



## Chapter 7

# The Cosmos Animated by Its Anima

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### INTRODUCTION: A FLUID IDEA

The world soul played such a key role in the early twelfth century because it played a key role in Plato's *Timaeus*. The Chartrians and their contemporaries believed that if they were to validate the exalted status of their beloved philosopher, then this concept had to be retained in their overall worldview. It had to be interpreted to fit into their metaphysics, science, and theology. On the surface, the concept of the world soul seemed to serve as the perfect key to integration. The idea functioned to demonstrate the inherent, natural, and irrevocable sacredness of the cosmos. The problems that it created regarding Catholic orthodoxy were rooted in this implication as well. In truth, whether or not the world soul was held to be heterodox depended greatly on how one interpreted the concept, Plato, and the Neoplatonists.

Throughout the lifetime of the idea, the world soul was held to be the vivifying force within all things, the force which moves the heavens, the fountain from which all human souls are formed, fate, a metaphor for cosmic order, that which sustains the stars and planets, as nature, and as the Holy Spirit. One of the key questions regarding this concept involves the status of the world soul as either a created or divine force.

### THE WORLD SOUL AND THE LENS OF INTEGUMENT

The world soul was understood by the Chartrians to be an integument. In each of the interpretations offered by William and Thierry, the idea of the world soul serves to stand in place of concealed truth. If understood properly, it also leads to that truth. Integuments, we recall, are coverings or envelopes

