Phaedo

PLATO

c. 428–348 BC

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Φαίδων

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Phaedo · Plato (c. 428–348 BC)

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, September 2026. forage.com/plato/phaedo

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INTRODUCTION

The *Phaedo* tells the story of Socrates' last day. Phaedo, who was there, recounts it to a friend: the conversation in the prison about whether the soul survives death, and then the hemlock.

Along the way Plato sets out his theory of forms, the argument that learning is recollection, and Socrates' account of how he turned from natural science to philosophy. The ending is one of the most moving passages in ancient literature.

Phaedo

Phlius, some time after Socrates' death. Phaedo tells Echecrates what happened.
Socrates argues for the soul's immortality on his last day, then drinks the poison.

ECHECRATES [57a] Were you there with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, on the day he drank the poison in the prison, or did you hear about it from someone else?

PHAEDO I was there myself, Echecrates.

ECHECRATES Then what did the man say before his death? And how did he die? I'd be glad to hear. You see, none of our citizens in Phlius goes to Athens much these days, and no visitor has come in a long time [57b] from there who could give us any clear report about all this—except, of course, that he drank the poison and died. About the rest he had nothing to tell us.[1]

PHAEDO [58a] So you didn't even learn how the trial went?

ECHECRATES Yes, somebody did report that to us, and we were surprised that he evidently died long after it took place. Why was that, Phaedo?

PHAEDO It was a stroke of luck, Echecrates. It so happened that on the day before the trial the stern of the ship the Athenians send to Delos had been garlanded.

ECHECRATES And what is that?

PHAEDO That, according to the Athenians, is the ship in which Theseus once sailed to Crete taking [58b] those famous "twice

seven," and saved them and was saved himself. The story goes that the Athenians vowed to Apollo at the time that if they were saved they would send a sacred mission to Delos every year; and ever since then they have sent it to the god annually, as they still do now. Once the mission has begun, it's their law that for that period the city must be kept pure and no one may be publicly executed until the ship has reached Delos and come back here again. Sometimes this takes a long time, when the winds happen to hold 58c them back. The mission begins when the priest of Apollo garlands the ship's stern—and this, as I say, happened to have been done on the day before the trial.[2] That's why Socrates spent a long time in prison between his trial and his death.

ECHECRATES And what about the death itself, Phaedo? What was said and done, and which of his friends were with him? Or did the authorities not let them be there, so that he died without friends?

PHAEDO 58d Not at all. Some were there—quite a few, in fact.

ECHECRATES Then please be good enough to tell us all of it as clearly as you can, unless you happen to be busy.

PHAEDO No, I have time, and I'll try to tell you the whole story. Remembering Socrates, whether I'm talking about him myself or listening to someone else, is always the most pleasant thing of all for me.

ECHECRATES Well, Phaedo, the people who'll be listening to you feel just the same. So try to go through everything as precisely as you can.

PHAEDO Well, what I felt while I was there was extraordinary. I wasn't overcome by pity, as you might expect of someone present at the death of a friend. The man seemed happy to me, Echecrates, both in his manner and in his words, so fearlessly

1 Phlius was a small city in the northeastern Peloponnese, where Phaedo tells this story to Echecrates.

2 The "twice seven" were the seven young men and seven young women Athens sent as tribute to the Minotaur in Crete; Theseus killed the monster and brought them home.

and nobly did he meet his end. It struck me that even in going to Hades he was not going without some divine dispensation, and that when he got there he would fare well, [59a] if anyone ever did.

That's why I felt no pity at all, as would seem natural for someone present at a scene of grief—nor, on the other hand, the pleasure we used to feel when we were engaged in philosophy, though our conversation was of that kind. Instead, I was in a truly strange state, an unfamiliar blend of pleasure and pain mixed together, as I reflected that he was about to die any moment. All of us who were there were in much the same condition, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, and one of us in particular, Apollodorus— [59b] I expect you know the man and what he's like.[3]

ECHECRATES Of course.

PHAEDO Well, he was completely like that, and I was shaken myself, and so were the others.

ECHECRATES And who happened to be there, Phaedo?

PHAEDO Of the locals, there was this Apollodorus, and Critobulus and his father, and also Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines and Antisthenes. Ctesippus of Paeania was there too, and Menexenus, and some other locals. Plato, I believe, was ill.[4]

ECHECRATES Were there any visitors from elsewhere?

PHAEDO [59c] Yes: Simmias of Thebes, and Cebes and Phaedondes, and from Megara, Euclides and Terpsion.

ECHECRATES What about Aristippus and Cleombrotus? Were they there?

PHAEDO No, they weren't; they were said to be in Aegina.

ECHECRATES Was anyone else there?

PHAEDO I think those were about all.

3 Apollodorus was a devoted and famously emotional follower of Socrates; he narrates Plato's *Symposium*.

4 Critobulus' father is Crito, Socrates' old friend, who plays a large part in what follows.

ECHECRATES Well then? What do you say the conversation was?

THE LAST DAY IN PRISON

Phaedo describes the friends' final visit, and Socrates says a philosopher welcomes death but may not take his life.

PHAEDO I'll try to tell you everything from the beginning. On the previous days too, the others and I had always been in the habit of visiting Socrates. We would gather at dawn at the courthouse where the trial had taken place, since it was close to the prison. Each day we would wait around, talking with one another, until the prison opened—it didn't open early—and when it did, we would go in to Socrates and usually spend the day with him. On that day we gathered earlier than usual, because the day before, 59e when we left the prison in the evening, we had learned that the ship had arrived from Delos. So we told each other to come to the usual place as early as possible. We came, and the doorkeeper who usually answered us came out and told us to wait and not go in until he gave the word. "The Eleven," he said, "are releasing Socrates from his chains and giving instructions for his death today."[5]

He didn't keep us waiting long, though; he came back and told us to go in. When we went in, 60a we found Socrates just released from his chains, and Xanthippe—you know her—sitting beside him holding their little boy. When Xanthippe saw us, she cried out and said the sort of thing women usually say: "Socrates, this is the last time your friends will talk to you, and you to them." And Socrates looked at Crito and said, "Crito, have someone take her home."[6]

Some of Crito's people led her away, crying out 60b and beating her breast. Socrates sat up on the bed, bent his leg, and rubbed it with his hand, and as he rubbed it he said, "What a strange thing it seems to be, gentlemen, this thing people call pleasure!

5 The Eleven were the Athenian officials in charge of the prison and of executions.
6 Xanthippe was Socrates' wife.

How remarkably it's related to what's thought to be its opposite, pain: the two refuse to come to a person at the same time, yet if someone pursues one of them and catches it, he's almost always compelled to catch the other too, as though they were joined to a single head 60c while being two." "I think," he said, "that if Aesop had noticed this, he'd have made up a fable about it: the god wanted to reconcile them in their war with each other, and when he couldn't, he fastened their heads together; and that's why whoever gets one of them finds the other following close behind. That's just how it seems to be with me, too. Since there was pain in my leg from the chain, now pleasure seems to have come following after it."[7]

Cebes broke in: "By Zeus, Socrates," he said, "I'm glad you reminded me. Several people have asked me about the 60d poems you've made by putting Aesop's stories into verse, and your hymn to Apollo—Evenus among them, just the other day. They wanted to know what you had in mind when you wrote them after coming here, since you'd never written any poetry before. So if you care at all about my having an answer for Evenus when he asks me again—and I know very well he will—tell me what I should say."[8]

Well, Cebes, he said, tell him the truth: that I didn't make them because I wanted to compete 60e with him or his poems—I knew that wouldn't be easy—but to test the meaning of certain dreams, and to make sure I hadn't neglected a sacred duty, in case this was the kind of music they were telling me to make. It was like this. The same dream often came to me in my past life, appearing in different forms at different times but always saying the same thing: "Socrates," it said, "make music and work at it."[9]

In the past I took it that the dream was urging 61a and encouraging me to do what I was already doing. Just as people cheer on runners, so the dream was cheering me on in what I was doing,

7 Aesop was the legendary author of the Greek animal fables.
8 Evenus of Paros was a teacher of rhetoric and a poet.
9 The Greek *mousikē* covers all the arts of the Muses, poetry and song as well as music.

making music—since philosophy is the greatest music, and that was what I was doing. But now, after the trial, since the god's festival was preventing my death, I thought that if the dream happened to be telling me to make music in the popular sense, I ought not to disobey it, but to make some. It seemed safer not to depart before I had fulfilled my sacred duty 61b by making poems and obeying the dream. So first I composed a poem to the god whose festival it was. After the god, I realized that a poet, if he's really going to be a poet, has to make stories, not arguments, and I myself was no storyteller. So I took the stories I had at hand and knew, Aesop's, and made poems out of the first ones I came across. Tell Evenus this, Cebes, and bid him farewell, and tell him, if he's sensible, to follow me as quickly as he can. 61c I'm leaving today, it seems; the Athenians order it.

And Simmias said, "What advice to give Evenus, Socrates! I've met the man many times, and from what I've seen of him, he won't be at all willing to take it."

"Why?" he said. "Isn't Evenus a philosopher?"

"I think so," said Simmias.

"Then Evenus will be willing, and so will anyone who takes part in this pursuit in a worthy way. Still, he probably won't do violence to himself; they say that isn't permitted." And as he said this he put 61d his feet down on the ground, and he stayed sitting like that for the rest of the conversation.

Then Cebes asked him, "What do you mean, Socrates, that it isn't permitted to do violence to oneself, and yet the philosopher would be willing to follow someone who is dying?"

"What, Cebes? Haven't you and Simmias heard about such things, when you spent time with Philolaus?"[10]

"Nothing clear, Socrates."

"Well, I too speak about them only from hearsay; but I don't mind telling you what I happen to have heard. And in fact it's perhaps 61e most fitting for someone about to travel to that other place to examine and tell stories about the journey there, and

10 Philolaus was a Pythagorean philosopher who had lived in Thebes, the home city of Simmias and Cebes.

what we think it's like. What else would one do in the time until sunset?"

"Then why is it, Socrates, that they say it isn't permitted to kill oneself? To answer what you were just asking, I did hear Philolaus say, when he was living with us, and some others too, that one mustn't do this; but I've never heard anything clear about it from anyone."

62a "Well, you must keep trying," he said, "for you may yet hear it. Still, it will perhaps seem surprising to you if this alone of all things is without exception, and it never happens for a human being, as other things do, that at some times and for some people it is better to be dead than alive; and it perhaps seems surprising to you that for those people for whom it is better to be dead, it's not holy to do themselves this good, but they must wait for someone else to be their benefactor."

And Cebes gave a quiet laugh. "Zeus knows it!" he said, speaking in his own dialect. 62b **11**

"It would seem unreasonable, put that way," said Socrates. "Still, perhaps there is some reason in it. The account given in the secret teachings about these things, that we humans are in a kind of custody and must not release ourselves from it or run away, seems to me a weighty one and not easy to see through. But this much at least, Cebes, seems to me well said: that it is gods who take care of us, and that we humans are among the gods' possessions. Or don't you think so?"

"I do," said Cebes. 62c

"Then," he said, "if one of your own possessions were to kill itself when you hadn't indicated that you wanted it dead, wouldn't you be angry with it, and punish it if you had some way of punishing it?"

"Certainly," he said.

"Then perhaps in this sense it isn't unreasonable that one must not kill oneself before a god sends some necessity, like the one now before us."

That does seem likely, said Cebes. But what you were saying just now, that philosophers would readily be willing [62d] to die—that seems strange, Socrates, if what we were saying a moment ago is reasonable, that it is a god who takes care of us and that we are his possessions. It makes no sense that the most sensible people shouldn't be upset at leaving this service, in which they are overseen by the best overseers there are, the gods. Surely a sensible man doesn't think he'll take better care of himself once he's free. A foolish person might perhaps think so, that he should run away [62e] from his master; he wouldn't reason that one mustn't run away from a good master, but should stay with him as much as possible, and so he would run away without thinking. But a person with sense would always want, I imagine, to be with someone better than himself. And yet, Socrates, on this reasoning the opposite of what was said just now is likely to be true: it's fitting for the sensible to be upset at dying, and for the foolish to be glad.

When Socrates heard this, he seemed to me pleased with Cebes' [63a] persistence, and he looked at us and said, "Cebes is always tracking down arguments, and he isn't at all willing to be persuaded straight away by whatever anyone says."

And Simmias said, "But this time, Socrates, I think myself that Cebes has a point. Why would truly wise men want to run away from masters better than themselves and part from them so lightly? And I think Cebes is aiming his argument at you, because you're taking it so lightly to leave both us and good rulers—the gods, as you admit yourself." [63b]

"What you both say is fair," he said. "I take it you mean I have to defend myself against this, as though in a law court."

"Exactly," said Simmias.

11 Cebes, a Theban, swears in the Boeotian form of the oath.

A DEFENSE BEFORE FRIENDS

Socrates explains why he faces death calmly: the philosopher seeks truth free of the body.

PHAEDO "Come on, then," he said, "let me try to make a more persuasive defense to you than I did to the jury. Simmias and Cebes," he said, "if I didn't believe that I was going, first, to other gods who are wise and good, and then also to dead people better than those here, I'd be wrong not to be upset at death. But as things are, you can be sure that I hope to come among 63c good men—though I wouldn't insist on that very strongly—but that I will come to gods who are very good masters, you can be sure that if I'd insist on anything of that sort, I'd insist on this. So for this reason I'm not as upset, but I'm hopeful that there is something in store for the dead, and, as has long been said, something much better for the good than for the bad."

"Well, Socrates," said Simmias, "do you mean to go away keeping this thought to yourself, or would you share it with us too? 63d It seems to me this is a good that's ours as well, and at the same time it will be your defense, if you persuade us of what you're saying."

"I'll try," he said. "But first let's see what it is that Crito here seems to have been wanting to say for some time."

"Only this, Socrates," said Crito: "the man who is going to give you the poison has been telling me for some time that I must tell you to talk as little as possible. He says people get heated when they talk, and one mustn't bring anything like that to bear 63e on the poison; otherwise people who do that sometimes have to drink it two or even three times."

And Socrates said, "Never mind him. Just let him get his own part ready to give it twice, or three times if need be."

"I pretty much knew you'd say that," said Crito, "but he's been bothering me for some time."

"Never mind him," he said.

But now I want to give my account to you, my judges, of why it seems to me reasonable that a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy should be confident when he is about 64a to die, and hopeful that he will win the greatest goods there once he has died. How this can be so, Simmias and Cebes, I'll try to explain.

Those who happen to engage in philosophy in the right way are likely to have escaped other people's notice in this: that they themselves practice nothing other than dying and being dead. Now if this is true, it would surely be strange to be eager for nothing but this all one's life, and then, when it actually comes, to be upset at the very thing one had long been eager for and practicing.

And Simmias laughed and said, "By Zeus, Socrates, 64b you made me laugh, though I was hardly in a mood for laughing just now. I think most people, hearing just this, would think it very well said about philosophers—and people back home would agree entirely—that philosophers really are longing for death, and that they themselves are well aware that philosophers deserve to suffer it."

"And they'd be telling the truth, Simmias, except for their being well aware. They aren't aware in what way true philosophers long for death, in what way they deserve death, and what kind of death. 64c Let's talk among ourselves," he said, "and say goodbye to them. Do we think that death is something?"

"Certainly," Simmias replied.

"Is it anything other than the separation of the soul from the body? And is being dead this: the body's having come to be apart, separated from the soul, itself by itself, and the soul's being apart, separated from the body, itself by itself? Death couldn't be anything other than this, could it?"

"No, it's this," he said.

"Now consider, my good friend, whether you agree with me about this. 64d I think it will help us understand better what we're looking into. Do you think it's characteristic of a philosopher to

be serious about the so-called pleasures of this sort, such as those of food and drink?"

"Not in the least, Socrates," said Simmias.

"What about the pleasures of sex?"

"Not at all."

"And what about the other ways of tending the body? Do you think such a man regards them as important? Owning fine clothes and shoes, for example, and the other adornments of the body—do you think he values them or thinks little of them, 64e except insofar as he absolutely has to have them?"

"I think he thinks little of them," he said, "the true philosopher, at any rate."

"Then in general," he said, "do you think that such a man's concern is not with the body, but that as far as he can, he stands apart from it and is turned toward the soul?"

"I do."

"So first of all, in matters like these, isn't it clear that the 65a philosopher, more than other people, releases his soul as far as possible from its partnership with the body?"

"It seems so."

"And I suppose, Simmias, most people think that someone who finds nothing of this sort pleasant and has no share in it doesn't have a life worth living; the man who cares nothing for the pleasures that come through the body is pretty close to being dead."

"What you say is quite true."

"And what about the actual acquiring of understanding? Is the body a hindrance or not, if one takes it along as a partner 65b in the search? What I mean is this: do sight and hearing give people any truth, or is it as even the poets are forever telling us, that we neither hear nor see anything accurately? And yet if these among the bodily senses aren't accurate or clear, the others hardly will be, since they're all inferior to these, I suppose. Or don't you think so?"

"I certainly do," he said.

"When, then," he said, "does the soul grasp the truth? Whenever it tries to examine anything together with the body, it's clearly deceived by it." 65c

"That's true."

"So isn't it in reasoning, if anywhere, that any of the things that are becomes clear to it?"

"Yes."

"And it reasons best, I suppose, when none of these things troubles it—neither hearing nor sight nor pain nor any pleasure—but it comes to be, as far as possible, itself by itself, saying goodbye to the body, and, as far as it can, without partnership or contact with it, reaches out for what is."

"That's so."

"So here too the philosopher's soul most of all 65d disdains the body and flees from it, and seeks to be itself by itself?"

"It seems so."

"And what about things like this, Simmias? Do we say that there is something just itself, or not?"

"By Zeus, we certainly do."

"And again, something beautiful, and good?"

"Of course."

"Now, have you ever seen any of these with your eyes?"

"Never," he said.

"Or grasped them with any other of the senses that work through the body? I'm speaking about all of them—for example, about size, health, strength, and, in a word, about the being of all the others, what 65e each of them actually is. Is their truest nature observed through the body? Or is it like this: whichever of us prepares himself most fully and most precisely to think about each thing he examines, the thing itself, will come closest to knowing each thing?"

"Certainly."

"Then wouldn't the person who does this most purely be the one who approaches each thing with thought alone, as far as possible, neither bringing sight into his thinking nor dragging any other 66a sense along with his reasoning, but using pure

thought itself by itself, tries to hunt down each of the things that are, pure and itself by itself—freed as far as possible from eyes and ears and, so to speak, from the whole body, since the body disturbs the soul and doesn't let it acquire truth and understanding whenever it is its partner? Isn't this the man, Simmias, who will reach what is, if anyone will?"

"What you say is extraordinarily true, Socrates," said Simmias. 66b

PHILOSOPHY AS PRACTICE FOR DYING

Socrates argues that philosophy is practice for dying, since it separates the soul from the body.

PHAEDO Then from all this, he said, genuine philosophers must come to hold some such belief, so that they say something like this to one another: "There seems to be a kind of path that carries us, with reason as our guide, to this view in our inquiry: as long as we have the body, and our soul is mixed up with such an evil, we will never adequately acquire what we desire—and this, we say, is the truth. The body gives us countless distractions because of its need for 66c nourishment; and besides, if any diseases fall upon us, they hinder our hunt for what is. It fills us with lusts and desires and fears and all sorts of phantoms and a great deal of nonsense, so that, as the saying goes, truly and really, because of it we can never think about anything at all. "Wars, too, and factions and battles are caused by nothing other than the body and its desires. All wars come about for the sake of getting money, and it's because of the body that we are 66d compelled to get money, enslaved as we are to its care. So, because of all this, we have no leisure for philosophy. And worst of all, if we do get some leisure from it and turn to looking into something, it keeps intruding everywhere in our inquiries, causing uproar and confusion and throwing us into a daze, so that because of it we can't make out the truth. "In fact it has been shown to us that if we are ever going to know anything purely, 66e we must get free of the body and look at things themselves

with the soul itself. And then, it seems, we will have what we desire and claim to be in love with—understanding—once we have died, as the argument indicates, but not while we are alive.

"For if it is impossible to know anything purely in the body's company, then one of two things follows: either knowledge can be gained nowhere, or only by the dead. For then, 67a and not before, the soul will be itself by itself, apart from the body. "And while we are alive, it seems, we will come closest to knowing if we associate with the body as little as possible and have nothing to do with it beyond what is absolutely necessary, and don't let ourselves be filled with its nature, but keep ourselves pure of it until the god himself releases us. In this way, pure and rid of the body's folly, we will probably be in the company of things that are likewise pure, and we will know through our 67b own selves all that is unmixed—and that, perhaps, is the truth. For it may well be that the impure is not permitted to lay hold of the pure." Things like this, Simmias, are what I think all who rightly love learning must say to one another and believe. Or don't you think so?

"More than anything, Socrates."

"Well then, my friend," said Socrates, "if this is true, there is great hope that when I arrive where I am going, there, if anywhere, I will fully gain what all our great effort in our past life has been for. So the 67c journey now laid upon me begins with good hope, and so it does for any other man who believes his mind has been prepared by being, as it were, purified."

"Certainly," said Simmias.

"And doesn't purification turn out to be just what was said some time ago in our argument: separating the soul from the body as far as possible, and accustoming it to gather and collect itself by itself out of every part of the body, and to live, as far as it can, both now and 67d hereafter, alone by itself, released from the body as if from chains?"

"Certainly," he said.

"And isn't this what is called death—a release and separation of the soul from the body?"

"Absolutely," he said.

"And it's those who practice philosophy rightly, we say, who are always most eager to release the soul, and they alone; and this very thing is the philosophers' practice: the release and separation of the soul from the body. Isn't that so?"

"It seems so."

"Then, as I said at the beginning, wouldn't it be absurd for a man [67e] to prepare himself throughout his life to live as close as possible to being dead, and then, when that comes to him, to resent it?"

"Absurd—of course it would."

So in truth, Simmias, he said, those who practice philosophy rightly are practicing dying, and to them, of all people, being dead is least frightening. Look at it this way.

If they are at odds with the body in every way and desire to have the soul by itself, then when this comes about, if they were afraid and resentful, wouldn't it be highly unreasonable of them not [68a] to go gladly to the place where, once they arrive, they can hope to obtain what they longed for all their lives—and what they longed for was understanding—and to be rid of the companion they were at odds with? Many people, when their human beloveds or wives or sons have died, have been willing to go to Hades of their own accord, led by the hope of seeing there those they longed for and being with them. And will someone who is truly in love with understanding, and who firmly holds this same hope, that he will meet with it nowhere else [68b] worth speaking of than in Hades, resent dying and not go there gladly? One would have to think he'll go gladly, my friend, if he really is a philosopher. For he will be firmly convinced that he will meet with understanding in its purity nowhere but there. And if that is so, wouldn't it be highly unreasonable, as I was saying just now, for such a man to fear death?

"Highly unreasonable, by Zeus," he said.

"Then isn't this sufficient evidence for you," he said, "that any man you see resenting it when he is about to die was not, after all, [68c] a lover of wisdom but a lover of the body? And this same

man, I suppose, is also a lover of money or a lover of honor, either one or both."

"It is just as you say," he said.

"Well, Simmias," he said, "doesn't what is called courage also belong above all to people of this disposition?"

"Surely it does," he said.

"And moderation too—what even most people call moderation, not being carried away by one's desires but treating them with disdain and keeping them in order—doesn't it belong only to those who most disdain the body and live in philosophy?"

"Necessarily," he said.

"Yes," he said, "because if you are willing to consider the courage and moderation of other people, you'll find it strange."

"How so, Socrates?"

"You know," he said, "that all other people consider death one of the great evils?"

"Very much so," he said.

"And the courageous among them endure death, when they do endure it, out of fear of greater evils?"

"That's so."

"So it's by being afraid—by fear—that everyone except philosophers is courageous. And yet it's unreasonable for anyone to be courageous through fear and cowardice." 68e

"Certainly."

What about the orderly ones among them? Isn't it the same with them—they are moderate through a kind of self-indulgence? We say that's impossible, and yet what happens to them with this simple-minded moderation is something like that. Because they are afraid of being deprived of some pleasures and desire them, they abstain from others, being mastered by the first.

And yet people call it self-indulgence 69a to be ruled by pleasures. All the same, what happens to them is that, being mastered by pleasures, they master other pleasures. And this is like what was just said, that in a way they have been made moderate through self-indulgence.

"So it seems."

My dear Simmias, this may not be the right exchange with a view to excellence—trading pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and fear for fear, greater for lesser, like coins. It may be that the only right coin, for which all these must be exchanged, is understanding, [69b] and that everything bought and sold for this and with this is truly courage and moderation and justice—in short, true excellence goes with understanding, whether pleasures and fears and everything else of that kind are added or taken away. But when they are separated from understanding and exchanged for one another, such excellence may be a kind of illusionist's painting, fit for slaves in truth, with nothing sound or true about it. What is true, in truth, may be [69c] a kind of purification from all such things, and moderation and justice and courage, and understanding itself, may be a kind of rite of purification.[12] And it may be that the people who established our initiation rites were not so foolish after all, but have long been speaking in riddles when they say that whoever arrives in Hades uninitiated and unconsecrated will lie in the mud, while whoever arrives there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods. For, as those concerned with the rites say, "Many carry the fennel wand, [69d] but few are Bacchants." And these, in my view, are none other than those who have practiced philosophy rightly. I myself, as far as I could, left nothing undone in my life to become one of them, but strove to in every way. Whether I strove rightly and achieved anything, we will know for certain when we get there, god willing, a little while from now, as it seems to me.[13] This, then, Simmias and Cebes, he said, is my defense: that it is reasonable for me not to be distressed or resentful at leaving you and my masters here, since I believe that there, no less than here, I will find good masters and good companions. Most people don't believe this. So if my defense is

12 "Illusionist's painting" (skiagraphia) was a technique of shading that looked convincing from a distance but showed only blotches up close.

13 The fennel wand (narthex) was carried by worshippers of Dionysus; a Bacchant is one truly possessed by the god.

any more persuasive to you than it was to the Athenian jurors, that would be good.

THE ARGUMENT FROM OPPOSITES

Cebes doubts the soul survives death, and Socrates argues that the living come from the dead.

PHAEDO When Socrates had said this, Cebes took it up and said, "Socrates, the rest seems to me well said, 70a but what you say about the soul leaves people with grave doubts. They fear that when it is released from the body it no longer exists anywhere, but is destroyed and perishes on the very day the person dies: that as soon as it is released from the body, it goes out like breath or smoke, scattered, flies off and is gone, and no longer exists anywhere at all. Of course, if it did exist somewhere, gathered together itself by itself and rid of those evils you went through just now, there would be great and fine hope, 70b Socrates, that what you say is true. But this, perhaps, needs no little reassurance and proof: that the soul exists when the person has died, and has some power and understanding."

"What you say is true, Cebes," said Socrates. "But what are we to do? Do you want us to talk through these very things, whether it's likely to be so or not?"

"I, at any rate," said Cebes, "would be glad to hear what view you hold about them."

Well, said Socrates, I don't think anyone who heard me now, not even a comic poet, would say I'm babbling and talking about things that are none of my business. So if you like, we should examine it thoroughly.[14]

Let's consider it in some such way as this: whether the souls of people who have died are in Hades or not. Now there is an ancient account, which we remember, that they go there from here, and come back here again and are born from the dead. And if this is so, that the living are born again from those who

14 Comic poets, Aristophanes in the *Clouds* among them, had mocked Socrates as an idle babbler.

have died, then wouldn't our souls [70d] exist there? They could hardly be born again if they didn't exist, and it would be sufficient evidence that this is so if it really became clear that the living come from nowhere else than from the dead. But if this is not so, we would need some other argument.

"Certainly," said Cebes.

"Then don't consider this only in the case of human beings," he said, "if you want to understand it more easily, but in the case of all animals and plants as well. In short, for everything that comes into being, [70e] let's see whether all things come into being like this: opposites from nowhere else than from their opposites, in all cases where there is such a thing—as the beautiful, I suppose, is opposite to the ugly, and the just to the unjust, and countless other things are the same way. So let's consider this: whether it is necessary that whatever has an opposite comes to be from nowhere else than from its own opposite. For example, when something becomes larger, it must, I suppose, become larger from being smaller before?"

"Yes."

"And if it becomes smaller, it will become smaller later [71a] from being larger before?"

"That's so," he said.

"And the weaker comes from the stronger, and the faster from the slower?"

"Certainly."

"What about this? If something becomes worse, isn't it from better, and if more just, from less just?"

"Of course."

"Then have we established this sufficiently," he said, "that all things come into being this way, opposite things from opposites?"

"Certainly."

"Next: is there also something like this about them? Between each pair of opposites, since there are two of them, there are two processes of coming-to-be, [71b] from the first to the second, and back again from the second to the first. Between a larger

thing and a smaller there is increase and decrease, and so we call the one increasing and the other decreasing?"

"Yes," he said.

"And separating and combining, cooling and heating, and all things like that—even if in some cases we don't have names for them, still in fact it must be so everywhere: they come into being from each other, and there is a process of each passing into the other?"

"Certainly," he said. 71c

"Well then," he said, "is there something opposite to living, as sleeping is to being awake?"

"Certainly," he said.

"What?"

"Being dead," he said.

"Then these come into being from each other, if they are opposites, and there are two processes between them, since they are two?"

"Of course."

"Now," said Socrates, "I will tell you one of the pairs I mentioned just now, both the pair itself and its processes, and you tell me the other. I mean sleeping and being awake: being awake comes from sleeping, and 71d sleeping from being awake, and their processes are falling asleep and waking up. Is that sufficient for you," he said, "or not?"

"Certainly."

"Now you tell me in the same way about life and death," he said. "Don't you say that being dead is the opposite of living?"

"I do."

"And that they come into being from each other?"

"Yes."

"Then what comes into being from the living?"

"The dead," he said.

"And what," he said, "from the dead?"

"I have to agree," he said, "that it's the living."

"Then it's from the dead, Cebes, that living things and living people come into being?"

"So it seems," he said.

"Then our souls exist in Hades," he said.

"It seems so."

"Now of the two processes involved here, one happens to be plain to see, doesn't it? Dying, surely, is plain to see, isn't it?"

"Certainly," he said.

"So what shall we do?" he said. "Shall we not supply the opposite process in return, and leave nature lame in this respect? Or must we supply some process opposite to dying?"

"Surely we must," he said.

"What is it?"

"Coming back to life."

"Then," he said, "if there is such a thing as coming back to life, this, coming back to life, would be a process from the [72a] dead to the living?"

"Certainly."

"So we agree in this way too that the living have come from the dead no less than the dead from the living. And if this is so, we thought, I believe, that it was sufficient evidence that the souls of the dead must exist somewhere, from which they are then born again."

"It seems to me, Socrates," he said, "that given what we have agreed, it must be so."

"Then look at it this way, Cebes," he said, "and you'll see that we weren't wrong to agree, as I think. If the two sets of things coming into being did not always balance [72b] each other, going round as if in a circle, but coming-to-be went in a straight line, only from the one into its opposite, and did not bend back again to the first or make a turn, you know that everything would in the end have the same form and be in the same state, and would stop coming into being?"

"What do you mean?" he said.

It's not hard to see what I mean, he said. For example, if there were falling asleep, but waking up did not balance it by coming out of the sleeping state, you know that in the end everything [72c] would make a nonsense of Endymion, and he would be nowhere

to be seen, because everything else would be in the same state as he is—asleep. And if everything were combined and nothing separated, Anaxagoras' saying would soon come true: "All things together." In the same way, my dear Cebes, if everything that shares in life were to die, and once dead, the dead stayed in that form and did not come back to life, wouldn't it be quite inevitable that in the end everything 72d would be dead and nothing would be alive?[15] For if living things came into being from other things, and the living died, what way could there be to prevent everything being used up in death?

"None at all, I think, Socrates," said Cebes. "What you say seems to me entirely true."

"Yes, Cebes," he said, "it is so, as I see it, more than anything, and we are not deceived in agreeing to these very things. There really is coming back to life, and the living do come into being from the dead, and the souls of the dead 72e exist, and it is better for the good ones and worse for the bad."

LEARNING AS RECOLLECTION

Socrates argues that knowing the equal itself shows the soul existed before birth.

PHAEDO Moreover, Cebes put in, it's also so according to that argument you're often in the habit of stating, Socrates, if it's true: that learning for us is in fact nothing but recollection. By this argument too, I suppose, we must have learned at some earlier time the things we now recollect.

But this is 73a impossible unless our soul existed somewhere before it came to be in this human form. So in this way too, the soul seems to be something immortal.

"But Cebes," Simmias put in, "what are the proofs of this? Remind me, since I don't remember very well at the moment."

"One argument, the finest," said Cebes, "is that when people are questioned, if someone questions them well, they state

everything as it is by themselves—and yet if knowledge and a right account weren't already present in them, they wouldn't be able to do this. Then, 73b if you lead someone to diagrams or something else of that sort, that shows most clearly that this is so."[16]

"But if you aren't persuaded this way, Simmias," said Socrates, "see whether you may come to agree if you look at it like this. You doubt, don't you, how what is called learning can be recollection?"

"I don't doubt you," said Simmias, "but what I need is to undergo the very thing the argument is about—to be reminded. In fact, from what Cebes set out to say, I nearly remember already, and I'm persuaded. Still, I would like to hear now how you set out to put it." 73c

"Like this," he said. "We agree, I suppose, that if someone is to recollect something, he must have known it at some earlier time."

"Certainly," he said.

"Then do we also agree on this, that when knowledge comes about in the following way, it is recollection? What way do I mean? This: if someone, on seeing or hearing something, or perceiving it with some other sense, not only recognizes that thing but also thinks of something else, the knowledge of which is not the same but different, aren't we right to say that he was reminded of the thing he thought of?"

"What do you mean?"

"Things like this: knowledge of a person is different, I suppose, from knowledge of a lyre."

"Of course."

"Well, you know that when lovers see a lyre or a cloak or anything else their beloved is accustomed to use, this is what happens to them: they recognize the lyre and in their mind they get

15 Endymion was a youth of myth granted everlasting sleep. The philosopher Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (5th century BC) began his book by saying that at first "all things were together."

16 Cebes seems to allude to a demonstration like the one in Plato's *Meno*, where Socrates questions a slave boy about a geometrical diagram.

the image of the boy whose lyre it was. And this is recollection. In the same way, someone who sees Simmias is often reminded of Cebes, and there would be countless other cases like this."

"Countless indeed, by Zeus," said Simmias. 73e

"So isn't something like this a kind of recollection?" he said. "Especially when it happens with things one had already forgotten through time and not paying attention to them?"

"Certainly," he said.

"What about this?" he said. "Is it possible, on seeing a painted horse or a painted lyre, to be reminded of a person, and on seeing a painted Simmias, to be reminded of Cebes?"

"Certainly."

"And on seeing a painted Simmias, to be reminded of Simmias himself?" 74a

"It certainly is," he said.

"Then doesn't it turn out, in all these cases, that recollection comes both from similar things and from dissimilar things?"

"It does."

"But when someone is reminded of something by similar things, mustn't he also experience this: thinking whether or not the thing falls short at all, in its likeness, of what he was reminded of?"

"He must," he said.

"Then consider whether this is so," he said. "We say, I suppose, that there is something equal—I don't mean a stick equal to a stick, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that kind, but something else beyond all these, the equal itself. Shall we say it is something, or nothing?" 74b

"By Zeus, we certainly shall say it is something," said Simmias, "most emphatically."

"And do we also know what it is?"

"Certainly," he said.

"Where did we get our knowledge of it? Wasn't it from the things we were just talking about? Seeing sticks or stones or other things that were equal, didn't we think, from them, of that, which is different from them? Or doesn't it seem different to

you? Look at it this way too. Don't equal stones and sticks, while remaining the same, sometimes seem equal to one person and not to another?"

"Certainly." 74c

"Well, have the equals themselves ever seemed unequal to you, or equality inequality?"

"Never, Socrates."

"Then these equals," he said, "and the equal itself are not the same."

"Not at all, it seems to me, Socrates."

"And yet it is from these equals," he said, "different as they are from that equal, that you have thought of and gained knowledge of it?"

"That's very true," he said.

"And that whether it is similar to them or dissimilar?"

"Certainly."

"It makes no difference," he said. "As long as, on seeing one thing, you think of another 74d from seeing it, whether similar or dissimilar, this must," he said, "have been recollection."

"Certainly."

"What about this?" he said. "Do we experience something like this with the equal sticks and the other equals we were just talking about? Do they seem to us to be equal in the same way as what the equal itself is, or do they fall somewhat short of it in being like the equal, or not at all?"

"They fall far short," he said.

"Then we agree that when someone, on seeing something, thinks, 'This thing I now see wants to be like some other thing that is, but it falls short and cannot be equal to it in that way, but is inferior,' the person who thinks this must, I suppose, have previously known the thing he says it resembles but falls short of?"

"He must."

"Well then, has this happened to us too, or not, with equal things and the equal itself?"

"Absolutely."

"Then we must have known the equal before the 75a time when we first saw equal things and thought that all these strive to be like the equal but fall short of it."

"That's so."

"Moreover, we also agree on this: that we have not thought of it, and could not think of it, from anything but seeing or touching or some other of the senses—I count all these as the same."

"Yes, Socrates, it's all the same, at least for what the argument wants to show."

"But surely it's from the senses that we must come to realize that 75b all the things we perceive are striving for what the equal is, and fall short of it. Or how do we put it?"

"Like that."

"So before we began to see and hear and use our other senses, we must somehow have acquired knowledge of what the equal itself is, if we were going to refer the equal things we get from our senses back to it, and see that they're all eager to be like it but are inferior to it."

"That follows necessarily from what's been said, Socrates."

"Now weren't we seeing and hearing and in possession of our other senses from the moment we were born?"

"Certainly." 75c

"But we must, we're saying, have acquired our knowledge of the equal before these?"

"Yes."

"Then it seems we must have acquired it before we were born."

"It seems so."

"Then if we acquired it before birth and were born having it, didn't we know, both before birth and immediately after, not only the equal and the larger and the smaller but everything of that kind? After all, our argument now is no more about the equal than it is about the beautiful itself and the 75d good itself and the just and the holy—about everything, as I say, that we stamp with the seal 'what it is itself,' both in the questions we

ask and in the answers we give. So we must have acquired knowledge of all these before we were born."

"That's so."

"And if, having acquired it, we didn't forget it each time, then we must always be born knowing and go on knowing throughout our lives. For that's what knowing is: having acquired knowledge of something, to keep it and not lose it. Or isn't this what we call forgetting, Simmias—the loss of knowledge?"

"Absolutely, Socrates," he said.

"But if, I suppose, we acquired it before birth and lost it at birth, and later, using our senses on these things, we recover the knowledge we once had before, wouldn't what we call learning be recovering knowledge that is our own? And wouldn't we be right to call this recollecting?"

"Certainly."

[76a] "Yes, because this did turn out to be possible: that on perceiving something—seeing it or hearing it or getting some other perception of it—a person could be led from it to think of something else that he had forgotten, something this was associated with, whether unlike it or like it. So, as I say, it's one of two things: either we were born knowing these things and all of us know them throughout life, or those who we say learn later are doing nothing but recollecting, and learning would be recollection."

"That's very much how it is, Socrates."

"So which do you choose, Simmias? That we were born knowing, [76b] or that we later recollect what we had acquired knowledge of before?"

"I can't choose right now, Socrates."

"Well, can you choose on this, and what do you think about it? Would a man who knows be able to give an account of what he knows, or not?"

"He'd have to be, Socrates," he said.

"And do you think everyone can give an account of the things we were just talking about?"

"I only wish they could," said Simmias. "But I'm much more afraid that by this time tomorrow there won't be a single person left who can do it properly." 76c

"So you don't think everyone knows these things, Simmias?" he said.

"Not at all."

"Then they're recollecting what they once learned?"

"They must be."

"When did our souls acquire the knowledge of them? Not since we were born as human beings, surely."

"Certainly not."

"Before, then."

"Yes."

"So our souls existed before, Simmias, before they were in human form—apart from bodies—and they had understanding."

"Unless, Socrates, we acquire these pieces of knowledge at the very moment we're born. That time is still left." 76d

"Very well, my friend. But then at what other time do we lose them? We aren't born with them, as we agreed just now. Or do we lose them at the same moment we acquire them? Or can you name some other time?"

"Not at all, Socrates. I didn't notice I was talking nonsense."

"So is this how things stand for us, Simmias?" he said. "If the things we're always harping on exist—a beautiful and a good and every being of that kind—and if we refer everything that comes from our senses to that being, 76e discovering that it was there before and was ours, and we compare these things to it, then just as these exist, so our soul must also exist even before we were born. But if they don't exist, this argument would have been made for nothing, wouldn't it? Is this how it is: there's an equal necessity that these things exist and that our souls existed before we were born, and if not the one, then not the other?"

"Socrates," said Simmias, "I'm overwhelmingly convinced that the necessity is the same. And the argument takes refuge in a fine place: 77a that our soul exists before we're born just as surely as the being you're now speaking of. For there's nothing

so plain to me as this: that all such things exist as fully as anything can—beautiful and good and all the others you were just mentioning. As far as I'm concerned, it's been adequately proved."

"And what about Cebes?" said Socrates. "We have to persuade Cebes too."

"Adequately," said Simmias, "as far as I can tell—though he's the most stubborn man alive when it comes to distrusting arguments. But I think he's been fully persuaded of this much: that before we were born 77b our soul existed. Whether it will still exist once we die, though, doesn't seem to me to have been proved either, Socrates," he said. "What Cebes was saying just now still stands in the way—what most people fear, that as a person dies his soul is scattered, and that this is the end of its existence. For what's to stop it coming into being and being put together from somewhere or other, and existing before it ever enters a human body, and yet, once it has entered one and is released from it, coming to an end itself and being destroyed?" 77c

"You're right, Simmias," said Cebes. "It looks as if half of what's needed has been proved—that our soul existed before we were born. But we still have to prove in addition that it will exist no less after we die than before we were born, if the proof is to be complete."

It has been proved, Simmias and Cebes, said Socrates, even now, if you're willing to put this argument together with the one we agreed on before it—that everything living comes from what is dead. For if the 77d soul exists beforehand too, and if, when it enters life and is born, it must come from nowhere else but death and being dead, how can it not also exist after it dies, since it has to be born again? So what you're asking for has been proved even now. All the same, I think you and Simmias would like to work through this argument still further. You're afraid, like children, that when the soul leaves the body the wind really will blow it apart 77e and scatter it—especially if someone happens to die not in calm weather but in a strong gale.

Cebes laughed and said, "Try to win us over, Socrates, as though we were afraid—or rather, not as though we were afraid; but maybe there's a child inside us too who's frightened of such things. So try to talk him out of fearing death as if it were a bogeyman."

"Then you must sing charms over him every day," said Socrates, "until you've charmed his fear away."

78a "Then where, Socrates," he said, "are we going to find a good charmer for such things, since you," he said, "are leaving us?"

"Greece is a big place, Cebes," he said, "and there must be good men in it; and there are many foreign peoples too. You must search through all of them looking for such a charmer, sparing neither money nor effort, since there's nothing you could spend money on to better purpose. And you must search among yourselves as well, together; for you may not easily find people better able to do this than you."

"That will certainly be done," said Cebes. "But let's go back to where 78b we left off, if you'd like to."

"Of course I'd like to. How could I not?"

"Good," he said.

THE SOUL AND THE INVISIBLE

Socrates argues the soul resembles the invisible, unchanging forms and so is unlikely to scatter at death.

PHAEDO "Well then," said Socrates, "shouldn't we ask ourselves something like this: what sort of thing is naturally liable to have this happen to it—being scattered—and for what sort of thing should we fear that it might happen, and for what sort not? And after that, shouldn't we consider which sort the soul is, and on that basis be confident or afraid for our soul?"

"That's true," he said. 78c

"Now isn't it what has been put together, and is composite by nature, that is liable to this—to be split apart at the points where

it was put together? And if there is something that isn't composite, isn't it this alone, if anything, that is not liable to it?"

"I think that's how it is," said Cebes.

"And the things that are always the same and in the same state are most likely to be the non-composite ones, while those that are different at different times and never the same are composite?"

"I think so."

"Then let's turn," he said, "to the same things we dealt with in our earlier [78d] argument. Being itself, whose being we give an account of in our questions and answers—is it always the same and in the same state, or different at different times? The equal itself, the beautiful itself, each thing itself that is, what is—does it ever admit any change whatsoever? Or does each of them that is, being uniform, itself by itself, stay the same and in the same state, never admitting any alteration in any way at all?"

"It must stay the same and in the same state, Socrates," said Cebes.

"And what about the many beautiful things—people, say, or horses or [78e] cloaks or anything else of that kind—or equal things, or beautiful things, or all the things that share a name with those? Are they the same? Or, quite the opposite of those, are they practically never the same in any way, either as themselves or as one another?"

"That's how these are," said Cebes. "They're never the same."

[79a] "Now these you could touch or see or perceive with your other senses; but the things that stay the same you can never grasp with anything except the reasoning of the mind. Such things are invisible, not seen, aren't they?"

"What you say is entirely true," he said.

"Then shall we posit," he said, "two kinds of things that are, one visible, the other invisible?"

"Let's posit them," he said.

"And the invisible always the same, the visible never the same?"

"Let's posit that too," he said. [79b]

"Come then," he said, "are we made up of anything other than body on the one hand and soul on the other?"

"Nothing else," he said.

"So which kind would we say the body is more like and more akin to?"

"That's clear to anyone," he said: "the visible."

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

"Not visible to human beings, at any rate, Socrates," he said.

"But we were talking about what is visible and not visible to human nature, weren't we? Or do you think we meant some other nature?"

"Human nature."

"So what do we say about the soul? Is it visible or not visible?"

"Not visible."

"Invisible, then?"

"Yes."

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

"It must be, Socrates."

"Now weren't we saying a while ago that when the soul uses the body to investigate something, whether through sight or hearing or some other sense—since investigating something through the body means investigating it through the senses—it is dragged by the body toward things that are never the same, and it wanders and is confused and dizzy, as though drunk, because it's in contact with things of that kind?"

"Certainly." 79d

"But when it investigates by itself, it goes off there, to what is pure and always is and is immortal and stays the same; and being akin to it, it is always with it whenever it comes to be by itself and is able to. Then it has ceased from its wandering, and in relation to those things it stays always the same, in the same state, because it's in contact with things of that kind. And isn't this state of the soul called understanding?"

"That's entirely well and truly said, Socrates," he said.

"So again, which kind do you think the soul is more like and more akin to, judging from what we said before and 79e what we're saying now?"

"I think anyone would concede from this line of inquiry, Socrates," he said, "even the slowest learner, that soul is wholly and entirely more like what is always the same than what isn't."

"And the body?"

"Like the other."

"Now look at it this way too. When soul and 80a body are together, nature assigns the one to serve and be ruled, the other to rule and be master. On this basis, again, which do you think is like the divine and which like the mortal? Or don't you think the divine is naturally fitted to rule and lead, and the mortal to be ruled and serve?"

"I do."

"So which does the soul resemble?"

"Obviously, Socrates, the soul resembles the divine and the body the mortal."

"Consider, then, Cebes," he said, "whether from everything we've said 80b this is what we get: that soul is most like what is divine and immortal and intelligible and uniform and indissoluble and always the same as itself and in the same state, while body, in turn, is most like what is human and mortal and multiform and unintelligible and dissoluble and never the same as itself. Can we say anything against this, my dear Cebes, to show it isn't so?"

"We can't."

"Well then, if this is so, isn't it natural for body to be quickly dissolved, but for soul to be altogether indissoluble, or nearly so?" 80c

"Of course."

"Now you realize," he said, "that when a person dies, the visible part of him, the body, which lies in the visible world and which we call a corpse, and which is naturally liable to dissolve and fall apart and be blown away, doesn't undergo any of this right away. It lasts a fair length of time—and a very long time

indeed if someone dies with his body in fine condition and in the bloom of life. In fact, when the body is shrunk and embalmed, like those embalmed in Egypt, it stays almost whole for an incredibly long time; 80d and some parts of the body, even if it rots—bones and sinews and everything like that—are nonetheless, so to speak, immortal. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"But the soul, the invisible part, which goes off to another place like itself—noble and pure and invisible—to Hades in the true sense of the name, to the good and wise god, where, god willing, my own soul must go very soon: is this soul of ours, being of such a kind and such a nature, blown apart and destroyed as soon as it's released from the body, as most 80e people say? Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias. This is much more how it is. If it's released pure, dragging nothing of the body along with it, since in life it never willingly had anything in common with the body, but shunned it and gathered itself into itself, since this is what it was always practicing—and that is nothing other than practicing philosophy rightly and really 81a practicing, readily, how to be dead. Or wouldn't this be the practice of death?"[17]

"Absolutely."

"Then if it's in this state, it goes off to what is like it, the invisible—the divine and immortal and wise—and when it arrives there it gets to be happy, freed from wandering and folly and fears and wild passions and the other human evils, and, as they say of the initiated, truly spending the rest of time with the gods. Is that what we should say, Cebes, or something else?"[18]

"Yes, by Zeus, that's what we should say," said Cebes. 81b

17 Plato plays on "Hades" (Haidēs), which was popularly linked with aidēs, "invisible."

18 The initiated: those admitted into mystery cults, such as the Mysteries at Eleusis, which promised them a blessed afterlife.

SOULS WEIGHED DOWN BY THE BODY

Socrates describes how souls tied to bodily pleasures wander or are reborn, while philosophers' souls go free.

PHAEDO "But if, I think, it is polluted and impure when it's released from the body, because it was always with the body and served it and loved it and was bewitched by it and by its desires and pleasures, so that it thought nothing was real except what is bodily—what one can touch and see and drink and eat and use for sex—while what is dark to the eyes and invisible, but intelligible and grasped by philosophy, this it has grown used to hating and dreading and fleeing: do you think [81c] a soul in that state will be released pure, itself by itself?"

"Not in the least," he said.

"No; rather, I think, it will be permeated by the bodily, which its intercourse and association with the body, through constant company and much practice, have made part of its nature, won't it?"

"Certainly."

"And this, my friend, we must think of as ponderous and heavy and earthy and visible. A soul like that, having this in it, is weighed down and dragged back into the visible world by fear of the invisible and of Hades, as they say, and it roams around [81d] the monuments and tombs, where in fact certain shadowy apparitions of souls have been seen—the kind of phantoms that souls like these produce, souls that were not released in purity but share in the visible, which is why they can be seen."

"That's likely, Socrates."

"Likely indeed, Cebes. And these aren't the souls of the good, but of the bad, which are forced to wander around such places, paying the penalty for their former way of life, which was bad. And they wander until, through the [81e] desire of what accompanies them—the bodily—they're bound into a body again. And they're bound, naturally enough, into characters of whatever sort they happen to have practiced in life."

"What sorts do you mean, Socrates?"

For example, those who have practiced gluttony and wanton violence and heavy drinking, and haven't taken care to avoid them, are likely to enter the races of donkeys [82a] and animals like that.

Don't you think so?

"What you say is very likely indeed."

"And those who have valued injustice and tyranny and robbery above all go into the races of wolves and hawks and kites. Or where else would we say such souls go?"

"Into those, no doubt," said Cebes.

"So," he said, "it's clear where all the others would go too, each according to the likeness of what they practiced?"

"Clear enough," he said. "Of course."

"And the happiest of these," he said, "who go to the best place, are those who have practiced popular, civic [82b] excellence—what people call moderation and justice—which comes from habit and practice without philosophy and intelligence?"

"How are these the happiest?"

"Because they're likely to come back into some social and gentle race like that—bees, perhaps, or wasps or ants—or into the same human race again, and decent men will come from them."

"That's likely."

"But no one who hasn't practiced philosophy and doesn't depart entirely [82c] pure is permitted to enter the race of gods—only the lover of learning. It's for this reason, my friends Simmias and Cebes, that true philosophers keep away from all bodily desires and hold out against them and don't surrender themselves to them. It's not at all that they fear the ruin of their household and poverty, as most people and money-lovers do; nor, again, that they dread the dishonor and disgrace that come with wickedness, as lovers of power and lovers of honor do, that they keep away from them."

"No, that wouldn't be fitting, Socrates," said Cebes. [82d]

"No, by Zeus, it wouldn't," he said. "And so, Cebes, those who care at all about their own soul, and don't live molding themselves to the body, say goodbye to all these people and don't travel the same road as them, since those people don't know where they're going. They themselves believe they mustn't act against philosophy and the release and purification she brings, and so they turn in her direction and follow wherever she leads."

"How, Socrates?"

I'll tell you, he said. Lovers of learning know, he said, that 82e when philosophy takes charge of their soul, it finds it simply bound fast in the body and glued to it, forced to examine the things that are through the body, as if through prison bars, rather than by itself, and wallowing in total ignorance. And philosophy sees how clever the prison is—that it works through desire, so that the prisoner himself becomes the chief accomplice 83a in his own imprisonment—

—as I say, lovers of learning know that when philosophy takes charge of their soul in this condition, it gently encourages it and tries to free it. It shows the soul that investigation through the eyes is full of deception, and so is investigation through the ears and the other senses; it persuades the soul to withdraw from them, except insofar as it must use them, and urges it to collect and gather itself into itself, and to trust nothing but 83b itself—whatever it grasps, itself by itself, of the things that are, each itself by itself. Whatever it investigates by other means, which is different in different things, it's to regard as nothing true. That sort of thing is perceptible and visible; what the soul sees by itself is intelligible and invisible. Now the soul of the true philosopher, believing it mustn't oppose this release, keeps away from pleasures and desires and pains and fears as far as it can. It reckons that when someone feels intense pleasure or fear or pain or desire, the harm he suffers from 83c them isn't as great as one might think—falling ill, say, or spending money because of his desires. No, he suffers the greatest and most extreme of all evils, and doesn't even take it into account.

"What's that, Socrates?" said Cebes.

"That the soul of every human being, when it feels intense pleasure or pain about something, is forced at the same time to believe that whatever it feels this about most is most vivid and most true, when it isn't. And these are mostly visible things, aren't they?"

"Certainly." 83d

"And isn't it in this experience that soul is most thoroughly bound down by body?"

"How so?"

"Because every pleasure and pain has a nail, as it were, and nails the soul to the body and pins it there and makes it bodily, so that it takes to be true whatever the body says is true. For by sharing the body's beliefs and delighting in the same things, it is forced, I think, to become like it in character and upbringing, and to be the kind of soul that never arrives in Hades pure, but always leaves full of the body. So it soon falls back into 83e another body and grows in it as if sown there, and as a result it has no share in communion with the divine and pure and uniform."

"That's very true, Socrates," said Cebes.

"Well then, Cebes, it's for these reasons that those who rightly love learning are orderly and brave, not for the reasons most people give. Or do you think so?"

84a "No, I certainly don't."

No, indeed. The soul of a philosophic man would reason as I've said. It wouldn't think that philosophy should set it free, and then, while philosophy was freeing it, hand itself over to pleasures and pains to bind it back in again, performing the endless labor of a Penelope working her loom the opposite way. Instead it secures a calm from these things, follows reasoning and stays with it always, contemplating what is true and divine and beyond opinion 84b and nourished by it. That, it thinks, is how it must live for as long as it lives, and when it dies it will go to what

is akin to it and of its own kind, and be rid of human ills.[19] With a nurture like that, Simmias and Cebes, and after pursuing these practices, there's no danger that it will fear being torn apart at its release from the body, blown away and scattered by the winds, gone and no longer anywhere at all. 84c

SIMMIAS AND CEBES OBJECT

Simmias suggests the soul is an attunement of the body, and Cebes compares it to a weaver who dies.

PHAEDO When Socrates had said this there was a long silence. Socrates himself was absorbed in the argument just given, to judge by his look, and so were most of us. But Cebes and Simmias were talking quietly to each other. Seeing them, Socrates asked, "What is it? You don't think what's been said falls short, do you? It certainly still leaves plenty of room for doubts and objections, if anyone means to go through it properly. Now if you two are looking into something else, I've nothing to say. But if you're puzzled about any of this, don't hesitate to speak up and 84d go through it yourselves, if you think it could be put better somehow, and to bring me along too, if you think you'll get further with me."

And Simmias said, "Well, Socrates, I'll tell you the truth. For some time now each of us has been puzzled and has been pushing the other forward and urging him to ask, because we want to hear but hesitate to be a nuisance, in case it's unwelcome to you in your present misfortune."

When he heard this he laughed gently and said: Oh dear, Simmias! I'd have a hard time persuading other people 84e that I don't consider my present lot a misfortune, when I can't even persuade you two, and you're afraid I'm in a worse temper now than I was earlier in my life. It seems you think I'm worse at prophecy than the swans. When swans sense that they must die, though they have sung in 85a the time before as well, then they

19 In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope put off her suitors by weaving a shroud by day and secretly unraveling it by night.

sing most and most beautifully of all, rejoicing that they are about to go away to the god whose servants they are.

But human beings, because of their own fear of death, tell lies about the swans too, and say that they sing out their death in grief, lamenting it. They don't consider that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or suffering any other pain—not even the nightingale, the swallow and the hoopoe, which they say sing laments out of grief. To me, though, neither these birds seem 85b to sing from grief nor do the swans. I think that because they belong to Apollo they have prophetic power, and it's because they foresee the good things in Hades that they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever before. And I consider myself a fellow servant of the swans and consecrated to the same god, with a gift of prophecy from our master no worse than theirs, and I'm leaving life no more downheartedly than they are.[20] So as far as that goes, you should say and ask whatever you like, as long as the Eleven of Athens allow it.

You put that well, said Simmias. So I'll tell you what 85c puzzles me, and then Cebes here will say where he doesn't accept what's been said. It seems to me, Socrates, as perhaps it does to you too, that clear knowledge about such matters is either impossible in this life or extremely hard to get. And yet not to test what is said about them in every way, and to give up before one is worn out from examining them from every side, is the mark of a very soft man. On these questions one must achieve one of these things: learn how they stand, or find it out for oneself; or, if that's impossible, at least take the best and hardest to refute of human accounts, and ride on it as on a raft, and sail through life at one's peril—unless one could make the journey more safely and with less danger on some sturdier vessel, some divine account. So now I won't be ashamed to ask, since you say this yourself, and I won't blame myself later for not saying now what I think. For, Socrates, when I examine what

20 In myth the nightingale, swallow and hoopoe had once been human (Procne, Philomela and Tereus), transformed after a story of violence and grief.

has been said, both by myself and with Cebes here, it doesn't seem quite adequate. 85e

And Socrates said, "Maybe what seems so to you is true, my friend. But tell me in what way it isn't adequate."

In this way, as I see it, he said: that someone could make this very same argument about attunement, and a lyre and its strings. He could say that the attunement in a tuned lyre is something invisible and bodiless, altogether beautiful and 86a divine, while the lyre itself and its strings are bodies, bodily, composite, earthy and akin to what is mortal. Now suppose someone smashes the lyre, or cuts and snaps the strings, and someone insisted, by the same argument as yours, that the attunement must still exist and not have perished. For there would be no way, he'd say, that the lyre, and the strings, which are mortal in kind, should still exist once the strings are broken, while the attunement, 86b which shares the nature of the divine and immortal and is akin to it, had perished—perishing before what is mortal. No, he would say, the attunement itself must still exist somewhere, and the wood and strings will rot away before anything happens to it— —and in fact, Socrates, I think you've realized yourself that we take the soul to be something very like this. Our body is held taut and together by hot and cold, dry and wet and the like, and our soul is a blend and attunement 86c of these very things, when they are blended with each other well and in due measure. Well, if the soul really is a kind of attunement, it's clear that when our body is slackened or strained beyond measure by diseases and other ills, the soul must perish at once, however divine it is, like the other attunements, those in musical notes and in all the works of craftsmen, while the remains of each body last a long time, 86d until they are burned or rot away. So consider what we'll say to this argument, if someone claims that the soul, being a blend of the things in the body, is the first to perish in what is called death.

Then Socrates looked at us intently, as he often used to, and smiled. "What Simmias says is fair," he said. "So if any of you is more resourceful than I am, why hasn't he answered? He seems

to be getting a real grip on the argument. But I think that before the answer we should first hear from Cebes [86e] what charge he in turn brings against the argument, so that we gain time to consider what to say. Then, when we've heard them, we can either agree with them if they seem to strike the right note, or, if not, go on to defend our argument. Come on, Cebes," he said, "tell us what it was that was troubling you and making you doubt."

All right, I'll tell you, said Cebes.

It seems to me that the argument is still where it was, and open, as we were saying before, [87a] to the same objection. That our soul existed even before it came into this form, I don't take back that this has been very elegantly and—if it isn't presumptuous to say so—quite adequately demonstrated. But that it still exists somewhere after we die doesn't seem to me to be shown this way. I don't concede Simmias' objection that soul isn't stronger and longer-lasting than body; I think it's far superior in all these respects. "Why do you still doubt, then," the argument might say, "when you see that after a person dies even the weaker part still exists? Don't you think the longer-lasting part must still be preserved during that time?" Consider whether there's anything in what I say in reply to this. It seems I too, like Simmias, need an image. To me this sounds just as if someone were to say about an old weaver who had died that the man hasn't perished but is safe somewhere, and offered as evidence the cloak he himself had woven and wore, which is safe and hasn't perished. And if anyone [87c] doubted him, he would ask which kind of thing lasts longer, a human being or a cloak in use and being worn; and when told that a human being lasts much longer, he would think it proved that the man is surely all the more safe, since the shorter-lived thing hasn't perished. But I don't think that's so, Simmias. Look at what I'm saying for yourself too. Anyone would see that the person who says this is talking nonsense. This weaver wore out many such cloaks and wove them, and he perished after them, many as [87d] they were, but before the last one, I suppose; and that doesn't make a human being any more inferior or weaker than a cloak. The soul in rela-

tion to the body, I think, would admit this same image, and anyone who said these same things about them would seem to me to be talking sense: that the soul is long-lasting, while the body is weaker and shorter-lived. But, he would say, each soul wears out many bodies, especially if it lives many years. For if the body were in flux and perishing while the person was still alive, 87e and the soul kept reweaving what was being worn out, still, whenever the soul perished, it would have to be wearing its last garment and perish before that one alone. And once the soul had perished, only then would the body show its natural weakness, and quickly rot and be gone.

So this argument doesn't yet entitle anyone to trust it and be confident that 88a after we die our soul still exists somewhere. Suppose someone were to grant the speaker even more than you do. Suppose he allowed not only that our souls existed in the time before we were born, but also that nothing prevents some of them from still existing after we die, and continuing to exist, and being born and dying again many times—since soul is so strong by nature that it holds out through many births. But having granted this, suppose he no longer conceded that it doesn't suffer in its many births and end up perishing altogether in one of its deaths, and said that no one knows which particular 88b death, which dissolution of the body, brings destruction to the soul, since none of us can possibly perceive it. If that's how things stand, anyone who is confident about death is foolish in his confidence, unless he can demonstrate that soul is altogether immortal and indestructible. If he can't, then anyone about to die must always fear for his own soul, that in the present separation from the body it may perish altogether.

88c All of us, when we heard them say this, felt dismayed, as we told each other afterward. We had been thoroughly persuaded by the earlier argument, and now they seemed to have thrown us into confusion again and plunged us into doubt, not only about the arguments already given but also about what was going to be said later. Perhaps we were worthless judges, or else the matters themselves could not be trusted.

ECHECRATES By the gods, Phaedo, I sympathize with you. Hearing you now, I find myself saying something like this 88d to myself: "What argument are we to trust now? The argument Socrates gave was so very convincing, and now it has fallen into doubt." This argument that our soul is a kind of attunement has a remarkable hold on me, now and always, and hearing it stated reminded me, as it were, that I had believed it myself before. So I badly need some other argument, starting again as if from the beginning, that will persuade me that when someone dies his soul doesn't die along with him. So tell me, by Zeus, how did Socrates pursue the argument? Did 88e he too, as you say you all did, show signs of being upset, or not? Did he calmly come to the argument's defense? And did he defend it adequately or not? Go through everything for us as precisely as you can.

PHAEDO Well, Echecrates, I had often marveled at Socrates, but I never admired him more than when I was with him then. 89a That he had something to say is perhaps not surprising. What I most admired in him was, first, how pleasantly, kindly and respectfully he received the young men's argument; then how sharply he saw what the arguments had done to us; and then how well he healed us, rallied us like men routed and beaten, and turned us round to follow him and examine the argument together.

ECHECRATES How so?

AGAINST HATRED OF ARGUMENT

Socrates warns against hatred of argument, comparing it to hatred of humankind.

PHAEDO I'll tell you. I happened to be sitting at his right, beside the bed on a low stool, and he was sitting much higher than I was. He stroked my head and gathered up the hair at the back of my neck—he had a habit of playing with my hair whenever he

had the chance—and said, "Tomorrow, Phaedo, I suppose you'll cut off this beautiful hair."[21]

"It looks that way, Socrates," I said.

"Not if you take my advice."

"What then?" I said.

"Today," he said, "I'll cut mine and you'll cut yours, if our argument dies on us and we can't bring it back to life. 89c And if I were you and the argument escaped me, I'd swear an oath like the Argives not to let my hair grow long until I had fought again and beaten the argument of Simmias and Cebes."[22]

"But," I said, "they say even Heracles couldn't take on two."

"Then call on me as your Iolaus," he said, "while there's still light."[23]

"Then I call on you," I said, "not as Heracles, but as Iolaus calling on Heracles."

"It will make no difference," he said. "But first let's be careful that something doesn't happen to us."

"What?" I said. 89d

"That we don't become haters of argument," he said, "the way people become haters of humankind. There's no greater evil," he said, "that anyone could suffer than to hate arguments. Hatred of argument and hatred of humankind come about in the same way. Hatred of humankind creeps in when someone puts intense trust in a person without skill, and believes him to be altogether true and sound and reliable, and then a little later finds him to be bad and unreliable—and then again with another. When this happens to someone many times, especially at the hands of those he would have considered 89e his closest and dearest friends, he ends up, after one knock after another, hating everyone and thinking that there's nothing sound in anyone at all. Or haven't you ever noticed this happening?"

"Certainly," I said.

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21 Cutting one's hair was a sign of mourning.

22 According to Herodotus, the Argives, after losing the district of Thyrea to Sparta, vowed to keep their hair short until they won it back.

23 Iolaus, Heracles' nephew, helped him fight the Hydra when a giant crab joined the fight against him.

Isn't it shameful, he said, and isn't it clear that such a person was trying to deal with people without any skill in human affairs?

If he had dealt with them skillfully, he would have believed things to be as they 90a are: that the very good and the very bad are each very few, and those in between are the great majority.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"It's just as with the very small and the very large," he said. "Do you think anything is rarer than to find an extremely large or extremely small man, or dog, or anything else? Or again one that's extremely fast or slow, ugly or beautiful, white or black? Haven't you noticed that in all such cases the extremes at either end are rare and few, while those in between are plentiful and many?"

"Certainly," I said. 90b

"So don't you think," he said, "that if a contest in wickedness were held, here too very few would turn out to be first?"

"Probably," I said.

"Probably so," he said. "But that isn't where arguments resemble people—I was just following your lead a moment ago. It's rather in this: someone trusts an argument to be true without the skill that concerns arguments, and then a little later it seems to him false—sometimes when it is, sometimes when it isn't—and then another, and another. And you know that especially those 90c who have spent their time on arguments for arguing both sides end up thinking they've become the wisest of men, and that they alone have grasped that there's nothing sound or stable in any thing or in any argument, but that all that exists simply twists up and down, as in the Euripus, and never stays anywhere for any time at all."[24]

"Absolutely," I said. "What you say is true."

"Then, Phaedo," he said, "it would be a pitiful thing if, when there is an argument that is true and stable and possible 90d to grasp, someone who had come across arguments of the sort that

24 The Euripus, the strait between the island of Euboea and mainland Greece, was famous for currents that reverse direction several times a day.

seem true at one time and not at another were to blame not himself or his own lack of skill, but in the end, because it pains him, gladly push the blame off himself onto arguments, and spend the rest of his life hating and abusing arguments, and be deprived of the truth and knowledge of the things that are."

"By Zeus," I said, "pitiful indeed."

First, then, he said, let's guard against this, and not [90e] let into our soul the thought that there may be nothing sound in arguments, but much rather that we ourselves are not yet sound, and that we must be brave and eager to become sound—you and the others for the sake of your whole life to come, and I [91a] for the sake of death itself, since I'm in danger at present of approaching this very question not philosophically but, like the thoroughly uneducated, out of a love of winning.

For when they dispute about something, they don't care how things actually stand on the subject under discussion; what they're eager for is that the positions they've put forward will seem true to those present. And I think I'll differ from them at present only to this extent: I won't be eager for what I say to seem true to those present, except incidentally, but to seem, as far as possible, to me myself to be [91b] so. For I calculate, my dear friend—see how I'm playing to my own advantage—that if what I say happens to be true, it's a fine thing to be persuaded of it; and if there's nothing for the dead, then at least during this very time before my death I'll be less unpleasant to those present by not lamenting. And this folly of mine won't last—that would be bad—but will perish shortly. That is how I'm prepared, Simmias and Cebes, he said, as I come to the argument. But you, if you take my advice, will give little thought to Socrates and much more to the truth. If you think I'm saying something true, agree with me; if not, resist me with every argument you have, taking care that in my eagerness I don't deceive both myself and you together and go off like a bee, leaving my sting behind.

IS THE SOUL AN ATTUNEMENT?

Socrates refutes the view that the soul is an attunement of the body.

PHAEDO "Well, we must get on," he said. "First, remind me of what you were saying, if I seem not to remember. Simmias, I believe, doubts and fears that the soul, though it is more divine and [91d] more beautiful than the body, may perish first, since it is of the nature of an attunement. And Cebes seemed to me to grant me this much, that soul lasts longer than body, but to say that no one can be sure whether, after wearing out many bodies many times, the soul may itself perish now, on leaving the last body, and whether this very thing is death, the destruction of soul, since body is perishing all the time without ever stopping. Is that what we have to examine, Simmias and Cebes, or is it something else?" [91e]

They both agreed that it was.

"Now do you reject all the earlier arguments," he said, "or some and not others?"

"Some and not others," they said.

"Then what do you say," he said, "about the argument in which we said that learning is recollection, and that if this is so, our soul must have existed somewhere else before [92a] it was bound in the body?"

"For my part," said Cebes, "I was wonderfully persuaded by it at the time, and I stand by it now as by no other argument."

"And I'm in the same position myself," said Simmias, "and I'd be very surprised if I ever came to think otherwise about that, at least."

And Socrates said, "But you'll have to think otherwise, my Theban friend, if you keep this view: that attunement is a composite thing, and that the soul is a kind of attunement composed of the things held taut in the body. For surely you won't accept [92b] your own statement that an attunement existed, already composed, before the things it had to be composed of existed. Or will you?"

"Not at all, Socrates," he said.

"Do you see, then," he said, "that this is what you end up saying, when you claim that the soul exists before it even enters human form and body, and yet that it is composed of things that don't yet exist? An attunement isn't the sort of thing you liken it to. Rather, the lyre, the strings and 92c the notes come into being first, while still untuned, and the attunement is the last of all to be put together and the first to perish. So how will this account of yours be in tune with that one?"

"In no way," said Simmias.

"And yet," he said, "if any account ought to be in tune, it's one about attunement."

"It ought," said Simmias.

"Well, this one of yours isn't in tune," he said. "So consider which of the two accounts you choose: that learning is recollection, or that soul is attunement."

"The first, by far, Socrates," he said. "This other one came to me 92d without demonstration, from a certain plausibility and attractiveness, which is also why most people believe it. But I know that accounts that make their demonstrations from plausibilities are impostors, and if you aren't on guard against them they deceive you thoroughly, in geometry and in everything else. The account about recollection and learning, though, was stated on the basis of a hypothesis worth accepting. For it was said, I think, that our soul exists even before it enters the body just as surely as the reality that bears the name 'what it is' belongs to it. 92e And I have accepted this, as I convince myself, adequately and correctly. So it seems that for these reasons I must not accept it from myself or from anyone else when he says that the soul is an attunement."

Well then, Simmias, he said, what about this?

Do you think it's appropriate for an attunement, or any other 93a composite, to be in any condition other than that of the things it's composed of?

"Not at all."

"Nor, I take it, to do anything or have anything done to it beyond what those components do or have done to them?" He agreed.

"So an attunement shouldn't lead the things it's composed of, but follow them." He thought so too.

"Then an attunement is far from being able to move or sound in opposition to its own parts, or to oppose them in any other way."

"Very far," he said.

"Well now: isn't every attunement naturally an attunement just to the degree it has been tuned?"

"I don't follow," he said.

"Isn't it the case," he said, "that if it's tuned more, and to a greater extent, 93b supposing that can happen, it would be more of an attunement, and a greater one; and if it's tuned less, and to a lesser extent, it would be less of one, and a lesser one?"

"Certainly."

"Now is that true of the soul? Could one soul, even to the smallest degree, be more fully and to a greater extent, or less fully and to a lesser extent, than another, this very thing—a soul?"

"In no way at all," he said.

"Come then, by Zeus," he said. "Isn't one soul said to have intelligence and excellence and to be good, and another to have folly and wickedness 93c and to be bad? And is that said truly?"

"Truly, of course."

"Then what will anyone who holds the soul to be an attunement say these things in our souls are, the excellence and the badness? Another attunement, and a lack of attunement? That the good soul has been tuned, and, being an attunement, has another attunement within it, while the bad one is itself untuned and has no further attunement within it?"

"I can't say myself," said Simmias. "But clearly whoever made that assumption would say something of the sort." 93d

"But it's already been agreed," he said, "that no soul is more or less a soul than another; and that amounts to agreeing that no

attunement is more, or to a greater extent, or less, or to a lesser extent, an attunement than another. Isn't that so?"

"Certainly."

"And what is no more and no less an attunement is tuned neither more nor less. Is that right?"

"It is."

"And does what is tuned neither more nor less have a greater or smaller share of attunement, or an equal one?"

"An equal one."

"So since no soul is more or less [93e] than another this very thing, a soul, it isn't tuned more or less either?"

"Just so."

"And in that condition it would have no greater share of lack of attunement, or of attunement?"

"No, it wouldn't."

"And again, in that condition, could one soul have any greater share of badness or excellence than another, if badness is lack of attunement and excellence is attunement?"

"No greater share."

[94a] "Or rather, Simmias, if we reason correctly, no soul will share in badness at all, if it's an attunement. For surely an attunement, being completely this very thing, an attunement, could never share in lack of attunement."

"Certainly not."

"Nor, surely, could a soul, being completely a soul, share in badness."

"How could it, given what we've said?"

"So on this argument the souls of all living things will be equally good, if souls are all by nature equally this very thing, souls."

"I think so, Socrates," he said.

"And do you think it's right to say that," he said, "or that the argument would [94b] have come to this if the hypothesis were correct, that the soul is an attunement?"

"In no way at all," he said.

"Well then," he said, "of everything in a human being, is there anything you'd say rules except the soul, especially a soul with understanding?"

"No, there isn't."

"Does it rule by going along with the body's feelings, or by opposing them as well? I mean something like this: when heat and thirst are present, it pulls us the opposite way, toward not drinking, and when hunger is present, toward not eating; and surely we see countless other cases 94c of the soul opposing what the body feels. Don't we?"

"Very much so."

"And didn't we agree earlier that, if it were an attunement, it would never sing against the tightening and loosening and plucking of the things it's made of, or anything else that happened to them, but would follow them and never lead?"

"We did agree," he said. "Of course."

Well then? Don't we now find it doing just the opposite? It leads all the things it's supposed to be made 94d of, opposes them in almost everything throughout life, and masters them in every way: punishing some more harshly and painfully, as in physical training and medicine, others more gently; now threatening, now admonishing; talking to the desires and fits of anger and fears as if it were one thing talking to something quite different. It's just as Homer portrays it in the *Odyssey*, where he says of Odysseus: "He struck his chest and rebuked his heart: 94e 'Endure, my heart; you've endured worse than this before.'"[25] Do you think he composed that believing the soul to be an attunement, the kind of thing to be led by the body's feelings, rather than the kind of thing to lead and master them, being itself something far more divine than an attunement?

"By Zeus, Socrates, I think the latter."

"Then, my excellent friend, it's in no way right for us to say that the soul 95a is an attunement. It seems we'd be agreeing neither with Homer, that divine poet, nor with ourselves."

25 Homer, *Odyssey* 20.17–18: Odysseus restraining his anger at the disloyal maid-servants.

"That's so," he said.

"Well now," said Socrates, "Harmonia of Thebes has been appeased, it seems, reasonably well. But what about Cadmus, Cebes?" he said. "How shall we appease him, and with what argument?"[26]

"I think you'll find a way," said Cebes. "You certainly made this argument against the attunement amazingly, beyond anything I expected. When Simmias was stating his difficulty, I really wondered 95b whether anyone would be able to do anything with his argument. So it struck me as very odd that it couldn't withstand even the first assault of yours. I wouldn't be surprised if Cadmus' argument met the same fate."

My good friend, said Socrates, don't boast, or some evil eye may upset the argument that's coming. But that will be the god's concern; let's close in, as they do in Homer, and test whether there's anything in what you say. The heart of what you're after is this: you demand a demonstration that our soul is 95c indestructible and immortal, if a philosopher about to die, who is confident and believes that after death he'll fare far better there than if he had lived some other kind of life, isn't to be feeling a senseless and foolish confidence. And you say that showing that the soul is something strong and godlike, and existed even before we were born as human beings, may well indicate, all of it, not immortality, but only that the soul is long-lasting, that it existed somewhere before for an immeasurable length of time, and knew and did a great many things. Yet 95d it was none the more immortal for that; in fact its very entry into a human body was the beginning of its destruction, like a disease. It would live this life in hardship and at the end perish in what we call death. And you say it makes no difference whether it enters a body once or many times, as far as each of us having reason to fear goes: anyone who isn't senseless should be afraid if he doesn't know, and can't give an account 95e to show, that it is immortal.

26 In myth, Harmonia ("Attunement") was the wife of Cadmus, founder of Thebes; Simmias and Cebes are both Thebans, so Socrates is joking about their two objections.

That's more or less what you're saying, I think, Cebes. And I'm going over it again on purpose, so that nothing escapes us, and so that you can add or take away anything you like.

And Cebes said, "No, there's nothing I need to take away or add at present. That's what I'm saying."

SOCRATES' TURN FROM NATURAL SCIENCE

Socrates recounts his youthful study of nature and his disappointment with Anaxagoras on mind as cause.

PHAEDO Socrates paused for a good while, considering something to himself, and then said: It's no small matter you're after, Cebes. We have to work through the whole question of the cause of coming-to-be and perishing.

96a So I'll go through my own experiences in this area for you, if you like; then if anything I say seems useful to you, you can use it to support your conviction about what you're saying.

"I'd certainly like that," said Cebes.

Then listen to what I have to tell you. When I was young, Cebes, he said, I was amazingly keen on the kind of wisdom they call inquiry into nature. It seemed to me a magnificent thing to know the causes of each thing—why each thing comes to be, why it perishes, and why it is. And I kept 96b going back and forth, first examining questions like these. Is it when the hot and the cold undergo a kind of putrefaction, as some people said, that living creatures are formed? Is it blood we think with, or air, or fire? Or is it none of these, but the brain that provides the senses of hearing and seeing and smelling, and from these come memory and opinion, and from memory and opinion, once they've settled down, knowledge comes to be in this way? And again, as I examined how these things perish, and what happens in the heavens 96c and on the earth, I finally concluded that I was as unfit for this kind of inquiry as anyone could possibly be. I'll give you good evidence of that. This inquiry blinded me so badly about things I'd previously known clearly—or so I and others thought—that I unlearned even what I thought I knew before,

about many things, and in particular about why a human being grows. I used to think it was obvious to everyone that it was due to eating and drinking: 96d when, from food, flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, and on the same principle each of the other parts gets added what belongs to it, then what was a small bulk later becomes large, and so the small person becomes big. That's what I thought then. Doesn't it seem reasonable to you?

"It does to me," said Cebes.

"Now consider this as well. I thought I had a satisfactory view whenever a big man standing next to a small one appeared to be bigger 96e by a head, and likewise one horse than another. And, still clearer than these, I thought ten was more than eight because two was added to it, and a two-cubit length was bigger than a one-cubit length because it exceeded it by half its length."

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

By Zeus, he said, I'm far, I suppose, from thinking I know the cause of any of these things. Why, I won't even accept from myself that when someone adds one to one, it's either the one it was added to that has become two, or the one that was added, or that the added one and the one it was added to 97a became two because of the addition of the one to the other. For it amazes me that when each of them was apart from the other, each was one and they weren't two then, but when they came near each other, this became the cause of their becoming two—the coming together involved in their being placed near each other. Nor can I be persuaded any longer that if someone splits one, this—the splitting—has now become the cause of its becoming two. For then the cause 97b of becoming two is the opposite of what it was before. Before, it was because they were brought near each other and one was added to the other; now it's because one is taken away and separated from the other. Nor can I persuade myself any longer that I know why one comes to be, or, in a word, why anything else comes to be or perishes or is, by this method of inquiry. Instead I jumble together some other method of my own at random, and I have no time at all for this one.

But then I once heard someone reading from a book, as he said, of Anaxagoras, 97c and saying that it is intelligence that orders all things and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause, and it seemed to me somehow right that intelligence should be the cause of everything. And I thought that if this is so, intelligence, in ordering things, would order them all and arrange each one in whatever way is best. So if anyone wanted to find the cause of how each thing comes to be or perishes or is, he should find out how it is best for it to be, or 97d to undergo or do anything else. On this account, a human being should consider nothing else, both about himself and about everything else, but what is best—the very best. And that same person must also know what's worse, since the knowledge of both is the same. Reasoning like this, I was delighted to think I'd found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the cause of things after my own heart, and that he would tell me, first, whether the earth is flat or 97e round, and, having told me, would go on to explain the cause and the necessity of it, saying what's better, and that it was better for it to be like that. And if he said it was at the center, he'd go on to explain how it was better for it to be at the center. And if he 98a made these things clear to me, I was prepared never again to long for any other kind of cause.

I was prepared, too, to find out about the sun in just the same way, and about the moon and the other stars—about their speeds relative to one another, their turnings, and everything else that happens to them—how it's better for each of them to do and undergo what they undergo. For I never supposed that, having said they were ordered by intelligence, he would bring in any cause for them other than that it's best for them to be just as they 98b are. So I thought that in assigning the cause to each of them and to all in common, he'd go on to explain what's best for each and what's good for all in common. I wouldn't have sold my hopes for a great deal; I got hold of the books very eagerly and read them as fast as I could, so that I might know as soon as possible what's best and what's worse.

Well, my friend, I was swept right away from that wonderful hope when, as I went on reading, I saw a man making no use of intelligence and not citing any causes for the ordering [98c] of things, but citing airs and aethers and waters and many other strange things. It seemed to me very much as if someone were to say that Socrates does everything he does with intelligence, and then, trying to state the causes of each thing I do, were to say first that the reason I'm sitting here now is that my body is made of bones and sinews; that the bones are hard and have joints separating them from one another, while the sinews are such as to tighten [98d] and relax, wrapping around the bones along with the flesh and the skin that holds them together; so, as the bones swing in their sockets, the sinews, by loosening and tightening, somehow make me able to bend my limbs now, and that's the cause of my sitting here with my legs bent; and again, as if he were to give you other causes of the same sort for my talking with you, citing sounds and air and hearing and countless other [98e] such things, and neglecting to state the true causes: that since the Athenians decided it was better to condemn me, for that very reason I in turn have decided it's better to sit here, and more just to stay and submit to whatever penalty they order. Because, by the dog, I think these sinews and bones would long ago [99a] have been somewhere around Megara or Boeotia, carried off by an opinion about what's best, if I hadn't thought it more just and finer, rather than escaping and running away, to submit to whatever penalty the city imposes.[27]

But to call things like that causes is very strange. If someone said that without having such things—bones and sinews and whatever else I have—I couldn't do what I've decided to do, he'd be telling the truth. But to say that it's because of them that I do what I do, and that I act with intelligence, yet not [99b] by choosing what's best, would be a great and far-reaching carelessness in speaking. It means being unable to distinguish that the real cause is one thing, and that without which the cause could

27 "By the dog" is an oath characteristic of Socrates. Megara and Boeotia were neighboring territories to which he could have fled.

never be a cause is another. That's what most people seem to me to be groping at, as if in the dark, when they give it a name that doesn't belong to it and call it a cause. That's why one person puts a vortex around the earth and so makes it stay in place beneath the heavens, while another props it up on a base of air, as if it were a broad kneading-trough. 99c But the power by which things are now placed in the best way they could be placed—that they neither look for nor think has any divine strength. Instead they think they'll someday find an Atlas stronger and more immortal than this, and better at holding everything together; they don't think that the good, which binds, truly binds and holds anything together. Now, I'd gladly become anyone's student to learn how such a cause works. But since I was deprived of it and couldn't discover it myself or learn it from anyone else, would you like me, Cebes, he said, to give you a demonstration of how I've conducted my second 99d voyage in search of the cause?[28]

"I'd like that more than anything," he said.

THE SECOND VOYAGE

Socrates describes his second approach: explaining things through the forms they partake in.

PHAEDO After that, then, he said, when I'd worn myself out looking into the things that are, I decided I must be careful not to suffer what people suffer when they watch and study the sun during an eclipse. Some of them ruin their eyes, unless they study its image in water or 99e something of the kind. I had some such thought myself, and I was afraid I might be completely blinded in my soul by looking at things with my eyes and trying to grasp them with each of my senses. So I decided I had to take refuge in arguments and examine the truth of the things that are in them.

Perhaps my comparison is in a way 100a inexact; for I don't at all agree that someone who examines the things that are in

arguments is looking at them in images any more than someone who examines them in concrete things. Anyway, that's the way I set out. In each case I lay down as a hypothesis whatever account I judge to be strongest, and whatever seems to me to agree with it I treat as true, whether about cause or about anything else, and whatever doesn't, as not true. But I want to tell you more clearly what I mean; I don't think you understand yet.

"No, by Zeus," said Cebes, "not very well." 100b

"Well," he said, "this is what I mean. It's nothing new; it's what I've never stopped saying, at other times and in the discussion we've just had. I'm going to try to show you the kind of cause I've worked out, and I'll go back to those much-repeated things and start from them, hypothesizing that there is a beautiful itself by itself, and a good, and a large, and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show you the cause from them and to discover that the soul is immortal." 100c

"Well," said Cebes, "take it that I grant it, and go straight on to finish."

"Then consider," he said, "what comes next, and see whether you agree with me. It appears to me that if anything else is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it's beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that beautiful. And I say the same for everything. Do you agree to this sort of cause?"

"I agree," he said.

Well then, he said, I no longer understand, nor can I recognize, those other clever causes. If someone tells me 100d that something is beautiful because it has a bright color or shape or anything else of that kind, I let the others go—they only confuse me—and I hold to this, simply and artlessly and perhaps naively: that nothing else makes it beautiful but the presence of that beautiful, or its communion, or however and in whatever way it comes to be added. I'm not insisting on that point any longer, but only that it's by the beautiful that all beautiful things become beautiful. That seems to me the safest answer to give to

28 A "second voyage" was proverbial for the next-best way: taking to the oars when the wind fails.

myself or to anyone else, and holding on to this [100e] I think I'll never fall. It's safe for me and for anyone else to answer that it's by the beautiful that beautiful things become beautiful. Or don't you think so too?

"I do."

"And so it's by largeness that large things are large and larger things larger, and by smallness that smaller things are smaller?"

"Yes."

"Then you too wouldn't accept it if someone said that one person is larger than another by a head, and that the smaller is smaller by that same thing. [101a] You'd protest that all you say is that everything larger than something else is larger by nothing but largeness, and larger because of that, because of largeness; and the smaller is smaller by nothing but smallness, and smaller because of that, because of smallness. You'd be afraid, I think, that some contrary argument would confront you if you said someone was larger and smaller by a head: first, that the larger is larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing; and then that the larger [101b] is larger by a head, which is small—and that it's monstrous for someone to be large by something small. Or wouldn't you be afraid of that?"

And Cebes laughed and said, "I would."

"Then," he said, "wouldn't you be afraid to say that ten is more than eight by two, and exceeds it for that reason, rather than by number and because of number? And that two cubits is larger than one cubit by a half, rather than by largeness? It's the same fear, surely."

"Certainly," he said.

And what about this? When one is added to one, wouldn't you beware of saying that the addition is the cause [101c] of their becoming two, or, when one is split, that the splitting is? You'd shout loudly that you know no other way for each thing to come to be than by sharing in the particular being of whatever it shares in; and that in these cases you have no other cause of becoming two than sharing in twoness, and that whatever is going to be two must share in this, and whatever is going to be

one, in oneness. As for these splittings and additions and other such subtleties, you'd bid them goodbye, leaving them for those wiser than you to answer with. You'd be afraid, as the saying goes, [101d] of your own shadow and your inexperience, and you'd hold on to the safety of the hypothesis and answer accordingly. But if anyone fastened on the hypothesis itself, you would let him be and wouldn't answer until you had examined whether the consequences that start out from it agree or disagree with one another. And when you had to give an account of the hypothesis itself, you would give it in the same way, positing another hypothesis—whichever seemed best of those higher up— [101e] until you arrived at something adequate. And you wouldn't jumble things together the way the contradiction-mongers do, discussing the starting point and what follows from it at the same time—not if you wanted to discover any of the things that are. For those people, perhaps, this isn't a matter of a single word or thought: their wisdom lets them stir everything together and still manage to be pleased with themselves. But you, if you are one of the philosophers, [102a] would do as I say, I think.[29]

"What you say is very true," said Simmias and Cebes together.

ECHECRATES By Zeus, Phaedo, and with good reason! It seems to me amazing how clearly he put those things—clear even to someone with only a little sense.

PHAEDO Certainly, Echecrates, and that's how it seemed to everyone who was there.

ECHECRATES And to us too, who weren't there but are hearing it now. But what was said after that?

29 The "contradiction-mongers" (antilogikoi) were debaters who made a practice of arguing both sides of a question to trip up an opponent.

THE FINAL ARGUMENT

Socrates argues the soul, bringing life, cannot admit death and is therefore immortal and indestructible.

PHAEDO As I recall, once these points had been granted him, and it was agreed that each of the forms is something, and that the other things, by partaking in them, get their names from them, he next asked: "If that's what you say," he said, "then when you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, aren't you saying that both are in Simmias then, bigness and smallness?"

"I am."

"But," he said, "you agree that 'Simmias overtops Socrates' doesn't state the truth [102c] in quite the way the words put it? Surely it isn't by nature, by being Simmias, that Simmias overtops him, but by the bigness he happens to have. Nor, again, does he overtop Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness relative to his bigness?"

"True."

"Nor again is he overtopped by Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has bigness relative to Simmias' smallness?"

"That's so."

"So that's how Simmias gets called both small and big: he sits between the two, submitting his smallness to the bigness [102d] of the one to be overtopped, and presenting to the other his bigness to overtop its smallness." And with a smile he said, "I seem to be about to talk like a written treatise. But anyway, surely it is as I say." He agreed.

My reason for saying this is that I want you to share my view. For it appears to me not only that bigness itself is never willing to be big and small at the same time, but also that the bigness in us never admits the small and isn't willing to be overtopped. Instead, one of two things: either it flees and retreats whenever its opposite, the small, [102e] approaches it, or at that approach it

has perished. It isn't willing to stand its ground and admit smallness and so be something other than what it was. Just as I, having admitted and endured smallness and still being who I am, am this same person, only small; but that bigness, being big, has not dared to be small. In the same way the small in us is never willing to become or to be big; nor is any other of the opposites willing, while still being what it was, to become its opposite and [103a] be it at the same time. Rather, it either goes away or perishes when this happens to it.

"That's exactly how it seems to me," said Cebes.

And one of those present, when he heard this—who it was I don't clearly remember—said, "Good gods! Wasn't the very opposite of what's being said now agreed in our earlier discussion: that the bigger comes to be from the smaller and the smaller from the bigger, and that this, quite simply, is how opposites come to be—from opposites? But now it seems to me it's being said that this could never happen."

Socrates turned his head toward him and listened. [103b] "That was bravely remembered," he said, "but you don't notice the difference between what's being said now and what was said then. Then we said that an opposite thing comes to be from an opposite thing; now we say that the opposite itself could never become opposite to itself, neither the opposite in us nor the one in nature. Then, my friend, we were talking about things that have the opposites, calling them by those opposites' names; now we're talking about the opposites themselves, from whose presence in them the things named get their names. [103c] Those opposites themselves, we say, would never be willing to admit coming to be from one another." And at the same time he looked at Cebes and said, "Cebes, did anything this man said trouble you too, by any chance?"

"No, I don't feel that way this time," said Cebes, "though I'm certainly not saying that many things don't trouble me."

"Then we've agreed on this without qualification," he said: "an opposite will never be opposite to itself."

"Absolutely," he said.

"Now consider this too," he said, "and see whether you'll agree with me. Is there something you call hot, and something you call cold?"

"There is."

"The same things as snow and fire?" 103d

"No, by Zeus, not I."

"So the hot is something other than fire, and the cold something other than snow?"

"Yes."

"But this much, I think, you believe: that snow, being snow, will never admit the hot, as we were saying before, and still be what it was, snow and hot; when the hot approaches, it will either withdraw before it or perish."

"Certainly."

"And fire, again, when the cold approaches it, will either get out of the way or perish; it will never dare to admit coldness and still be what it was, fire and cold." 103e

"What you say is true," he said.

"So with some things of this kind," he said, "it's the case that not only is the form itself entitled to its own name for all time, but so is something else, which is not the form but always has its character whenever it exists. Perhaps what I mean will be clearer in this example. The odd must surely always get this name we're now using, mustn't it?"

"Certainly."

Is it the only thing there is—this is my question—or is there something else 104a which is not the same as the odd, but which we must nevertheless always call by this name as well as its own, because it's by nature such that it never leaves the odd behind? I mean the sort of thing that happens with three, and with many others. Take three. Don't you think it must always be called both by its own name and by the name of the odd, even though the odd is not the same as three? Yet three and five and the whole half of the numbers are by nature such that 104b each of them, though not the same as the odd, is always odd. And again, two and four and the whole other row of numbers,

though not the same as the even, are each always even. Do you agree or not?

"Of course," he said.

"Then look closely at what I want to point out," he said. "It's this. It appears that not only do those opposites not admit one another, but also that whatever things, while not opposite to one another, always contain the opposites—these too seem not to admit whichever form is opposite to the one in them; when it attacks, they either perish or withdraw. Or won't we say that three will perish, or suffer anything else whatever, before it would endure becoming even while still being three?"

"Certainly," said Cebes.

"And yet," he said, "two is not the opposite of three."

"No, it isn't."

"So it's not only opposite forms that won't stand their ground when they attack one another; there are some other things too that won't stand their ground when opposites attack."

"Very true," he said.

"Then would you like us," he said, "to define what sort of things these are, if we can?"

"Certainly." 104d

"Then would they be these, Cebes," he said: "things which compel whatever they occupy to have not only their own form, but always also the form of some opposite?"

"What do you mean?"

"What we were saying just now. You know, surely, that whatever the form of three occupies must be not only three but also odd."

"Certainly."

"To such a thing, we say, the form opposite to the character that brings this about could never come."

"No, it couldn't."

"And it was the odd that brought it about?"

"Yes."

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

"Yes." 104e

"So the form of the even will never come to three."

"Certainly not."

"Then three has no share in the even."

"None."

"So three is uneven."

"Yes."

Now as for what I said we should define—what sort of things, while not opposite to something, still don't admit it, the opposite (as three, for instance, though not opposite to the even, is no more willing to admit it, since it always brings the opposite against it; and so two with the odd, and [105a] fire with the cold, and a great many others)—well, see whether you would define it this way: not only does an opposite not admit its opposite, but also whatever brings some opposite to whatever it approaches—the bringer itself will never admit the opposite of what it brings. Recall it again, since there's no harm in hearing something many times. Five will not admit the form of the even, nor will ten, its double, admit the form of the odd. The double is itself the opposite of something else, but still it won't admit the form [105b] of the odd. Nor will one and a half, or the others of that kind, the half, admit the form of the whole; nor again will a third and all such things—if you're following and agree with me that it's so.

"I agree very strongly," he said, "and I'm following."

"Then tell me again from the beginning," he said. "And don't answer me in the terms of my question, but imitate me. I say this because, besides the answer I gave at first, that safe one, I now see from what we're saying another kind of safety. If you were to ask me what it is that, when it comes to be in a body, will make it hot, I won't give you that safe, ignorant answer, that it's heat, but a more sophisticated one, based on what we're saying now: that it's fire. And if you ask what it is that, when it comes to be in a body, will make it sick, I won't say sickness but fever. Nor, if you ask what it is that, when it comes to be in a number, will make it odd, will I say oddness, but the unit; and so on with

the rest. See whether you now understand well enough what I want."

"Quite well enough," he said.

"Answer, then," he said: "what is it that, when it comes to be in a body, will make it alive?"

"Soul," he said. 105d

"And is this always so?"

"Of course," he said.

"So whatever soul itself occupies, it always comes to it bringing life?"

"It does indeed," he said.

"Is there anything opposite to life, or nothing?"

"There is," he said.

"What?"

"Death."

"Then soul will never admit the opposite of what it always brings, as we've agreed from what went before?"

"Very definitely," said Cebes.

"Well then, what did we just now call what doesn't admit the form of the even?"

"Uneven," he said.

"And what doesn't admit the just, and whatever doesn't admit the musical?" 105e

"Unmusical," he said, "and unjust."

"Very well. And what do we call whatever doesn't admit death?"

"Immortal," he said.

"And soul doesn't admit death?"

"No."

"So soul is immortal."

"Immortal."

"Very well," he said. "Shall we say that this has been proved? Or how does it seem to you?"

"Quite adequately proved, Socrates."

"Well then, Cebes," he said, "if the uneven were necessarily 106a imperishable, wouldn't three be imperishable?"

"Of course."

"And if the unhot were necessarily imperishable too, then whenever someone brought something hot against snow, wouldn't the snow get out of the way safe and unmelted? It would never have perished, nor again would it have stood its ground and admitted the heat."

"What you say is true," he said.

"In the same way, I think, if the uncoolable were imperishable, then whenever something cold came against the fire, it would never have been put out or perished, but would have gone away safe and sound."

"Necessarily," he said. 106b

Then mustn't we say the same about the immortal too? he said. If the immortal is also imperishable, it's impossible for soul to perish when death comes against it. For from what we've said already, it won't admit death or be dead—just as three, we said, won't be even, nor again will the odd; nor will fire be cold, nor the heat in the fire. "But what prevents," someone might say, "the odd from not becoming even when the even attacks, as has been agreed, 106c but perishing instead and having even come to be in its place?" Against someone who said that, we couldn't insist that it doesn't perish, since the uneven isn't imperishable. If that had been agreed by us, we could easily insist that when the even attacks, the odd and three go off and away; and we could insist in the same way about fire and heat and the rest. Isn't that so?

"Certainly."

"So now too, with the immortal: if we agree that it is also imperishable, soul would be, besides being immortal, 106d imperishable too. If not, we would need another argument."

"There's no need, as far as that goes," he said. "For hardly anything else would fail to admit destruction, if the immortal, which is everlasting, is going to admit destruction."

"And god, I think," said Socrates, "and the form of life itself, and anything else that is immortal, would be agreed by everyone never to perish."

"By everyone, by Zeus," he said, "by human beings at any rate —and even more, I think, by gods." 106e

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

"It must be, absolutely."

"So when death comes against a human being, the mortal part of him, it seems, dies, but the immortal part goes off and away safe and undestroyed, having withdrawn before death."

"So it appears."

"Then beyond all doubt, Cebes," he said, "soul is immortal and 107a imperishable, and our souls really will exist in Hades."

"For my part, Socrates," he said, "I have nothing further to say against this, and no reason to distrust the arguments. But if Simmias here or anyone else has something to say, he'd do well not to keep quiet. I don't know what other occasion anyone could put it off to than the present one, if he wants to say or hear anything about such matters."

"Well," said Simmias, "I myself have no remaining ground for distrust either, at least from what's been said. But the magnitude of 107b what the arguments are about, and the low opinion I have of human weakness, compel me still to keep some distrust in my own mind about what's been said."

"Not only that, Simmias," said Socrates. "You're right to say so, but our first hypotheses too, even if you all find them convincing, should still be examined more clearly. And if you analyze them adequately, you will follow the argument, I think, as far as it is possible for a human being to follow it. And if this itself becomes clear, you'll look for nothing further."

"What you say is true," he said. 107c

THE SOUL'S JOURNEY TO HADES

Socrates says the soul needs care for all time and begins a myth of its journey after death.

PHAEDO But this much, gentlemen, he said, it's right to bear in mind: if the soul is immortal, it needs care not only for this time

in which what we call living goes on, but for all time; and now the danger of neglecting it would seem terrible indeed. If death were a release from everything, it would be a windfall for the wicked, when they die, to be released from the body and, along with the soul, from their own wickedness. But as it is, since the soul appears to be immortal, there can be 107d no other escape from evils for it, and no salvation, except to become as good and as full of understanding as possible. For the soul goes to Hades taking nothing with it but its education and upbringing, which are said to do the greatest good or harm to the dead right at the start of the journey there. The story goes like this. When each person dies, the guardian spirit who was allotted to him while he lived tries to lead him to a certain place, where those gathered there must submit to judgment and then journey to Hades 107e with the guide who has been appointed to conduct those from here to there. And when they have met there with what they must meet, and stayed there the time they must, another guide brings them back here again over many long cycles of time.[30]

The journey isn't as Aeschylus' Telephus describes it. He 108a says a simple path leads to Hades, but to me it seems neither simple nor single. Otherwise there would be no need of guides, since no one could go astray anywhere if there were only one road. As it is, it seems to have many forks and crossroads; I say this judging from the sacrifices and rites observed here. Now the orderly soul, the one with understanding, follows along and isn't ignorant of its surroundings. But the soul that is passionately attached to the body, as I said earlier, flutters about it for a long 108b time, and about the visible region, and after much resistance and much suffering it is led off by force and with difficulty by the spirit appointed to it.[31] When it arrives where the others are, the soul that is impure and has done some such thing —has had a hand in unjust killings, or committed other deeds of

30 The guardian spirit (daimōn) is a divine being, below the gods, believed to be assigned to each person for life.
31 *Telephus* is a lost tragedy by Aeschylus.

that kind, which are the kin of these and the work of kindred souls—this soul everyone shuns and turns away from, and no one is willing to be its fellow traveler or guide. It 108c wanders in utter helplessness until certain periods of time have passed, and when they come it is carried by necessity to the dwelling that befits it. But the soul that has passed through life purely and with moderation finds gods as its fellow travelers and guides, and each such soul settles in the place appropriate to it. There are many wonderful regions of the earth, and the earth itself is neither of the kind nor of the size supposed by those who usually talk about the earth—as I have been persuaded by someone. 108d

And Simmias said, "What do you mean by that, Socrates? I've heard a great deal about the earth myself, but not the things that persuade you. So I'd be glad to hear them."

"Well, Simmias, it doesn't seem to me to take the skill of Glaucus to relate what they are. But to prove them true seems to me harder than the skill of Glaucus could manage. For one thing, I might not be able to; for another, even if I knew how, my life, Simmias, seems to me too short for the length of the argument. Still, nothing prevents me from telling you what I am persuaded the shape of the earth is like, 108e and what its regions are."[32]

"Well," said Simmias, "that will be enough too."

"I am persuaded, then," he said, "first, that if it is round and in the middle of the heavens, it needs neither 109a air nor any other such force to keep it from falling. What suffices to hold it is the uniformity of the heavens themselves in every direction, and the equilibrium of the earth itself. For a thing in equilibrium placed in the middle of something uniform won't be able to tilt more or less in any direction; being uniformly situated, it will stay without tilting. That, then, is the first thing I am persuaded of," he said.

"And rightly so," said Simmias.

32 "The skill of Glaucus" was a proverbial phrase for a task needing exceptional skill; its origin was disputed even in antiquity.

Further, he said, that it is very large, and that we [109b] who live between the Phasis and the Pillars of Heracles inhabit some small part of it, living around the sea like ants or frogs around a pond, and that many others live elsewhere in many such regions. For all around the earth there are many hollows of every kind of shape and size, into which water and mist and air have flowed together. But the earth itself lies pure in the pure heaven where the stars are, which is called the ether by [109c] most of those who usually talk about such things. It is the sediment of this ether that these things are, and they are always flowing together into the hollows of the earth.[33] So we live in its hollows without realizing it, and think we live up on the surface of the earth—as if someone living in the middle of the ocean floor thought he lived on the surface of the sea, and, seeing the sun and the other stars through the water, took the sea to be the heavens; and because of his [109d] sluggishness and weakness had never reached the top of the sea, and had never seen, by emerging and poking his head up out of the sea into this region here, how much purer and more beautiful it is than the place where his kind live, nor ever heard about it from anyone else who had seen it. This is just what has happened to us. Living in some hollow of the earth, we think we live on top of it, and we call the air the heavens, as though the stars moved through it as the heavens. And it's the same thing: [109e] because of weakness and sluggishness we are unable to pass through to the outer limit of the air. For if someone came to its top, or grew wings and flew up, he would poke his head out and see—just as fish here poke their heads out of the sea and see the things here, so he would see the things there. And if his nature were strong enough to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the true heaven and the true light [110a] and the true earth.

For this earth of ours, and the stones, and the whole region here, are corrupted and eaten away, as things in the sea are by

33 The Phasis (a river at the eastern end of the Black Sea) and the Pillars of Heracles (the Strait of Gibraltar) marked the eastern and western limits of the Greek world.

the brine. Nothing worth mentioning grows in the sea, and there is nothing, you might say, fully formed; there are caverns and sand and endless mud and mire wherever there is earth there too, things not in the least worthy to be judged against the beauties we have. But those things above, in turn, would appear to surpass ours by far more still. 110b Indeed, if it's good to tell a story, Simmias, it's worth hearing what the things on the earth beneath the heavens are like.

"Well, Socrates," said Simmias, "we for our part would be glad to hear this story."

THE TRUE EARTH

Socrates describes the true earth, its rivers and the fates of souls, and asks Crito not to mourn.

PHAEDO Well then, my friend, he said, the story goes like this. First, the earth itself, if you could look at it from above, would look like those balls made of twelve pieces of leather: many-colored, marked out in patches of color. The colors we have here are like samples of these—the ones painters 110c use. But there the whole earth is made of such colors, and of colors far brighter and purer than these. One part is purple, of wonderful beauty; another is golden; another, the white part, is whiter than chalk or snow; and the rest is made up of the other colors in the same way, colors more numerous and more beautiful than any we have seen. Even these hollows of it, full 110d as they are of water and air, present a kind of color of their own, gleaming amid the variety of the other colors, so that the earth appears as one continuous, many-colored surface.[34] On an earth like this, the things that grow grow in proportion: trees and flowers and fruits. The mountains, likewise, and the stones have, in the same proportion, a smoothness and a transparency and colors more beautiful than ours. The little stones we prize so much here are fragments of those—carnelians, jaspers, emeralds 110e and all the

34 A ball stitched from twelve pentagonal pieces of leather, each dyed a different color.

rest. There, everything is like that, and still more beautiful than these. The reason is that those stones are pure, not eaten away or spoiled as ours are by rot and brine from what has flowed together down here—things that bring ugliness and disease to stones and earth, and to animals and plants as well.

The earth itself is adorned with all of these, and with gold and silver besides, and 111a everything else of that kind. They lie there in plain view, abundant and large and everywhere on the earth, so that to see it is a sight for blessed spectators. Many living creatures live on it, human beings among them. Some live inland; some live along the edge of the air, as we live along the sea; and some on islands, close to the mainland, around which the air flows. In a word, what water and the sea are to us for our needs, there 111b air is; and what air is to us, ether is to them. Their seasons are so well tempered that they are free of disease and live far longer than people here. In sight and hearing and understanding and everything of that kind they stand as far above us as air stands above water, and ether above air, in purity. They also have groves and temples of the gods, in which gods really do dwell; they have voices and oracles and direct perceptions of the gods, and meetings of that kind 111c take place between them and the gods. They see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and the rest of their happiness is in keeping with all this.

Such, then, is the nature of the earth as a whole and of what surrounds it. Within it, in its hollows, all the way around, there are many regions. Some are deeper and more widely open than the one we live in; some are deeper but have a narrower opening than our 111d region; and some are shallower than ours and broader. All of these are bored through to one another beneath the earth in many places, by narrower and wider channels, and they have passages through which much water flows from one into another, as into mixing bowls. Under the earth there are ever-flowing rivers of unimaginable size, of hot water and of cold; there is much fire, and great rivers of fire; and many rivers of liquid mud, some cleaner, some muddier, 111e like the rivers of

mud in Sicily that flow ahead of the lava, and the lava itself. Each of the regions is filled with these, according to how the flow happens to come round to each at any given time. All of this is moved up and down by a kind of oscillation inside the earth, and this oscillation comes about through a natural cause of the following sort.[35]

One of the chasms of the earth happens to be the largest [112a] of all, and it is bored right through the whole earth. It is the one Homer spoke of when he said: "Far, far away, where the deepest pit beneath the earth lies." Elsewhere he, and many other poets, have called it Tartarus. Into this chasm all the rivers flow together, and out of it they flow again, and each takes on the character of whatever earth it flows through. The [112b] reason all the streams flow out of it and into it is that this liquid has no bottom and no foundation.[36] So it swings and surges up and down, and the air and wind around it do the same, for they follow it both when it rushes toward the far side of the earth and when it rushes toward this side. Just as the breath of those who breathe is always flowing out and in, so there too the wind, swinging along with the liquid, produces terrible, overwhelming gales as it [112c] goes in and comes out. When the water withdraws to the region called "below," it flows through the earth into the streams in those parts and fills them, as if it were being pumped in. When in turn it leaves there and rushes back here, it fills the streams here again. Once filled, these flow through channels and through the earth, each reaching the places to which a path has been made for it, and they form seas and lakes and rivers and springs. From there they sink back [112d] beneath the earth, some going round more and longer regions, others fewer and shorter, and empty into Tartarus again—some far lower than the point where they were drawn off, others only a little lower; but all flow in below where they flowed out. Some pour in on the opposite side from where they came out, some on the same side. And there are some that go right round in a circle, coiling once

35 The lava flows of Mount Etna.
36 The line is Homer, *Iliad* 8.14.

or even several times around the earth like snakes, descend as low as they can, and empty in again. 112e It is possible to descend in either direction as far as the center, but not beyond, since the part on either side is uphill for the streams from both sides.

Now there are many other streams, great and of every kind; but among these many there happen to be four in particular. The largest, which flows outermost in a circle, is the one called Ocean. Opposite it, flowing in the opposite direction, is Acheron, which flows through various desolate 113a regions and then, flowing underground, arrives at the Acherusian Lake. There the souls of most of the dead arrive, and after staying for certain appointed periods, some longer, some shorter, they are sent out again to be born as living creatures. A third river issues between these two, and near its source it falls into a vast region burning with a great fire, and forms a lake larger than our sea, boiling with water and mud. From there 113b it moves in a circle, turbid and muddy, and winding around within the earth it reaches, among other places, the edge of the Acherusian Lake, without mixing with its water. After coiling around many times underground, it empties into Tartarus at a lower point. This is the river they call Pyriphlegethon, and its lava streams spout up fragments of it wherever on earth they happen to break through. Opposite this, in turn, the fourth river issues, first into a place that is terrible and wild, so they say, entirely the color of dark-blue 113c enamel. They call this place Stygian, and the lake the river forms as it flows in they call Styx. Having fallen in there and taken on terrible powers in its water, the river sinks beneath the earth and, coiling around, moves in the opposite direction to Pyriphlegethon, meeting it from the opposite side in the Acherusian Lake. Its water, too, mixes with none, but it also goes round in a circle and empties into Tartarus opposite Pyriphlegethon. Its name, as the poets say, is Cocytus. 113d

Such being the nature of these things, when the dead arrive at the place to which each one's guardian spirit brings them, they are first judged—both those who have lived good and holy lives and those who have not. Those who are found to have lived mid-

dling lives travel to the Acheron, board the vessels that are there for them, and on these arrive at the lake. There they dwell and are purified: they pay the penalty for their wrongs and are released from them, if anyone has done wrong, and they receive rewards for their good deeds, [113e] each according to his merit. But those who are found to be incurable because of the magnitude of their offenses—who have committed many great robberies of temples, or many unjust and lawless killings, or other crimes of that kind—these their fitting fate hurls into Tartarus, and they never come out.

Those who are found to have committed offenses that are curable but great—for example, who have done some violence to a father or mother [114a] in anger and lived the rest of their lives in remorse, or who have killed someone in some other such way—these must fall into Tartarus. But when they have fallen in and been there a year, the wave casts them out: the killers by way of Cocytus, and those who struck a father or mother by way of Pyriphlegethon. When they are carried along to the Acherusian Lake, they shout and call out there, some to those they killed, others to those they abused; and having called them, they beg [114b] and plead with them to let them come out into the lake and to receive them. If they persuade them, they come out and their suffering ends; if not, they are carried back into Tartarus and from there into the rivers again, and they don't stop suffering this until they persuade those they wronged. That is the penalty the judges have laid down for them. Those who are found to have been outstanding in living holy lives are the ones who are freed from these regions within the earth and released [114c] as if from prison, and who go up to the pure dwelling-place and settle on the surface of the earth. Of these, the ones who have purified themselves sufficiently by philosophy live entirely without bodies for all time to come and arrive at dwellings more beautiful still. Those are not easy to describe, and there isn't enough time at present. But it is for the sake of the things we have gone through, Simmias, that one must do everything to have a share

in excellence and understanding in this life. For the prize is a fine one, and the hope is great.

Now, to insist that these things are exactly as I've described them would not befit a man of sense. But that this, or something like it, is the truth about our souls and their dwellings, given that the soul has been shown to be immortal—that, I think, is fitting, and worth the risk of believing that it is so. For it's a fine risk to run. One should repeat such things to oneself like a spell, and that is why I've been drawing out the story for so long. So for these reasons a man should be confident about his own soul 114e if in his life he has said goodbye to the other pleasures, those of the body, and to its adornments, as alien to him and as doing more harm than good; if he has been serious about the pleasures of learning; and if he has adorned his soul not with an alien adornment but with its own—with moderation and 115a justice and courage and freedom and truth—and so awaits his journey to Hades, ready to go whenever fate calls.

"As for you, Simmias and Cebes and the rest of you," he said, "you will each make that journey at some later time. But as for me, fate is calling now, as a character in a tragedy would say, and it's just about time for me to go to the bath. It seems better to bathe before drinking the poison, and not give the women the trouble of washing a corpse." 115b

When he had said this, Crito said, "Very well, Socrates. But what instructions do you have for these friends or for me, about your children or anything else? What could we do that would please you most?"

"Just what I'm always saying, Crito," he said, "nothing new. If you take care of yourselves, whatever you do will please me and mine, and yourselves too, even if you don't promise it now. But if you neglect yourselves and aren't willing to live following in the tracks, so to speak, of what we've said today and in times past, then no matter how much you promise 115c right now, and however earnestly, it will do no good."

"We'll be eager to do as you say, then," he said. "But how shall we bury you?"

However you like, he said, if you can catch me, and I don't get away from you. And laughing quietly, he looked at us and said: Gentlemen, I can't persuade Crito that I am this Socrates, the one now talking with you and setting out each point of the argument. He thinks I'm the one 115d he'll see in a little while as a corpse, and so he asks how he should bury me. All that long argument I've been making—that when I drink the poison I'll no longer stay with you, but will go off to the joys of the blessed—he takes, I think, as mere talk, meant to comfort you and myself at the same time. So give Crito a guarantee for me, he said, the opposite of the guarantee he gave the judges. He guaranteed that I would stay. You must guarantee that I won't stay once I'm dead, but will go 115e away, so that Crito may bear it more easily and not be distressed on my behalf, as if I were suffering something terrible, when he sees my body being burned or buried; and so that he won't say at the funeral that it's Socrates he is laying out, or carrying to the grave, or burying. Be sure of this, my excellent Crito, he said: to speak badly is not only a false note in itself; it also does some harm to souls.

You must take heart, then, and say that it is my body you are burying; and bury it 116a however you please and in whatever way you think most customary.

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

Socrates bathes, bids his family farewell, drinks the poison and dies.

PHAEDO After saying this he got up and went into another room to bathe. Crito followed him, and he told us to wait. So we waited, talking among ourselves about what had been said and going over it again, and then dwelling on how great a misfortune had befallen us, truly feeling that we would spend the rest of our lives like orphans who had lost a father. When 116b he had bathed, his children were brought to him—he had two small sons and one grown one—and the women of his household arrived. He talked with them in Crito's presence and gave them whatever instructions he wished; then he told the women and

children to go, and came back to us. By now it was near sunset, for he had spent a long time inside. He came and sat down, freshly bathed, and not much was said after that. Then the servant of the Eleven came and, standing 116c beside him, said: "Socrates, I won't find fault with you as I do with others, who get angry with me and curse me when, on the orders of the authorities, I tell them to drink the poison. You, though, I have come to know during this time as the noblest, gentlest and best man who has ever come here, and now especially I'm sure you're not angry with me—you know who is responsible—but with them. So now, since you know what I've come 116d to tell you, farewell, and try to bear what must be as easily as you can." With that he burst into tears, turned, and went away.

Socrates looked up at him and said, "Farewell to you too; we'll do as you say." And turning to us he said, "What a courteous man! All this time he's been coming to see me, and sometimes talked with me, and was the kindest of men; and now how generously he weeps for me. Come, Crito, let's do as he says. Have someone bring the poison, if it has been ground; if not, let the man grind it." 116e

Crito said, "But I think, Socrates, the sun is still on the mountains and hasn't set yet. Besides, I know others who drink it very late, well after they've been told to, after dining and drinking plenty, and some even after sleeping with whoever they happen to desire. Don't hurry; there's still time."

Socrates said, "It's natural, Crito, for the people you mention to do that—they think they gain something by it—and it's natural for me not to. I don't 117a think I'd gain anything by drinking a little later, except to make myself ridiculous in my own eyes, clinging to life and hoarding it when there's nothing left. So go on," he said, "do as I ask, and don't refuse."

Hearing this, Crito nodded to the servant standing nearby. The servant went out and, after a good while, came back bringing the man who was to give the poison, carrying it, already ground, in a cup. When Socrates saw the man, he said, "Well, my good man, you're the expert in these things. What should I do?"

"Nothing," he said, "except drink it and walk around until a heaviness 117b comes into your legs, and then lie down. That way it will do its work." And with that he held out the cup to Socrates.

He took it, Echecrates, quite serenely, without a tremor or any change of color or expression; and looking up at the man from under his brows like a bull, as he used to, he said, "What do you say about pouring a libation from this drink to someone? Is it allowed or not?"[37]

"We grind only as much, Socrates," he said, "as we think is the right amount to drink." 117c

"I understand," he said. "But it is allowed, I suppose, and even necessary, to pray to the gods that my move from here to there may be a fortunate one. That is my prayer; may it be so." And as he said this, he raised the cup to his lips and, quite readily and calmly, drained it. Up to then most of us had been fairly well able to hold back our tears, but when we saw him drinking, and then that he had drunk it, we could do so no longer. In my own case the tears came flooding out in spite of myself, so that I covered my face and wept for myself—not for him, but for my own misfortune, to be losing such a man 117d as my companion. Crito had got up and left even before I did, since he couldn't hold back his tears. Apollodorus, who even before had never stopped crying, now broke into loud sobs of grief and anger, and there was no one present whom he didn't make break down, except Socrates himself.

But Socrates said, "What are you doing, you strange people! This is the main reason I sent the women away, so that they wouldn't 117e strike such a wrong note. I've heard that one should die in reverent silence. Keep quiet, and be strong."

When we heard this we were ashamed and held back our tears. He walked around, and when he said his legs were getting heavy, he lay down on his back, as the man had told him to. Then the man who had given him the poison put his hands on him, and after a while examined his feet and legs; then he

37 A libation was a small amount of a drink poured out as an offering to a god.

pressed hard on his foot and asked if he could feel it. [118a] He said no.

After that he pressed his shins, and moving upward in this way he showed us that he was growing cold and stiff. Then he touched him once more and said that when it reached his heart, he would be gone.

The cold had now nearly reached his abdomen when he uncovered his face—for he had covered it—and said what were to be his last words: "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Pay it and don't forget."[38]

"It will be done," said Crito. "But see if there's anything else you want to say."

To this question he gave no further answer. After a short while he stirred, and the man uncovered him; his eyes were fixed. When Crito saw this, he closed his mouth and his eyes.

This, Echecrates, was the end of our friend: a man who was, we would say, the best of all those we came to know in his time, and also the wisest and the most just.

38 Asclepius was the god of healing; a cock was a customary offering to him.