collaboration. For one's position to be victorious in a debate, the enemy position has to be vanquished. We see this in the disregard the dialogues' vicious interlocutors show

for their conversation partners. They can achieve this desire without coming together with others in philosophical dialogue. These vicious interlocutors can—and do—achieve the feeling of victory or correctness that they desire through other, unphilosophical means. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus run circles around others with rhetorical games, barely acknowledging other perspectives. Euthyphro maintains his sense of rightness by not testing his views.

The womb, on the other hand, represents a more philosophically virtuous way of being. It operates in a way that resembles Socrates, or other interlocutors who care in earnest for carrying out philosophical discourse with others. The womb is not incessant in its attempts to get what it wants. Instead, it is sensitive to the circumstance of the other it is trying to persuade, it is aware that there is an appropriate season or circumstance for acting. This care for circumstance evokes instances in which Socrates relents from questioning a frustrated interlocutor (e.g., When Socrates turns away from Meno and to the slave in *Meno*). Additionally, the womb's desire is for collaboration. According to Timaeus—and this point differs from many of the Hippocratic accounts—the womb does not desire moistness or to be moistened, it desires childbearing. Where the male desire for emission—and the corresponding vicious desire for dominance or victory in discourse—does not require collaboration from the other, childbearing is an inherently collaborative effort.

Like the womb's desire, philosophical discourse seeks collaboration rather than domination. This should be unsurprising to us, given the frequency with which Plato uses feminine capacities—especially feminine reproductive capacities—as analogies for philosophical virtue elsewhere in his work. Looking back to the *Theaetetus*, Socrates

characterizes his philosophical midwifery as an art that inherently requires collaboration with another:

One thing which I have in common with the ordinary midwives is that I myself am barren of wisdom. The common reproach against me is that I am always asking questions of other people but never express my own views about anything, because there is no wisdom in me; and that is true enough. And the reason of it is this, that God compels me to attend the travail of others, but has forbidden me to procreate. ... But it is I, with God's help, who deliver them of this offspring.<sup>36</sup>

Socrates' analogy is not an exact match to the description of womanhood in the karmic myth, but his portrait of the midwife shares an important element with Timaeus' woman: both the midwife and Timaeus' woman rely on another to bring about the birth of the offspring.

### 1.3.1.2 *Aporia*

As Timaeus goes on, he illustrates another element of the womb's approach to achieving its desires that demonstrates another kind of philosophical virtue represented in female embodiment:

Whenever this comes to be fruitless long beyond its due season, it grows difficult and irritable; and wandering everywhere throughout the body it blocks up the breathing-passages, and by not allowing breathing throws one into the most extreme frustrations and brings on all sorts of other diseases, until the desire of the one and the love of the other<sup>37</sup> bring the sexes together.<sup>38</sup>

While the male genitals are constantly trying to overtake the man through stinging desires, the womb has a more strategic and intense approach. The womb achieves its desire by

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<sup>36</sup> *Theaet.* 150c-d, translated by Levett and Burnyeat.

<sup>37</sup> On the basis of the masculine gender of 'ἔρος' and the feminine gender of 'ἐπιθυμία', this line has been interpreted as a misogynistic slight. The idea is that Timaeus is implying that men love, a higher emotion, while women only desire, a baser emotion. Other interpreters take the nouns together, seeing Timaeus as saying something like the love and desire of the woman causes her to come together with the man. It seems to me that another possible interpretation of this passage is that the love of the one means the love of the woman, while the "other" that has desire could be the womb. She is, after all, definitively feminine (if we think the gender of the words is important, which it need not be), and a distinct entity apart from the woman with her own desires and aims.

<sup>38</sup> *Timaeus* 91c-d.



producing *aporia* in the woman. *Aporia*, the state of impasse or frustration, is familiar to readers of Plato as an intellectual or emotional state of some of Socrates' interlocutors at the end of a dialogue. The *Timaeus*, however, presents a physiological and inescapable *aporia*. When not anchored by a growing fetus, wombs wander around the body and cause trouble. Here, Timaeus emphasizes suffocation as the trouble caused for the woman, singling it out among the other "many diseases" caused for the woman. The woman is thrown into *aporia* by her suffocation. The womb is physically blocking the woman's airways, bringing on an *aporia* with a life-or-death urgency. The womb forces the woman to confront it and act.

The phenomenon of the womb-induced *aporia* is not unique to the *Timaeus*. The Hippocratic texts describe the same issue for women. Looking to the Hippocratic tradition, and in particular to the text *On Girls*, illustrates the connection between the bodily *aporia* women experience here and the kind of *aporia* Socrates induces in his interlocutors. In the treatise *On Girls*, the author describes what happens when a girl does not begin having intercourse with men in due season. According to that text, intercourse is required to allow menstrual blood to flow freely from the womb:

When young girls who are at the age to be married remain husbandless, they suffer even more often from this, especially during their monthly "descent," an excessive evil which did not trouble them when they were younger. But when they reach this age, blood flows into the uterus as if it should then flow out from it. But when the mouth at its end is not opened up (*ἀπορρευσόμενον*), even more blood flows in from food and the body's growth. Then, having no means of flowing out, the blood springs up in its multitude, into the heart and the midriff. When these fill up, the heart becomes heavy and dull, then from heavy to numb (*νάρκη*), and from the numbness madness (*παράνοια*) seizes her.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Hippocrates, *On Girls* 1.466, my translation.

The accumulation of menstrual blood causes a pain and eventually a deep dumbness that leads to madness. Socrates' interlocutors report similar symptoms of their philosophical state of *aporia*. Meno, for instance, describes the numbness brought on by conversation with Socrates:

Socrates, before I even met you I used to hear that you are always in a state of perplexity (*ἀπορεῖς*) and that you bring others into the same state, and now I think you are bewitching me and beguiling me, simply putting me under a spell, so that I am quite perplexed (*ἀπορίας*). Indeed, if a joke is in order, you seem, in appearance and in every other way, like the broad torpedo fish, for it too makes anyone who comes close and touches it feel numb (*ναρκᾶν*), and you now seem to have had that kind of effect on me, for both my mind and my tongue are numb, and I have no answer to give you.<sup>40</sup>

Here we see Socrates producing in Meno a similar experience to the girl experiencing the virgin's disease in *On Girls*—*aporia* gives way to numbness. In *On Girls* and the *Timaeus*, the *aporia* eventually produces insufferable frustration. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates describes the tendency his art has to bring on pain in his subject:

There is another point also in which those who associate with me are like women in childbirth. They suffer the pains of labor, and are filled day and night with distress; indeed they suffer far more than women. And this pain my art is able to bring on, and also to allay.<sup>41</sup>

Like the womb, Socrates is able to induce pain in a person to move them toward a kind of birth.

In the *Timaeus*, the womb's ability to produce *aporia* in the woman relies on its position within the woman and its ability to move around within her body. This stands in contrast with the male genitals' fixed position on the outside of the man's body. The womb does not have a natural or fixed position in the woman's body; it only occupies positions that

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<sup>40</sup> *Meno*, 79e-80b, translated by Grube.

<sup>41</sup> *Theaetetus*, 151a.

are more or less compatible with the woman's well-being and ability to bear a child.<sup>42</sup> Meno accuses Socrates of having an aporetic effect for the same reason. He says that it is because of Socrates' own perplexity that he is able to produce the same effect in others. Socrates recounts this kind of accusation against him in the *Theaetetus* in his discussion of midwifery:

The common reproach against me is that I am always asking questions of other people but never express my own views about anything, because there is no wisdom in me, and that is true enough. And the reason of it is this, that God compels me to attend the travail of others, but has forbidden me to procreate.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Socrates' interlocutors, Timaeus' woman cannot ignore her *aporia*. When Meno, Euthyphro, and the others become frustrated by the aporetic effect Socrates has on them, they can—and most often do—walk away from the situation out of frustration rather than confront it. They can deny or dwell in the *aporia* that is brought on in part by their unphilosophical way of being, choosing not to cooperate with Socrates any longer. The woman in Timaeus' myth is forced to reckon with the *aporia* and to give in to the desires of her womb. Her *aporia* compels her to work together with her womb.

### 1.3.2 Pregnancy and Birth

The power and desire of the womb forces the woman to cope with it and act in collaboration with others in several ways. So far, we have considered some ways the woman is forced to reckon with the desires of her womb in collaborative action. Additionally, the process of satisfying the womb's desire (i.e., childbearing) is an inherently collaborative effort. In this

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<sup>42</sup> In addition to its unfixedness, the womb, in the *Timaeus* and throughout Greek medical writings, is characterized as being generally indistinct and indeterminate. The woman's animal, the womb, is indistinct in name and number. Timaeus' words that we would translate as 'matrix' and 'womb' are plural: μήτραί and ὕστέραι (91c). This is not optional, there are not singular versions of these words that Timaeus could have chosen to use instead. This is the standard usage. On the Greek understanding, the womb has a natural sense of plurality.

<sup>43</sup> *Theaet.* 150c.

section, I will focus on the other aspects of womanhood that Timaeus explores in the karmic myth: pregnancy and childbearing.

Timaeus' account of these activities demonstrates the sense in which the woman, as a fact of her womanhood, is essentially committed to her offspring. Because satisfying the womb's desires requires gestation, childbearing, and childrearing,<sup>44</sup> the woman's initial obligation to her womb entails another set of obligations in motherhood.

After Timaeus goes through the trouble that the womb causes for the woman and the means by which the woman can relieve that trouble, he finishes the part of the myth dealing with the origin of women by narrating the fallout of disease-curing sexual intercourse:

...by not allowing breathing [the womb] throws one into the most extreme frustrations and brings on all sorts of other diseases, until the desire of the one and the love of the other bring the sexes together; and, as if plucking the fruit from trees, they sow in the womb, as though in a field, animals (ζῷα) invisible for their smallness and not yet formed; and these animals they again make distinct in their parts; and they nourish them to great size within the womb and afterwards, by bringing them into the light of day, complete their birth as animals. That's how women and the entire female sex were born.<sup>45</sup>

In the process of satisfying her womb's desire for childbearing, the woman runs into more collaborators with whom she becomes inextricably tied. It is not just the intercourse that is collaborative; Timaeus frames pregnancy as a collaborative project as well. In this passage, Timaeus consistently uses 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural verbs to describe the act of gestation. For instance, at 91d, is not just that she, the woman, nourishes the child, it is the case that *they* are—the woman and whom?—nourishing the offspring. The other party in addition to the woman who constitutes the “they” responsible for the gestation of the offspring throughout

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<sup>44</sup> Possibly also a general care for the household and estate (i.e., finances and property), but this is more according to custom and not outlined so clearly in the karmic myth of the *Timaeus*.

<sup>45</sup> *Timaeus* 91c-d.

91d (i.e., κατασπείραντες, they sow; διακρίναντες, they distinguish; ἐκθρέφονται, they nourish or bring to birth) could be her male sexual partner, but this seems unlikely. Surely the man has a role in sowing the seed of the offspring, but what part does he play in distinguishing the parts of the offspring or nourishing it in the womb? It seems likely to me that the “they” acting together here is the woman and her womb.<sup>46</sup> In any case, Timaeus depicts the woman as acting in collaboration even in the nourishing of the offspring in pregnancy.

Of course, the child itself is party to this project, too. There has to be a child for the womb’s desire for childbearing to be satisfied. The woman’s commitment to her child is a project of giving definition and nourishing the child. In what follows in this section, I will unpack the woman’s commitments to her offspring as further dimensions of womanhood and femininity that Timaeus shows us in the karmic myth.

It is odd here that, although the woman’s sexual partner and offspring constitute the woman’s familial commitments, Timaeus avoids using any familial language. The man with whom the woman generates an offspring is not called her husband. In fact, he is not given any kind of name or term; Timaeus says only that they come together, “συναγαγόντες.” In any case, Timaeus does not give an explicit name to the male involved in sexual reproduction. In his vagueness, Timaeus gives no indication that the man in any way belongs to the woman, or the woman to the man. They are not identified as husband

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<sup>46</sup> This reading is reinforced by understanding the ἐκατέρων in “μέχριτερ ἂν ἐκατέρων ἢ ἐπιθυμία καὶ ὁ ἔρως συναγαγόντες” as the woman and her womb rather than the woman and the man. Sexual intercourse being brought about by the desire of the womb and the love of the woman is an attractive reading of this line because it mirrors Timaeus’ earlier comments about men and their genitals. Back at 91b, Timaeus says that marrow “instilled in that very part where it found a vent a lively desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) for emission and thus produced a love (ἔρωτα) of begetting.” If it is the desire and love of the woman and her womb that cause the sexes to come together in sexual intercourse, it makes sense to interpret the “they” as the woman and her womb.

and wife. This, however, does not take away from the sense in which the woman depends on her sexual partner. Regardless of the marital status of their relationship, the woman experiences a profound dependency on her sexual partner insofar as he provides something that she cannot under any circumstances procure for herself on her own.

The same family-evading language extends to the woman's offspring. Timaeus chooses language that obscures the relationship between mother and child to the greatest degree. The offspring are not called children, sons, daughters, or even heirs. Timaeus calls them "ζῷα," living things, a remarkably unspecific term for what is growing in the woman's womb. In a myth that describes the transmutation of species through birth, can we be confident that these living things are even *human*? Presumably they are humans, but the language is nevertheless cloudy. Timaeus does not describe a mother nourishing a child, but simply a living thing. Although I am analyzing this part of the myth and this aspect of femininity as motherhood and the woman's commitment to her offspring, we have to keep in mind that Timaeus is not describing the mother-child relationship of typical Athenian custom. We should understand the woman's would-be familial commitments in the *Timaeus* itself as designating a more basic social-biological relationship. The woman's sexual partner and offspring are relevant to Timaeus' conception of womanhood and therefore to the myth insofar as they are necessary for her womb to get its way.

Timaeus characterizes pregnancy and the gestation of the ζῷα as a project of the mother (or the parents together, or the mother and womb together) executing certain commitments to her offspring. Timaeus highlights three ways in which the woman is committed to her offspring. The mother's first obligation to her offspring is to make it distinct in its parts. The second is nourishing the child within the womb. I'm going to

address each of these features one at a time. Finally, the woman is committed to bringing or leading her offspring into light (ἀγαγόντες εἰς φῶς, 91d). These three features—giving structural distinction, providing nourishment, and bringing the offspring into light—constitute what is necessary to complete the birth of the offspring (ζῶων ἀποτελέσωσι γένεσιν, 91d). The woman’s relationship to her womb and sexual partner revealed the feminine quality of dependency and mutual collaboration. Her relationship to her offspring reveals more aspects of femininity: in addition to being essentially dependent on the actions of others, the woman is what acknowledges, develops, and makes room for structure beyond herself, and gives it its own place in the world.

#### 1.3.1.1 Giving Distinctness and Making Room

When the offspring is initially sown in the womb, it is invisible (ἀόρατα) due to its smallness (σμικρότητος) and the its unformed state (ἀδιάπλαστα). To bring the offspring to birth is to solve this problem of its invisibility—in multiple senses, as Timaeus writes the mother brings the child into light (εἰς φῶς ἀγαγόντες). Timaeus tells us that this is accomplished by transforming the offspring’s smallness and unformedness. The first of these that Timaeus addresses is the unformedness. To give birth to her offspring, the mother must give definition to the offspring’s body:

They sow in the womb, as though in a field, animals invisible for their smallness and not yet formed; and these animals they again make distinct in their parts.<sup>47</sup>

When the mother makes her offspring distinct in its parts, she does so in two senses. Each sense reflects its own kind of philosophical virtue. On the one hand, the mother makes her offspring’s body distinct from itself—the previously unformed body develops limbs, a

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<sup>47</sup> *Timaeus* 91d.

face, and everything that constitutes a body. On the other hand, she is making the offspring distinct by separating it from herself and providing it with self-differentiation and self-definition.

The mother makes her offspring visible in part by making its body distinct in its parts. Making and giving distinctions is shown throughout the dialogues to be a core concern of doing philosophy. The practice of making divisions—especially dividing like from like—is the project of dialectic.<sup>48</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates even characterizes the method of division as a kind of cutting of the body at its natural joints.<sup>49</sup> While Socrates here is making butchering and the death of the animal the analogy, a similar kind of division occurs as the mother forms the body of her offspring preparing to give birth to it.

The art of division is philosophical because it is a search for truth. In making dialectical divisions, one recognizes what is apart from the other things that are like it and on its own terms. This is to say, dialectic aims to acknowledge categories on their own terms rather than in terms of custom. In the *Statesman*, the Stranger remarks multiple times on the importance of excluding cultural judgements from the method of division in order to make the truest cuts.

It's as if someone tried to divide the human race into two and made the cut in the way that most people here carve things up, taking the Greek race away as one, separate from all the rest, and to all the other races together, which are unlimited in number, which don't mix with one another, and don't share the same language—calling this collection by the single appellation 'barbarian'. Because of this single appellation, they expect it to be a single family or class too. ... But I imagine the division would be done better, more by real classes and more into two, if one cut ... the human race in its turn by means of male and female, and only split off Lydians or Phrygians or anyone else and ranged them against all the rest when one was at a loss as to how to

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<sup>48</sup> And practicing dialectic is, of course, according to many accounts in the dialogues the ultimate goal of philosophy (c.f. *Republic* 532a-d).

<sup>49</sup> *Phaedrus*, 265c.



split in such a way that each of the halves split off was simultaneously a real class and a part.<sup>50</sup>

When appealing to customary classifications—like Greek and barbarian—one is more likely to miss the real ways in which categories (i.e., a class or part; γένος or μέρος). Later, the Stranger remarks again on the way the dialectical method of division stands at odds with customary classifications and judgements:

Such a method of argument as ours is not more concerned with what is more dignified than with what is not, and neither does it at all despise the smaller more than the greater, but always reaches the truest conclusion by itself.<sup>51</sup>

True divisions divide according to the properties of the things being divided themselves, rather than human judgements about those things. Timaeus' description of the mother giving distinction to the body of her offspring emphasizes the sense in which she gives it distinction on its own terms. This sheds light on Timaeus' use of impersonal and non-familial language for the offspring. He is describing the woman's pregnancy as the process of bringing forth of a ζῴον, a living being in its own right. This characterization stands in contrast with the customary and traditional mother-child relationship. Timaeus is not describing a mother shaping her offspring *as* a child or member of the family. The mother here is not forming the way the child honors or participates in family custom, she is merely forming it as a living thing.

This brings us to the second sense in which the mother distinguishes her offspring in the womb: she distinguishes her offspring from herself. By means of her own womb and body, she gives her offspring body and structure apart from her own. In other words, she makes room for her offspring to be self-differentiated and self-defined. This practice, once

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<sup>50</sup> *Statesman*, 262c-263a, translated by Rowe.

<sup>51</sup> *Statesman*, 262d, translated by Rowe.

again, stands in contrast with familial custom, which seeks to assimilate a child into the family by eliding difference in the name of familial bonds and obligations. The mother's obligation to her child in pregnancy involves creating a difference between mother and child at the same time as she is immanently connected with and encompasses the child growing within her. Unlike the Demiurge of Timaeus's first discourse, who creates things to be as much like him as possible, the mother creates in a way that not only acknowledges but emphasizes the difference between herself and her offspring.<sup>52</sup>

In this respect, the role of the mother in the karmic myth resembles the role of the *χώρα* in the generation of the cosmos in Timaeus' second discourse, a resemblance Timaeus himself establishes multiple times:

Let us speak of the mother and receptacle of that which has been born visible and in all ways sensed as neither earth nor air nor fire nor water, nor as any of these things that have been born composites or constituents of these. But if we say that she is some invisible and shapeless form—all-receptive, but partaking somehow of the intelligible in a most perplexing way and most hard-to-capture—then we won't be lying.<sup>53</sup>

Like the *χώρα*, the mother in the karmic myth is wholly distinct from her offspring yet creates the occasion for the existence of the offspring in her natural capacity to make room for and give herself to what is other than herself.

### 1.3.2.1 Nurture

In the previous section, we looked at Timaeus's characterization of pregnancy and gestation as a process of making the offspring visible. In order to bring a child to birth and make it visible, the mother must make the offspring both well-formed and large enough.

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<sup>52</sup> C.f. *Timaeus* 29e: [The Demiurge] was good, and ... willed that all things should come to resemble himself as much as possible.

<sup>53</sup> *Timaeus* 51a-b.

So far, we have seen how the mother gives her offspring form and structure. Next, Timaeus addresses the issue of the offspring's size. When it is sown in the womb, the offspring is invisible due in part to smallness (σμικρότητος).<sup>54</sup> The mother's nurturing allows her offspring to grow to a visible size over the course of her pregnancy:

They nurture (ἐκθρέψωνται) [their offspring] to great size within the womb.<sup>55</sup>

Nurture is another key feature of the woman's commitment to her offspring. To unpack both what is essentially feminine and what is philosophically virtuous about nurturing, we need to distinguish it from similar capacities. What the mother does for her offspring in pregnancy—nurturing, ἐκτρέφω—is distinct from but closely related to feeding (τρέφω) and care (ἐπιμέλεια). Although the word for feeding, τρέφω, is the root of ἐκτρέφω, the words have different senses.<sup>56</sup> What the mother does is more than just feeding. Feeding the offspring and helping it to grow to a larger size is one aspect of the mother's nurture, but her nurture extends beyond that. In addition to providing nourishment for her offspring, the mother—or, more exactly, the womb—provides the offspring with a safe place in which it can grow undisturbed. At the same time, it would be going too far to call her nurture care

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<sup>54</sup> The issue of a thing's invisibility due to its smallness and, in turn, its visibility in aggregation, appears a few times in the *Timaeus*. It occurs for the first time in the discussion of the fabrication of human bodies in the first discourse. Here Timaeus here says that the rivets binding human bodies together are “invisible in their smallness,” σμικρότητα ἀοράτοις (43a). Later, Timaeus repeats the idea in the second discourse in his discussion of the pyramids that make up fire: “one must think of all these as being so small that none of them, taken singly each in its own individual kind, is seen by us because of their smallness; but when many have been gathered together, then do we see the masses of them,” (53b-c). The idea occurs once more in the third discourse, as Timaeus discusses the bubble-structures that arise from acid phlegm: “taken one at a time they are invisible because of their smallness (ἀοράτων διὰ σμικρότητα), but taken together yield a visible mass,” (83d).

<sup>55</sup> *Timaeus* 91d4.

<sup>56</sup> For the basic sense of this difference, we can look to the different translations according to Liddell & Scott. They translate τρέφω “to make grow or increase,” (p. 713) while ἐκτρέφω is “to bring up from childhood, rear up,” (p. 212). However, while τρέφω typically designates feeding in this simple sense, the word seems to take on a broader meaning in other parts of the *Timaeus*. In the dialogue's opening, Socrates describes the education of the guardians as a kind of τροφή: “And what about their nurture (τροφήν)? Weren't we saying that they would be nourished (τεθράφθαι) on lessons in both gymnastics and music?” (18a).

(i.e., ἐπιμέλεια).<sup>57</sup> While the notion of care entails a special attention that is paid to the object of the care, the mother’s nurture for the offspring in the womb is involuntary and operative at all times regardless of her attention. This is the case at least while the offspring is still in the womb (i.e., pre-born), which is the explicit scope of Timaeus’ analysis in the myth. His discussion of women ends abruptly with the birth of the offspring.<sup>58</sup> The mother’s nurture, then, is a capacity in between feeding and caring. It is a nurture that provides sustenance and protection, allowing for the offspring to grow and develop.

Once again, the way the mother nurtures her offspring mirrors the role of the χώρα in Timaeus’s second discourse. Timaeus describes the χώρα as a wet nurse (τιθήνην) of becoming.<sup>59</sup> Like the womb, the χώρα is that *in which* things come to be.<sup>60</sup> The mother is like the χώρα both in the sense that she provides the occasion for things to come into being by giving them body and also in the sense that she wholly encompasses what comes to be within her.<sup>61</sup>

### 1.3.2.2 Bringing Offspring into the Light

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<sup>57</sup> While care and education are not the senses in which the mother nurtures her offspring in the womb, the care for and education of youth is expressed as a concern in its own right for the philosopher in multiple dialogues. Significant care is given to the issue of childrearing in the *Republic*, the *Laws*, and even earlier in the *Timaeus* (18d).

<sup>58</sup> C.f., “After which they bring them forth into the light and thus complete the birth of the living thing. In this way, then, women and the whole female sex have come to be. And the tribe of birds...” (91d).

<sup>59</sup> *Timaeus* 49a.

<sup>60</sup> Timaeus characterizes the χώρα as that in which things come to be multiple times; see 49e, 50d.

<sup>61</sup> The mother’s nurture also evokes Timaeus’s description of the Earth in the first discourse: “And Earth [the Demiurge] contrived to be both our nurturer (τροφόν) and, because she’s huddled round the pole that’s stretched through the all, the guardian and craftsman of Night and Day—first and eldest of the gods that have come to be within heaven (40b-c).” Timaeus’s characterization of the Earth as nurturer here is unlike the nurture of the χώρα. While the χώρα is all-encompassing, the Earth is placed in the center of the cosmos, fully encompassed by the cosmos around her, and nurtures from there.

The mother's relationship to her offspring in gestation culminates with birth. Once the mother has nurtured her offspring and distinguished its body from her own from within the womb, the woman is able to give birth and make her offspring visible:

Leading them into the light, they complete the birth of the animals.<sup>62</sup>

Giving birth also constitutes an end of the woman's compulsion to her womb. What started with the womb's desire for childbearing is brought to completion when the woman finally gives birth. The womb first expresses its desire by producing extreme pains for the woman in a physical *aporia* that compels her to engage in sexual intercourse. However, this was only ever a means to an end. The point of the womb's desire is the birthing of the child, not insemination. This is underscored by the way Timaeus initially characterizes pregnancy with an agricultural metaphor: "then, culling as it were the fruit from trees, they sow upon the womb as if it were ploughed soil animals..."<sup>63</sup> The sowing of seed in the womb, as in the earth, is significant and worthwhile because of the harvest that follows.

Pregnancy and birth are often used as images for doing philosophy and philosophical virtue in the dialogues. As when Theaetetus has trouble giving Socrates an answer, Socrates tells him that this is because he is pregnant and experiencing philosophical labor pangs.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, as we have already discussed, Socrates describes his art as a kind of midwifery. However, instead of testing pregnancies and delivering babies, Socrates tests ideas and delivers true ones:

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<sup>62</sup> *Timaeus* 91d4-5. Even when it is born and visible in the world, the offspring is still merely a living thing, a ζῷον, rather than a child or even a human.

<sup>63</sup> *Timaeus* 91c-d.

<sup>64</sup> *Theaetetus*, 148e.

The most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Theaetetus*, giving birth is synonymous with philosophical success (i.e., arriving at a tested true conclusion). The mother's project of giving birth is highlighted as an exceptional image for the philosophical project throughout the dialogues.

Bringing the offspring into light is the ultimate way in which the mother recognizes the otherness of her offspring or recognizes it on its own terms apart from its origin in her. When the offspring is born, it is separated fully from the mother's body and begins its life outside the darkness of the womb and in the light. The mother's project of bringing her child into the light through birth represents another way that the mother is like the *χώρα*. To begin with, the *χώρα* is like the mother in that she is responsible for the visibility of all things insofar as visibility is a principle of body. Further, it is impossible for things that come to be to escape the *χώρα*—everything relies on her for body. At the same time, while all things rely on and cannot be fully separate from the *χώρα*, they do not receive any of their qualities from the *χώρα*. Timaeus describes her like the odorless base of a perfume or a molding material.<sup>66</sup> The *χώρα* creates the occasion and provides the basis for things coming to be but does not herself give attributes to what comes to be in her. Instead, she allows for the expression of the things that come to be in her on their own terms.

The journey from the darkness into light is the basic trajectory of philosophical inquiry. Seeking out the truth, we aim to give clarity and plainness to the nature of things. The philosophical journey is characterized as a journey from darkness into light in

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<sup>65</sup> *Theaetetus* 150b-c.

<sup>66</sup> *Timaeus*, 50e, 50a-b.

*Republic's* allegory of the cave in book seven.<sup>67</sup> In this same book, Socrates describes education as leading someone into the light.<sup>68</sup> The woman's ability to bring something to light and make it visible is characteristic of the capacities at play in the philosophical project. The woman is not fabricating an offspring, she is simultaneously growing it, discovering it, and bringing it to light, just as people do as they develop hypotheses and test philosophical ideas.

Timaeus frames his own project as an attempt to bring things to light or make them visible throughout the dialogue. Often when he mentions his use of the εἰκὼς μῦθος, he says that he uses it in order to make the topics of the speech clear. For instance, at 48c:

It's difficult to make plain (δηλῶσαι) what seems to be the case according to our present mode of exposition.

And 53c:

So now I must try to make plain (δηλοῦν) to you, by means of an unusual account...

Timaeus's project in the entire *Timaeus* is a kind of giving birth insofar as it is the explicit project of making matters clear, plain, or evident in their truth.

### 1.3.3 Review of Feminine Virtues

Timaeus frames the origin and nature of women in the karmic myth by giving an account of their reproductive role. Men and women are characterized by their ability to cope with the desires of their reproductive equipment. While men seek to overcome the stinging desire of their genitals, women are forced to give in to the womb's desire for childbearing.

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<sup>67</sup> *Republic* 514a-516b.

<sup>68</sup> *Republic* 518c: The power to learn is present in everyone's soul and the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely the one we call the good" (translated by Grube).

The woman's project of satisfying the womb's desire—i.e., the project of childbearing—entails various commitments, dependencies, and bodily capacities which, I have argued, constitute what is essentially womanly.

To begin with, womanhood entails a vulnerability to the womb. Because of the womb's ability to wander throughout the woman's body and suffocate her, it physically compels her to reproduce. While the man is able to overcome the desire of his genitals, the woman must give in to hers. In addition to her womb, the woman relies on a male sexual partner to maintain her well-being. Both of these dependencies constitute the first basic philosophical virtue of the woman: collaboration. Because of her dependency on the womb and her reproductive partner, the woman is compelled to collaborate with parties other than herself with whom she might otherwise be in conflict. Collaboration, working together, and mutual respect for the purpose of seeking out the truth is emphasized as philosophical virtues throughout the dialogues. The collaborative approach stands in contrast with autocracy or domination. The domineering approach, or the project of victory over the opponent rather than care for what is truest or best, is characteristic of the unphilosophical approach to discourse. Eristic, rhetoric, and persuasion stand in contrast with philosophy. The use of *aporia* to urge a collaborator one way or another, as Socrates does in many of the dialogues, is another way that the woman and her womb share a collaborative (if unpleasant) relationship.

In addition to dependency on her womb and reproductive partner, womanhood is expressed by the processes of pregnancy and birth. Timaeus expresses pregnancy as the project of a mother giving visibility to an initially invisible and concealed offspring by giving it form and nurturing it within the womb until she is able to bring it into the light.



The aspects of femininity and philosophical virtue that emerge in Timaeus's description of pregnancy have to do with the philosophical project of division (i.e., dialectic). The first thing that Timaeus says the mother does for her offspring is distinguish its body in its parts. Like a dialectician, she does so by distinguishing the body in its own right and distinguishes its body from her own. Further, Timaeus emphasizes the otherness of the offspring by refraining from the use of any kind of familial language for the offspring; it is merely a ζῷον. The mother gives structure and body to the offspring as a living thing, not as her son or daughter. Like the method of division in the *Statesman*, the mother's nurture of the offspring in the womb has no use for familial or customary traditions, opinions, or judgements. Additionally, in Timaeus's description of pregnancy we see ways in which the woman is to the offspring what the χώρα is to everything that comes to be in her. Like the χώρα, the mother gives body and substance in such a way that makes room for and allows the full expression of what comes to be in her.

In this analysis, I hope to have shown that Timaeus's karmic myth is neither simple nor misogynistic. His expression of sexual difference is irreducible to a somatic or psychological difference in the sexes. Rather, it is construed as a difference in the way that each kind relates to its role in reproduction. While Timaeus does say that women come to be as the result of men who were cowardly or unjust, nothing he says suggests that women are in any way inferior to men in their virtue or intelligence. On the contrary, Timaeus's expression of womanhood through her reproductive role emphasizes traits which are essentially philosophical both in the *Timaeus* and Plato's other dialogues. Crucial features of female embodiment, like making room and acknowledging and collaborating with

others, reflect traits necessary for practicing philosophy both informally and rigorously (i.e., dialectically).

#### 1.4 *Timaeus* 17a-19b: Childbearing and Childrearing as a Civic vs. Familial Duty and the Status of Women in the Preface

Now that I have gone through the whole account of the origin of women, I would like to go back to the beginning of the *Timaeus* and address the objection that the characterization of women in the karmic myth is incompatible with the claims Socrates makes in his preface about the equality of women in the city. I find that there is no such incompatibility. Rather, I will argue, the two passages aid in one's understanding of the other. I will begin with some considerations regarding the project of bringing these two parts of the dialogue into conversation with one another. Next, I will give an overview of the points Socrates addresses in his summary, and, following that overview, I will give my analysis of its significance with respect to the karmic myth.

##### 1.3.4 Method and Delivery in the Preface and the Karmic Myth

The *Timaeus* opens and closes with discussions that highlight the status of women. These discussions are quite different in method and scope. In his summary of the ideal city at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates foregrounds the civic status of women and suggests that men and women should share equal responsibilities in the city.<sup>69</sup> This opening

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<sup>69</sup> From 17b-19b, Socrates is summarizing the previous day's conversation, which many take to be a connection to the *Republic*, especially book V. If Socrates is meant to be summarizing the *Republic*, his foregrounding of women is even more salient. Socrates omits many—if not most—of the defining features of the aristocratic city from *Republic* in his summary. Some have tried to justify this by arguing that Socrates is referring back to an early version of *Republic* (the so-called “proto-*Republic*”) that does not include the features we are familiar with. Nails notes the “inadequate summary,” as evidence that the *Timaeus* must be the sequel to some earlier version of *Republic* on p. 326. Others, however, argue that Socrates has in mind

discussion is practical in at least two senses. First, it's a sketched summary of a previous conversation, so it is instrumental in tone. Second, it is practical in the sense that Socrates is listing the policies that will sustain the ideal city. The practicality and suggestion of gender equality in the dialogue's opening contrasts with the mythic and seemingly misogynistic quality of the end of the dialogue.

There are other differences to note between Socrates' preface and Timaeus' karmic myth in terms of the method and delivery of each section. To begin with, these sections are the words of two different speakers. Socrates delivers the political summary in the beginning, while Timaeus tells the ending myth. In addition to having a different speaker, the tone and content of the final pages of *Timaeus* are a far cry from the practical, political summary at the beginning of the dialogue. For one, Timaeus is delivering a myth. In contrast with Socrates' low-stakes summary, Timaeus' εἰκὼς μῦθος is not a practical or everyday way of speaking. Rather, it is such a particular way of speaking that it Timaeus gives it a special introduction in its own right.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, while Socrates is describing practical features of the lives of individual people, Timaeus is thinking at a level prior to the individual. His myth is dealing with categorical differences. He is describing how kinds of beings came to be rather than individuals. By considering individuals in terms of their souls and their fit for certain occupations rather than their status as man or woman, Socrates

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the *Republic* as we know it, but chooses to draw from it selectively in his summary to suit the purposes of the dialogue. Annas (2010), for instance, writes, "Plato wants to link the argument of the *Republic* with the cosmological project of the *Timaeus*, and does so by means of selective reference to the *Republic* in a new context, one in which he refers only to the ideal state in Book 5," (p. 52). While the supposed connection between *Republic* and *Timaeus* provides interesting context for evaluating Socrates' choice to focus on laws that have to do with women and childbearing, nothing in my argument relies on a connection between the dialogues. We must also consider the option that Socrates is referring to a conversation that we do not see in any dialogue.

<sup>70</sup> *Timaeus* 29b-d.

is erasing the boundary marked by sexual difference in his thinking. In contrast, Timaeus is comparing men and women precisely *as* sexually distinct beings by digging into what marks sexual categories off from one another. In that sense, sexual difference is treated more like a theoretical difference than a practical one in the karmic myth.

The delivery of the exchange between Socrates and Timaeus at 17b-19b stands in contrast with the final myth. This part of the dialogue is practical in part because it is instrumental. When I say it is instrumental, I mean that Socrates' summary is serving the purpose of reminding the speakers of the previous day's conversation. Timaeus initiates the recap with a casual request. He says, "if it's not difficult for you, go through it again briefly from the beginning, just to make it more secure for us."<sup>71</sup> Socrates obliges, and what follows is a low-stakes reminder of the past discussion. Timaeus confirms that the stakes of the summary are low when he says that everyone present agrees with the principles of the regime Socrates is (17c). Socrates is not out to argue or convince anyone of his points. He and Timaeus pass through this summary quickly without giving much detail or body to any of the points. In addition to being practical in the sense that it is instrumental, the summary is practical in the sense that it is delivered as casual, everyday conversation. The dialogue's opening is also practical in its content. Socrates is, for the most part, talking about policy.

At the same time, there are similarities to notice in the delivery of the beginning and end of the speech. Although Socrates delivers the summary at 17a-19b, Timaeus is participating in the conversation with Socrates, and expresses his enthusiastic agreement

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<sup>71</sup> *Timaeus*, 17b.

with Socrates' ideas multiple times.<sup>72</sup> Another thing these two sections of the dialogue have in common is a certain strangeness. Timaeus' karmic myth is undeniably strange. He talks about the human body in a strange way; we have ensouled animals living in us and guiding our lives, and the stakes of our future animal embodiment depend on how just or philosophical we are. Socrates' suggestions about the status of women in the beginning of the dialogue would be equally striking and strange to an ancient audience. Especially in Athenian society, women had an extremely limited role in public life.<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, like Socrates' sketch-outline in the beginning, Timaeus deliberately sets low stakes for the karmic myth. Before he tells it, he says:

For as regards the mode in which the rest of living creatures have been produced we must make but a brief statement, seeing that there is no need to speak at length; for by such brevity we will feel ourselves to be preserving a right proportion in our handling of these subjects.<sup>74</sup>

Timaeus deliberately changes his tone going into the final myth. For the entire third discourse he has been analyzing the minutiae of the human anatomy, describing in great detail the significance and purpose of the design of all aspects of the body, but here he shifts gears and speaks more concisely and in broad strokes.

There are many differences in the method, scope, and content of the beginning and end of the *Timaeus*. Although this is the case, they can still be brought into conversation with one another. For all their differences, they share key features and goals: in each case, Timaeus expresses or agrees to certain views about sexual difference and the relative status of men and women. Further, dramatically speaking, the sections are highly relevant to one

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<sup>72</sup> In Socrates' summary, Timaeus affirms his remarks frequently, at 17c9, 18a3, 18a8, 18a11, 18b8, 18c5, 18d6, 18e4, 19a6, and 19b1.

<sup>73</sup> For the details of this limitation, see Harris (2006, pp. 333-346), and Just (1989, pp. 13-39).

<sup>74</sup> *Timaeus*, 90e.

another. Considering the opening and closing passages of the *Timaeus* together is important to gain a sense of the dialogue's framing both dramatically and philosophically. An understanding of the *Timaeus* as a whole dialogue demands making sense of it with respect to its beginning and end, and, further, demands sorting out the reason sexual difference plays such an important role in the framing.

### 1.3.5 Survey of *Timaeus* 17b-19b

I'm first going to review each of the items in Socrates' summary between 17b-19b. Following this outline, I will synthesize some of the common goals of the policies the speakers discuss. Socrates' summary consists of the following eight points:

- (1) In the city, there will be two classes of people: one that consists of farmers and the other arts, another consisting of those who go to war on the city's behalf (17c).
- (2) In accordance with nature (17c), each person will receive an occupation that corresponds to their nature, and those who make war on behalf of the city will be her guardians (17c-18a).
- (3) The souls of the guardians will have a spirited and philosophic nature and they will be educated in gymnastics and music (and whatever is appropriate to them) (18a).
- (4) The guardians will live with everything in common and will not hold private property (18b).
- (5) Men and women should both be given an occupation based on their nature rather than sex (18c).
- (6) Marriages and children will be held in common so that no one recognizes their progeny (18c-d).
- (7) There will be a secret lottery to ensure that the best women reproduce with the best men (18d-e).
- (8) The offspring of the good couples will be nurtured, while the offspring of the bad couples will be dispersed throughout the city (19a).

The first four points of Socrates's summary describe a dimension of who the guardians of the city should be. The rest of the points in the summary conspicuously foreground sexual difference and family in Socrates' suggestions about marriage and childbearing.<sup>75</sup> If this is

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<sup>75</sup> This is even more conspicuous if one considers the discussion a summary of the conversation from *Republic*. Many important features of the conversation from *Republic* are omitted from the summary—for instance, the critique of poetry, the three classes, and the discussion of the various kinds of regimes, among many other items of discussion from the *Republic*. Instead, if this conversation really is meant to point the

a comprehensive summary of the day's discussion of the best regime—and, based on Timaeus' confirmation at 19b, it seems that it is—then, according to this account, the key to the ideal regime is ensuring that customs surrounding family and women's status do not prevent people with guardian-souls from ruling. By getting rid of the norms associated with sexual difference and the family, guardians are able to be identified according to the nature of their souls alone, as much as possible. Getting these customs right is the main, if not only, concern of the summarized conversation.

When we are deciding what to make of Socrates' account of women and sexual difference in the beginning of the *Timaeus*, we have to look closely at what he says at 18c. Based on what Socrates says at 18c, there is room for interpreting whether there is a difference between men and women in their souls. Socrates says:

Further, regarding women, we mentioned that their natures *were to be tuned to the men* and so made similar to them, and that to all the women all occupations were to be given in common, whether these have to do with war or with the other aspects of life.

The result of Socrates' suggestion here is clear: women should be given the same jobs as men in all areas of life. Most importantly, women will rule alongside men. The importance of this point is underscored when Socrates repeats it at 18d-e.<sup>76</sup> However, here at 18c when Socrates says that that women's natures must be brought alongside men's natures, there are a few possible implications this may have for an account of sexual difference.<sup>77</sup> The

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reader back to the *Republic*, Plato chooses to open the *Timaeus* with elements of *Republic* that are focused on the relationship between men and women, some of which were seemingly not very important parts of the *Republic* itself.

<sup>76</sup> "Don't we remember how we said that the rulers, male and female, had to contrive..." (18d-e).

<sup>77</sup> Here it is worth mentioning the role of conflict and in particular military combat that provides context for this section and the *Timaeus* as a dialogue in general. Socrates here mentions that women's natures must be attuned with the men's natures so that both may share in the tasks of the guardians, especially making war on behalf of the city. Following his preface, Socrates initiates the "feast of speeches" by requesting to see his ideal city in motion, which he explains as wanting to see it in active conflict with another city. Given the emphasis here and throughout the dialogue and on conflict and the role of courage and spiritedness in the

interpretive problem is with the word συναρμοστέον; one must fit together, bring alongside one another, or bring into harmony. Do the natures of women need to be fit with the natures of men because they are different and need to be adjusted to an androcentric standard? Or do the natures of men and women not differ on the basis of sex, making the need for fitting them together a corrective measure making up for the mistakes of custom? Based on the rest of Socrates' suggestions about the ideal regime, the latter seems more likely. It seems that the natures of men and women do not differ insofar as they are men and women, but rather based on the kind of lives or crafts they are best suited to. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Socrates talks about the natures—plural—of men and women, rather than a singular nature for each. In other words, there is no single “male” nature or “female” nature. The most straightforward reading here seems to be that Socrates is talking about the individual natures of men and individual natures of women, rather than a group of natures belonging only to women that must be brought into harmony with a group of natures belonging only to men. In any case, Socrates is clear that in the regime a person's civic role will not depend on their sex.<sup>78</sup>

The elevation of the civic status of women in the ideal city is accompanied by changing who is in charge of childrearing in the city. Women are relieved of their traditional obligations to childrearing and caring for the household, and instead marriages and children are held in common.<sup>79</sup> The commonness of marriages and children effectively eliminates individual families as anchors or obligations for women. This is a move that is

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human being, it is perhaps possible that Socrates means to suggest that women should be made more courageous so as to match the spiritedness of men as they join them in military combat.

<sup>78</sup> This reading aligns with Socrates' remarks in book V of *Republic* (i.e., 454b-456b).

<sup>79</sup> Socrates also suggests this in *Republic* (c.f. 457c-d).



possibly just as significant as the suggestion that women should rule. The regime not only gives women the new responsibility of ruling the city (among other occupations), but it does also so at the same time as it takes the traditional occupations of women off the table entirely.

In sum, Plato frames the *Timaeus* at the outset with a discussion of women and the family. In this discussion, Socrates emphasizes the importance of removing the obstacles that customs present to justice in the political sphere. In particular, he is concerned with the ways that customs surrounding women and the family get in the way of justice in the city. The main features I want to highlight from Socrates' summary are (1) the message is that women need to have equal status with men in the ideal regime, and that souls must be evaluated on the basis of facts other than sex, and (2) that this message is delivered in practical terms; The equality of men and women is treated/enforced practically, in terms of the occupations they are given. Further, the equality of men and women is instrumental for the city; we have to have female guardians if we're going to have the best guardians in general. Socrates does justice to women by recognizing them not according to custom but according to their souls.

### 1.3.6 Analysis of *Timaeus* 17b-19b and 90e-91d: Reading the *Timaeus* as a Dialogue Framed by Reflections on Sexual Difference

In this project, I have argued that the karmic myth does not present a misogynistic account. Instead, I find that it presents a concept of womanhood that is philosophically virtuous. I have argued that this characterization of womanhood should not be surprising to us given the way Plato uses feminine capacities as images for philosophical virtue throughout the dialogues. In particular, I have focused on the way Plato elevates feminine capacities in the

*Theaetetus*, *Symposium*, and *Republic*, although he does so in other dialogues as well. The woman in the karmic myth is characterized by her physiological compulsion to collaborate with those with whom she may find herself in conflict rather than seek domination over them. In particular, I have examined the ways that the woman is compelled to satisfy the desires of her womb in childbearing, which in turn entails certain commitments to and dependency on a reproductive partner and an offspring. This requirement for collaboration stands in contrast with the male ideal of overcoming and controlling the desires of one's reproductive equipment. While women are physiologically coerced into the philosophical virtue of mutual collaboration, men's virtue depends on controlling and dominating their genitals rather than working with them to achieve their desires.

This framework for womanhood appears oppressive or misogynistic only when we consider the various ways the karmic myth portrays women as being dependent on and committed to the project of childbearing according to the norms for the Athens in which Plato lives—or even according to the norms of our own lives today. In a society for which childbearing is the domain of the private family, the woman's physiological obligation to childbearing does indeed tie her to her body and its needs in a way that the man does not suffer.<sup>80</sup> The woman suffers something that the man need not in two respects: first, her need for childbearing compels her to marry and start a family, while for the man this is optional. The man cannot be suffocated by his genitals if he does not reproduce, therefore he is not compelled to marry in the same biological way that women are on this account. Second, as the caretaker of offspring, the woman is constrained to life in the private

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<sup>80</sup> This point is very similar to the thinking that guides Simone de Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex*, especially her ideas in "History" (i.e., Vol. I Pt. 2, especially chapters 1-2).

household, while the man is able to venture into public life as well as private life. In these ways, the way the karmic myth requires childbearing appears oppressive to the woman. We must, however, consider that this kind of society, the one in which children and marriage belong to private life, is not the one to which Timaeus' speech is expressly responding. When we consider the karmic myth's portrait of womanhood in light of the commitments and guidelines of the regime proposed in the beginning of the dialogue, it takes on a new look.

The regime Socrates proposes holds marriages and children in common; this is not a society in which the private family has a place. The regime legislates childbearing in order that no one knows to whom any child belongs. Men and women are assigned to mate by a secret lottery in order that the best offspring will be produced.<sup>81</sup> According to the laws of this city, participation in childbearing is established as a civic duty. This stands in contrast to the society of the private family in which childbearing is not mandatory. The change in the domain of childbearing has consequence primarily for men. According to the model of womanhood in the karmic myth, as well as the contemporary Greek cultural and medical understanding of womanhood and its requirements, childbearing is already mandatory. When childbearing is legislated, nothing changes in practice for the woman; either way, she is going to be bearing children. Men, on the other hand, are subject to an obligation to childbearing in the ideal regime which they do not enjoy in Athenian culture. While women are bound to childbearing in either case, the way that obligation is expressed is radically different in Athenian society compared with the ideal regime. In Athenian society, a woman's obligation to childbearing is an obligation of custom and of the body

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<sup>81</sup> *Timaeus* 18d-e.

and constitutes an inequality with and an inferiority to men. In the ideal regime, on the other hand, the woman's obligation to childbearing finds new expression as a civic duty. Men's and women's relationship with childbearing is equal as a civic duty; biology and custom are no longer relevant considerations in determining the relative status of men and women with respect to childbearing. This is reinforced by the fact that Socrates has the regime control the rearing and education of children; men and women cannot be compared with respect to their familial roles in this context. All of these laws serve the general purpose of clearing away customs which would keep those who are most fit to rule from ruling. In making childbearing and rearing a civic duty, the groundwork is laid for men and women to be considered each according to their nature as a human rather than their obligations (or lack thereof) determined by customary or biological constraints. The city's laws with respect to marriage and children are crucial for its ability to select the best leaders.

Viewing the karmic myth in the context of the ideal regime casts it in a different, more benign light. Sexual difference need not constrain one's life or pursuits; on the contrary, the ideal regime allows one to set aside sexual difference as a constraint. With these concerns out of the way, the significance of Timaeus framing of womanhood as philosophically virtuous is underscored: if men and women are essentially equal in nature, why are women seemingly better disposed to practicing virtue and doing philosophy? Further, the broader interpretive question remains: why does Plato foreground sexual difference and equality so intensely in the framing of the *Timaeus*? This framework suggests that sexual difference and the relative status of the sexes is an important notion for the rest of the dialogue. I find this a tenable understanding. In my next article, I will

argue that just collaboration of opposite kinds—expressed as sexual reproduction—is a paradigm that guides Timaeus’ cosmology, especially as he expresses the cosmos as the joint product of reason and necessity.

## CHAPTER 2. SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND COSMOLOGICAL PARADIGMS IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

### 2.1 The Dialogic Structure of Plato's *Timaeus*

Timaeus' monologue consists of three interconnected speeches<sup>82</sup> that explain the origin and order of the cosmos, from the whole down to the various animal bodies that occupy it. In his second and third speeches, Timaeus tells his audience that he is starting over, making a new beginning.<sup>83</sup> Timaeus takes up a different approach in each speech to explain different aspects of the cosmos. At the same time, Timaeus talks about his three speeches as if they constitute a unity like a living body, calling his third and final discourse as “a head that's joined to what has gone before.”<sup>84</sup> An understanding of Plato's *Timaeus* as a whole depends on the way one takes the relationship between these speeches. Do the three speeches contribute to a continuous whole? Do they differ because Timaeus is building out his previous ideas with new, more nuanced concepts? Or, on the other hand, do the differences in the speeches render them incompatible explanations of things? Could Timaeus be replacing certain ideas with others throughout the dialogue?

The relationship between Timaeus's first and second discourse is especially difficult to parse. Each takes on a different paradigm for conceiving of the origin and structure of the cosmos. In his first speech, Timaeus discusses the cosmos as a crafted thing,

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<sup>82</sup> Following Cornford's outline, I am reading the first discourse as 29d-47e, the second discourse as 47e-69a, and the third discourse as 69a-92c. In addition to the three discourses, Timaeus also gives a “prelude” (i.e., προοίμιον, 29d5) in which he introduces the parameters of his method with the notion of the εἰκὼς μῦθος. Here, he also sets down the foundational principles for his explanation in the first discourse by making the initial distinction between Being and Becoming (27d6-7) and introducing the δημιουργός (28a6).

<sup>83</sup> C.f., 48e, “Now let this new beginning concerning the all have more divisions than the one we made before,” and 69a, “let's go back again briefly to the beginning” (translations of *Timaeus* are by Peter Kalkavage here and throughout).

<sup>84</sup> *Timaeus* 69b. Kalkavage (2016) suggests that the image of the “head” likens Timaeus' speech to a statue, rather than a living body (p. 64).

using a model that conceives of cause as ποιήσις, where all order and structure in the natural world is the result of the workings of a divine craftsman.<sup>85</sup> Here, he explains the soul and body of the cosmos using language of mathematical proportion. At the end of this speech, Timaeus says that he has exhibited (ἐπιδείκνυμι) the things that have been crafted by intellect (τὰ διὰ νοῦ δεδημιουργημένα, 47e4) without yet discussing what comes to be by necessity (τὰ δι' ἀνάγκης γιγνόμενα). The second discourse, in turn, gives voice to what is left out of the first, explaining what comes to be by necessity. Here, Timaeus explains the origin of the cosmos as a kind of birth which relies on both a male and female parent rather than a single male δημιουργός. Timaeus's language changes with reference to the cosmos's parentage (in particular its father). Rather than "demiurge," Timaeus describes the father of the cosmos as "intellect."<sup>86</sup> Throughout the second discourse, Timaeus's language becomes more obscure and opaque, and he relies more heavily on images. Sorting out the unity or disunity of the *Timaeus* as a whole depends in large part on what one makes of the differences in Timaeus's first and second discourse. How are we meant to take the second discourse in relation to the first? Is the second discourse meant to pick up where the first leaves off and provide supplementary information? Is it an augmentation of the paradigm in first discourse, or does it present a new paradigm that is meant to revise the framework laid down in the first discourse?

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<sup>85</sup> I.e., the δημιουργός (28a6).

<sup>86</sup> Intellect (νοῦς) is introduced at 48a2. Despite the different name, many have argued that intellect is the intellect of the demiurge, or that these are two names for the same thing. For instance, Cornford associates intellect with the Demiurge (*Plato's Cosmology*, pp. 161-166), Menn (*Plato on God as Nous*, 1955) takes intellect to be the crucial component for the conception of God in Plato's *Timaeus* and other words, and Petrucci's (2021) philological analysis of 55d5 (i.e., reading θεός rather than Burnet's θεόν) offers good evidence to find that Timaeus does in fact identify the demiurge with intellect.

My task in this project is to sort out these and other questions about the relationship between the first and second discourse. Reading the relationship between the first and second discourse with a special concern for the role of sexual difference in each, I will make some suggestions about the significant ways in which the discourses differ. I will argue that the second discourse's genetic paradigm is a significant revision of the craft paradigm of the first discourse rather than an addendum to it. At the same time, I take seriously the notion that the discourses both contribute to a single whole, and I will consider what it means for both of these discourses to be part of the εἰκὼς μῦθος and part of a single philosophical account. I will argue that the crucial difference in the paradigms that guide the first and second discourse is rooted in the way each construes the role of femininity in its cosmological and cosmogonical account. To make my argument, I will analyze the various and repeated ways that Timaeus uses sexual difference to shape his accounts. I will focus in particular on each discourse's account of body and embodiment to demonstrate the crucial difference in the craft paradigm and the genetic paradigm. Looking to these accounts of body, I will argue that the craft paradigm seeks to minimize principles that the dialogue construes as feminine, while the genetic model makes the very same principles essential features of body and the cosmos.

I will begin by characterizing the first discourse's productive model and its commitments. I will focus on the ways this model is built on a basic distinction between Being (τὸ ὄν) and Becoming (τὸ γινόμενον) and conceives of the Demiurge's craftwork as a likeness of Being in the medium of Becoming. Here, I will analyze the role of sexual difference in Timaeus's characterization of the Demiurge, his characteristics, his craft, and,



in particular, his status as “poet and father” of the cosmos.<sup>87</sup> Next, I will look at the accounts of body according to the craft paradigm.<sup>88</sup> I will argue that the first discourse’s craft paradigm, and especially the account of body on that model, is highly androcentric according to the dialogue’s own conception of sexual difference. The first discourse seeks to understate—if not totally erase—in the cosmos characteristics that are explicitly associated with femininity in the rest of the dialogue.

Next, I will characterize the second discourse’s genetic paradigm for the origin and structure of the cosmos. Here, I will look at Timaeus’s revisions of the fundamental distinction between Being and Becoming with his introduction (and subsequent re-introductions) of the third kind. Once again, I focus on the role of sexual difference in these distinctions. While in the first discourse there was only a father of the cosmos, Timaeus introduces and explains a mother in the second discourse; Timaeus frames the first and third kind as a father and mother of the cosmos, respectively. I will demonstrate the ways Timaeus draws attention to femininity in the second discourse. On the genetic paradigm that guides the second discourse, Timaeus frames the origin of the cosmos as a collaboration between masculine and feminine principles, and he makes feminine principles (e.g., disorder, decay) essential features of embodiment rather than errors which require divine minimization. He uses overwhelmingly feminine images to characterize the *χώρα*—using feminine pronouns for her and calling her a mother and wetnurse—and I will argue this represents elevating femininity as a partner with masculinity in a way that was not done in the first discourse. I argue that the difference in the different treatment of

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<sup>87</sup> Ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα, 28c3.

<sup>88</sup> I.e., the body of the cosmos, crafted by the demiurge (31b-34a), and the bodies of human beings, crafted by the lesser gods (42a-43a).

femininity constitutes an irreconcilable inconsistency in the craft paradigm and the genetic paradigm, and that the genetic paradigm revises the craft paradigm in Timaeus' speech. I take the two discourse's differing approaches to the father's use of force or persuasion as further evidence of the incompatibility of the two accounts.<sup>89</sup>

## 2.2 The Craft Paradigm: Timaeus' First discourse

Timaeus explains the order of the cosmos in the first discourse using the nature and aims of craftwork as a paradigm. He frames his initial discussion of the origin and intelligible order of the cosmos as an act of production by a divine craftsman. Timaeus' conception of making depends on a categorical distinction between Becoming and Being, with the demiurge's producing a likeness of Being in the medium of Becoming. This likening takes place as the demiurge produces order and beauty in what is disorderly by subordinating aspects of Becoming to the norms of the eternal model. Because beauty and intelligibility are not natural to Becoming, the all requires the demiurge's craft to achieve intelligibility in the cosmos, it cannot achieve this on its own. Thus, the first discourse's account of the demiurge's craft is the story of the various ways in which he makes the components of the all commensurate with each other and with the whole. He constructs a body, soul, and intellect of the cosmos, producing a living thing by structuring its natural generativity.

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<sup>89</sup> In a future version of the project, I would like to include some further reflections on the unity of the first and second discourse. Despite the differences in the paradigms that guide the first and second discourse, I find that we need to take seriously the fact that they belong to the same account. Here, I will offer some remarks on considering the sense in which these accounts share unity as parts of Timaeus's *εἰκὼς μῦθος*, which he warns us will not always agree with itself: "If, in saying many things on many topics concerning gods and the birth of the all, we prove to be incapable of rendering speeches that are always and in all respects in agreement with themselves and drawn with precision, don't be surprised" (29c).

Over the course of his first speech, Timaeus deepens and expands the idea of the natural world as a likeness of the eternal model by explaining the aims and consequences of the demiurge's craft. As a likeness of Being, the cosmos occupies a strange position, seemingly at odds with itself in a basic ontological sense. On the one hand, it belongs to the class of things that come into being, τὸ γινόμενον, and as a result is subject to constant generation and, in its pre-ordered state, is grasped by opinion rather than intellect. On the other hand, as a likeness of Being, it is made to be as much like the eternal model as possible, with the demiurge approximating beauty, self-sameness, and intelligibility in his ordering of the all. Once the all is ordered into the cosmos, it is grasped both through opinion and intellect, with the intelligible aspects of the cosmos owing to the demiurge's craft.

In this section, I am going to analyze the commitments of the craft paradigm that guides Timaeus's first speech. First, I'll go through the distinction between Being and Becoming in prologue to the first speech (i.e., 27c-29d). I will review the way that the craftworking paradigm is introduced out of the distinction between Being and Becoming in the characterization of the cosmos as something that comes to be but is crafted in the likeness of Being. Next, I will examine the figure of the divine craftsman responsible for ordering the all into the cosmos: the demiurge. I will review the demiurge's aims in crafting the cosmos, focusing on the way that he seeks to produce certain properties (e.g., intelligibility, unity, order) in the cosmos while working to minimize others (e.g., unintelligibility, multiplicity, disorder). In particular, I will look at the way the demiurge does this as he crafts the body of the cosmos. Finally, I will examine the way Timaeus expresses the demiurge as an overtly masculine figure, and associates masculinity with the

properties that the demiurge seeks to impart in the cosmos. I will argue that, in addition to framing the demiurge as a masculine figure, Timaeus expresses this initial cosmological model as an androcentric model that names and emphasizes masculinity while occluding and refusing to name femininity as a principle or cause of cosmic order.

### 2.2.1 Being and Becoming

All of Timaeus' observations in his first discourse hinge the distinction between Being and Becoming that he makes in the prologue to his speech.<sup>90</sup> Timaeus begins his speech by setting Being (τὸ ὄν) to one side, and Becoming (τὸ γιγνόμενον) apart from it, listing the traits and behaviors that belong to each kind.<sup>91</sup> Being is always in the same condition (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὄν, 28a2) and never has generation (γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχων, 27e6), while Becoming is always coming into being and never *is* (τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν αἰεὶ, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε, 28a1), constantly being generated and destroyed (γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, 28a3). Being is purely intelligible, grasped through intellect with reason (νοήσει μετὰ

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<sup>90</sup> This occurs at 27d5-28a6. It is important to note the distinct sense in which Timaeus is construing Becoming here. Elsewhere in Plato's work, the physical world is often conceived as not-always-being in the sense of both being and not being some quality. For instance, in the *Phaedo*, Simmias is said to be both tall and not tall, insofar as he is taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo (102b-d). We find a similar characterization in what Socrates calls "summoners" (τὰ παρακαλοῦντα, 523c1) in *Republic* VII, the things that provoke intellect because they both are and are not at the same time. Socrates uses the example of a finger, which can be both big and small insofar as it is bigger than one finger but smaller than another. However, Timaeus does not characterize the sensible in terms of the compresence of opposites. Instead, he frames Becoming as constant generation set in tandem with being destroyed (ἀπολλύμενον, 28a3). In "Why The Cosmos Needs a Craftsman: Plato, 'Timaeus' 27d5-29b1," Johansen observes that Becoming in the *Timaeus* resembles Aristotle's concept of generation as the birth of a new thing (p. 300). We might also compare this characterization of Becoming with Heraclitean flux, i.e., an account of the physical as constantly changing into something new. Timaeus construes Becoming as what changes from one state into another over time.

<sup>91</sup> This distinction calls to mind the Pythagorean table of opposites that Aristotle recounts in *Metaphysics* A.5 986a22-b2, according to which the all is bifurcated into two categories of properties (i.e., order, simplicity, and the masculine on the one hand, and disorder, multiplicity, and the feminine on the other). Like the Pythagorean table of opposites, Timaeus will associate one category with the masculine (in this case, Being) and the other with the feminine (i.e., Becoming).

λόγου περιληπτόν, 28a1), while Becoming is sensible, opined with unreasoning sense-perception (δόξη μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστόν, 28a2-3). Timaeus draws all his initial commitments about the cosmos from the categories of Being and Becoming. From his observation that the cosmos is visible, tangible, and has body (ὀρατὸς γὰρ ἄπτός τέ ἐστιν καὶ σῶμα ἔχων, 28b7-8), Timaeus deduces that it must have come into being. Visibility and tangibility are qualities that are perceived through the senses, and sense-perception with opinion is how Becoming is apprehended (rather than Being), therefore the cosmos has come to be.

In addition to the general distinction between Becoming and Being, Timaeus makes a division within the class of Becoming with respect to cause. He observes that all Becoming must come into being through some cause (πᾶν δὲ αὖ τὸ γινόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίνεσθαι, 28a4-5).<sup>92</sup> This split gives rise to the paradigm of craftworking as the principle of the origin and structure of the cosmos. Timaeus associates cause with craft, suggesting that the cause of a thing's coming into being is a kind of craftsman (ὁ δημιουργός, 28a6).<sup>93</sup> In light of this, Timaeus distinguishes two kinds of craftsmanship that each yield their own kind of product. This distinction depends on the model to which the craftsman looks as he works. On the one hand, there is the craftsman who models his product after an eternal model (one that always is, belonging to the category of Being),

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<sup>92</sup> The craftsman's role as cause of the cosmos marks a distinctive aspect of the first discourse's productive model. Timaeus shows us that cause (αἴτιον) is not identical with the category of Being. That is to say, the eternal model is not itself the cause of the cosmos' coming into being.

<sup>93</sup> While Timaeus does not exclude the possibility of other kinds of causes of things coming into being besides craftsmen, he does not discuss any other causes. Further, when it comes to things that come to be that are beautiful, Timaeus is explicit that the cause *must* be a craftsman (28a8). For a more comprehensive analysis of Timaeus' arrival at this conclusion and his overall argument in the prologue, see Johansen's "Why the Cosmos Needs a Craftsman: *Timaeus* 27d5-29b1" (*Phronesis*, 2014). Johansen (pp. 313-16) argues that cause can be thought of only as a craftsman.

and, on the other hand, there is the craftsman who models his product after something else that has come into being. This constitutes a cut in kinds of Becoming: on the one hand, there is a kind of Becoming modeled after Being, on the other hand, a kind of Becoming modeled after Becoming.<sup>94</sup> Whether the craftsman looks to the eternal or something generated, he models in his work after a paradigm of some kind. Because of this, craftsmanship is, broadly speaking, mimetic in that it seeks to produce something as a copy of another. The craftsman of our cosmos, Timaeus tells us, looked to the eternal model.<sup>95</sup>

### 2.2.2 The Demiurge and His Craft

Timaeus says that products in the likeness of the eternal model are beautiful (καλόν, 28a6), while those in the likeness of a generated model are not beautiful (οὐ καλόν, 28b2). He observes that the beauty of the cosmos is evidence of the goodness of its maker and the model to which he looked.<sup>96</sup> Since, Timaeus says, the cosmos is the most beautiful of the things that have come into being (ὁ κάλλιστος τῶν γεγονότων, 29a5), he infers that it was crafted with reference to what is self-same and grasped through reason (29a6-b1), i.e.,

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<sup>94</sup> Similar distinctions in kinds of making appear in the *Sophist* and *Republic X*. In the *Sophist*, the Stranger distinguishes two kinds of making (ποιητικός) at 265b, one divine and one human. The divine kind of making is identified as natural generation, broadly speaking. The stranger says that animals, plants, and all other natural phenomena are the result of a god working as a craftsman (265c), and that this class of making is distinct from human productivity (i.e., craftsmanship, carpentry, etc.). Natural generation is described here as a kind of productive act, with the Stranger calling natural phenomena the products (γεννήματα, 266b4) and finished works (αὐτὰ ἀπειργασμένα) of a god. In *Republic*, Socrates distinguishes making (ποίησις) from imitation (μίμησις) on the basis of the model to which one looks (see 595c-601c). Making is producing something in the image of the form, while imitation—the art that belongs to poets and painters, according to Socrates—produces something in the image of appearance (i.e., a sensible thing from a particular angle at a particular moment in time).

<sup>95</sup> *Timaeus*, 29a.

<sup>96</sup> As I will discuss further below, the work of the lesser gods provides an example of craftworking that looks to a generated model and produces a correspondingly inferior product.

Being.<sup>97</sup> Timaeus concludes that the cosmos is a likeness (εἰκόνα, 29b2) because it is modeled after Being.

Timaeus describes the demiurge as “the best of causes,” good, and unbegrudging.<sup>98</sup> It is due to his unbegrudging nature that the demiurge makes the cosmos resemble himself as much as possible.<sup>99</sup> Accordingly, on this model, the demiurge fashions the cosmos as a likeness. He does not create *ex nihilo*; there is no crafting without a model (i.e., Being) or pre-existing material (i.e., the all, τὸ πᾶν, of 30a). At the same time, fashioning a product as a likeness requires a certain kind of creativity from the Demiurge. His special position as the cause of Becoming requires that he perform a kind of mediation between Being and Becoming. Becoming is not naturally orderly, intelligible, or beautiful, and it is therefore up to the Demiurge to approximate those things in Becoming by looking to Being.<sup>100</sup> While the paradigm to which he looks designates the intelligible qualities with which things must be imbued if they are to be like the paradigm, the particular way those intelligible qualities are visually represented cannot be dictated by the paradigm itself. This is because the most essential properties of the eternal model that Timaeus lists—e.g., intelligibility, goodness, beauty, self-sameness, and self-sufficiency—are not inherently visible properties.<sup>101</sup> For example, it seems to be the case that a visible thing must be beautiful in order to be like the

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<sup>97</sup> Johansen (pp. 305-6) invites us to consider this as a distinction between craftworking that is good, and craftworking that is not, drawing a comparison to the distinction Socrates makes between making (ποίησις) and imitation (μίμησις) in Book X of the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, Socrates contrasts a craftsman who uses knowledge to create a beautiful product in the likeness of a form against the one who uses opinion to make an imitation of an object’s appearance.

<sup>98</sup> *Timaeus*, 29a6, 29e1-2.

<sup>99</sup> *Timaeus*, 30a. Timaeus stresses that wise men (ἀνδρῶν, 30a1) say that this is the most authoritative reason for the cosmos coming into being.

<sup>100</sup> See *Timaeus* 29e-30a: “[the demiurge] took over all that was visible, and, since it didn’t keep its peace but moved unmusically and without order, he brought it into order from disorder.”

<sup>101</sup> Timaeus mentions these attributes of the eternal model throughout 28a-31b.

eternal model. However, visible things can be beautiful in different ways. The Demiurge represents beauty in the visible, but he has choices about the way he goes about doing so.<sup>102</sup>

As he discusses the crafting of the cosmos, Timaeus focuses on the ways that the demiurge brings the cosmos as much as possible into a state of likeness with the eternal model from a state of unlikeness. Since the properties of the eternal model are not natural to Becoming, the demiurge must take special measures to make Becoming resemble the model. To do this, he seeks to minimize and occlude certain aspects of Becoming that stand at odds with the norms of the eternal model. I say ‘occlude’ rather than ‘exclude’ because, as we will see, these features are not left out or removed from the cosmos. The demiurge must inevitably confront the unruly aspects of the all as he orders it into a cosmos. He covers over certain elements of the all like Ouranos does the Titans in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, by shoving them out of view by force and hiding them as much as possible. Unlike visibility and tangibility, which are preserved in the demiurge’s cosmos, disorder and multiplicity are among some of the properties suppressed by the demiurge’s craft. the demiurge occludes the aspects of the all that would prevent the cosmos from being as much like the model as possible. For instance, the model demands intelligibility, therefore the demiurge seeks to maximize intelligibility and minimize unintelligibility. The way the demiurge works by emphasizing the properties of the eternal model while occluding the disorderly aspects of Becoming is especially clear in Timaeus’s account of the demiurge’s construction of the body of the cosmos.

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<sup>102</sup> I attribute this basic point to Johansen (2014), who writes, “there can be no certain or demonstrative proof that *these* features are the ones that best liken the eternal paradigm in the medium of change, any more than one might *prove* that *La Traviata* is the best musical rendition of the novel *La Dame aux Camelias*,” (p. 317).



### 2.2.3 Body According to the Craft Paradigm

Next, I will consider the account of body and bodies according to the craft paradigm in the first discourse. I will examine three senses of body that Timaeus presents in the first discourse, in the order he introduces them. In the beginning of his speech, Timaeus associates body with visibility and tangibility. Next, Timaeus emphasizes the structuredness of body his discussion of the formation of the body of the cosmos—the first, most comprehensive, and most perfect body that comes into being. Finally, in the case of mortal bodies—bodies that can be dissolved by forces other than the demiurge’s will—individual bodies are presented as being naturally reliant on others and subject to external forces. In each conception of body, I will focus on the ways that the demiurge’s production of various bodies depends on suppressing a certain set of characteristics while emphasizing another.

#### 2.2.3.1 Visibility and Tangibility

Both in the prologue and in the discussion of the formation of the body of the cosmos, concepts of body (σῶμα) and the bodily (σωματοειδές) are interwoven with what is visible (ὀρατός), tangible (ἄπτός), and firm (στερεός).<sup>103</sup> Body is formed when the

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<sup>103</sup> At both 28b7-8 and 31b4-6, Timaeus lists tangibility and visibility alongside body, leaving open the possibility that body means something other than, or is not reducible to, visibility and tangibility. As he begins his discussion of the formation of the body of the cosmos, the Greek can be taken in different ways. Timaeus says that for what comes to be, it is necessary to be bodily, visible, and tangible: σωματοειδές δὲ δὴ καὶ ὀρατὸν ἄπτὸν τε δεῖ τὸ γινόμενον εἶναι (31b4-6). On the one hand, Zeyl and Kalkavage translate this passage as a list of three terms (e.g., it is necessary for Becoming to be bodily, visible, and tangible), suggesting that the bodily is something separate from the visible and tangible. However, the emphatic δὴ particle might suggest that the visible and tangible are constitutive of what it means to be bodily (e.g., it is necessary for Becoming to be bodily, which *really is* visible and tangible). Consider Denniston’s assessment of the particle: “the particle combines a temporal sense with that of obviousness, notoriousness, actuality, certainty ... Hence, δὴ denotes ‘that which lies, clear to see, before the speaker’s eyes at the moment ... δὴ denotes that a thing really and truly is so, or that it is very much so,” (pp. 203-204). What is at stake is two different senses of body. Either body is the combination of the visible and the tangible, or something else, distinct from the visible and tangible, and does not by nature contain the combination of those qualities. Moving further into the account of the body of the cosmos will help address this issue. However, it is at least

demiurge takes on the visible (30a3-4) and sets the two in proportion with one another in the creation of the elements (31b).<sup>104</sup> Timaeus introduces the specific ways that the demiurge orders the all in his discussion of the formation of the body of the cosmos—i.e., ordered visibility and tangibility. There is special emphasis on the way the demiurge’s craftsmanship takes what is already there and orders it by subjecting it to terms of orderliness. He describes the demiurge’s productive ordering as leading the all into order from disorder (εις τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας, 30a5). When Timaeus introduces the demiurge’s relationship to the visible (ὀρατόν, 30a3), he says that the demiurge takes it on or inherits it (παραλαβών, 30a4). The language Timaeus uses to describe the demiurge’s reception of the visible underscores the dynamic of power and hierarchy that is at play. Vocabulary is important here. In contrast with λαμβάνω, which has a simple meaning of reception or taking, παραλαμβάνω carries the sense of reception *from* someone else according to some specific context, for instance, the receiving of orders (e.g., from some higher authority), receiving a new familial commitment (e.g., a wife or a child), or receiving an inheritance.<sup>105</sup> The demiurge has a hierarchized relationship to the bodily, he has a power over or responsibility to it.

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clear that body is strongly connected to visibility and tangibility, even if the specifics of that relationship are not entirely defined. Further, as we will see, Timaeus describes the formation of the cosmic body as the combination and ordering of visibility and tangibility in the form of fire and earth.

<sup>104</sup> While visibility is most often mentioned in tandem with tangibility (c.f., 28b7-8, 31b4, 32b8), here Timaeus names it without also naming tangibility. Timaeus also leaves out tangibility at the beginning of the second discourse, in which the second kind—seemingly similar to the class of Becoming from the first discourse—is said to have generation and to be visible (γένεσιν ἔχον καὶ ὀρατόν, 49a1). In my view, we should not think of Timaeus as intentionally excluding tangibility from the bodily in these places. Rather, it seems that Timaeus uses visibility as a synecdoche for the bodily in these places. Body is conceived as visible and tangible, but the sense in which it is visible is privileged.

<sup>105</sup> C.f. Liddell & Scott: “παρα-λαμβάνω: to receive from another; to succeed to an office or property; to take possession of; to take to oneself as to wife,” (p. 524).

At its core, this concept of body—i.e., ordered visibility and tangibility—is the conception of the all *as* subordinate to the terms of the eternal model, or, in other words, the all as a likeness. I am considering subordination to be when something is made subject to the terms of another, but with its properties preserved in a meaningful sense. Visibility and tangibility are preserved as the demiurge shapes them (i.e., in forming the body of the cosmos, he does not seek to get rid of visibility or tangibility in any way). The body of the cosmos is fully visible and tangible, and Timaeus affirms that this must be the case.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, visibility and tangibility have been significantly altered. As we will see in the next section, they are no longer present as visibility and tangibility *as such*, but rather as fire and earth, mediated by air and water. That is to say, their presence and role in the ordered cosmic body is constrained and mediated by their participation in structure. We see the various ways that the visible and tangible are subordinated to the terms of structure by looking to the formation of the body of the cosmos and the various ways it is made like the eternal model.

#### 2.2.3.2 The Body of the Cosmos

The cosmic body is the first, most ideal and most comprehensive body that the demiurge crafts, constructed as a unique and beautifully combined structure. However, despite being the most perfect kind of body, it turns out to be surprisingly un-bodily. Body is established at the outset of Timaeus's speech as one of the properties that is most closely tied to Becoming, characterized throughout the first speech as something that is complex, visible, and changing. However, as a likeness of Being, the cosmic body is, as much as possible, the antithesis of these things; it is designed to be as simple and unchanging as it can be,

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<sup>106</sup> “What has come to be must be bodily in form and both visible and tangible,” *Timaeus*, 31b4.

subordinating the behaviors that are natural to Becoming—e.g., complexity, visibility, and flux—to be like the eternal model.

Timaeus says that nothing becomes visible without fire or tangible without earth (31b5-6).<sup>107</sup> Here, Timaeus appears to be presenting visibility and tangibility as secondary to fire and earth, with the former relying on the latter. This is a strange characterization, given the way he frames things in the prologue. If nothing can be visible without fire, then why does Timaeus remark on the visibility rather than the fieriness of Becoming in the prologue? The answer seems to be related to the issue of structure. Fire and earth differ from visibility and tangibility in that the former pair are presented specifically as components of a structure, part of a geometric ratio of elements, while the latter pair are not by nature parts of a whole. In other words, visibility is presented as an essential property of the unstructured all, while fire is presented as a component part of the structured body of the cosmos. Timaeus says that the demiurge constructs the body of the all (τὸ τοῦ παντὸς σῶμα, 31b7) from fire and earth, rather than visibility and tangibility themselves. This passage reveals an important component of body on the productive model, namely, that bodies have complex structure. In this respect, body is not reducible to visibility and tangibility, which are not by nature structured.

The demiurge combines earth and fire by setting them in proportion with one another using the most beautiful bond (δεσμῶν δὲ κάλλιστος, 31c2). This bond is a kind of proportion or analogy (ἀναλογία, 31c3) between terms. To bind fire together with earth, the demiurge sets water and air in the middle in a kind of geometric ratio. However, fire

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<sup>107</sup> To be more precise, earth is not directly the source of tangibility. Earth provides solidity, which in turn provides the basis for tangibility.

and earth are not merely linked or combined with these intermediary terms, they are made as uniform as possible.<sup>108</sup> Timaeus likens the terms of the bond to the ratio between a number (for example, 2), its square (4), and its cube (8).<sup>109</sup> When these terms are set into proportion with one another (2:4::4:8), the beauty of proportion's bond is demonstrated by the interchangeability of its components. For instance, taking 2, 4, and 8 in proportion, the middle term—four—allows for the interchangeability of the terms. Four is both a half (of eight) and a double (of two). In this kind of analogy, Timaeus says that by necessity all terms will turn out to be the same as one another, forming a unity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ αὐτὰ εἶναι συμβήσεται, τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ γεγόμενα ἀλλήλοις ἔν πάντα ἔσται, 32a5-6).

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<sup>108</sup> The degree to which the elements are made interchangeable by the most beautiful bond is called into question in the demiurge's treatment of the Earth. The elements are conceived of as components of a whole here, in their nature geared toward structure, but not in the atomistic way in which we are used to thinking of elements as parts of a whole. Instead of being the constituent building blocks out of which more complex bodies are built, they are operating here more like regional categories that both spatially and intelligibly inform different forms of embodiment in the cosmos. Later in Timaeus' speech, the elements re-appear as the regions in and according to which different kinds of animal bodies are constructed. There are heavenly bodies to occupy the fiery region of the cosmos, winged and air-travelling bodies to traverse the airy region, water-dwelling bodies in the watery region, and footed bodies to live on the earth (39e10-40a2). Here in the dialogue each element corresponds with a different kind (γένος). Earth, however, occupies a special and distinctive place in the cosmos. While the other elements are impersonal regions of the cosmos, Earth is given a personal character and identity. Earth has a special priority in her place in the cosmos, with Timaeus placing her at the center of the cosmos, wrapped around the axis that runs through the middle (40b). Timaeus says that she is the first and oldest of the gods to come into being (πρώτην καὶ πρεσβυτάτην θεῶν ὅσοι ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ γεγόνασιν, 40c). Earth is distinctive also in that she is the only heavenly body that is not made up of fire. Further, while the demiurge is called the father of the cosmos, there is no mention of a mother. Instead, the Earth is the figure closest to a mother in the first discourse, being characterized as feminine and a nurse (τροφόν, 40b) to humans. The account of the body of the cosmos created by the most beautiful bond stipulates that the elements are all interchangeable and virtually identical with one another, but this characterization of Earth seems to stand in tension with that account. While the elements are theoretically the same according to geometric proportion, this is not the case practically. In its particular embodiment and position in the cosmos, Earth is distinct from the other elements.

<sup>109</sup> The example is expandable to four terms, representing the four elements, by adding the fourth power of the original term (e.g., 2:4::4:8::8:16). There is no difference in the insights gained from the proportion between three terms vs. four terms, mathematically speaking. Cosmologically speaking, there is a significant difference between a bond between three and four terms; in order for the body of the cosmos to have depth (στερεοειδῆ, 32b1), four components are required, rather than three (see 32a7-b3).

With this proportionate bond, the demiurge makes fire, air, water, and earth not only commensurable, but in a significant sense the same as one another. In doing so, he also makes the visible and tangible intelligible as components of a structured whole (i.e., the cosmic body). This—structured visibility and tangibility—seems to define what it means to be a body on the model of the first discourse. The composition of the body of the cosmos constitutes the demiurge’s taking over of the visible. As a result of the demiurge’s craft, being composed into interchangeable and therefore unified parts, the body of the cosmos is unified and unchanging in a likely sense. That is to say, it is not *truly* unified or unchanging, but it approximates these properties in the medium of Becoming. The cosmic body is complex, but its complexity approximates simplicity in that it is structured. In other words, geometric structure serves as a way to approximate simplicity and unity in the all through a certain kind of decidedly complex structure called body.

In addition to the unity and intelligibility provided by the geometric structure of the most beautiful bond, this body approximates Being by being unique and comprehensive with respect to what is bodily. It is unique in that it takes up the entire quantity of each of the elements, leaving nothing outside itself. Timaeus says that it is one insofar as nothing is left out (33a1). Further, the body of the all approximates the unchanging nature of Being in the behavior allowed by its uniqueness. With nothing outside the cosmic body, it is not subject to external pressures like heat or cold, and it is therefore free of old age and disease (33a3-6). For the same reason, it neither subsumes external nutrients nor expels waste—instead, it uses its own waste for nutrition (33d). In this sense, the body of the cosmos approximates unchangingness. It does not increase or decrease in mass, and the quality of its body remains unchanging insofar as it neither ages nor gets sick. Finally, the cosmic

body approximates the way the eternal model embraces all figures within itself by being formed into the shape of a sphere, the shape which contains all other shapes (33b).

While the demiurge preserves some of the aspects of the disordered all in his ordering—like visibility and tangibility—he actively suppresses some of its most characteristic features, such as generativity, incompleteness, and dependency. It seems that these properties are necessary to body insofar as it is something that has come to be, but the demiurge occludes them as he orders the all. Timaeus indicates in the first discourse that the main features that the demiurge seeks to occlude as he crafts a body for the cosmos are multiplicity, change (i.e., growth and decay), and incompleteness (i.e., dependency). However, as I will argue below in section 2.4, these aspects of Becoming are not able to be fully occluded. Their resistance to the terms of the eternal model is expressed in certain key moments throughout the first discourse where the demiurge’s craftsmanship cannot totally eliminate certain kinds of necessary incommensurability in the cosmos.

The demiurge seeks to make the body of the cosmos as simple as possible, subordinating its multiplicity to the terms of unity through structure. Approximating the eternal model, the cosmos is one rather than many or indefinite in number (πότερον οὖν ὀρθῶς ἓνα οὐρανὸν προσειρήκαμεν, ἢ πολλοὺς καὶ ἀπείρους λέγειν ἦν ὀρθότερον; ἓνα, εἴπερ κατὰ τὸ παράδειγμα δεδημιουργημένος ἔσται, 31a2-4). There are multiple senses in which it is one. As I have already mentioned, it is unique, with nothing existing outside of it. Further, body is conceptually complex, but its structure resembles an intelligible unity. As we saw in the discussion of the most beautiful bond, the parts that constitute the body of the cosmos—fire air water and earth—are combined in such a way that they become interchangeable with one another, becoming a unity (ἐν πάντα ἔσται, 32a6-7).

Paradoxically, body's complexity is crucial for its likeness to simplicity. Body approximates the simplicity of Being through the intelligibility of its complex structure. Body is undeniably complex and manifold, but the demiurge's craft orders its complexity toward oneness. Therefore, *as* a body, the cosmic body is one because its complexity is structured.

The demiurge seeks also to impart the body of the cosmos with self-sameness, and does so by occluding transformation, growth, and decay. Generation and destruction—along with other transformative processes—are not presented as being essentially bodily. We should note that although having body (σῶμα ἔχων, 28b8) is one of the traits that allows Timaeus to identify the cosmos as a thing that has come into being, this is only insofar as body is sensible. In other words, while body is indicative of becoming, the all in its pre-ordered state is visible but does not consist of bodies. Body comes about as the result of the demiurge's craft, giving order and structure to the visible and tangible. Since body is something made by the demiurge, generation and destruction do not naturally belong to body *qua* structured product. Bodies are generative *qua* members of the class of Becoming, but it is not in this sense that we understand them as bodies. The demiurge makes the cosmic body as unchanging as possible and does so rather comprehensively. The spherical cosmic body is made the same as itself from every angle (33b) and does not change its shape over time. It is free from old age and disease (33a5-7), and therefore is not dissolved in an untimely way (ἀκαίρως λύει, 33a5). The cosmic body is crafted as a fully formed body. Once the demiurge sets its parts in proportion, it does not need to mature, grow, or change in order to become what it is.



The demiurge seeks to make the body complete and does so by suppressing any sense in which it is dependent or relational. Timaeus says that nothing that is like the incomplete would be beautiful (ἀτελεῖ γὰρ εἰκότος οὐδέν ποτ' ἂν γένοιτο καλόν, 30c5). Consequently, the demiurge makes the cosmic body as complete as possible. One way this is accomplished is quantitative completeness. As I have mentioned already, the demiurge uses up all of each of the elements, and nothing is left out (32c5-8). Completeness in the cosmic body is also construed as self-sufficiency, or not relying on anything other than itself. The demiurge thought it better that the cosmos be self-sufficient (αὐταρκες, 33d2) rather than relying on another (μᾶλλον ἢ προσδεῖς ἄλλων, 33d3). Consequently, the cosmic body does not require external nourishment, but recycles its own waste as nourishment (33c8) and experiences everything in itself, by itself (πάντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ πάσχον, 33c8-d1).

### 2.2.3.3 Mortal Bodies

The formation of mortal bodies presents another angle on what it means to be a body on the productive model. There are three kinds of mortal bodies, made to correspond with the airy, watery, and earthy parts of the cosmos (39e-40a).<sup>110</sup> The bodies that are generated within the cosmic body demonstrate what it means to be a body in a sense other than the virtually unique cosmic body. These internal bodies allow expression to otherwise occluded features of the cosmos. Since mortal bodies are made with a kind of craftsmanship that is less commanding than the demiurge's, they are rife with the aspects of Becoming that are minimized in the cosmic body. In fact, the evidence of the inferiority of mortal

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<sup>110</sup> The bodies that populate the fiery parts of the cosmos are immortal (i.e., the heavenly bodies). As I will discuss below, there is one exception or oddity to this rule: the Earth, the oldest and most authoritative of the gods, is immortal, but not composed by fire.

bodies lies in the pronounced presence of these traits that are occluded in the cosmic body. The perfection and simplicity of the cosmic body stands in contrast with the dependency and complexity of mortal bodies, and, in particular, the human body (the kind of mortal body that receives the most extensive treatment). While the cosmic body is one, there are many human bodies.<sup>111</sup> While the cosmic body is perfectly bound, simple, and self-sufficient, the human body is the opposite in every respect. As the craftwork of the lesser gods, the human body is bound by dissoluble bonds, fastened together with rivets (43a) rather than beautiful geometric proportion. Humans are constantly changing and dissimilar with themselves; they grow old, suffer diseases, and subsume and expel external material. They are temporary by design; Timaeus says that the lesser gods compose them borrowing portions of the elements, intending to return them again.<sup>112</sup> Further, the shape and motions of the human body are not self-same or all-encompassing to the same degree as the spherical cosmic body. Humans have arms and legs and participate in all kinds of motions. All of these qualities make the human body inferior to the cosmic body as a structural likeness of being.

In addition to providing a new avenue into understanding the nature of body, mortal bodies demonstrate something about the limits of the demiurge's craft. After the demiurge creates the planets time as a moving likeness of eternity, Timaeus reveals that the cosmos is still incomplete and therefore dissimilar to the intelligible animal. Unlike the intelligible animal, the cosmos does not at this point contain all kinds of animals within it. To be as similar as possible to the intelligible animal, the cosmos must contain all kinds of animals,

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<sup>111</sup> At least as many as there are stars, as 41d8 suggests.

<sup>112</sup> *Timaeus* 42e-43a.

including mortal animals, of which there are three kinds. This incompleteness is called a remainder—a *κατόλοιπον* (39e6)—in the cosmos. In order to fulfill the remaining task, the demiurge delegates the task of imperfect creation to the young gods he himself has created, who do not face the same limitations that he does. Since the lesser gods are looking to a generated model in their craft, their productivity is different from—and inferior to—the work that the demiurge does. The lesser gods imitate the demiurge's work, and their imitation yields a product that is dissoluble, i.e., mortal bodies.

Although mortal bodies are inferior kinds of bodies, they still approximate the qualities of the eternal model to whatever limited degree the lesser gods are able to do so. For instance, human bodies are, by nature, not able to be as self-sufficient as the cosmic body. The cosmic body has nothing outside it, and therefore is not subject to external forces of heat and cold or treacherous terrain to navigate. The human body, on the other hand, exists within a greater environment, and is consequently not as self-sufficient. The human body starts out as just the head, a roughly spherical body imitating the shape of the cosmic body. However, in order to make the human body more self-sufficient, the lesser gods give it arms and legs so that it is able to traverse its surroundings. There is a trade-off between self-sufficiency and self-sameness at play. The self-sameness allowed by the spherical shape of the head is sacrificed in favor of greater self-sufficiency allowed by having arms and legs.

#### 2.2.3.4 Summary of Body in the First Discourse

Timaeus does not give a straightforward account or definition of body in his first discourse. However, by looking to these various senses of body in the first discourse, we can discern

some things about the way Timaeus is conceiving of body. He associates it strongly with the visible and tangible, to begin with. Additionally, he sees the elements as a more structured order that the demiurge imparts visibility and tangibility with. Through the most beautiful bond, visibility and tangibility are made commensurable with one another in geometric proportion and are made into the cosmic body. Finally, bodies are also conceived as the individuals that populate the various elemental regions of the cosmos. These bodies are understood as operating within a certain context, naturally navigating a particular environment (e.g., bodies in the airy part have wings, while humans have arms and legs to move around the earth).

The demiurge crafts the body of the cosmos in the likeness of the eternal model by making it adhere as much as possible to a certain set of characteristics. In particular, he works to make the cosmic body as intelligible, unique, self-same, unchanging, self-sufficient, intelligible, ordered, structured, and simple as it can be. He does this by minimizing the aspects of Becoming that are opposed to these properties, namely, the aspects that are generative, incomplete, dependent on something beyond themselves, multiplicitous, changing, and indefinite. While this is especially clear as a goal of the demiurge as he crafts the cosmic body, it is also a goal of the lesser gods as they construct mortal bodies, although they are not able to approximate these traits as fully as the demiurge can.

#### 2.2.4 The Androcentrism of the Craft Paradigm

In this section, I aim to reveal the role of sexual difference in the craft paradigm. I am going to look at the commitments of the draft paradigm that guides the explanation of cosmic order in the first discourse and argue the various ways that it is androcentric. Further, I will

argue that, in its androcentrism, the demiurge's craft seeks to occlude any feminine principles from its explanation of what is essentially bodily. To make my argument, I will first look to the overtly masculine characterization of the demiurge. This characterization shows the way that Timaeus relies on categories of sexual difference in his first speech while ignoring an entire sex; the demiurge is characterized as masculine as opposed to feminine, but no account of femininity is given. After examining the masculinity of the demiurge, I will analyze the way that the various aspects the demiurge and lesser gods seek to occlude in the formation of bodies amounts to an occlusion of what is essentially feminine, as the second discourse (and much of Greek literature) reveals.

#### 2.2.4.1 The Masculinity of the Demiurge

Timaeus introduces the demiurge almost in passing; as soon as he claims that what comes to be must come to be by some cause, he is also talking about the craftsman of the cosmos.<sup>113</sup> The demiurge is a masculine figure as soon as he is introduced. Other than his craftsmanship, his masculinity is the first aspect Timaeus attributes to him. His title, δημιουργός, is masculine, and Timaeus immediately refers to him with masculine pronouns.<sup>114</sup> Masculinity is one of few traits that can be said about the demiurge at all. At 28c, Timaeus says this:

Now to discover this poet and father (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα) of this all is quite a task, and even if we discovered him, to speak of him to all men (πάντας) is impossible.

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<sup>113</sup> “Everything that comes to be necessarily comes to be by some cause; for apart from a cause, it's impossible for anything to have a coming to be. Now so long as the craftsman keeps looking to what's in a self-same condition...” (*Timaeus* 28a).

<sup>114</sup> I.e., “αὐτοῦ” at 28a.

Discovering who the demiurge is difficult, but two things are apparently equally self-evident: he is a maker, and he is a father. His masculinity is essentially tied up with his identity as a craftworker.

The way in which the demiurge is centrally masculine is surprising for two reasons. To begin with, the demiurge, being an entity who is causally prior to the cosmos and the various animal bodies that come to occupy it, should also be causally prior to the concept of sexual difference. Nevertheless, Timaeus characterizes him as essentially masculine and a father; this concept of the cause of the cosmos relies on a concept of sexual difference of which it is the cause. The second reason this characterization is surprising is that the demiurge is the sole parent of the cosmos. The poet image aligns with the single parentage of the cosmos; a poet does not require a collaborator to create. The father, by contrast, requires a mother to reproduce, and it is precisely production or reproduction that is at issue with this analogy. If the demiurge is the father of the all, he is a parthenogenic father who reproduces without a mother.<sup>115</sup> This is a crucial sense in which the first discourse is androcentric: by calling the demiurge father, Timaeus implies the concept of the mother,

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<sup>115</sup> Given the demiurge's status as parthenogenic father and sole ruler of the all, combined with Timaeus' extensive use of religious language throughout the first discourse, it is difficult not to compare the role of the Demiurge with Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony* as he gives birth to Athena. Like Zeus in the *Theogony*, the Demiurge finds a way to act as a father without need for a mother in reproduction. The cosmic family exalts the father as the sole parent, and likewise masculine traits are privileged as the standard for beauty in the cosmos. The Earth is the figure closest to a mother in Timaeus' description, being characterized as feminine and a nurse (τροφόν, 40b) to us. There is also an indication that the Earth has some kind of distinctive priority in her place in the cosmos, with Timaeus placing her at the center of the cosmos (40b), making her the only heavenly body that is not made up of fire, and stating that she is the first and oldest of the gods to come into being (πρώτην καὶ πρεσβυτάτην θεῶν ὅσοι ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ γεγόνασιν, 40c). However, there is no indication that Earth is a mother to the cosmos in the same sense that the demiurge is the father. Although the Earth is given a distinctive place in the first discourse and associated with motherly characteristics, she is still an entity that has come into being, crafted by the demiurge, and as an inhabitant of the cosmos does not have the same priority to the cosmos that the demiurge does.

but never introduces one. Rather, he subsumes the meaning of father under what it means to be a maker in general.

The productivity of the demiurge is, in many ways, unfatherly. Biologically speaking, the father's reproductive role is usually limited, collaborative, and spontaneous. The demiurge, on the other hand, is the cause of the cosmos in a way that is comprehensive, deliberative, and more or less exclusive. This is a salient distinction between the productive model of the first discourse and the genetic model of the second discourse. While sexual reproduction (i.e., childbearing, embryology, growth)—the metaphor for the structure of bodies employed in the second discourse—is spontaneous and passive, craftworking is an activity that is guided by an intelligible model. The nature of the making that the demiurge does is on the whole analogous with the kind of making that a human crafter of artifice does, such as a carpenter, potter, sculptor, or weaver.

At the same time, the demiurge's craftworking demonstrates a familial, but non-biological sense in which he is a father by revealing his participation in certain patriarchal power structures. As I discussed briefly above, we should understand the demiurge taking on (*παραλαβῶν*) the visible as a participation in a kind of patriarchal structure, as in taking on the responsibility and obligations associated with a wife or a child. As father, the demiurge is in a position of power. He is responsible for and presides over the ordering of the visible. In addition to his participation in patriarchal structure, the demiurge appears establish and oversee a hierarchy of responsibility. The way he establishes power structures is especially clear in the case of his address to the lesser gods. The role of the mother is attributed to imperfect or anomalous actors in the framework of the first discourse, particularly the lesser gods and the Earth. In the demiurge's address to the lesser gods, he

directly states that these gods will be responsible for furnishing mortal bodies with the powers of growth and decay (41d). The lesser gods' ability to impart these qualities into bodies depends on their limitations with respect to structure. Their craftwork is not perfect like the demiurge's, which is why he requires them in order to complete the cosmos with the creation of mortal bodies. In other words, the qualities of growth and decay in bodies depends on the imperfection of the lesser gods' craft. The lesser gods function as a class of laborers, responsible for fashioning mortal bodies, and their relationship to the demiurge resembles one between apprentices and the master sculptor. In the same way that the master sculptor charges his apprentices with artistic tasks that are reduplicative and imitative, the demiurge delegates the tasks to the lesser gods, instructing them to imitate his art in giving them birth. The lesser gods receive the material out of which to fashion human bodies just as the demiurge receives the visible and tangible for fashioning the cosmic body. Thus, he establishes and perpetuates a kind of hierarchical order in the task of divine craftworking.

Like a father, the demiurge is an external cause responsible for begetting a new, separate entity.<sup>116</sup> As we have seen, the all is naturally in a state of constant flux and transformation insofar as it belongs to the class of things that have come into being. However, this characterizes its pre-ordered state before it has been taken over by the demiurge. What the demiurge produces, i.e., what he is the father of, is not the growing, changing aspect of the offspring. Because the demiurge seeks to liken the all to the eternal model, his ordering suppresses the constant change natural to Becoming in favor of self-sameness and intelligibility. He cannot be responsible for the transformative or changing

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<sup>116</sup> Roughly similar to an efficient cause, in Aristotelian terms. For more on the Demiurge as an efficient cause, see Johansen (2014) p. 308.



nature of the all, since these things are naturally present in it before he takes it over. Rather, he imparts it with beauty, which is not natural to things that have come to be.

This is a construal of fatherhood that tacitly acknowledges that the father is not solely responsible for the existence of the offspring. At the same time, it makes no room for a mother, hence no mother is named or described. There is nothing for the mother to produce on this model. The father is responsible for the coming-to-be of the cosmos as an ordered version of the all. The part of the cosmos for which the father cannot be responsible (i.e., the pre-ordered all) cannot be the domain of the mother, because no one is or can be responsible for the pre-ordered all. Therefore, it is not merely the case that the mother goes unmentioned in the first discourse but may have been given voice had Timaeus chosen to do so. On the contrary, Timaeus's commitment to the foundational principles of Being, Becoming, and demiurge as cause excludes any role of a mother by design. The demiurge is a father in that he is not solely responsible for the production of his offspring, but, at the same time, Timaeus's account does not allow for a mother to play any role.

#### 2.2.4.2 The Occlusion of Femininity in the Demiurge's Craftworking

As we have seen, the first discourse describes body as the visible and tangible organized into an intelligible structure through the craft of the demiurge. On this model, what is essentially bodily is the structure that the demiurge imparts rather than the traits associated with visibility and tangibility (or generative Becoming as a whole). In fact, as I have tried to demonstrate, Timaeus portrays the essential features of Becoming as *unbodily*. According to the craft paradigm, a body is a better body when it can more comprehensively suppress the features of its becoming, as we see when we compare the cosmic body—the most ideal body—with the human body, an inferior kind of body. The ordered body in the

first discourse is a way of understanding Becoming in terms of structure rather than on its own terms. In my view, of the demiurge's productive task of ordering the all into a body should be understood as the process of subordinating the various senses of femininity in the all to an expressly masculine order.

Everything that the demiurge seeks to minimize as he perfects the look of the cosmos—for instance, disorderliness (ἀτάξιος, 30a5), unintelligibility (ἀνόητος, 30b2), incompleteness (ἀτελεῖ, 30c5), multiplicity (πόλυς, 31a2), and boundlessness (ἄπειρος, 31a3)—are overwhelmingly feminine traits, according to both the Greek literary and medical traditions, and to the framework of the *Timaeus* itself.<sup>117</sup> We can think of the various qualities that the Demiurge seeks to minimize in the cosmos as different iterations of femininity, representing different categories for women and female bodies in Greek culture, literature, religion, and medical theory. There are different names for different categories of women, each distinguished by their varying relationships to men, and, in particular, sexual partners. Some of these different categories of women are (i) the virgin, ἡ παρθένος (i.e., the woman who does not yet have a husband; femininity as what is incomplete or dependent on another), (ii) the wife, ἡ γυνή (the woman with a husband; femininity as yielding, being second in hierarchy, and supportive), and (iii) the archetypal Pandora (the original woman, conceived in Hesiod as a problem for men; femininity that precipitates destruction, disorder, decay, and chance). Each of these categories captures a

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<sup>117</sup> Additionally, if we are meant to understand *Timaeus* as a member of the Pythagorean tradition, we have even more reason to think of these traits as feminine. Given Aristotle's account of the Pythagorean table of opposites, which divides the all into two categories along the same general lines as *Timaeus*' bifurcatory division of the all in the prologue and first discourse (discussed further below), we should think of goodness, oneness, and finitude as characteristically male, and badness, multiplicity, and boundlessness as characteristically feminine.

different aspect of what the demiurge is forced to encounter but seeks to subordinate or cover over as he crafts the cosmos.

Just as body serves as a way to understand Becoming in terms of structure, it construes what is essentially feminine in terms of masculinity. The main qualities or behaviors that I'm referring to here as being subsumed under unfitting terms are the transformability of Becoming, and the dependent, relational qualities of bodies. The first discourse treats all things as adult versions of themselves; it is concerned with what is fully formed and unchanging. Despite the fact that the crafts of Intellect have some version of a birth insofar as they are brought into being, they are all born as adult versions of themselves, ready to participate in their naturally habitual activities. For instance, when the demiurge creates the stars, they immediately move regularly according to their planned orbits. When he creates human souls, they need only to be shown the basics of things and they immediately know what to do and how to live:

He told them the laws of destiny: how the first birth ordered for all would be one, in order that no one might be slighted by him; and how, once he had sown them, each in his own appropriate organ of time, they would have to sprout into the most god-fearing of animals; and how, human nature being twofold, the superior part would be a kind which at a later point would be called man (άνήρ).<sup>118</sup>

Once human souls are shown the laws of destiny, the demiurge no longer has any obligation to care for them, their fate is in their own hands. Nothing that the demiurge gives life to has the need for external nourishment or rearing in order to actualize its natural state. This is especially true of the cosmos as a whole. Timaeus notes that it is specifically designed not to need nourishment from an outside source, instead relying on its own waste as food (33d). Further, as has already been made clear, the crafts of the demiurge are naturally

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<sup>118</sup> *Timaeus*, 41e-42a.

incapable of decay. Whatever comes into being through the demiurge's hand can only be dissolved according to his will, and since his will is good, he never dissolves his creations. As a result of his natural propensity for order, the demiurge populates the cosmos entirely with adults, leaving a place neither for things that are growing and maturing, nor for what is past its natural ripeness and falling into decay. As I have suggested above, these processes—growth and decay, broadly construed—are present as errant states of being and are appropriately accounted for by means other than the demiurge himself.

The first discourse's subsumption of growth and decay—i.e., states of being that diverge from the norm—under structural terms is closely related to the omission of femininity as mother from this part of the text. Given the association between generative processes and femininity, it is unsurprising that the mother is omitted from the parentage of the cosmos in the first discourse. Mothers are responsible for a child's growth in both the embryological and cultural sense. These extra-structural behaviors or characteristics of things—which will be attributed to Necessity in the second discourse—are addressed in the terms of structure rather than their own appropriate terms. Because whatever is other than structure is being subsumed under the terms of mathematical structure in the first discourse, it (i.e., extra-normativity) is conceived as errancy or a mathematical remainder. In addition to the mother's role in growth and development, there is a close association between women and degeneration insofar as women are characterized in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere as erring from the male standard as part of their natures (c.f., 42a, 76d, 90e). The  $\chi\acute{o}\rho\alpha$ , with its distinctly feminine characterization, is the source of growth and decay in the second discourse. The  $\chi\acute{o}\rho\alpha$  is described as a nurturer and mother, and the formation of bodies from elemental triangles (called a birth, 53c, 54d) is described with the same

language as embryology in pregnant women/female animals later in the dialogue (c.f. 91d). Further, the shaking of the  $\chi\acute{o}\rho\alpha$ , which leads to the interchanging of elemental bodies, is determined to be the cause of decay and bodily dissolution in the cosmos.

### 2.3 The Genetic Paradigm: Timaeus's Second Discourse

After his discussion of sense perception at the end of the first discourse, Timaeus acknowledges that something has been left out of his account so far:

Now what's gone by so far in what we've said, except for a bit, has shown the things that have been crafted through intellect; but we must also set down beside this the account of what has come to be through necessity.<sup>119</sup>

Timaeus sets his second discourse up as the process of bringing to light what was omitted from his first discourse. As he starts out, the things that come to be through necessity are placed alongside the works of intellect. Early on in his second speech, Timaeus revises his initial distinction between Being and Becoming and adds a third kind alongside them. He introduces the third kind by placing it alongside his earlier division of the two kinds. However, following this initial division, he gives more context and clarity to the third kind, and the relationship between the three kinds changes. By his final re-division of the three kinds, Timaeus has taken up a new paradigm for the origin and structure of the cosmos. This new paradigm compares the origin of the cosmos to an act of sexual reproduction rather than the productivity of a craftworker. Thus, I will argue, the craft paradigm is abandoned in favor of a genetic model of the cosmos.

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<sup>119</sup> *Timaeus*, 47e-48a.

In this section, like the previous section, I will start by analyze the commitments of the second discourse. In particular, I am going to focus on the way that the first discourse's foundational division between Being and Becoming is revised and re-revised in order to bring to light the third kind. In analyzing each of these divisions, I will be highlighting the way that femininity is increasingly foregrounded in Timaeus's cosmological account. I will use this analysis to argue the incompatibility of the paradigms that guide the first and second discourse in the next section.

### 2.3.1 The Division of the Three Kinds

The second discourse starts out with a revision of Timaeus's divisions from the prologue:

Now let this new beginning concerning the all have more divisions than the one we made before. For then we distinguished two forms, but now we must make plain another, third kind. Two kinds were sufficient for what we said before: one set down as the form of a model—intelligible and always in the self-same condition—and the second, an imitation of a model, having birth and visible. A third kind we didn't distinguish at that time, since we considered the two would be sufficient; but now the account seems to make it necessary that we try to bring to light in speech a form difficult and obscure.<sup>120</sup>

Here Timaeus is referring back to the distinction between Being and Becoming that he made in advance of the first discourse. In addition to these two, which he has already introduced, Timaeus describes a third kind:

What power, then, and what nature should we suppose [the third kind] to have? This especially: That it's a receptacle for all becoming, a sort of wet nurse (τιθήνην).<sup>121</sup>

After his initial framing of the three kinds, Timaeus re-frames his new tripartite division of the all three additional times.<sup>122</sup> He spends a significant portion of his second speech making this division, offering orienting remarks to clarify the division (and in particular

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<sup>120</sup> *Timaeus* 48e-49a.

<sup>121</sup> *Timaeus*, 49a.

<sup>122</sup> At *Timaeus* 50c-d, 52a-b, and 52d-e.

the third kind), and returning to the division. This stands in contrast with the first discourse. Timaeus divides and re-divides the all into three kinds from 48e-53c in the second discourse, but his initial division between Being and Becoming takes only a few lines at 28a and is never revised over the course of the first discourse.

Timaeus labors to speak about this third kind he introduces in the second discourse. The strangeness of the third kind—the kind that Timaeus eventually calls “χώρα” at 52b—presents a problem for thinking and speaking about it. All thinking about the χώρα is improper insofar as it is indirect and mediated by intellect and sensible things. Being what makes room for all sensible things, the χώρα is implicitly present in all thinking about sensible things. Trying to talk about the χώρα itself draws what is the background of all things, so to speak, into the foreground. Methodologically, we are trying to speak determinately about the thing that is completely indeterminate. As a result, it is intuitive to frame a conversation about space in terms of the things it makes room for, but this is misguided because it speaks about the χώρα as if it has determinate attributes.

To account for this problem, Timaeus reveals something about the χώρα by talking about what it does rather than what it is. He reveals certain things about the way the χώρα acts on the basis of various incompatible images. He calls it a nurse (49a), gold being constantly re-modeled (50a-c), a mother (50d), the odorless base for perfumes (50e), and a winnowing basket (53a). Each of these images represents the χώρα in a different aspect. Among its other representations in Timaeus’ speech, the χώρα nourishes as a wet nurse does, remains a constant underlying change in the cosmos as moldable gold does, makes room for the birth of the second kind as a mother does, is completely receptive to the qualities of everything it makes room for as the odorless base of perfume is, and shakes

and purifies its contents with shaking and disequilibrium as a winnowing basket does. I am now going to unpack each of these ways of speaking about the *χώρα* to get a fuller picture of the ways Timaeus revises his explanation of the cosmos in the second discourse.

### 2.3.1.1 The First Division: The Wet Nurse of Becoming

When Timaeus first divides the three kinds, he sets the third kind down as an addition to the kinds previously distinguished:

Now let this new beginning concerning the all have more distinctions than the one we made before. For then we distinguished two forms, but now we must make plain another, third kind.<sup>123</sup>

Timaeus sets us up to expect his second discourse to be an addition to and continuation of the first. As was the case with the introduction of the demiurge, Timaeus claims that it would be difficult to proclaim the nature of the third kind:

Now the account seems to make it necessary that we try to bring to light in speech a form difficult and obscure.<sup>124</sup>

Although the third kind is difficult to make clear, Timaeus spends a great deal of effort trying to bring it to light. Also like his introduction of the demiurge, Timaeus is able to reveal one aspect of the third kind with ease. Where he was at first unable to say anything about the demiurge except that he was a father, Timaeus is unable to say anything about the third kind at first apart from her femininity. Once again, sexual difference is the first orienting detail we receive about the third kind:

What power, then, and what nature should one suppose [the third kind] to have? This especially: that it's a receptacle for all becoming, a sort of wet nurse.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Timaeus*, 48c.

<sup>124</sup> *Timaeus* 49a.

<sup>125</sup> *Timaeus* 49a.



Here, by classifying one of his divisions of the all as a nurse, Timaeus for the first time names femininity as an essential feature of the cosmos. However, this feminine principle seems to have less responsibility than the masculine principle (i.e., the demiurge, or first kind). While the demiurge is called father, Timaeus introduces the third kind as nurse rather than mother, emphasizing a continuity with the model according to which only the male parent is responsible as a cause of the things that come to be. By using the image of nurse rather than mother, Timaeus represents femininity in the model of the origin of cosmos with a kind of secondary generative capacity—the nurse’s role is to care for the already begotten offspring, in contrast with the mother’s role of bearing the offspring. However, Timaeus quickly revises this characterization after offering some images and suggestions about how to think of the third kind.

After Timaeus divides out the three kinds for the first time, he further explains the nature of the third kind by giving a new account of the elements. The elements, he explains, are not things in themselves, but rather are sorts of occasions of the third kind. The χώρα is that in which the elements appear.<sup>126</sup> Sensible things are the third kind molded in different ways. Put another way, the third kind is like a nurse in that she provides an occasion for the elements (and, consequently, for everything that comes to be). Next, before re-division, Timaeus offers an image for thinking of the third kind. He compares it to a gold molding stuff<sup>127</sup> (ἐκμαγεῖον, 50c2):

But we must make an effort to speak about this once more and with still more clarity. If someone, having molded all figures out of gold, should in no way stop remolding

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<sup>126</sup> *Timaeus*, 49c-50e.

<sup>127</sup> Bianchi (2006) offers an alternative translation and understanding of ἐκμαγεῖον: “The primary meaning of *ekmageion*, or at least the first given by Liddell and Scott is, by contrast, that of a napkin or wiping cloth: something that instead of creating marks rather removes them. Plato uses it precisely in this sense when describing the function of the spleen as that which cleans the liver and absorbs its impurities, ‘as a wiper [*ekmageion*] that is laid beside a mirror always prepared and ready to hand’” (p. 91).

each figure into all the others, then if someone pointed out one of them and asked “whatever is it?”—by far the safest thing to say in point of truth is “Gold.” ... The same account applies to the nature that receives all bodies. ... It’s laid down by nature as a molding stuff for everything, being both moved and thoroughly configured by whatever things come into it; and because of these, it appears different at different times.<sup>128</sup>

When Timaeus calls the third kind, he highlights the sense in which the *χώρα* remains the same, underlying the changing, various bodies (*σώματα*, 50b) that it receives.<sup>129</sup> Like the pre-ordered all in the first discourse, the third kind as *ἐκμαγεῖον* is the necessary material out of which things come into being, but is itself not responsible for the actual structural quality of anything that comes to be in it.

### 2.3.1.2 The Second Division: Mother, Father, and Offspring

After characterizing the third kind as *ἐκμαγεῖον*, Timaeus re-frames his division of the three kinds. While he placed the third kind alongside the previous division between Being and Becoming at first, Timaeus casts each of the kinds in a new light at 50c-d and presents a new kind of relationship between them:

In any case, at present we should keep in mind three kinds: that which comes to be, that *in which* it comes to be, and that *from which* what comes to be sprouts as something copied. And what’s more, it’s fitting to liken the receiver to a *mother*, the “from which” to a *father*, and the nature between these to an *offspring*, and to notice that if the imprints are going to be sufficiently various with every variety to be seen, then that in which the imprint are fixed wouldn’t be prepared well unless it’s shapeless with respect to all those looks that it might be going to receive from elsewhere.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Timaeus*, 50a-b.

<sup>129</sup> The gold image appears to be something like a provisional account of what Aristotle calls *δύναμις*, which he develops an extensive account of especially in Book Θ of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle describes matter as that which underlies all changes to a thing (*Metaphysics* 1042a33-1042b5), and further says that, as the underlying substance, matter is “that which exists potentially,” (1042b10, trans. Ross). In Aristotle’s thought, *δύναμις* is determined by and directed toward actuality (c.f., Θ.6). This marks an important difference between Aristotle’s account of potency and the image of the *chōra* as gold.

<sup>130</sup> *Timaeus*, 50c-e.

As Timaeus expands his explanation of the third kind, we see the second discourse's model begin to diverge from the first discourse's craft paradigm. At the same time, there is still a great deal in common between the two accounts. On the one hand, Timaeus is naming a mother of the cosmos and shifting the entire paradigm for its generation: the cosmos is now like a begotten offspring rather than a crafted artifact, the result of two parents rather than a single craftsman. The feminine principle is more fully integrated in this framing. Rather than being added in addition to the kinds Being and Becoming which can be understood without the addition of the third kind, the relationship between the three is understood in a new way here. On the new reproductive paradigm, the role of the father and offspring cannot be understood without the mother. In contrast with the first characterization of the third kind as a wet nurse, Timaeus now calls her mother, attributing to the third kind a similar kind of causal responsibility for the offspring that he did not initially present.

On the other hand, this model still shares significant features with the craft paradigm. The mother—i.e., the third kind—is not yet sufficiently differentiated from the all which the demiurge takes over in the first discourse. Like the model in the first discourse, here Timaeus characterizes the third kind as something fully passive and receptive. As an *ἐκμαγεῖον*, she is necessary for what comes to be in her, but she does not determine anything about what comes to be. While Timaeus further centralizes the feminine principle of his cosmic account by calling the third kind 'mother', it remains to be seen the ways in which she is responsible for what comes to be in her.

The mother's total receptivity is underscored by the perfume image Timaeus presents:

For if [the third kind] were similar to any of the things that come on the scene, on receiving what was contrary to itself or of an altogether different nature, whenever these things arrive, it would copy them badly by projecting its own visage alongside

the thing copied. For this reason, that which is to take up all the kinds within itself should be free of all forms, just as with all those fragrant oils, whose makers first artfully contrive this very condition: they first make the liquids that are to receive the scents as odorless as possible.<sup>131</sup>

In the image of the odorless base for perfume (50e), Timaeus describes the third kind as what makes room for the sensible. Like the perfume base, the third kind makes room for shaped things by being itself totally free from form or shape. This shapelessness is the necessary condition for shaped things to come into being. This characterization informs Timaeus' return to discussing the elements. Here, he says that the third kind is neither any of the elements nor anything that comes to be from them, but rather is what underlies these. The elements are different configurations of the third kind, the result of her "partaking somehow of the intelligible in a most perplexing way and most hard-to-capture."<sup>132</sup> Fire, for instance, can be called the part of the third kind that has been ignited.<sup>133</sup>

### 2.3.1.3 The Third and Fourth Divisions: Bastard Reasoning and the Winnowing Basket

Timaeus divides the three kinds for a third time at 52a:

One kind is the form, which is in a self-same condition—unbegotten and imperishable, neither receiving into itself anything else from anywhere else ... that which is intellection's (νόησις) lot to look upon; and there is a second kind, which has the same name as the form and is similar to it—sensed, begotten, always swept along ... graspable by opinion with the aid of sense (δόξη μετ' αἰσθήσεως); and moreover, a third kind—that of Space (χώρα)—which always *is*, not admitting of destruction and providing a seat for all that has birth, itself graspable by some bastard reasoning with the aid of insensibility (ἄπτὸν λογισμῶ τιμι νόθῳ), hardly to be trusted, the very thing we look to when we dream and affirm that it's somehow necessary for everything that *is* to be in some region and occupy some space, and that what is neither on earth nor somewhere in heaven is nothing.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Timaeus*, 50e.

<sup>132</sup> *Timaeus* 51a-b.

<sup>133</sup> *Timaeus* 51b: "Someone would speak most correctly if he said that the part of it that's been ignited appears each time as fire; the part that's been liquified, as water; and both earth and air appear to the extent that it receives imitations of these."

<sup>134</sup> *Timaeus*, 52a-c.

Timaeus further centralizes the third kind in his account by emphasizing the way that it, like the first kind, always is and does not admit of generation or destruction. The third kind is as timeless and as foundational for becoming as the first kind. Here, Timaeus is associating the three kinds with the different intellectual capacities used to grasp them. For intellect and the things that come into being, this framework roughly corresponds with Timaeus' remarks in the beginning of the dialogue:

Now the one [i.e., Being] is grasped by intellection (νοήσει) accompanied by a rational account, since it's always in the same condition; but the other in its turn is opined by opinion accompanied by irrational sensation (δόξη μετ' αισθήσεως), since it comes to be and perishes and never genuinely *is*.<sup>135</sup>

This characterization of the three kinds seems to align with the first discourse more closely than the previous two. Once again, the third kind seems to be something merely added in addition to that initial distinction. However, immediately on the heels of the third division, Timaeus re-frames the three kinds a final time before giving his account of the construction of the elemental bodies. He calls this account a summary (ἐν κεφαλαίῳ, 52d2), but this re-framing differs greatly from the previous characterizations of the three kinds:

So then, in summary, let this account be given, proceeding from my vote and reasoned out as follows: Being and Space and Becoming (ὄν τε καὶ χώραν καὶ γένεσιν εἶναι), three in a threefold way, *are* before the birth of heaven; and that wet nurse of becoming ... appears to our sight in all sorts of ways. And because she's filled with powers neither similar nor equally balanced, in no part of her is she equally balanced, but rather, as she sways irregularly in every direction, she herself is shaken by those kinds and, being moved, in turn shakes them back; and the kinds, in being moved, are always swept along this way and that and are dispersed—just like the particles shaken and winnowed out by sieves and other instruments used for purifying grain: the dense and heavy are swept to one site and settle, the porous and light to another.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Timaeus*, 28a.

<sup>136</sup> *Timaeus* 52d-53a.

In this final division, Timaeus introduces another image that further centralizes the role of the *χώρα* in his account and adds a new dimension to his conception of the feminine capacities of the third kind. Timaeus likens space to a winnowing basket that purifies grain. Previously, the *χώρα* has been characterized only as wholly passive in receiving impressions of intellect and providing an occasion and making room for the sensible to come into being. Here, in addition to these properties, Timaeus offers an image that demonstrates the role of the third kind in the cosmos. While she is not responsible for the identity, structure, or properties of anything that comes into being—since those are the domain of intellect—she does affect the sensible in her own way.

Timaeus says that the *χώρα* is unbalanced, and as a result she shakes and is shaken. This indeterminate shaking results in a kind of sorting or purification in which everything, being shaken, is sorted by likeness, the way that shaking a winnowing basket sifts grain. As we will discuss in the next section, Timaeus says that the disequilibrium and shaking of the *χώρα* divides the four kinds (53a), separating the dissimilar kinds, and pushing similar kinds together. The swaying, unbalanced nature of the *χώρα* picks up on the nature of the “wandering cause” (τὸ τῆς πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας, 48a6-7) that Timaeus referred to as part of his justification for taking up a new beginning in the second discourse:

So if anyone is to declare how the all was in this way genuinely born, he must also mix in the form of the wandering cause and say how it is its nature to sweep things around.<sup>137</sup>

The *χώρα* is entirely receptive, but her total receptivity fills her with uneven and unbalanced powers which, in turn, cause her to shake, sweep along, and disrupt the cosmos. The *χώρα*, not intellect, is responsible for disorder in the cosmos. Further, this aspect of

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<sup>137</sup> *Timaeus*, 48a.

the *χώρα* is not merely taken over and molded as the demiurge takes over the all. Intellect struggles with the *χώρα*'s disruption, and that disruption plays a key role in the sorting of the elements and the coming to be of bodies.

### 2.3.2 The Genetic Paradigm in Summary

Through these various characterizations of the division between Being, Becoming, and *χώρα*, Timaeus brings to light a conception of the origin and structure that uses sexual reproduction as its guiding paradigm. In contrast with the craft paradigm, according to which there was a single, male creator of the cosmos, the genetic paradigm posits a mother and father of the cosmos who are mutually responsible for what comes to be in distinctive ways. The father (i.e., intellect), has essentially the same domain as the first discourse's demiurge. He provides order and structure in what comes to be, and everything that comes to be is in some sense a likeness of him. The things that come to be in the cosmos are the offspring on this model. Like the class of Becoming in the first discourse, the offspring is everything that comes to be, which is sensible and grasped by opinion.

Special attention has been given to uncovering the mother of the cosmos according to this model. The mother (i.e., the third kind, the *χώρα*) has a role that is more obscure and difficult to discern. Timaeus relies on various incompatible images to infer things about the mother of the cosmos. In his initial characterization of the mother, she appears similar to the pre-ordered all of the first discourse; she is wholly receptive, lacks any structure or intelligibility in herself, and is taken over and shaped by intellect. Timaeus emphasizes the total receptivity of the *χώρα* by comparing her to a molding stuff that can take on various forms (i.e., the *ἐκμαγείον*), as well as the odorless base of a perfume that receives scents but does not itself shape what comes to be in it in any way. Timaeus's divisions of the three

kinds culminate in his characterization of the mother as a winnowing basket. In this image, Timaeus highlights a new set of generative properties of the mother of the cosmos. In her total receptivity, she takes on various unbalanced powers, and these in turn cause her to be shaken and to shake what comes to be in her. These properties in particular will be of special interest in the following section as I consider this genetic paradigm in contrast with the craft paradigm.

#### 2.4 The Incompatibility of the Craft Model and Genetic Model

Now that I have laid out the various commitments of Timaeus' cosmologies in the first and second discourses, I am going to argue that the genetic paradigm is not a continuation of the craft paradigm. I find that, in its incompatibility, the genetic paradigm offers a significant revision of the craft paradigm. Further, it is not merely the case that the craft paradigm is incomplete because it omits what comes to be through necessity. Instead, I find that the craft paradigm is shown to be insufficient due to its inability to account for or accommodate the things that come to be through necessity on its model.

As a matter of clarity, I am not arguing that there is necessarily a rift between or a replacement of the causal personnel between the first and second discourses. In other words, I think there is good reason to agree with those who say that intellect in the second discourse is a continuation of the first discourse's demiurge. It does not matter much to my argument whether intellect replaces the demiurge. My argument relies on the relationship between the causal principles of the cosmos, rather than they themselves. It isn't the figures themselves that make the genetic paradigm significantly different from the craft paradigm,



it is the relationship between the parents of the cosmos, and the way Timaeus construes the relationship between principles of sexual difference in the cosmos.

I'm going to make my argument from two angles. First, I will look at the ways that the second discourse makes disorder an essential feature of the cosmos in a way that the first discourse does not allow. Second, I will argue that the first discourse presents a model of forcible suppression of feminine features by the masculine demiurge, while the second discourse represents a collaborative relationship between the masculine and feminine, having intellect accomplish his goals by means of persuasion rather than force. While reason still seeks to minimize the effects of necessity as the demiurge does disorder, the relationship between reason and necessity in the second discourse involves a basic respect for or acknowledgement of the feminine that is not allowed by the framework of the first discourse.

#### 2.4.1 Disorder as an Essential Feature of Timaeus's Cosmology

In centralizing the *χώρα*, and, in turn, centralizing the *χώρα*'s capacity to shake and disrupt the cosmos, Timaeus makes disorder, decay, and disruption an essential feature of the cosmos on this account. While these properties were treated only as obstacles for the demiurge to overcome in the first discourse, here they play a crucial role in making the cosmos what it is. This is the most significant way that the second discourse's genetic paradigm differs from the first discourse's craft paradigm. The first discourse does not just omit disorder from its account of what is an essential feature of the bodies of the sensible things that populate the cosmos, it has the demiurge forcibly suppress those features in bodies. He seeks to minimize disorderliness (*ἀταξία*, 30a5), unintelligibility (*ἀνόητος*, 30b2), incompleteness (*ἀτελεῖ*, 30c5), multiplicity (*πόλυς*, 31a2), and boundlessness

(ἄπειρος, 31a3)—all of which are demonstrated in the second discourse to be essential features of the cosmos insofar as they are behaviors brought about by χώρα. Further, these are all shown to be essentially feminine features, partially constituting the χώρα’s role in the cosmos as its mother and nurse. On the craft paradigm, the essential features of bodies are those that are similar to the eternal model. On the genetic model, by contrast, Timaeus highlights both order and disorder as essential features of the cosmos, making intellect and χώρα both causal explanations of the cosmos.

Like the first discourse, the second discourse conceives of body as that which is constituted by the four kinds—fire, air, water, and earth. In the first discourse, the elements are brought about by the demiurge bringing visibility and tangibility into proportion with themselves in the fairest bond.<sup>138</sup> The god is also responsible for bringing about the elements<sup>139</sup> in the second discourse.<sup>140</sup> However, according to the genetic paradigm, the χώρα plays a role in the formation of the elements:

So too, when the four kinds are shaken by the recipient, who, being herself moved, is like an instrument that produces shaking, she separates farthest from each other the kinds that are most dissimilar, while pushing together as close as possible those that are most similar—which is exactly why these different kinds also held a different place even before the all was arrayed and came to be out of them.<sup>141</sup>

The χώρα’s shaking separates out the pre-elemental traces—picking up on ἵχνη at 53b2—of fire, air, earth and water prior to the involvement of the god. Her shaking has a lasting effect on the way the cosmos is composed. Even once the god has intervened and ordered

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<sup>138</sup> *Timaeus* 31b-32c.

<sup>139</sup> Using the term ‘elements’ here and throughout this section as shorthand for what the four kinds really are. As Timaeus demonstrates, these are not truly elements (or even syllables, as in 48c).

<sup>140</sup> See *Timaeus* 53b.

<sup>141</sup> *Timaeus* 53a.

the elemental bodies, Timaeus says that the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ 's motion is responsible for the division of the bulk of the elements in the cosmos into separate regions:

They [the elements] all exchange their places; for while the bulks of each kind stand apart in their own private region through the motion of the receiver, yet those that from time to time become dissimilar to themselves and similar to others are carried, because of the shaking, toward the region of those to which they've been made similar.<sup>142</sup>

In bringing the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  to light and attributing disorderly motion (i.e., shaking rather than directed motion, like the orbits of planets set out by the demiurge) to her, Timaeus makes room for disorderly or indeterminate motion in his account of body and the conditions of embodiment. On this model, disorderly motion is crucial to what it means to be a body. All things are subject to the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ 's shaking, and, in return, the shaking of the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  plays a certain role in sorting out the traces of what the god will order into the elemental bodies that compose all things. The role that the motion of the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  plays in developing the elements cannot be accounted for on the model of the first discourse, where the demiurge designs bodies not to suffer from disorder.

The way the shaking of the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  is taken up as a guiding feature of human health at the end of the dialogue represents another way in which disorderly motion becomes an essential feature of body in the *Timaeus* following the switch to the genetic model. At the end of Timaeus's third speech, he refers back to the motion of the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$  as he characterizes health for the human body:

If someone imitates what we have called the nurturer and wet nurse of the all, and for the most part never allows the body to be at peace but keeps it in motion and, by always inducing certain shakings in it ... he will have set friend next to friend so as to produce health.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Timaeus*, 57c.

<sup>143</sup> *Timaeus*, 88d-e.

The shaking of the *χώρα* is not only accommodated on the third discourse's account of the human body but guides the principle of health. The healthy or good body in the first discourse is the one that most resembles the demiurge. We find this in the body of the cosmos—it is spherical, self-same, and as unmoving as possible. However, in the account of the human body in the end of the dialogue, a body that is unmoving will become unhealthy. In certain respects, the human body must imitate the *χώρα* *rather than* the demiurge in order to be healthy.

Consider this together with the first discourse's discussion of human bodies. Here, Timaeus talks about bodiless human heads rolling around and getting stuck in ditches (44d-e). The humor of this section underscores the difference between the human body and the cosmic body, and in particular the inability of the craft paradigm to account for the human body. Like the cosmic body, the human head is spherical. However, although it is like the cosmic body in shape, the human head taken by itself appears absurd. This absurdity reveals the degree to which the human body is dependent compared to the independence of the cosmic body. While sphericity represents total independence for the cosmic body, it renders the human body helpless. Without arms and legs to help the head navigate its terrain, we are left with the absurd picture of a head which, although equipped with the power of thought and sensation, cannot move itself. This demonstrates the dependency that is entailed by existence within an environment. The cosmos is able to be self-sufficient because nothing exists outside it. As soon as there is an outside, sphericity is no longer a virtue of body, but an obstacle to basic operation. The very property that contributes to the self-sameness of the cosmic body gives expression to incompleteness in this different context. It is for this very reason that the human body has to imitate the motions of the

χώρα to achieve health. By keeping the body in motion, the human sets up a defense against external motions.

We have seen some ways that the properties associated with the shaking of the χώρα are made to be essential features of body in the second and third discourse. The craft paradigm cannot accommodate the privileged place of disorder that we find on the genetic paradigm. This is because the demiurge does not simply omit these properties in his craft, but rather seeks to minimize all of the properties associated with χώρα in the first discourse. Timaeus sets up the demiurge's craft in such a way that stands at odds with the features of body revealed later in the dialogue. As a result, I find that we must consider the model of the second discourse a revision of the first discourse rather than a continuation of it.

#### 2.4.2 Force and Persuasion

In addition to the way the genetic paradigm adopts properties of the χώρα as essential features of embodiment, the genetic paradigm differs irreconcilably from the craft paradigm in the way it construes the relationship between masculinity and femininity, and the ways in which the masculine acts upon the feminine. In particular, the first discourse emphasizes the way the demiurge acts by force, while, in the second discourse, intellect acts through persuasion. In Timaeus's introduction to the second discourse, his discussion of the relationship between reason and necessity appears similar to the role of the demiurge on the craft paradigm. According to this account of the birth of the cosmos, as in the first discourse, the male parent of the cosmos's origin works to minimize the role of the feminine parent:

For mixed indeed was the birth of this cosmos here, and begotten from a standing-together of necessity and intellect; and as intellect was ruling over necessity by persuading her to lead most of what comes to be toward what's best, in this way

accordingly was this all constructed at the beginning: through necessity yielding to thoughtful persuasion. So if anyone is to declare how the all was in this way genuinely born, he must also mix in the form of the wandering cause and say how it is its nature to sweep things around.<sup>144</sup>

While the relationship between reason and necessity emphasizes the minimization of feminine properties in a way similar to the demiurge's ordering of the all, there is a difference that sets the cases apart in the way that minimization is achieved. Namely, this minimization or marginalization occurs according to persuasion rather than force. Reason rules over (ἄρχοντος, 48a2) and necessity, but he relates to her through persuasion. In other words, necessity is persuaded by, and therefore to some extent agrees to the aims of reason: she yields to (ἡττωμένης, 48a4) reason. By contrast, when the demiurge encounters resistance to his craft in the first discourse, he suppresses disorder by force. For instance, when he is crafting the soul of the cosmos by combining elements of Being (οὐσία), Same (ταὐτά), and Other (ἕτερος), he encounters a difficulty. Timaeus says that the nature of Other is difficult to work with (τὴν θατέρου φύσιν δύσμεικτον οὔσαν, 35a7-8) and the demiurge orders it using force (βία, 35a8).

As I discuss above, this forceful minimization of feminine features is a crucial component of the craft paradigm. Timaeus is explicit about the features of Becoming that the demiurge is suppressing as he orders the cosmos. Consider, for instance, 33a-d, where Timaeus describes the uniqueness, self-similarity, and self-sufficiency of the cosmos. He mentions the suppressed opposites of these categories (i.e., multiplicity, dissimilarity, and dependency), in order to explain why the cosmos is the way that it is rather than another way (e.g., the cosmos is spherical so that it will not be dissimilar to itself). In cases like

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<sup>144</sup> *Timaeus* 48a-b.

these, *Timaeus* signals to us clearly the features that the demiurge aims to suppress for the sake of order in the cosmos. The craft paradigm does not make room for collaboration with—or even the yielding of—disorderliness. Insofar as the craft paradigm involves the demiurge fashioning the cosmos as a likeness of the eternal model, it entails that he emphasize certain elements of his medium (i.e., the pre-ordered all) while minimizing others. Essentially, the agreement or resistance of the all to the demiurge’s craft is not an issue of concern for the craft paradigm in the way it is for the genetic paradigm.

I find that the particular way in which the demiurge uses force in his craft is irreconcilable with the way reason persuades necessity in the second discourse. Whether the all is persuaded or coerced is irrelevant to the first discourse’s account of the demiurge’s craft. In crafting the all as a likeness, all that matters is whether the demiurge achieves the end of producing a cosmos that resembles the eternal model. Whether he achieves that end by force or persuasion does not matter on the model of the first discourse the way it does in the second discourse. By requiring that intellect persuade necessity, the model of the second discourse gives necessity a greater sense of power and something closer to equality, even as—or perhaps precisely when—she yields to intellect.

### 2.4.3 The Unity of the First and Second Discourse

The first and second discourse do not agree about everything in their cosmological accounts, and this is most of all true with respect to the treatment of the role of feminine features in the origin and structure of the cosmos. In this article, I have highlighted the ways that sexual difference sheds light on fundamental differences between the paradigms that guide the cosmology of the first and second discourse of the *Timaeus*. While I have argued that there are irreconcilable differences between the craft paradigm of the first

discourse and the genetic paradigm of the second discourse, the two discourses contribute to a unified speech in the *Timaeus*. As I have mentioned elsewhere, Timaeus foreshadows from the beginning of his speech the incongruity of his speeches, warning us that his speeches will not always agree with one another about everything.<sup>145</sup> Timaeus refers back to the internal unity of the three speeches at the outset of his final discourse, when he suggests that the final speech adds a head to the account.<sup>146</sup> Given Timaeus' remarks about the unity of his speech despite inconsistencies between the accounts, what are we to make of the differences between the discourses? How can we see them as parts of a unified account?

Admittedly, a full account of the unity of these discourses despite their differences is an issue that would require another article to address fully. Nevertheless, I will gesture toward a possible solution to the glaring differences. One way we might look at the frameworks of the first two discourses is as complementary models which emphasize different aspects of generativity. Just as there are different myths in Plato's dialogues which explore different elements of similar phenomena, we might see the first two discourses as accounts of a similar subject (i.e., the origin of the cosmos) that take up different methods of explanation.<sup>147</sup> This would explain the way each paradigm seems to be taken up at certain points in the third discourse in Timaeus' account of the human body. On the one hand, the craft paradigm is at play as the lesser gods construct the human body in imitation

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<sup>145</sup> See *Timaeus* 29c-d.

<sup>146</sup> See *Timaeus* 69a-b.

<sup>147</sup> For instance, consider the differences in the model of ἔπος in the *Symposium*'s various myths, or the differences in Socrates' account of the ascent up the ladder of love in *Symposium* and his myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*. While the details of these myths are at times contradictory, they are complementary in that they each contribute to a broadly speaking Platonic account of love. I owe this idea and example to David Bradshaw, who helpfully suggested it as a point of comparison to the different ideas at play in the *Timaeus*.



of the demiurge's craft. On the other hand, the genetic paradigm expresses itself in the third discourse in the elevated role of feminine properties in human anatomy and physiology, and in Timaeus' tendency to assign for each bodily function an organ that serves the male function and one that serves a female function.

## 2.5 Conclusion

To sum up, the craft paradigm that guides the first discourse relies on the subordination and occlusion of feminine principles insofar as it has the demiurge make the all in the likeness of the eternal model. To be made a likeness requires that a thing's own standards or characters are left behind in favor of the norms of the thing of which it is a likeness. In other words, to be made a likeness is to be subordinated to the terms of the model to which a thing is likened. I have shown that, in many cases, Timaeus is explicit about this subordination. Especially in his description of the formation of the body of the cosmos, he asserts and repeats the norms that the demiurge seeks to impart in the visible, and, further, the aspects of the all that he is required to occlude in order to replicate those norms. In particular, these suppressed aspects of the all are unintelligibility, disorder, complexity, multiplicity, dissimilarity, incompleteness, dependency, and wandering. The second discourse, in contrast, offers a new model that makes essential the very features suppressed by the demiurge in the first discourse. The genetic paradigm does this by bringing the feminine principle of the cosmos to light and giving it voice alongside the masculine principle as the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ .

I have argued that the second discourse's genetic paradigm is not an extension of the first discourse's craft paradigm. I have observed two basic incompatibilities between

the models. First, the first discourse does not leave room for the features that the second discourse deems essential. This is crucially different from the view that the things that come to be through necessity are merely left out of the account in the first discourse. Rather, Timaeus addresses these properties in the first discourse and has the demiurge actively suppress them. When Timaeus says that we must explain the things that come to be through necessity (i.e., 47e), I take him to mean that a new model is required that can account for the things that come to be through necessity, rather than exclude them from the model. The second incompatibility I observe is the demiurge's use of force on the craft paradigm compared to intellect's use of persuasion on the genetic paradigm. Intellect and necessity share a mutually collaborative relationship in the production of the cosmos. While necessity yields to intellect, they are each responsible for different aspects of the coming to be of the cosmos, and must, to some degree, acknowledge or pay respect to one another. This expresses itself in the form of intellect's use of persuasion rather than force, as well as necessity's agreement to be persuaded in yielding to intellect. The craft paradigm does not allow for such a mutual respect. In addition to not naming a female counterpart to the masculine demiurge, the means by which the demiurge shapes the all (i.e., whether by force or persuasion) is not shown to be a concern for his ultimate aim, which is to fashion the cosmos in the likeness of the eternal model. I have tried to argue that each of these incompatibilities suggests that the second discourse is in some ways a revision of the first, rather than a pure continuation of it. At the very least, the second discourse invites us to reconsider the role of the feminine principles that were overlooked in the first.

## CHAPTER 3. WOMEN'S BODIES AND HEALTH IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS* AND THE HIPPOCRATICS

### 3.1 Introduction

Alongside the Hippocratic texts, Plato's *Timaeus* is often cited as a *locus classicus* for hysteria with its account of the wandering womb in the myth of the origin of women.<sup>148</sup> In that passage, Timaeus describes the womb as an unruly animal that wanders around the woman's body wreaking havoc by causing suffocation and "all manner of other diseases" (νόσους παντοδαπὰς, 91c6) in order to satisfy its desire for childbearing. The woman's suffering is relieved only when she has sex with a man and conceives a child.<sup>149</sup> The myth portrays women's bodies as categorically dependent on men's bodies. Because of the womb's ability to move throughout the body, women are predisposed to disease and require intervention from men in the form of sexual intercourse to achieve health.

This infamous passage from Plato's *Timaeus* builds on the Hippocratic conception of the natural insufficiency of women's bodies.<sup>150</sup> Throughout the Hippocratic

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<sup>148</sup> I.e., *Timaeus* 91c. For the connection between this passage and historical conceptions of hysteria (and misogyny more generally), see Mercer, "The Philosophical Roots of Misogyny" (p. 188), Ng "Hysteria: a cross cultural comparison of its origins and history" (p. 288), and especially Bianchi, "The Errant Feminine in Plato's *Timaeus*," (c.f., p. 89: "This is the same errancy, straying, or wandering (*planomenon*) that Plato attributes to the womb at the very end of the dialogue, in a passage that (alongside Hippocrates) is a *locus classicus* for the malady of hysteria").

<sup>149</sup> "Whenever [the womb] comes to be fruitless long beyond its due season, it grows difficult and irritable; and wandering everywhere throughout the body it blocks up the breathing-passages, and by not allowing breathing throws one into the most extreme frustrations and brings on all sorts of other diseases, until the desire of the one and the love of the other bring the sexes together," *Timaeus* 91c-d (translated by Peter Kalkavage).

<sup>150</sup> As a matter of chronology, the Hippocratic gynecological texts are some of the oldest extant Greek prose. Grensemann (1975, p. 195-202) has argued that the *Nature of Women* was written in the first half of the fifth

gynecological texts, the author (or authors<sup>151</sup>) describes female anatomy as prone to disease and in need of male intervention to achieve health.<sup>152</sup> Sexual intercourse is prescribed frequently as a cure for all kinds of feminine diseases.<sup>153</sup> Sex is also prescribed as a kind of preventative measure women should take to ensure their health. The author of *On Girls* suggests that women should begin having sex as soon as they reach menarche, otherwise they will inevitably begin to suffer from some kind of disease.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, the author of *On Generation* begins the treatise by correlating women's health with sex: "the following point is also true for women: if they have intercourse with men they are more likely to be healthy, if not, then less so."<sup>155</sup> According to the Hippocratic tradition, men and women differ vastly in their basic anatomical principles; beyond having different reproductive equipment, women's bodies are viewed as fundamentally porous, while men's bodies are viewed as comparatively dense and smooth. Additionally, men and women have entirely different standards of health, and require different treatment regimens. The author of *Diseases of Women I* says that disease is "hard to recognize" (χαλεπὰ συνιέναι) in women

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century based on the text's humoral theory and the author's use of asyndeton, particles, and vocabulary (see also Dean-Jones (1994) p. 10).

<sup>151</sup> The Corpus of Hippocratic texts consists of about sixty treatises, which scholars today generally agree to be the work of multiple authors (although this has historically been a contentious issue in scholarship; see Dean-Jones "Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science," p. 6 note 15). At the same time, many (if not all ten) of the gynecological texts are considered to be the source of a single author due to the strong unity in doctrine and intertextual references (e.g., *On Generation* 4: "why [women] become prone to disease, I will explain in *Diseases of Women*," and *Diseases of Women I* 2-3, which takes up this topic). Dean-Jones argues (p. 12) that, regardless of authorship, the unity in the ideas expressed in the Hippocratic gynecology allow it to be treated as a perspective with unity (p. 12).

<sup>152</sup> Especially in *Nature of Women*, *On Girls*, *Diseases of Women*, *On Generation*, and *Barrenness*.

<sup>153</sup> E.g., uterine edema (*Nature of Women* ii 314, *Diseases of Women I* lix), displaced uterus (*Nature of Women* iii-v, viii, *Diseases of Women II* xviii-xix), postpartum complications (*Nature of Women* xvi-xviii), excessive phlegm (*Diseases of Women I* lviii), and uterine carcinoma (*Diseases of Women II* xlvi), to name a few examples among many more.

<sup>154</sup> *On Girls* 470. See also *Diseases of Women I* ii: "if the woman does not have intercourse with her husband ... her uterus turns aside. For it has no moistness of its own, since the woman is not having intercourse, and ... it is drier and lighter than it should be" (translated by Paul Potter).

<sup>155</sup> *On Generation* 4.476 (translated by Potter).

and emphasizes the importance of approaching care for men and women differently, writing, “Physicians too may err in not inquiring carefully about a disease’s cause [in women], and in treating them like diseases in men: indeed, I have seen many women perish in such cases. ... For there is a great difference in the treatment of women’s diseases and those of men.”<sup>156</sup>

It is unsurprising that there has historically been a strong association between the *Timaeus* and Hippocratic thought. Plato’s work is often in conversation with medicine. Elsewhere in his work, Plato’s characters discuss medicine and even Hippocrates specifically. In the *Phaedrus*, for instance, Socrates and Phaedrus look to Hippocrates as a model for a philosophical method of division.<sup>157</sup> It is especially fitting for the *Timaeus* to take up Hippocratic ideas; in many ways, versions of the Hippocratic project resemble Timaeus’ project. In addition to their practical concern of identifying and curing human disease, the Hippocratics are concerned with sorting out the ways that the human body must be understood in light of the equilibrium of the cosmos.<sup>158</sup> Likewise, the *Timaeus* explains the different ways that the human body resembles the cosmos as a whole and is designed to navigate and comprehend it.

Although the *Timaeus* undoubtedly draws on ideas from the Hippocratics about sexual difference, the texts differ in their respective approaches to the nature of femininity

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<sup>156</sup> *Diseases of Women* I lxii (translated by Potter).

<sup>157</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 270b-e. This section is understood to refer to the views expressed in the Hippocratic treatise on *Ancient Medicine*. Hippocrates of Cos is also mentioned by name in the *Protagoras* at 311b, and is alluded to in the *Charmides* at 156e.

<sup>158</sup> For instance, on the relationship between medicine and meteorology, the author of *Airs, Waters, Places* writes, “If it be thought that all this belongs to meteorology, he will find out, on second thoughts, that the contribution of astronomy to medicine is not a very small one but a very great one indeed. For with the seasons men's diseases, like their digestive organs, suffer change” (*Airs, Waters, Places* ii. 20-26, translated by W. H. S. Jones).

and dependency. In this project, I will consider the ways that the *Timaeus* takes up and revises ideas from Hippocratic gynecology rather than simply adopting them. I will explore different senses of dependency that Timaeus portrays in the dialogue, focusing on his account of human anatomy and health and disease in the human body (i.e., Timaeus' third discourse from 69a-90d). In my analysis, I will argue that the *Timaeus* differs from the Hippocratics in its approach to the relationship between health and femininity in two crucial ways. First, in Timaeus' account of human anatomy and physiology (69d-81e), several of the body's organs, processes, and desires with traits that are characteristically masculine in Hippocratic accounts (e.g., the heart, the liver, desire for food and drink, and bones) depend on the assistance of organs with characteristically feminine traits (e.g., the lungs, spleen, lower belly, and flesh). Second, in his account of diseases and health (81e-90d), Timaeus makes femininity a normative standard for health when he advises that one should imitate the *χώρα* in order to maintain a healthy body and soul. Here, Timaeus portrays features that the Hippocratics consider to be characteristically feminine (e.g., porosity, multiplicity, dependency, disequilibrium, and flux) as necessary for human health. While the Hippocratics use these principles to characterize the female body as an inferior kind of body, Plato's *Timaeus* takes the very same concepts and makes them central to the dialogue's notion of health and the demiurge's design of human anatomy.

I will begin with remarks on the Hippocratic notion of sexual difference. Here, I will focus on their conception of the unstable standard of health for women's bodies and their account of menstruation, which postulates that women depend on sexual intercourse to maintain health. Following the overview of Hippocratic gynecology, I will offer an analysis of the way these ideas are taken up and changed in the accounts of anatomy, health,

and disease in the third discourse of the *Timaeus*. This analysis has two parts, each focusing on one of the two sections of the third discourse (i.e., the account of human anatomy at 69d-81e and the account of health and disease at 81e-90d). In the first part, I will consider the way Timaeus associates dependency with masculine properties rather than feminine ones in his account of anatomy, and ultimately presents a mutual dependency between masculine and feminine features. In the second part of my analysis, I will argue that Timaeus characterizes health in his speech by appealing to the same qualities that the Hippocratics use to explain the inferiority of the female body.

### 3.2 Women's Bodies in the Hippocratic Corpus

The Hippocratics construe sexual difference as a matter not limited to reproductive organs. Beyond reproduction, sexual difference is constituted by differences in physiological processes and capacities of all varieties. On the whole, the Hippocratics consider men to have solid and denser flesh than women, which in turn allows their bodies to maintain equilibrium. Women, on the other hand, have flesh that is comparatively loose and porous. Although the malleability these qualities provide is seen as advantageous and even necessary for women in some circumstances—for instance, in pregnancy a woman's body must be able to stretch and change to make room for a growing child—it is an obstacle to health in other cases. Since female flesh has more room and requires more substance to fill it up compared to a man's compact flesh, women tend to retain excessive blood that must

be released periodically through menstruation. If it is not released, the excessive blood causes pain and disease for the woman.<sup>159</sup>

Although women's bodies are generally marked off from men's according to these principles in the Hippocratic tradition, there is a great deal of variance between different women's bodies based on factors like environment or sexual maturity. For instance, according to the author of *Nature of Women*, "cold places promote fluxes, while hot ones are drying and constipating."<sup>160</sup> Women's bodies differ from men's the most in their childbearing years and resemble men's bodies more prior to menarche or post-menopause, with barren women also sometimes possessing traits that more resemble men.<sup>161</sup>

The traits that constitute the sexually mature and fertile woman would be markers of disease for men. The author of *Nature of Man* asserts that health for the human being is a matter of proportionality between its parts:

The body of man has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of his body, and through these he feels pain or enjoys health. Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another in respect of compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled. Pain is felt when one of these elements is in defect or excess, or is isolated in the body without being compounded with all the others. For when an element is isolated and stands by itself, not only must the place which it left become diseased, but the place where it stands in a flood must, because of the excess, cause pain and

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<sup>159</sup> Although the Hippocratics are the first to give this medical-scientific account of the porosity of female, the vice of women's overindulgence is a well-worn narrative in Greek thought. Consider, for instance, Hesiod's accounts of the origin of women in both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, each of which postulates overindulgence as a crucial feature of femininity. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod calls woman a "beautiful evil" (καλὸν κακόν, 585), and says that they are "a great woe for mortals, dwelling with men, no companions of baneful poverty but only of luxury. As when bees in vaulted beehives nourish the drones, partners in evil works—all day long until the sun goes down, every day, the bees hasten and set up the white honeycombs, while the drones remain inside among the vaulted beehives and gather into their own stomachs the labor of others—in just the same way high-thundering Zeus set up women as an evil for mortal men, as partners in distressful works" (592-603, translated by Glenn Most).

<sup>160</sup> *Nature of Women* 1 (L VII 312), translated by Potter.

<sup>161</sup> See Dean-Jones (p. 109).



distress. In fact when more of an element flows out of the body than is necessary to get rid of superfluity, the emptying causes pain.<sup>162</sup>

The healthy person has a balance between their humors. Women, who are by nature disposed to an imbalance in humors due to their tendency to produce and retain excessive blood, are therefore never healthy in the same way that men can be. The healthy male body is self-sufficient and maintains an equilibrium with its itself.

Gynecology is a special and difficult subject for the Hippocratics. Because of women's tendency toward disproportion and disease, the Hippocratics must treat women according to a different standard than men, hence gynecology becomes its own special branch of medicine. However, the Hippocratics do not consider women to have a standard of health in the same way that men do. While proportion between humors—the male standard of health—cannot apply to women in the same way, there is no standard that takes the place of proportion for evaluating women's bodies. The author of *On Barrenness* remarks on the difficulty with treating women:

Try to treat in accordance with nature, with an eye to each women's condition and strength, since *in these matters there is no common measure*, but you should try to estimate from the various factors how to employ cleanings of the whole body and of the head, purgative medications, fomentations of the uterus, and suppositories.<sup>163</sup>

Without a standard other than the woman's general comfort and survival, the Hippocratics find it especially difficult to assess how or when they are diseased, and to what standard the physician aims to return them through treatment.

For the rest of this section I will go through the basic description and rationale for women's anatomy and physiology in the Hippocratic texts, focusing on their account of

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<sup>162</sup> *Nature of Man* iv (translated by Jones).

<sup>163</sup> *On Barrenness* 230 (translated by Potter).

menstruation, and the way menstruation serves as a reason that women depend on men for healthy menstruation.

### 3.2.1 Porosity and Menstruation

The Hippocratics distinguish men from women in part by their respective capacities for holding and processing nourishment and blood. The author of *Diseases of Women I* compares the difference between men's and women's bodies to the difference between a woven carpet and flocks of wool:

If someone sets both some clean flocks of wool and a clean densely woven carpet of exactly the same weight as the flocks over water or a moist location for two days and two nights, on removing them he will discover, on weighing them, that the flocks have become much heavier than the carpet. This happens because (sc. moisture) always moves up away from water present in a wide-necked vessel, and flocks, being porous and soft, take up a greater quantity of what is moving away, while a carpet, being compact and densely woven, becomes saturated without accepting much of what is moving toward it. In the same way, a woman, being more porous, will draw into her body more of what is being exhaled from her cavity, and more quickly, than a man does.<sup>164</sup>

The woman's natural porosity causes her to absorb and retain more of what she takes in than a man would.<sup>165</sup> The porosity of female flesh may also be owed to the openness of her *poroi*. In the *Regimen*, the author describes a vast and winding network of channels that run through the flesh and play a role in shaping a person's characteristics.<sup>166</sup> In a mature and healthy woman, these *poroi* are open and loose, with constriction being a sign of disease. This difference in anatomical structure (i.e., men's flesh being dense and women's porous) is the root of several differences in the way each sex experiences different physiological processes. Perhaps the most significant of these is the connection between

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<sup>164</sup> *Diseases of Women I* (i 12), translated by Potter.

<sup>165</sup> Elsewhere, the Hippocratics mark off glands as a special kind of flesh that is spongy, rarefied, and fatty, and say that "to the touch it is like wool" (*Glands* 1, translated by Potter). Female flesh in the *Diseases of Women* is described as flesh that is like a gland.

<sup>166</sup> For more on these *poroi*, see *Regimen* 1. 36.

female porosity and menstruation. The author of *Diseases of Women I* goes on to explain the connection between a woman's porous flesh and the necessity for menstruation:

Also, because a woman's flesh is softer, when her body fills up with blood, unless the blood is then discharged from her body, the filling and warming of her tissues that ensue will provoke pain: for a woman has hotter blood, and for this reason she herself is hotter than a man; if, however, most of the blood that was added is subsequently discharged, no pain will arise from it. A man, having solidier flesh than a woman, will never overflow with so much blood that, unless some of it is discharged each month, he feels pain, and besides he takes in only as much (sc. blood) as is necessary for the nourishment of his body, and his body—lacking softness as it does—is never overstretched or heated by fullness as a woman's is. A great amount of this is also due in a man to his exerting himself physically more than a woman, which consumes a part of the exhalation (sc. rising from his food).<sup>167</sup>

When the stomach converts food into blood, the part that is not useful to the body is meant to be exhaled.<sup>168</sup> The female flesh, however, absorbs excessive blood and retains it due to its porosity. As a result, women must periodically expel the excessive blood, which occurs through menstruation. The Hippocratics see menstruation as a necessary cleansing of the body of this excessive blood. For that reason, the authors often call menstruation ἡ κάθαρσις: “the cleansing,” or, even “the purification.”<sup>169</sup> Men do not need to menstruate because their dense flesh does not retain excessive blood. Their flesh allows the body to retain the amount of blood it needs, and nothing more. The capacity of the man's flesh to hold blood aligns with what is best for his body; in other words, he can hold only as much as he should hold. Women's flesh retains as much as it can, and its capacity exceeds what

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<sup>167</sup> *Diseases of Women I* (i 13), translated by Potter.

<sup>168</sup> Timaeus refers to the interconnected relationship between digestion, blood, and the breath as the “irrigation system” and gives a full account of it at 78a-81d. This system will be an object of analysis below.

<sup>169</sup> See, for instance, *Diseases of Women I* 6.

is good for the body. She can hold more than she should, and menstruation is considered evidence of this disparity.<sup>170</sup>

Although menstruation is evidence of the female body's inferiority with respect to achieving equilibrium with itself, it is even worse for a woman not to menstruate. The author of *Diseases of Women I* says that "if a woman is healthy, her menstrual blood will pass like that of a sacrificial animal."<sup>171</sup> When a woman stops menstruating all together, the Hippocratics do not in any case find that this is evidence of health or that the woman's body only holds the amount of blood it needs. Instead, they postulate that a woman who fails to menstruate retains her menses within her body.<sup>172</sup> The Hippocratics consider retained menses—a version of which is called the "virgin's disease," the topic of the treatise *On Girls*, as well as many of the other gynecological treatises—a disease that is fatal when not treated promptly. The Hippocratics often prescribe sexual intercourse with a man to cure and prevent retained menses in women.

### 3.2.2 Feminine Dependency and Men's Role in Women's Health

According to the Hippocratic understanding of both the female reproductive system and menstruation, the uterus does not, precisely speaking, perform menstruation as its natural function, and menstruation may take alternative forms.<sup>173</sup> The womb's purpose as an organ is for childbearing, but its role in menstruation is comparatively accidental. The womb

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<sup>170</sup> Dean-Jones observes the way that this demonstrates the androcentric norm of the Hippocratic conception of health: "underlying the Hippocratic characterization of male and female flesh is a value judgement: firm and compact = good; loose and spongy = bad" (p. 58).

<sup>171</sup> *Diseases of Women I* 6.

<sup>172</sup> C.f., *Diseases of Women I* 3: "When the menses cease to appear, pain occupies the lower belly, and a heaviness seems to be lying there; the woman suffers terribly in her loins and flanks. ... after two or three months sometimes her menses break out in a mass through the vagina" (translated by Potter).

<sup>173</sup> For instance, in extreme circumstances, the womb may fall down into the thigh, form a sore on the thigh, and "menstruate" from there.

becomes the mechanism for releasing excessive blood from the body due to its hollowness and its need for moisture. The womb needs moisture but must receive that moisture from somewhere else.<sup>174</sup> When a woman is menstruating regularly, the Hippocratics postulate that her excess blood flows<sup>175</sup> into her uterus, which in turn periodically releases the menses through the vagina. When the excessive blood from the woman's flesh does not flow into the uterus, it seeks out moisture elsewhere in the body by attaching itself to various organs and taking moisture from them.<sup>176</sup>

Unlike other organs, the Hippocratics see the womb as able to move itself throughout the woman's body in search of moisture. They describe the womb's movements less dramatically than the *Timaeus*. While the womb "wanders" (πλανώμενον, 91c) in the *Timaeus*, the Hippocratics describe it as "turning" to one side or another (e.g., στρέφω or τρέπω, as seen in *Diseases of Women* I 2, 7).<sup>177</sup> In order to keep the womb reliably attached to the cervix and menstruation regular, a woman must be sexually active with a male partner.<sup>178</sup> Sexual intercourse has two functions for women's health. First, the semen the uterus receives in intercourse encourages it to remain attached to the cervix. It does so by providing the womb with extra moisture so that it will not stray off to other parts of the body to receive moisture elsewhere. Second, sexual intercourse encourages the regular and

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<sup>174</sup> See *On Generation* 4, *Diseases of Women* I ii.

<sup>175</sup> The most frequent verb used for the flowing of the menses is χωρεύειν (c.f. *Diseases of Women* I 6), which can also mean "makes room" or "withdraws."

<sup>176</sup> E.g., the heart or the liver. See *Diseases of Women* I vii for an account of the womb attaching itself to the liver out of excessive dryness. The womb's attachment to one of the body's other organs can be fatal. Timaeus describes a similar phenomenon in his myth of the wandering womb, which has the womb block up the breathing passages.

<sup>177</sup> Hanson (1991) suggests that the womb's movements owe to the fact that, since men do not have wombs, there is no natural place for the womb in the female body (p. 82).

<sup>178</sup> This regimen is recommended by the author(s) of *On Girls*, *Diseases of Women* I and II, *On Generation*, *Barrenness*, and especially frequently in the *Nature of Women*.

easy flow of the menses by heating the blood with semen.<sup>179</sup> Intercourse also manually opens the passageway through which the menses pass, which is otherwise in danger of constricting.<sup>180</sup>

Men play a significant role in women's health by ensuring the regularity and curing the irregularity of menstruation. This is not a mutual relationship; men have no need of women for their health.<sup>181</sup> Men carry out a kind of paternalistic care over women. That is, they are not women's assistants; they are their caretakers. The dynamic of dependency between men and women is unbalanced, there is no mutual need.

### 3.2.3 The Hippocratic Woman in Summary

Hippocratic gynecology asserts that women's bodies are incapable of reliably maintaining an equilibrium on their own. Menstruation—called an “evil” by the author of *On Girls*—is the primary evidence for the inferiority of women's bodies. The Hippocratics conceive of menstruation as the body forcing out what it cannot deal with rather than a purposeful physiological process. On this account of menstruation, the porosity of a woman's flesh causes her to retain more blood than is useful to her body. The body must in turn be cleansed by releasing its excessive blood in menstruation. The woman, however, requires assistance in this release; her body does not naturally or always release its excessive blood

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<sup>179</sup> The author of *On Generation* says “[the woman's] uterus becomes moist during intercourse, rather than being in a dry state, and in a dry state it contracts more strongly than it should, and in contracting provokes a serious trouble in the body. Second, intercourse makes the menses pass more easily by warming and moistening the blood, whereas if the menses do not pass, women's bodies become prone to disease” (4, translated by Potter).

<sup>180</sup> See *On Girls* 468.

<sup>181</sup> That isn't to say that men have no need of women at all; women, especially in their childbearing (i.e., menstruating) years are valuable to men. At the same time, women are no use to men as far as men's health is concerned.

regularly, painlessly, or in the correct amount.<sup>182</sup> To ensure that the menses leave the body through the vagina and in the appropriate amount, the uterus must be stimulated by male seed through sexual intercourse.

This Hippocratic account of menstruation develops a scheme on which women physiologically depend on men for their health. This need is not reciprocal; women do not play any role in producing health for the man. Further, this scheme of feminine dependency relies on a fundamental distinction between denseness and porosity. It is the denseness of the man's flesh that allows his body to maintain equilibrium with itself and exhale his excessive blood. For the same reason, the porosity of the woman's flesh necessitates menstruation and causes her to rely on male intervention in the form of sexual intercourse.

### 3.3 Women's Bodies in Plato's *Timaeus*

Timaeus' speech is, first and foremost, an account of how the cosmos has come to be through the god (i.e., the demiurge, intellect) imposing order and proportion on the pre-ordered all.<sup>183</sup> Throughout the speech, Timaeus is analyzing and explaining the world—from the shape of the cosmos as a whole down to the individual bodies that reside within it—as exegetes (ἐξηγηταί, 29b5) of the god's craftwork.

Humans occupy a special place in Timaeus' account. Part of us—the divine kind of soul within us—is crafted by the demiurge with the same materials he used to craft the soul of the cosmos.<sup>184</sup> When the demiurge crafts the immortal souls, he also instructs them about

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<sup>182</sup> According to the author of *Diseases of Women I*, the correct amount of menstrual blood that should be released each cycle is two Attic cotyles.

<sup>183</sup> C.f. *Timaeus* 30a, 53b, 69b.

<sup>184</sup> *Timaeus* 41d.

the “laws of destiny” (νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους, 41e2-3), “in order that he might be blameless of the future evil from each of them.”<sup>185</sup> As he is instructing the souls, he introduces sexual difference as a normative bifurcation of humanity: “He told them the laws of destiny: ... how, human nature being twofold, the superior part would be a kind which at a later point would be called man.”<sup>186</sup>

By contrast with the kind of soul that the demiurge crafts for us, the human body and the other kinds of soul within the human are by nature mortal. Since the demiurge does not produce mortal crafts (i.e., crafts that will naturally dissolve over time), he assigns the task of crafting human beings to the lesser gods whom he has already crafted:

“Gods of gods, you works of whom I am craftsman and father, whatever is born through me is not dissoluble except by my will. ... Three mortal kinds are still left unbegotten; but if these are not born, heaven will be imperfect, for it will not have all the kinds of animals within itself—but have them it must, if it’s to be sufficiently perfect. ... So in order that mortal kinds may *be* and this all be genuinely all, turn yourselves, in accordance with nature, to the crafting of animals, imitating my power in giving you birth. And as many of them for whom it’s suitable to have the same name, ‘immortal,’ ... that part I’ll hand down to you after I’ve sown it and made a beginning. But as for what remains, you are to go about fashioning and begetting animals by interweaving mortal with immortal; and make them grow by giving them nourishment, and, when they’ve withered away, receive them back again.”<sup>187</sup>

The lesser gods initially form the human body as the head only, a spherical body that contains all of the divine circuits.<sup>188</sup> However, the head turns out to be helpless on its own, unable to navigate the world, so the gods give the head a body:

In order that it not go rolling on the earth, which has all sorts of heights and depths, and be at an impasse when it came to climbing over the one and climbing out of the other, they gave [the head] the body as a chariot for easy travel.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Timaeus*, 42d.

<sup>186</sup> *Timaeus* 41e-42a, translated by Kalkavage. Remarkably, the division between men and women comes before the human body is introduced.

<sup>187</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* 41b-d (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>188</sup> I.e., the sense faculties. *Timaeus* 43c-45d.

<sup>189</sup> *Timaeus* 42d, translated by Kalkavage.



This initial account of the human body posits two basic parts: on the one hand there is the head, which is the most perfect shape a mortal body can be (spherical) and possesses the divine part of the human. On the other hand, there is the rest of the body, which by nature serves the head and provides it with mobility.<sup>190</sup> After these brief remarks about the structure of the human body, Timaeus spends the final part of his first discourse focusing on the nature of sense perception, characterizing the senses as “the assistant causes (συναίτιων, 46c7) that god uses as his servants in perfecting as far as possible the look of the best.”<sup>191</sup>

In this initial sketch of the human being, Timaeus frames our thinking about the human being with a few versions of a similar kind of twofold division. The various divisions that Timaeus makes in this early account of the human being in the dialogue prepare us to think of the human being in terms of normative divisions. First, humans are immortal and mortal, the product of two kinds of craftworking. The demiurge is responsible for the immortal part of the human, while the lesser gods, imitating the work of the demiurge, are responsible for the mortal part of the human. Additionally, Timaeus has the demiurge say that human nature is twofold, with the superior part being called man. These distinctions reflect the initial division in the structure of the human body: the head resembles the immortal, being spherical and is containing the divine circuits, while the body is set apart as its servant and carries it around the world. Finally, sense perception serves as an assistant to reason in teaching humans the nature of concepts like number,

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<sup>190</sup> Precisely speaking, Timaeus only highlights the limbs when he describes the rest of the body; there is no mention of the thorax (i.e., chest and abdomen) yet. A full account of the thorax does not come until the third discourse.

<sup>191</sup> 46c, translated by Kalkavage.

proportion, same, and other. By the time Timaeus returns to give a more detailed account of the human body near the end of his speech, he has prepared us to think of the human being in terms of these normative pairs.

### 3.3.1 *Timaeus* 69d-81e: Human Anatomy

In his third discourse, Timaeus narrows his focus. Rather than going through the nature and origin of the whole cosmos, like he does in the first and second discourse, Timaeus focuses almost exclusively on the way that the human body is ordered.<sup>192</sup> In his account, Timaeus first discusses human anatomy and physiology (69d-81e), followed by an account of the nature and causes of diseases and health (81e-90d). In the discussion of anatomy, Timaeus frames the human being by focusing on different organs and physiological processes that serve different purposes by the design of the lesser gods who compose the body in imitation of the demiurge's craft.<sup>193</sup> Timaeus begins by addressing the parts of the body that have to do with different kinds of soul in the human. He starts with the body's frame, which, like the earlier discussion of the human body at 42d, is divided into the head and the body (69e). Next, he divides the body into the chest and the abdomen (69e). Timaeus goes on to address the role that the heart and the liver play in communicating between the immortal kind of soul and the mortal kinds of soul (70b-d and 70d-72d, respectively). Next, he addresses the way the lower belly accommodates humans' gluttonous appetite for food and drink (72e-73a). He discusses marrow and bones apart

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<sup>192</sup> Timaeus does swiftly address the coming to be of the whole cosmos at the outset of the third discourse at 69b-c in which he summarizes the idea that the cosmos came to be through the god ordering the disordered all: "So just as we said at the beginning, since things were in a condition of disorder, the god introduced proportions in them, making each thing proportional both to itself and to the others ... For at that time, things partook of none of this, except insofar as it happened by chance" (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>193</sup> See 69c: "[the god] himself becomes the craftsman of things divine, but the birth of things mortal he ordered his own offspring to craft. Imitating him, and having taken over the immortal principle of soul, they next sculpted around it a mortal body and gave it the entire body as its chariot" (translated by Kalkavage).

from flesh and sinew (73b-75d), the head, protected by skin and hair (75d-76d), and the fingers and fingernails (76d-e) before finishing off his anatomical account with an extensive discussion of the body's irrigation system and breathing (78a-81b).<sup>194</sup>

Timaeus first introduces the parts of the body (i.e., head, chest, and abdomen, 69e-70a) as the houses of different forms of soul. After distinguishing the head from the rest of the body, which is marked off by the neck, he distinguishes further between the chest and abdomen within the body. In doing so, he uses sexual difference as a model:

Now within the chest region or so-called thorax they proceeded to bind the mortal kind of the soul. And since one part of it is by nature better and another worse<sup>195</sup>, they build the cavity of the thorax in turn in sections, as though marking one dwelling for women and a separate one for men, by putting the midriff between them as a partition.<sup>196</sup>

I find that Timaeus' choice of image here is not accidental. Throughout the entire *Timaeus*, sexual difference has been the paradigm that guides normative twofold divisions (i.e., reason and necessity, or intellect and the  $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ ). Following that same framework, Timaeus uses this image to forecast the various ways he will draw on the concept of sexual difference, as he has been throughout his entire speech, as he makes various bifurcatory divisions in his account of the body's organs and their assistants in accomplishing their purposes. Each time Timaeus explains a new part of the body and the purpose of an organ, he also introduces a second organ that assists it. In other words, for each of the body's needs, there is an organ to accomplish that need, and another organ on which it depends

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<sup>194</sup> There is also a brief discussion of the bodies and souls of plants at 76e-77d, which, although rich and fascinating, is beyond the scope of this project in its current form.

<sup>195</sup> This association between a twofold division into a better and worse part recalls *Timaeus* 42a: "human nature being twofold, the superior part would be a kind which at a later point would be called man," (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>196</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* 69e-70a, translated by Kalkavage.

for assistance. Each of those sets of pairs is characterized in the terms that the Hippocratics uses to characterize sexual difference.

In this section, I will be analyzing Timaeus' account of human anatomy by looking to the ways he takes up Hippocratic explanations of sexual difference each time he makes a twofold division in the human body. In each case, Timaeus describes the assistant organ in the terms that the Hippocratics use to explain feminine dependency, but casts characteristically feminine features in a new light. In contrast with the Hippocratic theory of women's bodies, Timaeus portrays dense and solid substances as those which depend on the porous and malleable ones. At the same time, while the feminine organs do not depend on the masculine ones, they are posited as entirely secondary. The masculine organs depend on the feminine ones, but the feminine organs function entirely as assistants rather than paternalistic caretakers.

### 3.3.1.1 Reason, Spirit, and Appetite: the Heart, Lungs, Liver, and Spleen

Timaeus opens his account of anatomy by describing the body as it relates to the various kinds of soul(s) in the body. Following his earlier account, Timaeus sets the head up as the seat of the divine kind of soul, which is separated from the rest of the body by the neck.<sup>197</sup> In turn, the two kinds of mortal soul that reside in the body—the spirited kind and the appetitive kind—are divided into the upper and lower regions of the thorax. The spirited kind resides in the chest, which the midriff separates from the appetitive kind of soul, residing in the lower abdomen.<sup>198</sup> The upper and lower region of the thorax each possess

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<sup>197</sup> *Timaeus* 69d-e.

<sup>198</sup> “The part of the soul, therefore, that partakes of courage and spirit ... they settled closer to the head, between the midriff and neck” (70a), and “as for the part of the soul that’s desirous of food and drink and all those things it needs because of the nature of the body, they settled it in between the midriff and the boundary in the navel area (70d-e, translated by Kalkavage).

organs whose purpose it is to exhort the mortal kinds of soul to obey the immortal kind of soul. The heart is responsible for communicating to the spirited kind of mortal soul, while the liver communicates to the appetitive kind of mortal soul.

Timaeus conceives of the heart as the junction (or girdle, ἄμμα, 70b1) of the veins and source (πηγήν, 70b1) of the blood, whose purpose is to exhort the body to listen to reason rather than spirit by means of pumping blood through the body's narrow vessels to each of the sense faculties.<sup>199</sup> The heart monitors and adjusts the spirited kind of soul:

Now the heart ... they positioned in the guardhouse (τὴν δορυφορικὴν οἴκησιν, 70b2) in order that, whenever the ferocity of spirit might boil up, as soon as reason sends word that some unjust action is arising that involves these limbs, either from outside or even some action from the desires within, then, by way of all the narrow vessels, every sense-faculty in the body might grow acutely sensible of both the exhortations and threats and in all ways give heed to them, thus allowing the best part among them all to be leader.<sup>200</sup>

The heart is the guard and overseer of the body's vast network of blood vessels. It acts on the body swiftly and keenly (ὀξέως, 70b5) by means of these vessels.<sup>201</sup> Although Timaeus characterizes the heart as a guard and overseer, it is not entirely self-sufficient in its authority. The heart strains and suffers (πονοῦσα, 70d5) as it heats the body. In order that it might suffer less, the gods contrived assistance (ἐπικουρίαν, 70c4) for the heart in the lungs. Timaeus describes the lungs as being soft (μαλακίην, 70c5) and bloodless (ἄναιμον, 70c6), as well as being porous like a sponge (οἶον σπόγγου, 70c6), having perforations and caverns to absorb liquid. By receiving liquid in its soft and spongy caverns, the lungs cool the heart. When the heart is especially active and leaping (πηδῶσα, 70d4) around, the lungs

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<sup>199</sup> See *Timaeus* 70b-c.

<sup>200</sup> *Timaeus*, 70b-c.

<sup>201</sup> In this respect, the heart's role is similar to Zeus' role in Hesiod's *Theogony*. When injustice is committed in that text, Hesiod often makes mention of Zeus' ability to keenly notice and quickly act. For instance, *Theogony* 838: "On that very day an intractable deed would have been accomplished ... if the father of men and of gods had not taken sharp notice (ὀξὺ νόησε)" (translated by Most).

yield (ὕπεϊκον, 70d4) to it, cool it, and thereby relieve and comfort (ἀναπνοὴν καὶ ῥαστώνην, 70d1) it.

The lungs share the same characteristics as women's flesh on the Hippocratic model. They are soft and porous, ready to receive and absorb whatever comes into them. Timaeus, however, construes the softness and porosity of the lungs differently than the Hippocratics do female flesh. Porosity is not a marker of vulnerability for the lungs. While the porosity of a woman's flesh renders her vulnerable and in need of assistance, it is precisely the same quality that allows the lungs to help the heart. At the same time, this is not a pure elevation of feminine aspects of embodiment. The lungs are conceived of as entirely secondary to the heart. The lesser gods fashion each aspect of the lungs in order that it would be an assistant to the heart. The gods contrive the lungs as an assistant (ἐπικουρίαν αὐτῇ μηχανώμενοι, 70c4), and they design for the sake for the heart. It is spongy *in order that* (ἵνα, 70c7) it might have a cooling effect, and it is *for this reason* (διὸ δῆ, 70d2) that the gods place the lungs around the heart. The heart depends on the lungs to be cooled, but the lungs are contrived as an organ secondary to the heart.

Like the heart, the liver's purpose is to communicate to the mortal kind of soul (in this case, the appetitive kind) on behalf of the immortal kind of soul to ensure the rule of the immortal kind. The gods, knowing that the appetitive kind of soul would not understand reason, constructed the liver as a way of communicating to it by means of images and phantasms (εἰδώλων καὶ φαντασμάτων, 71a5-6). The liver displays images on its surface, which Timaeus describes as dense (πυκνόν, 71b2), smooth (λεῖον, 71b2), and brilliant

(λαμπρόν, 71b2).<sup>202</sup> Just as they construct the lungs for the sake of the heart and place them near it, the gods construct the spleen for the sake of the liver and place it nearby:

And again,<sup>203</sup> the structure of the organ that neighbors the liver, and its seat on the left, has come about for the liver's sake: to keep it always brilliant and pure, like a napkin (ἐκμαγεῖον, 72c5) laid next to a mirror, always prepared and ready to hand. And for this very reason, whenever certain impurities arise around the liver through diseases of the body, the loose texture of the spleen purifies them all and receives them, insofar as the spleen has been woven hollow and bloodless.<sup>204</sup>

The parallels between Timaeus' account of the liver and spleen and the Hippocratic account of male and female flesh are even more apparent. Here, once again, a dense and smooth substance is contrasted with a loose and porous one, with a dynamic of dependency between them. As was the case with the heart and lungs, Timaeus reverses the Hippocratic theory of the vulnerability of porous flesh. Instead, the liver, in its denseness and smoothness, needs something porous to help keep it healthy. The liver does not rid itself of impurities; rather, the spleen absorbs impurities from the liver's surface and takes them into itself.

Timaeus underscores the spleen's femininity when he likens it to a napkin and a receiver. Here, Timaeus is characterizing the spleen in the same terms he used to describe the *χώρα*—the mother and wetnurse of the cosmos—in his second discourse. The relationship between the liver and spleen is quite like the relationship between intellect and the *χώρα* as Timaeus describes it at 50b-c:

The same account applies to the nature that receives all bodies. ... it's laid down by nature as an ἐκμαγεῖον for everything, being both moved and thoroughly configured by whatever things come into it; and because of these, it appears different at different times; and the figures that come into it and go out are always imitations of the things

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<sup>202</sup> He also describes it as sweet—γλυκύ—and bitter—πικρότητα (71b2).

<sup>203</sup> A<sup>3</sup>, 72c1. Timaeus acknowledges the pattern of pairs of organs. Like the heart and lungs, the liver and spleen consist of an organ set out to accomplish a task, and a secondary organ designed to assist the first.

<sup>204</sup> *Timaeus* 72c.

that *are*, having been imprinted from them [by intellect] in some manner hard to tell of and wondrous.

In addition to the spleen's reception of the images and impurities of the liver, its characterization should be considered feminine for the way it serves as a purifier of the liver. Like the womb, the spleen absorbs impurities and, in turn, both performs a *κάθαρσις* and must be purified itself. Just as the Hippocratics postulate the womb fills with all of the excessive blood from the woman's body and expels it, purifying the body, the spleen takes in the impurities of the liver, purifying it (*καθαίρουσα*, 72c6). At the same time, the spleen must empty itself of the impurities that come into it: "when it's filled up with the impurities that have come off the liver, it swells to a great size and becomes festered, and ... whenever the body has been purified, the spleen shrinks and settles back down to the same size."<sup>205</sup>

However, as was the case with the heart and the lungs, this account is not an elevation of feminine principles. Although Timaeus has the liver depend on the feminine porosity and receptivity of the spleen, the spleen is categorically secondary to the liver. That is to say, the lesser gods create the spleen for the sake of the liver, as an assistant to it. Timaeus construes the lungs and the spleen as at once both essential and secondary in their roles. They are indispensable to the heart and liver, but not in the same way that men are indispensable to women's health in the Hippocratics. While men are paternalistic caretakers of women's bodies on the Hippocratic model, the organs with feminine features are assistants of and servants to their masculine counterparts. At the same time, unlike the Hippocratic scheme according to which women are exclusively dependent on men, there is a reciprocal dependency on Timaeus' model. Each requires the other in a different

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<sup>205</sup> *Timaeus* 72c-d, translated by Kalkavage. This description of the diseased spleen resembles the accounts of uterine edema in the Hippocratic texts (c.f., *Diseases of Women* I 7).



respect: the liver requires the spleen to maintain its health and ability to carry out its role in the body, while the spleen depends on the liver for its purpose and functions.

This finishes off Timaeus' account of the body as it relates to the different kinds of soul. Timaeus constructs "the remainder of the body" (τὸ τοῦ σώματος ἐπίλοιπον, 72e2) according to the same principles as the heart, lungs, liver and spleen. In what follows, he introduces a need of the body, the organ, process, or function that accomplishes that need, an imperfection in the carrying out of the function, and a secondary or assisting organ with feminine qualities like porosity or receptivity. I will review each of these cases.

### 3.3.1.2 Appetite and the Lower Belly

Humans require food and drink for nourishment. At the same time, human appetite is not temperate or mindful of health, and requires mediation. Timaeus says that the gods who crafted humans recognized that they would have an intemperate and gluttonous desire for food and drink. In order that humans do not immediately destroy themselves through overindulgence, the gods design a receptacle for excessive food and drink in the lower belly:

Foreseeing [excessive appetite], they put in place the lower belly as it is named as a receptacle (ὑποδοχήν) for the holding of superfluous food and drink and round about they coiled the growth of the intestines, so that the nourishment might not pass through swiftly and swiftly again compel the body to need other nourishment, and, by producing insatiableness through gut-gluttony, fashion the entire kind unphilosophical and uncultured—disobedient to the most divine of things within us.<sup>206</sup>

Once again, Timaeus compares part of the body with an assistant function to the χώρα. He says that the gods set up the lower belly as a receptacle—ὑποδοχήν, the same way he

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<sup>206</sup> *Timaeus* 72e-73a, translated by Kalkavage.

describes the receptacle of becoming at 49a.<sup>207</sup> As a part of the body that receives excessive nourishment, the lower belly functions like the Hippocratic womb. However, unlike the lungs and spleen that have come before, Timaeus describes the lower belly as doing more than merely assisting a higher function or clearing impurities. Rather than any specific organ, the lower belly is an assistant to appetite for food and drink, which is gluttonous by nature. The belly assists the appetite by mediating it, which produces not merely a healthy body, but encourages virtue in the human being.<sup>208</sup> Without the gut as a receptacle of food and drink, Timaeus says that humans would be unphilosophical (ἀφιλόσοφον, 73a6) as a whole. In order to be not just healthy, but also philosophical, the human relies on the assistance of the belly and intestines.

### 3.3.1.3 Bones and Flesh

Timaeus' discussion of bones and flesh is another example of porosity and softness aiding a hard substance rather than depending on it. This example in particular demonstrates hardness as a vulnerable quality. Bones—and the head—are fragile. In other words, they turn out to be fragile in their hardness, requiring flesh as a cushion.

The account of bones and flesh begins with a description of marrow, since marrow is the origin (ἀρχή, 73b2) of bones and flesh and all things of that nature. Marrow is a universal seed (πανσπερμίαν, 73c1) formed from the most perfectly smooth and un-warped triangles and implanted with the various kinds of souls. The brain is the marrow with the immortal kind of soul, and the marrow with mortal kinds of souls are elongated. Bones are

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<sup>207</sup> I.e.: “πάσης εἶναι γενέσεως ὑποδοχὴν αὐτήν,” 49a5-6.

<sup>208</sup> The relationship between physical health and moral psychology is treated more precisely later in the dialogue at 87d, which is a subject of analysis below.

created as hard shelters for marrow, and bones themselves are constructed from marrow dipped in water and fired several times.<sup>209</sup> The skull is crafted as a spherical bony shelter for the brain, and the rest of the body's bones are constructed as shelters for the oblong formed marrow.

Timaeus describes bones as being exceptionally vulnerable. Upon crafting the bones, the god<sup>210</sup> notices that they are more brittle and inflexible than necessary (τοῦ δέοντος κρῦροτέραν εἶναι καὶ ἀκαμπτοτέραν, 74b1) and easily susceptible to destruction through temperature fluctuation. In contrast with the Hippocratic scheme according to which porosity is correlated with vulnerability, Timaeus correlates rigidity with vulnerability. The bones more than any part of the body are described as fragile and vulnerable, and they are also the hardest parts of the body. Further, insofar as masculinity is associated with intellect throughout the dialogue, Timaeus is also framing this exceptionally vulnerable part of the body as a masculine one. The skull—the seat of reason, immortal soul, and the divine circuits in the human, itself crafted from immortal soul, and compared to the “men’s living quarters” at 70a—is the most fragile part of the body, later described as weak.<sup>211</sup> Because the bones need a cushion to protect them, the gods create flesh.

Flesh stands in contrast with bones. Where bones are rigid, flesh is capable of stretching and bending. The gods construct it as a barrier against heat and cold, and a

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<sup>209</sup> The account of the construction of bones occurs at 73d-74a. The bones are their money, so to speak.

<sup>210</sup> Although Timaeus reverts back to using 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verbs, it seems that this must still refer to the lesser gods, since, as Timaeus mentions twice (i.e., 41c and 69c) that the demiurge must delegate the construction of mortal kinds to the lesser gods.

<sup>211</sup> I.e., 75d.

cushion to protect bones in the case of falls. Just as the Hippocratics do, Timaeus compares it to wool:

Flesh he contrived as both a block against burning heat and a barrier against the winter cold, and furthermore, in the case of falls, so that it might gently and easily give way to bodies, just like the woolen goods we wear.<sup>212</sup>

The capacity to retain moisture is viewed as an advantage of flesh: “since it has a warm moisture within itself ... it might provide a congenial coolness over the entire body.”<sup>213</sup>

The gods compose flesh moist and soft (ἔγχυμον καὶ μαλακὴν, 74d1). Timaeus sets up a norm for flesh that differs from Hippocratic thinking. Where men’s flesh—i.e., flesh that is comparatively dry, compact, and hard—is the standard and norm for flesh on the Hippocratic model, with women’s flesh being viewed as straying from that norm, here the norm for flesh more closely resembles the Hippocratic idea of women’s flesh—i.e., flesh that is soft, loose, moist, cushiony, and malleable. At the same time, as is the case with the prior examples, flesh is constructed for the sake of the bones as their protector.

There is a tradeoff between flesh and bones, especially in the case of the head. The parts of the body covered with less flesh have better sensation, while the parts where bone is covered with thick flesh are less apt to sensation. For the first time in Timaeus’ account of organs and their assistants, there is an upper limit to the degree to which the assisting organ can be helpful. Too little flesh creates a body that is exceedingly fragile, but too much flesh creates a body that is exceedingly insensible. The god must confront this problem when constructing the head: is it better for humans to have a head that is better protected, or one that is more sensitive? Although Timaeus says that a fleshier head would

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<sup>212</sup> *Timaeus* 74b-c, translated by Kalkavage.

<sup>213</sup> *Timaeus* 74c, translated by Kalkavage.

give humans a life that would be longer, healthier, and freer from pain, he says that this kind of life is worse (χεῖρον, 75c1). Although it produces a shorter and more painful life, the gods judge that the more sensitive head produces a better (βέλτιον, 75c1) life.

Timaeus describes fingernails as a special combination of bones, sinews, and flesh:

Where sinew and skin and bone were woven together around the fingers there was a mixed combination of the three, which, upon drying, came to be one hard skin compounded of them all—crafted by these accompanying causes (συναιτίοις, 76d6), but fashioned by the superlative cause (αἰτιωτάτη, 76d7), purposeful intelligence, for the sake of those who were to come afterwards. For they who were constructing us knew that out of men (ἐξ ἄνδρων, 76d8) some day women and the rest of the wild animals would be born; and they saw, in particular, that many of these nurslings would, for many reasons, require the use of nails; whence they sketched out the origin of the nails in human beings right from their birth.<sup>214</sup>

Fingernails, while seemingly useless to men, are included on the male body because women and non-human will later require them.<sup>215</sup> Although women are conceived of as a category that is secondary to the human male (i.e., they come to be after and out of the human male),<sup>216</sup> this aspect of the gods' design of mortal bodies is still for their sake. In the previous examples, we have noticed the ways that an organ is construed as secondary when it is constructed for the sake of something else. Like the characterization of flesh, fingernails present a challenge to the androcentric design of the human being. Fingernails, although useful to women rather than to men, are still included in men's bodies.

### 3.3.1.4 The Irrigation System: Nourishment and Breathing

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<sup>214</sup> *Timaeus* 76d-e, translated by Kalkavage.

<sup>215</sup> The karmic myth at the end of the dialogue (90e-92c) describes the mechanism through which women and the rest of the wild animals come to be from human men.

<sup>216</sup> Reading the account of the origin of sexual difference at the end of the dialogue, some scholars (e.g., Strauss, Kalkavage, Miller) have asserted that the initial humans are unsexed, and that sexed men and women arrive on the scene at the same time. This passage—particularly the claim that women come to be *from men*, ἐξ ἄνδρων—presents a challenge for that view to address.

Timaeus' anatomical account culminates in his discussion of the irrigation system, which in turn sets up his discussion of the nature and cause of diseases. The irrigation system (τὴν ὑδραγωγίαν, 77e7) consists of the interconnected processes of digestion and breathing that nourishes the body and regulates its temperature. On the one hand, the body generates heat by taking in nutrition, converting it into hot blood, and returning that hot blood into the veins:

The fire cuts up the food and sways this way and that inside us as it follows the breath; and in this swaying to and fro it fills up the veins from the belly by pumping into them from there the cut-up bits of food ... We call it 'blood', which feeds the flesh and the entire body, from which source the various parts of the body are irrigated so as to fill up the base of what's been left void.<sup>217</sup>

On the other hand, the body cools itself through breathing:

Now all this work and process [i.e., breathing] has come about for the sake of our body, so that by being refreshed and cooled, it might be nourished and live; for whenever the inner fire, which is attached to the breathing that goes in and out, should follow this breathing, and, in its perpetual swaying back and forth, should enter in through the belly and lay hold of food and drink, it melts them and, by dividing them up into small pieces, drives them through the outgoing channels from a spring, and it makes the currents of the veins flow through the body as though through a pipe.<sup>218</sup>

For the Hippocratics, it is the interaction between the irrigation system and the flesh that explains women's need for menstruation. According to the Hippocratics, the porosity of women's flesh allows it to be overfilled with blood from the stomach, which must be expelled through menstruation. Timaeus has, however, described the flesh as being naturally loose and moist rather than dense and dry, as the Hippocratics describe men's flesh. Further, Timaeus' account of the irrigation system depends on the fundamental porosity of the human body.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> *Timaeus* 80d-81a, translated by Kalkavage.

<sup>218</sup> *Timaeus* 78e-79a, translated by Kalkavage.

<sup>219</sup> See *Timaeus* 78d-e.

Given the way Timaeus frames the human body in a more feminine light, one would hope that Timaeus would offer a solution to, or at least an account of, the problems that women face in the Hippocratic texts due to the porosity of their flesh. He does not, however, seem to see the porosity of flesh as an obstacle in the same way that the Hippocratics do for women. Additionally, Timaeus does not address menstruation in his account of the irrigation system as such. He does, however, give special attention to what happens when the body retains excess material. This serves as the explanation for why disease arises in the human body. Where the Hippocratics view menstruation as a particularly female process of expelling excessive material, Timaeus views the physical phenomenon of excessive retention as a general principle of disease in the body.

### 3.3.2 *Timaeus* 81e-90d: Health and Disease

After his account of the irrigation system, Timaeus moves into a discussion of the nature of health and disease. He starts with disease (81e-87b), which in turn is broken into two sections: body-related diseases and soul-related diseases. In each case, Timaeus conceives of disease as a kind of disproportion within the body. Following his account of disease, Timaeus discusses health for the human being (87b-90d). He describes health as a matter of proportionate care for the soul and body (87c-d). Care for the soul and body, in turn, consists of making them imitate the mother and wetnurse of the universe, the *χώρα*, to the greatest extent possible.<sup>220</sup>

In this section, I am going to analyze the way Timaeus positions femininity in his accounts of health and disease. Like the first part of his third discourse, Timaeus draws on

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<sup>220</sup> See *Timaeus* 88d-e, 89e.

Hippocratic ideas about sexual difference—and in particular Hippocratic ideas about feminine pathology—in his account of health and disease. For the most part, Timaeus centralizes femininity in his account of health. The *χώρα*, the paradigm of femininity in the *Timaeus*, serves as the model for human health on his account, and he even frames certain masculine features (i.e., denseness of the flesh) as pathological. At the same time, Timaeus also uses Hippocratic accounts of female disease as a model when he describes diseases of the soul. In this account, people with soul-related disease experience something like the virgin’s disease described in the treatise *On Girls* and in the final myth of the *Timaeus*. While it is undeniable that Timaeus centralizes femininity in his account of health in a way that the Hippocratics do not, his generalization of the model of female disease must also be accounted for.

#### 3.3.2.1 Disease

In his account of disease, Timaeus distinguishes between body-related diseases (“τὰ περὶ τὸ σῶμα νοσήματα” (86b1), discussed at 81e-86a) and soul-related ones that arise through the body (“τὰ περὶ ψυχὴν διὰ σώματος” (86b2), discussed at 86b-87b). This leaves open the possibility of diseases of the soul that come to be through means other than the body (i.e., through the soul itself), which Timaeus does not discuss. Consequently, the body is the site of explanation for all of the kinds of diseases that Timaeus discusses. Like the Hippocratics, Timaeus’ explains disease as a kind of disproportion within the body:

Where the structure of diseases comes from is, I take it, plain to everyone. For since there are four kinds of which the body is compacted (earth, fire, water and air), when, contrary to nature, either an excess or a deficiency of these kinds arises; or else when there’s a shift from their familiar place to one that’s alien; or again, since the kinds of fire and the rest happen to be more than one, when a particular bodily part rakes in an additional something that’s not suited to it—when all such things happen, they provide factions and diseases. ... whatever is unmusical and steps outside of [right



proportion] upon leaving or arriving will produce alterations of any and every variety and indefinitely many diseases and corruptions.<sup>221</sup>

Although diseases of all kinds arise through some kind of bodily disproportion, Timaeus divides them into kinds based on the organs or systems that are affected by the disproportion. He discusses diseases that result from the decomposition of flesh and the organs (82c-84b), diseases of the marrow (84b-c), and diseases that come to be from air, phlegm, and bile (84c-86a). In these accounts, Timaeus centralizes feminine anatomical principles as indicators of health, while pathologizing excessively masculine features. In the first kind of diseases, Timaeus says that the body falls into disarray when the parts of the body become hostile (πολέμια, 83a5) toward their χώραν—their rightful place:

For when all these have become reversed and thereby corrupted, they first destroy the blood itself; and providing no further nourishment for the body, they course through the veins in every direction, no longer abiding by the order of their natural circuits, becoming hateful to themselves, because they have no enjoyment of themselves, and hostile to whatever in the body stands together<sup>222</sup> and stays in its assigned place (χώραν), thus destroying and wasting everything.<sup>223</sup>

Next, in the second kind of disease, the one having to do with the marrow, Timaeus attributes disease in bones to their denseness:

But dangerous as these body-related ailments are, still more serious are those that are more primary. These arise whenever bone, through density of flesh, doesn't get sufficient air and, getting all heated up by mold, gangrenes, fails to receive its nourishment, and crumbles.<sup>224</sup>

In his initial account of flesh, as we have already observed, Timaeus emphasizes porosity rather than denseness, in contrast with the Hippocratic norm for healthy flesh. Here, Timaeus takes his divergence from the Hippocratics a step further—not only is the kind of

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<sup>221</sup> *Timaeus* 81e-82b, translated by Kalkavage.

<sup>222</sup> The word here is συνεστῶτι, from συνίστημι. Compare this to the similar willful standing together of intellect and necessity at 48a: “mixed indeed was the birth of this cosmos here, and begotten from a standing together (συστάσεως) of necessity and intellect” (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>223</sup> *Timaeus* 82e-83a (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>224</sup> *Timaeus* 84b-c (translated by Kalkavage).

flesh the Hippocratics consider to be feminine the normative standard of flesh for Timaeus, but characteristically masculine flesh is pathological. Density of the flesh prevents the bones and marrow from receiving their due nourishment and causes them to be consumed by mold. The flesh must be porous in order for the body's marrow to remain healthy.

While Timaeus' account of body-related diseases foregrounds feminine features that have been pathologized by the Hippocratics, his account of soul-related diseases uses Hippocratic accounts of female disease as a template for disease in general. Timaeus introduces soul-related diseases that come to be through the body by claiming that "it must be granted that folly (*ἄνοιαν*, 86b3) is a disease of the soul."<sup>225</sup> He divides folly into two categories of disease: madness (*μανίαν*, 86b4) and stupidity (*ἄμαθίαν*, 86b4), and sets them down alongside excessive pleasures and pains. As an example of soul-disease related to folly and excessive pleasures and pains, Timaeus discusses male sexual incontinence:

When the seed from a man's marrow-area flows copious and free-flowing, just like a tree whose nature makes it fruitful beyond measure, he brings on himself again and again many intense pains and many pleasures amid his desires and their offspring; and he comes to be raving mad for the greater part of his life through those greatest pleasures and pains; ... the truth is that sexual incontinence has come about as a disease of the soul, due for the most part to the condition of a single kind, which, because of the porosity of the bones, flows freely in the body and irrigates it.<sup>226</sup>

Timaeus characterized the excessive density of the bones as a pathology earlier, and here, in turn, he shows the danger of bones that are excessively porous. This is true at least in men—there is no indication of whether for women porous bones would produce the same kind of disease. There is no discussion of female sexual incontinence. While we could view this as Timaeus pathologizing the feminine trait of porosity in the bones, perhaps this

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<sup>225</sup> *Timaeus* 86b (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>226</sup> *Timaeus* 86c-d (translated by Kalkavage).

suggests instead that the male body is more easily prone to certain diseases in a way that the female body would not be.

This male disease follows a similar pattern to Hippocratic descriptions of diseases that are exclusively female. The madness of the sexually incontinent man, overfull with marrow, resembles the madness of the girl with virgin's disease, who is overfull with her menses. In *On Girls*, virgin's disease results when the mouth of the uterus is closed and, as a result, the menses are retained:<sup>227</sup>

But when the mouth at its end is not opened up, even more blood flows in from food and the body's growth. Then, having no means of flowing out, the blood springs up in its multitude, into the heart and the midriff.<sup>228</sup>

Like the man who becomes raving mad due to his body's overfullness, the girl with virgin's disease displays a terrifying madness due to her retained blood:

As a result, when this is the way things are going, the woman rages because of her acute inflammation, and in her rottenness she becomes murderous. She is afraid of darkness and dreads it. Because of the compression around the heart, they want to strangle themselves, and the bad state of the blood drags her spirit into evil, being agitated and in great anguish. She names deviant and fearful things, and they urge her to leap and fall into wells or to hang herself, as if being better and altogether necessary. When she is without these dreams, there is some pleasure through which she yearns for death as if it were some kind of a good.<sup>229</sup>

Timaeus seems to be taking this Hippocratic account of a sexually specific disease (i.e., a disease that only women suffer) and adapting it for a uniquely male ailment. Timaeus' sexually incontinent man suffers from something similar to the girl with virgin's disease, and for a similar cause. Both experience an overfullness of a substance that needs to be

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<sup>227</sup> This disease is not exclusive to the treatise *On Girls*. It appears frequently throughout the Hippocratic gynecology, especially in the earliest gynecological treatise, *Nature of Women*. I have chosen to look to the treatise *On Girls* in particular because it offers an account of virgin's disease that is the most focused and detailed of anywhere in the Hippocratic Corpus, and its details remain consistent with the other accounts of the same disease.

<sup>228</sup> *On Girls*, my translation.

<sup>229</sup> *On Girls*, my translation.

released from the body. The undue retention of the substance results in a madness and terrible pains and pleasures. For women, the disease is cured when she has sex with a man.<sup>230</sup> Timaeus does not give an account of the man's release from sexual incontinence due to excessive marrow, but presumably it must also come from emission of the excessive substance.

Following the account of sexual incontinence, Timaeus outlines another kind of pain the body creates for the soul, producing soul-related diseases like melancholy, bad temper, recklessness, and cowardice, forgetfulness, and slowness in learning. This account resembles even more closely Hippocratic accounts of the wandering womb, as well as Timaeus' own account which comes a few pages later:

Whenever the humors from acidic and briny phlegms and those that are bitter and bilious, wandering (πλανηθέντες, 86e7) throughout the body, have no vent to the outside but remain huddled up inside, and mingle the vapor that comes from them with the coursing of the soul and get thoroughly blended by it, they introduce all manner of soul-diseases (παντοδαπὰ νοσήματα ψυχῆς, 87a2), some more intense and widespread than others; and once they've penetrated to the three regions of the soul, in whatever region each of these attacks, they mottle (προσπίπτει, 87a5) her with diverse forms of bad temper and melancholy as well as of recklessness and cowardice, and also forgetfulness and slowness in learning.<sup>231</sup>

The vocabulary of Timaeus' wandering womb myth is a repetition of this section. In that myth, the womb acts on the woman in the same way that the acidic and briny phlegms treat the soul here. Timaeus describes the womb as wandering (πλανώμενον, 91c4) all throughout the body and causing all manner of diseases (νόσους παντοδαπὰς, 91c6) for the woman by suffocating her (τὰς τοῦ πνεύματος διεξόδους ἀποφράττον, 91c5). Once again,

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<sup>230</sup> "Release from these things comes whenever nothing prevents her blood from flowing out. Therefore, I really urge young girls, whenever they suffer from this kind of thing, to get together with a man as quickly as possible." (*On Girls*, my translation).

<sup>231</sup> *Timaeus* 86e-87a (translated by Kalkavage).

in his account of soul-related diseases Timaeus de-territorializes female pathology and instead makes it a model of disease that is common to both sexes.

### 3.3.2.2 Health and the Χώρα

Timaeus introduces health in terms of proportion:

And it's likely and fitting that we deliver in turn the counterpart that answers to all this, which concerns the treatment of our bodies and thought processes, as well as the causes by which these are preserved, for it's more just that good things have their account rather than bad. Now all the good is beautiful, and the beautiful is not disproportionate; so one must posit that an animal, too, if it's to be beautiful, must have due proportion. And while we thoroughly perceive and reason out the minor proportions, concerning those that are most critical and greatest, we are unreasoning. For with respect to health and diseases and virtue and vices, there isn't a single proportion or lack of proportion greater than that of soul herself in relation to body itself.<sup>232</sup>

Health and virtue are both constituted by a kind of proportion between the body and the soul. Body and soul are, however, different kinds of substance (if soul can be called substance at all) and therefore cannot be brought directly into proportion with one another. In order to maintain one's health, the proportion one must attend to is the one between *care* for the soul and the body. The healthy and virtuous person is the one who exercises the soul and the body in equal amount:

The one safeguard against both these conditions [i.e., a soul stronger than the body or a body stronger than the soul, both of which produce disease and vice] is this: never to set the soul in motion without the body nor body without soul, so that both of them, by defending themselves, may become equally balanced and thereby healthy.<sup>233</sup>

He goes on to give examples; the student of math must take care also to practice gymnastics, and the body-builder must also attend to philosophy. Although the soul and body are different and require different care, the basic principle of care for each of them is

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<sup>232</sup> *Timaeus* 87c-d (translated by Kalkavage).

<sup>233</sup> *Timaeus* 88b (translated by Kalkavage).

the same: they need to be set in motion. Care for the soul and body is synonymous with setting them into motion in this passage.

Timaeus describes this care for soul and body as setting each into motion in terms of the *χώρα*, the mother and wetnurse of the cosmos who is also the principle of motion, shaking, change, and disorder in the cosmos.<sup>234</sup> In advising how the body should be put into motion, Timaeus says that one should imitate the motion of the *χώρα*:

The various bodily parts must also be treated in the same way, in imitation of the form of the all. For since the body is burned up and chilled within by what enters it, and again dried up and moistened by what comes from the outside<sup>235</sup> ... it happens that whenever anyone surrenders his body, which has been in a state of peace, to these motions, the body is overpowered and utterly destroyed. But if someone imitates what we have called the nurturer and wetnurse of the all,<sup>236</sup> and for the most part never allows the body to be at peace but keeps it in motion and, by always introducing certain shakings in it, provides a constant natural defense against the inner and outer motions and, by temperate shaking, arrays the affections and particles that wander around the body and puts them in order with one another according to various kinships, as in the previous account we gave concerning the all, then he won't allow foe to be set next to foe to breed wars in the body and diseases as well, but rather he will have friend set next to friend so as to produce health.<sup>237</sup>

The *χώρα* is the paradigm of femininity in the *Timaeus*. She stands in contrast with masculine intellect; Timaeus uses a detailed image of sexual difference to characterize the two in relation to one another. In the initial discussion of the *χώρα*, she is viewed like the traditional Greek woman: a necessary evil. The cosmos cannot come to be except through her therefore intellect must persuade her toward what is best.<sup>238</sup> Here, however, she is cast in a new light. Rather than the irascible and indiscernible enigma Timaeus first presents her as, she is the model for human health and virtue.

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<sup>234</sup> Timaeus discusses at length in his second discourse. For the account of the *χώρα*, see *Timaeus* 47e-53a.

<sup>235</sup> C.f. *Timaeus* 52d-53a.

<sup>236</sup> At 49a, 50d, and 52d.

<sup>237</sup> *Timaeus* 88c-89a.

<sup>238</sup> See *Timaeus* 48a.

Previously in *Timaeus*, humans, along with the rest of the cosmos, are products that have been crafted solely in the likeness of the god and eternal model. This does not contradict or disagree with that account, but it does reveal a new aspect of embodiment. While the lesser gods craft human beings in imitation of the kinds of products their father, the demiurge, makes, the human being who imitates the demiurge in her actions will be neither healthy nor virtuous. When the human acts in some of the ways the demiurge acts (i.e., in ways that are motionless or purely reinforcing of self-sameness), she is destroyed by vice and disease. *Timaeus* finishes off his third discourse by reminding us that god has given us our own share of divinity (i.e., intellect), and that to become as immortal or godlike as a human can be, one must, above all, honor her divinity. As it turns out, honoring one's divinity and becoming godlike—through pursuing health, virtue, and the philosophical life that those allow—is a practice of imitating the feminine *χώρα*.

### 3.4 Conclusions

In my first analysis of the third discourse, I examined the ways that *Timaeus* reconsiders the Hippocratic notion of feminine dependency. In my analysis of the first part of *Timaeus*' first discourse, I argued that *Timaeus* casts the features that the Hippocratics consider characteristic of male bodies (i.e., dense, hard, and smooth flesh) in a position of dependency. Each of the organs that embody those traits—like the liver—requires another, feminine (i.e., porous, loose, soft, spongy, hollow, yielding, malleable) organ to maintain it and care for it. While in the Hippocratics women's bodies are dependent on men due to their porosity, *Timaeus* portrays the human body as one in which denseness and hardness must be maintained by what is porous. At the same time, the soft and porous organs (i.e.,

the lungs, lower belly, spleen) are secondary to their counterparts in function. Each of these organs is crafted for the sake of caring for another organ in the body, rather than accomplishing some purpose for the body. The liver is constructed in order to communicate between intellect and the appetite, while the spleen is constructed for the care of the liver.

Thus, there is a kind of mutual but incommensurate dependency between masculine and feminine properties throughout the *Timaeus*. In the third discourse, the soft organs depend on the hard ones for their functions, while the hard organs depend on the soft ones for their ability to function. They are mutually dependent in different ways. In the account of the origin of the cosmos in the second discourse, the *χώρα* depends on intellect for any form, intelligibility, or determinacy, while the cosmos coming into ordered being depends on intellect persuading necessity to be shaped in such a way. This mutual dependency stands in contrast with the Hippocratic notion of feminine dependency, which postulates women's unreciprocated dependency on male bodies. On the Hippocratic model, women require sexual intercourse to maintain an equilibrium, but men do not. Men do not require anything from women for their health; they are the caretakers of women, receiving nothing in return. Timaeus works in the terms that the Hippocratics use, discussing dependency in terms of sexual difference and physiological traits. However, while the Hippocratics frame dependency as a marker of inferiority and pathology, associated exclusively with femininity, Timaeus makes dependency an essential part of existence for everything that comes to be in the cosmos, especially human beings. Dependency is in its own way a feature of both masculinity and femininity.

In addition to revising the Hippocratic notion of feminine dependency, Timaeus is de-territorializing the Hippocratic idea of female diseases. In the Hippocratic texts, there



are certain diseases that are exclusive to women, such as virgin's disease and other forms of the retention of the menses.<sup>239</sup> Timaeus takes these female diseases and instead makes them a model of disease in general. He uses provocatively similar vocabulary to describe the origin of soul diseases as he does the pathology of the wandering womb. In the case of soul-diseases, humors wander throughout the body and strangle the soul, bringing on all manner of diseases for her. In another example, Timaeus takes his de-territorialization of the Hippocratic notion of female diseases a step further by using the model of female anatomy (i.e., porosity) and disease (i.e., retained menses) in order to present an account of male sexual incontinence. On that account, Timaeus uses the terms of female disease to describe an exclusively male disease. In his account of diseases, Timaeus is, as he is elsewhere, speaking in Hippocratic medical-scientific terms, but changing the meaning of those terms in a way that makes room for and better appreciates the feminine properties of embodiment.

Finally, Timaeus' most significant divergence from the Hippocratic norms of sexual difference and human health comes in his account of health. Timaeus foregrounds femininity in his account of health by making the *χώρα* the model of health for the soul and body in the human being. Where the Hippocratics set men's bodies as the standard of health for the human being, Timaeus establishes a feminine standard of health in the way he prioritizes the *χώρα*. This has to be one of the most significant instances in ancient Greek thinking of femininity being foregrounded and used as a standard of health for the human being. In making room for the feminine aspects of embodiment and foregrounding the

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<sup>239</sup> There are other exclusively female diseases in the Hippocratic Corpus, especially outlined in the *Diseases of Women* I and II and in the *Nature of Women*. I have focused primarily on diseases having to do with a displaced uterus and retained menses for the purposes of my project.

account of health in the human being, Timaeus acknowledges the sense in which humans are bodies as well as souls, and does justice to body as a component of the cosmos in its own right.

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