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Soul as Principle in Plato's *Charmides*: A Reading of Plato's Anthropological Ontology Based on Hermias Alexandrinus on Plato's *Phaedrus*

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Abstract: This paper aims to interpret the role of the soul as ontological, intellectual or cognitive and as the moral principle within the frame of the holistic conception of human psychosomatic health that emerges from the context of Zalmoxian medicine in the proemium of Plato's *Charmides*. It examines what the ontological status of the soul is in relation to the body and the body–soul complex of man considered as a psychosomatic whole. By comparing the presentation of the soul as principle in the *Charmides* and the *Phaedrus*, the paper defends the thesis that in the former dialogue, Plato develops his own anthropological ontology, which paves the way for the salvation of human existence and health. The soul is bestowed with an ontological primacy that determines the philosophical and medical presuppositions for treating human illness under a holistic view. The interpretation of the ontological relation of the soul to the body and the entire human being in the context of Zalmoxian holistic medicine is based on Hermias Alexandrinus' exegesis of the conception of the soul as principle in the *Phaedrus*. This paper demonstrates that, from both the medical holistic viewpoint and the anthropological philosophical perspective, the soul is the principle and $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu$ with regard to the body and the body–soul complex without being the whole that the corresponding medical epistemology must apprehend.



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1. Introduction

One of the most significant issues in the proemium of Plato's *Charmides* is the interpretation of the body–soul relationship, as well as the relation of the soul to the human being considered as a whole, as illustrated in the medical practice recommended within the narrative about the Thracian doctors and their king Zalmoxis, who was believed to be a god. The crux of the matter is the role of the soul within the holistic conception of human psychosomatic health that emerges from the context of Zalmoxian medicine. In this paper, I shall examine what the ontological status of the soul is with relation to the body and the body–soul complex of man when psychic and bodily illness are viewed holistically. In *Charmides*, Plato conceives of human health with relation to virtue (*sōphrosynē*) and knowledge, both scientific (*epistēmē*) and philosophical, as a cohesive whole in harmonization with Zalmoxian medicine. The latter is actually a philosophical device that helps him to move from somatic holism to psychosomatic holism and even beyond, as well as developing his own anthropological ontology. This inquiry takes place in a context in which philosophy interacts with medicine, and the ostensibly medical question of how we should conceive of human illness and the treatment of said illness becomes a philosophical question. In the latter case, the iatro-philosopher or someone who recognizes strong affinities between the aims of philosophy and medicine tries to find a therapeutic solution by investigating illness, both psychic and bodily, and its healing under a philosophical perspective, or in other words, the perspective of the philosophical presuppositions of a holistic therapy.

In the following sections of this paper, I shall examine the relation of the soul as principle to the body and the human being considered as a whole, as illustrated in the

proemium of Plato's *Charmides*. A crucial issue in the research of this dialogue has been the prevailing interpretative line, according to which the soul–body relationship is understood as a whole–part relationship. My aim is to refute this thesis and define the status of the soul–body relationship through another perspective, by comparing the presentation of the soul as principle in the *Charmides* and the *Phaedrus*. A further aim is to clarify the relation of the soul to “the whole” within the context of the Platonic philosophical approach to holistic Zalmoxian medicine. My explanation of what it means for the soul to be first within the whole shows that the body–soul dualism of the Platonic anthropological ontology does not dictate to medical epistemology and philosophical medicine that they must know only the soul, which is prior within the whole, but a much wider whole than the soul, in which the body and the body–soul complex each occupy a distinct place. In the first section, I will analyze the narrative about the Thracian doctors and their king Zalmoxis, tracing the references to different medical methods and their meaning. In the second section, I will examine the interpretation which identifies the soul–body relationship as a whole–part relationship and discuss the problems that arise. In the third section, I will present Hermias' reading of the passage of Plato's *Phaedrus*, where it is demonstrated that the nature of the soul as self-moved is to be a source (πηγή) and first principle (ἀρχή) of all other moved things. I will also examine *Charmides* 156b–157c in parallel with *Phaedrus* 245c–246a and 270b–c. In closing, I will argue that the soul as principle within the frame of the Platonic anthropological ontology of *Charmides* must be conceived of as something which is neither identified with the whole nor separated from it, but as something antecedent to all the other elements within the whole (being an element of the whole).

2. The Proemium of the *Charmides*: The Encounter between Philosophy and Medicine

According to the dramatic plot, Socrates, who had returned the previous evening from the Athenian campaign at Potidaea, revisits his old haunts and arrives at the palaestra of Taureas. He is interested to learn about any philosophical developments in his absence and about the young: whether any had come to stand out from the rest in wisdom or beauty, or in both (153a–d)¹ [1]. Charmides, who is considered the most beautiful of the young men, enters the dramatic scene of the palaestra of Taureas at that moment, escorted by a group of admirers, and Socrates asks Critias, who is both Charmides' guardian and cousin, to introduce him to the young man, to see if he also happens to have a “naturally good soul” (154a–e). Critias asks Socrates to pretend that he is a doctor who knows a cure for Charmides' headache, since the young man had been complaining of an ailment the day before and “just lately he said he's been a bit heavy-headed when he gets up in the morning”. So, Critias introduces Socrates to Charmides as a doctor who knows the cure for his headache (155a–e). When Charmides addresses Socrates and asks him whether he knows the cure for his head, Socrates' answer signals the beginning of the Socratic holistic philosophical treatment, which is presented here as a quasi-medical treatment.

Socrates, who feels himself seized by Charmides' beauty, somehow (meaning here “not easily” -μόλις (155e2–3)) manages to answer that he knows the cure. It is a certain herb (φύλλον τι), but the cure also involves a kind of incantation (ἐπωδή τις ἐπὶ τῷ φαρμάκῳ). If someone sings it while taking the herb, the cure will make him completely healthy; but without the incantation, the herb would have no benefit (155e5–8). According to this description, the herb must be considered only part of the cure, or if the cure is only the herb, then it would have no benefit, which finally means that in essence, the herb by itself alone is not a cure. The text emphasizes a synchronicity; one must take the herb and simultaneously sing the incantation. As such, it is preferable to view the cure as consisting of both the herb and the incantation. This means that if the cure is to be effective, it must be considered as a *whole*, constituted of both the herb and the incantation. This holistic approach to the specific medicament foreshadows the holistic approach to psychosomatic therapy that will emerge from the narrative about Zalmoxian medicine.

Charmides' statement that he is already familiar with Socrates' name because it comes up a lot among young men of his age encourages the latter to say that he will speak more

frankly (παρρησιάζομαι) about the nature of the incantation (156a9–b2). This intention to reveal the truth is reinforced when Socrates, who confesses that some minutes ago he had no idea how to do it, now makes the decision to show Charmides the power (δύναμιν) of the incantation. In my reading, the word δύναμις² [2] here has the meaning of “that through which the *ousia* or the nature of a thing manifests itself”, and the verb ἐνδειξάμην rather operates in the sense of “undertaking to make a revelation”³.

In the following passages (156b3–157b7), within the context of the narrative about Zalmoxis, Socrates refers six times to doctors and the different methods they employ, their accomplishments and their errors and failings. The comparative examination of these references is significant for the interpretation both of Zalmoxian holistic medicine and the Socratic holistic philosophical treatment. What is more, it is important for the identification of the status and role of the soul in the framework of these holistic therapies. Firstly (156b4–c9), Socrates clarifies that the incantation alone cannot treat the head condition and refers to the good doctors (ἄγαθοι ἰατροί). The ἄγαθοι ἰατροί tell someone who comes to them with an eye problem that they cannot try to heal just his eyes, but that they have to treat his head at the same time; likewise, it would be utterly foolish to consider treating the head on its own, apart from the whole body. On this principle, they direct their regimens at the entire body, attempting to treat and heal the part together with the whole (μετὰ τοῦ ὅλου τὸ μέρος). Charmides accepts this principle without question. Secondly (157d1–e2), Socrates, after being heartened by Charmides’ approval of the latter method, explains that he learned the incantation from one of the Thracian doctors of Zalmoxis, who are even said to be able to make people immortal. This second distinct reference to doctors implicitly associates the use of the medical method that the Thracian doctor will elucidate two lines later with the doctor’s knowledge not just of human health, but of the much wider and more valuable knowledge regarding how mortals may achieve immortality. The Thracian doctor praises the Greek doctors, as they are right to say the things Socrates has just mentioned (156d6–7). The Thracian doctor’s praise of the method of the Greek doctors is a distinct third reference which approves of the principle that one must always attempt to treat and heal the part together with the whole (μετὰ τοῦ ὅλου τὸ μέρος)⁴ [3]. Fourthly, the Thracian doctor invokes the figure of the king of the Thracians Zalmoxis, who is acknowledged to be a god, and exposes his radically holistic medical theory (156d8–157a3). According to Zalmoxian medicine, just as one should not try to heal the eyes apart from the head, nor the head apart from the body, one also should not try to heal the body apart from the soul. Fifthly, the frame of the fourth reference to doctors, which consists in an exposition of Zalmoxian medicine, contains a second reference to the Greek doctors. The Thracian doctor reports that Zalmoxis reproaches them for their failure to recognize the whole, which should be the object of their care. Here one should note the use of the emblematic Socratic word ἐπιμέλεια (156e5) to signify the care of the whole. For Zalmoxis, this is the reason that explains why so many diseases get away (διαφεύγειν) from doctors who practice in Greece. He claims that unless the whole is in a fine state, no part of it can possibly be in good condition. This holistic approach to health is then justified by the theory that everything that is bad or good for the body and the entire human being starts from the soul and emanates from there, just as it emanates from the head to the eyes. As such, one ought to treat the soul first and foremost if one intends to maintain the head and the rest of the body in good condition. In addition, the Thracian doctor clarifies that the soul is treated with certain incantations, and these incantations consist of beautiful words. It is from these beautiful words that σωφροσύνη is engendered in souls; once this σωφροσύνη is present, it is easy to provide health to the head and the rest of the body (157a3–b1). Finally, there is a sixth reference to doctors at 157b5–7, where the Thracian doctor identifies the error people make when treating humans: some try to be doctors of one apart from the other, meaning σωφροσύνη (temperance) and ὑγεία (health).

It is worth noting that the first and the third reference to doctors include the description of the same medical method, the same method of healing. Namely, the “good doctors” (156b5) apply the same method for which the Greek doctors are praised by the Thracian

doctor (156d6–7). This method consists of directing the regimens at the entire body, attempting to treat and heal the part together with the whole (μετὰ τοῦ ὅλου τὸ μέρος). Furthermore, the fourth and the fifth reference to doctors are strongly interconnected, with the method of holistic Zalmoxian medicine contrasted against the holistic medical method of the Greek doctors, who are censured for failing to recognize the whole that should be the object of their care. In the cases of both the “good doctors” and the Greek doctors who are praised for their method, the described method is concerned only with the body, and the whole that must be treated and healed together with its parts is the body. Zalmoxian medicine on the other hand encompasses an additional crucial factor for treating human health, namely the soul, and what is more, the soul in its relation to the body and the entire human being, i.e., the composite that consists of body and soul (παντὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ). Although both methods—that of the good doctors, which is identified with that of the Greek doctors who are praised, and that of Zalmoxian medicine—are holistic, they differ in their approach to the “whole”. As such, a crucial question is whether both treatment methods address the same “whole”. Essentially, Zalmoxian medicine is a holistic method that thematizes for the first time within this discussion in *Charmides* the role of the soul not only in the treatment of bodily health but also as ἀρχή and πρῶτον for the human being as a whole, and correspondingly for human health as a whole. Through this Zalmoxian holistic approach to human health, a significant aspect of the Platonic anthropological ontology may be observed to emerge, which determines the status of the soul as a principle of the entire human being.

Moravcsik notes that although Plato expressed no theory on health, the notion is central to his philosophy because he regarded adequate ethical theorizing as something analogous to how we think of the health of the body. Furthermore, Plato viewed the issue of how humans should live as a concern for the health of the soul [4] (p. 338). In the *Meno* 72d–e, health is among those things for which Socrates seeks the one Form that is the same everywhere regardless of particulars. Similarly, in the *Phaedo* 65d–e, health is counted among those things that have their truest version, their essence (οὐσίαν), which is imperceptible with the senses. Health, not only as a Form but also as a notion of medical thought and practice as well as practical and theoretical human life, has a normative aspect linked to the ensuring of the conditions which lead to well-being (cf. [4] p. 339). Apart from the perspective of the theory of Forms, another normative aspect emerges in the *Republic* 444d3–6, where there is a description of how health and sickness arise. To produce bodily health is to arrange the relation of the parts or the constituents of the body, specifically the relation of mastering and being mastered by one another “according to nature” (κατὰ φύσιν), whereas to produce sickness is to establish a relation of ruling and being ruled by one another that is contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν). Ruling and being ruled κατὰ φύσιν (according to nature) constitutes a norm or a standard which determines not only bodily health but also the health of the psychosomatic whole which a human being consists of.

In the *Gorgias* 464a ff., the health of the body is considered strictly separate from that of the soul. In the *Republic* IV, Plato develops his moral psychology, from which emerges a conception of virtue as an outcome of order in the soul. The pathology of the soul arises from the disorder and disharmony between its parts and their naturally constituted relations. Further, as Mackenzie notes, an analogy is drawn between the body and the soul which regards the virtuous soul as healthy and the vicious soul as diseased; thus, the idea of the disease of the soul is metaphorical [5] (p. 175). In the *Sophist* 227a ff., it is acknowledged that there are two types of cleansing, one dealing with the soul and a separate one dealing with the body. According to the body–soul analogy which dominates this section of the dialogue (226–230), of the two kinds of badness that affect the soul, one is like bodily sickness, and the other is like ugliness, namely bodily disproportion. In the *Timaeus* 86b–87b, there is also a distinction between diseases that affect the body and those that affect the soul, but the latter, according to the prevailing reading of this passage, all derive from the body⁵ [6–10]. At the end of this passage, the recommended remedy for

both psychic and bodily disease is to restore harmony and proportion between the body and the soul themselves.

The analogy between body and soul was an underlying concept of the analogy between medicine and philosophy which influenced Plato. Edelstein notes that from the fifth century B.C., when the discussion of ethical problems became an integral part of philosophy, the latter found a basis for exhortation in medicine. It was easy to include in the philosophical protreptic the idea that what is true of the body, namely the need for care, must also be true of the soul, since both are parts of our being. Indeed, it is true to an even higher degree with regard to the soul, since this is much more precious than the body [11] (p. 361)⁶. This idea culminated in the Socratic–Platonic conception of philosophy as care of the soul. Gill, when investigating the various ancient practices known as *θεραπεία τῆς ψυχῆς* (cure of the soul) and whether the ancient world possessed anything resembling the modern conception of psychotherapy, emphasizes the importance of *Charmides*. He notes that the proemium is the *locus classicus* where Plato puts forward the idea that philosophy is a quasi-medicine and combines it with the claim that Socratic dialogue is the most effective approach to cure psychic illness [12] (p. 321). In fact, the actual message of the proemium of *Charmides* is that Socratic dialogue is the most effective cure for psychosomatic illness, since it is explained that both bodily health and illness depend on the soul, and the body cannot be treated apart from the soul.

Moes notes that Socrates works here in the opposite direction to that of medical ethics. While medical ethics starts with general assumptions and principles underlying moral thought and then applies them to problems that arise from medical treatment and practice, Socrates starts from the “good doctors” (*ἀγαθοὶ ἰατροί*) and proceeds to identify analogies with ethical philosophy and moral psychology, because he is aware that the notion of health is broader than physical health [13] (p. 354). What is vital in Socrates’ approach to health here is the establishment of a sort of “medical” philosophy which acknowledges that there are organic relations firstly among the parts of the body, secondly between the “parts” (soul and body) of a human being and thirdly among the “parts” and the whole of a human being, as much as there are organic relations among the constituents and parts of the animate bodies and among the powers of the soul⁷, cf. [13], see [14,15]. Then, in turn, he converts this tendency for the medicalization of philosophy into a zeal for the philosophicalization of medicine and human treatment, as well as the establishment of a moral anthropology⁸, cf. [13], see also [16]. In involving himself in a dialectic with the doctors and Zalmoxian holistic medicine, Socrates does not merely appear as a physician of the soul but rather introduces an authoritative philosophical medicine which gives rise to a new anthropological ontology. This not only recognizes the soul as a principle (*archē*) of the human being but also brings to the fore a very promising perspective for the body.

3. The Soul and the Whole: The Analogies in *Charmides* 156e1–157a3

Given that in *Chrm.* 156b3–157a3, the soul is recognized as that from which everything that is bad and good for the body and the entire human being originates and emanates, a central question that must be answered is the relation this passage implies between the soul, the body and the whole man (the entire human being). If the use of the words “ὥσπερ... ὅτῳ” in 156e1–2 is interpreted as constructing an analogy that in each case illustrates the relation between the part and the whole, then we must assume that the head is a whole with regard to the eyes, the body is a whole with regard to the head and the soul is a whole with regard to the body. If we recognize that a similar analogy, which reflects the relation between the whole and the part, occurs in *Chrm.* 156e6–157a1 thanks to the use of the word *ὥσπερ*, then the relation between the soul and the body on the one hand, and the soul and the entire human being on the other, must be in parallel to the relation between the head and the eyes; namely, it must be seen as a relation between the whole and its parts. Finally, if we trace the same analogy in 157a1–3, then we can conclude that the soul constitutes the whole to which the head and the rest of the body belong as parts.

The crucial question that must thus be answered in this context is as follows: what is the relation between the soul and the whole?

According to a rather dominant line of interpretation, which will be at the center of my survey in this section, the soul in the above passages is identified with the whole, i.e., the whole man, the entire human being. A prominent representative of this interpretation is Thomas M. Robinson, who, in his classical work “Plato’s Psychology” [17] (pp. 4ff.), maintains that if one relies on passage 156dff., Socrates in Plato’s *Charmides* considers the soul to obviously be the entire human being—the total person or the “whole man”, of which the living body is an integral part. According to Robinson, “soul” and the “whole man” appear to be interchangeable terms in the *Charmides*, since the Thracian doctor’s language means that soul is to body as head is to eye or body is to head. This analogy compels us to recognize the soul as the whole being, of which the body is a part, in some sense of “part”. The “whole” in the case of the “whole man” in this passage refers to the combination of body and soul, but the two are so intimately bound together that the destruction of either is the destruction of both. Thus, what the Greek doctors fail to recognize is that many illnesses are in fact psychosomatic⁹ [17], cf. [18,19]. According to this line of interpretation, in this context, the soul is considered as the “total self”, as indicated by the sentence in *Chrm.* 156e6–157a1. But the “total self” which is the “whole man” does not equate with the numerical total of body and soul; one cannot cut away the body and find a separate and complete psychic substance which represents the “real self”. The entire man (πᾶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος) is the “whole man”, namely the soul, and the soul entails the body as its integral part. On the other hand, as Robinson stresses, through the reference to the incantations which consist of beautiful words (157a3–b1), the soul is recognized as a cognitive principle and the principle of moral activity, because the intellectual and moral activities that the beautiful words imply can be ascribed only to the total self, which is the soul. In consequence, the influence of the soul on the body is so strong that curing the soul is a necessary presupposition for any curing of the body [17] (pp. 6–7).

Robinson believes that in the *Charmides*, an undoubtedly Platonic dialogue, Plato employs the same argument that is presented in *Alcibiades I*, a dialogue whose authenticity is disputed—namely, the notion that the body is a possession of the soul (*Alc. I* 129 d–131a). Although he considers the argument to not be wholly clear in the latter dialogue, he believes that this possession is not arithmetical, a simple numerical addition, but something closer to biological possession, because it cannot be explained through the paradigm of a violinist possessing a violin, but rather a violinist possessing a hand that manipulates a violin [17] (p. 5) [20] (p. 38). According to Robinson, *Alcibiades I* and *Charmides* share the thesis that self and soul are one and the same, but they represent different accounts of the soul–body relationship. Socrates in the *Charmides* goes further than what he says in the *Alcibiades I*. In the latter dialogue the body is likewise a possession and an instrument of the soul but enjoys a special relationship with the soul when compared with other possessions of the soul (*Alc. I* 129c–130a). But in the *Charmides* the body becomes an integral and inalienable part of the soul in the sense of the relationship of biological part to biological whole [17] (p. 158).

This line of interpretation of the Thracian doctor’s language in the *Charmides*, within the narrative which conveys the core message of Zalmoxian medicine, produces a monistic account of the body–soul relationship completely different from the dualistic views that were familiar to the Greeks until then [17] (p. 8). According to Bennett, the Homeric concept of soul in the archaic period originated from the concept of a spirit wandering away from the body during sleep and trances, inherited from the contact between Greeks and the shamanistic culture of Black Sea [21] (p. 944), cf. [22] (pp. 6–7). At that time, far from body and soul being considered as one, there was not even a unitary concept of soul and psychic life¹⁰ [23], cf. [22,24,25]. The kind of soul that animates the body, in the sense of life-force and breath, which was representative of an individual’s life and identity, was not associated with any specific part of the body and could appear in dreams during sleep, leave the body during swoons and abandon it after death [23] (p. 328). Pythagoras seems to have

particularly associated the soul with the seat of emotions and desires, which transmigrates from body to body and thus possesses the capacity to exist separately from the body¹¹ [26]. In the Pre-Socratics, soul as the animating principle is closely connected with motion, perception, thought and desire¹² [27,28]. From there, it gradually came to denote the mental counterpart to the body. In this framework, interest in the cognitive functions and the moral value of the soul increased, and from the 5th century B.C.E. henceforth, a more unitary and abstract notion of the soul developed, according to which the soul takes on the personal psychic characteristics and activities of the individual¹³ [29,30], see also [21]. Soul became a distinct subject which knows and thinks. Even the interest of the natural philosophers and thinkers in the localization of the intellect and the cognitive processes to specific biological structures or parts of the human body shows that the prevailing tendency of philosophical thought was not to recognize the soul as a (biological) part of the body or the body as a (biological) part of the soul, as Robinson's interpretation suggests, but to try to understand how the soul operates within the body, being something *other* than the body that extends beyond anatomy [21,23,31] (p. 108).

Another issue raised by Robinson's interpretation of the soul in the narrative about Zalmoxian medicine is the relation between soul and self. According to Robinson, Plato ascribes various tentative solutions to Socrates at different times for the problem of the body–soul relationship, “ranging from the purest arithmetical dualism of *Gorgias*, 493a1–5, to the mitigated dualism of *Alcibiades I* (if it is a genuine Platonic dialogue) to the uniquely formulated monism of the *Charmides*” [20] (p. 40). According to his analysis, in the *Charmides*, soul as “self” seems to include the body as an integral part of itself, while in the *Protagoras*, it completely excludes it. In the *Gorgias* and *Alcibiades I*, it excludes it, “but at least body is seen to have a special relationship with soul not shared by other possessions” [17] (p. 20). It is worth noting that early Greek thought possessed no unitary concept of “self”, since the self for the Homeric warriors was preeminently the body, at least at death, while for the Orphics the self was the soul imprisoned in the body, and the body was considered the tomb of the soul¹⁴ [17,20,30,32]. Robinson stresses that before the *Charmides*, nowhere had it been affirmed that the soul is both the principle of cognition and the “total” self, and no one had ever said that the body was an integral part of the self [17] (p. 8). However, scientific medicine for the body had already exerted considerable influence on the way the soul was conceived of, as well as on the formation of philosophical ideas about how the soul must be treated. Claus notes that “naturalistic views of the ψυχή seem to have been more directly connected to the development of the ψυχή as self” [29] (p. 182). In his view, instead of a direct or explicit interest for—and epistemological speculation about—the cognitive functions of soul, in the course of the development of an implied analogy between body and soul which was activated by the interaction between medicine and philosophy, and within the frame of naturalistic approaches to the ψυχή, rationalistic ideas about the body and its nature were transferred to the soul. From this perspective, interest in the significance of the soul for the psychosomatic man did not emerge from a growing tendency for its separation from the body, but from a purpose dictated by both scientific or philosophizing medicine and medicalized philosophy or iatrophilosophy: therapy aimed emphatically at the whole man and could be effective only as part of a holistic conception of health (see [16]). Claus stresses that the reason for which the soul acquires moral and personal connotations within this frame of thought is precisely the fact that it is regarded as the psychosomatic φύσις of man, which is amenable to therapy. For him, the decisive Platonic use of ψυχή in the earlier dialogues must be taken to be “moralization of the psychosomatic ψυχή of fifth-century medical and sophistic soul therapy” [29] (pp. 182–183). If we take into consideration Claus' analysis and all the medical background of the body–soul analogy which I have previously highlighted, it is easier to understand why the *Charmides* gives rise to a monistic account of the body–soul relationship. Still, this account should be considered only in the sense that the soul is recognized as the most important element of the psychosomatic man regarding his therapy. I will demonstrate next that there is a view which stresses the importance of examining the monistic account of the body–soul relationship within and

not independently of the frame of the holistic therapy for the psychosomatic man and the corresponding holistic medical practice.

However, objections have been raised to the view of the nature of the soul and the kind of monistic account of the body–soul relationship proposed by Robinson, according to which soul is recognized as the “total self” or “true self” or the “person”. The point that the nature of this “soul/self” is such that it seems to include body as an integral part of itself seems especially disputable. A central objection to this approach is that the dualistic account of the body–soul relationship seems to have been predominant in the Platonic texts. Furthermore, the monism which prevails in the *Charmides*, according to Robinson, does not occur again in the Platonic dialogues—which in itself casts doubt on this interpretation—but more significantly, it has serious ontological implications for the nature of the soul that are incompatible with the theory of the immortality of the soul and the consequent dualistic views which hold that the soul survives the body. If one adopts this monistic view of the body–soul relationship, then the body cannot be conceived of as something separate from the soul, but instead, the two must be viewed as so intimately bound together that the destruction of either entails the destruction of both. The possibility of a disembodied existence of the soul is completely precluded¹⁵, cf. [17,19,33,34]. If the body is a part of the soul considered as a whole and their relationship is that of a biological interrelation, then the soul becomes a substance which differs from the body only from the perspective of its wholeness, namely, only quantitatively and not ontologically; hence, it is not incorporeal¹⁶ [34]. Nonetheless, a considerable number of scholars also believe that conceiving of the soul as the whole in *Chrm.* 156e1–157a3 seems to be an unavoidable or at least plausible reading¹⁷ [34–45].

But even if this difficulty was to be set aside, other serious objections to this reading have also been raised. I will present those which I consider noteworthy. According to a crucial objection, the view that the soul is the “whole man” cannot be inferred from *Chrm.* 156e6–157a3 [46] (p. 218). The only thing that is confirmed in this passage is that anything good or bad for the body and the entire human being (πάντι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ) originates from the soul and emanates from there. It is disputed whether this predominance of the soul in man can be construed as a psychosomatic complex in which soul includes the body as part [47] (p. 337). If “any talk of the self or person involves talk about *both* body and soul” (Robinson [17] p. 8; his italics), then the “soul” cannot be an interchangeable term for the “whole man”, unless we take it unjustifiably for granted that the soul includes the body [19] (p. 635).

Moreover, another objection is that since Robinson does not explain what the “self” or the “real self” is, and further what the relation between the “whole man” and the “self” is, he cannot justify why the soul here must be conceived of as the “total self” [46] (p. 219). The soul might somehow be related to the self, but it is not clear why it should be equated with it, since nothing is explicitly said about the self. In other words, nowhere is the tripartite equation “soul = whole man = total self” demonstrably valid and not arbitrary, and nowhere does Robinson provide such a demonstration. Still, it has been suggested that since soul appears to be a moral and intellectual principle in the *Charmides*¹⁸, the soul is probably implicitly equated with the self, but in the passages from which the soul emerges as such a principle, it is contrasted to the body in the sense that soul and body are clearly presented as distinct and as not having the whole–part relationship¹⁹ [19]. So, soul could be the “self” or the “real self” but without including the body.

Another crucial objection is that the point of the analogy presented in 156e1–157a3 is not that the relation of body to soul is identical to the relation of eye to head and head to body, so the body is not related to the soul as the part is to the whole [46] (pp. 218–219). The context in which the body–soul relationship is examined in the narrative about the Thracian doctor and Zalmoxis’ theory is the therapy of the psychosomatic man, so the prevailing dimension of this relationship is, in principle, medical or therapeutical. In the same passage (156e1–157a3), the soul is clearly given priority of care because the therapy of the body depends on the therapy of the soul. Consequently, since the whole man includes

the body, the therapy of the whole also depends on the soul. According to one line of interpretation, there may be a kind of analogy between the theory of the good doctors that the part cannot be cured without the whole and the Zalmoxian theory that the body cannot be cured without the soul. However, this analogy implies only that there is a causal relationship between the soul and its state on the one hand, and the healing of the body and the whole man on the other. It implies nothing about the ontological status of the soul and the body or about the nature of their relationship²⁰ [19], cf. [38,39]. In the next section, I will refute the view that we cannot infer the ontological status of the soul or the nature of its relationship to the body and the whole man from this passage. Still, I agree that the analogy refers only to the method, to the theories, and not to the conception of the body–soul relationship as a part–whole relationship.

Before presenting a new view of the relation of soul to the “whole”, I will refer to several interpretative approaches which constitute important contributions to the relevant discussion. Tuozzo underlines the difficulty of understanding the body as literally a part of the soul and proposes three distinct approaches to an alternative reading of the relevant passage [48] (pp. 119–120). The first approach combines the view of a causal relationship between the soul and the body with the whole–part relationship. According to the causal relationship, which is indispensable for the purposes of medical theory, the treatment of the afflicted part depends on the prior treatment of what is understood as the whole, and the whole is understood as such only because it must, by necessity, be treated first. Thus, something is a whole when it requires prior treatment on which the treatment of the afflicted part depends. In the bodily cases, the causal relationship coincides with the whole–part relationship, while in the case of Zalmoxian medicine, the soul determines the health of the body as a causal factor without relating to it as a whole. The second approach preserves the whole–part relationship, but instead of construing the soul as the whole of which the body is a part, it puts forward the notion of the “relevant whole”, which is the soul–body compound. This interpretation is founded on the distinction between the soul and “the entire person” implied in *Chrm.* 156e6–8. These interpretative approaches gradually give rise to the idea of the causal primacy of the soul; and further, the causal relationship between the soul and the body or the soul and the “whole man”, or the “whole man” on the one hand, and the body and soul on the other, replaces the whole–part relationship. However, Tuozzo offers his final solution with a third distinct approach that relies on the difference between “all” (πᾶν) and “whole” (ὅλον). The whole ensures its causal priority through its status as something other than the mere sum of its parts. Thus, the soul could be conceived as “the whole” in Zalmoxian medical theory in the sense “of the ‘one single form’ that unifies the elements that go into the human body, to make it an articulated unity. . . while the articulated body would be ‘the entire human being’” [48] (pp. 120–122).

From the perspective of holistic medical practice, which is crucial for the understanding of the analogies in the thorny passage 156b4–157a3, there is also another important line of interpretation that construes the soul as “the whole” in terms of “a relation of beneficial dependency”. According to this different conception of wholeness, “something is a part insofar as its being benefitted or harmed depends upon the well-being of something else, and something is a whole insofar as it determines the well-being of something else. In this sense, not just the body, but the whole person should be seen as parts, insofar as their health depends on the health of the soul” (Korobili and Stefou [44] pp. 210–211; [45] p. 66)²¹, cf. [40,49]. Relevant to this interpretation is the view that the soul is the most important part of the person, in the sense that it is the part that can make the person whole [41] (p. 17). In these last two interpretations we can also speak of the soul as a “whole”, not literally but as much as it is the most important causal factor of health or the most important causal factor for the person’s integrity.

Nevertheless, none of the above readings manages to escape the impasse to which the interpretation of the soul as “the whole” has led. They merely attempt to transform or disguise the difficulty caused by this interpretation. In the next section, I will show that the

thesis that the soul is “the whole” in the Zalmoxian medicine passage must be discarded and replaced by an appropriate reading.

4. The Soul as Principle and Part of the Whole: A Reading Based on Hermias Alexandrinus Commenting on *Phaedrus* 245c–d

In my view, the whole–part relationship dominates the first part of Socrates’ narrative with regard to the appropriate medical method for treating Charmides’ headache and human health overall (156b2–d7), where we can find the description of the method of the “good doctors” as well as the praise of the Greek doctors by the Thracian doctor for following the same method. But there is an implicit correlation between this relationship and a kind of causal relationship between the treatment of the whole and the treatment of the part. This causal relationship must be understood in terms of the concurrence of two treatments; its meaning is that one must always attempt to treat and heal the part together with the whole and not apart, otherwise the treatment will fail. In the next passage, where the Thracian doctor presents Zalmoxian medicine (157d7–e7), the soul is introduced for the first time within the context of this medical theory together with the criticism of the practice of the Greek doctors. This passage, on the one hand, explains the Zalmoxian holistic medical method which inaugurates the body–soul relationship, and on the other, it explains why so many diseases elude (διαφεύγουσιν) the Greek doctors; they fail to treat so many diseases because they ignore or disregard “the whole” of that for which they should care. While the previously described method of the good doctors is well known, since Charmides is aware of it and accepts its principle, when the Thracian doctor introduces the Zalmoxian method and consequently the soul in the discussion, the shift to a completely new method becomes obvious.

The Zalmoxian method is a new method, unknown to the good doctors and the Greek doctors who are praised by the Thracian doctor, but it is explained in terms of an analogy to their own method. The only common view between the two methods is that “unless the whole is in a fine state, no part of it can possibly be in good condition” (156e5–6). This principle serves as a middle term for the transition from the one method to the other and for the explanation of the new method in terms of the already known but deficient method. Considering that we have a transition, there are two things we must approach with care. The first is that the “whole” no longer has the same meaning it had in the medical practice of the good doctors. This view is reinforced (a) by the introduction of the soul, which inaugurates a new perspective that extends beyond the whole–part relationship within the context of the body, (b) by the fact that the doctors are now called “the Greek [doctors]” and (c) by the use of the phrase “ἐπιμέλειαν ποιῆσθαι” (156e5), which alludes to the Socratic terminology. The second thing we must note is that the analogies in 156e6–157a1 focus on the main subject and the primary concern and request of this discussion, which is the notion of health and its medical treatment. The analogy in 156e1–6 simply shows that the relationship between the treatment of the eyes and that of the head is analogous to the relationship between the treatment of the head and that of the body and further to the relationship between the treatment of the body and that of the soul (cf. [19] pp. 639–640). The point of the analogy is not that the body–soul relationship is a part–whole relationship, nor that the body is a part of the soul and the soul is a whole vis a vis the body.

So, while the analogies “eyes:head::head:body::part:whole” in 156b3–c9 must be read literally, in 156e1–6, the center of the analogies has changed and relies on the principles or the code of conduct of medical treatment. A further shift of the analogy occurs in *Chrm.* 156e6–157a3. We can acknowledge that this passage gives rise to the idea of the soul as the moral principle of the human being, since it is said that everything that is bad or good for the body and the entire human being originates and emanates from the soul. In this passage, the soul is related to both the body (τῷ σώματι) and the entire human being (παντὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ). But the soul clearly appears as something distinct from either of these. The phrase in 156e6–8 does not make sense if we assume that the soul identifies with the entire human being; on the contrary, the syntax shows that whatever is bad or

good emanates from the soul and moves towards $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\ \tau\tilde{\omega}\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omega$ as a clearly distinct destination. Also, the body appears to be distinct from both the soul and the entire human being. This means that $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$, the entire human being, is neither the body nor the soul. It remains to be the body and the soul together—the complex. As such, if we must necessarily find a “whole” in this passage, then one such whole must be $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ with regard to the soul and the body, considered separately as parts of it²² [42]. But this is not a whole we can identify with the soul.

The whole that the Greek doctors ignore is clearly not the whole to which the cases of diseases of body parts refer. Also, $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ is a relative whole and not the whole that the Greek doctors disregard. Indeed, the same passage makes it clear that what the Greek doctors ignore is that the soul is the source of everything good and bad and that this is what must be treated first and foremost. To comprehend the nature of the whole in this case—if indeed a “whole” exists at all—we must discern its relation to the soul, and subsequently, we must identify the role of the soul in the crucial passage *Chrm.* 156e6–157a3. As we already observed, in this passage, we can trace for the first time the idea of the soul as a moral principle. Also, the soul can be construed as a cognitive or intellectual principle for two reasons. Firstly, because Charmides’ headache as a dramatic device alludes to an intellectual deficiency and Socrates is invited to pretend that he is a doctor who can cure it. In this way, Socrates is invited to pretend to be what he really is: a dialectician who can practice philosophical medicine, the main purpose of which is to render his interlocutor aware of his dianoetic errors and false beliefs. Secondly, the care or treatment of the soul with beautiful words will result in the improvement of Charmides’ mind (“καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν διὰ τὴν κεφαλὴν βελτίων γενέσθαι”), as Critias states in *Chrm.* 157c9–10. The center of this process will be the soul. The soul as a moral and cognitive principle must be considered only within the framework of an ontology concerning human beings, i.e., an anthropological ontology which determines what is first and ruling and what is subordinate and ruled within the human being²³ [50]. The assumption that the soul must be interpreted here as a principle in terms of an anthropological ontology, an ontology that encompasses the soul, the body and the entire human being ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$), is especially strengthened by the vocabulary used in 157a1–3.

While in *Chrm.* 156b3–c9, the whole–part relationship is predominant, in 157a1–3, alongside the introduction of the soul as a moral principle, and as a result of it, we notice a shift to another relationship, that between what comes first ($\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$) and is a principle in a human being and what is second or inferior and dependent on this principle. This new relationship applies to both the relation of the soul to the body and the relation of the soul to the entire human being ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$), as we can infer from *Chrm.* 156e6–8. The soul is a principle and $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ with regard to both the body and the whole man. What, then, is “the whole” $\tau\tilde{\omicron}\ \acute{\omicron}\lambda\omicron\nu$ in this case? A relative whole is the soul together with the body; in this whole, the soul is $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$. Another relative whole is the soul together with the whole man or the entire human being ($\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$); $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ in this whole is again the soul. But the true $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\omicron\nu$ or the $\acute{\omicron}\lambda\iota\kappa\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\lambda\omicron\nu$ (the wholly whole) is a whole that encompasses the soul, namely the principle, because the soul is the principle and primary among all those included in the true whole. If the soul was not included in the whole, then it could not be the principle and $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$. To discern the true meaning of the whole in this case, we should consider that the whole consists of the principle, which is a $\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ ($\pi\rho\tilde{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu\ \tau\tilde{\eta}\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\xi\epsilon\iota$) in an ordered series of entities or elements, all of which are included in the whole, plus all the things that follow it. The “whole” is then made of the soul, the body and the entire human being or the complex; all three entities are members of the same ontological category, the human being ($\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$), and differ regarding priority within it. Although this priority of the soul is posited by the Thracian doctor in a strictly medical context, and the main subject and aim of the whole discussion is the healing of human illness, the same context gives rise to an ontological aspect of the Platonic anthropological theory which, in my view, can be combined with the way in which soul is defined as principle ($\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$) in the *Phaedrus*.

In the argument for the immortality of the soul in *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2, soul is defined as the source (πηγή) and first principle (ἀρχή) of motion for all other things (*Phdr.* 245c9). Soul is ever-moving and thus immortal, and as such, it constitutes the source and first principle of all other moving things. In this passage, it is stated that whatever ceases to move ceases to live, and thus, motion and life are inseparably bound. While that which moves something else and is moved by something else eventually ceases to move and consequently ceases to live, soul, which is the only entity which moves itself, never ceases to move and live, since it never leaves or abandons itself. As such, the soul emerges from this passage as both the principle of motion and the life-principle. In addition, the soul as principle is ungenerated and imperishable, while everything of which it is the source and first principle must be generated from it. Gertz believes that this passage implies a sort of essential predication, since a plausible reading would be that the property of self-motion expresses part of the soul's essential nature, without which it would cease to exist. He then discusses whether Plato changes his mind about the essential properties of the soul from the *Phaedo* to the *Phaedrus*, given that in the former, “the salient property that inseparably belongs to the soul is not ‘being in motion’ but ‘giving life to other things’” [51] (p. 86), cf. [52]²⁴. I do not view the conception of the soul as the principle of motion and its conception as the life-principle as incongruous, because the idea that the soul is a principle and cause of life and its manifestations—which include or presuppose various forms of intra- or extra-psychic movement, like growth, nutrition, digestion, reproduction, motion, perception, thought and desire—was already established by the early Greek thinkers, cf. [28] (p. 30), [27] (pp. 3–4). Since his predecessors already interconnected these conceptions, Plato merely highlights one or the other according to the argument in each dialogue²⁵ [53].

The two passages in *Charmides* and *Phaedrus* must be examined in parallel in at least two points. The first is the idea that the soul as the moral principle in the *Charmides* identifies with the soul as the principle of motion in the *Phaedrus*, given that in the former dialogue, soul is defined as that from which everything that is good and bad for the body and the entire human being originates and emanates. In this description, it is obvious that the soul operates as a source of everything that is good and bad for the body and the entire human being. Furthermore, the use of the specific kinetic infinitives ὠρμῆσθαι and ἐπιρρεῖν in the phrases “ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ὠρμῆσθαι” (156e6–7) and “ἐκεῖθεν ἐπιρρεῖν” (156e8) shows that in this process, the soul must be considered not merely as the source of everything good and bad for the body and the entire human being, namely, as the moral principle, but also as the principle of motion, since everything that is good and bad moves from the soul towards the body and the entire human being. Even if this appears prima facie to be a metaphor, since moral notions such as the good and bad are presented as bodies which move, it is not unreasonable for Plato to interpret psychic procedures in physical terms²⁶. At this point we should remember that according to Claus' interpretation, as I have already mentioned, in the frame of the naturalistic approach to *psychē*, characteristics of the body are transferred to the soul, and the soul acquires moral connotations because it is viewed as the psychosomatic *physis* of a man. Furthermore, according to the same interpretative line, the decisive Platonic treatment of ψυχή in the earlier dialogues must be taken to be moralization of the psychosomatic ψυχή of the fifth century medical and sophistic soul therapy—see [29] again (pp. 182–183). The second point is that in the *Charmides*, the soul is also a principle of life, since it is exactly this which must be treated first and foremost if one intends the parts of the body and the body as a whole to be in good condition. Given that human life depends on securing and maintaining health, and since the health of the body and the entire man depends on the treatment and care of the soul, the soul is also a principle of life, in the sense that it guarantees health and life (or salvation of existence) for the entire human being and its constituents.

Reading and interpreting the *Phaedrus* was a challenge for the Neoplatonists since the dialogue was included in the Iamblichean curriculum (Iamblichus' canon) as a theological dialogue correlated with the contemplative virtues [54] (pp. 1–3). Hermias is the Neoplatonic philosopher to whom the manuscript tradition attributes the only extant

ancient commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, and it is the only work by him that survives in its entirety²⁷. Among other issues, his commentary provides a valuable reading of the doctrine of the soul's immortality from the perspective of Neoplatonic philosophy. This reading may help us interpret the status and the meaning of the soul as principle in the context of the Platonic dialogues that discuss this issue.

Hermias' insightful analysis of the demonstration of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus* reveals another parallel between it and *Charmides* regarding the soul as the principle. In his comment on *Phdr.* 245c, Hermias reports that some thinkers have believed that the argument is only about the soul of the cosmos, while others, who emphasized the use of the word *πᾶσα* in the phrase "ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος", have considered it to be about every soul *tout court*. However, according to his own reading, Plato himself determined that the argument is about all the rational soul ("περὶ πάσης λογικῆς ψυχῆς"), when a few lines earlier he declared that "he must first talk about the nature of the soul, both divine and human" (245c2–4) (Herm. *In Phdr.* 102. 10–15, Couvreur; transl. Baltzly; Share [54]). Hermias asserts that the argument here concerns the rational soul for two more reasons: first, because what the ancients customarily call "soul" in the strict sense is the rational soul (Herm. *In Phdr.* 102. 20–21); second, because it is from the soul's perfecting that you may grasp its self-motion and thereby separate the rational soul from the non-rational and from nature, since it is characteristic of the rational soul to perfect and awaken itself and turn itself towards itself, a property not found in any other kind of soul (Herm. *In Phdr.* 114. 21–27). We have seen that in the proemium of the *Charmides*, the soul is presented not only as a moral, but also as a cognitive and intellectual principle, cf. [17] (p.7). The soul is affected and charmed by the "beautiful words" within the frame of a dialectical therapeutical interrelation, which involves its own intellectual activity and results in the improvement of the soul's self-understanding. Although the *Charmides* contains no reference to the tripartition of the soul, it is obvious that the rational element of the soul is present and fully activated in the process of the holistic therapeutical method.

Given that we have already seen the relevance of the view on the soul in the passages of *Charmides* and *Phaedrus* we examined in parallel, we should discuss Hermias' view on the soul as the source and first principle. My own interpretation of the soul's relation to the whole in the former dialogue relies on this view. Hermias, commenting on *Phaedrus* 245c9, stresses that Plato has done well to call the soul "source" (πηγή) and "principle" (ἀρχή) because it is characteristic of a source to, as it were, share what is its own spontaneously (αὐτοφυνῶς) with things that are other than itself, and of a principle to be, as it were, set over and the master of the things under it. This is because "it is a principle inasmuch as it is on the same level as the things of which it is the principle (ὡς συντεταγμένη τοῖς ὧν ἐστὶν ἀρχή), a source inasmuch as it is transcendent and situated in Intellect, both of which are features of soul"²⁸. From Hermias' explanation, we can derive the idea that soul, considered as a principle, is on the same level (συγκατατάσσεται) as the things of which it is a principle. I believe that this approach to the soul considered as a principle dovetails with the soul considered as *πρῶτον* within the anthropological ontology that emerges from the philosophical medicine evolved in *Chrm.* 156e6–157a3. In this passage, under the guise of Zalmoxian holistic medicine, Socrates shows what must be done for the healing of the human being, considered as a whole. What is to be healed is the man (ὁ ἄνθρωπος), but in order for the healing to be effective, anyone who plays the role of doctor must consider that there are three things amenable to therapy: the soul, the body, and the entire human being. The soul takes priority in the care and the cure not only over the body, but also over the entire human being. It is not only the moral, cognitive and intellectual principle, but also the *πρῶτον* in the whole that includes all the aspects of the human being (ἄνθρωπος) who must be cured: the soul, the body, and the entire human being (πᾶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος). Based on this understanding of the soul as a principle, which we have already seen in Hermias' comments on *Phaedrus*, I conclude that the whole in *Chrm.* 156e6–157a3 is what encompasses the principle, namely the soul, the body, and the entire human being.

Close examination of the whole passage that describes the different versions of the holistic medical method (156b5–157a3; 157b1–7) shows that what matters in the therapeutic process is not only the nature of the whole, but also the identification and recognition of the first and the principle within the whole. Clearly, what is crucial in Socrates' description of these holistic methods—those of both the good doctors or the Greek doctors and of Zalmoxis—is the emphasis on the medical and therapeutic philosophical thesis that during the healing process, neither the part can be separated from the whole nor the parts separated from each other. This is what we can infer from the use of the following phrases: “μετὰ τοῦ ὅλου τὸ μέρος ἐπιχειροῦσιν θεραπεύειν τε καὶ ἰᾶσθαι” (156c4–5), “οὐδὲ σῶμα ἄνευ ψυχῆς” (156e2) and “ὅτι χωρὶς ἑκάτερου, σωφροσύνης τε καὶ ὑγείας, ἰατροὶ τινες ἐπιχειροῦσιν εἶναι” (157b5–7). Initially, Zalmoxis' criticism of the method employed by the Greek doctors in 156e4–6 shows that the main reason for their failure to recognize and treat many diseases is their lack of knowledge of the whole. But this, in turn, seems to be modified into lack of knowledge of what is *πρῶτον* or takes precedence within the whole (157a1–3).

This need for knowledge of “the whole” that emerges from the proemium of the *Charmides* is an issue of medical epistemology, a petition of medical epistemological enquiry, that leads to the formation of a demanding anthropological ontology through dialectic, which proves to be a promising philosophical medicine. It is a challenge to examine this issue in the *Charmides* passage in parallel with *Phaedrus* 270b–e, where Socrates posits that the art of healing is much the same as that of rhetoric, and that in both cases, you must analyze a nature—that of the body in the former and that of the soul in the latter—if you are to proceed in a scientific manner. Socrates then inquires whether it is possible for one to acquire any appreciable knowledge of the nature of the soul without knowing *the nature of the whole* (270c1–2). Phaedrus replies that if Hippocrates the Asclepiad is to be trusted, then one cannot know the nature of the body either, except in that way. Hermias Alexandrinus, in his comment on this passage, refers to Hippocrates in a way that implies that the holistic medical method he was applying with regard to the body (τὰ περὶ σώματος) corresponded to the holistic method of inquiry into the soul (τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς). According to him, Hippocrates was saying that just as it is impossible to inquire into the soul without inquiring into the whole of the soul, it is similarly impossible to inquire into the body in a different way (Herm. *In Phdr.* 245. 5–7). Thus, according to his understanding, the central message regarding both the soul and the body is that one cannot know their nature unless one learns “the nature of the whole”, cf. [55] (p. 222, n.18). Hermias interprets “the nature of the whole” here as meaning “the whole soul”.

Regarding the medical viewpoint of the holism of the body, a think tank from which this conception is frequently held to derive is Hippocratic medicine. In modern discussions of holistic medicine, its perspective often relies on the Hippocratic background, but only with rare citations to specific parts of the Hippocratic corpus²⁹ [56], cf. [55]. Although Galen believes that the method Plato refers to and praises in *Phaedrus* 270b–c is included in Hippocrates' *De natura hominis*, which he considers to be a genuine Hippocratic treatise³⁰, contemporary scholars have found resemblances between the Platonic evidence and other Hippocratic treatises. Many interpreters believe that a real comparison of the *Phaedrus* passage with a single Hippocratic treatise is not possible and that “it rather agrees with the general spirit of the Coan School” (Tsekourakis [57] p. 164). In the modern view of ancient medical holism, the sanctuary of Asclepius in Cos is presented as “a holistic healing centre”, and there is an assumption in the history of ancient medicine that there was a noticeable difference between the physicians of the School of Cos and those of the School of Cnidos³¹ [55,58–61]. One can find the claim in modern bibliography that Cnidian medicine was not in favor of a holistic approach: it “considered the body to be merely a collection of isolated parts, and saw diseases manifesting in a particular organ or body part as affecting that part only, which alone was treated” [55] (p.140), [62]. On the contrary, according to the same line of thought, the School of Cos is considered to be imbued by a spirit of medical holism and is superior to that of Cnidos. The method attributed to the School

of Cos is also recognized as Hippocrates' own approach by many researchers of ancient medical holism; he viewed the body as an integrated whole and not merely a collection of parts, and he used to treat not just the disease, but the patient as a whole person [55] (p. 141). According to a disputable distinction, the Asclepiads were divided into those who recommended treatment with diet (the School of Cos) and those who applied a more direct, pharmaceutical treatment of the symptoms (the School of Cnidos) [48] (p. 114, n. 28).

King disputes the reliability of all the aforementioned views and believes that their roots are vague, claiming that the *Phaedrus* passage, although not explicitly stated, seems to be a main source for most of the assumptions regarding Hippocratic holistic medicine. She stresses that this passage at least tells us more about Plato's holism than about what the Hippocratic writers, let alone Hippocrates himself, originally meant [55] (p. 136). Still, Tuozzo supports that the "good doctors" of the *Charmides* are doctors of the Hippocratic School, who believe in body holism and favor treating diseases by means of diet. He also believes that Plato contrasts these doctors who practice a naturalistic kind of medicine and are generally known as Asclepiads with the magico-religious healers of the Orphic, Bacchic, and Pythagorean mystery cults, with whom Zalmoxian medicine has more in common [48] (pp. 113–114). The problem of the identification of these contrasted groups of doctors extends beyond the scope of this paper. What I am interested in at present is to show that there is an interpretation of the "whole" in the *Phaedrus* passage which dovetails with my own reading of *Chrm.* 156e3–157a3.

Given that holism encompassed a wide range of meanings in the ancient Greek world—it could concern the relationship between soul and body or mind and body, the body as whole, the relationship between body and cosmos or the relationship between man and cosmos—the question of what Plato really means when he uses the word ὅλον in the *Phaedrus* passage has been a thorny issue, cf. [55] (p. 137). Possible interpretations of "the whole" in this case encompass—either separately or in combination—the *whole of the body*, the *whole of the soul*, the *whole of nature*, the *nature of man as a whole*, the *universe*, the *natural environment* and the *whole universe*, the *whole of the world* or the *whole environment*³² [57,63–65]. I will dwell briefly only on the meaning proposed by Gill. According to her, "if we take seriously Socrates' methodological prescription, 'the nature of the whole' should include the object of our study (soul or body) and those external things on which it interacts. On this view, the 'whole' is the 'whole environment'" [64] (p. 302). Ferrari provides a relevant reading of the "whole" in the *Phaedrus* passage and proposes that rhetoricians should examine the nature of the human soul as a whole with its own parts, but they should also treat it as part of a larger whole or system itself, asking how and what it affects and how and by what it is in turn affected; the meaning of the whole here is that of the "overall system"³³ [64,65].

This interpretation of the relation between the soul and the whole in *Phaedrus* 270c1–2 fits nicely with my interpretative approach to *Chrm.* 156e6–157a1–3. In the proemium of the latter dialogue, and more specifically in the passage where Zalmoxian medicine is presented and contrasted with the medical practice of the Greek doctors (156a9–157d4), the soul is, as I have demonstrated, clearly shown to be a moral and cognitive principle. When considered as the moral principle from which everything good and bad for the body and the entire human being originates and emanates, it must also operate as a cognitive principle, i.e., that part or element of the human being that must confer knowledge of the good and bad. This means that soul as the source and principle cannot be identified with the whole, the larger one within which man exists and is affected by everything that is good and bad, because it is also the cognitive subject that acquires knowledge of the good and bad, namely of the whole system of moral values and the whole moral environment of a human being. Thus, the analogy in 156e8–157a1 does not allow us to infer that the soul is related to the body and the whole man as the head is related to the eyes, namely with a whole–part relationship, since the task of the soul is cognitive and intellectual and thus, completely different from that of the head. Furthermore, as I explained based on Hermias' reading of the soul as the principle of motion in the *Phaedrus*, in *Chrm.* 157a1–3,

the medical viewpoint of the passage which focuses on the holistic therapy of the human being produces an ontological nexus in which soul is recognized as the first (πρῶτον) and not as the whole that must be cured. In the Platonic anthropological ontology that this passage brings to the fore, the soul is the πρῶτον, among the other things that the doctor as a cognitive subject must take into account and cure to accomplish holistic therapy. From the ontological perspective, both the body and the whole man are included in these other things. But obviously, from the medical perspective, other factors that constitute the medical and therapeutical environment of the psychosomatic man should also be included. Coolidge aptly notes that “it may not be possible to treat the soul without considering its relation to a larger whole [...] Moreover, if this greater sense of the whole is itself ‘part’ of an even larger whole [...] then care relating to the greatest of these wholes (the ultimate sense of the whole) will be the most profound practice of medicine” [39] (pp. 26–27).

The identification of the soul as πρῶτον and not ὅλον is, in my opinion, also compatible with the end of the dialogue (174b–175a), where I believe we may recognize an analogy between the soul as the principle and knowledge of good and bad considered to be prior to any other kind of knowledge. The latter is shown to play a decisive role among the other forms of knowledge because in the absence of this knowledge, there is no chance that any action will turn out well or benefit us. Knowledge of good and bad is not “the whole of knowledge”, but it is the first among the other forms of knowledge in the sense that if one takes this knowledge away from the other kinds, then there will be no success and benefit in activity that depends on them. Similarly, the soul is the first among the things that constitute the whole for a human being that needs treatment, and it is this which must be treated first and foremost.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of passage 156b–157c in the proemium of *Charmides*, the discussion of the various interpretative approaches to it by modern scholars, its parallel examination with relevant passages of the *Phaedrus* and their explanation by Hermias Alexandrinus and modern commentators have demonstrated that the prevailing line of interpretation, according to which the soul–body relationship must be conceived of in terms of the whole–part relationship, must be rejected. My analysis of the above passage has shown that soul is considered a moral and cognitive principle, and a cognitive subject which contemplates and cognizes the whole. In parallel, the soul is a part or an element of the whole to which it belongs, and it is bestowed with an ontological primacy among the other things that co-exist within this whole. The Platonic philosophical approach to the holistic conception of human psychosomatic health proposes a holistic view that surpasses Zalmoxian medicine. It shows that both medical philosophy (or medical epistemology) and philosophical medicine must acquire knowledge not only of the whole and its parts, but also of what is πρῶτον within the whole, as well as the relations of the πρῶτον to the whole and the other parts of it.

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Abbreviations

<i>Chrm.</i>	Plato, <i>Charmides</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>In Phdr.</i>	Hermias Alexandrinus, <i>In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia</i>

Notes

- ¹ Throughout this paper, I follow the translation of *Charmides* by Moore and Raymond [1].
- ² For this meaning of δύνάμις, cf. Mannsperger [2] (pp. 195–196).
- ³ In my opinion, the verb has a similar meaning in *Meno* 82a, although in the latter passage, it also bears a quasi-demonstrative sense.
- ⁴ Most probably, the Greek doctors praised for applying the method of bodily holism identify with the “good doctors” previously mentioned (156b5), since they use the same method. Cf. Tsouna [3] (p. 81).
- ⁵ For this view, see [6] (pp. 59–60); [7] (p. 23); [8] (p. 418); [9] (p. 253 and n. 49); [10] (p. 260).
- ⁶ Edelstein [11] (p. 360) stresses that “writers of all philosophical creeds gave a prominent place to the analogy of body and soul, to the similarity between the training of the body and the discipline of the soul, to the consideration of medicine as a counterpart of ethics”.
- ⁷ Cf. [13] (p. 356). The *Anonymous Londinensis Papyrus*, probably from the second century A.D., is a valuable source of our knowledge about the idea of a strong relationship between Plato and medical science. A great part of its content has probably been taken from the *Menoneia*, a collection of medical δόξαι mentioned by Galen in his Commentary on *De natura hominis* (15, 25–26; Kühn). Galen notes that these δόξαι are attributed to Aristotle, but they were really written by Aristotle’s pupil Menon. The papyrus—in a part concerned with the etiology of diseases according to various authorities, which is the *Menoneia* proper—mentions Plato among twenty medical authorities. According to this testimony, Plato says that there are diseases that occur due to the condition of the elements of our bodies, whereas others occur because of the formation of the bodies and others because of their residues. See [14] (p. 2, 68–69); [15] (pp. 528–529). This idea of balance and equilibrium or proportion between opposing powers or organic parts of the body is used by Plato in medical analogies that are transformed into metaphysical theories, aiming to further philosophically explain the relations between body and soul. Here, in *Charmides*, the holistic view of the body–soul relationship also relies on this method of medical analogy or metaphor.
- ⁸ Cf. [13] (p. 358). For Plato’s medicalization of ethics, see also [16].
- ⁹ [17] (pp. 5–6). Cf. Jones [18] (p. 16), who praises this method of psychosomatic etiology of disease for its modernity. For a criticism of this interpretation as a misconception due to a misunderstanding of the nature of the use of ancient medicine by the philosophers, see Hogan [19] (p. 638, n.7).
- ¹⁰ For the different types of soul that Homer distinguished, see [23] (p. 328). Cf. [22] (p. 3); [24]; [25] (pp. 15–16).
- ¹¹ Huffmann [26] (pp. 27–28; 34), who discusses all testimonia about Pythagoras’ conception of the soul, refers to the testimony by Herodotus, who, in his *Histories* II. 123, may mean Pythagoras and Empedocles or the Pythagoreans and the Orphics generally or all of them.
- ¹² See [27] (pp. 3–4); [28] (p. 30). See also Aristotle, *DA* I.2, 403a25–29.
- ¹³ See [29] (p. 182); [30] (pp. 13–14). See also [21] (p. 945).
- ¹⁴ See [17] (p.8); [30] (p.14); [20] (pp. 37–38); [32].
- ¹⁵ Cf. [17] (p. 6); [19] (pp. 637ff.); [33] (p. 22); [34] (p. 18).
- ¹⁶ McPherran [34] (p. 18) tries to offer a solution. He believes that we are supposed to think of human beings as a psycho-physical unity in which soul, for Socrates, seems to designate the ordering intelligence and animating principle of the entire person. The soul governs the body. According to his view, if we also take into account the Zalmoxian doctrine of immortality, then we are allowed to think that for Socrates, the soul could be “not only the whole of which the body is a part, but *also* a non-physical and potentially separable substance. . .” I cannot see how soul can be both, and I doubt that we can so easily associate the Zalmoxian doctrine of immortality, to the degree we can reconstruct it from Herodotus (*Historiae*, 4. 93–96), with the Platonic theory of the soul’s immortality.
- ¹⁷ Tuckey [35] (p. 18) seems to read in this way; see also Philip [36] and Bruell [37] p. 147, n.13. Hyland [38] (p. 41) believes that Socrates comes close to suggesting that a firm distinction between the body and the soul cannot even be consistently maintained; see also Coolidge [39] (p. 26), Hazebroucq [40] (p. 118), Schmid [41] (p. 17), Benardete [42] (p. 239), McPherran [34] (p. 18), Levine [43] (p. 67), Korobili and Stefou [44] (pp. 210–211), [45] (p. 66), who offer a specific interpretation of the “whole”.
- ¹⁸ The evidence for these assumptions lies in *Chrm.*157a5–b1 and 157c7–d1.
- ¹⁹ Hogan [19] (pp. 644–645). Another passage that supports the clear distinction between soul and body is *Chrm.*154d1–e7. In this passage, the *prosōpon* seems to be identified with the somatic hylomorphic complex to which the soul is contrasted.
- ²⁰ Hogan [19] (p. 639). Cf. Hyland [38] (p. 41). Coolidge [39] (p. 26) believes that what the soul is remains completely dark here.

- 21 Cf. Hazebroucq [40] (pp. 118–120). See also the review of Hazebroucq by Rowe [49] (p. 88).
- 22 Benardete [42] (p. 239) claims that the soul seems to be both the whole of which the body is a part and a part of what Socrates calls the entire human being.
- 23 The idea that the soul operates as a principle with regard to the whole man and to the whole body has been expressed by Steiner [50] (p. 34). However, Steiner believes that the whole which must be the object of health care is the soul.
- 24 See Gertz [51] (p. 86, especially n. 3); see also [51] (pp. 86ff.) for the reading of two distinct lines of argument rather than a single complex syllogism in this demonstration. Cf. Bett [52] (p.337), who also stresses that in *Phdr.* 245c7–8, self-motion appears to be an essential property of a self-moving thing.
- 25 Robinson [53] (pp. 325–326) believes that the argument in *Phaedrus* has much in common with the final argument for immortality in the *Phaedo*. In his opinion, the difference is that in the latter dialogue, the argument sprang from a metaphysic of Plato's own creation, whereas the *Phaedrus* argument is of a more empirical character and has its roots deep in the pre-Socratic tradition. Robinson notes that in the *Phaedo*, in defense of his own newborn metaphysic, Plato eliminated the elementary attribute of all living things, movement, and recognized only the priority of the static, homogeneous and unchanging entity whose immortality he set out to prove. When soul is seen in the *Phaedrus* as the source of motion, the appreciation of its true nature becomes possible. However, he stresses that the notion of movement does not appear “like a bolt from the blue in *Phaedrus*. It was there by implication in both *Phaedo* and *Republic* when the soul was seen as a principle of Life, or bound up with the Idea of Life” [53] (p. 326, and p. 330, n. 18).
- 26 For example, see *Sophist* 228c–d, *Timaeus* 43b–44c.
- 27 According to a noteworthy evaluation of Hermias' exegetical work on *Phaedrus*, what makes it different in quality from the interpretative approaches of modern scholars is “its relentlessness”, as well as his dedication, perseverance, endurance and thoroughness, since “every detail is put under the interpretive microscope and a significance that is consonant with his understanding of Platonism is discovered” (Baltzly; Share [54] p. 26; see also the whole introduction to their translation of Hermias).
- 28 Herm. In *Phdr.* 116. 7–12. On the contrary, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (268.29–31), Simplicius suggests that the soul is a principle (ἀρχή) of change and motion, and not only a principle but also a source (πηγή), but without being present in what is moved as in a substrate (ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ), for it is a separate actuality of the moving body.
- 29 “Hippocrates held the belief that *the body must be treated as a whole and not just a series of parts*, which is the underlying concept of the recently emerging *systems biology*” (Robson and Baek [56] p. 57). Cf. King [55] (p. 222, n. 18).
- 30 Galen, In *Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarii* III, vol. 15, 9.10–16; 11.11–13.3 (Kühn, Leipzig: 1821–1833; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1964–5).
- 31 Smith [58]; Lonie [59]; Langholf [60] (pp.12–36); Prioreshi and Babin [61]; King [55] (pp. 140–141).
- 32 Mansfeld [63] (pp. 341–342); Tsekourakis [57] (pp. 162–163); Gill [64]. Regarding the meaning “the whole soul” which Hermias seems to read in the passage (In *Phdr.* 245.5–6), I agree with the objections to this reading that are already expressed in scholarship. See Ferrari [65] (pp. 247–248, n. 17); Gill [64] (pp. 310–311, n. 25).
- 33 Ferrari [65] (p. 77). Gill ([64] p. 310, n. 24) takes Ferrari's reading to be a version of her proposal.

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