
The Phaedo II

Arguing for the Soul

A Bi-conditional Asserted 76e-77a

- (1) The soul exists if, and only if, the Forms exist.
- (2) The Forms exist.
- (3) So, the soul exists.

The Theory of Recollection

- ❖ 72e-77a: Knowing the Forms involves a kind of recollection.
 - ❖ Note that at 76e-77a, the doctrine of recollection is said to stand or fall with the theory of Forms.
 - ❖ Compare *Meno* 81c-d: 'As the soul is immortal, and has been born often and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learnt; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and other things.'
 - ❖ There follows a demonstration of an episode of recollection: *Meno* 82a-86b

A Reconstruction of the Implicit Argument

- (1) If there are some things we know but do not/cannot know by means of sense perception, then we must have learnt them some time before we were embodied.
- (2) There are indeed some things we know but do not/cannot know by means of sense perception (like geometrical and arithmetic truths, as well as the truths about virtue).
- (3) So, we must have learnt some things before the time we were embodied—during the time in which ‘we exist but are not human beings’ (*Meno*, 86a).
- (4) If we exist before we are embodied, then the soul must be immortal.
- (5) So, the soul is immortal.

An Argument for Forms from the *Phaedo*

❖ *Phaedo* 74a9-c5

"Then consider whether this is so. We say, don't we, that there is something equal—I don't mean a log to a log, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that sort, but something else beyond all these, the equal itself: are we to say that there is something or nothing?"

"We most certainly are to say that there is," said Simmias, "most emphatically!"

"And do we know what it is?"

"Indeed."

"Where did we get our knowledge of it? Wasn't it from the things we were just mentioning: on seeing logs or stones or other equal things, wasn't it from these that we thought of that object, it being different from them? Or doesn't it seem different to you? Consider it this way: don't equal stones and logs, the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one, but not to another?"

"Yes, indeed."

"But now, did the equals themselves ever seem to you unequal, or equality inequality?"

"Never yet, Socrates."

"Then those equals, and the equal itself, are not the same."

Some Formulations of *Phaedo* 74b-d

- ❖ Evidently relies upon Leibniz's Law:
 - ❖ If $x = y$, then ϕx *iff* ϕy
 - ❖ Informally: if x and y are identical, then whatever features x has, y has too; and whatever features y has, x has too.
- ❖ But Plato is relying on which feature?
 - ❖ Compresence of Opposites

Compresence of Opposites

1. Equal sticks and stones sometimes, staying the same, appear equal in one respect and unequal in another (viz. they suffer the compresence of opposites).
2. The equals themselves are never unequal (and so never suffer the compresence of opposites).
3. Therefore, the equal itself and equal things are not the same.

An Argument from Simplicity: *Phaedo* 78b-80b

- (1) It is possible for x to go out of existence only if x is composite.
- (2) The soul is not visible.
- (3) x is composite only if x is visible.
- (4) So, the soul is not composite.
- (5) So, the soul cannot go out of existence.
- (6) Hence, the soul is immortal.

The Basic Picture: *Phaedo* 80b

- ❖ ‘. . .it follows from all that has been said that the soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble, and never consistently the same.’

The Affinity Argument: *Phaedo* 78b-84b

- ❖ On this basis, Socrates mounts the Affinity Argument for Immortality.
- ❖ Note that this argument is not meant to be deductive, but rather analogical or probabilistic.
 - ❖ The suggestion is thus not that the immortality of the soul is *proven*, but that we have good reason to accept this thesis.
 - ❖ Further, there seems to be some selection such that the philosophical soul is more likely to soar upon death:
 - ❖ ‘The soul in this state [*scil.* the one purified by philosophy] makes its way to the invisible, which is like itself, the divine and immortal and wise, and arriving there it can be happy, having rid itself of confusion, ignorance, fear, violent desires and the other human ills and. . . truly spend the rest of time with the gods’ (*Phaedo* 81a).

A Framework for the Affinity Argument

The Realm of Forms

The Perceptual Realm

Divine

Human

Deathless

Mortal

Intelligible

Perceptible

Uniform

Muliform

Indissoluble

Soluble

Always the Same as Itself

Never Consistently the Same

Two Ways of Thinking about the Argument

- ❖ As an Analogical Argument
- ❖ As a Probabilistic Argument

Analogical Arguments Illustrated

- ❖ Suppose we find a (seeming) artefact on Mars, something at the level of complexity of, say, a mobile phone. We might reasonably be inclined to argue: (i) this object exemplifies the level of complexity of a mobile phone; (ii) what explains the level of complexity of a mobile phone is its having been engineered by some conscious designer(s); so, (iii) what explains the complexity of this artefact is its having been engineered by some conscious designer(s); (iv) if (iii), it is reasonable to assume that there are or were conscious beings in the place where this artefact originated; (v) it did not originate on earth; so (vi), there are or were conscious designers somewhere other than earth.

The Analogical Argument, First Pass

- (1) The soul exhibits features known to be features of objects in the intelligible realm.
- (2) What best explains the exhibition of those features in the intelligible realm is (i) the bare fact that those objects are in the intelligible realm rather than in the sensible realm, and (ii) the fact that those objects are always the same and never vary.
- (3) If (2), what explains the exhibition of those features in the case of the soul is (i) the bare fact that the soul too is an object in the intelligible realm, and (ii) the fact that the souls are always the same and never vary.
- (4) If souls are always the same and never vary, souls are immortal.
- (5) So, it is reasonable to conclude that souls are immortal.

Probabilistic Arguments Illustrated

- ❖ Weather predictions: (i) usually when a high pressure cell collides with a low pressure cell, rain or snow falls; (ii) we expect a high pressure cell to collide with a low pressure cell over Cambridge tomorrow; so (iii) probably it will rain or snow in Cambridge tomorrow.
- ❖ Induction: (i) all of the swans ever observed have been white; (ii) we expect to see some swans in St James's Park tomorrow; so, (iii) probably the swans we expect to see tomorrow will be white.
 - ❖ Note that neither of these arguments purports to prove deductively, once and for all, that their conclusions obtain.
 - ❖ Rather, they conclude that *probably* they will obtain.
 - ❖ So, all things considered, it behoves you to carry an umbrella for your trip to Cambridge tomorrow.

The Probabilistic Version, First Pass

- (1) Souls are (a) intelligible rather than perceptible, (b) uniform rather than multiform, and (c) always the same as themselves rather than shifting and never the same.
- (2) Things which are (a), (b), and (c) are also (in our experience thus far—namely of Forms) also (d) indissoluble and deathless.
- (3) So, souls too are probably indissoluble and deathless.

Taking that All Together

- ❖ Souls are more like the Forms than they are like the body or other material objects.
- ❖ If that is so, they are likely to be—like the Forms and unlike the body or other material objects—immortal.
- ❖ So, souls are likely to be immortal.

Some Basic Platonic Theses

- ❖ Soul-Body Dualism: the soul is one entity and the body another.
 - ❖ Corollary: the soul can exist without the body.
- ❖ Transcendence: the soul's mission is to transcend the body; it seeks knowledge and gains it by communing with the Forms.
- ❖ Personal Identity: the person *is* the soul, not a composite of soul + body.
 - ❖ Corollaries:
 - ❖ Where the soul goes, so goes the person (*Phaedo* 115c-116a).
 - ❖ You and I are only *contingently* human beings; to be a human being is to be an embodied soul.
 - ❖ Compare: someone is a driver when and only when driving a car, and so ceases to be a driver when the car is parked. Or, again, perhaps better and closer to Plato's point of view, someone is a prisoner when and only when they are imprisoned; one ceases to be a prisoner when she is released.