Simmias’ Objection to Socrates in the Phaedo: Harmony, Symphony and Some Later Platonic/Patristic Responses to the Mind/Soul-Body Question

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Abstract
Simmias’ famous epiphenomenalist analogy of the soul-body relation to the harmony and strings of a lyre (together with Cebes’ subsequent objection) leads to Socrates’ initial refutation and subsequent prolonged defense of soul’s immortality in the Phaedo. It also yields in late antiquity significant treatments of the harmony relation by Plotinus (Ennead III 6 [26] 4, 30-52) and Porphyry (Sentences 18, 8-18) that present a larger context for viewing the nature of harmony in the soul and the psycho-somatic compound. But perhaps the most detailed treatment of the musical analogy, and certainly the most radical, is to be found in Gregory of Nyssa’s De Hominis Opificio. Gregory’s remarkable development of the musical instrument analogy provides a multi-layered analysis of interrelated causality on the mechanistic, physiological, psycho-somatic and intellectual/spiritual planes. Gregory not only sees mind/soul and body as radically equal and yet multilayered in their mutual development; he also refuses to restrict mind to the brain alone, for all physiological systems, in his view, are holistically and individually expressive of mind’s activity. Gregory’s theory is more innovative than Augustine’s view of the mind/soul-body relation and, in my view, the most important account between Plotinus and Aquinas.

Keywords
harmony, symphony, attunement, music, mind, soul, body, localization, holistic functioning

In this paper I shall look at four “harmony” responses to the mind/soul-body question, three from the immediate Platonic tradition, starting from
Plato’s *Phaedo* and then, moving by magic carpet, to Plotinus and Porphyry and coming, finally, to one Patristic response in the 4th Century CE from Gregory of Nyssa. My aim is to show that the harmony analogy is more complex than it first appears and that it yields in Patristic thought a sophisticated (and almost entirely overlooked) formulation for the mind/soul-body issue.

1. **Plato**

At a pivotal, and poignant, moment in the *Phaedo*, the doubts of the assembled company about Socrates’ early arguments for the immortality of soul are voiced by Simmias and then Cebes. I shall focus only on Simmias. Simmias’ objection is that the soul’s relation to the body might only be like the harmony or attunement of a lyre: “One might say the same thing also about an attunement and a lyre and its strings” (85e3-4). Is the harmony something divine or all-beautiful (in one sense of harmony—more like music or a range of notes) that survives the destruction of the lyre or is the harmony simply the attunement or compound of its material constituents (in another sense of harmony—more like the relative adjustment of the strings)\(^1\) and thus the first to perish? The latter seems more likely.

Among Socrates’ various replies is his third argument that if a harmony is completely determined by the disposition of its components, so that it can neither act nor be acted upon in any way different from its components, then if soul can control and oppose bodily feelings, the soul cannot be a harmony—or something composite. One could object to Socrates’ reply that the harmony of a lyre is clearly capable of being acted upon in a way in which its components are not; for the harmony may be destroyed, while the strings and wood remain intact. But the essential point remains: the lyre’s harmony depends wholly upon the state and relationship of its material components, whereas they in no way depend upon it. The causal relation is in one direction only whereas the soul, by contrast, is not only acted upon by the bodily elements, but acts upon them.

On the other hand, a harmony-theorist or a behaviorist might argue that the soul is simply determined in physical ways of which we are unconscious and that agency is largely an illusion; or, if common sense notions such as freedom are hard to dispel entirely, one might argue that the soul could be a bodily attribute in a different way: for example, the body is not just an assemblage of inorganic, fairly homogenous parts but a complex organism that allows for internal interaction and even internal direction (my head or my heart directs me—or, in later thought, the nerves and the blood). This is a more telling objection, and implicitly in the *Phaedo* it will be tackled by an appeal to two principles: First, that while a purely physical explanation might well seem to do the trick at first sight, a fuller formal explanation must also be necessary to take account of the causality operative in the other direction (namely, but not exclusively, in terms of human agency) (cf. 96a-102a). And, second, that only intelligible or formal causality can make proper sense of our ability to know (103b-107a). Any other, more limited material explanation will be reductionistic, if taken to be the whole truth about human beings or about the physical world. On this understanding, the bodily is to be explained in relation to the formal rather than form reduced to the bodily.

One may consequently go further and reject Simmias’ analogy of soul to a harmony on the grounds that it leaves out what needs to be taken into account, namely, that there is no harmony of material components without the human hand to strike the strings in certain patterns, without the consciousness to discover, create and hear the harmony, and without the art of music that makes the harmony possible. In other words, we need another harmony (or entelechy) to explain the material harmony (entelechy);\(^2\) or, in different terms, a material harmony requires a much larger *symphony*. Such an interpretation could be supported by Plato’s language elsewhere. In *Republic* 4, for instance, the potentially divided impulses of the three forms, types, parts or powers\(^3\) of soul—reason, spirit

\(^2\) As Plotinus suggests in his criticism, first, of the “Pythagorean” theory of soul as attunement and, then of Aristotle’s entelechy theory in consecutive chapters of IV 7 [2] 8(4) and (5).

\(^3\) Socrates use all these terms and, therefore, the typical emphasis upon soul-parts in Plato by contrast with soul-powers in Aristotle is not fully warranted by the text. Socrates calls them “parts” (442b; 444b), eidē or “forms” (435c; 439e; 504a: cf. *Phaedrus* 253c; *Timaeus* 69c; 77b) and genē or “kinds”; he relates them to the objects of their activities; and he also conceives them and their cognates as parts or faculties (e.g. *to logistikon*) and powers
and desire—need to be harmonized like the three fundamental notes or strings in the octave so that the psychic musician, as it were, can play real music: “bound together, he becomes one, wise and harmonized” (443d-e). Such a unity, I think, is not that of a syntheton pragma as in the Phaedo (92a), but of an implicitly incomposite entity that is nonetheless multiple. So at the end of Republic 9, when Socrates sums up the nature of the person who has real intelligence, he tells us that such a person “will always be attuning the harmony in the body for the sake of the symphony in the soul” (591d1-2).

This symphony or harmony, as the Timaeus tells us, is akin to the revolutions of the soul; it is also something that soul participates in (37a); at the same time, the different motions of sound focused into a single blend provide intellectual delight (euphrosynē/eupherosyne:4 well-movedness), caused by the imitation of “the divine harmony manifested in mortal motions” (Timaeus 80b; cf. 47cff). Implicitly, therefore, if we put together a picture from what could almost be three chronologically consecutive dialogues (if the Timaeus is early), there are three “harmonies” that need to be taken into account in the mind/soul-body relation: a bodily harmony, a psychic symphony, and a higher celestial symphony reflected even in physical harmonies. Of this last harmony or something like it, the Athenian Stranger observes in the Laws 689d: “...without symphony how could the smallest form of phronesis exist... and the greatest and best of symphonies would rightly be called the greatest sophia.” What is striking in Plato is that soul’s incomposite nature is essentially symphonic and that the divine expressiveness of the body in this relation is never eclipsed. It is, instead, emphasized—just as it is in the penultimate act of the Phaedo, so often overlooked in favor of the body-tomb motif. This penultimate act is not the final argument, but the beautiful myth of the body-idea of earth.6 But what is this symphony? It is not yet Beethoven or Mahler,

(433d;477b-c). Even if Republic 4 conceives reason, spirit and desire heuristically as parts, it is their interrelation that Socrates works to at 443cff., and especially in the fuller development of the argument in Republic bk. 9.


Phaedo 108e.
but it certainly involves a higher world of music, the combined music of soul-parts and the harmonic organization of the body—not simply for some Hippocratic regimen or balanced humors—but rather moderation (sōphrosunē) for the sake of phronesis/sophia. This is an incarnational view of the soul-body relation such as we find in the Symposium, Republic, Timaeus—and also in Alcibiades I and its description of soul’s search for self-knowledge in the best part of the soul of another that results in practical insight in the living of one’s daily affairs.7

2. Plotinus and Porphyry

How do Plotinus and Porphyry understand this? Two major passages are well discussed by Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé and Jean Pépin in the 2005 edition of Porphyry’s Sententiae by Luc Brisson and others (I, 96-101; II, 485-97).8 In addition, Stephen Gersh has conducted a significant analysis of all the passages on harmonia in the Enneads in their chronological order.9 However, since these two passages in Plotinus and Porphyry, together with all the other passages in the Enneads,10 are not without con-

7) Alcibiades I, 132e-134e.
10) As noted above, Plotinus rejects the view that the soul is, like the lyre, a blending of the body’s constituents like an attunement of the lyre’s strings (IV 7 [2] 8 (4)-(5); III 6 [26] 2), but he employs the notions of harmony, musician and lyres in different ways as images of the logos (III 2 [47] 16—the logos of this universe in the drama brings all conflicting parts into a single harmony; 17—making a single harmony of the different sounds uttered by the parts; IV 3 [27]12—the symphony or harmonious adjustment of souls to the All; IV 4 [28] 12), the individual soul (I 4 [46] 16), unity-in multiplicity of souls (IV 4 [28] 8—the heavenly bodies and souls move like strings plucked harmoniously on a lyre), of the universe (IV 4 [28] 41—sympathetic resonance between strings and even different lyres yields one harmony even if composed of opposites), of intellects (VI 5 [23] 10—the strings are together even if we think we touch them seriātīm), and applies the harmony analogy to the intelligible in II 9 [34] 16 (from which flows the harmony in sensible sounds) and, again, to body’s relation to soul in II 3 [52] 13, 34-47 (if the body is like a lyre not properly attuned to take the melody, it may hinder the activity of soul) (I 4 [46] 16).
siderable difficulties that would lead me far beyond the scope of the present article,¹¹ I shall limit myself to the simplest observations. Here are the two major texts in question:

Plotinus, Ennead III 6 [26] 4, 30-52:

Ἀλλ᾽ ἐστι μὲν τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς μέρος τὸ παθητικὸν οὐ σῶμα μὲν, εἴδος δὲ τι. Ἐν ὠλὴ μὲν τοῖς ἐπιθυμοῦν καὶ τὸ γε θρεπτικόν τε καὶ αὐξητικόν καὶ γεννητικόν, ὃ ἐστι βία καὶ ἀρχή τοῦ ἐπιθυμοῦντος καὶ παθητικοῦ εἴδους. Εἴδει δὲ οὐδὲν δεῖ παρεῖναι ταραχὴν ἢ ὠλὸς πάθος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐστηκένα μὲν αὐτό, τὴν δὲ ὠλὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ πάθει γίγνεσθαι, ὅταν γίγνηται, ἐκείνου τῇ παρουσίᾳ κινοῦντος. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ φυτικὸν, ὅταν φύῃ, φύεται, οὐδ᾽, ὅταν αὐξῇ, αὐξεῖται, οὐδ᾽ ὠλὸς, ὅταν κινῇ, κινεῖται ἐκείνην τὴν κίνησιν ἢ κινεῖ, ἀλλ᾽ ἢ οὐδ᾽ ὠλὸς, ἢ ᾠλὸς τρόπος κινήσεως ἢ ἐνεργείας. Αὐτὴν μὲν οὖν δεῖ τὴν τοῦ εἴδους φύσιν ἐνέργειαν εἶναι καὶ τῇ παρουσίᾳ ποιεῖν, οἶον εἰ ᾧ ἄρμονία ἐξ αὐτῆς τῶς χορδῶς ἐκίνει. Ὁστά τοίνυν τὸ παθητικὸν πάθος μὲν αἴτιον ἢ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ γενομένου τοῦ κινήματος ἐκ τῆς φαντασίας τῆς αἰσθητικῆς ἢ καὶ ἄνευ φαντασίας· ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ τούτῳ, εἰ τῆς δόξης ἄνωθεν ἄρχοντος· αὐτῷ δὲ μένον ἐν ἄρμονίᾳ εἴδει. Τὰ δὲ αἰτία τοῦ κινήσεως ἀνάλογον τῷ μουσικῷ· τὰ δὲ πληγέντα διὰ πάθος πρὸς τὰς χορδὰς ἂν τὸν λόγον ἔχοι. Καὶ γὰρ κάκει οὐχ ᾧ ἄρμονία πέποθεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἢ χορδῆς οὐ μὴν ἐκκινήθη ἢν ἢ χορδῆ, εἰ καὶ ὁ μουσικὸς ἐβούλετο, μὴ τῆς ἄρμονίας τούτῳ λεγοῦσης.

...this part of the soul that is subject to affections is not a body but a form. Certainly the desiring part is in matter and so, too, is the part which governs nutrition, growth and generation, which is the root and principle of the desiring and affective form. But it is not proper to any form to be disturbed or in any way affected, but it remains at rest itself, and its matter enters into the state of being affected, when it does so enter, while the form stirs up the affection by its presence. For, of course, the growth-principle does not grow when it causes growth, nor increase when it causes increase, nor in general, when it causes motion, is it moved by that particular kind of motion which it causes, but either it is not moved at all, or it is a different kind of motion and activity. So then the actual nature of the form must be an activity, and act by its presence, as if the harmony by itself plucked the strings. The part subject to affections, then, will be the cause of the affection, either because the movement starts in virtue of it, from the mental picture produced by

sense-impressions, or even without a mental picture; and we must examine this, if the affection is produced by the opinion starting from above; but the part itself stays still in the form of a harmony.\(^{12}\) The causes of getting the movement started are like the musician, and the parts on which the affection makes its impact might correspond to the strings. For in the case of playing an instrument, too, it is not the harmony which is affected, but the string; the string, however, would not be moved even if the musician wished it, unless the harmony said so. (Trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted).\(^{13}\)

Porphyry, *Sententiae* 18, 8-18:

> ὅταν γὰρ τὸ ζῴον αἰσθάνηται, ἔοικεν ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ ἁρμονίᾳ χωριστῇ ἐξ ἑαυτῆς τὰς χορδὰς κινούσῃ ἡρμοσμένας ἁρμονία ἀχωρίστῳ, τὸ δὲ αἴτιον τοῦ κινῆσαι τὸ ζῷον, διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἐμψυχον ἀνάλογον τῷ μουσικῷ διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἑναρμόνιον, τὰ δὲ πληγέντα σώματα διὰ πάθος αἰσθητικῶν ταῖς ἠρμοσμέναις χορδαῖς· καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖ οὕτω ἡ ἁρμονία πέπονθεν ἡ χωριστή, ἀλλ’ ἡ χορδή, καὶ κινεῖ μὲν ὁ πέπονθεν ἡ χωριστή, ἀλλ’ ἡ χορδή, καὶ κινεῖ μὲν ὁ μουσικὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ ἁρμονίαν, οὐ μὴν ἔκινηθῇ ἄν ἡ χορδή μουσικῶς, εἰ καὶ ὁ μουσικὸς ἐβούλετο, μὴ τῆς ἁρμονίας τούτου λεγούσης.

For when the living being experiences sense-perception, the soul becomes like a separable harmony that all by itself moves the strings that are attuned by an inseparable harmony; the cause of the motion is the living being who is by virtue of being ensouled analogous to the musician by virtue of being attuned, whereas the bodies struck by virtue of the sense-affection are analogous to the harmonized strings; for in that case it is not the separable harmony that is affected, but the string. And the musician moves according to the harmony that is in him, but the string would not be moved musically, even if the musician wished it, unless the harmony said so (Trans. J.M. Dillon, adapted).

Porphyry evidently has the Plotinus-passage in mind, but with some differences. First, the harmony in form (Plotinus: as if “by itself plucked the strings;” Porphyry: “the separated harmony”) is likened to the soul, even to the apparently passive soul when understood as an activity. Second, the

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enharmonized musician is likened to the ensouled living creature who causes the movement of strings, though in both it is the formal harmony that has the first-or last-word; and, third, the strings are likened to the visibly affected body. Porphyry mentions explicitly the “living creature” who does not appear directly in III 6 [26], though later in I 1 [53] Plotinus interposes between soul and body the compound living creature formed from a qualified body and an illumination from soul to the body (7, 1-6) that actually does the sensing. For our purposes, there is a kind of symphony involved between the separable and the inseparable harmonies mediated by the musician through the strings. Does this double harmony reflect a vertical application of the apparent phenomenon of vibrating resonances between different lyres reported by Porphyry in the Ad Gaurum (49, 22-27, Kalbfleisch) and mentioned by Plotinus as a kind of perception of symphony between strings or even a physical movement from one lyre to another at IV 4 [28] 41, 3ff.)? Or does it go back to the Phaedo 85e-86d and Simmias’ double harmony theory—divine and mortal—that doesn’t quite “sound in tune” under Socrates’ subsequent questioning (92c5; c8) (οὗτος τοίνυν, ἐφη, σοὶ οὐ συνῳδός)? Perhaps it goes back to both, but certainly to the Phaedo. In sum, we seem to have in Plotinus and Porphyry a kind of uneasy alliance between a concrete musical image and a somewhat ethereal transcendent harmony plucking the strings in one sense or another. What will happen then when a Christian reader of Plato, Plotinus and Porphyry uses a harmony image to illustrate the mind-body relation?

3. Gregory of Nyssa

Perhaps the most concrete treatment of the musical analogy, and certainly the most radical in its context, is to be found in Gregory of Nyssa’s De Hominis Opificio (a conclusion to his brother Basil’s unfinished Hexaemeron). Gregory’s remarkable view of the articulated mind/soul-body rela-

16) For a slightly different view, see Pépin (note 12), 2005, 488.
tion provides a multi-layered analysis of interrelated causality on the mechanistic–physiological, psycho-somatic and intellectual/spiritual planes. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio* 9, 149, 24-152, 6:

Ἐπεὶ οὖν νοερόν τι χρῆμα καὶ ἄσωματὸν ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς, ἀκοινόνητον ἂν ἔσχε τὴν χάριν καὶ ἄμικτον, μὴ διὰ τινος ἐπινοίας φανερομένης αὐτοῦ τῆς κινήσεως. Τούτου χάριν τῆς ὀργανικῆς ταύτης προσεδεήθη κατασκευῆς, ἵνα πλήκτρον δίκην τῶν φονητικῶν μορίων ἀπτόμενος, διὰ τῆς ποιᾶς τῶν φθόγγων τυπώσεως ἐρμηνεύσῃ τὴν ἕνωθεν κίνησιν. Καὶ ὀσπέρ τις μουσικῆς ἐμπειρὸς ὄν, ἄν ἰδίαν εκ πάθους μὴ ἔχοι φωνὴν, βουλόμενος δὲ φανερὰν ποιῆσαι τὴν ἑπιστήμην, ἀλλοτρίας ἐμμελῳδοίη φωναῖς. ἦν γὰρ ἰῶτας δημοσιεύουν τὴν τέχνην· οὐτοὶ καὶ ὁ ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς, παντοδαπῶν νοημάτων εὑρετής ὄν, τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι διὰ σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπαίουσα τῇ φωνῇ δεικνύειν τὰς τῆς διανοίας ὀρμας, καθάπερ τις ἰμματίτης ἔντεχνος, τῶν ἐμψυχῶν τούτων ὀργάνων ἀπτόμενος, διὰ τῆς ἔν τούτως ἡχὸς φανερὰ ποιῆται τὰ κεκρυμμένα νοήματα.

Since mind then is an intellectual and incorporeal thing, its peculiar quality/grace would have been incommunicable and unmixed, if its motion were not manifested through some inventiveness. Which is why there was need of this instrumental organization so that it might, like a plectrum, touch the vocal organs and indicate through the particular impression of the sounds the motion from within. And as some skilled musician, who may from circumstance not have his own voice, yet wish to make his skill manifest, might make his melody through the voices of others, displaying his skill through flutes or a lyre; so also the human mind, as a discoverer of all kinds of notions, because it is unable to show the original impulses of its thinking to the soul that perceives through corporeal senses, touches like some skilful composer these ensouled organs and makes clear through the resonance in them its hidden notions.

At first sight, this instrumentalist view might not seem too promising. The mind looks more like a clever ghost-in-the-machine than a genuinely unified agent, but this does not fit Gregory’s time or viewpoint, for while he holds that an incorporeal mind is not to be reduced to any single organ, and should rather be viewed holistically, this does not mean that mental “epiphenomena” cannot be given psychosomatic or physiological explanations or that the root and pathways of thought should not in a secondary sense be traced to the brain and the nerves or the heart and the arteries.
The harmony analogy is developed immediately in the text that follows, and on this occasion it takes on a symphonic physiological organization that the reader might not at all anticipate:

Σύμμικτος δέ τις ὑμουσική περὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ὀργανὸν αὐλοῦ καὶ λύρας, ὡσπερ ἐν συνῳδίᾳ τινὶ κατὰ ταύτῃ ἀλλήλοις συμφθεγμένον. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ πνεῦμο διὰ τῆς ἀρτηρίας, ἀπὸ τῶν πνευματοδόχων ὄγχειον ἀνοικόμενον, όταν ἡ ὀρμή τοῦ θεσπομένου πρὸς φωνὴν τονωσθῇ τὸ μέρος, ταῖς ἐνδόθεν προσαρασσόμενοι προσβολαῖς, αἳ κυκλοτερῶς τὸν αὐλοειδῆ τοῦτον διειλήφασι πόρον, μιμεῖταί πως τὴν διὰ τοῦ αὐλοῦ γεγομένην φωνήν, ταῖς ὑμενώδεσιν ἐξοχαῖς ἐν κύκλῳ περιδονούμενον. Υπερῴα δὲ τὸν κάτωθεν φθόγγον ἐκδέχεται τῷ κατ’ αὐτὴν κενώματι, διδύμοις αὐλοῖς ταῖς ἐπὶ τούς μυκτήρας διήκουσι, καὶ οὐν λεπίδων τισὶν ἐξοχαῖς τοῖς περὶ τὸν ἴθμους χόνδροις τὴν φωνὴν περισχίζουσα, γεγωνοτέραν τὴν ἀχὴν ἀπεργάζεται. Παρειὰ δὲ, καὶ γλῶσσα, καὶ ἡ περὶ τὸν φάρυγγα διασκευή, καθ’ ἣν ὁ ἀνθερεὼν ὑποχαλᾶται κοιλαινόμενος, καὶ ὀξυτονῶν ἐπιτείνεται· ταῦτα πάντα τὴν ἐν τοῖς νευραῖς τοῦ πλήκτρου κίνησιν ὑποκρίνεται ποικίλως καὶ πολυτρόπως, ἐπὶ κατ’ ζῶν τοὺς πολλὰς ὑποχαλάς καθ’ τὴν ἀρμονίαν τοῦ μέλους (De Hominis Opificio 9, 149, 40-152, 7).

Now the music of the human instrument is a sort of compound of the flute and lyre, sounding together in unison with one another as in some concerted piece of music. For the breath, as it is pushed up from the air-receiving vessels through the windpipe, whenever the impulse of the speaker attunes the part with the tension for speech, and as it strikes the internal projections which divide this flute-like passage in a circular way, imitates in a way the sound produced through the flute, driven around in a circle by the projecting membranes.

But the palate receives the sound from below in its own hollow and, dividing the sound by the twin flutes that lead to the nostrils and by the cartilages around the perforated bone (colander) like scaly projections, makes its resonance stronger. Whereas cheek and tongue and the organization of the pharynx by which the chin is relaxed when drawn in and extended out as it tightens—all these answer to the movement of the plenum on the strings in complex and diverse ways, transposing with great speed as the moment requires the arrangement of the tones. And the opening and closing of lips produces the same effect as players who stop the breath of the flute with their fingers, according to the harmony of the melody.
This is a remarkable passage. The interest in physiology and the construction of the body from a medical viewpoint are pronounced in Gregory, as also in Basil, and this interest is undoubtedly connected with the new importance they accord body (made, according to some texts in Gregory, in the image of God). Certainly too, Gregory builds implicitly in *De Hominis Opificio* upon the work of the great Alexandrian dissectionists such as Hierophilus, Erasistratos of Alexandria and the prodigious Galen of Pergamum, allowing—as does Galen—for the mapping of the tripartite structure of soul onto the three major physiological systems (as roughly outlined already in the *Timaeus*): the brain and the nervous system; the heart and the arteries; the liver and the veins. But what exactly does Gregory refer to in the above passage and are we any longer in the context of the Platonic harmony image? Let me answer the second question first.

The *Phaedo* harmony analogy is still in play because here also we have two harmonies, but no longer “out of tune” with each other, as in Simmias’ apparently discordant view that the soul is a divine harmony and a harmony of constituent parts. In the above passage, by contrast, the two instruments and their harmonies are *ἐν συνῳδίᾳ τινὶ κατὰ ταὐτὸν ἀλλήλοις* according to the measure of the single harmony produced. Gone are the harmony in form of Plotinus’ account and the separable/inseparable harmonies of that of Porphyry in favor of a radical new unity in which mechanism, physiology and language/meaning are diverse notes of a single theme. Is it likely that Gregory would have been aware of these earlier versions that he can so radically transform the analogy? The *Phaedo* he knew intimately. He is also aware that “pathos (affection) in the case of incorporeals (*epi tòn asômatôn*) is *apathês* (unaffected)” (*Commentary on the*


19) *De Hominis Opificio*, chapters 29-30.

20) *Phaedo* 92c.

21) On this see Gregory’s *De anima et resurrection (passim)* in which he creates a kind of “Phaedo Christianus” (and more) and especially C. Apostolopoulos, *Phaedo Christianus*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986.
Song of Songs, 772a), a statement which exactly captures the view of Plotinus in his treatise “On the impassibility of incorporeals,” i.e., soul (and the whole of intelligible reality) and matter, Ennead III, 6.22 Furthermore, he also seems very aware of Porphyry’s work, especially the Isagoge.23 So it is very likely he knows exactly the intertextual melody he wants to play.

But what exactly is Gregory referring to in the above passage? Is the music of the human instrument simply the compound of two bodily senses or the ensouled body or does it include soul in the broader sense as a soul-body compound in which soul answers to the flute and body to the lyre? The image is, in fact, still more complex. First, soul is certainly included since the soul explicitly perceives through the sense-organs (διὰ σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπαίων τῇ ψυχῇ). Second, the beauty of the analogy is that flute and lyre answer to either or both soul and body.

Third, mind is not excluded from the picture since the “impulse” of the speaker/musician answers to the “impulse of the dianoia” and thus incarnates the agency of mind in the symphony. Mind makes the music possible, from one perspective, and body organized into mind, from another perspective, actualizes music. In fact the harmony image is more an image of mind than it is of body simply—an interpretation necessitated by the very next words in the text at the beginning of chapter 10 (152, 10-12): Οὕτω τοίνυν τοῦ νοοῦ διὰ τῆς ὀργανικῆς ταύτης κατασκευῆς ἐν ἡμῖν μουσουργοῦντος τὸν λόγον, λογικοί γεγονόμεν… "In this way with the mind making the music of logos by means of this organic system/construction in us, we are born logikoi.”24

22) PG 44, 772a; GNO/VI/23, 10.


24) Is there a hint of difference here from Origen and Evagrius—or at least from one strand of excessive desert practice such as Messalianism, namely, that we are born logikoi from the beginning and have not fallen from an original state of being pure intellects or logikoi contemplating God? Since the De Hominis Opificio is probably written in Constantinople at the great Council in 379, and Evagrius is there too as the secretary of Gregory Nazianzus, it seems implausible to suppose any indirect criticism of Evagrius who at this stage of his life is more interested in clothes than asceticism. And it is also implausible to suppose that Gregory (in the context of the Philokalia edited from snippets of Origen by
What we have in Gregory, then, is a new mind/soul-body model from within the Platonic-Aristotelian/Christian tradition. In the above passage, he presents a mechanistic-physiological application that confirms the conclusion that not only hands (149, 12-13: ἰδιὸν τῆς λογικῆς φύσεως αἱ χεῖρες) but lips, bone and breath are propria of our rational nature. He then goes on to provide a psycho-somatic two-way application of his thesis in 10, 152, 10ff: the operation of the instrument is two-fold involving the production of sound and the reception of concepts from outside that do not meddle in each other’s business but abide in unison, each in its own proper activity.25 And finally Gregory provides, as it were, a neuro-cognitive application, worthy of Augustine’s later treatment of memory.26 What is the extent of this vast inner chamber-receptacle that processes all sorts of data without confusion or error, he asks? It is, Gregory argues, like some massive city of human subjects that welcomes all comers (152, 27-33: ὡσπερ εἰ τις πολύχωρος εἰπόλις ἐκ διωφόρων εἰσόδων τοὺς πρὸς αὐτὴν συμφοιτώντας εἰσδεχομένη), on both its own and their own terms (κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκαστος γνώμην), distinguishing and apportioning everyone.

In other words, the groundwork for three of the major conclusions of the De Hominis Opificio is already established by chapter 10. First, while psychic localization is necessary to account for both faculty functioning and impairment, excessive localization prevents us from appreciating the

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his brother, Basil and his friend, Gregory Nazianzus,) is directly critical of Origen twenty years before the flare-up of the Origenist controversy just after the death of Evagrius. So, the slight emphasis in this passage would plausibly suggest Gregory’s early awareness of extreme ascetic practices based upon a negative evaluation of the body, an awareness that later involved him in combating Messalianism (whether Gregory’s De Instituto Christiano is a copy of Pseudo-Macarius’ Great Letter, as Jaeger argued, or a later attempt to translate Pseudo-Macarius’ ideas into a literary, philosophical frame). On this see the introduction by G. A. Maloney, S.J., Pseudo-Macarius. The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992, 7-11.

25) De Hominis Opificio 10, 152, 17-21: Διπλὴ δὲ περὶ τὸ ὀργανὸν ἡ ἐνέργεια: ἡ μὲν πρὸς ἐργασίαν ἠχῆς, ἡ δὲ πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν τῶν ἐξωθεν νοημάτων. Καὶ ous ἐπιμίγνυται πρὸς τὴν ἑτέραν ἄλλη, ἀλλὰ παραμένει τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ...

26) 152, 27-33: τί τὸ πλάτος ἐκείνου τοῦ ἐνδοθεν χορήματος, εἰς ὧν πάντα συνήρρει τὰ διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς εἰσχεόμενα; τίνες οἱ ὑπομημητογράφοι τῶν εἰσαγομένων ἐν αὐτῇ λόγῳ; καὶ ποιά δοξεία τῶν ἐνθεμένων τῇ ἀκοῇ νοημάτων; καὶ πῶς, πολλὰς καὶ παντοδαπὰς ἀλλήλως ἐπεμβαλλομένων, σύγχυσις καὶ πλάνη κατὰ τὴν ἐπάλληλον θέσιν τῶν ἐγκειμένων οὐ γίνεται.
holistic complexity of the mind/soul in those physiological systems and the musical possibilities inherent even in mechanistic processes (see chapters 11-16). Second, Gregory’s radical thesis finally articulated (after sustained treatment of the question what belongs in the image of God, passion, creation, resurrection, transmigration of the soul—see chapters 17-28) in chapter 29 that mind/soul and body have an equal beginning in organic development. Neither is prior to the other:

29, 233, 39ff:

But since the human being is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the origin of his structure is one and common [for both] so that he should not turn out to be older and younger than himself, the bodily taking the lead in him and the other turning up later. But we are to say that in the foreknowing power of God, according to the account adopted a little earlier, the entire fullness of humanity presubsisted27... and in the creation of the individual we are not to put one element before the other, neither the soul before the body nor the reverse.

Finally, there is the third major thesis of the last chapter, chapter 30, where Gregory concludes with an independent examination of the construction of the body from the medical point of view, thus showing his approval of, and continuity with, a long tradition rooted in the magnificent Timaeus account of the generation of the human body, on the one hand, and his radical departure from—or completion of—that tradition, on the other, depending on one’s point of view:

27) Compare Plotinus VI 7 [38] 1, 45-9.
For the project was to show that the seminal cause of our constitution is neither an incorporeal soul nor an unsouled body, but that from animated and living bodies it is generated in the first constitution as a living, animate being, and that human nature, like a nurse, receives and tends it with her own proper powers; and it grows in both aspects and makes its growth manifest correspondingly in each part. For straightaway, by means of this mechanistic/artificial and scientific process of formation, it shows the power of soul interwoven in it, appearing rather dimly at first, but subsequently shining more brilliantly with the perfection of the instrument.

In short, Gregory’s radical account of the equality of soul and body in organic development, especially when placed in the context of contemporary debates in neuroscience between the practical need for brain mapping and localization, on the one hand, and a more holistic understanding of brain functioning, on the other, deserves to be better recognized in the history of thought than it has been. General and specific histories tend to see nothing much happening between Plotinus in the 3rd century and Aquinas in the 13th. However, Gregory not only sees mind/soul and body as radically equal and yet multilayered in their mutual development; he also refuses to restrict mind to the brain alone, for all physiological

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28) Compare Ennead VI 7 [38] 1-7 (which is effectively Plotinus’ version of the De Homiinis Opificio), especially 5, 5-8: Oὕτω γὰρ καὶ οἱ ἐν τοῖς σπέρμασι λόγοι οὔτε γὰρ ἄνευ ψυχῆς οὔτε ψυχαὶ ἀπλαῖοι. Οἱ γὰρ λόγοι οἱ ποιοῦντες οὐκ ἄψυχοι, καὶ θαυμαστὸν οὐδὲν τὰς τοιούτας οὕσιας λόγος εἶναι. 29) As opposed to VI 7 [38] 7, 8-16; cf. IV 3 [27]9. 30) Artificial or mechanistic, on the one hand; scientific as the proper focus of logos, on the other—both apply at each stage as we saw in the harmony analogy above. 31) Compare Plato, Timaeus 36e2; and for symplekein in Plato and Plotinus see Ast, vol. III and Sleeman-Pollet, sv. 32) VI 7 [38] 7, 29-31. 33) 30, 253, 18-31: Τὸ γὰρ προκείμενον ἄν δεῖξαι τὴν σπερματικὴν τῆς συστάσεως ἡμῶν αἰτίαν, μὴ ἀσώματον εἶναι ψυχῆν, μήτε ἄψυχον σώμα, ἀλλὰ εὔρισκον τε καὶ ζῶντον σωμάτων ἃν καὶ ἐμφυόν παρά τὴν πρότειν ἀπογενναθῆ λόγον· ἐκδεξαμένην δὲ τὴν ἀνθρωπινὴν φύσιν, καθάπερ τινὰ τροφὸν ταῖς οἰκείαις δυνάμενον αὐτὴν ταχείας καὶ ἐπαναλαμβάνεις τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ ἑξεισθέντων ἐξελέγας καὶ ἐπαναλαμβάνεις τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ ἑξεισθέντων ἐξελέγας. Εὐθὺς μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆς συμπεπλεγμένης καθὲ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνδεικνύεται δύναμιν ἄμυδρότερον μὲν κατὰ τὴν πρότειν ἑκφαινομένην, καθὲ τῇ τοῦ ὀργάνου τελεσίστη συναναλάμπομασταν.
systems, in his view, are holistically and individually expressive of mind’s activity. Gregory’s theory is more innovative than Augustine’s view of the mind/soul-body relation34 and, in my view, the most important account between Plotinus and Aquinas.

34) However rich and multi-dimensional it might be in its own right; see K. Corrigan, “The soul-body relation in and before Augustine”, Studia Patristica, Vol. XLIII, 2006, 59-80. This has been part of a larger project—see my Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity, Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2009.