

PHAEDO

PLATO

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. FRAME STORY

ECHECRATES: Were you with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, on the day when he drank the poison in prison, or did you hear about it from someone else?¹ 57

PHAEDO: I was there myself, Echeocrates.

ECHECRATES: Then what did he say before his death, and how did he die? I would like to hear, for nowadays none of the Phliasians go to Athens at all, and no stranger has come from there for a long time, who could tell us anything definite about this matter, except that he drank poison and died, so we could learn no further details. b

PHAEDO: Did you not even hear about the trial and how it was conducted?

ECHECRATES: Yes, someone told us about that, and we were surprised that he was put to death a long time after it was over. Now why was that, Phaedo? 58

PHAEDO: It was a matter of chance, Echeocrates. It happened that the stern of the ship which the Athenians send to Delos was crowned on the day before the trial.

ECHECRATES: What ship is this?

¹ This dialogue takes place very shortly after Socrates' execution, during the time of the Peloponnesian wars (between Athens and Sparta). Ellis, the town from which Phaedo comes was allied with the Spartans, as was Philous the town in which the frame story takes place. (It is located midway between Athens and Ellis. This is why, as Echeocrates goes on to say, it was difficult for the Phliasians to get information about recent events in Athens, such as Socrates' trial and execution. Philous was a center of Pythagorean philosophy, and Echeocrates was a Pythagorean. Phaedo seems to have stopped off at Philous on his way from Athens back to Ellis (where he would later found a school). At the time of the dialogue he would have been in his late teens or early twenties, and there is reason to think that he'd been brought to Athens as a prisoner of war and a slave (perhaps specifically a sex-slave) and that his freedom was purchased at Socrates' request by one of his friends (perhaps by Crito or Cebes, both of whom appear in this dialogue).

PHAEDO: This is the ship in which, according to the Athenians, Theseus once went to Crete with the fourteen youths and maidens—he saved all of them and himself. The Athenians had made a vow to Apollo, as the story goes, that if they were saved they would send a mission every year to Delos. And ever since they send it every year in honor of the god. Now it is their law that after the mission begins the city must be pure and no one may be publicly executed until the ship has gone to Delos and back; and sometimes, when contrary winds detain it, this takes a long time. The beginning of the mission is when the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship; and this took place, as I said, on the day before the trial. That’s why Socrates spent a long time in prison between his trial and his death. b c

ECHECRATES: What took place at his death, Phaedo? What was said and done? And which of his friends were with him? Or did the authorities forbid them to be present, so that he died without his friends? d

PHAEDO: Not at all. Some were there, in fact, a good many.

ECHECRATES: Be so good as to tell us as exactly as you can about all these things, if you’re not too busy.

PHAEDO: I’m not busy and I’ll try to tell you. It is always my greatest pleasure to be reminded of Socrates, whether by speaking of him myself or by listening to someone else.

ECHECRATES: Well, Phaedo, you will have hearers who feel as you do; so try to tell us everything as accurately as you can. e

B. THE SCENE AND THE CHARACTERS

PHAEDO: For my part, I had strange feelings when I was there. For I was not filled with pity as I might naturally be when present at the death of a friend; since he seemed to me to be happy, both in his manner and his words, he was meeting death so fearlessly and nobly. And so I thought that even in going to Hades he was not going without the protection of the gods, and that when he arrived there all would be well with him, if it ever was well with anyone. And for this reason I was not at all filled with pity, as might seem natural when I was present at a scene of mourning; nor on the other hand did I feel pleasure because we were occupied with philosophy, as was our custom—and our talk was of philosophy;—but a very strange feeling came over me, an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and of pain together, when I thought that Socrates was about to die. And all of us who were there were in the same condition, sometimes laughing and sometimes weeping; especially one of us, Apollodorus; you know him and his character.² b 59

² Apollodorus was a regular companion of Socrates in the several years prior to the latter’s death. The son of a wealthy family, he had run a successful business, which he gave up to follow Socrates around. He is elsewhere described as effeminately flamboyant and nicknamed “maniac” (*Symposium* 173d).

ECHECRATES: To be sure I do.

PHAEDO: He was quite unrestrained, and I was much agitated myself, as were the others.

ECHECRATES: Who were they, Phaedo?

PHAEDO: Of native Athenians there was this Apollodorus, and Critobulus and his father, and Hermogenes and Epiganes and Aeschines and Antisthenes; and Ctesippus the Paeonian was there too, and Menexenus and some other Athenians. But Plato, I think, was ill.³

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ECHECRATES: Were any foreigners there?

PHAEDO: Yes, Simmias of Thebes and Cebes and Phaedonides, and from Megara Euclides and Terpsion.⁴

ECHECRATES: What? Were Aristippus and Cleombrotus there?

PHAEDO: No. They were said to be in Aegina.

Echecrates: Was anyone else there?

PHAEDO: I think that's about all.

ECHECRATES: Well then, what was the conversation?

PHAEDO: I will try to tell you everything from the beginning. On the previous days I and the others had always been in the habit of visiting Socrates. We used to meet at daybreak in the court where the trial took place, for it was near the prison; and every day we would wait about, talking with each other, until the prison was opened, for it was not opened early; and when it was opened, we went in to Socrates and spent most of the day with him. On that day we came together earlier; for the day before, when we left the prison in

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³ That Plato makes a point to mention his own absence may be a way of indicating that, though this dialogue (unlike many others) takes place at an actual event that occurred within Plato's lifetime, it is not intended to reflect the event accurately. The use of a frame story (a technique employed in several other dialogues) may serve a similar purpose.

Critobulus was the son of Crito (a friend of Socrates' from his own generation). He is one of the people who, in the *Apology* (33a), offers to contribute money to pay a fine for Socrates. Hermogenes (like the money-wasting, sophist-hiring Callias) was a son of the extremely wealthy Hermogenes, though he was not the principle heir and would not have inherited very much. Like the others he was an associate of Socrates'. Antisthenes was a regular companion of Socrates', who went on to become a minor philosopher in his own right and an author of Socratic dialogues. None of his work survives. Little is known also about Aeschines except that he was an associate of Socrates' and was poor. Less is known about Epiganes and Ctesippus, though we can infer from their presence that they were part of Socrates' circle. Little is known also about this Menexenus, though he appears in other dialogues (one of which is named after him) and there is some circumstantial evidence that he may have been related to Socrates.

⁴ Simmias and Cebes were young men from Thebes and seemingly pythagoreans, both seem to have been friends of Socrates and went on to write Socratic dialogues, none of which survive. In Plato's *Crito* (45b), they are listed among several people who came to Athens with money to help Socrates escape from prison. (Socrates declines to escape.) Euclides started a school of philosophy in Megara, and was apparently a frequent visitor to Athens and friend of Socrates. Nothing of interest is known about Terpsion and Phaedonides.

the evening we heard that the ship had arrived from Delos. So we agreed to come to the usual place as early in the morning as possible. And we came, and the jailer who usually answered the door came out and told us to wait and not go in until he told us. “For,” he said, “the eleven are releasing Socrates from his fetters and giving directions how he is to die today.”⁵ So after a little delay he came and told us to go in. We went in then and found Socrates just released from his fetters and Xanthippe—you know her—with his little son in her arms, sitting beside him.⁶ Now when Xanthippe saw us, she cried out and said the kind of thing that women always do say: “Oh Socrates, this is the last time now that your friends will speak to you or you to them.” And Socrates glanced at Crito and said, “Crito, somebody better take her home.” 60

And some of Crito’s people took her away wailing and beating her breast. But Socrates sat up on his couch and bent his leg and rubbed it with his hand, and while he was rubbing it, he said, “This thing that people call ‘pleasure’, what a strange thing it is! And how curiously it’s related to its opposite, ‘pain’. They will not both come to a man at the same time, and yet if he pursues the one and captures it he is almost always bound to catch the other also as if the two were connected to the same head. And I think,” he said, “if Aesop had thought of them, he would have made a fable telling how they were at war and a god wanted to reconcile them but couldn’t, so he joined their heads together, and that’s why, when one of them comes to anyone, the other follows after. This is just what seems to be going on with me: there was pain was in my leg on account of the fetter, and pleasure appears to have come following after.” b c

Here Cebes interrupted and said, “By Zeus, Socrates, I am glad you reminded me. Several others have asked about the poems you have composed, the verse-versions of Aesop’s stories and the hymn to Apollo, and Evenus asked me the day before yesterday why you, who never wrote any poetry before, composed these verses after you came to prison.⁷ Now, if you want me to be able to answer Evenus when he asks me again—and I know he will—tell me what to say.” d

“Then tell him the truth, Cebes,” he said, “that I composed these verses not because I wished to rival him or his poems (for I knew that would not be easy), but because I wanted to test the meaning of certain dreams, and to be conscientious in case this is the kind of music they kept ordering me to make. They went something like this: the same dream came to me often in my past life, sometimes in one guise and sometimes in another, but always saying the same thing: ‘Socrates,’ it said, ‘make music and practice it.’ And I used to think that it was urging and encouraging me to do what I was doing already and that just as people encourage runners by cheering, so the dream was encouraging me to do what I was doing, that is, to make music, because philosophy was the greatest kind of music and I was practicing it. e 61

“But now, after the trial and while the festival of the god delayed my execution, I thought, in case the repeated dream really meant to tell me to make this which is ordinarily called music, I ought to do so and not to disobey. For I thought it was safer not to go off before making sure that I had done what I ought, by obeying the dream and composing verses. So first I composed a hymn to the god whose festival it was. Then, b

⁵ In Athens, there were eleven magistrates elected each year who were in charge of the police, jails, and executions.

⁶ Xanthippe was Socrates’ wife. They had children quite late in Socrates’ life.

⁷ Evanus is the Sophist to Socrates tells us Callias plans to send his sons (20a-c). He was also a poet and a few fragments of poetry survive from him.

after addressing the god, I thought that a poet, if he is really to be a poet, must compose stories and not accounts; and since I was not a story writer, I took the stories of Aesop, which I had at hand and knew, and put the first one I came across into verse.

“So tell that to Evenus, Cebes, and bid him farewell, and tell him to follow after me as quickly as he can, if he’s sensible. It seems that I’m going today; for that’s the Athenians’ order.” c

And Simmias said, “Socrates, what advice this is for Evenus! I’ve met him often, and from what I’ve seen of him, I’m sure he won’t follow it at all, if he can help it.”

“Why not?” he said. “Isn’t Evenus a philosopher?”

“I think so,” said Simmias.

“Then Evenus will take my advice, and so will every man who engages worthily in this business. However, he probably will not take his own life, for they say that is not permitted.” And as he spoke he put his feet down on the ground and remained sitting in this way through the rest of the conversation. d

C. PHILOSOPHER’S DESIRE TO DIE (AND THE IMPROPRIETY OF SUICIDE)

Then Cebes asked him: “What do you mean by this, Socrates, that it is not permitted to take one’s life, but that the philosopher would desire to follow after someone dying?”

“How is this, Cebes? Haven’t you and Simmias, who are pupils of Philolaus, heard about such things?”⁸

“Nothing definite, Socrates.”

“I myself speak of them only from hearsay; but I have no objection to telling what I have heard. And indeed it is perhaps especially fitting, since I am going to the other world, for me to tell stories about the life there and to speculate about what we think it’s like; for what else could we do in the time between now and sunset?” e

“Why in the world do they say that it is not permitted to kill oneself, Socrates? I heard Philolaus, when he was living in our city, say the same thing you just said, and I have heard from others, too, that one must not do this; but I never heard anyone say anything definite about it.” 62

“You must take heart,” he said, “and maybe you’ll hear something. But perhaps it will seem strange to you that this is the only thing that is simple, and it never happens, as it does with other things, that it’s only for certain people at certain times that it is better to be dead than alive; and it may seem strange to you that it is not pious for these people to do what is good for themselves and they must wait for some other benefactor.”

And Cebes, said chuckling, “Zeus knows,” speaking in his own dialect.

“It does seem unreasonable, when put in this way,” said Socrates, “but perhaps there is some reason in it. Now the doctrine that is taught in the mysteries, that we men are in some sort of prison and must not set ourselves free or run away, seems to me to be weighty and not easy to understand.⁹ But, Cebes, I do believe that this point is sound: that the gods are our guardians and that we men are one of the possessions of the gods. Don’t you believe this?” b

⁸ Philolaus was a prominent Pythagorean, who settled in Thebes after the Pythagoreans were exiled from southern Italy in the middle of the Fifth Century.

⁹ In Greece at the time there were a number of “mystery cults”—sects which had secretive religious rituals. One sect, the Orphics, held (among other things) that the body was a prison in which the soul was incarcerated.

“Yes,” said Cebes, “I do.”

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“Well then,” he said, “if one of your possessions should kill itself when you had not indicated that you wanted it to die, would you be angry with it and punish it if you could?”

“Certainly,” he replied.

“Then perhaps from this point of view it is not unreasonable to say that a man must not kill himself until god sends some necessity upon him, such as has now come upon me.”

“That seems sensible,” said Cebes, “but what you said just now, Socrates, that philosophers ought to be ready and willing to die, that seems strange, if we were right just now in saying that god is our guardian and we are his possessions. For it isn’t reasonable that the wisest men should not be troubled when they leave the service in which the gods, who are the best overseers in the world, are watching over them. A wise man certainly wouldn’t think that when he is free he can take better care of himself than they do. A foolish man might perhaps think so. He might think, that he ought to run away from his master, and he would not realize that he must not run away from a good master, but ought to stay with him as long as possible; and so he might thoughtlessly run away; but a thoughtful man would wish to be always with one who is better than himself. And yet, Socrates, if we look at it in this way, the contrary of what we just said seems natural; for the wise person ought to be troubled at dying and the foolish to rejoice.”¹⁰

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When Socrates heard this I thought he was pleased by Cebes’ earnestness, and glancing at us, he said, “Cebes is always on the track of accounts and will not be easily convinced by whatever anyone says.”

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And Simmias said, “Well, Socrates, this time I think myself that Cebes is right. For why should really wise men run away from masters who are better than they and lightly separate themselves from them? And it strikes me that Cebes is aiming his account at you, because you are so ready to leave us and the gods, who are, as you yourself agree, good rulers.”

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“You have a right to say that,” he replied; “for I think you mean that I must defend myself against this accusation, as if we were in a law court.”

“Precisely,” said Simmias.

“Well, then,” he said, “I will try to make a more convincing defense than I did before the judges. For if I did not believe,” he said, “that I was going to other gods who are wise and good, and, moreover, to men who have died, better men than those here, I would be wrong not to resent dying. But as it is, you may rest assured that I expect to go to good men. I’m not totally confident in this, but if I’m confident of anything at all in such matters, it is that I am going to gods who are good masters. And therefore, so far as that is concerned, I not only do not resent dying, but I have great hopes that there is something in store for the dead, and, as we’ve long been told, something better for the good than for the wicked.”

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“Well,” said Simmias, “do you intend to go away, Socrates, and keep your opinion to yourself, or will you share it with us? It seems to me that this is a good which belongs in common to us also, and at the same time, if you convince us by what you say, that will serve as your defense.”

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“I will try,” he replied. “But first let us ask Crito there what he wants. He has

¹⁰ As in the readings from the Meno, word for “wisdom” here is “*phronēsis*”, rather than “*sophia*.”

apparently been trying to say something for a long time.”

“Only, Socrates,” said Crito, “that the man who is to administer the poison to you has been telling me for some time to warn you to talk as little as possible. He says people get warm when they talk and heat has a bad effect on the action of the poison; so sometimes he has to make those who talk too much drink twice or even three times.” e

And Socrates said: “Never mind him. Just let him do his part and prepare to give it twice or even, if necessary, three times.”

“I was pretty sure that was what you would say,” said Crito, “but he has been bothering me for a long time.”

II. ARGUMENT THAT THE PHILOSOPHER WANTS TO SEPARATE HIS SOUL FROM HIS BODY

A. INITIAL SKETCH OF THE ARGUMENTS

“Never mind him,” said Socrates. “I want to explain to you now, my judges, the reason why I think a man who has really spent his life in philosophy is naturally cheerful when he is about to die, and has strong hopes that, when he is dead, he will attain the greatest blessings in that other land. So I will try to tell you, Simmias, and Cebes, how this would be. 64

“Other people are probably not aware that those who pursue philosophy properly study nothing but dying and being dead. Now if this is true, it would be absurd to be eager for nothing but this all their lives, and then to be troubled by the arrival of the thing for which they’d been eagerly practicing all along.”

And Simmias laughed and said, “By Zeus, Socrates, I don’t feel much like laughing just now, but you made me laugh. For I think the majority, if they heard what you just said about the philosophers, would say you were quite right, and our countrymen would agree entirely with you that philosophers are nearly dead, and they would add that they know very well that the philosophers deserve it.” b

“And they would be speaking the truth, Simmias, except about their knowing it very well. For they do not know in what way the real philosophers are near death, nor in what way they deserve it, nor what kind of a death it is. Let us, then,” he said, “speak with one another, paying no further attention to them. Do we think there is such a thing as death?” c

“Certainly,” replied Simmias.

“We believe, don’t we, that death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that the state of being dead is the state in which the body is separated from the soul and exists alone by itself and the soul is separated from the body and exists alone by itself? Is death anything other than this?”

“No, it is this,” he said.

“Now, my friend, see if you agree with me; for, if you do, I think we will get to know what we’re investigating better. Do you think a philosopher would be likely to care much about the so-called pleasures, such as eating and drinking?” d

“By no means, Socrates,” said Simmias.

“How about the pleasures of sex?”

“Certainly not.”

“Well, do you think such a man would think much of the other cares of the body—I

mean such as the possession of fine clothes and shoes and the other personal adornments? Do you think he would care about them or have contempt for them, except so far as it is necessary to have them?" e

"I think the true philosopher would have contempt for them," he replied.

"Putting this together, then, don't you think that such a man wouldn't devote himself to the body, but would, insofar as he was able, turn away from the body and concern himself with the soul?"

"Yes."

"To begin with, then, it's clear that in such matters the philosopher, more than other men, separates the soul from association with the body?" 65

"It is."

"Now certainly most people think that a man who takes no pleasure and has no part in such things doesn't deserve to live, and that one who cares nothing for the pleasures of the body is about as good as dead."

"That is very true."

"Now, what about the acquisition of wisdom? Is the body a hindrance or not, if it is made to share in the search? What I mean is this: Do the sight and hearing of men have any truth in them, or is it true, as the poets are always telling us, that we neither hear nor see anything accurately? And yet if these two bodily senses are not accurate or exact, the rest are not likely to be, for they are inferior to these. Don't you think so?" b

"I certainly do," he replied.

"Then," he said, "when does the soul attain truth? For when it tries to consider anything in company with the body, it is evidently deceived by it." c

"True."

"It is in thought, then, if at all, that anything real becomes clear to it?"¹¹

"Yes."

"But it thinks best when it is not troubled by anything like hearing or sight, or pain or any pleasure—when it is, as far as possible, alone by itself, and takes leave of the body, avoiding, as far as is possible, all association or contact with the body, and reaches out toward reality."

"That is true."

"In this matter also, then, the soul of the philosopher has a great deal of contempt for the body and avoids it and strives to be alone by itself?" d

"Evidently."

B. THE APPEAL TO FORMS

"Now how about this, Simmias? Do we think there is such a thing as the just itself, or not?"

"We certainly think there is."

"And the beautiful and the good?"

"Of course."

¹¹ The phrase translated "Anything real" means, more literally "anything that is." Below, "reality" translates a related phrase "the things that are." Recall that the word "*ousia*" (translated substance) is a derivative form of the verb "to be".

“Well, did you ever see any of these things with your eyes?”

“Certainly not,” he said.

“Or did you ever grasp them with any of the bodily senses? I am speaking of all such things, as size, health, strength, and, in a word, the substance of all other things—what each of them really is. Is what is most true in them contemplated by means of the body? Isn’t it rather the case that the person who prepares himself most accurately to grasp the thing he is investigating itself will come nearest to the knowledge of it?” e

“Certainly.”

“Who would do this most perfectly? Wouldn’t it be someone who approached each thing, so far as possible, with the thought alone, not introducing sight into his thinking or dragging in any of the other senses along with his reasoning, but using thought pure and by itself in his attempt to search out the substance of each thing pure and by itself, freeing himself (as far as possible) from his eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body, because association with it confuses the soul and prevents it from attaining truth and wisdom? Isn’t this the man, Simmias, if anyone, who will reach reality?” 66

“That is marvelously true, Socrates,” said Simmias. b

“Then,” he said, “all this must make the true philosophers think and say something like this to one another: ‘There seems to be some sort of path that is leading us together with our reason astray in our inquiry. As long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such a bad thing, we’ll never attain completely what we desire, that is, the truth. For the body keeps us constantly busy because of its need for sustenance; and moreover, if diseases come upon it they hinder our pursuit of the truth. And the body fills us with passions and desires and fears, and all sorts of fantasies and foolishness, so that, as they say, it really and truly makes it impossible for us to think at all. c

“The body and its desires are the only cause of wars and factions and battles; for all wars arise for the sake of gaining money, and we are compelled to gain money for the sake of the body. We are slaves to its service. And so, because of all these things, we have no leisure for philosophy. But the worst of all is that if we do get a bit of leisure and turn to philosophy, the body is constantly interrupting our studies and disturbing us with noise and confusion, so that it prevents us from discerning the truth. d

“It’s really been proven to us that if we are ever to know anything purely, we must be free from the body and must view the objects themselves with the soul itself by itself. Only then, when we are dead, are we likely to possess the wisdom which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, not while we live, as our account shows. For, if we cannot know anything purely while the body is with us, then one of two things must be true: either we cannot acquire knowledge at all, or we can only do so when we are dead; since, then (but not before sooner) the soul will be by itself apart from the body. And while we live, I think we’ll be nearest to knowledge when we avoid, as far as possible, consorting with the body, except what is absolutely necessary, and do not infect ourselves with its nature, but keep ourselves pure from it until the god himself sets us free. And being pure in this way, though separation from the body’s foolishness, I think we’ll be with other pure people, and on our own we’ll know all that is unadulterated (which is presumably truth); for it is not permitted for the impure to touch the pure.’ e 67

“Simmias, I think these are the sorts of things that everyone who loves learning properly must think and say to one another. Don’t you agree?” b

“Definitely, Socrates.”

“Then,” Socrates said, “if this is true, my friend, I have great hopes that when I reach the place to which I am going, there, if anywhere, I will acquire fully that which has been my chief goal in my past life. So the journey that is now imposed upon me can be made with good hope by anyone who thinks that his mind has been prepared by having been, as it were, purified.” c

“Certainly,” said Simmias.

“And doesn’t the purification turn out to be what we mentioned in our account a while back: separating, as far as possible, the soul from the body and teaching the soul the habit of assembling and bringing itself together from all parts of the body, and living, as far as it can, both now and hereafter, alone by itself, freed from the body as from fetters?” d

“Certainly,” he said.

“Well, then, this is what we call death, isn’t it, a release and separation from the body?”

“Exactly so,” he said.

“And, as we say, it is especially—or, rather, only—the people who practice philosophy correctly who are always most eager to release the soul. And isn’t the philosophers’ occupation is just this—the release and separation of the soul from the body?”

“Obviously.”

“Then, as I said in the beginning, it would be absurd if a man who had, for his whole life, been training himself to live as nearly in a state of death as he could, was then disturbed when death came to him. Wouldn’t it be absurd?” e

“Of course.”

“In fact, then, Simmias,” he said, “the true philosophers practice dying, and death is less terrible to them than to any other men. Consider it in this way. They are in every way hostile to the body and they desire to have the soul apart by itself alone. Wouldn’t it be very foolish if they were frightened and troubled when this very thing happens, and if they weren’t glad to go to the place where there is hope of attaining what they longed for all through life (and they longed for wisdom) and of escaping from the association with the thing from which they’ve estranged themselves? 68

“Many men have gone to Hades of their own accord in search of people they love—of wives or sons who have died—lead by the hope that they would be see and be united there with their loved ones. So what about someone who truly desires wisdom, and knows that there is nowhere other than Hades where he can attain it to any extent? Will he be resentful of dying? Won’t he go there gladly? We must think so, my friend. If he really a philosopher, he will firmly believe that he will not find pure knowledge anyplace else. And if this is so, would it not be very unreasonable for such a man to fear death?” b

“Very unreasonable, certainly,” he said.

“Then,” Socrates said, “when you see a man troubled because he is going to die, isn’t it sufficient evidence that he was not a philosopher but a body-lover? And this same man is also a money-lover and an honor-lover—either or both.” c

“Certainly,” he said, “it is as you say.”

C. SUPPLEMENTARY ARGUMENT CONCERNING THE VIRTUES

“Then, Simmias,” he continued, “isn’t that which is called courage especially characteristic of philosophers?”

“By all means,” he said.

“And orderliness—that which is commonly called orderliness, which consists in not being excited by the passions and in being superior to them and acting in a temperate way—isn’t that characteristic of those alone who have contempt for the body and pass their lives in philosophy?” d

“Necessarily,” he said.

“For,” said Socrates, “if you care to consider the courage and the temperance of other men, you will see that they are absurd.”

“How so, Socrates?”

“Don’t you know that all other men count death among the great evils?”

“They certainly do.”

“And don’t courageous men face death—when they do face it—through fear of greater evils?”

“That is true.”

“Then all except philosophers are courageous through fear. And yet it is absurd to be courageous through fear and cowardice.”

“Very true.” e

“And how about the orderly ones? Isn’t it the same with them? They are temperate because of a kind of licentiousness. Sure, we say that this is impossible, but nevertheless their simplistic temperance amounts to little more than this; for they’re afraid of being deprived of certain pleasures that they desire, and so they refrain from some because they are under the sway of others. And yet being ruled by pleasures is called licentiousness. Nevertheless they conquer pleasures because they are conquered by other pleasures. Now this is about what I said just now, that they are temperate by a kind of licentiousness.” 69

“So it seems.”

“My dear Simmias, I suspect that this is not the right way to purchase virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fear for fear, and greater for less, as if they were coins. The right coin, for which all those things must be exchanged and by means of and with which all these things are to be bought and sold, is in fact wisdom; and courage and temperance and justice and, in short, true virtue exist only with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and other things of that sort are added or taken away. And virtue which consists in the exchange of such things for each other without wisdom, is but a painted imitation of virtue and is really slavish and has nothing healthy or true in it, whereas, in truth, temperance and justice and courage are purifications of these things, and wisdom itself a sort of purifying. c

“I suppose that the men who established the mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that someone goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but that someone who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For as they say in the mysteries, ‘the wand-bearers are many, but the devotees few’; and I believe that these devotees are the people who have been true philosophers. In my life, I’ve strived in every way I could to be one of them, neglecting nothing within my power. Whether I’ve tried strived rightly and accomplished anything, I think I’ll know clearly, when I have arrived there, very d

soon, if it is the god's will.

"This, then, Simmias and Cebes, is the defense I offer to show that it is reasonable for me not to be troubled or to resent leaving you and the rulers I have here, because I believe that there, no less than here, I will find good rulers and friends. Now, it would be good if I've been more successful in convincing you by my defense than I was in convincing my Athenian judges." e

When Socrates had finished, Cebes answered and said: "Socrates, I agree to the other things you say, but in regard to the soul men are very prone to disbelief. They fear that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere, and that on the day when the man dies it is destroyed and perishes, as soon as it is separated from the body; and that as soon as it leaves the body it may disperse like a breath or smoke. If it does exist anywhere, gathered together alone by itself and separated from the bad things you just enumerated, then there is plenty of good hope that what you say is true, Socrates. But it requires a lot of reassurance and trust to believe that when a man is dead the soul still exists and has any power and wisdom." 70 b

"What you say, Cebes, is true," said Socrates. "Now what should we do? Do you want to keep on talking about this to see whether it is probable or not?"

"I do," said Cebes. "I would like to hear what you think about it."

"Well," said Socrates, "I don't believe anyone who heard us now, even if he were a comic poet, would say that I am chattering and talking about things that don't concern me. So if you like, let's examine the issue to the end." c

III. ARGUMENTS THAT THE SOUL CAN EXIST IN SEPARATION FROM THE BODY

"Let us consider it by asking whether or not the souls of men who have died are in Hades. There is an ancient tradition, which we remember, that they go there from here and come back here again and are born from the dead. Now if this is true, if the living are born again from the dead, our souls would exist there, wouldn't they? For they couldn't be born again if they didn't exist, and this would be a sufficient proof that they exist, if it should really be made evident that the living are born only from the dead. But if this is not so then some other account would be needed." d

"Certainly," said Cebes.

A. ARGUMENT FROM CONTRARIES

"Now," he said, "if you wish to find this out easily, do not consider the question with regard to men only, but with regard to all animals and plants, and, in short, to all things that come to be.¹² Let's see whether come to be in this way, that is, from their opposites, in those cases where there are opposites. For example, the beautiful is the opposite of the ugly, the just of the unjust, and there are countless other such cases. So, let's consider whether it's necessary that whatever has an opposite comes to be only from its opposite. For example, when anything becomes larger it must have been smaller and then have e

¹² The word translated "coming to be" is *genesis* it can mean to "birth" or "becoming" (as in "He's becoming a good swimmer.")

become larger.”

“Yes.”

“And if it becomes smaller, it must have been larger and then have become smaller?” 71

“That is true,” he said.

“And the weaker is comes to be from the stronger, and the slower from the quicker?”

“Certainly.”

“And the worse from the better and the more just from the more unjust?”

“Of course.”

“Then,” he said, “we have this fact sufficiently established, that all things come to be in this way, opposites from opposites?”

“Certainly.”

“Now then, is the following also true of all these pairs: between the members of each pair, aren’t there two processes of coming to be—from one to the other and back again from the latter to the former? Between a larger thing and a smaller thing isn’t there growth and shrinkage, and don’t we speak of “growing” in the one case and of “shrinking” in the other? b

“Yes,” he said.

“And similarly, there’s separating and combining, and cooling and heating, and all the rest. Even if we do not always have a name for the process, it must be that in every case they come from each other and that there is a process of coming to be from each to the other?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Well then,” said Socrates, “is there anything that is the opposite of living, as being awake is the opposite of sleeping?” c

“Certainly,” said Cebes.

“What?”

“Being dead,” he said.

“Then these two are generated from each other, and since they’re two, there must be two processes between them; right?”

“Of course.”

“Now,” said Socrates, “I will tell about one of the two pairs of which I just spoke to you and its intermediate processes; and you tell me about the other. I say one term is sleeping and the other is being awake, and being awake comes to be from sleeping, and sleeping from being awake, and the processes of coming to be are, in the latter case, falling asleep, and in the former, waking up. Do you agree, or not?” d

“Certainly.”

“Now,” he said, “you tell me in this way about life and death. Don’t you say that living is the opposite of being dead?”

“I do.”

“And that they come to be from one another?”

“Yes.”

“Now what is it that comes to be from the living?”

“The dead,” he said.

“And what,” said Socrates, “from the dead?”

“I can say only one thing—the living.”

“From the dead, then, Cebes, the living, both things and persons, come to be?” d

“Evidently,” he said.

“Then,” said Socrates, “our souls exist in the other world.”

“So it seems.”

“And of the two processes of coming to be between these two, the one can be clearly seen; for surely dying is clearly seen, isn’t it?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Well then,” said Socrates, “what should we do next? Should we deny the opposite process, and should nature be one-sided in this instance? Or must we grant that there is some process of coming to be that’s the opposite of dying?”

“Certainly we must,” he said.

“What is this process?”

“Coming to life again.”

“Then,” said Socrates, “if there is such a thing as coming to life again, this would be the process of the living coming to be from the dead?” 72

“Certainly.”

“So by this method also we reach the conclusion that the living come to be from the dead, just as much as the dead from the living; and since this is the case, it seems to me to be a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead exist somewhere, from which they come back to life.”

“I think that results necessarily from our previous admissions, Socrates.”

“Now here is another method, Cebes, to prove, as it seems to me, that we were right in making those admissions. For if coming to be did not proceed from opposite to opposite and back again, going round, as it were in a circle, but always went forward in a straight line without turning back or curving, then, you know, in the end all things would have the same form and be affected in the same way and stop coming to be at all.” b

“What do you mean?” he said.

“It is not at all hard,” said Socrates, “to understand what I mean. For example, if the process of falling asleep existed, but not the opposite process of waking from sleep, in the end, you know, that would make the sleeping Endymion a mere trifle; it would be nothing, because for everything else would be in the same state, sound asleep.¹³ Or if everything was mixed together and never separated, then soon Anaxagoras’ saying that “all things were mixed together” would soon come true. And in like manner, my dear Cebes, if all things that have life were to die, and, when they had died, the dead were to remain in that condition, wouldn’t everything eventually be dead and nothing alive? For even if the living things came to be from something other than the dead, and the living died, how could we avoid everything ultimately being swallowed up in death?” c d

“I see no way, Socrates,” said Cebes. “What you say seems to be perfectly true.”

“I think, Cebes,” he said, “it is absolutely so, and we are not deceived into making those admissions. There really is such a thing as coming to life again and the living come to be from the dead, and the souls of the dead exist.” e

¹³ Endymion was a mythological figure put into a state of eternal sleep by Zeus.

B. ARGUMENT FROM RECOLLECTION

“And besides,” Cebes rejoined, “there’s also that account you frequently mention that our learning is nothing other than recollection. According to this too, if it’s true, then we must have learned in some previous time the things that we are reminded of now, and this would be impossible if our souls did not exist somewhere before being born in this human form. So according to this account also it appears that the soul is something immortal.” 73

“But, Cebes,” said Simmias, “what were the proofs of this? Remind me; for I do not recollect very well right now.”

“There’s one excellent argument,” said Cebes, “When people are questioned, if you put the questions well, they answer correctly by themselves about everything; and yet if they didn’t have some knowledge and a correct account within them, they could not do this. So, if one shows them a diagram or anything of that sort one gets clear evidence that this is so.” b

“And if you are not convinced in that way, Simmias,” said Socrates, “see if you don’t agree when you look at it in this way. Do you doubt that the thing that’s called ‘learning’ is recollection?”

“It’s not that I doubt it,” said Simmias, “but I do need to undergo just what we’re talking about: recollection. And from what Cebes started to say I’m already beginning to recollect and be convinced. Nevertheless, I’d like to hear what you were going to say.” c

“It was this,” he said. “We agree, I suppose, that if anyone is to remember anything, he must have known it at some previous time?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Then do we agree to this also, that when knowledge comes in such a way, it is recollection? What I mean is this: If a man, upon hearing or seeing something (or perceiving it in any other way), not only knows that thing but also has something else occur to him—something of which the knowledge is not the same, but different—aren’t we right to say that he recollects the thing that occurs to him?” d

“What do you mean?”

“Let me give an example. Knowledge of a man is different from knowledge of a lyre.”

“Of course.”

“Well, you know, don’t you, that when someone who is in love sees a lyre or a cloak or anything else that belongs to his beloved, he perceives the lyre and an image occurs to him of the boy to whom the lyre belongs? This is recollection, just as when one sees Simmias, one often remembers Cebes, and I could cite countless such examples.”

“To be sure you could,” said Simmias.

“Now,” he said, “is that sort of thing a kind of recollection? Especially when it takes place with regard to things which have already been forgotten through time and inattention?” e

“Certainly,” he replied.

“Well, then,” said Socrates, “can a person be reminded of a man by seeing a picture of a horse or of a lyre, or be reminded of Cebes by seeing a picture of Simmias?”

“Surely.”

“And by seeing a picture of Simmias he can be reminded of Simmias himself?” 74

“Yes,” he said.

“All these examples show, then, that recollection is caused by like things and also by unlike things, don’t they?”

“Yes.”

“And when one has a recollection of anything caused by like things, will he not also inevitably consider whether this recollection offers a perfect likeness of the thing recollected, or not?”

“Inevitably,” he replied.

“Now see,” he said, “if this is true. We say there is something equal. I do not mean one log equal to another, or one stone to another, or anything of that sort, but something beyond that—the equal itself. Should we say there is such a thing, or not?”

“We should definitely say that there is,” said Simmias. b

“And do we know what it is?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Where did we get the knowledge of it from? Isn’t it from the things we were just talking about—by seeing equal logs or stones or other equal things? Wasn’t it from seeing these that this thing, which is different from them, occurred to us? Or don’t you think it is different? Look at it this way. Don’t equal stones and logs, while remaining the same, sometimes seem equal to one person and unequal to another?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, then, did the equals themselves ever appear to you unequal or did equality ever appear to be inequality?” c

“No, Socrates, never.”

“Then,” he said, “those equals are not the same as the equal itself.”

“I should say not, Socrates.”

“But, nevertheless,” he said, “it is from those equals, which are not the same as that equal, that the knowledge of that equal occurred to you and was received by you?”

“Very true,” he replied.

“And it is either like them or unlike them?”

“Certainly.”

“It makes no difference,” he said. “Whenever someone sees one thing, and from this sight another thing occurs to him, whether the things are like or unlike, this must be recollection.” d

“Surely.”

“Now then,” he said, “do the equal logs and the equal things of which we were speaking just now affect us in this way: Do they seem to us to be equal in the way that the equal itself is equal, or do they somehow fall short of being like the equal itself?”

“They fall very far short of it,” he said.

“Do we agree, then, that when anyone on seeing a thing thinks, ‘This thing that I see aims at being like some other thing that exists, but falls short and is unable to be like that thing, but is inferior to it,’ the person who thinks thus must have previous knowledge of the thing that he says the other resembles but falls short of?” e

“We must.”

“Well then, is this just what happened to us with regard to the equal things and the equal itself?”

“It certainly is.”

“Then we must have had knowledge of the equal before the time when we first saw 75

equal things and thought, ‘All these things are aiming to be like the equal but fall short.’”

“That’s true.”

“And we agree, also, that it did not occur to us, nor could it have occurred to us, from anything other than seeing or touching or one of the other senses—I’m counting them all as the same.”

“Yes, Socrates, they are all alike, for the purposes of our account.”

“Then it must be from the senses that it occurs to us that all the things we perceive through them are striving to reach that which the equal is, and that they are falling short of it. Is that our view?” b

“Yes.”

“Then before we began to see or hear or use the other senses we must somewhere have gained a knowledge of what the equal itself is, if we were about to compare our perceptions of equal things to it, viewing them all as yearning to be like it, but falling short.”

“That follows necessarily from what we have said before, Socrates.”

“And we saw and heard and had the other senses as soon as we were born?”

“Certainly.” c

“But, we say, we must have acquired a knowledge of the equal before we had these senses?”

“Yes.”

“Then it appears that we must have acquired it before we were born.”

“It does.”

“Now if we had acquired that knowledge before we were born, and were born with it, we knew before we were born and at the moment of birth not only the equal and the greater and the less, but everything of that sort? For our present account is no more concerned with the equal than with the beautiful itself and the good itself and the just and the pious, and, in short, with all those things which we stamp with the seal of ‘what it is’, both when we are asking questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of all of them before we were born.” d

“That is true.”

“And, if having acquired this knowledge in each case, we didn’t forget it, we must to always be born knowing these things, and must know them throughout our life; for to know is to have acquired knowledge and to have retained it without losing it, and the loss of knowledge is just what we mean when we speak of forgetting, isn’t it, Simmias?”

“Certainly, Socrates,” he said. e

“But, I suppose, if we acquired knowledge before we were born and lost it at birth, but afterwards by the use of our senses regained the knowledge which we had previously possessed, would not the process which we call learning really be recovering knowledge which is our own? And should we be right in calling this recollection?”

“For sure.”

“For we found that it is possible, when perceiving a thing by the sight or the hearing or any other sense, to have occur to one from that perception another thing which had been forgotten, which was associated with the thing perceived, whether like it or unlike it. So, as I said, one of these two things is true: either we are all born knowing these things and know them all our lives; or else, those who are said to learn merely remember, and learning would then be recollection.” 76

“That is certainly true, Socrates.”

“Which then do you choose, Simmias? Were we born with the knowledge, or do we recollect afterwards things of which we had acquired knowledge before our birth?” b

“I cannot choose at this moment, Socrates.”

“How about this question? You can choose and you have some opinion about it: When a man knows, can he give an account of what he knows or not?”

“Certainly he can, Socrates.”

“And do you think that everybody can give an account of the things about which we’ve just been talking?”

“I wish they could,” said Simmias; “but on the contrary I fear that tomorrow, at this time, there will be no longer any man living who is able to do so properly.”

“Then, Simmias, you do not think all men know these things?” c

“Not at all.”

“Then they recollect the things they once learned?”

“Necessarily.”

“When did our souls acquire the knowledge of them? Surely not after we were born as human beings.”

“Certainly not.”

“Then previously.”

“Yes.”

“Then, Simmias, the souls existed previously, before they were in human form, apart from bodies, and they had wisdom.”

“Unless, Socrates, we acquire these ideas at the moment of birth; for that time still remains.” d

“Very well, my friend. But when else could we lose them? For we are surely not born with them, as we just now agreed. Do we lose them at the moment when we receive them, or do you have some other time to suggest?”

“None whatever, Socrates. I did not notice that I was talking nonsense.”

“Then, Simmias,” he said, “is this our position: If, as we are always saying, the beautiful exists, and the good, and every substance of that kind, and if we compare all our perceptions to these, finding that it existed before and is ours, and we liken these things to that substance and liken our perceptions to it, then just as these things exist, so our souls must have existed before we were born. And, if these things do not exist, our account is impotent? Is this the case, and is it equally certain that provided these things exist our souls also existed before we were born, and that if these do not exist, neither did our souls?” e

“Socrates, it seems to me that there is absolutely the same certainty, and our account comes to the excellent conclusion that our soul existed before we were born, and that the substance of which you speak likewise exists. For there is nothing so clear to me as this, that all such things, the beautiful, the good, and all the others of which you were speaking just now are fully real. And I think the proof is sufficient.” 77

C. ARGUMENT THAT THE SOUL EXISTS AFTER DEATH

PHAEDO: "But how about Cebes?" said Socrates, "For Cebes must be convinced too."

"He is fully convinced, I think," said Simmias; "though, of all people, he's the most obstinate doubter. Still, I think he's quite convinced that our soul existed before we were born. However, Socrates, it doesn't seem—not even to me—to have been proven that it will still exist after we die. The common fear, which Cebes mentioned just now, that when a man dies the soul is dispersed and this is the end of his existence, still remains. For assuming that the soul comes into being and is brought together from some source or other and exists before it enters into a human body, what prevents it, after it has entered into and left that body, from coming to an end and being destroyed itself?" b

"You're right, Simmias," said Cebes. "It seems to me that we have proved only half of what is required, namely, that our soul existed before our birth. But we must also show that it exists after we are dead as well as before our birth, if the proof is to be complete." c

"It's been shown already, Simmias and Cebes," said Socrates, "if you will combine this conclusion with the one we reached before, that every living being is born from the dead. For if the soul exists before birth, and, when it comes into life and is born, cannot be born from anything else than death and a state of death, mustn't it also exist after dying, since it must be born again? So the proof you're asking for has already been given. However, I think you and Simmias would like to carry on this discussion still further. You have the childish fear that when the soul goes out from the body the wind will really blow it away and scatter it, especially if a man happens to die in a high wind and not in calm weather." d e

And Cebes laughed and said, "Assume that we have that fear, Socrates, and try to convince us; or rather, don't assume that we are afraid, but perhaps there is a child within us, who has such fears. Let's try to persuade him not to fear death as if it were a bogey-man."

"Ah," said Socrates, "you must sing charms to him every day until you charm away his fear."

"Socrates," he said, "where will we find a good singer of such charms, since you are leaving us?" 78

"Greece is a large country, Cebes," he replied, "in which there are many good men, and there are many foreigners also. You ought to search through all of them in quest of such a charmer, sparing neither money nor work, for there is no greater need for which you could spend your money. And you must seek among yourselves, too, for perhaps you would hardly find others better able to do this than you."

"That will be done," said Cebes, "but let's return to the point where we left off, if you are willing." b

"Oh, I am willing, of course."

"Good," he said.

"Well then," said Socrates, "don't we have to ask ourselves some such question as this: What kind of thing naturally suffers dispersion, and for what kind of thing might we naturally fear it, and again what kind of thing is not liable to it? And after this don't we have to ask in which class the soul belongs and base our hopes or fears for our souls upon the answers to these questions?"

"You're quite right," he replied.

"Now, isn't that which is compounded and composite naturally liable to be c

decomposed, into the things from which it was compounded? And if there is anything uncompounded, isn't that thing unlikely to be decomposed, if anything is?"

"I think that's true," said Cebes.

"Then it is most probable that things which are always the same and unchanging are the uncompounded things and the things that are changing and never the same are the composite things?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Then let's return to what we were discussing before," he said. "Is the substance itself, which we give an account of in our questions and answers, always the same or is it liable to change? Consider the equal itself, the beautiful itself, and what each thing itself is—its being. Do these ever admit of any change whatsoever? Or does what each of them is, since it is always by itself and uniform, remain the same and never in any way admit of any change?" d

"It must remain the same, Socrates," said Cebes, e

"But how about the many beautiful things, such as men, or horses, or cloaks, or any other such things—or the many equal things—or the things that have the same name as those? Are they always the same? Or are they, in direct opposition to the substances, constantly changing in themselves, unlike each other, and, so to speak, never the same?"

"The latter," said Cebes; "they are never the same." 79

"And you can see these and touch them and perceive them by the other senses, whereas the things that are always the same can be grasped only by the reason, and are invisible and not to be seen?"

"Certainly," he said, "that is true."

"Now," he said, "should we assume that there are two forms of beings, one visible, the other invisible?"

"Let's assume that," said Cebes.

"And that the invisible is always the same and the visible constantly changing?"

"Let us assume that also," he said.

"Well then," said Socrates, "aren't we made up of two parts, body and soul?" b

"Yes," he replied.

"Now to which species should we say the body is more similar and more closely akin?"

"To the visible," he said; "that's clear to everyone."

"And the soul? Is it visible or invisible?"

"Invisible, to man, at least, Socrates."

"But we call things visible and invisible with reference to human vision, don't we?"

"Yes, we do."

"Then what do we say about the soul? Can it be seen or not?"

"It cannot be seen."

"Then it is invisible?"

"Yes."

"Then the soul is more like the invisible than the body is, and the body is more like the visible." c

"Necessarily, Socrates."

"Now we have also been saying for a long time, have we not, that, when the soul makes use of the body for any inquiry, either through seeing or hearing or any of the

other senses (for inquiry through the body means inquiry through the senses), then it is dragged by the body to things which never remain the same, and it wanders about and is confused and dizzy like a drunken man because it is in contact with such things?"

"Certainly."

"But when the soul inquires alone by itself, it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless, and, since it's akin to these, it always dwells with them when it's by itself and isn't hindered, and it can rest from its wanderings and remain always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion with it. And this state of the soul is called wisdom. Isn't that so?" d

"Socrates," he said, "what you say is perfectly right and true."

"And now again, in view of what we said before and of what has just been said, to which species do you think the soul has greater likeness and kinship?" e

"I think, Socrates," he said, "that anyone, even the dullest, would agree, after this account that the soul is infinitely more like that which is always the same than it is like that which is not."

"And the body...?"

"...is more like the other."

"Consider, then, the matter in another way. When the soul and the body are joined together, nature directs the one to serve and be ruled, and the other to rule and be master. Now this being the case, which seems to you like the divine, and which like the mortal? Or do you not think that the divine is by nature fitted to rule and lead, and the mortal to obey and serve?" 80

"Yes, I think so."

"Which, then, does the soul resemble?"

"Clearly, Socrates, the soul is like the divine and the body like the mortal."

"Then see, Cebes, if this is not the conclusion from all that we have said, that the soul is most like the divine and immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and ever unchanging, and the body, on the contrary, most like the human and mortal and manifold and unintellectual and dissoluble and ever changing. Can we say anything, my dear Cebes, to show that this is not so?" b

"No, we cannot."

"Well then, since this is the case, isn't it natural for the body to meet with speedy dissolution and for the soul, on the contrary, to be entirely indissoluble, or nearly so?"

"Of course." c

D. THE FATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

PHAEDO: "Observe," he went on, "that when a man dies, the visible part of him, the body, which lies in the visible world and which we call the corpse, which is naturally subject to dissolution and decomposition, does not undergo these processes at once, but remains for a considerable time, and even for a very long time, if death takes place when the body is in good condition, and at a favorable time of the year. For when the body is shrunk and embalmed, as is done in Egypt, it remains almost whole for an incalculable time. And even if the body decays, some parts of it, such as the bones and sinews and all that, are, practically immortal. Isn't that true?" d

"Yes."

“Then what about the soul, the invisible part that, which goes to another place that is like itself, noble and pure and invisible—to Hades in the true sense of that word—to the good and wise god, where, god willing, my own soul must soon go? Can the soul which is like this with this sort of nature, be scattered and destroyed right away when it departs from the body, as most men say? Far from it, dear Cebes and Simmias, but the truth is more like this: If it is pure when it leaves the body and drags nothing bodily with it, because it never willingly associated with the body in life, but avoided it and gathered itself into itself alone, since this has always practiced this—and this is nothing else than practicing philosophy in the right way—in fact it’s practicing for death... Or isn’t this the practice of death? 81

“By all means.”

“Then if it is in such a condition, it goes away into that which is like itself, into the invisible, divine, immortal, and wise, and when it arrives there it is happy, freed from error and foolishness and fear and wild lusts and all the other human ills, and as the initiated say, it lives in truth through all after time with the gods. Is this our belief, Cebes, or not?”

“Assuredly,” said Cebes.

“But, I think, if it is defiled and impure when it leaves the body, because it was always with the body and cared for it and loved it and was fascinated by it and its desires and pleasures, so that it thought nothing was true except the bodily, which one can touch and see and drink and eat and use for sexual pleasure, and if it is accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and grasped by philosophy—do you think a soul in this condition will depart pure and uncontaminated?” 81

“By no means,” he said.

“Rather, I suppose, it will be permeated with the bodily, which was ingrained in it by constant association and intercourse with the body and by a lot of practice?”

“Certainly.”

“And, my friend, we must believe that the bodily is burdensome and heavy and earthly and visible. And such a soul is weighed down by this and is dragged back into the visible world, through fear of the invisible and of Hades, and so, as they say, it flits about the monuments and the tombs, where shadowy shapes of souls have been seen, phantoms of those souls which were not set free in purity but retain something of the visible; and this is why they are seen.” 81

“That is likely, Socrates.”

“It is likely, Cebes. And it is likely that those are not the souls of the good, but those of the wicked, which are compelled to flit about such places as a punishment for their former bad mode of life. And they flit about until through the desire of the bodily which clings to them they are again imprisoned in a body. And they are likely to be imprisoned in ones with characters that correspond to the practices of their former life.” 81

“What characters do you mean, Socrates?”

“I mean, for example, that those who have indulged in gluttony and violence and drunkenness, and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort. Don’t you think so?” 82

“Certainly that is very likely.”

“And those who have chosen injustice and tyranny and robbery pass into the bodies

of wolves and hawks and vultures. Where else can we imagine that they go?”

“Beyond a doubt,” said Cebes, “they pass into such creatures.”

“Then,” he said, “it is clear where all the others go, each in accordance with its own habits?”

“Yes,” said Cebes, “of course.”

“Then,” he said, “the happiest of those, and those who go to the best place, are those who have practiced, the popular and social virtues, which they call “temperance” and “justice”, by habit and training, without philosophy or understanding?” b

“How are these happiest?”

“Don’t you see? Isn’t it likely that they pass again into some such social and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or ants, or into mankind again, and that worthy men spring from them?”

“Yes.”

“And no one who has not been a philosopher and who is not wholly pure when he departs, is allowed to enter into the communion of the gods, but only the lover of knowledge. It is for this reason, dear Simmias and Cebes, that the true philosophers refrain from all bodily desires and resist them firmly and do not give in to them: it’s not because they fear poverty or loss of property, as most men, in their love of money, do; nor do they refrain from these things because they fear the dishonor or disgrace of wickedness, like the lovers of honor and power.” c

“No, that would not be seemly for them, Socrates,” said Cebes.

“Certainly not,” he said. “And therefore those who care for their own souls, and do not live in service to the body, turn their backs upon all these men and do not walk in their ways, for they feel that they know not whither they are going. They themselves believe that philosophy, with its deliverance and purification must not be resisted, and so they turn and follow it whithersoever it leads.” d

“How do they do this, Socrates?”

“I will tell you,” he replied. “The lovers of knowledge,” he said, “recognize that when philosophy first takes possession of it, their soul is entirely fastened and welded to the body and is compelled to regard real things through the body as through prison bars, not with its own unhindered vision, and it’s wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy sees that the most dreadful thing about the imprisonment is the fact that it is caused by the lusts of the flesh, so that the prisoner is the chief assistant in his own imprisonment. The lovers of knowledge, then, I say, recognize that philosophy, when it takes possession of the soul in this state, encourages it gently and tries to set it free: it shows that examining with the eyes, ears and other senses is full of deceit; it persuades it to withdraw from the senses except when it is necessary to use them; and it exhorts it to collect and concentrate itself within itself, trusting nothing other itself by itself and regarding as true whatever thought itself in itself it examines of things that exist themselves in themselves, but none of the things it examines in other ways, which are different in different things—that sort of thing is perceptible and seen, whereas the soul itself sees that which is invisible and intelligible. Now the soul of the true philosopher believes that it must not resist this deliverance, and therefore it stands aloof from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as it can, considering that when anyone feels intense pleasure or fear or pain or desire, he doesn’t only suffer from them in the ways one might think (for example, by getting ill or losing the money spent on his c

desires); he also suffers the worst and most extremely bad thing, and does not take this into account.

“What is this bad thing, Socrates?” said Cebes.

“The bad thing is that the soul of every man, when it is greatly pleased or pained by anything, is compelled to believe that the object which caused the emotion is very distinct and very true; but it is not. These things are mostly the visible ones, aren’t they?”

“Certainly.”

“And when this occurs, isn’t the soul put most completely in bondage by the body?”

“How so?”

“Because each pleasure or pain nails it as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it bodily, so that it supposes the things are true that the body says are true. For because it has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body it is compelled to adopt also the same habits and mode of life, and can never depart in purity to the other world, but must always go away contaminated with the body; and so it sinks quickly into another body again and grows into it, like seed that is sown. Therefore it has no part in the communion with the divine and pure and uniform.”

“What you say is very true, Socrates,” said Cebes.

“This, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave; not the world’s reason. Or do you disagree?”

“Certainly not.”

“No, for the soul of the philosopher would reason as we’ve said. It would not think that philosophy must free it, while it, having been set free, should surrender itself to pleasures and pains and imprison itself again, laboring like Penelope unweaving the web she wove. No, his soul believes that it must gain peace from these emotions; it follows reason and stays with it always, contemplating that which is true and divine and not a matter of opinion. It is nurtured by this and believes that it must live in this way as long as it is alive, and then, at death, pass on to that which is kindred and such as itself, and be free from human ills. A soul which has been nurtured in this way, Simmias and Cebes, is not likely to fear that, when it leaves the body, it will be torn apart and vanish into nothingness, blown apart by the winds, and be no longer anywhere.”

IV. PROOF THAT THE SOUL IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

A. SIMMAS AND CEBES’ OBJECTIONS

PHAEDO: When Socrates had said this there was silence for a long time, and Socrates himself was apparently absorbed in what had been said, as were also most of us. But Simmias and Cebes conversed a little with each other; and Socrates saw them and said: “Do you think there is anything incomplete in what has been said? There are still many things one can doubt and many points open to attack, if anyone cares to discuss the issue thoroughly. If you are considering anything else, I have nothing to say; but if you are having any difficulty about these issues, do not hesitate to speak and discuss them yourselves, if you think anything better could be said about it, and to take me along with you in the discussion, if you think you can get on better in my company.”

And Simmias said: “Socrates, I will tell you the truth. For some time each of us has

been in doubt and has been egging the other on and urging him to ask a question, because we wish to hear your answer, but hesitate to trouble you, for fear that it may be disagreeable to you in your present misfortune.”

And when he heard this, he laughed gently and said: “Ah, Simmias! It will be hard e
work for me to persuade other people that I do not regard my present situation as a
misfortune, when I cannot even make you believe it, but you’re afraid I’m more
temperamental now than I used to be. And you seem to think I have less prophetic power
than the swans who, though they also sing at other times, sing most and best when they 85
feel that they’re going to die, since they rejoice that they are about to go to the god whose
servants they are. Men, because of their own fear of death, misrepresent the swans and
say that they sing out of sorrow, in mourning for their own death. They do not consider
that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or has any other trouble—no, not even the
nightingale or the swallow or the hoopoe which are said to sing in lamentation. I do not
believe they sing out of grief, nor do the swans. Rather, since they’re Apollo’s birds, I b
believe they have prophetic vision, and because they have foreknowledge of the blessings
in the other world they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever before. And I think
that I am myself a fellow-servant of the swans and am consecrated to the same god and
have received from our master a gift of prophecy that’s no worse than theirs, so I leave
life with as little sorrow as they have. So far as this is concerned, then, speak and ask
whatever questions you like, as long as the Athenians’ eleven permit it.”

“Good,” said Simmias. “I will tell you my difficulty, and then Cebes in turn will say c
why he does not agree with everything you’ve said. I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do
yourself, that it is either impossible or very difficult to acquire clear knowledge about
these matters in this life. And yet someone’s a weakling if he doesn’t test what is said
about them in every way and persevere until he is worn out by studying them on every
side. For he must do one of two things; either he must learn or discover the truth about
these matters, or if that is impossible, he must take whatever human account is best and d
hardest to disprove and embark upon it as upon a raft to sail on through life in the midst
of dangers, unless there is some stronger vessel—some divine revelation—on which he
can sail, making his voyage more safely and securely. So now I am not ashamed to ask
questions, since you encourage me to do so, and I will not have to blame myself later for
not saying what I think now. For, Socrates, when I examine what has been said, either
alone or with Cebes, it does not seem quite satisfactory.”

And Socrates replied: “Perhaps you’re right my, friend. But tell me in what way it e
isn’t satisfactory.”

“In this way,” he said, “one might use the same account about a harmony and a lyre
with its strings. One might say that the harmony is invisible and incorporeal, and very
beautiful and divine in a well-tuned lyre, but the lyre itself and its strings are bodies, and 86
bodily and composite and earthy and akin to that which is mortal. Now if someone
shatters the lyre or cuts and breaks the strings, what if he maintained by the same account
you used, that the harmony could not have been destroyed and must still exist? For there
would be no possibility that the lyre and its strings, which are of mortal nature, still exist
after the strings are broken, and the harmony, which is related and akin to the divine and b
that the immortal, is destroyed before that which is mortal. He would say that the
harmony must still exist somewhere, and that the wood and the strings must rot away
before anything could happen to it. And I fancy, Socrates, that you yourself must be

aware that we believe that the soul is something like this: that our body is strung and held together by heat, cold, moisture, dryness, and the like, and the soul is a mixture and a harmony of these same elements, when they are well and properly mixed.¹⁴ Now if the soul is a harmony, it is clear that when the body is too relaxed or is too tightly strung by diseases or other ills, the soul must of necessity be destroyed, no matter how divine it is, like other harmonies in sounds and in all the works of artists, and the remains of each body will endure for a long time until they are burnt or decayed. Now what should we say to this account, if anyone claims that the soul, since it's a mixture of the elements of the body, is the first to be destroyed in what is called death?"

Then Socrates, looking keenly at us, as he often used to do, smiled and said: "Simmius raises a fair objection. Now if any of you is more resourceful than I am, why don't you reply to him? He seems to score a good point. However, I think before replying to him we ought to hear what fault our friend Cebes finds with our account, so that we can take time to consider what to say, and then when we have heard them, we can either agree with them, if they seem to strike the proper note, or, if they do not, we can proceed to argue in defense of our reasoning. Come, Cebes," he said, "tell us what it was that troubled you."

"Well, I will tell you," said Cebes. "The account seems to me to be just where it was, and to be still open to the objection I made before. For I don't deny that it has been very cleverly, and, if I may say so, conclusively shown that the soul existed before it entered into this bodily form, but it does not seem to me to be proven that it will still exist when we are dead. I don't agree with Simmius' objection, that the soul is not stronger and more lasting than the body—for I think it is far superior in all such respects. 'Why then,' the account might say, 'do you still disbelieve, since you see that the weaker part still exists after a man dies? Don't you think the stronger part must be preserved for the same length of time?' Now see if my reply to this has any sense."

"I think that, like Simmius, I can best express myself with an image. It seems to me that it's very much like someone's saying about an old weaver who has died, that the man hasn't perished but is safe and sound somewhere, and offering as a proof of this the fact that the cloak which the man wove and used to wear is still whole and hasn't been destroyed. Then if anyone doesn't believe him, he would ask which lasts longer, a man or a cloak that is in use and wear, and when the answer was given that a man lasts much longer, he would think it had been proved beyond a doubt that the man was safe, because that which was less lasting had not been destroyed. But I do not think he is right, Simmius, and I ask you especially to pay attention to what I'm saying: Anyone can understand that someone who said this would be talking nonsense. For the weaver in question wove and wore out many such cloaks and lasted longer than them, though there were many, but I think he perished before the last one. Yet according to this account a man isn't at all feebler or weaker than a cloak. And I think the same image would apply to the soul and the body, and it would be quite appropriate to say similarly about them, that the soul lasts a long time, but the body lasts a shorter time and is weaker. And, one could go on to say that each soul wears out many bodies, especially if the man lives for many years. For if the body is constantly changing and being destroyed while the man still lives, and the soul is always weaving anew that which wears out, then when the soul perishes it must have on its last garment, and only this will outlast it, and when the soul

¹⁴ The view that the soul is a harmony was a tenet of Pythagoreanism.

has perished, then the body will show its natural weakness right away and will quickly disappear in decay.

“So we are not yet justified in feeling sure, on the strength of this account, that our souls will still exist somewhere after we are dead. For if one were to grant even more to a man who uses your account, Socrates, and allow not only that our souls existed before we were born, but also that there is nothing to prevent some of them from continuing to exist and from being born and dying again many times after we are dead (because the soul is naturally so strong that it can endure repeated births)—even allowing this, one might not grant that it does not suffer from its many births and does not finally perish altogether in one of its deaths. ‘But,’ he might say, ‘no one can tell beforehand the particular death and the particular dissolution of the body which will destroy the soul, for none of us can know that.’ Now if this is the case, anyone who feels confident about death has a foolish confidence, unless he can show that the soul is altogether immortal and indestructible. Otherwise a man who is about to die must always fear that his soul will be utterly destroyed in the impending dissolution of the body.”

Now all of us, as we remarked to one another afterwards, were very uncomfortable when we heard what they said; for we had been thoroughly convinced by the previous account, and now they seemed to be throwing us again into confusion and distrust, not only in respect to the past discussion but also with regard to any future one. They made us fear that our judgment was worthless or that no certainty could be attained about these issues.

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF REASONING

ECHECRATES: By the gods, Phaedo, I sympathize with you; for I myself after listening to you am inclined to ask myself: “What account shall we believe henceforth? For Socrates’ account was perfectly convincing, and now it has fallen into discredit.” For the doctrine that the soul is a kind of harmony has always had (and has now) a wonderful hold upon me, and your mention of it reminded me that I had myself believed in it before. Now I must begin over again and find another account to convince me that when a man dies his soul does not perish with him. So, for heaven’s sake, tell me how Socrates continued the discourse, and whether he also, as you say the rest of you did, showed any uneasiness, or calmly defended his account. And did he defend it successfully? Tell us everything as accurately as you can.

PHAEDO: Echecrates, I have often wondered at Socrates, but I never admired him more than then. Perhaps it was to be expected that he would have an answer ready, but what astonished me more about him was, first, the pleasant, gentle, and respectful manner in which he listened to the young men’s criticisms, secondly, his quick sense of the effect their words had upon us, and lastly, the skill with which he cured us and, as it were, recalled us from our flight and defeat and made us turn around and follow him and join in his examination of the account.

ECHECRATES: How did he do it?

PHAEDO: I’ll tell you. I was sitting at his right hand on a low stool beside his couch, and

his seat was a good deal higher than mine. He stroked my head and gathered the hair on the back of my neck into his hand—he had a habit of playing with my hair on occasion—and said, “Tomorrow, perhaps, Phaedo, you will cut off this beautiful hair.”

“I suppose so, Socrates,” I said.

“Not if you take my advice.”

“What would I do then?” I asked.

“You will cut it off today, and I will cut mine, if our account dies and we cannot bring it to life again. If I were you and the account escaped me, I would take an oath, like the Argives, not to let my hair grow until I had renewed the fight and won a victory over the account of Simmias and Cebes.”

“But,” I replied, “they say that even Heracles is not a match for two.”

“Well,” he said, “call me to help you, as your Iolaus, while there is still light.”¹⁵

“I call you to help, then,” I said, “not as Heracles calling Iolaus, but as Iolaus calling Heracles.”

“That’s all the same,” he said. “But first let us guard against a danger.”

“Of what sort?” I asked. “The danger of becoming misologists or haters of reasoning,” he said, “as people become misanthropists or haters of man; for nothing worse can happen to a man than to hate reasoning.¹⁶ Misology and misanthropy arise from similar causes. For misanthropy arises from trusting someone implicitly without sufficient knowledge. You think the man is perfectly true and sound and trustworthy, and afterwards you find him base and false. Then you have the same experience with another person. After this has happened to a man many times, especially if it happens among the people who he regards as his nearest and dearest friends, he ends up in continual quarrels and hating everybody, thinking that there is nothing sound in anyone at all. Haven’t you noticed this?”

“Certainly,” I said.

“Well,” he went on, “isn’t it disgraceful, and isn’t it clear that such a man tries to consort with men when he is ignorant of human nature? For if he had knowledge when he dealt with them, he would think that there good men and bad men are both very few and that there are very many in between; for that is the case.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean just what I might say about the large and small. Do you think there is anything more unusual than to find a very large or a very small man, or dog, or other creature, or again, one that is very quick or slow, very ugly or beautiful, very black or white? Haven’t you noticed that the extremes in all these cases are rare and few, and that there are very many things between the extremes?”

“To be sure,” I said.

“And don’t you think,” he said, “that if there were a competition in wickedness, there

¹⁵ Iolaus was Heracles (much weaker) nephew, who helped with several of his labors.

¹⁶ The word translated “account” is “*logos*”, a noun derived from the verb “*legein*” meaning to speak. (Our word “logic” comes from it, as does the suffix “-ology”.) It is a difficult family of words to translate because it came to have such a wide meaning. In the first place, “*logos*” can refer to the faculty of speech or to a speech someone gives, but it can also refer to the faculty of *reason*, or to an explanation, argument, or definition. When Plato and Aristotle write about a *logos* (rather than about the faculty of *logos*), translators often the word “account” because it is generic enough to encompass all of these (though not without some awkwardness), and I have been translating the term that way even in contexts where “argument” might read more naturally. In understanding this section, it is important to keep in mind that the word “account” is a form of the same words translated “reason” and “reasoning”.

would also be very few who excelled in that?”

“Very likely,” I replied.

“Yes, very likely,” he said, “But it is not in that way that accounts are like men; I was merely following your lead in discussing that. Here’s the similarity: when a man without proper knowledge concerning reasoning has confidence in the truth of an account and later thinks that it’s false (whether or not it’s really so), and this happens again and again; then you know, those men especially who have spent their time in debates come to believe that they are the wisest of men and that they alone have discovered that there is nothing sound or sure in anything, whether an account or anything else, but all things go up and down, like the tide in the Euripus, and nothing is stable for any length of time.”

“Certainly,” I said, “that is very true.”

“Then, Phaedo,” he said, “if there is any account that is true and sure and can be learned, it would be a sad thing if a man, who’s met with some of those accounts that seem to be sometimes true and sometimes false, didn’t blame himself or his own lack of skill, but ended up, in his frustration, throwing the blame upon the accounts and hating and reviling them for the rest of his life and being deprived of the truth and knowledge of reality.”

“Yes, by Zeus,” I said, “it would be sad.”

“First, then,” he said, “let us be on our guard against this, and let’s not admit into our souls the notion that there is no soundness in accounts at all. Let us always assume instead that we ourselves are not yet in a sound condition and that we must strive manfully and eagerly to become so—you and the others for the sake of all your future life, and I because of my impending death. For I fear that I am not in a philosophical frame of mind right now as regards this particular question, but that I’m contentious, like uncultured people. When they argue about anything, they do not care what the truth is about the issues they’re discussing; they’re just eager to make their own views seem true to their audience. I think that right now I differ from them only to this extent: I won’t be eager to make what I say seem true to my hearers, except as a secondary issue, but I’ll be very eager to make myself believe it. For I am thinking—notice how greedily—that if what I say is true it’s surely a good thing to have been convinced of it, whereas if there nothing for me after death, at least I won’t burden my friends with lamentations in these last moments and my ignorance won’t last (for that would be a bad thing, but it would soon end).

“So, Simmias and Cebes,” he said “this how I’m equipped to approach the account. But if you take my advice, you’ll give little thought to Socrates and much more to the truth; and if you think what I say is true, agree to it, and if not, oppose me with every account you can muster, so that I don’t, out of eagerness, deceive myself and you alike and go away like a bee, leaving its sting behind.”

C. RESPONSE TO SIMMIAS’ OBJECTION

PHAEDO: “But we must get to work,” he said. “First refresh my memory, in case I seem to have forgotten anything. Simmias, I think, has doubts and fears that the soul, though it’s more divine and excellent than the body, might be destroyed first, since it’s a sort of harmony. And, Cebes, I believe, granted that the soul is more lasting than the body, but said that no one could know that the soul, after wearing out many bodies, is not destroyed

itself in the end when leaving the body; and that this is death—the destruction of the soul, since the body is continually being destroyed. Are those the points, Simmias and Cebes, that we must consider?” They both agreed that these were the points. e

“Now,” he said, “do you reject all of our previous accounts, or only some of them?”

“Only some of them,” they replied.

“What you think,” he asked, “about the account in which we said that learning is recollection and that, since this is so, our soul must necessarily have been somewhere before it was imprisoned in the body?” 92

“I was wonderfully convinced by it at the time,” Cebes said, “and I still believe it more firmly than any other account.”

“And I too,” said Simmias, “feel just as he does, and I’d be very surprised if I were to ever think differently on this issue.”

And Socrates said: “You must, my Theban friend, think differently, if you persist in your opinion that a harmony is a compound and that the soul is a harmony made up of the elements that are strung like harp-strings in the body. For surely you won’t accept your own statement that a composite harmony existed before those things from which it had to be composed, will you?” b

“Certainly not, Socrates.”

“Then do you see,” he said, “that this is just what you say when you assert that the soul exists before it enters into the form and body of a man, and that it is composed of things that do not yet exist? For harmony is not what your comparison assumes it to be. The lyre and the strings and the sounds come into being in a tuneless condition, and the harmony is the last of all to be composed and the first to be destroyed. So how can you bring this theory into harmony with the other?” c

“I can’t do it at all,” said Simmias.

“And yet,” said Socrates, “there ought to be harmony between it and the theory about harmony above all others.”

“Yes, there ought to be,” said Simmias.

“Well, there is no harmony between the two theories,” he said. “Now which do you prefer, that knowledge is recollection or that the soul is a harmony?”

“Definitely the former, Socrates,” he replied. “For this other came to me without demonstration; it merely seemed probable and attractive, which is the reason why many men hold it. I am conscious that those accounts which base their demonstrations on mere probability are deceptive, and if we are not on our guard against them they deceive us greatly, in geometry and in all other things. But the theory of recollection and knowledge has been established by a sound course of reasoning. For we agreed that before it entered into the body our soul existed just as does the substance of the sort call by the name “what it is”. Now I am persuaded that I was quite correct to accept this. Therefore, I cannot allow either myself or anyone to say that the soul is a harmony.” d e

“Here is another way of looking at it, Simmias,” he said. “Do you think a harmony or any other composite thing can be in any other state than that in which the elements are of which it is composed?” 93

“Certainly not.”

“And it can neither do nor undergo anything other than they do or undergo?”

He agreed.

“Then a harmony cannot be expected to lead the elements of which it is composed,

rather than following them.”

He assented.

“A harmony, then, is quite unable to move or make a sound or do anything else that is opposed to its component parts.”

“Quite unable,” he said.

“Well then, is not every harmony by nature a harmony according as it is harmonized?”

“I do not understand,” said Simmias.

“Would it not,” said Socrates, “be more completely a harmony and a greater harmony if it were harmonized more fully and to a greater extent, assuming that to be possible, and less completely a harmony and a lesser harmony if less completely harmonized and to a less extent?”

“Certainly.”

“Is this true of the soul? Is one soul even in the slightest degree more completely and to a greater extent a soul than another, or less completely and to a less extent?”

“Not in the least,” he said.

“Well now,” he said, “one soul is said to possess understanding and virtue and to be good, and another is said to lack understanding and possess wickedness and to be bad. Is this true?”

“Yes, it is true.”

“Now what will those who assume that the soul is a harmony say that these things—the virtue and the wickedness—in the soul are? Will they say that this is another kind of harmony and a discord, and that the soul, which is itself a harmony, has within it another harmony and that the other soul is discordant and has no other harmony within it?”

“I can’t say,” replied Simmias, “but evidently those who make that assumption would say something of that sort.”

“But we agreed,” said Socrates, “that one soul is no more or less a soul than another; and that is equivalent to an agreement that one is no more and to no greater extent, and no less and to no less extent, a harmony than another, isn’t it?”

“Certainly.”

“And that which is no more or less a harmony, is no more or less harmonized. Is that so?”

“Yes.”

“But has that which is no more and no less harmonized any greater or any less amount of harmony, or an equal amount?”

“An equal amount.”

“Then a soul, since it is neither more nor less a soul than another, is neither more nor less harmonized.”

“That is so.”

“And therefore can have no greater amount of discord or of harmony?”

“No.”

“And therefore again one soul can have no greater amount of wickedness or virtue than another, if wickedness is discord and virtue harmony?”

“It can’t.”

“Or rather, to speak exactly, Simmias, no soul will have any wickedness at all, if the soul is a harmony; for if a harmony is entirely harmony, it could have no part in discord.”

“Certainly not.”

“Then the soul, being entirely soul, could have no part in wickedness.”

“How could it, if what we have I said is right?”

“According to this account, then, if all souls are by nature equally souls, all souls of all living creatures will be equally good.”

“So it seems, Socrates,” he said.

“And,” said Socrates, “do you think that this is true and that our reasoning would have come to this end, if the theory that the soul is a harmony were correct?”

“Not in the least,” he replied.

“Well,” said Socrates, “of all the parts that make up a man, do you think any is ruler except the soul, especially if it be a wise one?”

“No, I do not.”

“Does it yield to the feelings of the body or oppose them? I mean, when the body is hot and thirsty, does not the soul oppose it and draw it away from drinking, and from eating when it is hungry, and do we not see the soul opposing the body in countless other ways?”

“Certainly.”

“Did we not agree in our previous discussion that, if it were a harmony, it could never give forth a sound at variance with the tensions and relaxations and vibrations and other conditions of the elements which compose it, but that it would follow them and never lead them?”

“Yes,” he replied, “we did, of course.”

“Well then, do we not now find that the soul acts in exactly the opposite way, leading those elements of which it is said to consist and opposing them in almost everything through all our life, and tyrannizing over them in every way, sometimes inflicting harsh and painful punishments (those of gymnastics and medicine), and sometimes milder ones, sometimes threatening and sometimes admonishing, in short, speaking to the desires and passions and fears as if it were distinct from them and they from it, as Homer has shown in the *Odyssey* when he says of Odysseus: ‘He struck his breast, and rebuked his heart, saying “Endure it, heart, you have born worse than this.”’¹⁷ Do you suppose that, when he wrote those words, he thought of the soul as a harmony which would be led by the conditions of the body, and not rather as something fitted to lead and rule them, and itself a far more divine thing than a harmony?”

“By Zeus, Socrates, I think the latter.”

“Then, my good friend, it will never do for us to say that the soul is a harmony; for it seems we’d neither agree with Homer, the divine poet, nor with ourselves.”

“That is true,” he said.

¹⁷ *Odyssey* XX.17-18.

D. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF CEBES' OBJECTION

PHAEDO: "Very well," said Socrates, "we seem to have placated Harmonia of Thebes pretty well; but, Cebes, how and with what account can we placate Cadmus?"¹⁸

"I think you'll find a way," said Cebes. "At any rate, you conducted this account against harmony wonderfully and better than I expected. For when Simmias was describing his difficulty, I wondered if anyone could deal with his account; so it seemed to me very remarkable that it could not withstand the first attack of your account. Now I won't be surprised if the Cadmus' account meets the same fate." b

"My friend," said Socrates, "don't be boastful, we don't want to jinx the coming account. However, that's in the hands of the god. Let's charge our foe in Homeric fashion and test the worth of what you say. Now, to sum up what you're seeking: You demand a proof that our soul is indestructible and immortal. One is needed if the confidence of a philosophical man who is confident in the face of death and thinks that after death he will fare better in the other world than if he had lived his life differently is not to be senseless and foolish. Though we've show that the soul is strong and godlike and existed before we men were born as men, none of this, you say, is evidence of immortality, but only of that the soul is long-lived and existed somewhere an immeasurably long time before our birth, and knew and did various things; yet it is no more immortal for all that, and its very entrance into the human body was the beginning of its dissolution—a disease, as it were: it lives in toil through this life and finally is destroyed in what we call death. Now it makes no difference, you say, whether a soul enters into a body once or many times, so far as the fear each of us feels is concerned; for, unless he's a fool, anyone must e afraid if he does not know and cannot prove that the soul is immortal. Cebes, I think that's about what you're saying. I'm restating it on purpose, so that nothing escapes us and so that you can add or take away anything you want." c d e

And Cebes said, "At present I don't want to take anything away or to add anything. That's what I'm saying."

Socrates paused for some time and was absorbed in thought. Then he said: "It is no small thing that you seek. It calls for a thorough discussion of coming to be and being destroyed. Now I will tell you my own experience in the matter, if you wish; then if anything I say seems to you to be of any use, you can employ it for the solution of your difficulty." 96

"Certainly," said Cebes, "I wish to hear your experiences."

E. SOCRATES' FLIRTATION WITH NATURAL SCIENCE

PHAEDO: "Listen, then, and I will tell you. When I was young, Cebes, I was tremendously eager for the kind of wisdom which they call physics. I thought it was a glorious thing to know the causes of everything, why each thing comes into being and why it is destroyed and why it exists. I was always unsettling myself with such questions as these: Do heat b

¹⁸ Camdus is the legendary founder of Thebes (the city from which both Simmias and Cebes come), and "Harmonia" is both the Greek word for harmony (from which our English word obviously derives) and the name of Camdus' wife. Socrates is using the pun on Harmonia's name to liken couple to the pair of objections from the two Thebans.

and cold, by a sort of fermentation, bring about the organization of animals, as some people say? Is it the blood, or air, or fire by which we think? Or is it none of these, and does the brain furnish the sensations of hearing and sight and smell, and do memory and opinion arise from these, and does knowledge come from memory and opinion in a state of rest? And again I tried to find out how these things are destroyed, and I investigated the phenomena of heaven and earth until finally I made up my mind that I was by nature totally unfitted for this kind of investigation. And I will give you a sufficient proof of this. I was so completely blinded by these studies that I lost the knowledge that I, and others also, thought I had before; I forgot what I had formerly believed I knew about many things and even about the cause of man's growth. For I had thought previously that it was clear to everyone that man grows by eating and drinking; for when, from the food he eats, flesh is added to his flesh and bones to his bones, and in the same way the appropriate thing is added to each of his other parts, then the small bulk becomes greater and the small man large. That is what I used to think. Doesn't that seem to you reasonable?"

"Yes," said Cebes.

"Now listen to this, too. I thought I was sure enough, when I saw a tall man standing by a short one, that he was, say, taller than the other by a head, and that one horse was larger than another horse by a head; and, to mention still clearer things than those, I thought ten were more than eight because two had been added to the eight, and I thought a two-cubit rule was longer than a one-cubit rule because it exceeded it by half its length."

"And now," said Cebes, "what do you think about them?"

"By Zeus," he said, "I am far from thinking that I know the cause of any of these things. I don't even dare to say, when one is added to one, whether the one to which the addition was made has become two, or the one which was added, or the one which was added and the one to which it was added became two by the addition of each to the other. I wonder at how when each of them was separate from the other, each was one and they were not then two, and when they were brought near each other this juxtaposition was the cause of their becoming two. And I cannot yet believe that if one is divided, the division causes it to become two; for this is the opposite of the cause which produced two in the former case; for then two arose because one was brought near and added to another one, and now because one is removed and separated from other. And I no longer think that I know by this method even how one comes to be or, in a word, how anything comes to be or is destroyed or exists. I no longer accept this method, but I have another confused way of my own.

"One day I heard a man reading from a book he said was by Anaxagoras and saying that it is a mind that arranges and causes all things. I was delighted by this cause, and it seemed to me to be somehow right that a mind should be the cause of all things. I thought, 'If this is so, then the mind in arranging things arranges everything and establishes each thing as it is best for it to be; so if anyone wishes to find the cause of a particular thing's coming to be or being destroyed, he must find out what it is best for the thing to be like or to undergo or to do. Going by this account, a man shouldn't consider anything (whether in regard to himself or anything else) other than what's best and most excellent (though the same man will necessarily also know the worse, since the knowledge of both is the same).

“As I considered these things I was delighted to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the cause of things—one who suited my own mind. And I thought he’d tell me whether the earth is flat or round, and then, when he’d told me that, that he’d go on to explain the cause and necessity of its being so, telling me which is better and that it better that it should be as it is; and, if he said that the earth was in the center, we would go on to show that it is best for it to be in the center. If he made those things clear to me, I was ready to never desire any other kind of cause, and I was ready to find out in the same way about the sun and the moon and the other stars—about their relative speeds, and orbits, and the other things that happen to them, and why it is best that each do and undergo the things they do. For I never imagined that, when he said they were ordered by mind, he would introduce any other cause for these things than that it is best for them to be as they are. So I thought when he assigned the cause of each thing and of all things in common he would go on and explain what is best for each and what is good for all in common. I would not have sold my hopes for a fortune, and I seized the books very eagerly and read them as fast as I could, so that I would know as quickly as I could about the best and the worst.

“But, my friend, my glorious hope was quickly snatched away from me. As I went on with my reading I saw that the man made no use of his mind, and did not assign it any responsibility for the ordering of things. Instead he mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other absurdities!

“It seemed to me just as if someone said that Socrates’ actions are all due to his mind, and then, when trying to give the causes of the particular thing I’m doing, said that I am now sitting here because my body is composed of bones and sinews, and the bones are hard and have joints which divide them, whereas the sinews, which can be contracted and relaxed, surround the bones (along with the flesh and the skin which contains them all), and so, since the bones are hung loose in their ligaments, the sinews, by relaxing and contracting, make me able to bend my limbs now, and that is the cause of my sitting here with my legs bent. Or he could give other such causes for my talking to you: sounds and air and hearing and a thousand of others, without mentioning the true causes: that the Athenians judged that it was best to condemn me, and so I judged that it was best for me to sit here and that it is right for me to stay and undergo whatever penalty they order. For, by Dog, I think these bones and sinews of mine would have been in Megara or Boeotia long ago, taken there by my opinion about what was best, if I did not think it was better and nobler to endure any penalty the city may inflict rather than to escape and run away. But it is most absurd to call things of that sort causes. If anyone were to say that I could not have done what I thought proper if I had not bones and sinews and other things that I have, he would be right.

“To say that those things are the cause of my doing what I do, and that I act by my mind but not from the choice of what is best, would be an extremely careless way of talking. Imagine not being able to distinguish between two different things: the real cause and that without which the cause couldn’t act as a cause. And so it seems to me that most people, when they call the latter a ‘cause’, are groping in the dark, as it were, and are giving it a name that does not belong to it. That’s why one man makes the earth stay below the heavens by putting a vortex around it, and another presses it down on the air as if with kneading-trough. They do not look for the power which causes things to be now placed as it is best for them to be placed, nor do they think it has any divine force, but

they think they can find a new Atlas more powerful and more immortal and more all-embracing than this, and in truth they give no thought to the good, which must embrace and hold together all things. c

“Now, Cebes,” he said, “I would gladly be the pupil of anyone who would teach me about such a cause; but since that was denied to me and I was not able to discover it myself or to learn of it from anyone else, do you want me to give you an account of the way in which I have conducted my second voyage in search of the cause?” d

“I want it with all my heart,” he replied.

F. A “SECOND-VOYAGE”: THE HYPOTHETICAL METHOD & THE THEORY OF FORMS

PHAEDO: “After this, then,” he said, “since I had given up investigating real things, I decided that I must be careful not to suffer the misfortune which happens to people who look at the sun and watch it during an eclipse. For some of them ruin their eyes unless they look at its image in water or something of the sort. I thought of that danger, and I was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with any of my senses. So I thought I must have resort to accounts and examine in them the truth of the real things. Now my metaphor may not be not accurate, because I don’t grant at all that someone who studies the real existents by looking to accounts is looking at them in images any more than someone who studies them by looking to things. In any event, that’s the way I began. On each occasion I hypothesize the account that I consider strongest, and I regard whatever seems to me to agree with this (whether relating to cause or to anything else) as true, and I regard whatever disagrees with it as untrue. But I want to tell you more clearly what I mean; for I don’t think you do understand now.” 100

“I certainly don’t understand you very well,” said Cebes. b

“Well,” said Socrates, “this is what I mean. It’s nothing new, but the same thing I’ve always been saying, both in our previous conversation and elsewhere. I am going to try to explain to you sort of cause I’ve been dealing with, and I’ll revert to those things I’ve often mentioned and proceed from them, hypothesizing that there is some beautiful itself by itself, and also a good and a large and all the others. If you grant this and agree that these exist, I think that, from them, I can explain the cause to you and prove that the soul is immortal.” c

“You can certainly take that for granted,” said Cebes, “so proceed.”

“Then see if you agree with me in the next step,” he said. “I think that if anything is beautiful besides the beautiful itself it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of the beautiful itself; and this applies to everything. Do you assent to this view of cause?”

“I do,” he said.

“Now,” he went on, “I no longer understand or recognize those other ingenious causes. If anyone tells me that what makes a thing beautiful is its lovely color, or its shape or anything else of the sort, I let all that go, for all those things confuse me, and I simply, naively, and perhaps foolishly cling to this—that nothing else makes it beautiful but the presence or communion or whatever you want to call it with the beautiful itself—for I don’t insist on that, but only that beautiful things are made beautiful by the beautiful. For I think this is the safest answer I can give to myself or to others, and if I d

stick to this, I don't think I'll ever be overthrown, and I think it's safe for me or anyone else to give this answer, that it is by the beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful. Do you agree?" e

"I do."

"And it's by bigness that big things are big and bigger things bigger, and by smallness that smaller things are smaller?"

"Yes."

"And you wouldn't accept anyone's saying that one man was bigger or smaller than another by a head; rather you'd insist that you say only that every bigger thing is bigger than another by nothing other than bigness, and that it is bigger because of bigness, and that which is smaller is smaller by nothing other than smallness and is smaller because of smallness. For I think you'd be afraid that if you said that a man was bigger or smaller than another by a head you might get the response that, first the bigger is bigger and the smaller is smaller by the same thing, and second, that the bigger man is bigger by a head, which is small, and that it is a monstrous thing that one is big by something that is small. Wouldn't you be afraid of this?" 101 b

And Cebes laughed and said, "Yes, I would."

"Then," he continued, "you would be afraid to say that ten is more than eight by two and that this is why it is more. You would say it is more by number and because of number; and a two cubit measure is bigger than a one-cubit measure not by half but by magnitude, wouldn't you? For you'd have the same fear."

"Certainly," he said.

"Well, then, if one is added to one or if one is divided, you would avoid saying that the addition or the division is the cause of two? You'd exclaim loudly that you know no other way by which anything can come into existence than by participating in the distinctive substance of each thing in which it participates, and therefore you accept no other cause of the existence of two than participation in duality, and things which are to be two must participate in duality, and whatever is to be one must participate in unity, and you would pay no attention to the divisions and additions and other such subtleties, leaving those for wiser men to explain. You would distrust your inexperience and would be afraid, as the saying goes, of your own shadow; so you would cling to that safe hypothesis of ours and would reply as I've said. And, if anyone attacked the hypothesis itself, you would dismiss him and you would not reply until you had examined the consequences to see whether they agreed with one another or not; and when you had to give an account of the hypothesis itself, you would give it in the same way, by hypothesizing some other hypothesis which seemed to you to be the best of the higher ones, and so on until you reached one that was adequate. You would not mix things up, as debaters do, in talking about the principle and its consequences, if you wanted to discover any of the real things. Others don't give any thought to these things or care about them; their wisdom enables them to mix everything up and still be pleased with themselves; but if you're a philosopher, I think you will do as I've said." 102 e

"That is true," said Simmias and Cebes together.

ECHECRATES: By Zeus, Phaedo, they were right. It seems to me that he made those matters astonishingly clear, to anyone with even a little sense.

PHAEDO: Certainly, Echebrates, and everyone there thought so, too.

ECHECRATES: And so do we who weren't there and are hearing about it now. But what was said after that?

PHAEDO: As I remember it, after all this had been admitted, and they had agreed that each of the forms exists and that other things which participate in them get their names from them, then Socrates asked: "Now if you assent to this, don't you, when you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, say that there is bigness and smallness in Simmias?" b

"Yes."

"But," said Socrates, "you agree that the statement that Simmias is bigger than Socrates is not true as stated in those words. For Simmias is not greater than Socrates because he's Simmias, but because of the bigness he happens to have; nor is he bigger than Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness relative to his bigness." c

"True."

"And again, he is not smaller than Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has bigness relative to Simmias's smallness."

"That is true."

"Then Simmias is called small and big, when he is between the two, surpassing the smallness of the one by exceeding him in height, and granting to the other the bigness that exceeds his own smallness." And he laughed and said, "I seem to be speaking like a legal document, but it really is very much as I say." d

Simmias agreed.

"I am speaking like this because I want you to agree with me. I think it is evident not only that bigness itself will never be big and also small, but that the bigness in us will never admit the small or allow itself to be exceeded. One of two things must take place: either it flees or withdraws when its opposite, smallness, advances toward it, or else it has already ceased to exist by the time smallness comes near it. But it will not receive and admit smallness, thereby becoming other than it was. So I have received and admitted smallness and am still the same small person I was, but the bigness in me, being big, cannot endure becoming small. In the same way, the smallness in us will never become or be big, nor will any other opposite which is still what it was, ever become or be also its own opposite. If that happens, it either goes elsewhere or is destroyed." 103 e

"That," said Cebes, "seems to me quite evident."

Then one of those present—I don't just remember who it was—said: "By the gods, isn't this present account the exact opposite of what was agreed in our earlier discussion: that the bigger comes to be from smaller and the smaller from the bigger, and that opposites always come to be from their opposites? Now it seems to me we are saying, this can't ever happen."

Socrates cocked his head on one side and listened. "You've spoken up like a man," he said, "but you don't notice the difference between the present account and what we said before. We said before that one opposite object comes to be from another opposite object, whereas we're now saying that the opposite itself cannot ever come to be its own opposite—neither the opposite in us nor in reality. Then we were talking about things b

that have opposites and are called by names derived from them, but now we're talking about those opposites themselves, from whose presence in them the things called after them derive their names. It is these ones that we're saying would never be tolerate coming to be from one another." c

At the same time he looked at Cebes and said: "And you—are you troubled by any of our friends' objections?"

"No," said Cebes, "not this time; though I confess that objections often do trouble me."

"Well, we're quite agreed on this," said Socrates, "that an opposite can never be its own opposite."

"Entirely agreed," said Cebes.

"Now," he said, "see if you agree with me on what follows: Is there something that you call heat and something you call cold?"

"Yes."

"Are they the same as snow and fire?" d

"No, not at all."

"Heat is a different thing from fire and cold differs from snow?"

"Yes."

"Yet I suppose you believe that if snow admits heat (to employ the form of phrase we used before), it will no longer be what it was, namely snow, and also warm, but will either withdraw when heat approaches it or will cease to exist."

"Certainly."

"And similarly fire, when cold approaches it, will either withdraw or be destroyed. It will never succeed in admitting cold and still being fire, as it was before, and also cold." e

"That is true," he said.

"It's the case, then," he said, "about some of these things that it is not only the form itself that deserves the same name through all time, but also something else that isn't the same as the form, but always, whenever it exists, has the shape of that form. Maybe what I mean will be clearer in this example: surely the odd must always have this name I've just mentioned, right?"

"Certainly."

"But is it the only thing called odd—this is my question—or is there something else that's not the same as it, but which one must nevertheless always call 'odd' as well (as by its own name), because it is by nature such that it can't ever be separated from the odd? I mean the sort of thing that happens to three, and there are many others. Take the case of three: don't you think it must always be called by its own name and also be called odd, which is not the same as three? Yet the number three and the number five (and half of the whole number series) are so constituted, that each of them is odd though not the same as the form of odd. And in the same way two and four and all the other series of numbers are each even, though they're not the same as the even. Do you agree, or not?" b

"Of course," he replied.

"Now see what I want to make clear. This is my point, that not only do the opposites exclude each other, but so do all things which, although not opposites one to another, always contain opposites; these also, we find, exclude the form which is opposed to the form contained in them, and when it approaches they either be destroyed or withdraw. We certainly have to agree that three will endure destruction or anything else rather than c

submit to becoming even, while still remaining three, don't we?"

"Certainly," said Cebes.

"But the two is not the opposite of the three."

"No."

"Then not only opposite forms refuse to admit each other when they come near, but certain other things refuse to admit the approach of the opposites."

"Very true," he said.

"Should we, then," said Socrates, "define, if we can, what these are?"

"Certainly."

"Then, Cebes, will they be those which always compel anything they occupy to contain not only their form but also that of some opposite?"

"What do you mean?"

"Such things as we were speaking of just now. You know of course that whatever the form of three occupies must not only be three but also odd."

"Certainly."

"Now such a thing can never admit the form that is the opposite of the shape that produces this result."

"No, it can't."

"But the result was produced by the shape of the odd?"

"Yes."

"And the opposite of this is the form of the even?"

"Yes."

"Then the even will never be admitted by three."

"No."

"Then three has no part in the even."

"No, it has none."

"Then three is uneven."

"Yes."

"Now what I said we need to define is what things, without being the opposites of something, nevertheless refuse to admit it, as three, though it is not the opposite of the even, nevertheless refuses to admit it, but always brings along its opposite, and as two brings along the opposite of the odd and fire that of cold, and so forth in many other cases. Now see if you would define it this way: it's not only opposites that will not admit their opposites, but nothing that brings some opposite along into that which it occupies will ever admit into itself the opposite of the thing it brings along.

"Now let me refresh your memory; for there is no harm in repetition. The five will not admit the form of the even, nor will ten, the double of five, admit the form of the odd. Now ten is not itself an opposite, and yet it will not admit the form of the odd; and so one-and-a-half and other mixed fractions and one-third and other simple fractions reject the form of the whole. Do you go along with me and agree with this?"

"Yes, I agree entirely," he said, "and I'm with you."

"Then," said Socrates, "please begin again at the beginning. And don't answer in the exact words of my questions, but do as I do. I say that beyond that safe answer that I spoke of at first, I now see another safe answer. If you ask me what by being in anything causes it to be hot, I won't give you that safe but stupid answer and say that it is heat; I can now give a more refined answer, that it is fire. And if you ask what, by being in a

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body, causes it to be ill, I won't say illness, but fever. And if you ask what, by being in a number, causes it to be odd, I won't say oddness, but the number one, and so on. Do you understand sufficiently what I mean?"

"Quite sufficiently," he replied.

G. A PROOF OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

PHAEDO: "Now answer," [Socrates] said. "What, by being in a body, causes it to be alive?"

"The soul," he replied.

"Is this always the case?"

"Yes," he said, "of course."

"Then if the soul takes occupies anything it always brings life to it?"

"Certainly," he said.

"Is there anything that is the opposite of life?"

"Yes," he said.

"What?"

"Death."

"Now the soul, as we agreed before, will never admit the opposite of the thing it brings along with it."

"Decidedly not," said Cebes.

"Then what do we now call that which does not admit the idea of the even?"

"Uneven," he said.

"And those which do not admit justice and music?"

"Unjust," he replied, "and unmusical."

"Well then what do we call that which does not admit death?"

"Deathless or immortal," he said.

"And the soul does not admit death?"

"No."

"Then the soul is immortal."

"Yes."

"Very well," he said. "Shall we say then that this is proved?"

"Yes, and very satisfactorily, Socrates."

"Well then, Cebes," he said, "if the odd were necessarily indestructible, wouldn't three be indestructible?"

"Of course."

"And if that which is without heat were indestructible, wouldn't snow go away whole and unmelted whenever heat was brought in conflict with snow? For it couldn't have been destroyed, nor could it have remained and admitted the heat."

"That is very true," he replied.

"In the same way, I think, if that which is without cold were indestructible, whenever anything cold approached fire, it would never be destroyed or be quenched, but would go away unharmed."

"Necessarily," he said. "And don't we have to say the same thing about that which is immortal? If the immortal is also indestructible, it is impossible for the soul to be destroyed when death comes upon it. For, as our account has shown, it will not admit

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death and will not be dead, just as three, we said, will not be even, and the odd will not be even, and as fire, and the heat in the fire, will not be cold. But, one might say, why isn't it possible that, though the odd does not become even when the even comes upon it (we agreed to that), it is destroyed and the even takes its place? Now we cannot silence someone who raises this question by saying that is not destroyed, for the odd is not indestructible. If that were conceded to us, we could easily silence him by saying that when the even approaches, the odd and the number three go away; and we could make the corresponding reply about fire and heat and the rest, could we not?"

"Certainly."

"And so, too, in the case of the immortal; if it is conceded that the immortal is indestructible, the soul would be indestructible as well as immortal, but if not, a further account is needed."

"But," he said, "it is not needed, so far as that is concerned; for surely nothing would escape being destroyed if the immortal, which is everlasting, is could be destroyed."

"I think," said Socrates, "that everyone would agree that a god and the form of life, and anything else that is immortal, can't ever be destroyed."

"All men certainly would," he said, "and moreover, I imagine that the gods would too."

"Then since the immortal is also indestructible, wouldn't the soul, if it is immortal, also be indestructible?"

"Necessarily."

"Then when death comes to a man, his mortal part, it seems, dies, but the immortal part goes away unharmed and undestroyed, withdrawing from death."

"So it seems."

"Then, Cebes," he said, "it is perfectly certain that the soul is immortal and indestructible, and our souls will exist somewhere in another world."

"I have nothing more to say against that," said Cebes, "and I cannot doubt your conclusions. But if Simmias, or anyone else, has anything to say, he had better say so, since I don't know what future occasion other than the present he could be waiting for, if he wants to say or hear anything about these issues."

"But," said Simmias, "I don't see how I can doubt the result of the discussion either, though since the subject is so large and I have such a poor opinion of human weakness, that I cannot help having some doubt in my own mind about what has been said."

"Not only that, Simmias," said Socrates, "but our initial hypotheses ought to be more carefully examined, even though you accept them. And if you analyze them completely, I think you'll I think, follow and agree with the account, as far as it is possible for man to do so. And if this is made clear, you will seek nothing farther."

"That's true," he said.

V. CONCLUSION

A. THE MORAL OF THE STORY

PHAEDO: “But my friends,” he said, “we ought to keep in mind, that, if the soul is immortal, we must care for it, not only for the sake of this time, which we call life, but for the sake of all time, and if we neglect it, the danger now appears to be terrible. For if death were an escape from everything, it would be a boon to the wicked, for when they died they would be freed from the body and from their wickedness together with their souls. But now, since the soul is seen to be immortal, it cannot escape from badness or be saved in any other way than by becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul takes nothing with it to the other world except its education and nurture, and these are said to benefit or injure the departed greatly from the very beginning of his journey there. And so it is said that after death, the guardian spirit that had been allotted to each person in life, leads him to a place where the dead are gathered together; then they are judged and depart to the other world with the guide whose task it is to lead those who come from this world there; and when they have received their due there and remained through the appointed time, another guide brings them back after many long periods of time. And the journey is not as Telephus says in the play of Aeschylus; for he says a simple path leads to the lower world, but I think the path is neither simple nor single, for if it were, there would be no need of guides, since no one could miss the way to any place if there were only one road. But really there seem to be many forks of the road and many windings; this I infer from the rites and ceremonies practiced here on earth. Now the orderly and wise soul follows its guide and understands its circumstances; but the soul that desires the body, as I said before, flits about it, and in the visible world for a long time, and after much resistance and many sufferings is led away with violence and with difficulty by its appointed spirit. And when it arrives at the place where the other souls are, the soul that’s impure and has done wrong, by committing wicked murders or other deeds akin to those and the works of kindred souls, is avoided and shunned by all, and no one is willing to be its companion or its guide, but it wanders about alone in utter bewilderment, during certain fixed times, after which it is carried by necessity to its fitting habitation. But the soul that has passed through life in purity and righteousness, finds gods for companions and guides, and goes to dwell in its proper dwelling. Now there are many wonderful regions of the earth, and the earth itself is neither in size nor in other respects such as it is supposed to be by those who habitually discourse about it, as I believe on someone’s authority.”

And Simmias said, “What do you mean, Socrates? I have heard a good deal about the earth myself, but not what you believe; so I should like to hear it.”

“Well Simmias, I do not think I need the art of Glaucus to tell what it is. But to prove that it is true would, I think, be too hard for the art of Glaucus, and perhaps I should not be able to do it; besides, even if I had the skill, I think my life, Simmias, will end before the discussion could be finished. However, there is nothing to prevent my telling what I believe the form of the earth to be, and the regions in it.”

“Well,” said Simmias, “that will be enough.”

“I am convinced, then,” he said, “that in the first place, if the earth is round and in the middle of the heavens, it needs neither the air nor any other similar force to keep it from

falling, but its own equipoise and the homogeneous nature of the heavens on all sides suffice to hold it in place; for a body which is in equipoise and is placed in the center of something which is homogeneous cannot change its inclination in any direction, but will remain always in the same position. This, then, is the first thing of which I am convinced.”

“And rightly,” said Simmias.

“Secondly,” he said, “I believe that the earth is very large and that we who dwell between the pillars of Hercules and the river Phasis live in a small part of it about the sea, like ants or frogs about a pond, and that many other people live in many other such regions. For I believe there are in all directions on the earth many hollows of very various forms and sizes, into which the water and mist and air have run together; but the earth itself is pure and is situated in the pure heaven in which the stars are, the heaven which those who discourse about such matters call the ether; the water, mist and air are the sediment of this and flow together into the hollows of the earth. Now we do not perceive that we live in the hollows, but think we live on the upper surface of the earth, just as if someone who lives in the depth of the ocean should think he lived on the surface of the sea, and, seeing the sun and the stars through the water, should think the sea was the sky, and should, by reason of sluggishness or feebleness, never have reached the surface of the sea, and should never have seen, by rising and lifting his head out of the sea into our upper world, and should never have heard from anyone who had seen, how much purer and fairer it is than the world he lived in. I believe this is just the case with us; for we dwell in a hollow of the earth and think we dwell on its upper surface; and the air we call the heaven, and think that is the heaven in which the stars move. But the fact is the same, that by reason of feebleness and sluggishness, we are unable to attain to the upper surface of the air; for if anyone should come to the top of the air or should get wings and fly up, he could lift his head above it and see, as fishes lift their heads out of the water and see the things in our world, so he would see things in that upper world; and, if his nature were strong enough to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the real heaven and the real light and the real earth. For this earth of ours, and the stones and the whole region where we live, are injured and corroded, as in the sea things are injured by the brine, and nothing of any account grows in the sea, and there is, one might say, nothing perfect there, but caverns and sand and endless mud and mire, where there is earth also, and there is nothing at all worthy to be compared with the beautiful things of our world. But the things in that world above would be seen to be even more superior to those in this world of ours. If I may tell a story, Simmias, about the things on the earth that is below the heaven, and what they are like, it is well worth hearing.”

“By all means, Socrates,” said Simmias; “we should be glad to hear this story.”

“Well then, my friend,” he said, “to begin with, the earth when seen from above is said to look like those balls that are covered with twelve pieces of leather; it is divided into patches of various colors, of which the colors which we see here may be regarded as samples, such as painters use. But there the whole earth is of such colors, and they are much brighter and purer than ours; for one part is purple of wonderful beauty, and one is golden, and one is white, whiter than chalk or snow, and the earth is made up of the other colors likewise, and they are more in number and more beautiful than those which we see here. For those very hollows of the earth which are full of water and air, present an appearance of color as they glisten amid the variety of the other colors, so that the whole

produces one continuous effect of variety. And in this fair earth the things that grow, the trees, and flowers and fruits, are correspondingly beautiful; and so too the mountains and the stones are smoother, and more transparent and more lovely in color than ours. In fact, our highly prized stones, sards and jaspers, and emeralds, and other gems, are fragments of those there, but there everything is like these or still more beautiful. And the reason of this is that there the stones are pure, and not corroded or defiled, as ours are, with filth and brine by the vapors and liquids which flow together here and which cause ugliness and disease in earth and stones and animals and plants. And the earth there is adorned with all the jewels and also with gold and silver and everything of the sort. For there they are in plain sight, abundant and large and in many places, so that the earth is a sight to make those blessed who look upon it. And there are many animals upon it, and men also, some dwelling inland, others on the coasts of the air, as we dwell about the sea, and others on islands, which the air flows around, near the mainland; and in short, what water and the sea are in our lives, air is in theirs, and what the air is to us, ether is to them. And the seasons are so tempered that people there have no diseases and live much longer than we, and in sight and hearing and wisdom and all such things are as much superior to us as air is purer than water or the ether than air. And they have sacred groves and temples of the gods, in which the gods really dwell, and they have intercourse with the gods by speech and prophecies and visions, and they see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and in all other ways their blessedness is in accord with this.

Such then is the nature of the earth as a whole, and of the things around it. But round about the whole earth, in the hollows of it, are many regions, some deeper and wider than that in which we live, some deeper but with a narrower opening than ours, and some also less in depth and wider. Now all these are connected with one another by many subterranean channels, some larger and some smaller, which are bored in all of them, and there are passages through which much water flows from one to another as into mixing bowls; and there are everlasting rivers of huge size under the earth, flowing with hot and cold water; and there is much fire, and great rivers of fire, and many streams of mud, some thinner and some thicker, like the rivers of mud that flow before the lava in Sicily, and the lava itself. These fill the various regions as they happen to flow to one or another at any time. Now a kind of oscillation within the earth moves all these up and down. And the nature of the oscillation is as follows: One of the chasms of the earth is greater than the rest, and is bored right through the whole earth; this is the one which Homer means when he says: "Far off, the lowest abyss beneath the earth"; and which elsewhere he and many other poets have called Tartarus. For all the rivers flow together into this chasm and flow out of it again, and they have each the nature of the earth through which they flow. And the reason why all the streams flow in and out here is that this liquid matter has no bottom or foundation. So it oscillates and waves up and down, and the air and wind about it do the same; for they follow the liquid both when it moves toward the other side of the earth and when it moves toward this side, and just as the breath of those who breathe blows in and out, so the wind there oscillates with the liquid and causes terrible and irresistible blasts as it rushes in and out. And when the water retires to the region which we call the lower, it flows into the rivers there and fills them up, as if it were pumped into them; and when it leaves that region and comes back to this side, it fills the rivers here; and when the streams are filled they flow through the passages and through the earth and come to the various places to which their different paths lead, where they

make seas and marshes, and rivers and springs. Thence they go down again under the earth, some passing around many great regions and others around fewer and smaller places, and flow again into Tartarus, some much below the point where they were sucked out, and some only a little; but all flow in below their exit. Some flow in on the side from which they flowed out, others on the opposite side; and some pass completely around in a circle, coiling about the earth once or several times, like serpents, then descend to the lowest possible depth and fall again into the chasm. Now it is possible to go down from each side to the center, but not beyond, for there the slope rises forward in front of the streams from either side of the earth. d e

“Now these streams are many and great and of all sorts, but among the many are four streams, the greatest and outermost of which is that called Oceanus, which flows round in a circle, and opposite this, flowing in the opposite direction, is Acheron, which flows through various desert places and, passing under the earth, comes to the Acherusian lake. To this lake the souls of most of the dead go and, after remaining there the appointed time, which is for some longer and for others shorter, are sent back to be born again into living beings. The third river flows out between these two, and near the place whence it issues it falls into a vast region burning with a great fire and makes a lake larger than our Mediterranean sea, boiling with water and mud. Thence it flows in a circle, turbid and muddy, and comes in its winding course, among other places, to the edge of the Acherusian lake, but does not mingle with its water. Then, after winding about many times underground, it flows into Tartarus at a lower level. This is the river which is called Pyriphlegethon, and the streams of lava which spout up at various places on earth are offshoots from it. Opposite this the fourth river issues, it is said, first into a wild and awful place, which is all of a dark blue color, like lapis lazuli. This is called the Stygian river, and the lake which it forms by flowing in is the Styx. And when the river has flowed in here and has received fearful powers into its waters, it passes under the earth and, circling round in the direction opposed to that of Pyriphlegethon, it meets it coming from the other way in the Acherusian lake. And the water of this river also mingles with no other water, but this also passes round in a circle and falls into Tartarus opposite Pyriphlegethon. And the name of this river, as the Poets say, is Cocytus. “Such is the nature of these things. Now when the dead have come to the place where each is led by his genius, first they are judged and sentenced, as they have lived well and piously, or not. And those who are found to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the Acheron and, embarking upon vessels provided for them, arrive in them at the lake; there they dwell and are purified, and if they have done any wrong they are absolved by paying the penalty for their wrong doings, and for their good deeds they receive rewards, each according to his merits. But those who appear to be incurable, on account of the greatness of their wrongdoings, because they have committed many great deeds of sacrilege, or wicked and abominable murders, or any other such crimes, are cast by their fitting destiny into Tartarus, whence they never emerge. Those, however, who are curable, but are found to have committed great sins—who have, for example, in a moment of passion done some act of violence against father or mother and have lived in repentance the rest of their lives, or who have slain some other person under similar conditions—these must needs be thrown into Tartarus, and when they have been there a year the wave casts them out, the homicides by way of Cocytus, those who have outraged their parents by way of Pyriphlegethon. And when they have been brought by the current to the Acherusian lake, 113 b c d e 114

they shout and cry out, calling to those whom they have slain or outraged, begging and beseeching them to be gracious and to let them come out into the lake; and if they prevail they come out and cease from their ills, but if not, they are borne away again to Tartarus and thence back into the rivers, and this goes on until they prevail upon those whom they have wronged; for this is the penalty imposed upon them by the judges. But those who are found to have excelled in holy living are freed from these regions within the earth and are released as from prisons; they mount upward into their pure abode and dwell upon the earth. And of these, all who have duly purified themselves by philosophy live henceforth altogether without bodies, and pass to still more beautiful abodes which it is not easy to describe, nor have we now time enough.

“But, Simmias, because of all these things which we have recounted we ought to do our best to acquire virtue and wisdom in life. For the prize is fair and the hope great. Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while; and he ought to repeat such things to himself as if they were magic charms, which is the reason why I have been lengthening out the story so long. This then is why a man should be of good cheer about his soul, who in his life has rejected the pleasures and ornaments of the body, thinking they are alien to him and more likely to do him harm than good, and has sought eagerly for those of learning, and after adorning his soul with no alien ornaments, but with its own proper adornment of temperance and justice and courage and freedom and truth, awaits his departure to the other world, ready to go when fate calls him. You, Simmias and Cebes and the rest,” he said, “will go hereafter, each in his own time; but I am now already, as a tragedian would say, called by fate, and it is about time for me to go to the bath; for I think it is better to bathe before drinking the poison, that the women may not have the trouble of bathing the corpse.”

B. SOCRATES' DEATH

PHAEDO: When he had finished speaking, Crito said: “Well, Socrates, do you wish to leave any directions with us about your children or anything else—anything we can do to serve you?”

“What I always say, Crito,” he replied, “nothing new. If you take care of yourselves you will serve me and mine and yourselves, whatever you do, even if you make no promises now; but if you neglect yourselves and are not willing to live following step by step, as it were, in the path marked out by our present and past discussions, you will accomplish nothing, no matter how much or how eagerly you promise now.”

“We will certainly try hard to do as you say,” he replied. “But how shall we bury you?”

“However you please,” he replied, “if you can catch me and I do not get away from you.” And he laughed gently, and looking towards us, said: “I cannot persuade Crito, my friends, that I am really the Socrates who is now conversing and arranging the details of his account; he thinks I am the one whom he will soon see as a corpse, and he asks how to bury me. And though I have been saying at great length that after I drink the poison I will no longer be with you, but will go away to the joys of the blessed you know of, he

seems to think that was idle talk uttered to encourage you and myself.

“So,” he said, “give security for me to Crito, the opposite of the security he gave the judges at my trial; for he gave security that I would remain, but you must give security that I will not remain when I die, but will go away, so that Crito can bear it more easily, and will not be troubled when he sees my body being burnt or buried, so that he won’t think that I’m undergoing terrible treatment, and won’t not say at the funeral that he is laying out Socrates, or following him to the grave, or burying him. For, dear Crito, you can be sure that such wrong words are not only undesirable in themselves, but they infect the soul with badness. No, you must be of courageous, and say that you bury my body,—and bury it as you think best and as seems to you most fitting.”

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When he had said this, he got up and went into another room to bathe; Crito followed him, but he told us to wait. So we waited, talking over with each other and discussing the conversation we had heard, and then speaking of the great misfortune that had befallen us, for we felt that he was like a father to us and that when without him we would pass the rest of our lives as orphans. And when he had bathed and his children had been brought to him—for he had two little sons and one big one—and the women of the family had come, he talked with them in Crito’s presence and gave them such directions as he wished; then he told the women to go away, and he came to us. And it was now nearly sunset; for he had spent a long time inside. And he came and sat down fresh from the bath.

b

c

After that not much was said, and the servant of the eleven came and stood beside him and said: “Socrates, I will not find fault with you, as I do with others, for being angry and cursing me, when at the behest of the authorities, I tell them to drink the poison. No, in all this time and in every way I have found you to be the noblest and gentlest and best man who has ever come here, and now I know your anger is directed against others, not against me, for you know who is blame. Now, for you know the message I came to bring you: farewell and try to bear what you must as easily as you can.” And he burst into tears and turned and went away.

d

Socrates looked up at him and said: “Fare you well, too; I will do as you say.” And then he said to us: “How charming the man is! Ever since I have been here he has been coming to see me and talking with me from time to time, and has been the best of men, and now how nobly he weeps for me! But come, Crito, let us obey him, and let someone bring the poison, if it is ready; and if not, let the man prepare it.”

e

And Crito said: “But I think, Socrates, the sun is still upon the mountains and has not yet set; and I know that others have taken the poison very late, after the order has come to them, and in the meantime have eaten and drunk and some of them enjoyed the company of their loved ones. Don’t hurry; there is still time.”

And Socrates said: “Crito, the people you mention are right in doing as they do, for they think they gain by it; and I will be right in not doing as they do; for I think I will gain nothing by taking the poison a little later. I will only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I cling to life and being sparing when there’s none left. Come,” he said, “do as I ask and do not refuse.”

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At this Crito nodded to the boy who was standing near. The boy went out and stayed a long time, then came back with the man who was to administer the poison, which he brought with him in a cup ready for use. And when Socrates saw him, he said: “Well, my good man, you know about these things; what must I do?”

“Nothing,” he replied, “except drink the poison and walk around until your legs feel heavy; then lie down, and the poison will take effect by itself.” b

At the same time he held out the cup to Socrates. He took it, and very gently, Echeocrates, without trembling or changing color or expression, but looking up at the man with wide open eyes, as was his custom, said: “What do you say about pouring a libation to some deity from this cup? May I, or not?”

“Socrates,” he said, “we prepare only as much as we think is enough.”

“I understand,” said Socrates, “but I may and must pray to the gods that my departure hence be a fortunate one; so I offer this prayer, and may it be granted.” c

With these words he raised the cup to his lips and very cheerfully and quietly drained it. Up to that time most of us had been able to restrain our tears fairly well, but when we watched him drinking and saw that he had drunk the poison, we could do so no longer. In spite of myself my tears rolled down in floods, so that I wrapped my face in my cloak and wept for myself; for it was not for him that I wept, but for my own misfortune in being deprived of such a friend. d

Crito had got up and gone away even before I did, because he could not restrain his tears. But Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time before, then wailed aloud in his grief and made us all break down, except Socrates himself. But he said, “What conduct is this, you strange men! I sent the women away chiefly for this very reason, so that they wouldn’t behave in this absurd way; for I’ve heard that it is best to die in silence. Keep quiet and be brave.”

Then we were ashamed and controlled our tears. He walked about and, when he said his legs were heavy, lay down on his back, for this was the advice of the attendant. The man who had administered the poison laid his hands on him and after a while examined his feet and legs, then pinched his foot hard and asked if he felt it. He said “No”; then after that, his thighs; and passing upwards in this way he showed us that he was growing cold and rigid. And again he touched him and said that when it reached his heart, he would be gone. The chill had now reached the region about the groin, and uncovering his face, which had been covered, he said—and these were his last words—“Crito, I owe a cock to Aesculapius. Pay it and do not neglect it.” e

“That,” said Crito, “shall be done; but see if you have anything else to say.”

To this question he made no reply, but after a little while he moved; the attendant uncovered him; his eyes were fixed. And Crito, when he saw it, closed his mouth and eyes. 118

Such was the end, Echeocrates, of our friend, who was, as we may say, of all those of his time whom we have known, the best and wisest and most wise and just man.