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In what sense are emotions rational in the *Timaeus*? (Ti. 42a-b, 69c-72e)

Olivier RENAUT

Abstract : Taking *Timaeus* 42a-b and 69c-72e as a starting point, this paper claims that emotions are rational in Plato only in a derivative sense. First, what we call "emotions" are, in the *Timaeus*, a complex state not only of 'mind', but of the compound "body and soul", or, rather of the "incarnate soul"; in this sense, they are non-rational for they derive from necessity. Second, in the framework of a psycho-physiological account, emotions are, *prima facie*, irrational affections, insofar as they may prevent reason from working properly. Third, it is true, however, that there are some emotions that actually help the reason to command, but the cognitive dimension that is commonly found within emotions comes from a distinct and separate power ($\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$) that makes these emotions display a kind of derivative "rationality". With such a psycho-physiological explanation, the *Timaeus* can better explain how to rationalize our actions and ways of being through these intermediate states, by bypassing the apparently natural process that goes from sense-perception to what is found pleasant or painful and by giving these emotions their proper (though extrinsic) object of value.

Keywords : Emotions, affections, psychophysiology, dualism, intermediary

Introduction: "emotions" in Plato's Dialogues

A general consensus has emerged that a "cognitive" understanding of anger, jealousy, envy, *erôs*, fear, etc. can account for what we, contemporaries, call "emotions" in ancient texts¹. The reappraisal of cognitive and rational aspects of "emotions" in Antiquity, especially in Aristotle, has led commentators to define emotions as psychophysiological states of mind, relying on an evaluative representation². As recent interpreters have shown, when Plato (or Socrates) sets up his moral psychology, he pays particular attention to non-rational forces, such as shame, fear and anger³. The fact that Plato shows interest in "emotions" cannot be doubted; but the fact that Plato has a proper "theory" of emotions is less certain, even if it seems possible to reconstruct some pieces of definition. What remains obscure is the relation of emotions with reason: do emotions have a function or a rational intention? Do they possess their own cognitive capacity, either perceptual, representational

¹ We should not, of course, understand that there is a single version of cognitivism at stake. See especially Pearson (2014) for a very useful survey of competing approaches on Aristotle's so-called "cognitivism".

² Fruitful connections between Aristotle and Plato in this regard are made by Moss (2012), 260–62; Wilburn (2014), sec. 4.3. presenting Plato paving the way for Aristotle's definition of emotions as grounded on *φαντασία*. But *pace* Moss p. 261, and following Wilburn p. 642, n. 36, I take Plato's position to be incompatible with the view that "appearances" can be "evaluative" *per se*. As I intend to show below, it is precisely a merit of Plato's explanation of emotions to make a powerful distinction between the source of evaluation ($\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$) and the experience of the emotion itself.

³ See for example Brickhouse and Smith (2010), and more recently Brickhouse and Smith (2015). The authors try to show that the so-called "intellectualist" theory of virtue should make use of non-rational forces such as anger, shame and fear; emotions are altogether dialectical targets of the refutation (so that rationality should "erode", in the end, the power of emotions), and means at the disposal of Socrates for those whose beliefs come from a non-rational process. They deny, however, that emotions have any cognitive power of their own.

or judgmental? And if they do, how do the different levels of cognition cohere in the agent's soul? Lastly, are emotions some means, for the agent, to behave more rationally, or more reasonably? In this chapter, I will use two passages from the *Timaeus* (42a3-b3 and the long passage 69c-72e) to answer, tentatively, these questions, in the hope of specifying the kind of "rationality" that can be attributed to emotions in Plato. I will distinguish three steps to account for the idea that emotions may be said to be rational. 1) What we call "emotions" are, in the *Timaeus*, complex states not only of mind, but of the compound "body and soul", or, rather of the "incarnate soul". In this respect, emotions are "non-rational", being derived from a non-rational physical necessity. 2) Timaeus settles a genealogy of emotions so that they are presented, at first sight, as irrational affections, because they threaten the normal functioning of reason in the agent. 3) But in 69c-72e, emotions seem to present some characteristics of cognitive processes and seem more "rational" than mere drives and movements. Emotion is that by which the agent has a representation of an object, or the feeling of an impending event, or seems to value an object, a person or an action. The agent deploys through his/her emotions a kind of intentional rationality. In fact, I will show that this rationality may be called "derivative", for what makes an emotion align with reason derives from a distinct capacity, at least δόξα or reason itself: emotions seem to manifest "rationality", but they do not possess a judgmental capacity of their own. In conclusion, I will show that through this psycho-physiological account of emotions, the *Timaeus* can better explain how to rationalize our actions and ways of being through a good use of these intermediate states, in the framework of a strict dualism. Emotions can be seen as natural behaviors in compliance with reason, and efficient in a pragmatic sense.

1. Non-rational emotions derived from necessity

At 42a3-b2, Timaeus mentions a series of affections that follows the constitution of the living human being, which is a compound of a divine principle inherited from the Demiurge and a body serving as its vehicle, making the "mortal soul" necessary for the whole to function properly.

So, once the souls were of necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) implanted (ἐμφυτευθεῖεν) in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first co-natural (σύμφυτον) capacity they would of necessity come to have would be sense perception (αἴσθησιν), which arises out of forceful disturbances (ἐκ βιαίων παθημάτων). This they all would have. The second would be love, mingled with pleasure and pain (δευτερον δὲ ἡδονῆ καὶ λύπη μειγμένον ἔρωτα). And they would come to have fear and spiritedness as well, plus whatever goes with having these emotions, as well as all their natural opposites (πρὸς δὲ τούτοις φόβον καὶ θυμὸν ὅσα τε ἐπόμενα αὐτοῖς καὶ ὅποσα ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα). And if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust.⁴

Emotions of love, fear, spiritedness are not states of the mind exclusively, nor bodily states, but states of the incarnate soul (or animated body). It is once the soul is implanted (ἐμφυτευθεῖεν) in bodies that emotions arise. This is confirmed in our second passage at 69c, where emotions are mentioned *before* sense-perception, when daemons give the body as a vehicle of the soul, creating the mortal part of the soul; emotions are evoked through the word πάθημα:

⁴ Plato, *Ti.* 42a3-b2. All translations are borrowed from D. J. Zeyl in Cooper and Hutchinson (1997); minor modifications are noted when suggested.

And within the body they built (προσφκοδόμουν) another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind (τὸ θνητόν), which contains within it those dreadful and necessary disturbances (παθήματα).⁵

In these two passages, πάθημα refers to the passive side of an action, done by an agent on another⁶. Sensations and emotions, then, are altogether results of and responses to those necessary changes in the sensible realm (ἐκ βιαιῶν παθημάτων). In both cases, they are affections caused by an external movement, affections that one perceives and feels. But in the first passage, παθήματα mean the impressions aroused externally, because of some bodily parts that are added and removed from the body; these movements arouse sensation (αἴσθησις), and then come the emotions. By contrast, in the second passage, πάθημα is a genus term for the following emotions: pleasure, pain, boldness, fear, anger and hope (69d1-4).

On the one hand, the use of the same word, πάθημα, for external affections and emotions shows that we must think of emotions such as anger and fear as being of the same kind with what arouses sensation or desire, irrespective of their corporeal or psychological nature: emotions are παθήματα in the sense that they are affections and reactions that are experienced by the incarnated soul. On the other hand, using the same term for the cause that arouses sensation and the result, which is the emotion itself, may hint to the fact that there is a causal link between these two poles. Commentators have underlined the continuity between the παθήματα as impressions, which are echoed in the body and even in the soul, and the παθήματα as “passions of the soul”; πάθημα means a concomitant alteration between the agent and his environment⁷. Sometimes, πάθημα would refer to what arouses sensation, and sometimes to the effect of sensation or to the emotional reaction of the agent.

In all cases, this lexical similarity between the cause and the effect of emotion shows that, by contrast with other dialogues where emotions are more strictly understood as psychological states of mind, the *Timaeus* insists on the irreducible integration of emotions in the psycho-physiological compound. An emotion is not a mere “mental” state; it always has an origin and effect in a body. This is not to say that Plato had considered emotions as exclusively psychic before the *Timaeus*; but it is true that in some dialogues, the corporeal dimension of emotion is even not mentioned, as if their underlying judgement was the only important aspect to define them. For example, fear (φόβος or δέος) in the *Protagoras* (358d5-6) or the *Laches* (198b9) is defined as “an expectation of something bad” (προσδοκία κακοῦ). This is the kind of judgement and its intentional object that defines fear, not its physical aspects. Plato insists here on the cognitive, not to say intellectual, activity underlying this emotion, maybe at the expense of other aspects such as its physical counterpart in courage: endurance for example. Other dialogues ascribe emotions to disincarnate souls⁸. But the fact that in these passages Plato emphasizes the psychic activity that sets the agent in motion, much more than the bodily states that are often associated with emotions (blushing, sweating, palpitating, and the

⁵ *Ti.* 69c7-d1.

⁶ On the meaning of πάθημα in the *Timaeus*, see O'Brien (1984), esp. 124, and Brisson (1997).

⁷ On this particular meaning of πάθημα see Macé (2006), 172–75. Aristotle uses πάθημα with the same meaning as external impressions at *De An.* I.1, 403a20. cf. Polansky (2007), 54, n.40.

⁸ In the *Phdr.* 254b7-d, Socrates describes the intra-psychic conflict whenever the lover approaches his beloved, and attributes fear and awe to the rational part of the soul (ἔδεισέ τε καὶ σεφθείσα), shame and reverence (αἰσχύνης τε καὶ θάμβους) to the intermediary part, and anger (ὀργή) to the desiring part. See Cairns (1993), 384-385 and Renaut (2013) on this passage. Strictly speaking, these emotions happen to a charioteer and horses, and not to disincarnated psychic “functions”. See also *Leg.* 896e9-897a3, where Plato ascribes to the disincarnated soul some movements whose names are, among others, joy, pain, boldness, fear, love and hate.

like), does not mean that emotions could exist without the physical affections by which they arise⁹. One may even go further, and take the *Timaeus* to be the dialogue where the traditional dualism between soul and body is challenged¹⁰. As Anthony Price states in his survey of emotion in Plato and Aristotle, the *Timaeus* seems to pave the way to Aristotle's view: emotions are, indeed, some states in which the border between body and soul is blurred¹¹. In other words, even if it seems to be a truism, emotions are psychophysiological states; but that does not mean that we should conflate the question of the psycho-physiological nature of emotions with the question of their putative cognitive power¹².

If we accept that emotions are not states of mind, but are primarily affections or impressions that are attributed to the living compound, we can account for a first kind of “non-rationality” of emotions from these two passages. They are the result of a pressing necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) which effects are not rational. It is then necessary that violent moves happen and disturb the regular movements of the soul. Natural necessity determines the whole chain that goes from sensations to affections of the soul, related ones (ἐπόμενα) and opposite ones (ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα). It is not surprising that emotions are said δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα, dreadful and necessary, and we may here understand dreadful *because* necessary. At 43b1-2, the movements of the living being in the realm of the sensible are said to be ἀτάκτως and ἀλόγως (in a world which is itself moving ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως, 53a8)¹³. The non-rationality of the bodily mass explains why sense-perception itself is non-rational (28a3 and later again at 69d4), whose movement threatens the rational revolutions of the soul (43e3).

Emotions are thus not, at first sight, rational movements; on the contrary, Plato considers them primarily as non-rational drives that obscure rational and regular activity. Daemons are submitted to necessity (69d5) when they shape the human compound, and emotions are the non-rational effects of this incarnation.

⁹ In this sense, I fully agree with Lorenz (2012), 249–51 in saying that anticipatory experiences in the *Phlb.* 32b9–36c2 rely on lower functions of the compound (perception and memory) and do not require a specific intellectual activity. There are no emotional affections without a primary experience of sense-perception. Lorenz draws from this passage, however, that the lower parts of the soul are given the ability to form forward-looking states and motivations of their own. But this is not how Plato would account for anger, which he takes to be already a complex interaction of distinct capacities, as I will try to show in section 3 below.

¹⁰ See Karfik (2005) for an important analysis of the way body and soul become progressively indistinguishable when the physician comes to the marrow. See also Carone (2005). I depart here from Carone's conclusion that the *Timaeus* offers us clear examples of how dualism is abandoned here. Carone is certainly right in underlining the fact that some psychophysiological processes linked with tripartition are best understood when compared to Aristotle's *De Anima* I, but as I will show in section 4, it does not imply that we should abandon a strong dualism between soul and body. For this view, see recently Jorgenson (2018), ch. 1–3.

¹¹ Price (2009) esp. 126, n. 7 on intentionality and materiality of anger, and 129 on what he calls a “phenomenology” of emotions in the *Timaeus*.

¹² I follow Moss (2012), 272, n.24 in giving credit to Plato that the question is not whether passions are psychological or physical, but rather to what extent the experience of passions amounts to a physical “state” implying fillings and depletions.

¹³ See also 42d1, about the mass that is added to the original nature of the man, which is θορυβώδη καὶ ἄλογον, “full of disturbances and irrational”.

2. A threat to reason

In both passages, Timaeus depicts the way emotions arise in what we can call a “genealogy”, which accounts for the mixed character of emotions. Timaeus mentions basic elements, from which emotions seem to derive, or with which emotions are combined: sense-perception, ἔρωσ, and pleasure and pain. In these genealogies, Timaeus does not only present emotions as non-rational (as deriving from necessity), he describes them as threats to a reasonable ethical life.

The first passage 42a ff., apparently goes from the bodily movements to psychic activities. Sense-perception is the first thing (πρώτον μὲν) that appears when the soul is encapsulated in its body. The sensible body, through sense-perception, relays the violent sensible movements (adjunction or subtraction) to the soul, provoking a pleasant or a painful sensation. Everything we call emotions in the *Timaeus* is somehow derived from this common origin: sense-perception. This is confirmed in the *Thaetetus* at 156b2-c7, where “pleasures, pains, desires, fears and the like” form a general kind of “sense-perception” from the viewpoint of the one who perceives them as pleasant, harmful, desirable or fearsome¹⁴. Mingled with sense-perception, pleasure and pain occur; they are presented as the two basic feelings from which all other passions or emotions derive¹⁵.

The second element (δεύτερον δὲ) is ἔρωσ (love or perhaps more broadly *desire*), together with pleasure and pain. Ἐρωσ accounts for the way an agent, human or not, aims to restore a void by filling what he lacks. It is difficult to say whether ἔρωσ has a conative or cognitive dimension here; at least, ἔρωσ is an essential component for any subsequent emotion, in recognizing a lack, and positing an object of desire that may replenish this lack. In giving a meaning to pleasure and pain with which ἔρωσ is mixed, the *Timaeus* is congruent with the *Philebus*: desire is presented as an activity of the soul (35a-d), which treats the physiological impressions in qualifying them as pleasure and pain.

Emotions appear at last (πρὸς δὲ τούτοις), in an ordinate enumeration according to the criteria of affinity and oppositeness (ὅσα τε ἐπόμενα αὐτοῖς καὶ ὁπόσα ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα). In 42a-b, the list is limited to two emotions – fear and spiritedness – whereas in 69d2-4 Timaeus adds another pair of opposites – boldness and hope¹⁶. The sequence seems quite clear: we begin with something co-natural to any living being, sense-perception, then we have a mixture (μειγμένον) with ἔρωσ, pleasure and pain, that finally ends with a more complex collection of feelings or emotions. We move then from simple to complex as if the emotions could be deduced from the elements they come from, and Plato hints to a way we could classify emotions (by opposites), depending on the criteria of pleasure and pain¹⁷, which are the two pillars of sensibility.

This genealogy is useful to understand why, besides being necessary, emotions are also “dreadful” for reason. One may easily understand how an emotion can give rise both physical and psychological troubles, which are described at 86b-c.

We must lay it down that the diseases that pose the gravest dangers for the soul are excessive pleasures and pains (ἡδονὰς δὲ καὶ λύπας ὑπερβαλλούσας). When a man enjoys

¹⁴ “For perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) we have such names as sight, hearing, smelling, feeling cold and feeling hot; also what are called pleasures and pains, desires and fears (καὶ ἡδοναὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ λύπαι καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι καὶ φόβοι κεκλημένοι); and there are others besides, a great number which have names, an infinite number which have not.” (trans. M. J. Levett revised by M. Burnyeat in (Cooper & Hutchinson 1997)).

¹⁵ See also *Leg.* 644c-d and 653a5-7.

¹⁶ Brisson (1994), 418 insists on the echo between the two passages, and contends, rightly in my view, that the function of θυμός unifies these emotions as “a part of the spectrum of the mortal sub-species of the human soul”.

¹⁷ For the parallel here with Aristotle, see Moss (2012), 264.

himself too much or, in the opposite case, when he suffers great pain, and he exerts himself to seize the one and avoid the other in inopportune ways, he lacks the ability to see or hear anything right (οὐθ' ὄραν οὔτε ἀκούειν ὀρθὸν οὐδὲν δύναται). He goes raving mad and is at that moment least capable of rational thought (λυττᾶ δὲ καὶ λογισμοῦ μετασχεῖν ἤμιστα τότε δὴ δυνατός).¹⁸

Timaeus explains how a physiological state creates an emotional one, that consequently has some effect on the use of rational thought. Excessive pleasures and pains first affect sense-perception itself (οὐθ' ὄραν οὔτε ἀκούειν ὀρθὸν οὐδὲν δύναται) by obscuring either organs or even memory and representation; then, they affect rational thought and anticipation, preventing the agent from using calculation and reasoning correctly, or even from using them at all. If the agent lets desire and sense-perception lead the course of his action, sooner or later, he will experience the diseases that affects each part of his soul. Emotions are then not only irrational in having no share of reason, but in being an obstruction of reason; they are not only *deprived* of reason, but they are also a *threat* to reason. The agent has lost control of his own sensations and desires, whose unmastered excess will give birth to afflictions. Bad temper and melancholy (δυσκολία and δυσθυμία), recklessness and cowardice (θρασύτης and δειλία), forgetfulness and stupidity (λήθη and δυσμαθία) are the names Timaeus chooses to depict the diseases that occur when excessive affections have overwhelmed reason in its control of sense-perception and desire¹⁹. The use of reason is now made impossible, literally, in its capacity of judgement and calculation (λογισμοῦ μετασχεῖν) as well as its capacity to have a proper sensation²⁰.

This first genealogy in 42aff. seems to adopt a genetical order. By contrast, at 69d1-6, the same elements of emotions appear, though in a slightly different order:

And within the body they built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it those dreadful but necessary disturbances (δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκαῖα ἐν ἑαυτῷ παθήματα ἔχον): pleasure, first of all (πρώτον μὲν), evil's most powerful lure (μέγιστον κακοῦ δέλεαρ); then (ἔπειτα) pains, that make us run away from what is good (ἀγαθῶν φυγᾶς); besides these (ἔτι δ'), boldness also and fear, foolish counselors both (ἄφρονε συμβούλω); then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage (δυσπαραμύθητον), and expectation easily led astray (εὐπαράγωγον). These they fused (συγκερασάμενοι ταῦτα) with irrational sense perception (αἰσθήσει δὲ ἀλόγῳ) and all-venturing desire (ἐπιχειρητῆ παντός ἔρωτι), and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul.²¹

As Johansen rightly noted, the difference of the order of presentation between the two passages can be accounted by their respective aims. In 42aff., Timaeus adopts a genetic description following the order of *necessity*; whereas in 69dff., emotions are something with which daemons must cope in order to obtain the best functioning of the mortal soul regarding its relation with the immortal function²². At 69d, pleasure and pain lead the way, followed by the emotions of boldness and fear,

¹⁸ *Ti.* 86b4-c3.

¹⁹ *Ti.* 87a2-7. On the congruent description of vice as disease in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, see Renaut (2019).

²⁰ The expression λογισμοῦ μέτεχω is formerly used about the World soul at 36e6, and again at 47c2, where we are expected to recognize the kinship between the revolutions of the Intellect and our own in our soul, through vision. The same expression is used at 71d4 to qualify the desiring part of the soul, which has no share of reason.

²¹ *Ti.* 69c5-d6.

²² Johansen (2004), 145–49, rightly argues that 42a.ff. and 69c.ff. represent two stages in presenting affections, the former underlying on pure physical necessity, and the latter presenting affections as challenges for the daemons to make them co-operate with reason. This depiction of the incarnated soul avoids a naïve conception of teleology, which would have

anger and hope. An echo of the classification by affinity and opposites can be found through the chiasm *κακοῦ δέλεαρ / ἀγαθῶν φυγάς*, the oxymoron *ἄφρονε συμβούλω*, and the opposition *δυσπαραμύθητον / εὐπαραγωγόν*. And last, if Timaeus does not explicitly say that emotions are a genetic composition of sensation and desire at 69dff., he insists on the intimate link between affections that are seated in the mortal part of the soul on the one hand, and sensation and desire on the other hand. Each affection is then presented as a threat to reason; and we can deduce that reason is an opposing power, capable of mastering emotions, as it is already suggested in 42b1-2, when Timaeus says that “if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust”.

3. A derivative rationality

Being rooted in the living compound, emotions are then non-rational but also irrational insofar they are a threat to reason. Moreover, as H. Lorenz points out, once the living compound is vicious, some emotions could also lead to physical diseases, as it is the case when political and educational institutions corrupt the citizens in prescribing bad habits and regimen²³. However, if emotions are presented as dreadful and irrational, why is it the case that some emotions seem to side with reason?

3.1. Δόξα and emotions

After having presented *παθήματα* as potential obstacles to reason, Timaeus explains how the daemons locate each function of the soul, mortal and immortal, in the body which the whole soul enlivens, in order to enable reason to rule. Given the intermediary place that is ascribed to *θυμός*, to which I will return in the next section, the agent is now capable of mastering his desires and appetites by “listening” to reason’s commands. The example of anger is crucial here to demonstrate how such an emotion, despite being “hard to assuage (*δυσπαραμύθητον*)”, is nevertheless useful to react correctly when facing injustices.

Now the part of the mortal soul that exhibits manliness and spirit (*τὸ μετέχον οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀνδρείας καὶ θυμοῦ*), the ambitious part, they settled nearer the head, between the midriff and the neck (*μεταξὺ τῶν φρενῶν τε καὶ ἀχένος*), so that it might listen to reason (*ἵνα τοῦ λόγου κατήκοον*) and together with it restrain by force the part consisting of appetites, should the latter at any time refuse outright to obey the dictates of reason (*τῷ τ’ἐπιτάγματι καὶ λόγῳ*) coming down from the citadel. The heart, then, which ties the veins together, the spring from which blood courses with vigorous pulse throughout all the bodily members, they set in the guardhouse. That way, if spirit’s might should boil over (*ὅτε ζέσειεν τὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ μένος*) at a report from reason (*τοῦ λόγου παραγγελίαντος*) that some wrongful act involving these members is taking place—something being done to them from outside or even something originating from the appetites within—every bodily part that is sensitive (*πᾶν ὅσον αἰσθητικὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι*) may be keenly sensitized

presented the work of the daemons as implausibly wicked in having instilled such emotions in order to force the agent to cope with them.

²³ Lorenz (2012), 256: “He [Timaeus] does not tell us how that might happen, but we may speculate that just as certain disturbances in the body can impart corresponding disturbances to the parts of the soul, so a suitably powerful disturbance in a given soul-part, such as reason, can impart a corresponding disturbance to adjacent parts of the body – for instance, to the internal fire in the region of the brain. (...) To put it succinctly, Plato in the *Timaeus* subscribes to bidirectional body-soul interaction”. A clear example of this interaction is given at 88a3-7 when those practicing controversy experience rheum and inflammations of all kind.

(ὀξέως... αἰσθανόμενον), through all the narrow vessels, to the exhortations or threats (τῶν τε παρακελεύσεων καὶ ἀπειλῶν) and so listen and follow completely (γίγνεται ἐπήκοον καὶ ἔποιτο πάντα). In this way the best part among them all can be left in charge. The gods foreknew that the pounding of the heart (τῇ δὲ δὴ πηδῆσει τῆς καρδίας), which occurs when one expects what one fears and when one's spirit is aroused (ἐν τῇ τῶν δεινῶν προσδοκίᾳ καὶ τῇ τοῦ θυμοῦ ἐγέρσει), would, like all such swelling of the passions (οἴδησις...τῶν θυμουμένων), be caused by fire.²⁴

This passage depicts a very detailed analysis of the emotion of anger.

- 1) *The presence of judgement.* Anger arises with a judgement that comes from reason, which reports an injustice (τοῦ λόγου παραγγελιαντος), whether internal (in the body) or external. Timaeus ascribes to reason the capacity to interpret a series of perceptions, according a law which happens to be flouted. In other words, it is not the θυμός's function to interpret a sensation before the reaction of the agent: it is because reason informs the agent that there is an injustice that θυμός reacts and boils. For the first time here, Timaeus gives the missing link between sense-perception and a complex emotion such as anger: a judgment coming from reason, having some effects on θυμός. In order for a painful sensation to arouse anger, there must be a judgement that qualifies this sensation as *unjust*.
- 2) *A complex belief.* Anger is a complex synthesis between the judgement that comes from reason and the painful sensation that is qualified as unjust. In order to be sensitive to "anger", the agent should be, in a way or another, committed into a specific belief that leads the course of action. In that sense, facing a dangerous situation, one could either flee and be a coward, or try to overcome one's fear in believing that it would be worse, for the sake of one's honor, to abandon one's position in the battlefield. This complex belief at stake in the emotion of anger in our passage is rendered by the expression ἐν τῇ τῶν δεινῶν προσδοκίᾳ, which is the very same expression used to define fear in the *Protagoras* (358d5-6) and in the *Laches* (198b9)²⁵. In our passage though, it is not fear but anger that arises (καὶ τῇ τοῦ θυμοῦ ἐγέρσει); this is because the intermediary function of the soul is previously characterized with three features before our passage: θυμός partakes in courage, spirit and desire of victory, which makes the agent less vulnerable to dangers and more sensitive to honor and shame. The fact that the very same προσδοκίᾳ could lead to fear in other dialogues, or to anger here in the *Timaeus*, shows that there is more than a simple representational "expectation" at stake in an emotion; it is a belief that comes with *values*, which can modify the content of the emotion itself.
- 3) *Modes of transmission.* Anger makes the body more acute, more sensitive, and more akin to fulfill what reasons commands. The pounding of the heart, the circulation of the blood, the role of the lungs are the principal agents of the transmission of the reasons's commands to the whole body. At 70a7-c1 quoted above, Timaeus explains how the heart's function is to support the spirit in preventing the excessive anger from having a physiologically deleterious effect. Provided that the judgment about what is right is in fact true, right anger is capable a) when the danger is external, of putting the body at the disposal of the soul (in the sense that a soldier should be acutely aware of dangers, be on the lookout for enemies, be steady, quick, etc.²⁶) and b) when the danger is internal, to put the soul itself in the right order, even if it entails ambiguous or conflicting emotions (intense fear and the desire to flee, and intense indignation and the desire to fight and have the injustice rectified). Anger appears, with the assistance of other intermediaries such as the heart and the lungs,

²⁴ *Ti.* 70a2-c4 (trans. Zeyl slightly modified).

²⁵ See also *Leg.* 646e7-8. The notion of προσδοκίᾳ is not always connected with fear, but refers more broadly to intellectual anticipations which rely on previous sensitive experiences with the body: see *Resp.* X, 584c9-11, and most notably *Phlb.*, 32b9-c5. See on this last passage Delcomminette (2006), 303-90.

²⁶ See on this description *Resp.* 375a.ff. on the description of the good warrior's qualities.

as a complex psycho-physiological state capable of influencing sense-perception, with the general aim of realizing reason's rule.

This short description of anger raises many difficulties for interpreters. How should we account for the fact that the reason's commands are "translated" into a sensitive language that put the body at the disposal of the soul? And what makes the two "mortal" parts of the soul more inclined to follow or obey reason? One of the most difficult issues is to clarify what kind of "cognitive" power θυμός has, if it has any.

I follow here the general "imagistic" explanation, given by J. Wilburn about the inferior parts of the soul, and particularly about θυμός; according to this interpretation, it is through "images" (rather than propositional "judgments") that θυμός understands reason, as 71a4-7 makes clear²⁷. To be sure, "listening to" reason does not entail that θυμός *understands* it as a propositional content; the adjective κατήκοον and, later, ἐπήκοος seem rather to refer to a reverent way the agent receives a discourse than a distinctive rational understanding²⁸. Accordingly, in the *Republic*, educative models pervade the childrens' soul through music and gymnastic to shape images of a good character²⁹. Concepts such as honor and victory, and consequently shame, even if they are not "perceptible" things, are translated into "images" insofar as, in each of those cases, an image of the self is at stake³⁰. In this respect, there is no need in conferring θυμός a higher cognitive power than its ability to be sensitive to "images", or a representational-based sensibility, to understand how anger, for example, should work in the *Timaeus*. This account both explains how emotions such as anger could arise when a propositional judgement is at work (as in the case when there is a προσδοκία in our passage), or without it (as the pages 42a-b and 69c-d seemed to claim). This is why it is all the more so justified, as J. Moss suggests, to compare Plato's and Aristotle's views on emotions in subsuming them under the wide label "cognitivist" account of emotions³¹.

3.2. Θυμός has no cognitive power

The Timaeian account of emotions should be interpreted, nevertheless, through a strongly dualistic framework. As it is well known, there is no "image" of anything unjust or fearful that do not refer, ultimately, to a kind of judgement that accounts for it, whether this judgement is rational or only doxastic, whether this judgment takes the shape of a prescription of a law, a threat, a warning, a rumor, etc. The judgement remains distinct from the image that refers to it, as the scribe remains distinct from the painter in the *Philebus*, even if the final representation or belief does conflate their respective work. This is up to the agent, so to speak, to account for the underlying judgement that makes him react emotionally in such a way. The *Timaeus'* account of emotions remains, in this

²⁷ Wilburn (2014). See 630-4 for a useful refutation of Carone (2007), though Carone's account (which insists on a unified way of experiencing an emotion) remains in my view phenomenologically true; and see 634-641 for a full account of his imagistic account, with which I completely agree.

²⁸ Ἐπήκοος is used to refer to the way an important discourse is received by the audience, with awe and respect, for example a sacred or religious one (*Men.* 247d3; *Phlb.* 25b8; *Leg.* 800d7, 931b6-d9), a discourse of a *sophos* (*Prot.* 315b6, *Resp.* 499a5), or a verdict *Leg.* 767d8; 855d7.

²⁹ *Resp.* 411a5-b1.

³⁰ On this, see Wilburn (2014), 645-49, Renaut (2014), 182-97, and Hobbs (2000), 30.

³¹ Moss (2012), 273: "Therefore, we can call the Aristotelian and Timeian accounts of passions cognitivist while respecting their denial that passions involve full-fledged rational judgments".

respect, perfectly compatible with a strong dualism which separates what emanates from the intellect and reason, and what comes from the other parts of the soul and from the body.

One may compare our passages from the *Timaeus* with the Hippocratic treatise *Sacred Disease*, when the physician explains how we mistakenly assign cognitive capacities to φρένες and καρδία. This comparison should lead us to find some important differences between Aristotle and Plato regarding emotions.

The diaphragm (φρένες) has a name due merely to chance and custom, not to reality and nature, and I do not know what power (τίνα δύναμιν) the diaphragm has for thought and intelligence (ὥστε φρονέειν τε καὶ νοέειν). It can only be said that, if a man be unexpectedly (ἐξ ἀδοκῆτος) over-joyed or grieved, the diaphragm jumps (πηδῶσι) and causes him to start. This is due, however, to its being thin, and having a wider extent than any other organ; it has no cavity where it can receive any accident, good or bad, but it is disturbed by both owing to the weakness of its nature. Since it perceives (αἰσθάνονται) nothing before the other parts do, but is idly named as though it were the cause of perception; just like the parts by the heart called “ears”, though they contribute nothing to hearing. Some people say that the heart is the organ with which we think (φρονέομεν τῇ καρδίῃ), and that it feels pain and anxiety. But it is not so; it merely is convulsed, as is the diaphragm, only more so for the following reasons. From all the body veins extend to it (ἐξ ἅπαντος γὰρ τοῦ σώματος φλέβες ἐς αὐτὴν συντείνουσι), and it so encloses them that it feels (ὥστε αἰσθάνεσθαι) any pain or tension that comes upon a man. The body must, too, when in pain, shiver and be strained, and the same effects are produced by excess of joy, because the heart and the diaphragm are best endowed with feeling (διότι ἡ καρδίη αἰσθάνεται τε μάλιστα καὶ αἱ φρένες). Neither, however, has any share of intelligence (τῆς μέντοι φρονήσιος οὐδετέρῳ μέτεστιν) but it is the brain which is the cause of all the things I have mentioned.³²

Apart from the striking lexical similarities, and despite the obvious difference between Plato and the physician who makes the brain the organ of thought, they can be compared regarding the following points. Just as the physician denies that any organ like φρένες and καρδία could partake in thought or even in a representational or, broadly speaking, a cognitive perception – for they just “perceive” an excessive pleasure or pain with the whole body – *Timaeus* distinguishes the origin of the judgment that may qualify an emotion (such as anger) from the location of the emotion itself. The fact θυμός is the psychic part endowed with spirit does not entail that θυμός itself is the seat of the cognitive content that qualifies a situation as *unjust*. The physician is then right to assert that the overreaction of φρένες to an “unexpected” (ἐξ ἀδοκῆτος) joy or pain proves that the ability of an organ to partake in thought is not deducible from its propensity to react to a perception. In the *Timaeus* as well, προσδοκία probably refers to a judgmental capacity or power, and it would be a mistake to ascribe it to a lower part of the soul, not to say the least to the body, on the grounds that this is where the emotions are felt. One can imagine that Plato would agree that θυμός “perceives” an image of what is just or unjust, fearful or not, but he would not say that it is able to form the judgment necessary for an “anticipation”, which belongs to the rational part of the soul. What spirit is capable of, rather, is to make the agent “sensitive” to images, situations, values, in making him angry, fearful, shameful, etc.

If I am right in maintaining a form of dualism between affection and reason here, it is then quite understandable that, at 69d3, *Timaeus* qualifies boldness (θάρρος) and fear (φόβος) with what I take to be an oxymoron: they are “foolish counselors” (ἄφρονε συμβούλω). Those emotions are paradoxical

³² *Sacred Disease* XX, (§ 17 Littré) (trans. W.H.S. Jones, in Hippocrates (1923))

states: for on the one hand they may set *deliberation* or a calculus in motion (or be conditioned by it) – and here lies what is generally called their cognitive dimension; but they are also, on the other hand, some affections that do not go in any way beyond a mere conative response to physical and perceptual stimuli.

We can conclude this section by giving a third meaning to the so-called “rationality” of emotions. They were first found non-rational in the sense that they derive from necessity. Secondly, they are irrational for preventing reason from functioning properly. But thirdly, emotions can be said rational for, even being derived from an irrational sense-perception, they are overdetermined by a *δόξα* which inheres in the images that are produced in the lower parts of the soul. Some emotions, then, are seen as being “rational” or siding with reason in the contemporary sense we give to this term, for example anger or fear being appropriate reactions to a concrete scenario which commands the agent to be committed in certain behaviors. But for Plato, they are “rational” only in a *derivative* manner, for they borrow their meaning from a *δόξα* (or at best knowledge) whose formulation belongs to the immortal part of the soul.

4. A rational use of emotions

In the *Timaeus*, emotions, together with sense-perceptions, form a common genus which is called “παθήμα”. We may refer to specific emotions such as fear, anger, boldness and hope – but they are not a natural kind that are distinct from other affections such as pleasure and pain on the one hand, and sense-perceptions on the other hand.

Nevertheless, there may be a reason, as we have seen, to isolate some of these affections, insofar as some emotions reveal the power of reason through them. To put it briefly, emotions are clear manifestations of how the rational human agent controls (or not) his own life. Emotions are ordinarily thought of as necessary and spontaneous reactions that reason cannot handle or master, but they are also, at best, instruments of reason to put the whole body at its disposal – as in the case of anger in the pages 70a-c. This is also why it is so difficult to recognize that there is a special “seat” of emotions in Plato: for some of them are undoubtedly akin to θυμός (such as anger and boldness), whereas others seem to be more akin to the desiderative part (φοβός at 71b5; joy at 71d1-2). A clear-cut typology of emotions depending on the psychic parts or locations in the body seem, at this point, impossible to draw from Plato’s text: emotions are mixed states, where further psychic capacities and organs intervene. One can even describe the same emotion – anger for example – either by the feeling of an injustice, or bodily warmth, or both, even if further processes are at work.

If we recognize the variety of the operations at stake in emotions, one can better understand why emotions are ambivalent in Plato, and why they are altogether dangerous and may help during education in order to shape the experience of pleasures and pains in the city:

I maintain that the first sensation (πρώτην αἴσθησιν) that a child feels in infancy is pleasure and pain (ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην), and this is the route by which virtue and vice first enter the soul. (But for a man to acquire good judgment (φρόνησιν), and unshakable correct opinions (ἀληθεῖς δόξας βεβαίους), however late in life, is a matter of good luck: a man who possesses them, and all the benefits they entail, is perfect.) I call ‘education’ the initial acquisition of virtue by the child, when the feelings of pleasure and affection, pain and hatred, that well up in his soul are channeled in the right courses (ὀρθῶς ἐν ψυχαῖς ἐγγίγνωνται) before he can understand the reason why (μήπω δυναμένων λόγῳ λαμβάνειν). Then when he does understand, his reason and his emotions agree

(συμφωνήσωσι) in telling him that he has been properly trained by inculcation of appropriate habits. It is this concord that is the whole virtue. But there is one element you could isolate in any account you give, and this is the correct formation of our feelings of pleasure and pain (τὸ δὲ περὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας τεθραμμένον αὐτῆς ὀρθῶς), which makes us hate what we ought to hate from first to last, and love what we ought to love. Call this ‘education’, and I, at any rate, think you would be giving it its proper name.³³

A psycho-physiological account such as the one we have described in the *Timaeus* helps us to understand the mechanism and efficiency of such training³⁴. First, sense-perception combined with pleasure and pain occurs in each newly incarnated soul. Second, knowledge or, for want of anything better, right and true opinion instilled by law, should be instilled in these very sensations or feelings. Thirdly, emotions such as love or hatred (but we could add fear, anger or shame) appear to be intermediary states that are signs of concord (which is not exclusive with self-mastery). A “correct formation of our feelings” is then the explicit result of primary education; emotions are rational if and only if they are signs of or means towards this concord between right δόξα and the sensations of pleasure and pain. Emotions can assist or support a kind of rationality, provided that both body and soul are shaped, by nature and education to achieve this rational order.

Conclusion

We should now answer the two sets of questions I raised in the introduction.

Are emotions rational? A first answer is a definite “no”. Insofar as they are mixed states of the incarnated soul (or animated body), and insofar as they are mixed states of sense-perception, pleasure and pain, ἔρως and an external judgment on what is valued or not, they cannot be not rational *per se*. Nevertheless, Plato provides a theory that enables us to understand how to rationalize our states of body and mind, in investing those states by shaping them, by exercises and habits. This is how we should understand this long psycho-physiological passage of the *Timaeus*: a correct understanding of how emotions are aroused, or how emotions arouse some psycho-physiological states may help the educator to shape them, especially when he should bypass the spontaneous way that goes from a pleasant sense-perception to a deleterious δόξα. Being non-rational or irrational does not mean either that emotions are not important in the individual and civic life. Indeed, there are emotions whose controlled intensity and meaning are parts of the living being. Being just, as the *Timaeus* says, consists in a firm control of these mixed states. Emotions are not only states of the incarnate soul with which we should cope; they are means for the individual to bring about the rule of reason.

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³³ *Leg.* 653a5-c4 (trans. T. J. Saunders in (Cooper & Hutchinson 1997)).

³⁴ See Wilburn (2013) on this point in the educational program in the *Laws*, which is, according to the author, aimed primarily to θυμός. See esp. 80ff. for a convincing analysis on the relation between spirit on the one hand, and pleasure and pain on the other hand, and 87 on a parallel between *Ti.* 70c1-d6 and *Leg.* 790e-791b.

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