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"DEATHLESS IS INDESTRUCTIBLE, IF NOT WE NEED ANOTHER ARGUMENT": AN IMPLICIT ARGUMENT IN THE *PHAEDO*

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1

The final argument of the *Phaedo* ends with what J. R. Skemp has called a blatant begging of the question.[1] The beginning of the argument is reasonable enough, and can be summarized as:

1) Some things impart certain forms to anything they approach (snow imparts cold, fire heat, the number three oddness).
2) These carriers can never have the opposite quality of the form they impart (snow can never be hot, or fire cold, or three even; in other words, cold, heat, and oddness are essential properties of snow, fire and three).

Then Socrates adds two more steps:

3) Soul imparts life to whatever it enters.
4) Therefore souls can never have the opposite of life–death–and are immortal, deathless.

[1] J. R. Skemp, *The Theory of Motion in Plato's Later Dialogues*, Cambridge 1942, p. 8. Other commentators are sometimes a little more generous in their assessment, but they generally agree that the logic of the argument fails entirely. See Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said*, Chicago 1933, p. 180; A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, New York 1956[6], p. 206; R. Hackforth, *Plato's* Phaedo, New York 1955, p. 164; R. S. Bluck *Plato's* Phaedo, New York 1955; P. Friedländer, *Plato*, III, Princeton 1969, pp. 357–358; R. Burger, *The* Phaedo*: A Platonic Labyrinth*, New Haven 1984, pp. 180–182; D. Bostock, *Plato's* Phaedo, Oxford 1986, pp. 191–193; C. J. Rowe, *Plato*: Phaedo, Cambridge 1993, pp. 263–264; P. Ahrensdorf, *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy*, Albany 1995, pp. 183–184.

Step 3) is somewhat questionable since not everyone accepts the existence of souls, but even then the argument may succeed hypothetically, and prove that *if* there is such a thing as soul, it must be eternal. However, Socrates then points out that the soul's inability to die may not preclude it from perishing in some other way, so the soul will not be proven eternal unless it is shown to be not only deathless but also imperishable. Either they must agree that what cannot die must also be imperishable, or else they will need an additional argument to prove that the soul cannot perish in some other way (105e–106d). Accordingly when Cebes rejects the second disjunct in favor of the first, and replies that no further argument is necessary, we would expect him to explain why – given Socrates' reminder that the deathless is not necessarily imperishable – he thinks that it is so in this case. But instead he simply assumes in a subordinate clause what he is supposed to defend – "the deathless, which is eternal" – and concludes that no other argument is necessary (105d). Why Plato permits the undefended conclusion that the deathless is imperishable, after warning us that there is nothing self-evident about the inference, remains a mystery.[2]

After the argument Simmias says, "Because of the importance of the matters about which we spoke and because of my low regard for human weakness, I am forced still to have doubts about the things we said". Socrates replies, "Not only that, Simmias, but you should more clearly examine both those things which you rightly mentioned and the first hypotheses, even if they are convincing to you. And if you analyse them sufficiently, I think, you will be following the argument as far as it is possible for a person to follow it" (107a–b). I would like to explore the possibility that implicit in this argument and its anticlimactic ending, is a more subtle argument that Socrates' advice to Simmias invites us to pursue.

The allegory of the Cave illustrates Plato's belief that the further one goes in philosophy the more empty and ridiculous it will appear

[2] Cebes' inference was troublesome to ancient commentators as well. Strato asks, "Is it not rash to assume that if soul is insusceptible of death and in that sense immortal, it is also imperishable? In this sense of the word even a stone is immortal, but it does not follow that it is imperishable" (L. G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, ed. and trans., Vol. 2: Damascius, Amsterdam 1977, I, §§ 438.

to the general public, whose acclimatization to darkness blinds them to the light. That concern reappears in the *Phaedrus'* caveat about writing: "Once it is written down every account rolls around everywhere, both to those who understand it and to those for whom it isn't appropriate, and it doesn't know who it ought to speak to and who not" (275d–e). And in two famous passages from the letters: "I do not think the attempt to tell people of these matters a good thing, except in the case of some few who are capable of discovering the truth for themselves with a little guidance. In the case of the rest to do so would excite in some an unjustified contempt". "There is in general no doctrine more ridiculous in the eyes of the general public than this. ... That is the reason why I have never written anything about these things, and why there is not and will not be any written work of Plato's own. What are now called his are the work of a Socrates grown beautiful and new".[3] I believe that the reason the implicit argument is not made explicit or conspicuous is that it cannot be defended in the same way as the other arguments.

2

There would be no point in looking for a merely implicit explanation if a straightforward one were satisfactory, but Socrates' own examples show the unacceptability of the argument if taken at face value. In order to illustrate the conception of the soul as the vehicle by which life is present in bodies, he prefaces that description with examples taken from the visible world, like snow and fire.[4]

1) Whenever snow is present to a body it always brings cold, and fire always brings heat.
2) Whatever naturally bears a form can never admit the opposite of that form.
3) Therefore snow can never admit heat, nor fire cold.

[3] *Ep.* VII, 341e and II, 314a–c. Even if the letters are not authentic these passages, at least, hit the mark.

[4] *Phd.* 103d–e. For the sake of simplicity I leave the examples of three/odd and fever/sickness aside here. I have dealt with them extensively in *Plato's* Phaedo: *An Interpretation* (Toronto 1982), and including it here would make no difference to our conclusions.

4) In the same way, soul bears the form of life and cannot admit death.

Snow is incompatible with heat, and fire with cold, in exactly the same sense that soul is incompatible with death. In the case of the visible examples, however, we can see that they are not eternal – snow melts and fires are extinguished – even though the forms they represent, hot and cold, are just as eternal as the form of life. On that model it seems to follow that souls can perish just as easily as snow and fire do, so how can the imperishability of the soul be demonstrated by assimilating the soul to these observably perishable models? Since the non-hot (snow) and the non-cool (fire) are not indestructible, is there any reason to believe that the non-dead (soul) is any different? Cebes thinks there is, but if we describe the parallels more precisely it is hard to see *how* it can be different.[5]

Cebes does not seem to notice that "deathless" here only has the narrow technical meaning of "not admitting death while in existence". In colloquial speech we use "deathless" as synonymous with "eternal" or "imperishable", and that is how Cebes seems to interpret it here despite Socrates' prompting. But in precisely the same sense that soul is called deathless, we can say that fire is inextinguishable because nothing can be both fire and extinguished, and snow is unmeltable because nothing can be both snow and melted.[6]

[5] One difference is that soul is a necessary and sufficient condition for life, whereas all the other examples are sufficient but not necessary conditions for the forms they bear. Thus "alive" and "animate" have identical extensions, whereas "cold" is broader than "snowy" and "hot" is broader than "fiery". But this makes no difference to the argument since the argument depends on sufficient conditions and not necessary ones.

[6] The word "death" conceals a distinction that is explicit in the other cases. "Death" refers both to the form and to the condition that the soul would be in if it participated in it: if the soul participated in the form of death its condition would be death. In the case of fire and snow, however, there are distinct words for the form and the condition: heat and melted (τηκτός), cold and extinguished (ἀπεσβέννυτο). When snow participates in the form of heat its condition is not hot but melted, and when fire participates in cold its condition is not necessarily cold but extinguished. If we substitute "unmeltable" for snow's property of "not admitting heat", and "inextinguishable" for fire's property of "not admitting cold", the full force

Moreover in colloquial usage "inextinguishable fire" and "unmeltable snow" sound just as indestructible as "deathless soul",[7] but because these things are visible we can see that the inference does not follow. In the strict terminology of the argument, snow is unmeltable only in the narrow sense that when it stops being cold it stops being snow; strictly speaking what is melts is not the snow but the underlying water when it ceases to be crystalized and becomes liquid. The water continues to exist but stops participating in the forms of snow and cold; the snow itself, however, ceases to exist and so is not indestructible. Similarly, fire is inextinguishable only because when it cools it is no longer fire; what is extinguished is not the fire but the fuel, which ceases to be aflame. The fuel still exists but no longer participates in fieriness and heat; the fire itself, however, no longer exists and is not indestructible. On this model soul is deathless because it cannot exist and be dead; what dies is the body, which ceases to be animate. The body still exists but without partaking of animation and life. We cannot point to something and say it is snow but melted or fire but extinguished, any more than we can (metaphorically) point to something and say it is soul but dead; we can only say that it used to be snow or a fire. Since snow and fire nevertheless cease to exist, the argument gives us no reason to deny that the soul can cease to exist as well, even though it is deathless.

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of the parallelism becomes evident: in exactly the same sense that soul is deathless, fire is inextinguishable and snow is unmeltable.

[7] This answers Bluck's suggestion that soul is on a different footing from the other bearers because it essentially cannot die and the perishing of something alive always entails the negation of its life, i.e. its death (*Plato's* Phaedo, New York 1955, p. 191–194). Damascius seems to have had something similar in mind when he replied to Strato that "the soul is not insusceptible of death in the way a stone is; ... for soul never appears without life" (Westerinck, I, § 446; see above, n. 1). On Bluck's reasoning snow (and the others) would turn out to be imperishable as well: if snow perished, its coldness would perish, but the perishing of coldness is heat, so since snow cannot admit heat it cannot perish. In Aristotelian terms, the problem for Bluck is that the perishing of the essential attribute (life, cold) together with the substrate (soul, snow) does not result in its contrary, precisely because no substrate then exists to support it. Although the perishing of soul would result in the departure of life, this could not be called "death" because there would be nothing of which "dead" could be predicated.

Socrates points out the problem explicitly:

> "But, someone might say, what prevents the odd (while not becoming even when the even approaches, as we agreed) from being destroyed and becoming replaced by the even? To someone who says this we could not maintain that it is not destroyed, for the uneven is not imperishable. Whereas if we agreed that it is imperishable we could easily maintain that when the even approaches, the odd and the number three go away [instead of being destroyed]. And we could maintain the same thing about fire and heat and all the others... And so now in the case of the deathless as well, if we agree that it is *also* imperishable, then the soul, *in addition* to being deathless, will also be imperishable. If not, we need another argument." (*Phd.* 106b–d, emphasis added)

All the examples are put on the same level. Something that is by nature uneven, uncoolable, or deathless is not necessarily imperishable, and on the basis of the present argument we will not be able to refute anyone who suspects that such things may be destroyed, "for the uneven [etc.] is not [*ipso facto*] imperishable." We will be able to satisfy only someone who is willing to agree without proof that the uneven, uncoolable, or deathless is *also* imperishable *in addition to* being uneven, uncoolable, or deathless. In other words, the argument that proves the soul to be deathless does not thereby prove it to be imperishable, and we must hope that our partner concedes this further inference to us without proof, which in fact Cebes does. The argument does not, then, prove that the soul is eternal.

The Affinity argument was an argument from analogy: since the soul resembles the divine in fundamental ways it is plausible to infer that it resembles the divine also with respect to eternality. The final argument, on the other hand, is an argument *against* analogy: the soul resembles snow and fire in fundamental ways, and snow and fire perish, but soul does not perish anyway.

3

Socrates had said that if Cebes did not accept that the deathless was also imperishable they would need an additional argument (106d). Are there any indications of what that other argument might be?

The argument as a whole is prefaced by a long introduction that sets the terms of reference for the argument itself. For example, Socrates distinguishes two levels of causality: "the real cause" and "that without which the cause could never be a cause" (99b). The real cause is the good – everything that we do is for the sake of a perceived good. But certain material conditions have to be brought about in order to achieve that end, bodily exertions for example, like the movement of our bones and sinews (98c–99a). This sets the stage for the final argument's distinction between the formal causes – forms like life, hot, and cold – and the physical entities like soul, fire, and snow that make possible the efficacy of the formal causes.

But the final argument never brings in the causality of the "real cause", the good, only that of other forms. In one way that is not surprising, because Socrates introduced the theory of forms as part of a secondary method (*deuteros plous*) to compensate for his inability to discern the causality of the good. He was afraid that if he attempted to look at the good itself he would become blinded like someone who looks at the sun in eclipse directly, rather than in reflections, so he decided to look at the truth of things as reflected in words instead. This is his method of hypothesis, which now takes as its working hypothesis the theory of forms (99d–100b). The surprising thing is that one of the first forms that Socrates hypothesizes is the form of the good: "I hypothesize the existence of something beautiful, itself by itself, and a good and a big, and all the others" (100b). It seems odd to reintroduce at the beginning the very thing that the method was designed to enable us to postpone. Socrates does at least continue to avoid it. He goes on to give illustrations of the first and last of the three examples, the beautiful (100d–e) and the big (100e–101b), but about the middle example, the good, he says nothing. Like the sun, the good too seems to be present here only in eclipse.

The reason is that since the method of hypothesis is meant to eventually enable us to see the good, the good is always in a sense implicit. The method consists of downward and upward stages that correspond closely to the *Republic's* description of *dianoia* and dialectic,[8] so the *Phaedo's* image of resorting to reflections because of our inability to look at the sun directly, seems naturally enough to

[8] Compare *Phd.* 100a and 101d with *Resp.* 510b–511b.

imply that it is a means of accustoming ourselves to the brightness so eventually we will be able to see the sun itself (the good), like the similar reflections in the *Republic* (516b). Socrates introduced the method of hypothesis by saying, "Since I turned out to be able neither to discover [the good] myself nor learn it from another, I used a *deuteros plous* on my search for the cause" (99c8–d1). Since *deuteros plous* or "second sailing" refers to the use of oars in the absence of wind, the metaphor suggests that the destination is the same – the true causality of the good – and only the means of reaching it has changed. The direct way would have been "to discover it myself or learn it from another"; the secondary way is to approach it gradually by progressively more adequate hypotheses. I want to suggest that the approach to the good is what lies behind the final argument like an eclipse.

In the *Republic* the students are pushed to higher, more comprehensive hypotheses by the curriculum set by their educators. Each new noetic study "destroys the hypotheses" of its predecessor, that is, makes them no longer merely hypothetical, by deducing them from something more comprehensive.[9] Thus the students progress from arithmetic to plane geometry, to solid geometry, and to astronomy and harmony (522b–531c). In the *Phaedo* there are no educators or curriculum, so the impetus to go higher comes from challenges to our hypothesis. At that point we are told to seek out a higher hypothesis after examining the consequences of our hypothesis to see whether they "are consonant or dissonant"[10] Thus the first causal hypothesis that Socrates considered, physical causality, is dismissed partly because of internal "dissonances": for example it gave opposite explanations of the same phenomena, such as that according to addition the cause of 1 becoming 2 is combination, while according to division the cause is the opposite, separation (97a–b). And it is dismissed also because it is dissonant with our belief that a true cause should explain *why* something happens, not only how it happens, for example Socrates' being in jail (98e–99b).

[9] *Resp.* 533c, cf. 510b–511b.

[10] *Phd.* 101d. The text adds "... with each other", but that seems to be short for "with all things that we consider true"; it refers to dissonances not only with each other but also with our other beliefs. See R. Robinson *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, Oxford 1953, p. 131 and 29 f.

Socrates accordingly dismisses the physicalist hypothesis and replaces it with the hypothesis that the causes of things are forms. This is the first upward move in the method of hypothesis, the attempt to get to the true cause, the good, in an indirect way. He has rejected the hypothesis of the materialists and replaced it with the higher hypothesis of the forms, which is "safe" from the limitations of its predecessor.[11] But the theory of forms is dissonant in its own way: whereas the materialist theory was at least sophisticated and informative, explanations like "things are beautiful because of beauty" are unsatisfyingly simple, artless, foolish, and ignorant.[12] Socrates accordingly replaces this second hypothesis with a higher one that comprehends both the sophisticated materialist hypothesis and the formalist one.[13] He says, "Tell me again from the beginning, and do not answer me as I asked before but imitate me. I am saying that, from what we have now been saying, I see a safety beyond the first answer I mentioned ... not safe and ignorant ... but [safe and] subtle" (105b). The new model introduces the "bearers" of forms, so that it still makes use of the theory of forms but now brings it together with the kind of natural causes spoken of earlier.

The hypothetical ascent through these three stages seems to be the structural principle on which the dialogue as a whole is based. The first argument inferred immortality from the conception of the soul as a merely physical principle. Next the argument from recollection both described and represented a transition from the physical world to the world of forms, and the third argument drew as strong an opposition as possible between forms and material things, just like the "safe" version of the theory of forms in the present argument. The final argument, after recapitulating these steps in its own way, restores the importance of the physical realm as furnishing the means by which the intelligible can function causally – physical causality is the necessary condition for formal causality, "that without which the cause cannot be a cause".

[11] *Phd.* 100d–101d. Also see A. Nehamas, *Prediction and Forms of Opposites in the* Phaedo, in: *Review of Metaphysics*, 26, 1973, pp. 461–491, and Ch. Stough, *Forms and Explanations in the* Phaedo, in: *Phronesis*, 21, 1976, pp. 1–30.

[12] The materialist explanations are called σοφάς at 100c; the formal explanations are called ἁπλῶς, ἀτέχνως, and εὐήθως at 100d, and ἀμαθῆ at 105c.

[13] A similar reconciliation between the materialists and "the friends of the forms" is effected in the *Sophist* by the Eleatic stranger (249c–d).

The new model runs into its own dissonance, we saw, because the analogies with snow and fire that show the soul to be deathless also suggest that it may be perishable. It is deathless only in the sense that snow is unheatable and fire uncoolable, but snow and fire perish nevertheless. Socrates pointed out that imperishability does not necessarily follow from being deathless, and that the conclusion can be established only if we agree to take this further step without proof. In that case the imperishability of the soul can not be derived from the present hypothesis alone, and the hypothesis proves inadequate.

At that point we would expect a still higher hypothesis to be introduced, which is just what Socrates' suggestion of the need for another argument seems to propose, but Cebes ends the discussion by conceding what still needs to be demonstrated. In view of the need to go beyond the present hypothesis, Socrates' remark to Simmias less than a page later takes on added weight and significance: "Our first hypotheses, even if they are convincing to you, must nevertheless be examined more clearly. And if you analyze them sufficiently, I think, you will be following the argument as far as it is possible for a person to pursue it" (107b). The first hypotheses of the present argument were at 100b: "I hypothesize the existence of something beautiful, itself by itself, and a good and a big". We saw that Socrates made some use of the first and third of these, but not the middle one, the good.

Socrates has mentioned three levels of causality: the good (the true cause), physical causes (without which the true cause could not be a cause), and the forms (less dazzling reflections of the good). The first three hypotheses posited the natural causes, the forms, and the combination of the two. It would seem that any further hypothesis would have to bring in the good, which was not only one of the first hypotheses but is the goal that the method of hypothesis has been aiming at all along.

4

If a fourth hypothesis is implicit in the *Phaedo*, we would expect it to be indicated in the exchange between Cebes and Socrates about whether to agree that the soul is not only deathless but also imperishable, or whether to look for an additional argument. Cebes' reply was, "Hardly anything else would not admit destruction if the deathless, which always is, admitted destruction." Socrates responds, "The god, I believe, and the form of life itself, and anything else that may be deathless, everyone would agree that they never perish" (106d).

Why does Cebes not confine his answer to what he agrees to in the subordinate clause – that "the deathless always is", from which it follows that if the soul is deathless it is also imperishable? What is the relevance of adding that hardly anything else would resist destruction if the soul were destroyed? The first argument, from reciprocity in nature, concluded that unless the soul were immortal, eventually everything else would die out (72c–e). Later, when Simmias and Cebes objected that the recollection argument does not prove immortality, Socrates pointed out that the objections could be met by using the first argument to complete the recollection argument (77c). In a similar way Cebes' present reference to the fact that unless the deathless were also imperishable virtually everything else would perish, seems to be making use of the first argument in order to complete the final one. Plato himself links the first and last argument in at least two ways, first by developing them both with reference to Anaxagoras (72c and 97c), and then by having an anonymous speaker pose a question that requires Socrates to explain how the conceptual schemes of the two arguments are related to each other (103a).

If the final argument ultimately falls back on the first argument, then it is subject to the same limitations as the first argument, in particular that it assumes that entropy is not taking place.[14] It argues that if the soul died with the person, eventually no souls would remain and the world would be dead. But it does not prove that that is

[14] It also fails to address the possibility that souls may be newly created every time a living being comes into existence — but that is more of a Christian view than a Greek one.

not happening; it has no answer for anyone who believes it possible that the world is gradually running out of soul or energy too slowly for us to discern. It cannot answer the entropy objection because one of its premises is that every movement in one direction must be balanced by a counter-movement in the opposite direction, so the entropy thesis, which literally means that movement occurs solely in "one direction" (*hen tropos*) can only be dismissed by begging the question. Consequently if the final argument has to fall back onto the first argument, it is doomed. For the previous arguments to be vindicated the final argument must validate the first one, not the other way around.

If Cebes' answer contains nothing to acquit him of begging the question, what about Socrates' response? He said, "The god, I believe, and the form of life itself, and anything else that may be deathless, everyone would agree that they never perish." In what way are the god and the form of life imperishable? If Socrates means that they are imperishable because they are deathless then he is simply following Cebes in begging the question. Both are deathless and both are imperishable, but they are not imperishable *because* they are deathless. Deathlessness and imperishability coincide in their case only for exceptional reasons: in the case of the gods "deathless" is intended as a synonym for "eternal",[15] and the form of life is eternal not because it is deathless but because all forms are eternal by nature.[16] Both examples, however, have other implications that are worth pursuing. If we accept Socrates' claim that the form of life is eternal, then, since forms are causes, and their causality requires a physical agency like fire or snow, the agent of the form of life must also be eternal, namely soul. Socrates' reference to the form of life is a reminder that unless the soul is immortal, life cannot be an eternal form. That would still leave the final argument subject to the limitations of the first argument, however, because if

[15] Cf. A. E. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 206: "the imperishability of the soul is accepted as a consequence of the standing conviction of all Greek religion that τὸ ἀθάνατον = τὸ θεῖον = τὸ ἄφθαρτον" (the deathless = the divine = the imperishable).

[16] David White suggests that it is the other forms to which Socrates refers when he adds, "and anything else that may be deathless" (*Myth and Metaphysics in Plato's* Phaedo, Selinsgrove 1989, p. 214).

entropy is occurring then the form of life may not be an eternal cause. Is there any way to ground the hypothesis that entropy is not occurring, in a higher hypothesis, so that it does not need to beg the question? Let us take a closer look at Socrates' other example, the imperishability of the god.

This is not the first time in the dialogue that the concept of god has been linked with that of the continuity of life. At the beginning of the conversation Socrates defended the paradox that suicide is wrong even though death is better for the soul than life. Death is superior to life because only then can the soul fulfill its vocation of beholding truth unobstructed by the body (64c–66d), but suicide is not permitted because we are servants of the gods and ought not to deprive them of our service (62b–63c). But Cebes points out that if we are servants of the gods then it makes no sense to praise death over life, since gods are the best possible masters and we would not want to leave the service of good masters (62d–e). Simmias agrees that the gods are good, and reminds Socrates that this is what he believes as well (63a), and Socrates concurs, adding only that after death we will be subject to gods who are no less good than the ones here (63b, 80d). If life is in service to the gods, and gods are personifications of goodness, as all three speakers agree, then life is in the service of the good. If the service of our life is necessary to the causality of the good, then the goodness of the world will be eternal only if life is eternal, and life will be eternal only if soul is eternal. Socrates' later reply to Cebes, that the imperishability of deathless soul is connected with the imperishability of life and the god, points in this direction. The form of life is eternal because the god or good is eternal, and so the agent of life, soul, must be eternal. In this way the method of hypothesis provides the final link in the chain of the *deuteros plous*, and arrives at last at the principle of the good.

The final argument began by speaking of the good as the only true cause, and by hypothesizing its existence along with the beautiful and the big. It ended with Socrates' remark to Simmias that they need to reconsider the initial hypotheses and pursue them further. The argument's ascent through hypotheses, and Socrates' suggestion that an additional argument may be necessary, point to the need eventually to answer the question in terms of the true cause, the good. The reference to the eternality of the god and the form of life recall how such an answer was already adumbrated in the dialogue.

When Plato comes to write the *Timaeus* he offers a more explicit version of that argument, although still couched in mythological terms. The creator god, who is good, creates the universe based on an eternal model. Making it as much like himself as possible and therefore good, he makes it rational, and since reason cannot exist apart from soul he makes it ensouled, alive (29a–30b). In other words the causality of the good requires the eternal presence of soul and life. Soul then must be imperishable.[17]

5

If that is what the argument is meant to imply, why is it so elusive – why allow the question to be begged if a plausible demonstration is available? Cebes could have replied that deathless does not imply imperishable since the soul might simply disappear, and Socrates could have answered in the way that was suggested above. There are three reasons why Plato may have preferred not to pursue that strategy.

First, the implicit teleological argument cannot possibly be formulated with the kind of rigor that the other arguments had. The proof would run: The universe is good, life is in the service of the good, therefore life is necessary to the universe and soul must be eternal. Plato's defence of the major premise required almost the whole length of the *Timaeus*,[18] and could hardly have been accom-

[17] David Gallop also connects the god here both with Socrates' search for the true cause (97b–99c) and with the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, although he does not take it to be an image of the form of the good that Socrates mentions at 100b, and does not regard it as providing the basis for the additional argument to prove imperishability. See *Plato*: Phaedo, Oxford 1975, pp. 220–21. David White also notes the relationship between the god and the earlier true cause, but he does not take them to be the same: "what was good 'for all combined' would depend on that capacity of mind missing from the fragmented sense of divine causality at Socrates' disposal" (*op. cit.*, p. 213).

[18] David Sedley argues that the myth at the end of the *Phaedo* anticipates the teleological project of the *Timaeus*: *Teleology and Myth in the* Phaedo, in: *Proceedings of the Boston Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 5, 1989, pp. 359–383. Cf. D. Frede, *Platons* Phaidon, Darmstadt 1999, pp. 156–157.

plished here. It would be especially difficult to prove the goodness of the world to an audience that is lamenting the unjust execution of the man who was "the best of all we have known, and also the wisest and most just" (118a). Instead Plato resorts to a strategy described by R. Hackforth, one of his most cautious interpreters: there are "many instances in the dialogues in which Plato allows a fallacy to be committed by one of his characters – deliberately allows it... Why does he do this? I think we must answer, because he believed [something] ... yet he could not prove it."[19]

Second, Plato always makes us work to grasp his meaning. Just as Socratic method does not aim to hand over to the interlocutor Socrates' own solutions but to provoke him into seeing the truth with his own "eyes", Plato too makes his audience work to discover for ourselves the insight behind the words. That is why Socrates frequently warns his audience of the inadequacy of what he is saying. He gives such a warning in the middle of the dialogue:

> "I am in danger of behaving at present not as a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, but, like those who are completely uncultivated, as a lover of victory. For they, too, when they dispute about something, do not consider how things stand with the matters the discussion is about, but are eager that what they set forth seems true to those who are present. And I seem to myself to differ from them only thus far: I am not eager that what I say seem true to those who are present, except as a by-product, but that to me myself it seem so as far as possible." (91a–b)

This brings us to the third point. Socrates' distinction is puzzling. How can he both not care about the truth of the matter and also want it to seem as true as possible to himself? The sense in which he wants to make it seem true must be different from the sense in which it would seem true to a philosopher. When Simmias and Cebes were not satisfied with the first two arguments, Socrates accused them of

> "fearing like children that the wind, in truth, blows apart the soul that is leaving the body, and scatters it around, especially when one dies not in a calm but in a gale."

[19] R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure*, New York 1945, p. 16, n. 1.

> And Cebes, laughing, said, "Try to persuade us out of our fears – rather, not as though *we* were afraid, but perhaps there even is a child in us who fears these very things..."
>
> "But it is necessary", said Socrates, "to sing incantations to him every day until you enchant it away..." "And you should spare neither money nor effort in your quest for such an enchanter, as there is nothing on which you could more suitably spend money." (77d–78a)

The reason it is so important, we learn later, is that

> "If death were a deliverance from everything, it would be a godsend to the evil when they die, to be delivered at once from the body and their evil, together with the soul. But now that it is evidently immortal, there would be no other escape or salvation from evils for it than to become as good and wise as possible." (107c–d)

There are two kinds of persuasion that Socrates aims at in the *Phaedo*. One to convince the philosopher in us, and another to convince the child in us – in other words, one aimed at reason, the other at our emotions. Most people are guided by their emotions, whether appetitive or spirited, so rational arguments alone will not be sufficient.[20] As Socrates points out in the *Phaedrus*, when we wish to persuade people of something we have to match the type of speech we use with the type of person we wish to persuade (271b). If even the two most philosophically sophisticated members of Socrates' audience, Simmias and Cebes, need emotional reassurance, how much more will it be true of the other members of the audience, most of whom are not philosophers. Throughout the *Phaedo* Socrates supplements the logic of the arguments with a mythological overlay that acts as an incantation to our emotional nature, although only the concluding myth is explicitly called an incantation (114d). Every argument is couched in the emotion-laden language of Homeric mythology, with constant references to the gods and to the soul's dwelling in Hades after death. But the reasoning within the arguments suggests that "the gods" are a metaphor for the form of the good, and that "Hades" is a metaphor for the invisible realm of

[20] *Phd.* 68b–69a. Cf. *Tim.* 71a–d.

intelligible forms.[21] Every argument operates at two levels, an imaginative level that provides reassurance to our emotional nature but which is logically invalid, and an abstract level that may be valid but does not solace our emotions with comforting images. The invalidity of the surface of the arguments is what goads the more philosophical natures into looking more deeply. The above quotation, in which Socrates compares himself to the eristics, concludes by telling his audience to "have little regard for Socrates and much more for the truth. If I seem to you to say something true, agree with it; and if not, oppose it with every argument, taking care that, through eagerness, I don't deceive you together with myself, and go away like a bee leaving its sting behind" (91b–c).

The stated conclusion of the reciprocity argument, that our individual souls exist after death in Hades, provides an emotionally comforting image of personal immortality, but the logic of the argument does not lead to that conclusion but to a conception of the soul's eternality more like the conservation of energy.[22] To think of ourselves as participating in immortality through the eternality of natural processes may be enough for our rational nature, but it is not likely to console our emotional nature. Similarly, the logic of the recollection argument does not establish its overt conclusion that our soul had to pre-exist in Hades and "see" the forms in order to have a concept of absolutes like equality, but it makes a reasonable case that our soul can know absolutes because it shares their eternal nature.[23] The more valid conclusion, that our soul has an impersonal eternality like that of the forms, will not have the same emotionally consoling effect as the conclusion that our souls dwell in Hades. In the same way, the logic of the final argument, the essential-attribute argument, begs the question when it claims that because each individual soul is deathless it is imperishable, but it leads more validly to the conclusion that soul in general must always exist because it is better that life be eternal. Since that conclusion applies to undifferentiated rather than individual souls, however, it will not satisfy our emotional need to believe in the immortality of our personality, the way the surface of the argument does.

[21] *Phd.* 80d, 81c. The etymology of "Hades" is "unseen".

[22] Cf. R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Phaedo of Plato*, London 1894², p. 119.

[23] That is how Simmias later recalls it: "Our soul exists even before it comes into the body just as its essence is the kind we designate as 'that which is'" (92d).

One of the aims of the *Phaedo* is to offer comfort to those who fear that death may be absolute (77d–78a), and who are therefore more vulnerable to the temptations of immorality (107c–d). For that component of Socrates' and Plato's audiences there is value in allowing the conclusion of the final argument to rest on an ultimately fallacious but apparently rigorous connection, while pointing toward an ultimately plausible but elusive connection for those who are not satisfied as easily as Cebes.